

Deconflicting and Derisking Land in Uganda: The Surveyors' Perspective

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Key words: Cadastre; Digital cadastre; Legislation; Risk management; Security of tenure; Land governance; tenure security; mailo; deconfliction; derisking; Uganda; cadastral modernization; UgNLIS; SLAAC; dispute resolution

SUMMARY

Land is Uganda's most vital productive asset, anchoring livelihoods for over 70% of the population and underpinning national development. Yet tenure insecurity, overlapping rights, gaps in registration coverage, and fragmented dispute resolution systems continue to fuel conflict, reduce productivity, deter investment, and erode social cohesion. This paper synthesizes the historical evolution of land registration, clarifies the concepts of deconflicting and derisking land, and assesses the current institutional and legal architecture, with a focus on the Department of Surveys and Mapping (SMD) and the Uganda National Land Information System (UgNLIS). Drawing on documentary evidence and policy analysis, we identify persistent challenges—including mailo-tenant tensions, double titling, fraudulent transfers, titling within protected areas, and the high share of unregistered customary land—and examine how parallel dispute resolution mechanisms and limited institutional capacity perpetuate forum shopping and delays. We propose a set of integrated reforms to clarify rights, scale systematic adjudication and registration, streamline dispute resolution hierarchies, and strengthen geospatial and administrative capacities to derisk land for communities, government, and investors. The paper concludes with policy options tailored to Uganda's tenure pluralism and ongoing modernization agenda.

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FIG Congress 2026
The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond
Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026