

# Reconciling Uganda's Land History: The Uganda Land Commission and the Pursuit of Equitable State Land Management and Restitution

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**Keywords:** Land governance, Land restitution, Uganda Land Commission, Legal pluralism, Land tenure security

## SUMMARY

This paper critically examines the historical and contemporary dimensions of land governance in Uganda, with particular emphasis on the Uganda Land Commission (ULC) and its role in addressing restitution and equitable management of state land. Drawing upon documentary analysis of historical records, constitutional provisions, legislative reforms, and scholarly literature, the study situates Uganda's land question within a political economy framework. Uganda's land system has evolved from pre-colonial communal management to colonial expropriation, through post-independence reforms, and into the legal pluralism of the 1995 Constitution and subsequent Land Acts. While significant progress has been made in securing tenure rights and initiating restitution processes, challenges such as elite capture, institutional weaknesses, corruption, and overlapping tenure systems continue to undermine equitable outcomes. The paper concludes by recommending targeted reforms to strengthen institutional autonomy, operationalize a revolving Land Fund, clarify tenancy laws, and integrate customary tenure into statutory frameworks to ensure sustainable and inclusive land governance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The land rights debate has stood at the epicenter of Uganda's political, economic, and social history for centuries. Rooted in colonial expropriation and skewed tenure arrangements to post-independence land management challenges, dubbed by some scholars as "*land mismanagement*," Uganda's land question is as much about justice and identity as it is about governance and development (Kishaija & Heil, 2025; Musinguzi et al., 2021; Bomuhangi et al., 2011). While Uganda does not have a formal land restitution Program similar to South Africa's post-apartheid redress mechanisms, there exists a deeply felt need to address historical injustices that have been a cumulative result of colonial land laws, state capture of land, public displacement as a result of political turmoil, poor land administration, and unequal power relations. These injustices persist today as overlapping claims, tenure insecurity, and disputes—especially on Mailo and government land—continue to fuel land conflicts and social exclusion (Kamusiime, Rugadya, & Obaikol, 2005). At the heart of the Government's land administration lies the Uganda Land Commission (ULC), a constitutional body mandated under Article 239 to hold and manage land vested in or acquired by the Government (MLHUD, 1998). Over the years, the ULC has operated within a land governance system that has often struggled with capacity, political interference, weak enforcement, and a lack of public confidence. As a result, land meant to serve national development — for public infrastructure, social services, or resettlement — has sometimes been lost to corruption, underutilization, or elite capture (Tatwangire & Holden, 2013). Therefore, this paper examines the role of the Uganda Land Commission in addressing historical land injustices through equitable state land management and restitution within Uganda's evolving land governance framework.

## 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the historical evolution of land tenure in Uganda and its influence on contemporary land governance challenges.
2. To assess the role of the Uganda Land Commission (ULC) in state land management and restitution, focusing on legal, institutional, and policy frameworks.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of restitution mechanisms, particularly the Land Fund, in promoting tenure security and equitable land distribution.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1. Historical and Political Context

Uganda's land reform efforts can be traced back through the lenses of its historical legacies of prior and colonial regimes and its post-independence era (Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development, 2013). Before the colonial period, each community had its way of managing land. Land management was based on a network of relationships within families, lineages, and bigger societal groups. These relationships helped protect the rights of individuals and communities according to their traditions. People could keep using the land as long as these relationships stayed strong (Ahimbisibwe et al., 2019; Atwagala, 2021; Whyte & Acio, 2017). Thus, land use depended on how each family or group used their specific piece of land.

In Buganda, the land was mostly overseen by the Kabaka, who acted as a representative for the people. By around 1840, the Kabaka started limiting the power of clan leaders, bringing control under four main categories: clan estates, estates owned by the Kabaka and high chiefs, individual inherited land, and the right of peasants to live on land (MLHUD, 1998; Pedersen et al., 2012; Gondo & Kyomuhendo, 2011; Gärber, 2013). Similar semi-feudal structures were also seen in the kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro. On the other hand, in Acholi, Lango, Kigezi, and Sebei, customary tenure treated land as a communal heritage (MLHUD, 1998). Individuals held use rights (cropping, grazing, selling) subject to family approval, clans or families-controlled dispute resolution and sale restrictions, and communities enjoyed communal grazing, access to water, and other shared resources.

### **3.2.Colonial Period (1894 – 1962)**

During colonial rule, several agreements in Buganda, Toro, and Ankole introduced private estates—Mailo in Buganda and native freehold in Toro and Ankole—replacing the customary system. According to MLHUD (1998), in Buganda, Article 15 of the 1900 Agreement allocated 9,003 square miles of Mailo land to the Kabaka and 4,000 chiefs, with the rest becoming British-controlled “crown land.” Mailo (akin to freehold) concentrated land and power in the hands of the Kabaka and chiefs, turning them into landlords over dependent peasants, while market forces and high costs excluded most people with low incomes from land ownership.

Outside Buganda, the colonial Government established three forms of freehold: alienated individual grants under the 1903 Crown Land Ordinance, conversions of customary tenure in Kigezi, Bugisu, and Ankole, and native freehold in Toro and Ankole, which closely resembled Buganda's Mailo land.

### **3.3.Post-Colonial Transition and Institutional Continuity Period (1962-1975)**

During the first Obote Government, colonial-era tenure systems were largely maintained. Still, the 1962 Crown Act converted all crown land into public land under the management of the Uganda Land Commission. The Commission was mandated to hold and manage this land on behalf of the Government, allocate it for public purposes, and oversee leases to individuals and institutions. The 1969 Public Land Act further strengthened tenure security for customary occupants by prohibiting their eviction without consent and requiring compensation. Throughout this period, Mailo, freehold, leasehold, and customary tenure remained in place, with leaseholds—often carved from former public land—granted for 99

years (MLHUD, 1998). Most land outside Buganda and parts of Ankole, Toro, and Bunyoro continued under customary tenure, administered under traditional authority structures.

### **3.4. Authoritarian Centralization and Land Nationalization Period (1975 – 1995)**

As a drastic shift from the colonial era land regime, the 1975 Land Reform Decree declared all land in Uganda to be public land under the Uganda Land Commission, abolishing freehold tenure, converting Mailo into long-term leaseholds (199 years for public bodies and 999 years for individuals), removing tenant protections under previous landlord–tenant laws, and requiring written permission for customary occupation. Although implementation was limited, the decree replaced all other lease systems with leasehold and extended state control over land (including degazetting some protected areas). It made the leasehold the only legal landholding under Amin's regime (1971 – 1978) (MLHUD, 1998). This remained in place until the 1995 Constitution repealed the decree, reinstated customary, Mailo, freehold, and leasehold tenure, vested land ownership in citizens, and established district land boards.

### **3.5. The Period of Legal Pluralism: 1995 – 2010+**

During Museveni's time in power, the 1995 Constitution and the 1998 Land Act brought back the idea of legal pluralism in land ownership that had last operated in 1975 prior to its suspension by the 1975 Land Reform Decree. This new arrangement however, recognized four systems: customary, freehold, Mailo, and leasehold. Ownership of land was given to Ugandan citizens. Article 237 set up a decentralized system through District Land Boards, which were responsible for managing and distributing land on behalf of the people (MLHUD, 1998). Meanwhile, the Uganda Land Commission continued handling land that belonged to the Government, allocating land to public organizations, and leasing or selling public land when it was in the country's best interest (Meinert & Kjær, 2016). The Land Act's key objectives included securing tenure, resolving conflicts between registered owners and occupants, redressing historical injustices, promoting sustainable land use and coordinated urban development, conserving the environment, and enabling compulsory acquisition for public purposes such as safety, order, morality, and health.

### **3.6. Framework for Restitution: Legislation and Institutions**

Uganda's framework for land restitution is anchored in the 1995 Constitution, which vests land ownership in citizens under four tenure systems—customary, freehold, Mailo, and leasehold—and redresses historical injustices relating to land. The Constitution under Article 237 acknowledges the rights of lawful and bona fide occupants, deprived under the colonial and post-colonial policies (Byakagaba et al., 2018; McDonald, 2011). The Land Act also empowers lawful and bona fide occupants to acquire registrable interests in their land, effectively supporting restitution by converting insecure holdings into secure rights.

The Uganda Land Commission (ULC) plays a central role, maintaining and managing land invested or acquired by the Government, allocating land for public purposes, and facilitating refunds where state-controlled land is returned or relocated. The District Land Boards (DLBs), created under the Constitution, are responsible for holding and allocating lands not belonging to any person or authority in their districts (Kasirye, 2021). They also facilitate registering and formalizing occupants' rights, especially in previously public lands. The

additional legal support comes from the Land Acquisition Act (Cap. 226), which governs the mandatory acquisition but requires immediate and adequate compensation (Kasirye, 2021). Specific statutory reforms, such as the 2004 amendments to the Land Law, strengthen protections for good-letter occupants. The above structure seeks to restore land rights to historically underprivileged individuals or those delivered insecurely, protect current occupants from eviction, and ensure that refund is performed in equity, due process, and sustainable land use principles.

### **3.7. The Contested Parameters for Restitution in Uganda**

A complex interaction of historical legacies, constitutional guarantees, and competing interests on land ownership and use shapes Uganda's contested parameters of restitution. The 1995 Constitution and the 1998 Land Act - partially implemented through the Land Fund for Uganda Land Commission - addressed past injustices, providing legal and bona fide occupants and a way to acquire registered land (Mabikke, 2016). These measures are rooted in the recognition that many occupants, especially in Mailo land, are descendants of tenants placed there under colonial or post-independence agreements, and throughout generations they have developed profound social and economic ties with the Land.

Conversely, the restitution processes have generated tenacious disputes over the scope, beneficiaries, and restoration mechanisms. Registered owners—especially those with mailo and freehold titles—often argue that granting occupants rights without consent undermines title security, devalues property, and infringes on constitutional protections for private ownership (Mabikke, 2016). At the same time, lawful/bona fide occupants and customary tenants argue that restitution measures have remained slow, underfunded, and selectively applied, leaving them vulnerable to eviction and land grabbing.

Controversy also arises over valuation and compensation structures. While the Land Fund is mandated to acquire land or provide loans for occupants to formalize tenure, disagreements persist over the criteria for “willing seller–willing buyer” arrangements, the adequacy of disturbance allowances, and the fairness of market valuations, (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020). This is especially in cases where land has both economic and cultural significance.

Another persistent difficulty is the coexistence of customary and statutory land possession systems (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020). Efforts to align usual practices of land access and inheritance with statutory registration have been difficult, raising concerns that the formal title can weaken community ownership or pave the way for speculative elite acquisitions.

Institutions responsible for implementation, including the Uganda Land Commission and district land boards have frequently been associated with allegations of corruption, political interference and administrative inefficiency. These weaknesses have fueled perceptions that restitution can be manipulated to serve politically connected individuals rather than guaranteeing the rights of expropriated historically.

As a result, reimbursement in Uganda - although intended a tool for addressing historical injustice, reducing poverty and promoting the equitable use of land - restricts disputes on property rights, economic interests and social justice (Bamwesigye et al., 2020). These unstable

questions maintain fragile and highly politicized reimbursement and a recurring source of land-related conflicts.

### **3.8. The National Land Policy: Progress and Limitations**

The 2013 National Land Policy (NLP) was introduced as a corrective structure to resolve such conflicts, address historical injustices and guide refund (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020). Its objectives included:

1. Resolving tenure conflicts—particularly on Mailo and Native Freehold land- where multiple conflicting rights persisted after the 1975 Land Reform Decree disruptions.
2. Clarifying landlord–tenant relations—including defining bona fide occupants, setting tenant rights, and regulating ground rent, with proposed remedies such as buyouts, land sharing, and leasehold arrangements.
3. Deploying the Land Fund: This Fund will compensate absentee landlords in Kibaale, enabling tenants to secure registrable interests.
4. Addressing Buganda’s land claims—including the return of public land, forest reserves, and official estates seized during earlier political transitions.
5. Restoring customary rights to communities in regions such as Ankole (post-group ranch privatization), Acholi (post-IDP displacement), and Karamoja (post-conservation expansion and mineral licensing), as well as areas affected by central forest reserve gazettement.

Significant challenges persisted while progress was made, such as the joint GIZ–MLHUD pilot in Kassanda, Mubende, and Mityana, which issued Certificates of Occupancy and Land Inventory protocol. The definition of bona fide occupants remains contested, often leaning towards socio-cultural recognition over economic utility, limiting potential benefits for tenants and landlords (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020; Obaikol, 2014; Deininger et al., 2015). The four policy remedies have largely failed in practice, with many disregarded, leading to rising evictions despite official guidelines intended to prevent them.

### **3.9. The Land Fund’s Shortcomings**

Although envisioned as a revolving facility under the Land Act (Cap 227), the Land Fund has never been operationalized in that form. Instead, it operates as part of the Uganda Land Commission's budget, primarily through ad hoc appropriations. While it has acquired significant tracts—such as 81,880 hectares fully paid for and 31,086 hectares partially paid—the redistribution process is slow, incomplete, and sometimes opaque (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020). Furthermore, identified absentee landlord holdings remain limbo despite earmarked funds.

### **3.10. Customary Land Dispossession**

During the ranching schemes of the 1960s and 1970s led by the state, it is estimated that 277,000 hectares of community grazing land were converted into lease to 207 individuals and companies. This process has shifted many usual occupants without proper compensation (Xia et al., 2023). Today, a significant part of this land remains unused or underused, despite the

growing demand, and in some cases the leaseholders illegally converted ownership into freehold, violating the original conditions of allocation.

The literature reviewed agrees that land governance in Uganda has, to a larger extent been influenced by old historical factors that still remain, especially land alienation under the colonialists, institutional post-independence continuity as well as reopening of legal pluralism after the 1995 Constitution. Earlier studies have deeply explored aspects of customary tenure systems, Mailo land relations, and land-related conflicts. However, the operational role of the Uganda Land Commission in restitution and state land management has received relatively less analytical attention. Most of the studies have been inclined towards the legal frameworks or policy aspirations but have hardly considered institutional practice and governance dynamics. Through a critical review of how the mandate and performance of the Uganda Land Commission affect restitution results and fairness in Uganda's land governance system, this paper fills in the gap.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

This study utilizes a qualitative approach of research, more suitable for examining the historically rooted and politically contested nature of land governance in Uganda. The approach permits a depth analysis of processes, meanings and interpretations that cannot be fully captured by quantitative methods. It is particularly suitable for examining the restitution and management of state lands, where issues of historical injustice, institutional weakness, and political economy intersect.

The research depends on documentary and file analysis. Primary sources include official and political instruments, such as the 1995 Uganda Constitution, the Land Act (cap. 227), the land acquisition Act (cap. 226) and the 2013 National Land Policy, along with subsequent amendments and the subsidiary legislation that shaped governance since 1995.

Secondary sources consist of scholarly literature, policy briefs, evaluation reports and case studies of academic researchers, civil society and development partners. Studies by Bomuhangi et al. (2011), Mabikke (2016), Meinert & Kjær (2016) and Bamwesigye et al. (2022) offer critical perspectives on Uganda's earthly policy. Reports of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) and international agencies such as Chalk provide empirical evidence of policy implementation. The triangulation of these sources strengthens the validity of the findings and captures several perspectives on reform and restitution.

The analysis combines political economy and institutional structures. The analysis of political economy is applied to reveal as historical legacies, acquired interests and power relations influence the governance and restitution of the land. Institutional analysis focuses on the capacity, functions and restrictions of actors such as the Uganda Land Commission, the district terrestrial councils and the land fund. Together, these structures highlight the interaction between the statutory law and informal practices, as well as the tension between the usual and formal possession systems.

#### **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **5.2. Results**

The Uganda Land Commission (ULC) progressed in the acquisition, redistribution and regularization of land through refund initiatives. However, the results have a mixed image, marked by numerical successes, along with persistent structural challenges.

#### 5.2.1. Performance of the Land Fund and restitution results

By 2023, government records show that the land fund had allowed the acquisition of substantial appearances from absentee owners. These purchases intended to increase the tenure security for lawful and bona fide occupants, particularly in Buganda, Bunyoro and parts of Ankole and Tooro.

**Table 1: Land Fund Acquisitions and Payments (as of 2023)**

Category	Titles Acquired	Area (Hectares)	Value (UGX Billion)	Status
Fully Paid Titles	387	81,880	75	Awaiting distribution to occupants
Partially Paid Titles	113	31,086	76	Payment ongoing
Identified for Future Payment	86	16,760	66.7	Belong to absentee landlords

**Source:** Rugadya & Scalise (2020) ULC Administrative Reports (2023).

These acquisitions represent progress in combating the absent owner, but delays in redistribution have limited its impact. In Mubende Block 247, for example, the titles remain under restriction, leaving the occupants exposed to eviction, despite the government's purchase.

#### 5.2.2. Certificates of Occupancy and Land Inventory Protocols

Pilot initiatives supported by ULC and partners such as GIZ introduced new approaches to the formalization of tenure. In Kassanda, Mubende and Mityana districts, 93 Certificates of Occupancy (COOs) and more than 95,000 land inventory protocols (LIPs) were issued. These tools clarified the relations of the owner and provided a basis for refund planning. However, limited application and low public awareness reduced its effectiveness. In many cases, the COOs were disregarded during attempts to eviction, weakening confidence in their protective value.

#### 5.2.3. Regional restitution projects

The refund also assumed the form of high-profile allocations. Notable examples include 1,261 acres in block 244 (Kibaale District) and 1,843 adds in block 65 (Kagadi), which were transferred to long -term occupants. In the Karusandara area in Kasese, 8,364 acres were restored to the displaced communities.

**Table 2: Restitution Performance Framework: Land Fund & Uganda Land Commission**

<b>Output / Intervention</b>	<b>Scale of Achievement</b>	<b>Intended Outcome</b>	<b>Political &amp; Institutional Risks</b>
<b>Land acquisition from absentee landlords</b>	387 titles fully paid (81,880 ha) worth UGX 75B	Secure tenure for lawful & bona fide occupants, reduce disputes	Delays in transfer allow speculative land grabs; elite influence over allocation; contested claims (e.g., Buganda public land demands)
<b>Partial payment for identified titles</b>	113 titles (31,086 ha) worth UGX 76B	Facilitate staged restitution and budget flexibility	Funding gaps delay completion; political diversion of funds; increased vulnerability of tenants awaiting finalization
<b>Identification of absentee-owned land for future purchase</b>	86 titles (16,760 ha) worth UGX 66.7B	Pipeline for long-term restitution planning	Risk of political interference in prioritization; potential encroachment before acquisition
<b>Certificates of Occupancy &amp; Land Inventory Protocols</b>	93 COOs and 95,000+ LIPs issued in Kassanda, Mubende, Mityana	Formal recognition of tenant rights, clarity on land use	Weak enforcement; COOs may be ignored in eviction attempts; low public awareness of legal strength
<b>High-profile restitution projects</b>	e.g., Block 244 (1,261 acres, Kibaale), Karusandara (8,364 acres, Kasese)	Visible resolution of historical injustices; trust-building	Local politicization; disputes over beneficiary lists; elite infiltration in community allocations
<b>Customary-to-formal tenure transitions</b>	Targeted in Bunyoro, Buganda, Ankole, and Bugisu	Integrate customary norms with statutory protections	Risk of undermining communal tenure; accelerated land market speculation; tensions between traditional leaders and state agencies

#### 5.2.4. Challenges Undermining Restitution

Despite numerous achievements, continuous challenges constrain equitable outcomes:

- **Legal Ambiguities:** The definition of bona fide occupancy remains contested, creating uncertainty for both landlords and tenants.

- **Institutional Weaknesses:** The ULC and District Land Boards lack financial independence and remain prone to corruption.
- **Elite Capture:** Restitution has often been redirected to politically connected elites rather than historically dispossessed groups.
- **Customary Land Dispossession:** Ranching schemes and conservation expansion in Acholi, Karamoja, and Ankole have displaced customary occupants without adequate restitution.

### 5.3. Discussion

The Land management and restitution reforms of Uganda have a paradoxical trajectory. On the one hand, quantitative achievements, such as land acquisitions, issuance of occupation certificates and large -scale refund projects, demonstrate clear intention of policy and institutional commitment. On the other hand, the experienced experiences of many intended beneficiaries reveal persistent vulnerabilities, highlighting the difficulty of reconciling the historical injustices of land with equitable and sustainable governance.

The acquisition of the land fund of more than 387 securities covering approximately 81,880 hectares (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020) reflects a significant state effort to reduce absentee landlordism. Pilot initiatives such as Mubende, Kassanda and Mityana were issued, where more than 95,000 land inventory protocols were issued, representing progress towards the formalization of usual rights. In addition, the refund projects in Kasese and Kibaale highlight the potential for state interventions to correct the displacements that persisted for generations.

Despite these remarkable achievements, the results of restitution remain fragile. A major obstacle is in the contested definition of "bona fide occupancy." As noted by Mabikke (2016), this legal ambiguity generates conflicting interpretations, prolongs disputes and supports insecurity for owners and tenants. Institutional weaknesses aggravate these challenges. The Uganda Land Commission (ULC) and the district terrestrial councils continue to suffer from chronic sub -finance and vulnerability to corruption (Hillesland et al., 2020). As a result, lands purchased through the fund usually remain not distributed, creating opportunities to transfer land and speculative transfers. These weaknesses echo the observation of Meinert and Kjær (2016) that land issues are often instrumentalized in the political sphere of Uganda, serving sponsorship rather than reform.

Elite capture and political interference further impair restitution. Bamwesigye's research et al. (2022) demonstrates that land reforms usually favor politically connected individuals. The compensation of absent owners, in some cases prioritized on the security of tenants, illustrates this distortion. Similarly, the demands of buganda for the return of more than 9,000 square miles of public land politicized refund, transforming allocation processes into bargaining chips between the central and kingdom authorities (MLHUD, 2013). This dynamic restricts the equitable achievement of the objectives of restitution.

The customary possession remains particularly vulnerable. In regions such as Acholi, Karamoja and Ankole, state -led pedestrian schemes, conservation initiatives and mineral licensing moved communities without significant compensation (Xia et al., 2023). Although

the 1995 Constitution has granted the usual status equal to statutory forms, implementation gaps persist. Xia et al. (2023) warns that formalization of usual participation can involuntarily impair the community authority and facilitate speculative acquisition by the elites. This unresolved tension between statutory recognition and customary protection perpetuates insecurity for marginalized communities.

The Land Fund, initially foreseen as a rotary facility under the 1998 land Act, was reduced to an ad hoc appropriation mechanism. This impairs long-term planning and leaves the fund open to political manipulation (Rugadya & Scalise, 2020). While acquired hectares serve as evidence of production, the slow redistribution of land limited the holding of safe possession. As Bomuhangi et al. (2011) point out, the political structures of Uganda are usually strong in paper, but weak in implementation, a visible pattern on the trajectory of the land bottom.

Finally, a critical gap persists between results and results. Although land acquisitions and occupation certificates provide measurable progress, the lasting insecurity of the occupants and the recurring disputes show that structural justice remains illusory. Risks of restitution become a mechanism of transactional redistribution rather than a repair process. As Kishaija and Heil (2025) argue, reforms should address not only the insecurity of possession, but also the deepest inequalities rooted in the colonial and post-colonial legacies of Uganda. Without institutional strengthening and isolation of political capture, restitution processes can reproduce rather than dismantle exclusion.

A comparative perspective reinforces this point. The South African land restitution program, despite its controversy, is guided by statutory clarity and judicial supervision (Deininger et al., 2015; Byakagaba et al., 2018). Uganda dependence on discretionary settlements and inconsistent appropriations leaves its restitution vulnerable to elite capture. However, the recognition of various Uganda possession systems offers a progressive structure that, if fully implemented, could form the basis for the most inclusive land governance.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The history of the land of Uganda reflects a continuum complex of community administration, colonial expropriation, post-independence reforms, and continuous struggles to balance justice with development. The Uganda Land Commission, established as a custody of public lands, played a central role in restitution and management. Although significant progress has been done through the land fund, occupation certificates and refund-targeted projects, structural weaknesses continue to limit the impact of these reforms. Legal ambiguities, institutional underfinancing, corruption, elite capture and unresolved tension between statutory possession and custom undermines the effectiveness of land governance. Without comprehensive reforms, restitution is in danger of becoming transactional redistribution rather than a transforming process of justice. Ensuring equity and sustainability requires incorporation of restitution within broader principles of responsibility, institutional integrity and inclusive development.

This paper recommends that the strengthening of institutional autonomy and the capacity of the Uganda Land Commission must be prioritized. The granting of the Commission's financial and administrative independence would help the isolate it from political

interference, while investment in training, digitizing records and robust monitoring systems would improve transparency and efficiency. The Land Fund must be operationalized as a genuine rotary facility, consistent with the 1998 land Act. Establishing a dedicated budget line would allow long-term planning and reinvestment. Transparent acquisition and redistribution mechanisms should prioritize legal and good-fell occupants. The rapid transfer of acquired land is essential to protect communities from extended insecurity and speculative land grabs.

Uganda land laws must be clarified and harmonized. The ambiguous definition of legal occupation and good-fell promoted conflicts and disputes, undermining owners and tenants. Harmonization must preserve community rights and protect communities from elite-oriented speculation. Reducing corruption and elite capture requires stronger supervision. Independent bodies, including representatives of civil society and parliamentary committees, must monitor refund and allocation processes. Regular audits and public reports would increase responsibility. Employees involved in fraudulent transactions must face firm sanctions to restore public trust in ULC.

Communities should have easy access to land rights information, refund programs and legal protections. Scanning records and the creation of open access records would reduce manipulation and promote responsibility. Public awareness campaigns would further enable citizens to defend their rights. Finally, restitution must be linked to broader objectives of development. Safe possession must be complemented by programs that promote agricultural productivity, poverty reduction and social inclusion. The incorporation of restitution within a broader development structure would transform land reform into a driver of economic growth, social justice and national stability.

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