Empirical studies of land rights privatisation have tended to underemphasise the unintended impacts of land rights reform relative to establishing whether the predicted impacts have occurred. This article, in reviewing some of the unintended consequences of the 1998 Uganda Land Act, draws attention to ways in which intended impacts may be undercut by lack of both consultation and foresight in anticipating responses to new legal provisions and by lack of adequate resourcing of the reform process. It also recognises that unintended outcomes may sometimes reflect appropriate adaptations of legal provisions at the local level, and briefly considers what light the Ugandan experience can throw on recent proposals for formalisation of informal property rights in the Third World.

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