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LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Strengthening land and resource governance and property rights is central to achieving and protecting broad development outcomes. Clear, secure, equitable and inclusive land rights and sound resource governance systems play an important role in addressing the climate crisis and create incentives that can enhance food security, economic growth, women's equality and empowerment, protections for Indigenous Peoples and local communities and natural resource management.

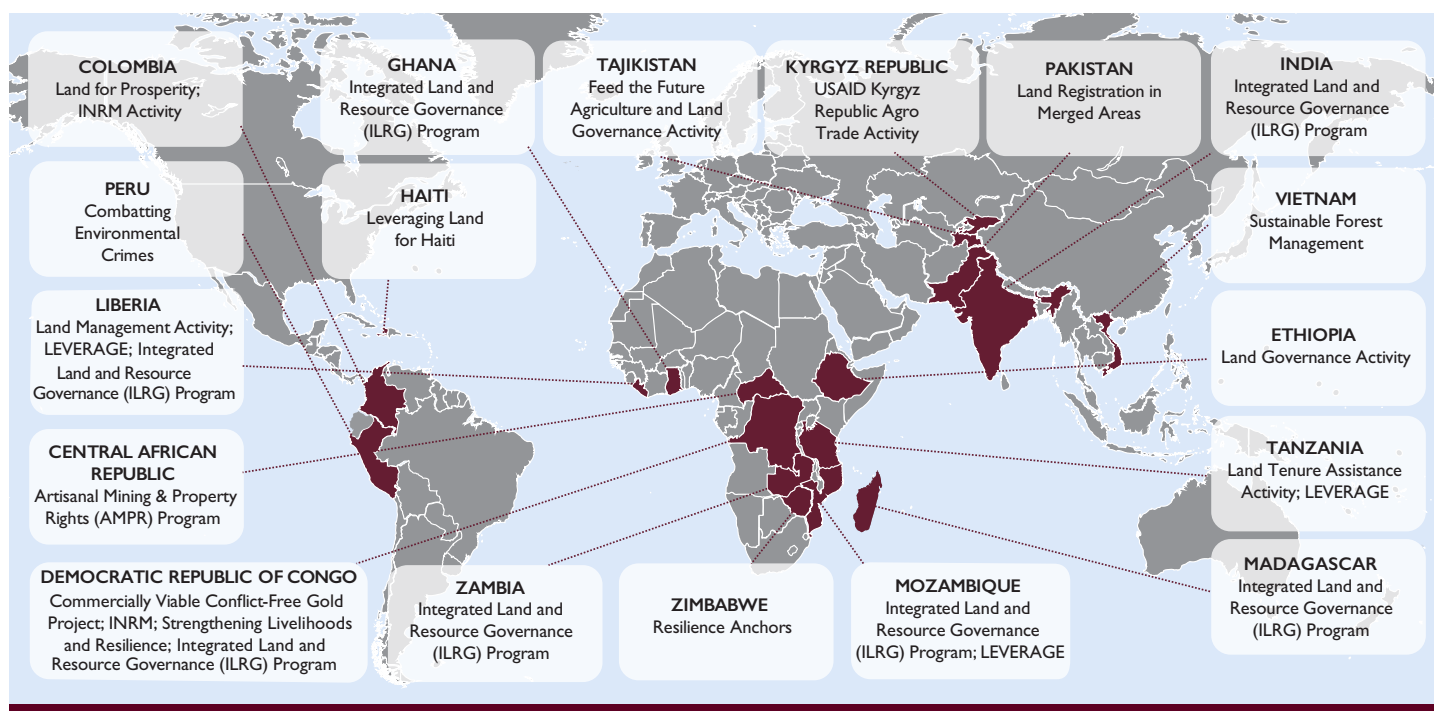
However, a large proportion of people around the world lack secure rights over and access to the land and property on which they live. Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized populations are especially vulnerable. They own and control less land which, in turn, limits their voice in decision-making at all levels. In many countries, rights and claims to land and natural resources are undocumented, overlapping, or unclear, which can fuel uncertainty, competition and conflict. As climate change, population growth, and other forces put pressure on increasingly scarce land and natural resources, it is especially important to support inclusive, effective land and resource governance, and bolster efforts to clarify and strengthen rights to this important asset for people around the world.

LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE (LRG)

refers to the bundle of rules, rights, policies, processes, institutions and structures created to manage the use, allocation of, access to, control, ownership, management, and transfer of land and land-related natural resources.¹

At USAID, we envision a world where women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized populations and groups living in vulnerable situations have equitable access to land and resource rights that uphold and sustain human dignity, enable sustainable economic growth and economic empowerment, strengthen food security, reduce conflict and promote peaceful and sound land use and resource governance.

USAID is collaborating with governments, civil society, the private sector, and other donors to improve land and resource governance and strengthen property rights for individuals, communities, and businesses around the world. In the land sector, USAID has focused land and resource governance programs in 17 countries, with investments in programs of over \$300 million subject to the availability of funds.²



KEY ISSUES

The strength of land and resource rights is closely linked to other top USAID development objectives and programs, including:



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY, FOOD SECURITY, AND RESILIENCE

Without secure land and property rights, individuals, communities, and businesses are less likely to make forward-looking investments in their land, such as irrigation systems, soil conservation or planting trees, due to the uncertainty of capturing future returns from their efforts. This has negative implications for agricultural productivity and food security. USAID's programs set the foundation for effective land and resource governance systems that enable more efficient investment in land, labor, capital, and access to markets for improved food production and consumption, increased resilience as well as enhanced nutrition. In particular, USAID helps improve legal and policy enabling environments to support smallholder and women farmers, improve access to land services and facilitate land registration, raise awareness of land rights, and supports efforts to improve land markets, accelerate economic recovery and enhance food security.



GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women comprise 43 percent of agricultural labor in the developing world, but their rights to land and resources are often unrecognized and they are often poorly represented in land governance processes. USAID's land and resource governance programs have a significant focus on improving women's land rights globally by, among other efforts, working with men and boys as champions for change, supporting gender-equitable laws and policies, ensuring women participate in land certification or titling projects, helping shift discriminatory social norms, and supporting women to participate in governance bodies. Strengthening land and resource rights for women is a powerful avenue for change and is directly linked to gains in women's equality and empowerment, fostering increased agency, farm productivity, food security, improved nutrition, education for children, and gains toward other development goals. Importantly, USAID is advancing socially and gender inclusive land rights recognition through our Mobile Approaches to Secure Tenure (MAST) approach, which has led to significant gains in women's land rights in Tanzania, Zambia, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique.



PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

There is emerging global consensus that responsible investment depends on businesses recognizing and respecting local land and resource rights as part of their social license to operate and as a critical way to mitigate operational and other land-based risks. Investors responding to USAID's Investor Survey on Land Rights indicate they assess land tenure risks, reject projects based on those risks, and—when they choose to invest—work to mitigate land-based risks in myriad ways. Private companies have influence over land and resource rights through their production and supply chains, and company leaders can make valuable contributions to policy environments that support fair and equitable land rights. USAID has forged new pathways to engaging private sector companies in support of secure land rights in [India](#), [Ghana](#), Madagascar, [Mozambique](#), and Zambia. USAID also engages the private sector through the [Public Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade](#) in support of ethical mineral supply chains.



DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE

Just under one billion people globally consider it likely or very likely that they will be evicted from their land or property in the next five years.⁵ Insecure and inequitable rights are a primary cause of civil conflict and risks of violence escalate when land governance systems are ineffective, socially exclusive or corrupt. USAID partners with local governments, customary communities, and traditional leaders to strengthen laws and institutions that deliver secure, equitable rights to land and resources for groups and individuals, and promotes inclusive governance over them. USAID's [2020 Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) reinforces the central role that Indigenous Peoples play in the Agency's programming for land and resource governance.



CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY, AND FORESTRY CONSERVATION

Good governance is critical for environmental stewardship. Evidence suggests that Indigenous Peoples and local communities with secure property rights experience less deforestation than those with weak or no rights.^{3,4} Strengthening rights and local governance systems also helps foster increased biodiversity conservation and greater protection, management, and restoration of forests and other lands to help mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. USAID supports land rights formalization programs in countries rich in environmental resources, such as Colombia, Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Zambia to promote positive incentives for sustainable land uses. In Ghana, USAID is evaluating impacts of land tenure efforts on deforestation and carbon emissions. Other research is exploring the anticipated development impacts of rising global demand for minerals that power low carbon green energy technologies.

LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE TEAM SERVICES

The Land and Resource Governance Division serves as an Agency-wide resource for programming and design support, rigorous analysis that builds the evidence base, and use of innovative approaches to promote equitable and inclusive land and resource governance for all through the following programs:

- **[Integrated Land and Resource Governance \(ILRG\) program](#):** ILRG pilots and tests innovative models for securing rights and improving resource governance. To date, ILRG's engagements have focused on Ghana, Liberia, India, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia.
- **[Communications, Evidence and Learning \(CEL\) project](#):** CEL conducts technical capacity building, knowledge sharing, and outreach to advance evidence-based knowledge on best practices for strengthening land tenure, property rights, and resource governance.
- **[Integrated Natural Resource Management \(INRM\) activity](#):** INRM provides on-demand support services and technical assistance for USAID Missions, Bureaus, and Independent Divisions across a wide array of environmental and natural resource management issues including land and resource governance.
- **[Artisanal Mining and Property Rights \(AMPR\) project](#):** AMPR supports the establishment of legal, responsible supply chains and strengthening peace in artisanal mining areas, primarily in the Central African Republic.

LEARN MORE

Visit www.land-links.org or contact USAID's Land and Resource Governance team at landmatters@usaid.gov.

¹ Land and Development: A Research Agenda for Land and Resource Governance at USAID, 2020. <https://land-links.org/research-publication/land-and-development-a-research-agenda-for-land-and-resource-governance-at-usaid/>

² Investments are calculated from USAID's Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights (STARR) II Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Contract Mechanism. <https://land-links.org/document/starr-ii-info-sheet/>

³ Hajjar, R., Oldekop, J.A., Cronkleton, P., Newton, P., Russell, A.J. and Zhou, W., 2021. A global analysis of the social and environmental outcomes of community forests. *Nature Sustainability*, 4(3), pp.216-224.

⁴ Pacheco, A. and Meyer, C., 2021. Land-tenure regimes determine tropical deforestation rates across socio-environmental contexts.

⁵ Prindex Comparative Report 2020, updated. <https://www.prindex.net/reports/prindex-comparative-report-july-2020/>