

RESETTLEMENT

# Go back home, refugees urged

People can only be reconciled once they return to their farms, minister says

By NATION Team

**M**ore than 15,000 people camping at Eldoret showground have been asked to make a decision on when they will be going back to their farms.

Special Programmes minister Naomi Shabaan said their complaints that no efforts had been made to reconcile them with their neighbours should not be a hindrance to their going back to their farms.

Dr Shabaan advised the people in the camp to go to their farms so that they could be reconciled with their neighbours.

Speaking in Eldoret during yesterday's launch of a peace programme run by the United Nations Development Programme, the minister encouraged the refugees to have faith in the Government's pledge to compensate them for the losses they incurred in the post-poll clashes.

## Meaningful

"We will not achieve meaningful reconciliation if you continue staying in the camp instead of talking to your neighbours at the farms. We need time to ascertain the genuine victims of the violence so that unscrupulous individuals do not take advantage of whatever little the Government would give you," the minister said.

The resettlement, known as "Operation Rudi Nyumbani" that started last week, encountered resistance on the second day when refugees at the Eldoret camp vowed to stay put until they are compensated. They also raised concerns over their security when they go back to their farms.

Rift Valley PC Noor Hassan Noor angered them when he dismissed those resisting resettlement as poor town dwellers who own no farms and were not ready to lose the benefits at the camp.

The Emergency Volunteer Scheme



**ABOVE:** Some of the women camping at the Nakuru showground weep after one of them told Rift Valley PC Noor Hassan Noor of the ordeal she had been through. **LEFT:** A chief in Kipkelion carries a gourd full of sour milk that the people would take as a sign of peace.

Photos/SOLLO KIRAGU and JOSEPH KIHARI

funded by UNDP involves recruiting and training neighbourhood peace volunteers to preach reconciliation among returnees and their neighbours, offer counselling and help in distributing aid.

Kenya Red Cross Society manager in

charge of the area, Mr Patrick Nyongesa, said there was high registration of people willing to return to their farms.

He said 5,527 out of the 7,150 internal refugees at Burnt Forest and more than 1,000 others at Matharu camp in Uasin Gishu have returned to their farms.

The provincial administration says more than 25,000 people in Trans Nzoia East have returned to their farms.

And more than 50 refugees who returned to the country from Uganda on Friday last week are still camping at Busia Police Station, awaiting compensation from the Government.

## Compensation

Kenya Red Cross society Busia branch coordinator Nicodemus Okango said most of them wanted to return to their ancestral homes while others were not sure of their security. He added that 123 others are also still camping at the police station waiting for compensation.

And the relocation of the internal refugees residing at Stadium Camp in Naivasha Town will commence on Monday.

Reported by Sammy Cheboi, Barnabas Bii, Ouma Wanzala and Macharia Mwangi

## Poll process faulty, admits ECK boss

By SAMWEL KUMBA

Electoral Commission chairman Samuel Kivuitu yesterday conceded publicly for the first time that the electoral process was faulty and open to abuse.

Mr Kivuitu said the law should be amended to provide for a more transparent procedure of vote counting and announcement of presidential election results.

The law should also provide a clear timetable for the transition from one president to the successor and provide for the procedures under which a new president was installed, he said.

The ECK boss also disclosed that he wanted to retire on expiry of his second term before the elections last year, but accepted another term under pressure from political parties.

Mr Kivuitu said the electoral process was not transparent and had loopholes which could be abused if not addressed.

## Suspicion

"We should, for example, allow all Kenyans to participate and feel nice about the installation of the President. This may, to a great extent, remove the suspicion and the concerns about the authenticity of such an important event in our nation," said Mr Kivuitu.

President Kibaki was sworn-in hurriedly at State House shortly after Mr Kivuitu announced him the winner of the closely-fought presidential election.

This sparked violence that was ended by the signing of a power-sharing agreement with the runner-up, ODM leader Raila Odinga.

The ECK was accused of mismanaging the presidential election to give victory to the incumbent.

Mr Kivuitu was addressing a forum on whether Kenyan electoral laws were responsible for political violence.

He said he had previously proposed to the President that ECK be reconstituted. According to him, the country's electoral laws had some gaps, which could lead to resentment.

"I have previously called for a reconstitution of ECK so that the perception of acceptability is created," he said.