

PROTECTING LAND RIGHTS OF THE AGED

Dealing with land theft among old people

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SUMMARY

Commencing from the fifth decade of the twentieth century African nations have invested a lot of thought, energy and money into land distribution, registration and regularization, both in rural and urban areas. The results have been relatively successful in most countries. Unfortunately the demographics dimension has not been adequately thought. The growth of African populations is the fastest in the world, and young people form the largest cohort or category. They need not only food, education, and health facilities but also jobs when they leave school. They also need space. Older generations are inevitably squeezed or forced out of livelihoods and in some cases their own homes.

The aim of the paper is to collect and analyse data on the nature of land theft culprits and evictors, and the methods they deploy to disenfranchise elderly people in broad daylight. While on paper the law protects the assets of senior citizens, in reality there are so many devious ways in which a grandmother, senior wife or elderly farmer can be dispossessed and not realize the event until years later. Cases of violence between son and father are not rare. The study is based on case studies in research done in Kenya and Tanzania.

The findings will be able to guide governments, land managers and human rights activists to create suitable legal and administrative structures that will make the elderly better informed and equipped to protect their land-based assets.

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