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CEDP INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND SECURITY OF LAND LAND REFORMS WERE TIMELY, SAYS MINISTER NABAKOOBA

Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) Judith Nabakooba has described the land reforms undertaken in her docket under the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) over the last decade as necessary and timely.

Key among reforms undertaken at the land ministry over the past decade is the digitisation of land records through the design, installation, piloting and roll out of the National Land Information System (NLIS).

The push to digitize and automate the lengthy, complex, process and procedures that govern land registration in Uganda is part of the World Bank-funded Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) that the lands ministry is part of.

The project implementation, spearheaded by the MLHUD, was implemented between 2013 and 2019 aimed at, among other objectives, reducing the number of days to register land from 52 in 2010 to 25 by 2019. Project information reveals that this target was achieved and that it took 20 days to register land by 2020.

Nabakooba says reforms like digitising land records was timely owing to the increasing population growth amidst a static land size. Uganda currently has an estimated population of about 43.8 million and this is projected to hit 80m and 100m by 2040 and 2050 respectively. This is against a static land of about 241,037 square miles including water bodies, forests, and gazetted tourist sites.

"This means that we need to have proper land use planning and manage urbanisation in relation to development. When the reforms were geared towards centralization and easy management of land information. The NLIS has made it easier and faster to access land information," Nabakooba told the New Vision in an interview.

With this in mind, the government through its development footprint, the National Development Plan, sought to have productive and sustainable utilisation of land through strong land management practices.

The third National Development Plan (NDP III) stipulates that the Government hoped to achieve this by promoting tenure security including women's access to land, develop and implement a Land Valuation Management Information System (LAVMIS)



The Gulu lands office

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and promote land consolidation, titling and banking.

It was against this background that the Government of Uganda secured a loan from the World Bank to implement the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) that would, among other objectives, improve access and security of land tenure to create incentives for investments and productivity.

One of the components of this project is the land administration reform that's implemented by the ministry



Nabakooba says the project supported the construction of 22 Ministry Zonal Offices

of lands, housing and urban development.

CEDP sought to strengthen the land administration system in Uganda through a combination of activities that included systems' improvements and physical infrastructure, systematic registration of communal and individually owned land and enhancements in land valuations capacity.

It also sought to strengthen institutional and dispute resolution capacity and human capital.

"While the land agenda in Uganda is broader than the particular focus in this project, the activities included in and envisaged results are key foundational elements needed to advance the economic benefits of land administration," an excerpt from the project document states.

Prior to this project, the land system was manually managed with 'records scattered in different places and simple tasks like retrieving some of these documents could take ages'.

"By introducing the NLIS, we sought to streamline registers and put in place proper record keeping and deal with issues like double titling, overlaps of titles and missing of titles," Nabakooba explained.

Previously, people used to come to ministry headquarters for the simplest of tasks like doing a search and retrieving records.

A total of 22 Ministry Zonal Offices (MZOs) have been established during the reforms to

TENURE TO CREATE INCENTIVES FOR INVESTMENTS AND PRODUCTIVITY

BENEFITS

Because of these reforms, Nabakooba said her ministry has been able to develop a draft National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) which is currently awaiting the certificate of financial implication from the finance ministry for cabinet approval. The NPDP will guide physical developments and land-use planning for the entire country.

From inception, the ministry staff have been involved, oriented and trained. They can now ably manage the system. This means that the project has supported building the capacity of the ministry staff.

decentralise the process of land management.

These are located in Jinja, Kampala, Mukono, Masaka, Mbarara, Wakiso (2-Kyadondo/Busiro), Lira, Kabarole, Kibaale, Arua, Gulu, Masindi, Mbale, Kabale, Mityana, Luwero, Mpigi, Soroti, Tororo, Moroto, and Rukungiri

"People can obtain a range of services including: getting land titles, conducting land searches, and surveys from those respective offices. The project further strengthened security of tenure by enabling tenants to acquire certification because a number of people occupy land but their status is legally unknown," she explained.

However, Nabakooba says failure to have all the information about titled land into the digital system still affects operations of the MZOs.

"We still have a backlog and some of the information is still manual. This is expected to be substantially cleared by June," she adds.

CURBING FRAUD

In February this year, the ministry of lands made modifications to the new land titles, introducing security features to guard against fraud and forgeries in land transactions.

According to the changes, one's National Identification Number (NIN) will be linked to their certificate of title as a security feature to avoid fraud.

Accordingly, one must present a NIN that must tally with the one linked to the certificate of title in the digitised system if they are to access the title.

This, officials say, will go a long way in reducing cases of land fraud that had become so rampant across the country.

Andrew Bashaija, the then head of the land division at the High



The Wakiso lands office

CEDP SOUGHT TO STRENGTHEN LAND ADMINISTRATION THROUGH SYSTEMS' IMPROVEMENTS AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, SYSTEMATIC REGISTRATION OF COMMUNAL AND INDIVIDUALLY OWNED LAND AND ENHANCEMENTS IN LAND VALUATIONS CAPACITY.

Court is quoted to have said in 2018 that more than 75% of the cases at the division are fraud-related cases

STRENGTHENING CHIEF GOVERNMENT VALUER'S OFFICE (CGV)

Nabakooba says part of the reforms are related to strengthening the office of the Chief Government Valuer (CGV) which she says is currently weak and functioning without a clear legal framework guiding its operations.

CGV's office is used by all ministries, departments and agencies during land valuation processes for land and wayleaves acquisition which are commonplace for infrastructure



Effective land management is key for execution of infrastructure projects such as power grid extension

projects in sectors like energy, roads, water, housing, and oil and gas.

She explained that the lands ministry has drafted and submitted principles of a bill to strengthen the office of the CGV which has been submitted to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs for consideration.

The new principles are

expected to give the office more authority and a legal framework for operation.

"Right now, they are using general standards and practices. We believe, that they will also have a law which will guide them on how to proceed but also set standards for performance of the task. Like estimates of prices of land in different areas. We hope that once such information

is given, it can even curb those who escalate the prices and speculators who make land prices to skyrocket," Nabakooba explained.

Inside the bill is the code of ethics that shall guide valuers and establish a body that oversees and regulates them in addition to the basic standards and principles of valuation for accountability.