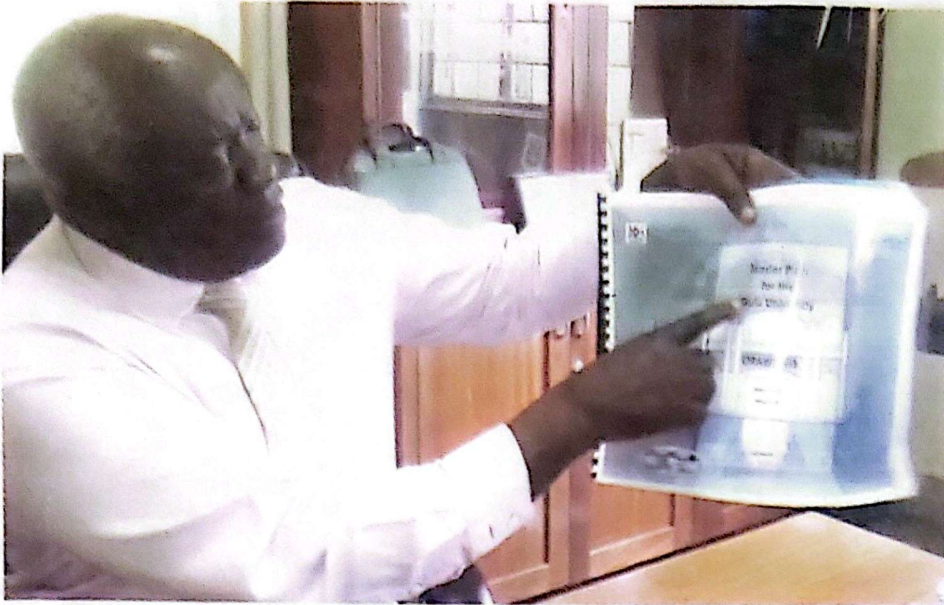


# Fight over land delays Gulu University expansion plan



**Plan.** Prof Pen-Mogi, the Gulu University vice chancellor, shows the university master plan. PHOTO BY J. OCUNGI

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**Claim.** The university accuses land owners of being anti-development while the latter say the university has not negotiated with them.

**GULU.** The disagreement between landowners and Gulu University management has hindered the expansion plan of the university main campus in Laroo Division, Gulu Municipality.

The university management recently identified 315 hectares of land in the area to establish a modern Faculty of Engineering but the project has been greeted with resistance from land owners.

Originally, the master plan drawn by the government for the university was to sit on 742 hectares of land with an enrolment of 30,000 students.

But currently, it only occupies 20 hectares of land at the former district farm institute land belonging to Gulu District local government as locals refused to sell their land.

Prof Jack Nyeko Pen-Mogi, the university vice chancellor, told *Daily Monitor* in an interview that their plans to put up an Engineering Faculty are hanging in balance since they do not have enough land.

government is willing to compensate the land owners but they have denied us land," Prof Pen-Mogi said.

Prof Pen-mogi, however, said the project is likely to be taken to Nwoya District where the university acquired 500 hectares of land.

He accused the landowners of being anti-development and appealed to local leaders to intervene in convincing them. He accused some political leaders in the district of inciting locals not to offer their land to the university.

#### Landowners speak out

Ms Lucy Abalo, 48, a land owner in Agwe Parish, Laroo Division said she cannot offer her land to the university because she has no other land to settle on.

Ms Abalo faulted the university management for allegedly having a sinister move over their land.

Mr Denis Otto Aroma, another land lord, welcomed the university's plan but tasked the management to negotiate with the land owners if they are to acquire the land.

"I am not against development, but as a land owner I demand a good an-

land owners the terms and conditions on how they will handle compensation," he said.

Mr Moses Abonga, the Laroo Division LC3 chairperson, however blamed Prof Pen-Mogi for his failure to negotiate with land owners.

Mr Abonga alleges that Prof Pen-Mogi rather than dealing with the locals directly, he chose to work with the government to survey the land before consulting the residents.

He said the university was given 70 hectares of land by Gulu Municipal Council and wondered why Prof Pen-mogi is still insisting on getting land from locals.

Gulu District chairperson Martin Ojara Mapenduzi told *Daily Monitor* in an interview on Monday that the district is willing to work with Gulu University but cautioned management to use rightful procedures of acquiring land from locals.

"The land the university is interested in belongs to individuals not government. The university management must not take shortcuts in getting it. They should negotiate with land owners, value the property and compensate at the current land value for the owners to acquire land elsewhere," Mr Mapenduzi said.

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MARTIN OJARA MAPENDUZI, GULU DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON

Authorities at the institution have over the years been at loggerheads with local communities over their refusal to vacate their land to enable expansion of the university.

In 2009, land owners residing within the university dragged the institution to court protesting against forceful intention to take their land. Court ruled in their favour and tasked the university management to enter