

How can we minimise land conflicts in Teso?

Few people have title to their land, so most people have never surveyed their land. This means the land is not marked with official stones and there is no map with the land registry. As a result, many land conflicts can arise when people argue about where the borders of each plot are – where one person's land ends and another's begins.

You do not have to survey land through the District officials to make sure that all the land borders are clear in your village. You can do this yourselves, if you work together in your village. It is a good idea for the elders (*Teso for Rwot Kweri??*) to help start the process.

What do we need to do?

First, you need to agree in the village that you want all your borders to be clear among yourselves.

Then you need to find a way which you all agree upon to mark the borders. These markers should be permanent, so no-one can change them. They should be agreed upon by everyone, so everyone will know they are markers. A good marker is a kind of tree which is only used for marking

borders, such as *ejumula* or sisal. It helps if you have a way of writing this down, by drawing a map of everyone's gardens. Each person can then have a copy. They can use this if ever there is a disagreement about borders or ownership of land. They can also use it if they are selling or renting out their land so that everyone knows who owns the land and where the boundaries are.

You can also take the opportunity to get everyone to agree on where cattle paths should go, so there will not be disputes between cattle owners and other people. Other copies can be kept by officials who would help you if you have any land disputes – e.g. the LC1 or the sub-county chief. This will help to stop people cheating by changing certificates or writing new ones, because you can always call the sub-county chief or LC1 to check if the papers are correct.

Giving a copy to the sub-county chief does NOT mean you are registering the land with the Government. You do not have to pay a fee. It does not mean the sub-county has any rights to your land. It is just one way in which you can make sure that whatever you decide about the boundaries can be enforced, if ever there is a dispute. Getting agreement on the boundaries of your land is a good idea, even if you choose not to leave a copy in the sub-county office.

These maps and papers can also help you if you want to apply for a certificate of

customary ownership. However, you do not have to apply for a certificate if you don't want to. The maps and papers are for you in your village. You can choose who to give copies to and how you use them. No-one can use them to take away your rights to land.

I would like to stop disputes about borders in our village. What should we do next?

step 1: Talk about the idea in your village, together with the clan committee members, and make sure everyone agrees it is a good idea. (You don't need to mark the whole village at once. If only a few neighbours are interested, then they can also carry on.)

step 2: Arrange a meeting for all the people who have gardens around yours. Make sure you all agree exactly where the borders of each garden are. Ask the elders to help if you are not sure.

step 3 If many people have cattle, you may want to fix cattle paths. In that case, decide where the paths should be and how wide. If you want a path 4 metres wide between two gardens, then leave this space – the border of each garden will have to move back 2 metres.

step 4: Decide how you are going to mark the borders. Planting *ejumula* is a good way, and one which many villages have agreed

upon, but if you want to choose another way, you can do.

step 5: Now you can measure the borders of all the gardens so that you can write it down on a map. Find a long stick and cut it to exactly one metres or two metres. Use this to measure all the borders. Make sure you all agree on the lengths.

step 6: Draw a map of all the gardens around yours on a piece of paper. It doesn't matter if you don't put too many gardens on one paper, you can use a separate map for different groups of gardens. On the map, you can also draw other things like streams or rocks which will help you identify where the gardens are. Make sure you write down the name of the village and the parish and sub-county. If there are names for different parts of your village, you can write down which area your map covers.

step 7: If you give each garden a number, it will make it easier to write things down. Then you can write details on one piece of paper with the garden number and everyone will know which garden you are talking about.

step 8: write the garden numbers on the map. On another piece of paper, or on the back of the map, you can write the details of each garden. The map is for you all, so you can decide what is useful to write down. We

think you will find it useful to include the following things:

- the names of the husbands and wives who own each of the gardens.
- the lengths of each of the borders which you have measured
- show which direction is north and south (or mark where the sun rises from and where it sets).
- mark any graves on the map.

step 9: All the neighbours should sign to show that they agree. It is good if husbands and wives both sign, to make sure there will never be any dispute. If anyone does not find it easy to sign their name, they can mark with a thumbprint.

step 10: Witnesses should also sign to say they saw that everyone agreed.

step 11: Make copies of the maps. Each person should have a map with their garden and the gardens of their neighbours. Extra copies can be made for whoever you decide to give them to. It is good to give one to the LC1 and one to the sub-county chief. (Make sure that the LC1 passes on the maps when he retires!)

Do we ever need to change the maps?

If anyone sells a garden or a piece of their garden, it is good to change the maps. The buyer and seller should go together to the LC1 and to the sub-county chief to change

the names of the owners. If only part of a garden is sold, then you need to agree on the new border and to mark it in the same way you marked other borders (e.g. with *ejumula*). You will need to make an extra copy if part of a garden is sold, so the new owner and the seller can both have copies.

The clan members and the LC1 should work together to make sure that no-one uproots any of the boundary trees. People who uproot these trees should be made to replant them and to pay a fine, such as slaughtering a goat for people. They should be told not to uproot the trees again. If they do, You can go to the police, if you have in writing the decision of the clans and LC1s involved in the boundary marking.

If you want any help on how to stop boundary conflicts or on any other problems about your land rights, you can contact:

- Katakwi District Land Board
- Iteso Cultural Union
- LEMU

This leaflet has been prepared by LEMU for the Iteso Cultural Union. Please let us know if you found it useful! If you have any other comments, or if you would like to make leaflets on any other topic, please contact us at:

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