

Transforming Natural Resources Conflicts through the Three Rs: A Gender-Centric Approach

When we talk about conflict, we must not forget that who we are, will determine how we are affected by it, and, equally important, our role in it. Our rights and responsibility in society do define our role in its rupture, how we are affected by it, and how we can be agents of change to bring it back together.

The Civil Peace Service has been present in Northern Uganda since 2001 and, over the years, it has focused on the transformation of conflicts stemming from the management of land and other natural resources through partnering and working with local organisations in the subregions of Teso, Acholi and Karamoja.

Gender roles often determine access utilization and control over land, natural resources and the livelihoods sourced from them. Women are typically responsible for smaller yet taxing daily agricultural activities, collecting water and firewood, etc. while men hold more control over larger-scale resource management. In this role division, prescribed gender norms also create unbalanced participation in decision-making processes, which makes it hard to include all perspectives and needs when in search for solutions for all.

Unequal access and control over these, means different experiences during conflict, increased vulnerability in the face of scarcity, and unequal participation in the transformation and resolution of the above conflicts. Thus, excluding perspectives when untangling of tensions and depriving the resolution of conflicts of common inclusive progress. For all the above, focusing on gender transformative methods in peacebuilding is key to addressing the roots of conflict and supporting formal and informal approaches that create wider participation of society, on equal terms.

As part of the methodology, the GIZ Civil Peace Service in Uganda counts with a vast network of partners divided into Interest Groups. The Interest Groups or IGs form a consortium of civil society partners¹ who work on a specific land conflicts themes from different angles and experiences. These groups and organisations can connect to the population and local authorities affected and involved in the conflict areas to support the local initiatives to transform the conflicts. This multistakeholder approach ensures a wider lens of inclusion, perspective, and multi-partner collaboration, with a close commitment to improving access, control and use of land and other natural resources to those affected by gender disparities. In essence, the tripod resources, rights, and representation are at the core of GIZ Civil Peace Service's work.

¹ Community-based organisations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-based Organisations, Traditional Leaders, Women's organisations, Youth groups, Academic, Local and National Government.

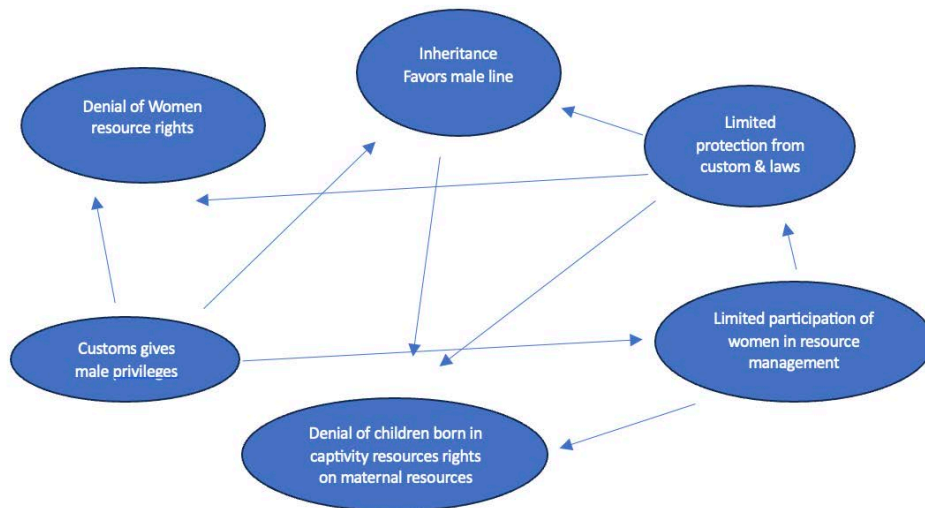


Fig 1. Obstacles to the fulfillment of women's land rights in North and Northeastern Uganda found in the 2023 gender analysis.

(Natural) Resources

Our consortium partners have had a significant contribution in the different contexts where we work. The Ateker Women Land Rights Partners in Teso sub region (AWOLARIP), the Women Land Rights Intra and Interclan Conflicts (WOLRIC) in Acholi Sub region and Traditional Land Management Systems Interest Groups (TRALAMs) in Karamoja sub region spearhead initiatives that contributes to positive changes of norms and structures that promote inclusive and non-gender-discriminative governance of land and natural resources.

These initiatives include awareness creation through different platforms such as radio programmes, community dialogues and community theatre. Furthermore, these target traditional structures, community members including women, girls, boys and men, civil society actors, and government representatives. These projects have contributed to a changed perspective in which land duty bearers to recognize gender-based injustices and proactively develop strategies to contribute to more parity.



In Amudat district in northeastern Uganda, in a heavily men-dominated environment, Pauline Chepotemo has defied the odds. During a one of one conversation with our partner organisation, she remarked “I initially believed that women must submit to men and must not speak before them but must stay home and take care of the children but after participating in various activities organised by the Interest Group TRALAMs, I realised that I have rights to express my opinion. I have now been elected as a female representative in the local council structure and I can sit and discuss with men on matters that concerns our community. I urge other women to speak up, because we are all equal to men and can produce good ideas that is good for our families and the whole community too.”

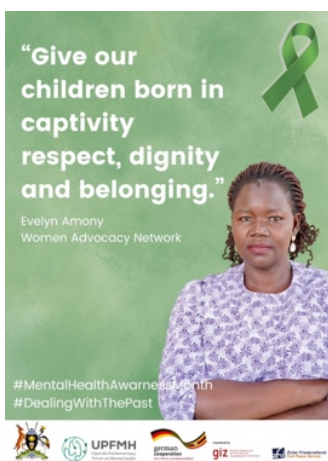


To transform community-level conflicts; mediation and alternative disputes resolution (ADR) mechanisms are the preferred approach: the method is embedded within the culture, and it has long-lasting effects in the context. Through ADR, some of the women who formed part of the community mediation teams successfully resolved eight land conflict cases over women land rights applying a gender lens. Today, the women are utilizing the land to produce food and derive other livelihood options.

Rights

The Ugandan Law and Constitution of 1995 stipulate the equality of access and ownership of natural resources regarding individual rights. However, in a heavily patriarchal society, this reality is not always met. When it comes to individual and communal rights over natural resources, to reach a status closer of that stipulated by the Ugandan State, the first steps are awareness creation at community level to influence attitudes and norms towards legal principles non-discrimination. It is often the case where women are not aware of their legal rights and less so, the fulfilment of these.

During the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, many women had children while in captivity. Upon returning home, many of their children were not welcomed or granted access, control, and utilization rights from their maternal homes, on the pretext that they belonged to the male lineage and part of the family, putting the livelihoods of the mothers and their children at stake.



Through national advocacy, GIZ CPS in partnership with the Uganda Parliamentary union on Mental Health conducted a national level platform to engage the members of parliament to take national responsibilities to support LRA survivors, and specifically women who came back with their children. The different advocacy messages from the survivors, CSOs, government representatives were heard, and members of the Parliament of Uganda committed to take debate and pass a law that would consider the interest and needs of LRA survivors and their children.

Representation

GIZ CPS supports a wide network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that work to promote land and natural resource rights in the Acholi, Teso and Karamoja sub regions, and peacefully transform the conflicts that stem from tensions over the management of these. Generally, CSOs have good representation of women as



leaders of the networks and strongly



promote spaces to further enhance that representation. Being a pillar of the work of the GIZ CPS, it is key to create those space for female voices to champion and encourage other women to protect their land and natural resource rights.

The CPS annually hosts a conference that gathers all stakeholders present in the partners' networks as well as other key actors in the transformation of the conflict lines the programme works on. We call it the Multi-Stakeholder Meeting and it has been celebrated since 2014 to renew the mandate and enhance the impact of partners. Women's land rights have been featured since and the creation of women's spaces is a constant in the conference. From the conversations in this platform, the partners have shifted their attention to gendered approaches to conflict. It was precisely in 2023, when the partners that focus on women's land rights started thinking and stirring their mandate towards advocating for the land rights of survivors of the LRA conflict at national level and bringing it to Parliament (as explained in the previous section.)



At local government level, in Teso sub region, the Ateker Women Land Rights Partners conducted a study determining the reasons for low participation of women in the decision-making local government structures over land and natural resources. Besides the civil society space, the goal is to ensure and support the presence of women in District Land Boards across the three sub regions.

