

# Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU)

## The challenge

With 229 inhabitants living per square kilometre, Uganda ranks high among the most densely populated countries in Africa and is currently experiencing growing pressure on land and land-related resources. Less than a quarter of the land is formally registered and for most of the largely rural population, land is a source of identity, livelihood, nutrition, and wealth. The lack of documentation of ownership and historically weak enforcement of land rights has become a major challenge to contend with today.

There is a high amount of insecurity particularly on customary land, often leading to the rural population having less secure access to land. Women, youth, and marginalized groups especially, are often unaware of their land rights. Land conflicts are a common occurrence within communities or families, often due to unclear land use or ownership. Additionally, conflicts are aided by cases of illegal land acquisition and eviction by some investors or from the often-fragile relations apparent in the refugee-hosting communities in the country.

Progressively, Uganda has created favourable preconditions for land governance through the 1995 Constitution, the 1998 Land Act, and the 2013 National Land Policy (NLP). However, given the latest implementation experience, there is a need for a review of the legal framework to reflect the emergent dynamics in the land sector.

## Our approach

The Programme for Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU) comes in to bridge the policy and implementation gap in actualizing the National Land Policy to promote land rights through supporting **Continuous Awareness Raising and Information Dissemination** (CARID) on land rights, resolving land conflicts through **Alternative Dispute Resolution** (ADR) within communities using Area Land Committees, and Capacity Development within the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), Local Government administrations and Civil Society Organizations to

Project name	Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU)
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and European Union (EU).
Project region	Northern Uganda: Districts of Dokolo, Amolatar, Katakwi, Soroti and Terego.  Central Uganda: Districts of Mubende, Mityana, Kasanda, Gomba, Kiboga and Butambala.
Lead executing agency	German Cooperation for International Development (GIZ).
Duration	01.03.2016 – 31.05.2026

support **systematic mapping of land** using a *fit-for-purpose* approach.

The Programme works closely with all key stakeholders for sharing knowledge and experiences. This multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach secures inclusion and participation and, together with the experiences from implementation, informs policy advisory and review of the legal framework at the national level.

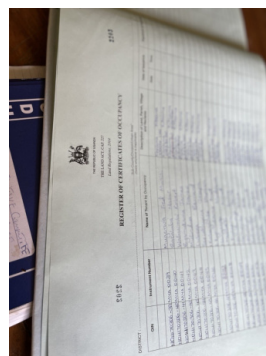
The step-by-step, *fit-for-purpose* process of land registration is a safe-guard to only map and document conflict-free land. Land ownership and use rights are registered with the issuance of a social document - Land Inventory Protocols (LIPs), and formal documents - Certificates of Occupancy (CoOs) and Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs).

These documents not only record the ownership or use-right but also enable smallholder farmers to access credit for agricultural investment increasing agricultural productivity and household incomes, specifically for women, youth, and marginalized groups.

Sustainability is baked-in by a move towards **self-financing of land registration** where minimal fees are set by the District Local Councils for registration of land rights within the Sub-Counties.

### The programme works under the following fields of action:

1. Improving institutional framework and procedures to secure tenure rights in Uganda, based on evidence, innovative approaches, and digitalized processes.
2. Increasing civil society engagement in the formulation, review, and implementation of responsible land policy.



L. to r.: Beneficiaries showing their landtitles; a written registry of certificates; a storage room containing certificates

- Raising awareness about responsible land policy along internationally agreed guidelines and the 2013 National Land Policy among private agriculture investors, affected land users and financial institutions.

## The benefits

The Programme has supported awareness raising and mapping of undocumented land to strengthen land rights and mitigate land conflicts. Over 86,000 households in Northern, North-Eastern and Central Uganda have secured land use and ownership rights through Land Inventory Protocols, Certificates of Occupancy and Certificates of Customary Ownership. Of these households, 26,353 are women-headed. While 121,151 hectares of land have been mapped through direct Programme intervention.

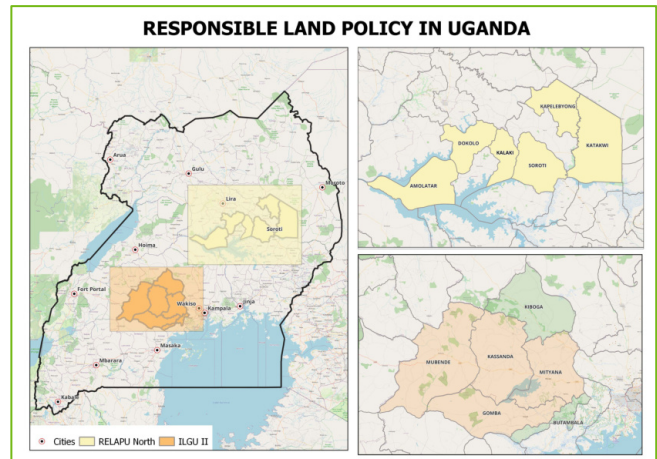
The Programme supports amicable resolution of land conflicts. Using Alternative Disputes Resolution Mechanisms. In Central Uganda alone, 3,043 conflicts were reported and 2,531 solved – an 83% success rate (April 2022).

Through the Responsible Investment in Land (RGIL) project component that ended in December 2023, at least 73 domestic agricultural investments improved compliance with international principles on responsible investment in agriculture and food systems. A compliance monitoring Tool was developed together with the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA), to promote social, environmental, and human rights safeguards for investment in land.

The Land Inventory Protocols have created preconditions for step-by-step registration of land rights. RELAPU has leveraged this to pilot a *self-financing* model of land registration within the local administrative structures.

The LIPs, CoOs and CCOs have increased tenure security and land value for the recipients of the land documents while also enabling smallholder farmers to access credit for agricultural investments. Through dialogue with Uganda Bankers Association (UBA) and six financial institutions these documents may now be used at sensitised branches when applying for loans.

Gender inclusion has been mainstreamed, with specific trainings to address gaps and advocate for women's land rights. While social inclusion in land governance has been ensured through CSOs and supporting public forums with representative voices from society.



## Success factors

**Sustainability and institutionalization:** The Programme has defined building blocks for a smooth transition into official structures through: Supporting capacity building at MLHUD, District Land Offices (DLOs), Ministerial Land Offices (MZOs) and Sub-Counties. The integration of CCOs and CoOs into the Uganda National Land Information System (UgNLIS) and through advocating for self-financing mechanisms for land registration.

**Adherence to legal and customary practices:** The Programme respects local customs, traditional practices and stipulated government procedures in awareness raising, conflict resolution and documentation of land.

**Policy Support:** The Programme adopts lessons learnt from implementation experience and incorporates international best practices to inform policy advocacy and review of the National Land Policy with MLHUD.

**Partnership approach:** The Programme involves state, academic, traditional, and civil society actors, actively working with the Ministry of Lands and implementing partners for mutual learning. Guidelines and policy advisories especially for addressing the needs of marginalised groups are advocated.

**Cooperations within the GIZ Portfolio:** With the *Civil Peace Service* for alternative dispute resolution, and self-financing approaches. As part of the **Rural Development Cluster** on joint activities for natural resource management, wetland protection and mapping of fish-breeding grounds with the *Programme for Promoting Rural Development in Uganda* (PRUDEV) and *Sustainable Fisheries in Uganda*.

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