

opportunities, trees have effectively be-

tion because the environmental im-

ues unchecked, the region could face in-

of industrialisation.

Land grabbing threatens schools, health centres nationwide

BY DAN WANDERA

LUWEERO. A growing public outcry over persistent land disputes across Uganda has put public institutions, faith-based organisations, schools, and health centres under immense pressure.

These institutions top the list of properties battling suspected encroachment and land grabbing. Community leaders reveal that in many cases, land donated for public use has been reclaimed by relatives of the original owners.

Mr Erasto Kibirango, the Luweero District chairperson, says more than 85 percent of reported cases in the district involve schools and health centres fighting to retain their land.

"These cases often involve family members of those who donated the land. Our people are becoming selfish

and taking advantage of the lack of documentation for donated land," he says.

Some individuals have taken over Sempa Church of Uganda Primary School, Kajuule Memorial Primary School, and Kiiso Church of Uganda Primary School, playgrounds and gardens.

Mr Samuel Ssesanga, a parent and member of the School Management Committee at Sempa, says a section of family members reclaimed a significant portion of the school's garden and children's playground because the school lacked original documents for the land donated by Mr Jackson Wamala.

Observers warn that the trend reflects not just selfishness but also a decline in societal morals.

Mr Gideon Ssenyimba, an educationist and retired secondary school teacher in Wobulenzai Town Council, Luweero District, attributes encroachment to

the rising commercial value of land.

"Our grandparents were generous and shared their property with communities, donating land for schools, churches, and health units. Many have since passed on without leaving documentation, and some selfish family members have exploited this to reclaim

THE ROOT CAUSES

- Many donated lands lack formal documentation.
- Relatives of original donors often reclaim land for commercial gain.
- Rising land value incentivises encroachment.
- Experts note a decline in societal ethics.

land," he said.

Lands Minister Judith Nabakooba acknowledges the trend and advises affected institutions, including churches, to survey and formally title their land to deter encroachers.

"The original spirit of generous donations has been overshadowed by selfish individuals taking advantage of unclear documentation," Ms Nabakooba said on March 6 during the Women's World Day of Prayer at St Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral, Namungoona.

"You need to prioritise surveying and registration. Many churches historically acquired land through donations from communities and cultural leaders. Our ministry is increasingly receiving complaints of church land being encroached upon," she added.

A circular from the ministry dated August 25, 2025, and signed by Permanent Secretary Dorcus W Okalanyi, advises

faith-based institutions with untitled land to apply for land titling at respective zonal offices. It clarifies that titling does not transfer ownership to government; land remains with the institution, with users such as schools, health centres, or churches formally recognised.

The ministry has facilitated titling for 133 seed secondary schools and 178 health centre IVs under the Uganda Inter-Governance Fiscal Transfer (UIGFT) and Uganda Secondary Expansion Project (USEEP).

In the Greater Luweero area (Nakasike, Luweero, Nakasongola), fewer than 25 percent of public institutions have titled land, leaving many vulnerable. Mr Kibirango warns that without dedicated budgets for titling, several schools and health centres risk losing land to encroachers, even when it was originally donated by their communities.