

LAND CONFLICTS AND REPARATIONS FOR PEACEBUILDING AND LIVELIHOOD SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

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OVERVIEW

Land conflicts rooted in colonial regimes remain critical issues affecting peacebuilding and livelihood sustainability across Africa. This policy brief highlights land conflict challenges and reparations initiatives in selected African countries, aiming to inform policymakers and stakeholders through five key research findings:



Unlocking Zimbabwe's Agricultural Potential: A total of \$145.9 million allocated for farmer compensation is expected to boost agricultural productivity and social equity.



Empowering South Africa's Marginalized Communities: By early 2024, about 25% of South Africa's farmland had been redistributed to Black South Africans, with a target of 30% by 2030—potentially transforming the country's socio-economic landscape.



Transforming Maasai Lives in Tanzania: Nearly 10,000 Maasai and 40,000 livestock have been impacted through targeted relocation and compensation programs.



Enhancing Land Security in Kenya: Over 5 million title deeds have been issued, enhancing transparency and land tenure security.



Securing Uganda's Future: Around 600,000 digital land titles have been issued to promote peace and development through secure tenure.



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INTRODUCTION

Land conflicts in Africa are deeply rooted in colonial histories that entrenched unequal land distribution and ownership. Despite significant efforts post-independence, challenges such as inequitable redistribution, unclear tenure systems, environmental degradation, unresolved restitution claims, resource competition, poverty, and ethnic tensions persist. These issues impact both rural and urban communities, with over 40% of Africa’s population now residing in urban areas.

Tackling these land-related challenges is critical to achieving the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and promoting responsible land governance. While numerous African nations have introduced land reforms, restorative justice measures, and new policy frameworks, the need for transformative, inclusive governance remains urgent.

This brief focuses on five countries—Zimbabwe, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda—examining key land conflict dynamics, reparation initiatives, and policy implications for peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Methodology

This policy brief draws on a multi-method research approach, combining case studies, policy analysis, and expert interviews. Interviews were conducted with field practitioners, government officials, and academics involved in land governance and peacebuilding.

Case studies included real-world examples from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Botswana, and South Sudan. These cases provided practical insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding land conflict resolution and reparations.

The findings aim to benefit local communities, displaced populations, marginalized groups, traditional leaders, policymakers, and others engaged in land governance, with a focus on peacebuilding and livelihood security.

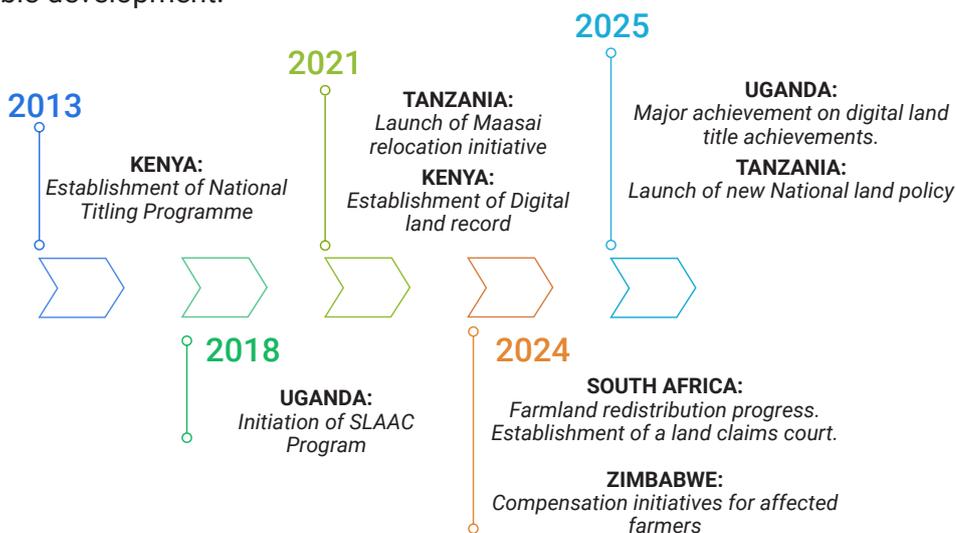


Figure 1: Progress towards land reparations initiatives in some African countries



LAND CONFLICT REPARATIONS IN AFRICA: ONGOING PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES

This section presents examples of land conflict reparations in five African countries, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, and highlights national initiatives to address colonial legacies and fill policy and legal gaps. These efforts aim to ensure fair access to land, foster peace, and promote inclusive development.

ZIMBABWE: Addressing Inequities in Land Ownership for Black and White Farmers

- The Zimbabwean government has called for reparations, restoration, and an official apology for the injustices endured by Black Zimbabweans during the colonial period (1890–1980).
- Current initiatives include compensating affected farmers and supporting agricultural productivity among new landowners.
- The government is also improving women’s land rights through legal reforms, gender-responsive planning, and increased education and advocacy.

Compensation Allocation

USD 20 million was allocated in the 2024 budget for compensating both white and Black farmers, with an additional USD 125.9 million planned through 2028.

Number of Beneficiaries

As of February 2025, payments had been approved for 94 farms, including compensation for 56 white farmers under the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) and for 400 Black Zimbabweans affected by earlier land seizures.

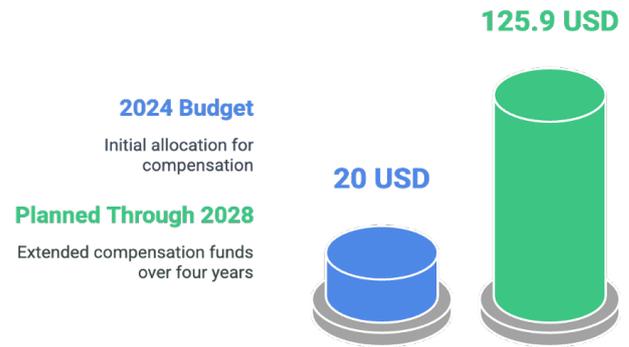


Figure 2: Compensation distribution amount for farmers in Zimbabwe

SOUTH AFRICA: Addressing Racial Segregation and Unresolved Restitution Claims

- South Africa’s government is pursuing restitution, redistribution, and development programmes to empower historically marginalized communities.
- Land dispute resolution centers have been established in rural areas via the Land Claims Court (LCC).
- As of early 2024, approximately 25% of South Africa’s farmland had been redistributed to Black South Africans, with a target of 30% by 2030.

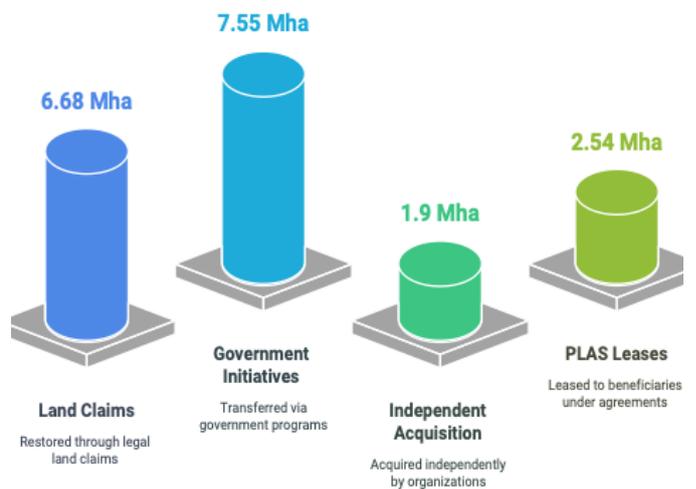


Figure 3: Land restoration and acquisition progress in south Africa



TANZANIA: Recognizing Pastoralists' Land Rights

- In March 2025, the government launched a revised National Land Policy (2023 edition), replacing the 1995 version. This policy strengthens efforts to manage land resources and protect the rights of farmers and pastoralists.
- In 2021, the government began relocating Maasai communities from Loliondo and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area to Msomera, in Tanga Region.

Support Provided to Relocated Communities

- Compensation of TZS 10 million (approx. USD 3,757), permanent housing on 2.5-hectare plots, and an additional 5 hectares for farming and grazing.
- Transportation assistance for families and livestock.

Results by September 2024

- Nearly 10,000 people and 40,000 livestock were successfully relocated to Msomera and surrounding areas.

KENYA: Addressing Ethnic Tensions and Land Tenure Insecurity

The government of Kenya established the National Titling Programme in 2013 through the Ministry of Lands, utilizing ICT to digitize land records via the “Ardhi Sasa” (<https://ardhisasa.lands.go.ke/>), platform which was formally launched on April 27, 2021, by former President Uhuru Kenyatta. This initiative represents a pivotal effort to enhance transparency, security, and efficiency in land ownership and administration.

ICT Integration and Rollout

- Initially deployed in Nairobi, the platform has expanded to Murang'a, with plans for further national implementation.
- Services include land registration, surveying, valuation, allocation, and planning—all integrated into one system.

Achievements

- Digitized land records from 57 registries dating back to 1895.
- Developed Kenya's first digital topographic and cadastral maps for Nairobi County.
- Issued over 5.1 million title deeds between 2013 and 2020.
- During FY 2019/2020, 500,000 title deeds were processed.

Issuance of title deeds

- Between 2013 and 2020, over 5.1 million title deeds were issued through the National Titling Programme.
- During the financial year of 2019/2020, a total of 500,000 title deeds were processed across various categories, as illustrated in Figure 4.

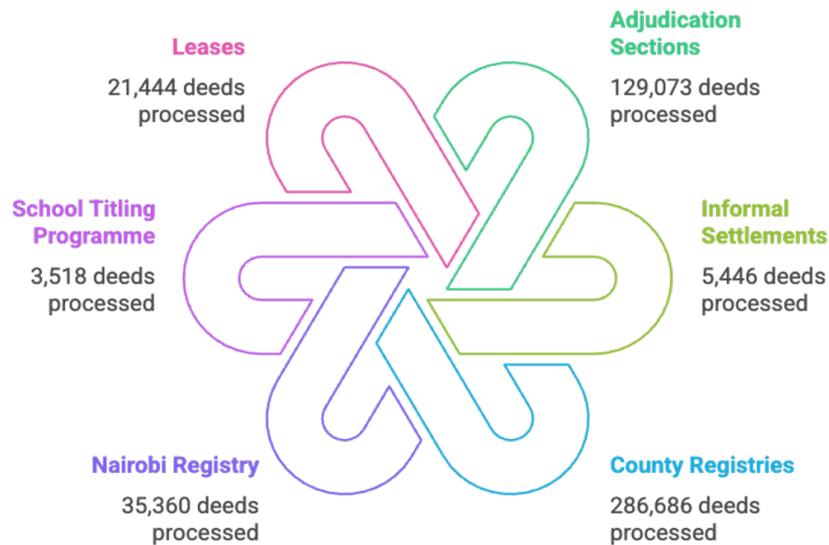


Figure 4: Kenya's distribution of Title deeds processed in FY 20219/2020

UGANDA: Resolving colonial legacy and a dual land tenure system

- In 2018, the government initiated the Systematic Land Adjudication and Certification (SLAAC) program to systematically document land rights and improve tenure security, with a particular focus on rural communities. This initiative is reinforced by the National Land Policy of 2013 and the Land Act of 1998.
- Furthermore, the Uganda National Land Information System (UgNLIS) platform (<https://mlhud.go.ug/ugnlis/>) was introduced in 2013 as part of Uganda's land digitization efforts under the World Bank-funded Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP).
- Both programs aim to resolve land disputes by enhancing transparency, accessibility, and tenure security. SLAAC includes mediation and reconciliation processes to address disagreements over land rights before issuing freehold certificates of title.

Scope of SLAAC and ICT intervention

The interventions are applied nationally, with phased and localized implementation. The SLAAC program adjudicates land parcel by parcel, focusing on rural communities, while the UgNLIS operates through all 22 Ministry Zonal Offices for nationwide land record digitization.

Achievements

- By 2025, approximately 600,000 land titles have been digitized under UgNLIS. This includes transitioning from manual systems that date back to 1908.
- The SLAAC program aims to register an additional 800,000 Digital land titles issued parcels. This process is ongoing.
- Additionally, Uganda now issues digital Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs) through the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM), which improves efficiency and security. These certificates feature QR codes and parcel maps.



POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given the increasing demand for equitable access to and control over land—as well as Africa’s aspirations for sustainable peace, social and economic development, and environmental security, the findings of this study point to several critical policy recommendations:

- Reform colonial land tenure systems to ensure fairness, equity, and alignment with current socio-economic realities.
- Develop inclusive policy frameworks that consider historical, social, cultural, economic, and political contexts when addressing land-related challenges.
- Strengthen women’s land rights by implementing gender-responsive legal frameworks, planning processes, and awareness campaigns that promote legal literacy and advocacy.
- Establish rural land dispute resolution centers supported by mediation and arbitration mechanisms to promote accessible, community-based conflict resolution.
- Invest in capacity-building for local institutions and communities to enhance institutional effectiveness and empower citizens with knowledge of land rights and sustainable land use.
- Utilize trained paralegals to support land governance, reduce court burdens, and improve legal access for marginalized populations.
- Adopt innovative technologies, including digital geospatial tools and ICT platforms, to improve land registration, resource mapping, and record-keeping (e.g., Kenya’s Ardhī Sasa, Tanzania’s e-Ardhi, and Uganda’s UgNLIS).
- Replicate successful models such as Rwanda’s Land Tenure Regularization Program and South Sudan’s Marial Bai Agreement to address displacement, regulate pastoralist-farmer relations, and promote social cohesion.
- Create equitable compensation frameworks and promote participatory governance to ensure fair access to land for women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Involve affected communities in decision-making processes, particularly in land use planning, tenure reform, and redistribution, to ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes.
- Strengthen legal frameworks to clearly define land rights, tenure systems, and dispute resolution mechanisms, with a focus on gender responsiveness.
- Recognize customary land rights and ensure laws are accessible and comprehensible to all stakeholders, especially women, youth, and indigenous peoples.
- Facilitate inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogues involving civil society, traditional authorities, women, and youth to shape responsive, people-centered land policies.
- Acknowledge and address historical land injustices resulting from colonialism by implementing land restitution, fair compensation, and support mechanisms that help communities rebuild livelihoods, promote reconciliation, and foster long-term peace.