

SCALING UP COMMUNITY-BASED LAND REGISTRATION AND LAND USE PLANNING ON CUSTOMARY LAND IN UGANDA



Photo © UN-Habitat/GLTN

Land is vital for farmers: without it, they cannot grow crops or raise livestock. But often access to land in rural Uganda is anything but secure. Over 80% of the country is subject to customary tenure, where farmers lack any formal documentation proving their land rights. That makes this land prone to disputes, land grabbing and gender inequality.

Agriculture is the backbone of Uganda's economy, providing 64.3 percent of employment, 23 percent of the gross domestic product and 70 percent of export earnings. It will not be possible to achieve food security and reduce poverty without resolving issues of access to land, security of tenure and the capacity to use land productively and sustainably.

KEY CHALLENGES

But Uganda faces several challenges relating to land:

- ❑ A majority of rural communities and families who access land through customary land tenure, which covers over 80% of the country's land, still lack formal documentation of their land rights. The tools, processes and structures for registering land, including customarily held areas, are unclear, unaffordable and sometimes inconsistent.
- ❑ Disputes between neighbours and among families or clans over land are common in rural areas. Some 70% of court cases are thought to be related to land disputes. Women, young people and other vulnerable groups are particularly affected.
- ❑ The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries has put enormous pressure on land and natural resources, especially in the West Nile region. Land is needed for refugee settlements themselves, as well as for food production, energy, etc.
- ❑ Wetlands in Uganda are under increasing threat due to encroachment. They are subject to degradation and unsustainable use, which is a major threat to the environment and the ecological system that depends on it.
- ❑ The formal institutions responsible for land administration and land-use planning at district and lower-levels are weak. They include district land offices, area land committees, recorders, sub-county land-use planning committees, and district land boards.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Scaling up Community-based Land Registration and Land Use Planning on Customary Land in Uganda project is implemented by the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), as facilitated by UN-Habitat. The project builds on a successful pilot project, Securing Land Tenure for Improved Food Security in Select Areas in Uganda, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands.

The project aims to develop a structured and scalable approach to improve tenure security and sustainable land use for men, women and youth. It does this using inclusive, gender-responsive, fit-for-purpose and participatory methods.



District official addresses community members in Butaleja district during a community sensitization meeting. Photo @ UCObAC

The project aims at three main outcomes:

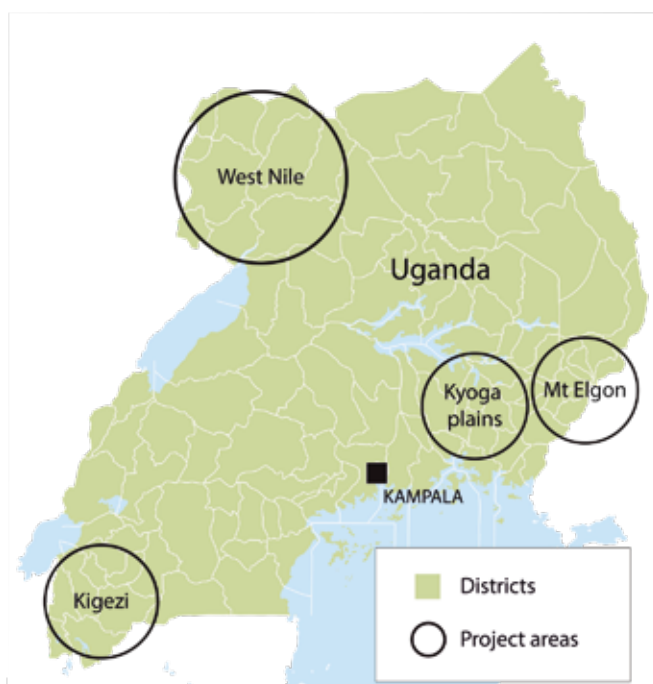
- ❑ Improved tenure security for men, women and youth.
- ❑ Sustainable, climate-smart and inclusive land-use planning.
- ❑ Improved capacity and awareness of key land stakeholders on customary land registration and land use planning.

The project contributes to the goal of Uganda's National Development Plan III (2020/21–2004/25) to increase household incomes and improve the quality of life of Ugandans, especially through enhancing productivity and social wellbeing. It also supports the implementation of the National Land Policy of 2013 and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT).

The project builds on the pilot project's work in three agricultural zones: the Kyoga plains and the Mt Elgon region in eastern Uganda, and the Kigezi sub-region in the southwest. The project will also work in the West Nile region in the northwest, which hosts many refugees. Customary land tenure is dominant in these regions. The land in these zones is largely not registered and lacks formal documentation, so is prone to land disputes and land grabbing.

The project aims to improve the tenure security and land use of smallholder farmers by applying tools and approaches that have already been developed, customized and tested through the pilot project. These include the Social Tenure Domain Model, gender and youth responsiveness evaluations, participatory enumeration, fit for purpose land administration, the continuum of land rights, and tenure responsive land use planning and mediation. The project will also develop two sustainable, climate-smart and inclusive sub-county land-use plans and at least three wetland-management plans. It will build the awareness and capacity of land actors at different levels, including the members of area land committees and district land boards, physical planning committees, staff of the district land offices, implementing partners and other key stakeholders.

Map of the priority project sites.



KEY INTERVENTIONS

The four-year project will be implemented in two phases: consolidation (1.5 years) and scaling up (2.5 years).

For Phase 1, the key interventions include:

- ❑ Improving tenure security for smallholder farmers in southwestern Uganda and the Kyoga plains, and supporting one sub-county to develop a physical plan in a participatory way.
- ❑ Support at least one wetland community to develop a wetland management plan, in a participatory way and apply for a Wetland Resource Use Permit.
- ❑ Supporting the development of standard operating procedures and guidelines for customary land registration, dispute resolution and land-use planning in rural areas.
- ❑ Undertaking studies, including an impact assessment of the pilot project, baseline and situation analysis, studies of cultural norms, practices, gender and access to land and natural resources, and a land and conflict sensitivity analysis in the areas hosting refugees.
- ❑ Other key interventions will include awareness-raising, strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders, strengthening the capacity of land-management institutions at the district and lower levels, and resolving disputes using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Activities in Phase 2 will be based on the experiences in Phase 1.

Implementing partners:

Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children's Welfare (UCOBAC), Makerere University-School of Built Environment and International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR).

In collaboration with:

Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), ACTogether Uganda, International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC), Local governments in the four zones and The Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Uganda.

Funded by:

The Kingdom of Netherlands through the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)-managed Land-at-Scale Programme.

STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

The Project was launched in December 2021. To date, key implementation arrangements have been agreed with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), civil society organizations, academic partners, and other key partners.

The project implementation has achieved significant progress in the following key areas: building and strengthening partnerships on issues and measures for strengthening land and natural resources tenure security at the community, local government and national levels; increased awareness of project stakeholders, including at national, district and community levels on the use and application of gender-responsive, Fit-for-Purpose and pro-poor land tools and approaches, and enhanced sustainable wetlands use and participatory land use planning; gender-responsive mapping and adjudication of land rights for registration; capacity development on land tools implementation, land rights and establishment/ strengthening multi-stakeholder engagements.

In the coming months, the focus is to fast-track delivery of pending outputs, including continuing mapping and registration of land rights to reach intended project targets, conducting all the planned studies on Gender evaluation assessment in customary settings, and conflict sensitivity, among others, finalise sub-county planning and start approval process as well as the development of guidelines on land use planning on customary land and Alternative Dispute resolutions.



Community members from Kitumba sub county validating the Sub- County land use framework. Photo @GLTN on 10th August 2022

More information

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