

Diocese reclaims land after 30-year dispute

BUYENDE

By Tom Gwebayanga

Church of Uganda (COU)'s Busoga Diocese has reclaimed the disputed 8.6-acre land of Ngandho Church in Buyende district, ending a 30-year conflict with locals and stakeholders of Ngandho Primary School.

On Sunday, Busoga Diocese bishop, the Rt Rev. Prof. Grace Lubaale, received the Church's land title from the family of the late Yeremiya Bagiire, who donated the land.

A handful of locals and Ngandho Primary School administrators claimed the land belongs to them, although Yeremiya Katoto and Yeremiya Bagiire (all deceased) donated the land to the Church in 1958 and executed a deed to that effect.

The dispute ended up in court, which declared that the land belongs to the Church, prompting the Bagiire family and Church to process its title.

PHOTO BY TOM GWEBAYANGA



John Bagiire (second-right) leading Grace Lubaale (left) and other Busoga Diocese officials on a guided tour of the reclaimed Ngandho Church land in Buyende district

The breakthrough is a milestone of Lubaale's initiative to reclaim all disputed and encroached upon land in the diocese.

"My father, Yeremiya Bagiire, was a primary school teacher. He established Bagiire Primary in 1958 following the

demise of our grandfather, Yeremiya Katoto, who was a lay reader," John Bagiire said, before handing over the title.

John said his father, Yeremiya, initially constructed a grass-thatched church to enhance educational standards and foster spiritual growth.

He added that after the court judgment, the education ministry was consulted for guidance to process the title.

Lubaale said the donation represents a landmark victory for the Church, marking the beginning of resolving land disputes affecting many

CHURCH LAND CHALLENGES

For years, land disputes involving the Church, communities and schools have been frequent and complex, often stemming from historical, undocumented land donations by families, dual claims over public-private management and encroachment by private developers.

The Church did not have proper documentation and it lost valuable property. However, in a move to reduce these disputes, the Government last year processed 4,000 land titles for Church of Uganda, a step which safeguarded the Church's assets and strengthened accountability.

To boost the initiative, the Church also developed a Land Information Management System.

schools and churches within the diocese.

He warned priests against conniving with the community to sell, rent or encroach on church land.

Lubaale observed that the original name of Bagiire Primary School had been changed to Ngando Primary School, an alteration that led to the 30-year conflict.

"The community thought it was school land and that

the church vacates, yet they are inseparable," He said, adding that disputes arise from selfishness, inadequate documentation and forgery, which the diocese won't tolerate.

Buyende education officer Dison Bwire commended the Bagiire family.

Ngandho village LC1 chairperson George Ngobi praised the family's contribution.