

# Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU)

## The challenge

With 174 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, Uganda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa and experiencing a growing pressure on the finite resource of land. However, less than a quarter of its land is officially registered and for most of the largely rural population, land is a source of livelihood, nutrition, and wealth. As such, the lack of documentation of ownership and a historically weak enforcement of land rights has become a major challenge.

There is a high amount of insecurity particularly on customary land, often leading to the rural population having less secure access to land. Especially women, youth, and marginalized groups are often unaware of their rights.

Conflicts around land are a common occurrence within communities or families, often due to unclear land-use or ownership. Additional layers of conflict can be caused by investors engaging in illegal land acquisitions or in the fragile context between refugees and host communities.

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

The RELAPU project comes in to bridge these gaps between policy and implementation through awareness raising, conflict resolution in rural communities, and capacity building within government institutions while also documenting land use and land ownership rights. This is done through issuance of Land Inventory Protocols, Certificates of Customary Ownership and Certificates of Occupancy.

## Our approach

In pursuit of the objective „ **Access to land as a key prerequisite for poverty and hunger reduction in rural areas has improved for certain population groups, especially women and marginalised groups, in central, northern and eastern Uganda.**“ the project applies a multi-level approach. It systematically builds capacities within the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development as well as local governments to secure land. It uses implementation experience in the field to inform policy advisory for the review of the legal framework.

The programme works under the following fields of action:

1. Improve the institutional framework and procedures to secure tenure rights in Uganda, based on evidence, innovative approaches, and digitalized processes.
2. Increase the engagement of the civil society in the formalisation and implementation of a responsible land policy.
3. Raising awareness about responsible land policy along internationally agreed guidelines and the national land policy (NLP) among private agriculture investors, affected land users and financial institutions.
4. Creating a conducive environment for enhanced production of small-holder farmers by providing options for access to finance.

On the ground, awareness raising, and surveying of undocumented land strengthens customary land rights and reduces land conflicts. The project supports the inventorization of the existing land use with so-called Land Inventory Protocols. The protocols adhere to the standards outlined in the National Land Policy and create the



L. to R.: Beneficiaries receiving their certificates of ownership, District Cartographer at work.

preconditions to trigger a step-by-step formalization of customary land rights. With this, RELAPU pilot's innovative methods and advocates for resource mobilization for land registration. Gender aspects are mainstreamed in all aspects and specific trainings help to address the gender gap, while advocating for women land rights.

<b>Project name</b>	Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU)
<b>Commissioned by</b>	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and European Union (EU)
<b>Project regions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Districts of Dokolo, Amolatar, Katakwi, Soroti and Terego in Northern Uganda</li> <li>▪ Districts of Mubende, Mityana, Kassanda, Gomba, Kiboga and Butambala in Central Uganda</li> </ul>
<b>Lead executing agency</b>	German Cooperation for International Development (GIZ)
<b>Duration</b>	01.03.2016 – 31.05.2026

Through strengthening civil society organisations and providing public forums, RELAPU assures that the public dialogue accounts for the voices of large parts of the society. The project involves CSOs and representatives of traditional authorities in essential steps of its approach, e.g. during awareness raising or alternative dispute resolution.

Further, local authorities and investors are sensitized on principles of responsible agricultural investments in land. The project builds the capacities of government authorities and domestic, mainly agricultural, investors to guide their investments to comply with recognized principles of responsible investments in land.

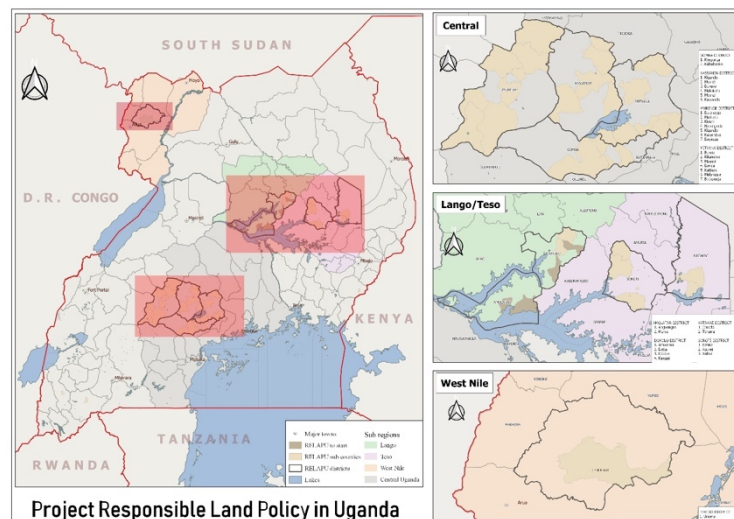
## The benefits

The step-by-step formalization of the user rights, customary ownership and property rights contributes to the safeguarding and valorisation of rural lands. Through this, acceptance and openness to land registration is improved within the rural population due to its benefits and added security.

Existing conflicts are registered and processed through local structures in a solution-oriented way. Under involvement of local authorities, customary know-how is applied to achieve cultural acceptance. Community leaders are also sensitized for the needs of the vulnerable. Only land that is conflict-free will be surveyed and documented.

The Capacity Development Strategy foresees to qualify professional staff from the local authorities responsible for implementing the land registration processes, following a training of trainers approach with the Ministry of Land. CSO partners, local authorities and private sector investors will likewise benefit from the capacity building measures.

Responsible land-based investments are also a means to increase revenue and expand inclusive business models. Banks and service providers for micro-financing are sensitized to accept the land inventory protocols as verification instruments for the production potential of small-holder farmers, who seek to access finance.



Project Responsible Land Policy in Uganda

The project creates transparency and a positive attitude towards the principals of land legislation both within local communities, authorities and the private sector. It addresses aspects of good local governance and public financial management and planning as a cross-cutting element in rural administration.

## Success factors

### Respect for national law while building on local know-how:

RELAPU acknowledges local customs and traditional authorities and involves them actively in discussions how to operationalize customary land management procedures established by government. Processes for land inventories or conflict resolution therefore do not only adhere to government but are also accepted within the cultural context.

**Partnership approach:** The project is involving well respected state, academic, traditional, and civil society actors, while cooperating closely with Ministry and other implementation partners for mutual learning. Ideas for guidelines or policy reviews are advocated for, particularly addressing needs of marginalised groups.

**Working towards sustainability and institutionalization:** RELAPU has defined building blocks for a smooth transition of implementation into official structures and builds up capacities as well as mechanisms for data integration, utilization of fees for sensitization and scaling of land registration.

**Tapping synergies within:** While having different co-financings and target areas, the RELAPU components build on each other and with this deliver effective services and technical advice.

### Integrated cooperation within German Development Cooperation Portfolio:

RELAPU cooperates with the *Civil Peace Service* in aspects of alternative dispute resolution. As part of the rural development cluster, joint activities for natural resource management, wetland protection and productive land use are explored with the GIZ Programs *Promoting Rural Development in Uganda* and *Responsible Fisheries Business Chain*. In West Nile, refugees and host communities, who improve their productive potential under the project *Response to increased demand on Government services and creation of economic opportunities* are supported with registering land and land-lease agreements for refugees