



Photo: Woman and man with community farming documents in Zambezia Province, Mozambique. Credit: Ricardo Franco for USAID.

# LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

USAID is leading the way to strengthen land and property rights and promote sound resource governance to achieve inclusive, sustainable development outcomes.

## Overview

Around the world millions of people, communities, and businesses lack clear and secure rights over land, resources, and property needed for economic development and maintaining community stability. Nearly one billion people around the world live in fear of being forced out of their home or land.<sup>1</sup> Insecure land and resource rights present a fundamental barrier for overcoming many of today’s most pressing challenges: poverty, hunger, conflict, poor governance, and lack of economic opportunity. These challenges are made worse by forces such as climate change and displacement. Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized populations are especially vulnerable as they own and control less land, which limits their participation in decision-making at all levels.

USAID is collaborating with partner governments, civil society, the private sector, and other donors to improve land and resource governance and strengthen property rights around the world.

<sup>1</sup> [Prindex Comparative Report 2020](#), updated.

## Key Issues

Land and resource rights and sound land governance principles are central to achieving and protecting broad development outcomes, including:

- **Agricultural Productivity, Food Security, and Resilience** – Strengthening land rights is a proven way to catalyze agricultural production and supply chains, supporting food security and improved nutrition. When land rights are secure, farmers invest more in their land and their agricultural productivity improves. USAID's land and resource governance programs work to help increase food productivity and resilience.
- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** – Although women make up more than 40 percent of agricultural labor in the developing world, they are often denied land rights and are underrepresented in land governance processes. USAID enhances women's access to land and resources by promoting gender-equitable land laws, which includes advocating for women in land certification activities, providing financial and leadership training to women, engaging male leaders as advocates of gender-equitable land services, and promoting women leaders in local resource governance bodies.
- **Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Forestry Conservation** – Strengthening rights and local governance systems 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's land and resource governance programs promote sustainable land use and environmental stewardship and help to reduce pressure on forests and critical ecosystems.
- **Private Sector Engagement** – Many companies depend on land for the production and sourcing of key commodities. How they acquire, use, and manage land has enormous implications for people and the environment; done with disregard for international standards, companies can violate human rights, create conflict, degrade the environment, and worsen inequalities. USAID engages the private sector in support of secure land rights and responsible land-based investments across several countries and sectors.
- **Democracy and Conflict Reduction** – One main cause of insecure and inequitable rights is civil conflict. Risks of violence escalate when land governance systems are ineffective, socially exclusive or corrupt. USAID collaborates with local governments, customary communities, and traditional leaders to enhance laws and institutions, advancing secure, equitable land rights and inclusive governance.
- **Protections for Environmental Defenders** – Around the world, environmental defenders are threatened and - killed while seeking to address the harmful impacts of habitat loss, climate change, encroachment on Indigenous lands, and other social and environmental threats to their livelihoods and cultures. Land grabbing and insecure land tenure are often at the root of many of these problems. USAID supports collaboration with customary leaders and judicial institutions to advance national legal and policy reforms that establish and protect the rights of environmental defenders and socially and politically marginalized groups such as women, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and ethnic minorities.

- **Critical Minerals** – Many critical minerals vital to the global energy transition are found in USAID-presence countries. The mining required to meet the global demand for these key minerals, which is projected to increase by as much as 400 percent by 2040, will profoundly impact economies and communities around the world. USAID seeks to mitigate these impacts and leverage the opportunities by drawing on more than 20 years of experience supporting responsible supply chains for diamonds, gold, and critical minerals, and advancing just and responsible mining practices in partner countries.

## How We Work

### Agency Support Services

USAID's Land and Resource Governance Division serves as an Agency-wide resource for programming and design support, providing rigorous research, analysis and evaluation that builds the evidence base using tools such as Political Economy Analysis (PEA), mapping and geospatial analyses, reviews of national policies and legal frameworks, and advancing private sector engagement to promote responsible land-based investment.

### Programs

USAID's Land and Resource Governance Division work is directed through three global programs:

**Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) II** – ILRG II is a global mechanism that was launched in September 2023. It supports USAID Missions and Operating Units to strengthen land and resource governance systems and deliver more secure land tenure for women, men, youth, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized communities. This is accomplished by addressing legal and policy barriers, improving country implementation efforts and addressing discriminatory social norms that prevent inclusive and equitable access to land and resources. ILRG II also partners with the private sector to support responsible land-based investment.

**Advancing Capacity for the Environment (ACE)** – ACE is a global USAID program that facilitates the Agency's ambitious work to fight climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve land and natural resource governance, and expand access to secure, modern energy and resilient infrastructure. The program strengthens capacities for technical leadership and effective programming through integrated support in four areas: communications, knowledge management, training, and organizational development.

**Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM)** – 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.

## Learn More

Visit [www.land-links.org](http://www.land-links.org) or contact USAID's Land and Resource Governance team at [landmatters@usaid.gov](mailto:landmatters@usaid.gov).