“Akiira Geothermal’s Response”

*Business and Human Rights Resource Centre invited Akiira Geothermal to respond to the following report by;*

* *“Akiira 1 Geothermal Power Plant Project: Maasai Community in Kenya Affected by Another Geothermal Power Project Speaks Out”, July 2018, International Accountability Project and Narasha Community Development Group*

*Akiira Geothermal provided the following response:*

Akiira stakeholder engagement plan is based on IFC standards and is well recognized by Ministry of Energy, GRMF among others as the best implemented so far. We have taken an active role in engaging the affected communities ensuring gender equality, youth, elderly and people with disability participation. Our engagement also ensures we respect customary beliefs and practices of the local communities. The SEP also identifies affected community based on impact. The stakeholder action plan has a schedule of meeting and activities to be conducted through the life of the project which include project kick off meetings, air and noise report meeting, open day, grievance report meeting etc

The company has implemented the action plan; conducted several meeting prior to its formulation and there are minutes and reports to show the same. We have been audited by lenders and other international organization on the same, we have responded to issues and concerns to their satisfaction.

Akiira has a grievance mechanism, which all affected communities are aware of including the kambiturkana village. We have forms in or office, which many have used in the past. We also have had follow up meeting to address the grievance raised throughout the various phases of the project.

Based on previous reports/documentations such as the technical considerations as indicated in the exploration license, Environmental Management Plan, Air and Noise report, Biodiversity and ESIA there were no settlement in the area, hence the decision on pad location.

Kambiturkana is an illegal settlement which was developed in 2016 when construction work was in progress. They have been engaged by our team on numerous occasion however they have repeatedly refused to sign minutes of all meeting they have attended. It make it difficult for our team to engage them.

Our concerns:

-          The team carrying out the research went under the pretense that they were contracted by EIB or Akiira manipulating the community to attend their meeting. The team also went to the extent of bribing other to give bad review on Akiira in order to submit a valid report to the sponsors.

-          To give a brief background on Jackson Shaa associated with the Narrasha Group. He is a principal at the worst performing school in Suswa and spend majority of his time traveling and doing activist work neglecting the many children entrusted in his care. He accuses Akiira of engaging illiterate individual and yet does nothing to ensure the pupils in his school do not end up like the majority of the community who drop out of school due to poor performance and lack of proper mentors and education system. When we enaged local heads of schools in Suswa to come up with solutions on how to improve school performance, Mr Shaa never showed concern for the initiative.

He applied for a job with Akiira but did not qualify and has since made it his mission to tarnish the company reputation. We have invited him on numerous occasion to come to our office but he has not made the effort to engage our team.

Mr Shaa had the opportunity to assist the community during the energy committee local content public baraza held a couple months ago, but instead used his influence as an opinion leader to withhold information from the community. The energy committee public participation forum was used by a few to drive their agenda and not the local community input and concerns as intended.

-          Earlier in the year Jackson and Mr Koisaaba held similar meeting with the community. We were informed of a report that was submitted to a European organization indicating Akiira official were interviewed, which was not the case. The level of integrity in handling these issues is concerning.

-          We welcome constructive criticism as we are not perfect. However Akiira has done tremendous work in the community compared to more established companies in the area. We have maintained consistent community participation, information disclosure and transparency. We would like to request IAP to ensure due diligence on some of the reports and communication received and understand motive. We welcome partners and individuals who have the best interest of community at heart and not driven by self-interest. That said we are open to discuss any issues and concerns at our offices at your convenience.

Please feel free to contact us for further discussions.

regards,

Rebecca Supeyo

Corporate & Community Affairs Manager