

Amuru orphans reclaim land after two-year dispute

BY JACKSON KITARA

AMURU

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Three children of the late Bosco Nyero have recovered their land after a two-year dispute with their paternal uncle.

Ivan Onen-can, 20 years; Prosy Akello, 18 years and Samuel Odong, 14 years, regained rights over their father's land located in Acoto village, Okungedi parish, Amuru sub-county, in Amuru district, having been deprived of it by their paternal uncle, William Ojok, who had refused them to live on and use the land.

This is after the Amuru Grade 1 Magistrates' Court ordered the orphans and their paternal uncle to go for mediation, which was held before Christopher Jogo and



Prosy Akello (centre in blue dress) with community members and Redeem International officers after recovering their land

was attended by 21 members. During mediation, Ojok agreed to give six acres of land to his deceased brother's children.

After the mediation, Jogo wrote the resolution and presented it to Godfrey Abala, the Amuru Grade

One Magistrate, who wrote a judgment on the land conflict and the land was given to orphans.

Akello said they grew up at their mother's place in Agago district, but in 2024, their uncles chased them away.

She said in October, they returned home, but their paternal uncle did not welcome them. Akello noted that Ojok and his son, named Tuku Pe, fought his brother's wife, Franka Akello, destroyed the bricks that they laid, took away their gardens and planted crops on them and did not want them on the land.

Akello said the case was reported to the LC1, who referred them to the Police, who linked them with Redeem International, which helped them.

"We will use it for farming and produce enough food that we can sell and pay school fees for our younger brother and also for my vocational studies," Akello said.

REDEEM OFFICERS SPEAK OUT

Teopista Sharon Lamunu, a Redeem International lawyer, said the orphans are among the many they have supported in recovering their land from land grabbers.

She said when they received complaints from the children, they did their investigation and presented the findings to the magistrate, who tasked the local leaders with handling the matter through mediation.

Lamunu appealed to people with land disputes to use mediation because litigation is costly, time-consuming and court proceedings separate people, as the loser will have to pay court fines.

Patience Aber, the community liaison officer of Redeem International, Gulu field office, said they have resettled 31 widows and orphans in Gulu district, Amuru and Gulu city and secured 506 acres of land, which were handed back to the widows and orphans.

She said most of the land conflicts are characterised by high levels of violence, where people fight, destroy crops in gardens and burn grass-thatched huts, among others, but they work closely with security to stop the violence.

However, Aber said they only mediate civil matters, but not criminal offences committed during land grabbing.

Their mother, Joyce Akello, said her husband died in 2011 and she returned to her father's home. She added that she got married to another man and left his children with his brother, who later chased them.

Joyce Akello said, according to Ojok, his brother-in-law, her deceased husband refused to give land to his children because she never looked after him before his death.

Ojok, however, said the children did not use the right approach to reclaim their father's land and were using force, which made him hesitant.

He said he was arrested five times and had three cases of malicious damage and threatening violence, for

which he spent a lot of money on transport to go and attend court hearings for the three cases on different days and paid for bail.

"I thank the magistrate for his wise decision to use court mediation to resolve the matter, because it binds us together," Ojok noted.

David Ocira, the LC3 chairperson of Amuru sub-county, said land grabbing is common because in the first farming season, youth look at land as a resource that they can grab and sell to get quick money.

He appealed to clan leaders to protect widows and orphans, but not to chase them away, arguing that the law gives full ownership of land to widows and orphans.



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