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DISPLACEMENTS: ZAMBIANS IN SERENJE'S MUCHINDA CHIEFDOM SEEK ASYLUM IN DRC

Senior Chief Muchinda, Kankomba Welala the Third, of the Lala people of Serenje District in Central Province has disclosed that some of his subjects are seeking asylum in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

He said Government must treat the matter seriously as the Royal Establishment has video evidence of those seeking asylum.

The Traditional Leader said the challenge has arisen because of displacements due to mining and converting their land into farm blocks.

The Senior Chief said Government's desire for excess land has resulted in 155 000 hectares of land being converted into Nansanga Farm Block.

He further said there is greedness and corruption among some of those running Government machinery.

The Chief has since donated ten bales of second-hand clothes known as salaula to old men and women in his Chiefdom, and secured ten hectares of land to cultivate fields for them.

He said this in a speech read on his behalf by his Royal Establishment Secretary Eliud Katyoka during a Traditional Leaders Caucus in Serenje District organised by Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) which is Implementing a Resilient Initiatives for Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project with support from Bread for the World (BFTW) Germany.

"Mining has come with challenges. One of the schools has no pupils to write Grade 7 examinations because all the children have gone into mining," he said.

But Serenje District Commissioner Paul Masuwa said he is concerned with unfolding events following installation of Chief Muchinda two months ago.

Mr. Masuwa reminded the Senior Chief that his Chiefdom cannot develop in isolation but work with Government.

He said the Nansanga Pilot Project is important because it will create jobs and improve the welfare of the people of Muchinda Chiefdom.

The District Commissioner said Government will also investigate and arrest culprits involved in child labour as it is an international and domestic crime.

"I am the one who installed Senior Chief Muchinda two months ago. Remember that there was a gap of 13 years without a Chief. We were all anxious to have a Chief. This is because Government needs to work with Chiefs to develop. But I am very concerned with what is happening in Muchinda Chiefdom. You said you want to be the best Chiefdom but that can only happen if you work with Government," he said.

And Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) Board Member Emmanuel Mutamba said chiefs should be free to contact his organization to research on provisions of the law on several matters including displacements.

"We have an effective Research Department which can help to render an informed Legal perspective on all issues affecting Chiefdoms," he said.

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Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ)

Plot 269, Off Twin Palm Road, Ibex Hill, Lusaka -Zambia
Visit CEJ website: <https://cejzambia.org/> and Facebook: <https://facebook.com/cejzambia.org>
Call: +260 54713003 / +260 964 244255 / +260 973 389859
Email: info@cejzambia.org