



LAND PROCESSING HAS MOVED FROM A MANUAL ORIENTATION TO A COMPUTER-BASED ENVIRONMENT

By **Umaru Kashaka**

In an effort to fight forgery of titles and fraudulent land registration, the ministry of lands has imposed restrictions on access to the land registry that covers its staff as well as the public. Johnson Mukaga, the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) coordinator at the ministry headquarters in Kampala, says the restrictions were placed in order to secure land titles in this era of cyber-crime as the land registry moves to embrace computerisation.

"The Uganda National Land Information System (UgNLIS) is designed in such a way that nobody can access, transfer or delete data without being identified," he says. Mukaga explained that for any illegal or irregular transaction that is attempted an alert is immediately registered.

"We have fire proof systems and backups for every transaction that happens at the UgNLIS centre. In essence, we have both hard and software systems where in extreme cases if one has access to a document, it can only be a mirror image of the original," he stated.

The computerised UgNLIS, which is operational in the land ministry's 22 zonal offices countrywide, was set up in March 2013 to digitise land titling, registration and mapping after the Government secured a World Bank loan of \$65m (about sh246b). It was initially rolled out under the Second Private Sector Competitiveness Project and later CEDP.

GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION

Mukaga also said they have linked up with government agencies such as Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) and the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) to avoid impersonation during transactions. "We have also improved our customer care services, installed closed-circuit television cameras and have biometric access to our offices," he said.

He also noted that the computerisation of the land registry has been a huge step involving



PHOTO BY STUART YIGA

A policeman guarding Stephen Mugambwa's house which was allegedly demolished by Hajji Sula Sserunjogi over land disputes in Kimegeredde village, Semuto Town Council in Nakaseke district. The Uganda National Land Information System (UgNLIS) is designed to stop such disputes

GOVT INTENSIFIES FIGHT AGAINST LAND FRAUD

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changing land processing from a manual orientation to a computer-based environment.

"This affected all the departments along the process line that are required to process a land title, including surveys and mapping that provide the deed plans and the land administration that must check and approve all applications before titling," he said.

He added that all hard copies, including cadastre sheets as old as 100 years have had to be reconstructed, incomplete paper records from the old manual system, un-surveyed land, untitled land and plots as well as the 'commitment' of all records has been entered into the system.

"We are cognizant of this fact and our ministry is working around the clock to resolve this. It is quite a laborious process, but we are determined to clean up the records," Mukaga said.

FROM MANUAL TO DIGITAL

Until 2013, Mukaga noted that the land registry in Uganda ran a manual system of records-keeping, albeit with challenges.

"Issues of inefficiencies, inadequate space and the laborious system opened up to human error such as issuing of multiple titles and loss of documents made land transactions a nightmare," he said.

Sam Mayanja, state minister for lands, said the current trend shows that their land services are improving.



Nabakooba hands Butaleja residents land titles

"Before this system (UgNLIS) was rolled out, it used to take three to five years to get a land title, but now it takes 25 days and we still want to reduce this to 10 days," he said.

OVER SH900B COLLECTED

Mayanja revealed that as of October last year, the Government had collected sh956b in revenue from the NLIS and that this amount of money surpassed the World Bank loan of \$65m which was used to set it up.

"This system has successfully integrated

various aspects of land management, including land registration, administration, surveying, mapping, physical planning and property valuation," he said.

He noted that it has also notably reduced back-door transactions, forgeries, graft and challenges related to missing land records, significantly improving public perceptions of corruption within the land sector as recognised by Transparency International.

All this has resulted in notable improvements in

service delivery.

"We had many problems with the previous manual system, including altering of land title information, multiple allocations of plots and unauthorised land allocations. So, our records were not computerised," Mayanja said.

The minister stressed that the Government's reforms in policies, laws, institutions, procedures and processes related to land, including the NLIS implementation, have strengthened land tenure security for individual ownership and titling.

"This supports the promotion of a free land market, assuming that allocating land to the most efficient users will encourage investment and economic development. Our country's progress in modernising land governance has attracted delegations and organisations from various African countries, including Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mali, Ghana and Malawi, who have visited our ministry to learn from the NLIS implementation and share experiences," he said.

According to him, overall, this system has made a positive contribution to the social and economic development of Uganda and provides a strong foundation for achieving the country's Sustainable Development Goals.

Lands minister Judith Nabakooba also told *New Vision* that multiple titling of land, which is an escalating problem originating from survey works, is being addressed by digitising land titles.

"With time, no new entry of a land title sitting on another will be allowed by the system as it will be quickly detected. The practice now is that for any new title made, the documents are immediately scanned into the system with details of the parties involved in the transaction," she said.

She noted that the implementation of the land valuation management information system and integration with NLIS will streamline valuation and tighten revenue leakages in the land sector.

She, however, noted that the current staffing in their zonal offices is at 45% which is by far very low to meet the workload of processing 200,000 titles per year.