



GENDER STRATEGY FOR LAND-AT-SCALE UGANDA

Introduction

Women's Land Rights (WLRs) are fundamental human rights, foundational to gender equality and women's dignity and instrumental in improving food security, effective climate action, poverty eradication, and sustainable economic growth. WLRs generate positive economic outcomes that translate into better welfare at the household level, especially for women and children.

While the LAND-at-Scale project aims to improve tenure security and land use for women, men, and youth, there are deeply entrenched gender inequalities in Uganda that prevent women from fully enjoying their land rights. Despite progressive policies and laws such as the 1995 Constitution, the Land Act, the Succession Act, and the National Land Policy (2013), inequalities persist due to discriminatory social and customary norms and practices. Women, who make up 70–80% of the agricultural labour force, often lack secure rights to own, access, or control/manage land.

In line with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development's Gender Strategy for implementing the National Land Policy, the LAND-at-Scale project aims to ensure its outcomes accrue to women and men and to other marginalised groups. The project outcomes are:



Improved tenure security for women, men, and youth;



Sustainable, inclusive, climate-smart land-use planning



Improved capacities of key land stakeholders in customary land registration and land-use planning processes.

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN UGANDA



Discriminatory norms: In many cultures in Uganda, inheritance customs and patriarchy undermine women's land ownership.

Weak institutional implementation: Statutory laws are often not effectively implemented, with discriminatory customary practices overriding them in practice.

Limited legal awareness: Women may fear social backlash or lack the legal knowledge needed to pursue their land rights.

Economic constraints: Women often have limited access to financial resources to register land or pursue legal claims. There is also a risk that land registration processes, if not carefully managed, can overlook or extinguish women's existing (often undocumented) secondary use rights.

Specific vulnerabilities: Widows, displaced women, and female-headed and child-headed households face heightened land insecurity.

LAND-AT-SCALE GENDER APPROACH AND STRATEGIES

The project seeks to be gender-transformative, not merely gender-sensitive, in its approach. By supporting communities to acknowledge the underlying structural causes of gender inequality and the differential impacts on men, women, and other marginalised groups, the project helps stakeholders understand and consider the social and cultural factors underlying sex-based discrimination. It then interrogates existing social and gender norms and works to transform the inequitable and harmful roles, practices, power imbalances, and relations in order to promote gender equality in access to, ownership of, and control over land resources and services.

The project employs several strategies, including the following:

Promote joint and individual land registration for women: Actively support the registration of land in women's names, both individually and jointly with their spouses, with a goal to meet or exceed the 40% target for Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs). Raise awareness among men and women about the benefits of joint registration for family security and women's empowerment. As a result, **15,228** out of **34,674** individuals benefiting from the mapping of **24,628** parcels were women, and **6,596** out of **14,675** recipients of CCOs already issued through the project were women, demonstrating significant progress in women's land tenure security under customary systems. Ensure mapping and demarcation processes capture women's land use and claims, including secondary rights, using gender-responsive tools like the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) and Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC).

Strengthen gender-responsive Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Make mechanisms accessible, affordable, and sensitive and responsive to gender issues, ensuring women feel safe to report and resolve land disputes. This includes training both formal and traditional ADR committees on women's land rights, gender dynamics, and fair mediation practices, and promoting women's participation in these committees.

As a result, 195 land disputes affecting 495 individuals (269 males, 226 females, including 123 youth and 4 widows) have been registered, with 159 resolved through ADR.

Capacity building for gender-responsive land governance:

Train project staff; government officials (including MLHUD and local governments); Area Land Committees (ALCs); District Land Boards (DLBs); physical planning committees; and implementing partners. Training covers gender analysis, women's land rights, gender-sensitive approaches to land registration and land-use planning, and the GLTN Gender Evaluation Criteria. It also includes supporting the inclusion of gender experts in project teams and empowering women to participate and lead in land-governance institutions.

As a result, the capacities of 1,809 key land stakeholders were strengthened, including 676 women (452 of whom were youth), ensuring increased female representation in land-governance roles and decision-making processes.

Ensure women's participation in land-use planning:

Promote and ensure women's active involvement in land-use and wetland planning by addressing their specific needs related to food security, livelihoods, and natural resource access. Incorporate women's traditional knowledge of sustainable land and resource management in planning processes. As a result, two physical development plans have been developed for Kitumba and Pakelle sub-counties, and three wetland management plans completed in Butaleja District.

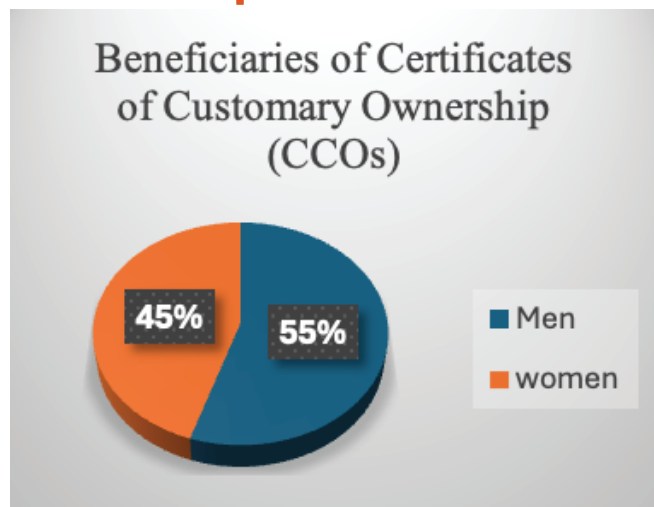
Engage with customary institutions: Engage traditional leaders in dialogue to promote positive customary practices that uphold women's land rights and advocate for the reform of discriminatory norms. Through engagement with traditional leaders in Adjumani District, **2,273** women have been trained in WLR in collaboration with customary institutions, demonstrating progress in the recognition of women's rights by customary institutions.

Institutional and policy strengthening: Support the integration of gender-disaggregated data into the National Land Information System.

PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER-EQUITABLE LAND ACCESS AND GOVERNANCE

The strategies have demonstrated significant gender impact by actively including women in land mapping and the issuance of Certificates of Customary Ownership. While men still form the majority of beneficiaries in these areas, women constitute a substantial share (**44.9%** of CCOs issued in the names of women and girls), reflecting a positive shift towards gender equality in land rights. Furthermore, **37.4%** of key land stakeholders who received capacity-building training were women, indicating a concerted effort to empower women in land governance and decision-making. These figures underscore a deliberate move towards more gender-equitable land administration on customary lands in Uganda.

Certificates of Customary Ownership



The data above illustrate the gender distribution of beneficiaries who received Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs) as part of the land-tenure interventions. Out of a total of **14,675** individuals who benefited from CCOs, women accounted for 6,596 (i.e. **45%**), representing a significant step towards securing their land rights within customary land systems in Uganda. Men, numbering **8,079 (55%)**, still constitute the larger share of CCO recipients, but the data underscore a deliberate effort to include women in formal land ownership, reflecting a positive shift towards more gender-equitable land registration.

Trained Key Land Stakeholders



Of the **1,809 stakeholders trained**, **676 (37.4%)** were women, including **452** youth. While men represent a larger proportion at **62.6% (1,133 stakeholders)**, the project deliberately insisted on the inclusion of a substantial number of women, which is crucial for increasing their representation in land-governance roles and decision-making processes.

Stories of Change

After losing their husband, two co-wives in Butaleja, Uganda, faced the threat of losing their land to a family member. Through the project's mediation and land registration interventions, they successfully resolved their disputes and secured their property rights. Guided mediation led to an agreement to jointly register their land. This collaborative decision empowered them, ensured their land-tenure security, and prevented further conflicts. The formal recognition of their land rights now provides peace of mind and protects their livelihoods and future.



Jessica, a widow from Butaleja, faced insecurity and threats from family members after her husband passed away, leaving her and their children vulnerable to losing their land. Jessica was empowered after receiving a certificate of customary ownership through the LAND-at-scale Uganda Project, which secured her land rights and gave her confidence to access a bank loan. With this loan, she invested in agricultural productivity, diversified her income sources, and built a permanent home on the land she rightfully inherited. Jessica's story demonstrates the transformative power of land tenure security for widows and their families, fostering economic stability and social empowerment.

