



**Land and
Equity Movement
in Uganda (LEMU)**

Making land work for us all

LEMU Annual Report 2023



February, 2025

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List of Acronyms

ADR- Alternative Dispute Resolution

B.O.D - Board of Directors

CLA – Communal Land Association

DCA- Dan Church Aid

FPIC- Free, Prior Informed Consent

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GRC- Grievance Redress Committee

GIZ- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

IDLO- International Development Law Organisation

IDRC – International Development Research Center

ILC- International Land Coalition

LASPNET- Legal Aid Service Provider's Network

LEMU – Land and Equity Movement in Uganda

MLHUD – Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development

MOU- Memorandum of Understanding

NFA- National Forestry Authority

NGO – Non- government organization

NLC – National Land Coalition

NULP- Northern Uganda Land Platform

PPRR - Principles, Practices, Rights and Responsibilities

RAI- Risk Assessment Indicators

RGIL-Responsible Governance on Investment in Land

UCOBAC - Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children's Welfare

VGGT- Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests

Foreword



DR. JOHN JARAMOGI OLOYA, LEMU BOARD CHAIRPERSON

This year 2023, LEMU marks its 20th Anniversary of making major contributions to the land sector in Uganda. Over the years, LEMU has grown to be known for its contribution in the recognition and support of customary land tenure in Uganda, by identifying the problems internal to customary land tenure and those generated by the outside, such as the rise of the land market and then mobilizing both the state, non-state actors and communities to recognize and support customary land tenure.

As we celebrate LEMU's 20-year contribution in the land sector in Uganda, LEMU is grateful to have had generous support from a number of partner organizations and entities over the two decades including: Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development, District local government, traditional institutions, Land rights forums and Civil Society Organizations.

We are also exceedingly grateful to our funders, including; The Berkley Family Trust UK, Cordaid, IDLO, DCA, IDRC, GIZ, ILC, Trocaire, USAID, NAMATI and other Anonymous funders. In these years, LEMU greatly contributed to the understanding of customary land tenure issues through writing of more than 100 publications, influencing the National Land Policy to recognize Customary Land Tenure as equal with other land tenure systems and consequently LEMU has established herself as a national authority on the theory and practice of customary tenure.

LEMU has also taken her work internationally, with regular presentations at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty in Washington DC, United States. Through this international presence, LEMU has gained support from all over the world, and has convened an 'International Advisory Board', which is consulted on matters requiring an international perspective.

In order to improve customary land justice in Uganda, LEMU has run a number of successful programmes in Lango, Teso, Acholi, Karamoja, Bunyoro and West Nile regions of Uganda, contributing towards improving customary land justice. LEMU has also established innovative tools and practices to improve the definition of customary land 'on the ground'.

To contribute **towards the promotion of customary tenure, LEMU's key milestone in the 20 years has been the** PPRR work, in which LEMU worked with 8 communities (Lango, Teso, Acholi, Bunyoro, Aringa, Lugbara, Kumam and Alur) in northern and eastern Uganda, to draft their customary land laws into Principles, Practices, Rights and Responsibilities (PPRR) books. The PPRR books have assisted local communities to protect their long-held customs and traditions, including their customary land tenure systems. The books have been distributed to the judiciary in at least three regions, to magistrates and members of the District Coordination Committee under the Justice Law and Order Sector.

The use of the books in courts as guides in customary land cases is in line with the Constitution's commitment to protect customary land rights. As a result of the formal documentation of the existing customary land laws, the communities' traditional and customary land tenure systems have been given recognition and respect.

Having led the LEMU Board for the last six years and as I retire from the Board next year, I am confident that LEMU will continue her important work on land matters in Uganda, which continue to have a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of many of her citizens.

.....

Dr. John Jaramogi Oloya

Chairperson Board of Directors

Message from the Executive Director



DR. THERESA AUMA

I am glad that this year's remark is coming during LEMU's Anniversary. Exactly 20 years after its establishment, LEMU has auspiciously secured the land rights of communities in Lango, Teso, Acholi and Karamoja sub-regions, where we have implemented this year's programs.

This year's major achievement has been the development of LEMU's 3-years strategic plan which will among others aim to achieve 5 key objectives to;

Continue to support communities to secure their land rights, Continue to support communities to manage land conflicts, Change the perceptions of customary tenure as being relevant and productive, Promote sustainable and productive land use under customary tenure and finally build LEMU's capacity to achieve its mission and objectives.

Highlights of key activities and events in LEMU's during the year 2022 include;

We hosted the National Land Coalition and supported the coordination of the activities of the platform.

Documented community grievances arising from investment projects in Lango, Acholi, Teso and Karamoja sub-regions.

At the institutional level, two (2) new members of the board of directors were recruited to replace the five that had retired in 2022. The Board of Directors works in close collaboration with the newly constituted International Advisory Board, to deliberate on the strategic direction of LEMU's work and key research agenda for the land sector in Uganda.

LEMU's main program areas were focused on interventions to overcome violations arising from land-based investment projects in Lango, Teso and Acholi sub-regions. The other areas of LEMU's program focusing on strengthening customary land rights were not sufficiently dealt with due to limited funding for such activities.

LEMU also held a celebration of its 20th anniversary in Soroti city. This celebration was a strategy to re(mobilize) the long-time stakeholders from various locations such as the global friends of LEMU, traditional institutions in Lango, Teso and Acholi, target communities and NGOs working in the land sector.

Armed with a new strategic plan that transcends from land rights advocacy to ensuring a productive and sustainable land use, we look forward to (re)mobilizing a considerable number of actors and stakeholders to join the movement of working towards a secure customary land tenure for the vulnerable and poor communities in rural Uganda. We also look forward to embracing more related themes that define access, use and control of land and natural resources for the vulnerable population. We count on all forms of support to realize these aspirations.

.....
Dr. Theresa Auma O. Eilu,

Executive Director

Who we are

Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) LEMU is a national Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has made significant contributions towards the recognition and protection of land rights under customary tenure at both local and national levels in Uganda. Based on grounded action and research since 2003, LEMU has effectively engaged the various stakeholders (state, non-state and academia) in an attempt to reduce inequality in (the understanding of) customary land rights and prevent dispossession of the most vulnerable sections of the society such as women, youth, the elderly, the indigenous people and the rural poor.

We work towards mobilising the collective power of the vulnerable sections of the population and empowering them to analyse their own situation and engage effectively with actors and factors that undermine their rights to land and other natural resources. One of LEMU's major achievements at the national level has been the successful and significant contribution to the advocacy for the recognition of customary land tenure as equal with other land tenure systems in Uganda.

LEMU comes uniquely placed as a single-issue organization focused on land, yet it is already creating novel synergies and strategies to consider land from a more holistic perspective. To achieve this, LEMU has begun to work around the links between land and other thematic areas, these may include the drivers of conflicts around land (such as investments, climate change) or opportunities that come from securing land (such as increasing productivity).

Over the years, LEMU has mainly partnered with clans/traditional institutions, state agencies in the land administration and land justice arena, and customary landowners to generate key areas of consensus around what customary land is, what it is not and how security of tenure can be achieved within the realm of customary land tenure.

Throughout these years, LEMU's presence is evident in the sub-regions of Lango, Acholi, Bunyoro, West Nile, Teso, Karamoja and around key National advocacy issues regarding land facilitating the process of clarification and documentation of land governance under customary land tenure and these resulted into the documentation of "Principles, Practices, Rights and Responsibilities (PPRR)" for customary land management in these regions.

We undertook the implementation of Community Land Protection as an approach for sustainable land and natural resource management in Lango sub-region (2009-2016) and Karamoja sub-region (2016-date).

LEMU is a member of the International Land Coalition (ILC) and has been hosting the ILC initiative of the National Land Coalition (NLC) since 2020, a platform that brings together over 37 land actors in Uganda, for key advocacy issues with an aim of attaining a people-centered land governance. LEMU is an active member of other national and regional networks such as the Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET), and the Northern Uganda Land Platform (NULP). Additionally, LEMU has ceaselessly contributed to the international land policy dialogues through tailored presentations at the World Bank Land Conferences consecutively between 2015 and 2019.

Finally, LEMU is fully registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee (registration number 60601) and has a legitimate operational permit, valid until July 2027 (permit number 7424). Headquartered in Kampala, with 3 field offices located in Moroto, Soroti and Lira districts, LEMU has regional operations in Karamoja, Lango and Teso.

LEMU is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, with an International Advisory Board composed of land and development experts that guide the strategic intervention areas on the land question in Uganda, especially on the customary land question. At the regional level, LEMU has acquired Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) and exceptional working relationships with the District Local Government in the regions of operation in 2023.

Our Vision

An empowered and flourishing society with securely held and productive land

Our Mission

To support vulnerable communities in Uganda to secure their land rights under customary tenure and to achieve sustainable and productive land use.

Description of activities and achievements by objective

Objective 1: Communities and Stakeholders are better able to secure their customary land rights.

Community Education – On laws, policies, customary tenure rights and how to deal with investors

A total of 36 community engagements across all LEMU project areas (Lango, Acholi, Teso and Karamoja) were conducted in 2023. Among these meetings were follow-up meetings on reported investment cases, awareness raising meetings, community conflict resolution, a Community Land Association (CLA) handover ceremony in Amudat district, trainings of Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs) in Lango sub-region, Gender Based Violence (GBV) trainings and 2 boundary marking exercises in Looro sub-county in Amudat district and in Awer Forest reserve, Dokolo district, in Lango sub-region, where LEMU advocated for re-demarcation of the forest boundary, following community complaints that the forest had encroached into their land.

Radio Programs

In the Lango sub-region, the program conducted 2 radio talk shows funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and 1 in Karamoja region facilitated by Dan Church Aid (DCA); the topics of discussions were centered around issues of investments on land and encouraging communities to rent rather than sell their land. A message to protect customary land rights and renting rather than selling land was disseminated across radios stations, by news reporters who covered the LEMU 20th anniversary celebration event. The program targeted to hold 4 talk shows but only 3 were possible due to limitations in funding. From the three radio talk shows and news broadcasts resulting from the LEMU 20th anniversary celebrations, LEMU managed to reach more than 7 million people with the message on land rights.

Publications and Short Video Documentaries

LEMU finalized the incorporation of 14 CLA's in Amudat district in Karamoja and these certificates together with the constitutions were printed, laminated and delivered to the beneficiaries during a handover ceremony organized by LEMU and graced by Dennis Obbo, the Spokesperson for Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development. A total of 500 copies of posters on Responsible Investments in Land (RGIL) were printed and disseminated to the communities adjacent to investments in selected districts of Karamoja region, 300 copies of the referral pathways were printed and submitted to the communities in Looro sub-county, Amudat district. In total therefore, a total of 828 publications were printed and disseminated in the Karamoja region with funding from DCA.

For Lango sub-region, with funding from GIZ, the following publications were printed/ disseminated; 131 copies of alternative dispute resolution tool kits, 4 NIRAS International consulting materials (achieving land based investments, a manual for communities on how to understand and address land conflicts, sheet on Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), 300 copies of Lango PPRR; a chart with Risk Assessment Indicators (RAI) principles, leaflet on how customary land is accessed at family level, were all disseminated to over 500 lower government officials and affected communities in the districts of Amolatar and Dokolo.

With funding from GIZ-RGIL; 200 copies of Lessons learnt from the RGIL grievance redress

mechanisms; Impact report of the RGIL project were produced and presented to stakeholders during the GIZ-RGIL project close-out event in November 2023. At the National level, the following publications were written/printed and disseminated to about 200 individuals mainly targeting policy makers at the Ministry of Lands and NGO actors, these include; LEMU's 10-year contribution towards the implementation of the National Land Policy, LEMU's contribution towards the Land Act Amendment proposals, LEMU's 20-year documentation of its impact, influence and relevance for commemorating the 20th anniversary. Other national level policy advocacy publications were towards the Land Act Amendment and the National Land Policy under the National Land Coalition.

The program also developed two short documentaries, 1) on the satisfaction of investments in two districts of Dokolo and Amolatar funded by GIZ-RGIL project, 2) on issues of investments and community land rights in Acholi and Karamoja sub-region financed by International Development Research Center (IDRC).

Challenge:

Overall, implementing objective one encountered a major challenge relating to the exposure of violations of investments which posed a risk of closure to LEMU, even though the radio programs, publications and video documentaries targeted investment projects. Going forward, LEMU's communication strategy will be reviewed to ensure the organisation's safety and peaceful co-existence with the government as a key stakeholder.

The list of publications written/printed and disseminated and the link to the video documentaries is attached to this report as Annex 1.

Objective 2: Increased Capacity of Communities to manage conflicts on customary land

Under this objective, several activities were implemented with mainly funding from IDRC, DCA, GIZ as described below; In Lango sub-region under the GIZ financed project of RGIL, the program built capacities of over 130 traditional and local leaders and duty bearers, on grievance redress mechanisms in Dokolo and Amolatar, to work with paralegals and the communities to resolve land disputes. LEMU also disseminated guides on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) investment toolkit meant to guide the grievance redress committees in resolving disputes.

In Dokolo and Amolatar still, GIZ funded the designing of a mediation pathway including the distribution of Information, Education, and communication (IEC) materials on conflict resolution like the PPRR, LEMU ADR toolkit among others to lower government leaders.

LEMU engaged the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and resolved a long-standing conflict between the Awer forest investor and the neighbouring community. This issue was brought to LEMU's attention by several community members during one of its conflict resolution meetings in Dokolo, specifically in Okwongodul sub county. - This resulted in an approval of LEMU's request to NFA to re-demarcate Awer forest reserve as a way to confirm Awer forest boundaries in the presence of the neighbouring community and other key stakeholders in the District.

In the 17 investment projects where LEMU documented 197 grievances, LEMU worked with the grievance redress committee and resolved approximately 94% of the community-investor conflicts. The GRCs are a sustainable approach to conflict resolution since the GRC members were set up from among the local community members whose capacity as

community land rights defenders was built by LEMU.



The Dokolo DPC, LEMU Project Officer and CLO joined the community members of Okwongodul Sub County, during forest reserve boundary verification exercise by NFA. on 22/7/2023 at Awer Forest Reserve in Dokolo District.

Photo credit: Andrew Ewinya

In Karamoja under the DCA funded project, LEMU carried out 2 CLA community monitoring meetings with the executive members of the CLA's in Arimonyang and Murongole in Amudat district. These meetings resulted in a resolution by CLA leaders in Morungole grazing land to hold a conflict resolution meeting and erected concrete pillars to protect their grazing land, an idea they had earlier on rejected.

In Looro sub-county, Amudat district, selected participants were trained on Gender Based Violence handling in regards to land, as well as creation of a GBV referral pathway as a way of building their capacity to manage land related conflicts.

Under the IDRC funded project in several districts of Lango, Teso and Karamoja regions, 14 individuals from two conflicting families in Pakiri village, Amuru district were selected as a resource management and negotiation committee. They were entrusted with decision making responsibilities and management of conflicts arising from natural resources in their community.

Subsequently a draft community Memorandum of Understanding was designed for resource management and to ensure that there is continued collaboration with LEMU even in the future.

In Pallisa district, the program with the help of **M/s Akoko, Ojok, Omara & Co. Advocates**, a notice of intention to sue was issued to Arab contractors, for a potential harm against the community in Opwateta sub-county, Okaracha village, Pallisa district in Teso sub-region.

Due to lack of any response from the investor, LEMU swung into action and engaged a government valuer, a move which facilitated the filing of a court case against the investor to ensure that the community secures justice.

Challenge

Limited funds dictated that LEMU prioritises the implementation of community-investor conflicts, neglecting land conflicts at household levels, yet some community-investor conflicts where the investors did not cooperate (such as the case of Arab contractors in Pallisa district) dragged beyond the year and are still likely to exceed project periods.

Objective 3: Improved perception of customary tenure as being relevant and productive

As a contribution to this objective, emphasis was put on incorporating the local/ traditional leaders in all projects, for instance, clan leaders are considered a pillar in the composition of the grievance redress structures meant to facilitate conflict resolution processes between communities and investors.

These actions highly enhance the public image of customary land and its structures as relevant in land management. In addition, the program conducted training with lower government and traditional leaders in the Lango sub-region as key elements in the conflict resolution cycle; these training enlightened the traditional leaders on the specific roles they play in ensuring there is peace and justice in the community. LEMU also focuses mainly on the traditional institutions as being at the center of land protection like in the formation of the CLAs in Karamoja with elders belonging to every CLA governance committee of nine (9). These elders supported LEMU in every step of the boundary marking exercises.

Under the IDRC grant, the project convened selected government and cultural leaders in Karamoja in a regional dialogue to share results or findings from the project on land-based investments in the region after which LEMU conducted a radio talk show with name and position in community from the Karamoja elder's forum to discuss issues of investments in Karamoja. Including the traditional leaders was a step towards according importance to customary land and the role played by the traditional leaders in managing them.

In the Lango sub-region, through the boundary re-demarcation work of LEMU with support from NFA, user conflicts that were being experienced between the Awer forest reserve investor and community were successfully resolved.

Awareness raising programs across all its community interventions in 2023 were conducted. Notable among them was under the IDRC project where massive awareness campaigns were carried out in Karamoja sub-region on the lawful processes of acquiring land for investment. These campaigns also empowered the community to advocate for their land rights, as a way to alert the community and adequately prepare them to respond to the intended mining lease, planned to be acquired by Tororo Cement Company.

LEMU engaged both the mainstream media and public events to highlight laws and guidelines on customary tenure as well as disseminating video clips highlighting success stories of LEMU's defense of customary tenure for the last 20 years, consequently through the radio talk shows and national events, like the celebration of 10 years of the implementation of the national land policy, positive messages on customary land were created and disseminated by LEMU.

The program also took stock of all LEMU contributions for the last 20 years during the 20th

anniversary celebration event through continuous awareness raising that mainly advocated for land rent rather than selling. The translated PPRRs that were already translated in different languages were sold during several ongoing community engagements and also during the 20th anniversary celebration event in Soroti. These PPRRs were translated in local languages to ensure effective communication of customary land messages on protection and preservation to an end of protecting customary tenure among the different tribes.

Challenge

Much as LEMU has affluently implemented life-changing projects at the community level, a lot of these successes go undocumented, there still exists a gap in financing LEMU's publicity efforts on both mainstream and online media channels. There is a need to fundraise to professionally facilitate LEMU's publicity efforts in the championing of land rights. To address this gap, LEMU will focus on strengthening its communication and Monitoring and Evaluation work from 2024 onwards. Funders will therefore be approached to support this important aspect of LEMU's work.

Objective 4: Enhanced sustainable and productive use of land under customary tenure.

The program has continued to work in partnership within the National Land Coalition members to distribute the Risk Assessment Indicators and Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) posters with guidelines on the sustainable agricultural use of land. These posters were distributed during community engagements and during national events that LEMU participated in. LEMU also continued the protection of land rights but also educating communities about the need to engage in productive and sustainable land use. Therefore, in line with this, the program concluded the formation process of 14 new CLA's in Amudat district as a way of securing community grazing lands which will later be baselines for sustainable land use practices.

In Acholi sub-region, specifically in Pakiri community, LEMU facilitated name and law firm a lawyer to draft a community memorandum of understanding between two families and in the MOU were rules and procedures of how to use and manage their community land and also how management of resources such as the community rock should be handled. This was intended to ensure productive and resource management.

The program through its community, local and national interventions has largely carried out awareness raising on different environmental concerns to pass on the message of restoration and conservation of existing natural resources. There are also on-going policy interventions to advocate for a concrete policy changes to effect sustainable land use practices.

Challenge

Most of the activities planned under this objective are under the new programming areas of the strategic plan and these will be incorporated in various fundraising efforts in the coming years of the implementation of the strategic plan. These activities include, formation of farmer groups for increased land use and production, advocating for preservation of traditional crops, vegetables and fruits.

Strategic Objective 5: Build LEMU'S capacity to achieve its mission and objectives

During the year 2023, the following strategic activities were carried out to ensure the

institution is strengthened and streamlined;

Recruitment of an acting Executive Director

The LEMU Executive Director, upon successfully giving birth was granted a maternity leave for four (4) months, leading to the recruitment of an acting Executive Director to run program and administrative tasks. The Ag. Executive Director works as a National Land Coalition facilitator, a platform of all land actors in Uganda hosted by LEMU. Dr. Doreen Kobusingye was considered by the Board of Directors as the most suitable staff to act in the position of Executive Director from October 2023 until January 2024 when the substantive Executive Director was expected to return from maternity leave.

Exit and Entry of Board Members

LEMU welcomed two (2) new board members on the board in May 2023, following the exit of five (5) board members whose tenure had expired in 2022. Additional three (3) CVs were considered in October for recruitment of more candidates on the LEMU Board. By the end of 2023 the LEMU Board was constituted by four members and additional three (3) CVs had been considered to make the board fully constituted by seven (7) members as stipulated by the organization's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The New Strategic Plan (2023- 2026)

In 2023, LEMU finalized the development of its sixth strategic plan since its formation in 2003. The strategic plan focuses on creating an understanding of customary land tenure and advocating for its legal recognition and support. The 6th strategic plan continues to pursue LEMU's distinctive interest in customary land tenure, but also is a transition into other thematic areas, related to land rights issues, and the interaction between customary land tenure and the other three tenure systems namely; mailo, freehold and leasehold recognized in the law of Uganda

The strategic plan also prompts a consideration of the nexus between land rights and related issues such as land productivity, food systems and sustainable development.



Soroti district Land Board Chairperson and Speaker Moroto district Local Government launching the new LEMU strategic plan during the 20th anniversary celebration in Soroti city, November 2023.

Photo credit: Sandenieh media

Death of LEMU Founding Executive Director (retired) - Ms. Judy Adoko



In 2023, LEMU witnessed the sad and sudden death of its founder, Judy Adoko on the 5th March 2023.

This came off as a big loss to the organization but also to the land sector in Uganda, since Judy was or will always be one of the greatest advocates for the protection of customary land tenure in Uganda.

The Lango community both in Kampala and in the Lango sub-region and the general public, specifically those in the land sector joined LEMU staff in eulogising her as a person of integrity, and an icon in the protection of customary tenure rights in Uganda.

End of GIZ-RGIL project on promoting responsible governance of investments in Dokolo and Amolatar district

In 2023, the GIZ project on responsible governance of Investments on land came to closure after two years of implementation from January 2022 to October 2023. Fundraising efforts continue to take effect in the following years as captured in the strategic plan, to raise funds to bridge the implementation gap occasioned by the end of the GIZ project.

The close-out event for the project was conducted by GIZ and LEMU's success in resolving community-investor land conflicts was highly recognized and commended by key stakeholders. One of the major contributions of this project was the resolution of 93% of community-investor conflicts registered and the creation of Grievance Redress Committees as a sustainable approach to managing conflicts between communities and investors at the local level.



Dokolo and Amolatar district leaders join LEMU program Officer for the GIZ-RGIL close-out event at Munyonyo Speke Resort, November 2023

Photo Credit: Joyce Ediam

Cross Cutting Strategy 1: Key stakeholder engagement

Throughout this year, LEMU, prioritised working closely associated with duty bearers from the community, local government and other government authorities. In the Lango sub-region for instance there was close collaboration with National Forestry Authority, the community, the district local government and police to re-demarcate the boundaries of Awer forest.

LEMU has existing MOUs with most local district governments in regions of their project.

As a member of national and international alliances on land including , International Land Coalition (ILC), National Land Coalition (NLC), Northern Uganda Land Platform (NULP), Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) etc., LEMU has, through these alliances had the opportunity to write position papers on land rights, for instance, a position paper on the proposed amendments in the Land Act Cap 227 and its implications on customary tenure and a decade of LEMU's contribution towards the implementation of the national land policy in Uganda (2013-2023) presented during the National Land Policy Platform event themed

"Assessing the contribution of the National Land Policy to the Optimal Use and Management of Uganda's Land Resources".

Such alliances and networks have strategically positioned LEMU to be more influential and impactful in Uganda's land sector.

Cross Cutting Strategy 2: Embark on research-based advocacy and setting the research agenda

One of the identified ways of setting the research agenda for LEMU were two-fold; through the strategic discussions at the level of the advisory board and through collaboration with academic and research institutions and fundraising. This aspect of LEMU's work however, did not take root during the year 2023 but will constitute a major aspect of the program work in 2024 and the implementation of the new strategic plan is enrolled.

Cross-cutting Strategy 3: Focus on youth, gender equity, GBV issues and on the most vulnerable including children, the disabled and the elderly.

During the year, LEMU prioritised issues of gender equity and fighting Gender Based Violence at community level, through conducting GBV disclosure trainings with duty bearers as well as creating a clear referral pathway, funded by DCA, these trainings were conducted in Amudat district, Karamoja region. However, due to the limitations in funding, implementation of mainstream GBV activities at community level was not achieved. The program also conducted continuous awareness raising during the community meetings with the youths about existing land-related legislation and policies.

LEMU also conducted awareness raising through radio talk shows in Karamoja and Lango sub-regions to disseminate information on protection of customary land rights. This mode of information sharing enabled a wide reach of information and indeed complemented physical meetings which were in most cases limited to those who could physically attend the meetings.

The program also established and trained grievance redress committees in Lango region funded by GIZ to ably resolve land related conflicts involving youth and people with special needs.

Highlights of documented program impacts/Achievements during the year.

Impact documented under the RGIL project

The RGIL project implemented by LEMU in the Lango sub-region had substantial impacts which included: increase in the number of acres of land used for agricultural production by smallholder farmers and the change in attitude regarding investment and relationship with investors. Change in behavior around environmental protection. Those who had encroached the wetlands in Muntu-Sub County (Amolatar district) and other sub counties accepted to leave the wetlands, the investors accepted to preserve the indigenous trees and conserve the wetlands. There was evidence that some long-standing conflicts have successfully been resolved and there is peaceful coexistence between communities and investors.

There was increased collaboration with government leaders to resolve conflicts and facilitate wetland restoration. Inclusion of other stakeholders; religious, sub county and district leaders improved community relationships and fostered harmony. The beneficiaries also adopted the use of modern agricultural practices and the use of improved agricultural inputs. The community in Muntu sub-county reported that they were using one of the investor's bulls to cross breed their animals thus improving the quality of their animals.

The level of community enthusiasm and attitude towards investment in land was observed as high and positive. Some of the investors reported to have diversified into new enterprises and increased acreage for purposes of increasing production and maximizing land use. The smallholder farmers reported that they were benefiting from knowledge and skills transfer as a result of the improved relations with investors. The investors on agro-forestry however noted that some community members remain adamant and continue to graze the animals in the forests when the trees are still young hence damaging the trees. It was also reported that some community members misunderstood the messages on rights and encroached on wetlands.

Impact documented under the DCA project:

Drawing from the years of supporting communities to protect their communal grazing lands through the formation of CLAs, the project reached a wider number (estimates) of communities and strengthened their leadership structures from within the communities. The creation of CLAs has created a sense of responsibility among CLA leaders and community members with regards to how to protect and sustainably use their lands. The CLA constitutions are beginning to be applied more and more, especially on restrictions around land use that prevents encroachment and cutting trees from the grazing land.

Though the element of land governance is gradually progressing, the element of sustainable use of land and other natural resources within the grazing land has greatly improved. There are no more resource-based conflicts, but rather existing land conflicts are around external boundaries.

The introduction of GBV training helped to raise awareness on the GBV related forms of violence that are common in the communities.

Impact documented under the IDRC funded project: Mitigating conflicts between investors and local communities



Artisanal Miners working in a limestone mine in Tapac sub-county, Moroto district, Karamoja region.

Photo credit: Alex Ssebukalu

Improved Investor Compliance with promises made to the local communities.

At the start of this project, many investors were reported to have failed to honor their commitments to host communities. However, according to recent reports from these communities, the situation is now improving. In Lokales sub-county, an investor fulfilled their promise by paying school fees for two girls.

In Tapac sub-county, Moroto district, Tororo Cement, currently renewing its mining lease, compensated communities for surface rights, LEMU and the Catholic Land Desk in Moroto documented Land owners presented to Tororo cement for compensation. Documented land owners and presented to Tororo cement for compensation.

Addressing community grievances.

LEMU has continued to provide response to community grievances and hence having a strong reputation in regards working for the marginalized communities in society. In Awer Central Forest reserve where the government granted a lease of 49 years to a private investor since 2008, the investment has caused several negative impacts and violation of

rights ranging from spraying of food crops planted by community members, confiscating and illegally selling the animals of community members, land grabbing as the boundary of the forest reserve is not clear, cheating during sub-renting of land, family graveyards enclosed within the forest, non-payment of laborers.

The investment therefore generated a total of 217 grievances from affected community members and through several community mediation meetings and dialogue with relevant stakeholders, about 25% of these disputes have already been resolved by LEMU. Most importantly, the stakeholder dialogue made the political leaders aligned to the ruling government to pick up the issues and put pressure on the investor and National Forest Authority to respond to the grievances raised by the community so as not to taint the image of the ruling government. As a result, National Forest authority, through the support of this project conducted re-demarcation of the 220 hectares of land and to ensure that the land illegally taken from community members is returned to them.

The investor also agreed in the presence of the district technical, political and law enforcement leaders to work with LEMU to ensure all registered complaints are addressed and by September 2023, 94% of these grievances had been resolved. This huge success has greatly contributed to building community trust to LEMU before the public.

Celebration of LEMU 20th anniversary



In 2023, LEMU celebrated 20 years of existence and contribution in the land sector in Uganda in Teso sub-region in November 2023.

The event brought together Key stakeholders like government, traditional leaders, LEMU project beneficiaries, the press and the general public. LEMU took stock of its past achievements through writing a paper on, Celebrating 20 years of LEMU: Influence, Impact and Identity. This paper was presented during the 20th anniversary event.

Twenty (20) years of LEMU: Influence, Impact and Identity

Established by late Judy Adoko on 1st October 2003, with a vision

"a Ugandan society with land tenure security and equitable land rights to make land work for all in poverty eradication and economic development".

For over 20 years now, we have used our expertise in customary tenure to promote and defend especially the customary rights of Ugandans in Lango, Teso, Karamoja and Acholi sub-regions.

In the last 20 years, LEMU's notable success in the Uganda land sector has been around improving understanding around customary land tenure through research and publications, contribution to the recognition of customary land tenure in the 2013 National Land Policy as equal with other land tenure systems and resolution of land conflicts both at family levels and between investors and affected communities.

Our work at community levels has been mainly in Northern Uganda.

20 years of Influence: LEMU's Contribution to the understanding of customary land tenure issues in Uganda and abroad

LEMU contributed to the recognition of customary land tenure in the 2013 National Land

Policy as equal with other land tenure systems.

LEMU has further contributed to debates within the women's movement e.g. on the question of women's land rights, consistently rebutting the suggestion that women do not hold land rights under customary tenure.

Consequently, LEMU has established itself as a national authority on the theory and practice of customary tenure.

Internationally, LEMU's contribution is recognisable in the global arena through presentations at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty in Washington DC, United States. Such international engagements has consequently enabled LEMU to attract participation in LEMU's affairs and membership from global partners

LEMU's work has further attracted strategic alliances with partner organisations, including membership of the International Land Coalition, the Northern Uganda Land Platform.

LEMU currently hosts the International Land Coalition ILC initiative of the National Land Coalition, and alliances with academic and research institutions such as Uganda Christian University and the Makerere Institute of Social Research.

20 years of Impact: LEMU's contribution towards improving customary land justice

Through its programs in Lango, Teso, Acholi, Karamoja, Bunyoro and West Nile sub-regions., LEMU registered a remarkable improvement towards customary land justice including; .

- A resolution of over 1,200 land disputes through mediation and legal advice, maintaining a database of cases in order to identify key themes and lessons learnt.
- At the same time, we have encouraged and built the capacity of community leaders on alternative dispute resolution ADR tool kits.
- There is an improvement in the documentation of customary land through facilitating boundary tree planting and taking a lead role in drafting the Land Documentation and Demarcation Manual.
- LEMU has supported to build the capacity of traditional and local government leaders on customary land management, National laws and policies on land and women land rights.

20 years of Identity: LEMU's contribution towards the promotion of customary tenure

LEMU, through a close collaboration with clan leaders from selected the cultural institutions of Lango, Teso, Acholi, Bunyoro, Aringa, Lugbara, Kumam and Alur, drafted customary land laws for the abovementioned groups into Principles, Practices, Rights and Responsibilities (PPRR) books. Since their documentation, the PPRR books have frequently been referred to as 'LEMU books'. They have effectively been cited by respective clan leaders during land

conflict resolution, hence reserving their customary land tenure systems.

The PPRR books have moreover, already been distributed to the judiciary in three sub-regions of Lango, Acholi and Teso, magistrates and members of the District Coordination Committee under the Justice Law and Order Sector. The use of the books in courts as guides in customary land cases is in line with the Constitution's commitment to protect customary land rights. As a result of the formal documentation of the existing customary land laws, the communities' traditional and customary land tenure systems have been given recognition and respect.

Conclusion and Way Forward

As we reflect on LEMU's 20 years of defending land rights, we are optimistic and confident that LEMU has been elevated within these two decades to continuously defend land rights at a more strategic national level, making constant reference to the three major contextual trends that have previously defined LEMU's work including; (a) a rapid increase in the demand for land (including in areas where customary land prevailed), (b) a persistent misrepresentation of customary land tenure, especially in policy-influencing institutions, and (c) confusion and weaknesses in customary land management. The previous phase of LEMU's work therefore focused on overcoming these challenges.

Going forward, LEMU will strive to create new synergies and strategies by considering land from a more holistic perspective.

The new strategies draw on the close links that exist between land and other thematic areas, including the drivers of conflicts around land: these include investments in land and other market forces, the impact of climate change, gender and poverty issues, as well as the opportunities that can arise from secure land tenure (such as increasing productivity through sustainable land use practices). While previous efforts mainly focused on protection of land rights, the new strategy also combines land rights protection work with promoting sustainable land use, where applicable.

LEMU will ceaselessly look for partners to support her work to ensure that the expertise accumulated over 20 years continues to be more impactful.





Community participants marching along the streets of Soroti While holding different land protection messages during the 20 years celebration.

Photo credit: Sandenieh media

Board of Directors

The following individuals served on the board of directors the whole of 2023.

NAME	GENDER	ROLE	OCCUPATION
Dr John Jaramagi Oloya	M	Chairperson	Consultant with over 30 years of field based and hands on experience in development
Grace Chelimo Angeline	F	Member	Resource Person for Land Justice at Justice, Law and Order Sector Secretariat
Nabatanzi Caroline	F	Treasurer	Internal Auditor at Uganda Management Institute with CPA and MBA from Heriot Watt University, United Kingdom
Mr. Anthony Okech	M	Member	Freelance consultant and former senior lecturer at Makerere school of adult and community education
Dr Jimmy Spire Sentongo	F	Member	Professor, academic, columnist, portraitist, author, human rights defender and editorial cartoonist
Mr Matthew Otto	M	Member	Senior Land Management Officer for Kitgum District with over 15 years of experience in Land Matters

Donors and development partners that supported LEMU's work in 2023

The following are the development partners that have supported LEMU to implement the set objectives in 2023. LEMU extends her sincere gratitude to these entities.

NO.	PROJECT NAME and duration	PARTNER
1	Preventive legal empowerment: Early alert and action to strengthen rights in the context of land-based investments February 2022- January 2025	International Development Research Centre
2	Improving livelihoods by securing communal Land Rights in Napak and Amudat Districts of karamoja. January – December 2023	Danish Church Aid
3	Responsible Governance of Investments on Land November 2022 – October 2023	GIZ
4	Promote people centered land governance through policy and practice change June 2023 –May 2023	International Land Coalition (ILC)

Conclusion

LEMU continues to aspire to work for the protection of customary land rights where most of Uganda's population derive their livelihood. As the implementation of the next three-year strategic plan is rolled out in the coming year, the organization will continue with this aspiration but also transition into other thematic areas related to the issues of customary land rights.

The transition is justified with the changing environment in which LEMU's work is situated (such as the rise of a land market, demographic trends resulting in land shortages and social differentiation caused by poverty, urbanization and education, climate change). In all its work LEMU will continue working within legal and regulatory frameworks and with all concerned national and traditional institutions like the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development to work for a just society in the context of customary land rights.

Annex 1

- List of publications written/printed for dissemination in 2023
- Online link to video documentaries

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1W7t1G725GqIY9gZDa9QyRrbMmGMe6Hem9odODBWC9LI/edit?usp=sharing>



**Land and
Equity Movement
in Uganda (LEMU)**

Making land work for us all

Plot 4174, Block185, Off Bulindo Road, Kira-Mulawa, Shimoni Road
P.O. BOX 70855, Clock Tower Tel: 0392 756 212
Email: info@land-in-uganda.org Website : www.land-in-uganda.org