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## Effectiveness of the Ward Tribunal in Resolving Land Conflicts in Rapidly Urbanising Cities in Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

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Land conflicts are prevalent in many urban areas globally, often stemming from rapid urbanisation, competing land uses, and population growth. This study focused on examining the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in rapidly urbanising cities in Tanzania, drawing lessons from five selected wards: Nzuguni, Kizota, Nkuhungu, Kilimani, and Mkonze in Dodoma City. The research employed a cross-sectional design and collected data from landholders, ward tribunal members, Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), land officers, and town planners from Dodoma City Council, selected through systematic and purposive sampling. Data were collected from 156 respondents using surveys, interviews, and documentary reviews. The findings indicate that sources of land conflicts across the five wards included boundary disputes, inheritance issues, land ownership, and land use rights. The results revealed that approximately 34% of conflicts were successfully resolved by ward tribunals, while the remainder were referred to the District Land and Housing Tribunal and Dodoma City Council. The low percentage of resolved land conflicts was attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding legal issues and responsibilities, as well as limited resources, which hindered their ability to mediate effectively. The study concludes that ward tribunals in the area resolve land conflicts in the area at an average level; however, improvements are needed. This highlights the necessity for comprehensive training programmes to equip ward tribunal members with legal principles and guidelines, conflict resolution skills, and ethical responsibilities, thereby empowering them to manage disputes effectively and fairly. It is essential to allocate adequate resources to support their operations, including technology, office space, and administrative support. Furthermore, there is a need to educate community members about the roles and functions of ward tribunals to build trust and encourage the utilisation of community-based land conflict resolution.

### 1. Introduction

Land conflicts are widespread in many urban areas worldwide, often resulting from rapid urbanization, competing land uses, and population growth. To curb the problem, governments established different instruments to address land conflicts, ranging from formal judicial systems to community-based land conflict resolution methods. The effectiveness of these mechanisms varies, with some countries achieving significant success in reducing land conflicts through innovative approaches and strong legal frameworks (World Bank, 2018; Kimengsi and Awah, 2021; Khamis, 2022; Tahir, 2022;

Mudapakati et al., 2024; Mwamfupe et al., 2024). Until a few years ago, judicial systems were the preferred way of resolving land-related conflicts in urban and peri-urban areas. However, proceedings and administrative interventions have been criticised as costly, time-consuming, inequitable, and unjust to the poor, vulnerable, and minority groups. To decrease pressure on legal systems and improve access and justice for all, many developing countries have introduced Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to complement court processes (Kalabamu, 2021).

Community-based land conflict resolution is gaining increasing attention in legal circles and

globally due to the inherent weaknesses of the judicial system (Kamoleka and Lucian, 2024). Community-based mechanisms for land conflict resolution are more prevalent in developing countries than in developed countries, primarily due to the reliance on traditional and customary practices in resolving disputes (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Many governments have adopted community-based approaches to address land conflicts. These systems are designed to provide accessible and affordable mechanisms for resolving land conflicts, often incorporating customary principles of mediation and reconciliation (Rumansra, 2015; Rahakbauw, 2023; Wijaya, 2024; and Judijanto et al., 2024). In African countries, land conflicts involve local communities, traditional leaders, local government authorities, and civil society organisations working together to find peaceful solutions. However, each country has its way of resolving land conflicts based on cultural, traditional, and legal differences. Some countries, such as Botswana, have introduced Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to complement court processes. Alternative dispute resolution aims to reduce court cases, dispense justice, and promote peaceful relationships in land-related conflicts (Kalabamu, 2021). Tanzania introduced Ward or Village Tribunals, established under the Ward Tribunals Act, which came into effect on 1 July 1985. These tribunals were established to address minor disputes and conflicts within wards or villages, providing a local and accessible means of justice for community members (URT, 1995).

Cities in Tanzania are undergoing significant changes in land use due to increased population growth and development (Oyedele et al., 2020; Kisamba and Li, 2023). Following the relocation of most central government functions from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma, the city experienced rapid growth. The city experienced rapid population growth, with census data showing an increase from approximately 324,347 in 2002 to over 765,179 in 2022 (URT, 2024). The increased number of people has increased the demand for land for developmental purposes, notably, land for the construction of roads, private developers, the building of residential and commercial properties by governments, building of schools, corporate bodies and individuals, drainage systems and health centres and so on (World Bank, 2021; Nyakamwe et al., 2022; Makacha et al., 2022; Msongaleli et al., 2023). All these activities have resulted in high pressure on land and land-use

conflicts between people (Oyedele et al., 2020). Land conflicts present a significant challenge in Dodoma city. For example, during a four-day clinic from March 16 to 20, 2023, aimed at addressing land conflicts as part of the implementation of the Dodoma Region's strategy to resolve land disputes, a total of 3,056 individuals came forward with land-related issues. Likewise, the Dodoma City Council was required to compensate citizens for approximately 3,995 plots (Mwananchi, 2023; Dodoma City Council, 2023). In response to these challenges, ward tribunals play a crucial role in Tanzania's administrative structure, particularly in addressing complex land-related conflicts (Khamis, 2022; Kombe, 2023). This raises the question of how ward tribunals effectively resolve land conflicts in rapidly urbanizing cities like Dodoma.

Various studies document the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas differently. Kitosi et al. (2024) in Tanzania reveal that the land conflicts in urban areas include land use conflicts, inheritance conflicts, accessibility conflicts, sales, boundary conflicts, and transfer of ownership. Rahakbauw (2023) in Indonesia suggests that land disputes arise from unfair practices, the absence of historical records, unclear boundaries, and increased land value. In Uganda, Kansime and Harris (2020) note that land disputes included boundaries between neighbours, inheritance and intra-family disagreements about whether or not to sell land. Regarding community-based land conflict resolution, different countries have varying experiences. For instance, in Tanzania, Kombe (2023) highlights that ward tribunals have a high success rate in resolving land disputes; thus, the decisions made by ward tribunals are considered fair and just in resolving land disputes. However, it faces challenges such as insufficient funding, a lack of trained personnel, and resources in resolving land disputes. In Indonesia, Pulungan (2025) reveals that integrating customary legal principles into the formal justice system ensures the protection of indigenous land rights. Wutwensa et al. (2025) suggest that the formal legal framework often overlooks indigenous rights, resulting in unresolved conflicts and cultural exclusion. However, Wijaya (2024) cautioned that capacity building for customary institutions is crucial for them to be effective in resolving disputes, enabling customary leaders to collaborate with formal institutions. In Kenya, Njuguna (2020) revealed that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are important in resolving land disputes and

facilitating negotiation, dialogue, and consensus-building among disputing parties. Berhe et al. (2024) note that administrative structures, such as tribunals and customary institutions, foster culturally accepted, sustainable, and efficient conflict resolution.

Research on ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas has made significant progress in recent years. These studies have focused on community-based land conflict resolution, with a few specifically examining ward tribunals in various developing countries. However, no studies have focused on the unique context of rapidly urbanising cities, such as Dodoma. Notably, studies in Tanzania concentrated on rural settings, and generalising findings from other countries to the Dodoma context is not feasible. This gap underscores the need to focus on the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas, drawing on experience in Dodoma City. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the sources of land conflicts and assess the capacity and effectiveness of ward tribunals.

This study contributes to and advances scholarly debates on ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas in developing countries. The study is important as it seeks to reveal the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas, which is important to policymakers. The significance of this study extends beyond the specific context of rapidly urbanizing cities in Tanzania to encompass numerous developing countries where many cities experience rapid urbanizing. Consequently, the in-depth effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas can furnish policymakers and urban planners with valuable insights, enabling informed decision-making. The findings of this study hold the potential to aid policymakers in shaping urban planning and development control policies and strategies. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in urban areas, such as Dodoma, can offer a fresh perspective on strengthening ward tribunals and resolving land conflicts in these areas.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study Area and Research Design

The study was carried out in Dodoma City, specifically in five selected wards: Nzuguni, Kizota, Nkuhungu, Kilimani, and Mkonze. Dodoma City was

chosen because it has experienced numerous land conflicts, mainly due to the increase in land demands following the government's relocation from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma. This shift was driven by the rising need for land for settlements. Before selecting these wards, the primary criterion was that they had reported a significant number of land conflicts to the Dodoma City Council compared to other wards. Dodoma, the capital city of Tanzania, lies in the central part of the country. It is located between latitudes 6.000° and 6.300° South and longitudes 35.000° and 36.300° East. The city borders Chamwino district to the east and Bahi district to the west. Dodoma sits on a broad upland plateau at an altitude of 900 to 1000 meters above sea level.

The study used a cross-sectional research design that involved collecting data from various wards at the same time, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the current land conflict resolution process through ward tribunals across different areas. This approach captured diverse perspectives and experiences from multiple wards, offering a complete understanding of the effectiveness of ward tribunals. The cross-sectional design allowed for analysis of how ward tribunals resolve land conflicts by highlighting their strengths and weaknesses in addressing these issues within the study areas.

### 2.2 Data collection

The study collected primary data from respondents, including landholders, ward tribunal members, and key informants from the Dodoma City Council. Furthermore, secondary data were collected from various documents, such as relevant laws and ward tribunal meeting records. The use of primary and secondary data provided a broad understanding of the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts. Primary data were collected through a survey with landholders using a structured questionnaire and an interview with key informants, including ward tribunal leaders, Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), land officers, and town planners, using an interview guide. This comprehensive approach ensured the collection of varied viewpoints and detailed information appropriate to the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts in Dodoma City.

### 2.3 Sampling

The sampling unit included individual landholders who experienced land conflicts, and the sampling frame included a list of these landholders. Systematic sampling was employed to select the respondents. Given that the list of landholders with conflicts was available in each ward, every 10th landholder was systematically chosen for the study from the list. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to select key informants, including ward tribunal leaders, WEOs, land officers, and town planners. These individuals were involved in the study since they had technical information which could not be obtained from landholders. The sample used for the study was 156, which was calculated using a formula for the known population. Also, the study involved 14 key informants, including 10 ward tribunal leaders, 1 WEO, 1 land officer, and 1 town planner.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2080}{1 + 2080(7.7\%)^2}$$

### 2.4 Data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately in this study. The collected data underwent several processing steps before analysis. This involved editing the data to identify and correct errors and omissions, coding for consistency, inputting the data into IBM SPSS Statistics version 27, and conducting data cleaning and verification. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and various data related to the effectiveness of ward tribunals in land conflict resolution, with frequencies and percentages calculated. Quantitative data were presented in tables and figures. Additionally, qualitative data were analysed through transcribing audio recordings of interviews to generate textual data for review. This was followed by identifying and analysing recurring themes and patterns within the data. The narrative analysis concentrated on the stories from key informant interviews to

understand their experiences and the meanings attributed to them.

Additionally, to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, training was provided for enumerators to guarantee their understanding of the questions and to minimise errors and inconsistencies. A pilot test was also conducted for one day to assist enumerators in clearly comprehending the questions and identifying any issues or uncertainties, which facilitated enhancements to the questions based on the pilot study results. Triangulation was performed using multiple data sources and methods to verify the data collected by respondents; for instance, data provided by ward tribunal leaders was cross-verified by WEO and certain landholders. Furthermore, the study actively monitored and continuously evaluated the data collection process to identify and address any challenges that may arise during data collection.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Social-demographic characteristics

Table 1 shows that most respondents (68%) were males, while the rest were females, indicating a significant gender imbalance in participation. This reflects wider trends in Tanzanian urban areas, where men are twice as likely as women to own land and, thus, more likely to engage with ward tribunals over land conflicts. Additionally, 22% of respondents were aged between 36 and 45 years, followed by 19% aged between 18 and 25 years and 26 to 35 years, respectively. The data reveal that 60% of respondents were under 45. Regarding occupation, 48% were employed, 23% self-employed, and the remainder unemployed or retired. Concerning average monthly income, 42% earned between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Tzs, 33% earned below 500,000 Tzs, and 25% earned above 1,000,000 Tzs. As for marital status, 61% were married, 19% were single, and 20% were divorced or widowed. In terms of education, 42% had secondary education, 32% had tertiary education, and very few had no formal education or only primary education. Lastly, regarding years living in the community, 37% had lived there for 1 to 5 years, 31% for over 10 years, with others residing for 6 to 10 years or less than one year.

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Males	106	68
	Females	50	32
Age	18-25 years	30	19
	26-35 years	30	19
	36-45 years	35	22
	46-55 years	20	13
	56-65 years	23	15
	Over 65 years	18	12
Education level	Non-formal education	13	8
	Primary education	27	18
	Secondary education	66	42
	Tertiary education	50	32
Occupation	Employed	75	48
	Unemployed	25	16
	Self-employed	36	23
	Retired	20	13
Monthly Household Income	Below 500,000 TZs	51	33
	500,000 TZs - 1,000,000 TZs	66	42
	1,000,001 TZs - 1,500,000 TZs	27	17
	1,500,001 TZs - 2,000,000 TZs	8	5
	Above 2,000,000 TZs	4	3
Marital Status	Single	30	19
	Married	95	61
	Divorced	10	6
	Widowed	21	14
Years of Residence in the Community	Less than 1 year	16	10
	1 - 5 years	57	37
	6 - 10 years	34	22
	More than 10 years	49	31

### 3.2 Sources of land conflicts by wards

Table 2 illustrates the sources of land conflicts in the wards of Nzuguni, Kizota, Nkuhungu, Kilimani, and Mkonze. The primary cause of conflict across all five urban wards is land ownership, particularly in Mkonze (57%), Kilimani (39%), and Nkuhungu (43%). Furthermore, boundary disputes are

significant, especially in Nzuguni (35%) and Kizota (28%). Inheritance conflicts commonly happen in all wards, with notable percentages of 27% in Kilimani and 23% in both Nzuguni and Mkonze, highlighting ongoing issues related to family or customary succession. Regarding land use rights, these account for the smallest share of conflicts (7–15%), suggesting that disputes are more frequently



linked to ownership rather than land use. Land use rights are governed by various laws and regulations, most notably the Urban Planning Act of 2007 and the Land Act of 1999. Respondents noted

that before regularisation, they conducted business, but once formalised, land use was solely designated for housing, excluding business activities.

**Table 2: Sources of land conflicts by wards**

Source of Land Conflict	Nzuguni		Kizota		Nkuhungu		Kilimani		Mkonze	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Boundary	9	35	11	28	8	29	8	24	4	13
Inheritance	6	23	9	23	5	18	9	27	7	23
Land ownership	8	31	13	33	12	43	13	39	17	57
Land use rights	3	12	6	15	3	11	3	9	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.3 Capacity of the Ward Tribunal

The capacity of the ward tribunal is described as its ability to manage and resolve land conflicts effectively. As such, the capacity is assessed based on the number of members, training received, the number of members attending the mediation process, and the number of conflicts registered, resolved, and forwarded to the District Land and Housing Tribunal over the past three years. The selection of this period is based on the fact that the World Bank (2020) recommends a three-year period for evaluating local justice mechanisms, as this timeframe strikes a balance between institutional continuity and responsiveness to reform efforts.

#### 3.3.1 Number of members and sex distribution in the ward tribunal

The study findings show a relatively balanced representation of eight male and female members in each ward. Male members range from 4 to 5, while female members range from 3 to 4. This gender ratio suggests that women are involved in conflict resolution. The number complies with the required number of members according to Ward Tribunal Act Number 18 of 1995.

#### 3.3.2 Training received by ward tribunal members

Respondents indicated that, although they received training, it has not been sufficient for them to fulfil their roles in land conflict resolution. Consequently, members noted that even though they have been engaged in mediation, they possess limited knowledge of legal issues and responsibilities, which hinders their ability to mediate land conflicts effectively. Members underscored the need for more comprehensive training to enhance their

knowledge and confidence in performing their roles. During the interviews with Ward Tribunals, one member emphasised that:

*"When we were elected, we were trained on our responsibilities, but when we started working, we discovered other issues we had not learned about, particularly land ownership according to the law. This renders us ineffective, and thus, we refer many cases." (Women, Interview, Nzuguni Ward, June 2024).*

These findings demonstrate that ward tribunal members struggle to effectively manage land conflicts because of a lack of knowledge, leading to delays. This emphasises the importance of regular training to ensure members are familiar with laws and best practices.

#### 3.3.4 Number of conflicts registered in the past three years

Table 3 shows that 360 conflicts were registered, 122 resolved, and 238 forwarded to the District Land and Housing Tribunal and Dodoma City Council. These findings reveal that the ward tribunal successfully addressed approximately 34% of the conflicts. If ward tribunals received regular training and other essential resources, many conflicts could be resolved. Most of the land conflicts forwarded to the Dodoma City Council relate to land use. Notably, the findings highlight the varying effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms across the wards; for instance, Kizota ward recorded a significant number of cases (90) compared to other wards, indicating a high demand for conflict resolution mechanisms in this area. Regarding case resolution, Nzuguni Ward resolved a considerable number of cases (58%) compared to

other wards, which resolved fewer than 50%. The forwarding of cases by ward tribunals to the District Land and Housing Tribunal and Dodoma City Council indicates operational limitations and structural issues in the local land conflict

resolution system, highlighting the need for improved legal clarity, capacity building, and support mechanisms for ward tribunals and other institutions at the ward level.

**Table 3: Number of conflicts registered, resolved, and forwarded to the District Land and Housing Tribunal in the past three years**

Ward	Number of Conflicts Registered	Number of Conflicts Resolved by WTC	Number of Conflicts Forwarded to other Organs
Kizota	90	21	69
Kilimani	75	13	62
Mkonze	70	33	37
Nkuhungu	65	20	45
Nzuguni	60	35	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>238</b>

### 3.4 Ward tribunal effectiveness

The study identified significant disparities in the effectiveness of ward tribunals across study areas. Table 5 indicates that the ward tribunal is perceived as highly effective at maintaining impartiality during mediation, with a strong mean score of 4.51, suggesting that fairness is a recognised strength. Additionally, the tribunal is regarded as effective in fostering trust within the community (mean score 4.03), reflecting a positive reputation and a degree of community confidence. However, other functions, such as handling disputes, contributing to harmony, and following up on resolved cases, scored around the average

mark, indicating inconsistent performance and areas requiring attention. Despite strengths in trust-building and impartiality, the tribunal is largely considered ineffective in several critical operational areas. These include managing mediation efficiently, resolving conflicts, facilitating communication, ensuring accessibility, and applying legal principles, each receiving low mean scores ranging from 2.11 to 2.97. The overall weighted mean of 3.03 indicates an average rating, suggesting that while the tribunal performs well in principle-based aspects, it struggles with the practical execution of its duties.

**Table 5: Ward tribunal effectiveness**

Statement	P	IE	A	E	VE	Mean Score	Interpretation
	%	%	%	%	%		
Ward tribunal in maintaining impartiality during mediation	8.6	0	2.9	8.6	80.0	4.51	Very effective
Ward tribunal in fostering trust within the community	2.9	5.7	8.6	51.4	31.4	4.03	Effective
Ward tribunal members in handling disputes	0	0	88.6	2.9	8.6	3.20	Average
Ward tribunal in contributing to community harmony	2.9	2.9	80.0	5.7	8.6	3.14	Average
Ward tribunal in following up on resolved cases to ensure compliance	5.7	5.7	80.0	2.9	5.7	3.09	Average
Tribunal, in managing the mediation process efficiently	5.7	85.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.97	Ineffective
Ward tribunal in resolving conflicts	8.6	8.6	74.3	8.6	0.0	2.91	Ineffective
Ward tribunal members in facilitating communication between conflicting parties	2.9	2.9	80.0	5.7	8.6	2.26	Ineffective
Ward tribunal in being accessible to community members	14.3	71.4	8.6	5.7	0	2.11	Ineffective
Ward tribunal in applying legal principles to resolve disputes	5.7	80.0	2.9	5.7	5.7	2.11	Ineffective
<b>Weighted mean</b>						<b>3.03</b>	<b>Average</b>

*Very effective (VE), Effective (E), Average (A), Ineffective (IE), Poor (P)*

### 3.5 Methods employed by ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts

Table 6 presents various methods for resolving land conflicts across five wards. The preferred method is mediation, which received a score of 100% in Kizota, Nzuguni, Kilimani, and Mkonze, and 87.5% in Nkuhungu. Another preferred

method is arbitration, with scores ranging from 75% to 87.5%. This choice is followed by community involvement and certificates for case referral, which scored between 60% and 75%, emphasising the significance of collective engagement in resolving land conflicts. Notably, negotiation was the least preferred method, with scores around 50%.

**Table 6: Methods in resolving land conflicts**

Methods	Nzuguni	Kizota	Nkuhungu	Kilimani	Mkonze
Arbitration	7 (87%)	5(83.3%)	6(75%)	4(80%)	7(87.5%)
Mediation	8(100%)	6(100%)	7(87.5%)	5(100%)	8(100%)
Community involvement	6(75%)	4(66.7%)	5(62.5%)	3(60%)	6(75%)
Issuance of certificates for referral	5(62.5%)	4(66.7%)	6(75%)	3(60%)	5(62%)
Negotiation	4(50%)	50% (3)	4(75%)	2(40%)	4(50%)

## 4. Discussion

The study results show differences in age, education, occupation, monthly household income, marital status, and years of residence among respondents within the community. Most respondents are under 35 years old, reflecting the common age group in Dodoma and Tanzania as a whole (URT, 2024). Additionally, younger individuals may be more involved in acquiring or developing land, which could increase land conflicts within this age group. This demographic often faces land disputes due to inheritance issues, where land passed down from older family members is contested among heirs. Concerning occupation, employed and self-employed people generally have access to financial resources and thus may feel pressure to secure land for housing, leading to more conflicts (Mtatiro, 2022). Regarding monthly income, those with higher earnings can afford the legal procedures needed for acquiring and protecting land, whereas poorer individuals often resort to informal land markets, bypassing certain buying procedures and risking land conflicts (Anseeuw and Baldinelli, 2020). In terms of marital status, married individuals need land for housing or business purposes to support their families; this demand can spark conflicts, especially in areas where land is scarce or highly valued. Finally, findings on years of residence indicate respondents have lived in the area for 1 to 5 years, suggesting that newcomers may be actively acquiring land and might face initial disputes over ownership and boundaries. Conversely, landowners who have resided there for over 10 years usually have a better understanding of local land tenure systems and have built relationships

within the community. However, long-term residents may also be involved in ongoing or historical land conflicts, especially when longstanding issues or changes in land ownership occur (Mwamlangala et al., 2016; Laiser, 2016).

The study found that the root of land conflicts is land use rights, followed by inheritance, land ownership, and boundaries. These findings support research by Ma et al. (2025) in China, Otu (2022) in Ghana, Mohamed (2020), Kamoleka and Lucian (2024), and Kitosi et al. (2024) in Tanzania. Engaging local communities in decision-making, land use planning, and boundary demarcation helps reduce land conflicts (Schmidt and Zakayo, 2018). By understanding the causes of land use conflicts, urban planners can design urban spaces that minimise conflicts and encourage fair land use. Addressing land conflicts related to inheritance and ownership can promote social equity and protect the interests of marginalised groups, ensuring they access land and are shielded from dispossession (Mwamlangala et al., 2021).

The study found that both male and female members served on each ward tribunal. These findings align with Tanzanian policies regarding land conflict resolution, which emphasise community involvement and representation in decision-making processes. The Land Disputes Court Act of 2002 and subsequent reforms promote the establishment of ward tribunals that are accessible and representative of the local population. The composition of ward tribunals ensures that both men and women are involved in conflict resolution, facilitating equal treatment of all parties. Moreover, the National Strategy for



Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP II) recognises the importance of gender equity in promoting sustainable land management and conflict resolution practices. The balanced representation in the ward tribunals supports this strategy, indicating that effective conflict resolution mechanisms are in place that correspond with national priorities for equitable land management (URT, 2010).

Although the study acknowledges the importance of training, it found that members primarily received training upon election. According to Mwamfupe et al. (2024), training programmes can enhance the mediation skills of ward tribunal members. Inadequate training often leads to a lack of confidence among members in fulfilling their roles, echoing the concerns expressed by ward tribunal members. Therefore, improving training programmes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of relevant legal frameworks and responsibilities could significantly enhance the effectiveness of ward tribunals in resolving land conflicts (Massawe and Urassa, 2016). This highlights the need for more thorough and ongoing training programmes that address specific legal and practical aspects of land management, ensuring that officials can perform their duties effectively and independently.

The study's findings show that, on average, land conflicts have been resolved by 34. This finding suggests that if ward tribunals are strengthened, capacitated, and adequately resourced, the number of land conflicts resolved will increase. The study found that ward tribunals effectively maintain impartiality during mediation, foster trust within the community, manage disputes, contribute to community harmony, follow up on resolved cases to ensure compliance, and manage the mediation process efficiently. These findings echo other studies conducted in different countries, including Carlisle and Gruby (2019) and Ghebretekle and Rammala (2018) in South Africa and Ethiopia; Alemneh (2024), Tan and Hassen (2023) and Alemneh (2023) in Ethiopia; Sanga (2019) in Tanzania, Ibrahim et al. (2022) in Ghana; Golar et al. (2021) in Indonesia; Abedi (2018) and Omodo et al. (2023) in Uganda, which reveal that community-based land conflict resolution, including ward tribunals, is more effective than other forms of land conflict resolution that do not involve community members. The methods used by ward tribunals to resolve land conflicts offer opportunities for mediation and community

involvement, fostering discussion and mutual understanding compared to the means employed in top-down approaches (Magoti, 2019; Khamis, 2022). This emphasises the need to enhance ward tribunals through regular training (Rahmah et al., 2024).

## 5. Conclusions

Ward tribunals in urban areas hold significant potential for resolving land conflicts within the community. However, their effectiveness is hindered by several key challenges, including insufficient training in legal matters and responsibilities for tribunal members, as well as inadequate resources to carry out their duties effectively. These shortcomings undermine their capacity to deliver fair and timely resolutions, thereby diminishing public trust in their ability to manage land disputes. Consequently, urban areas continue to experience persistent land conflicts that escalate into broader disputes, stifling urban development, disrupting community cohesion, discouraging investment, and hindering proper urban planning, which in turn leads to informal settlements and land tenure insecurity. Such behaviour highlights the need for comprehensive training programmes to equip ward tribunal members with legal principles, conflict resolution skills, and ethical responsibilities, enabling them to handle disputes effectively and fairly. Additionally, it is essential to allocate adequate resources necessary to support their smooth operations, including technology, office space, and administrative support. Furthermore, educating community members about the roles and functions of ward tribunals will help build trust and encourage the use of community-based land conflict resolution. Civil society organisations and other development stakeholders must support and collaborate with ward tribunals in urban areas, providing training, technical expertise, and advocacy to enhance their functionality.

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