

CEDP streamlining land administration



Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development Judith Nabakooba addresses media during the launch of Uganda National Land Information System portal recently. PHOTO/COURTESY

Interview. The Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) is a Government of Uganda project financed by the International Development Agency of the World Bank. *Daily Monitor's* Joan Salmon spoke to Ms Dorcas W. Okalany, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development about the project.

What is the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) all about?

The CEDP is about land adjudication. We secure people's land because our Constitution provides that people own the land. Uganda has four tenure systems; leasehold, mailo-land, freehold, and customary.

Customary is the biggest chunk of land ownership because most people in the North, East, and part of the West own such land. Mailo is mainly in Central; Buganda, Bunyoro, some parts of Toro and some parts of Ankole. However, Mailo-land was already titled by the colonialists where people had plots of land hence the existence of landlords and tenants in Buganda.

That said, all these tenure systems must be protected. Therefore, in 2013, we conceived the project and thereafter started

inputting people's land titles in the system because much as, say people in Buganda had titles, they were in the paper system yet we needed them in the land information system for security reasons. Once in the system, nobody can make another title unless the original owner has sold.

In the case of land purchase, the original land owner produces the original land title and the registration process of the buyer starts so they can get their title as well.

Once someone has titled land, they can use it for productive gains such as planting crops that are economically valuable and can sit on the land longer.

With CEDP, we have the Land Information System (LIS) that caters to the e-registration of titles and hitherto, we have been capturing leasehold, freehold, and mailo land. We are getting the software to capture customary land because these landowners are losing their land unknowingly.

Currently, many people have formed associations and certificates of customary ownership (CCOs) to own land and CEDP-Additional Financing (CEDP-AF), we will capture the customary land. Seeing that the biggest chunk of land in Uganda falls under this category. Once done, we would have titled 75 percent of the land.

The government also owns lands but oftentimes has to do land banking by buying from individual owners for projects. Thereafter,

this purchased land is titled in accordance with Article 26 of the Constitution.

Under CEDP, service delivery is decentralised through the formation of 22 Ministry Zonal Offices (MZOs). These have equipment that can do all the work from go-



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ing to visit locus, surveying, registration and finally getting the title. Once the title has been got, that information is entered into the system and there is a backup at the headquarters (National Land Registry (NLR)).

What was the criteria for creating ministry zonal offices and what impact have they had in those areas?

The criteria was easy as we looked at the location of the chunks of land in the country thus dividing it into zones. For example, the Moroto MZO covers the Moroto sub-region, and the Mbale MZO takes on Mbale and Sebei. Originally, we had 21 zones but saw it necessary to add another in Wakiso owing to the immense activity there hence dividing Busiro and Kyadondo. The criteria was based on work volume, area coverage, and population.

What remarkable achievements have been registered so far under this arrangement?

People are now interested in titling land because before sensitisation, they were scared but now they are confident that the government is giving them a worthy service.

Before 2013, all those that needed a title came to the ministry headquarters and it took so long for one to get their title. However, today, if one came with all the required documents, in 10 to 15 days, they will have the title.

Every zonal office has the necessary expertise in cartography, surveying, valuation, registration, physical planning, and land officers so it is akin to a conveyer belt and the process is smooth.

Currently, there is a project going and we hope to churn out 75,000 titles before 2023 under additional financing, we are also looking at more than one million titles to come out in different regions.

It is now easier for people to buy land than it was before because they do not have to go through the rigour of registering untitled land.

Land titling brings in revenue to the government because the ministry charges Shs70,000 which goes to the district and the information center. This non-tax revenue is added to the consolidated fund to add to the pool from which government gets money to avail public goods. Since the inception of the project, the ministry has collected approximately Shs710.4b.

Initially, we had a consultant to help us with the system but made it a point to learn how it works and also customize it to our needs. Today, we have a group of experts who are running it smoothly and we are moving on well hence reducing the need for consultants.

How has this project strengthened the land administration system in Uganda?

The project has created ease in administration and planning. For

example, during the planning of the Entebbe Express Highway we did not have to go to the headquarters to make inquiries about who owns a certain parcel of land. All that is possible in the zonal offices and it also eases compensation. We are also doing this for several government projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway, and Jinja Express Highway.

With the recent approval of the National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) after Uganda was declared a planning zone in 2010, land use will become more guided.

With a growing population, we need food security, therefore, need to plan well so there are areas for agriculture as well as settlement. With NPDP, it will allow for Rapid Physical Planning (RPP) so that as we issue out titles, we will also advise people on how to use the land so that it is well utilised for economic gain.

There are also 42 Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) remote sensing equipment which eases surveying with accuracy. While six have been majorly active, we desire to increase their activity so that nobody puts a plot where it is not supposed to be.

When land is secured through titling, it is easy to manage it. For example, most missionary schools got land from the community but it was never titled, more so up-country. Therefore, with the increasing population, the land was encroached on. With titling, illegal activities are avoided so one either

leases their land out or sells it. That allows for harmony which betters the economic use of the land. We also want to title even public land as this is vulnerable to thieves. We have started with the Ministry of Education and Sports starting with some of their institutions and the churches are also coming on board.

We can also know the location of protected forest reserves, and wetlands and set it apart from where people can settle. In the 1960s, we were just gazetted land but never titled it which caused people to encroach on it hence the floods we are seeing today. Once this land is demarcated, we also issue its land titles as such our ecosystem is preserved.

How can successful land administration reforms under CEDP contribute to attracting investors in Uganda?

Once there is security of land tenure, investors will easily come to invest in Uganda because they also need titled land.

Even when we borrow from other organisations such as World Bank to do a project, they always check if the land is titled so that their investment is secure. They also need to know how long the lease will last because foreign investors only get leasehold tenure.

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