

**BRIEFING** | NOVEMBER 2020

# Strengthening inclusive development and equal access to resources in Uganda

**Saferworld and the Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-West Nile) are jointly implementing a project funded by Irish Aid, ‘Strengthening inclusive development and equal access to resources for marginalised citizens in Uganda’. The project is being implemented in two districts in Northern Uganda – Adjumani and Nwoya. In August 2019, Saferworld and RICE-West Nile conducted a gender and conflict analysis in the two districts, which identified and analysed the following: key conflict drivers and their correlation with gender norms; inequality; access to and use, control and ownership of land; and the different ways men, women and young people are affected by these conflict drivers.**

In Uganda, overlapping formal and informal land rights systems – where land is administered through both statutory and customary law – lead to uncertainty and tensions. This has been exacerbated by the arrival of refugees in Adjumani District due to the civil war in South Sudan. At the community level, land rights violations, including widespread land grabbing and forceful evictions, violate people’s human rights. The marginalisation and exclusion of women and youth from land and property rights, development opportunities and processes for participation also generate tensions. The discovery of oil in Nwoya District has resulted in uncertainties over who should benefit and has accelerated the acquisition of land, leading to an influx of individuals and investors who acquire large swathes of land, at times fraudulently. Some of this land is obtained for large-scale infrastructural development, mineral exploration and commercial agriculture, with increasing incidences of rights violations against local populations, such as the destruction of people’s crop fields and houses.

This briefing presents the main conflict drivers in Nwoya and Adjumani Districts, according to the people who live there. It also provides recommendations for policymakers and programming.

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# Methodology

Primary data was collected using a gender-sensitive conflict analysis methodology based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Secondary data was collected through a review of available literature, such as national development policies and strategies, and research reports on Adjumani. The study was purely qualitative and was conducted using a participatory process. The different methods of data collection were used to allow for a greater depth of understanding of the complexity of the context. The team was composed of five

Saferworld programme staff, one staff member from RICE-West Nile, and three research assistants who were selected on the basis of their linguistic ability. The study involved a total of 219 respondents (124 men and 95 women) – these included community members, investors, and informal and formal authorities, such as local and national government authorities and cultural leaders. Local languages were used during the meetings, with the help of translators.

## Policy frameworks: gender equality on paper, but limited delivery and enforcement

The constitution of Uganda guarantees equal opportunities for women and men. Within the National Development Plan II and III – which present Uganda’s overarching development framework and which focus on inclusive growth and employment – the government also committed, in 2018/19, to promote rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, redress imbalances and promote equal opportunities for all, boost effective participation of communities in the development process, and improve resilience and the capacity of vulnerable groups for inclusive growth.

There are existing policies and mechanisms for stimulating economic growth for both men and women. Among these are:

- The Local Governments Act (Cap. 243), which encourages women’s representation in any directly elected committee and council.
- The Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (2016–2021), which deals with matters related to inequality, exclusion, inequity, vulnerability and non-realisation of rights. It focuses on the social sector, which encompasses services like community empowerment.
- The Gender Policy (2007), which is a framework for redressing gender imbalances as well as a guide for development practitioners. The aim of this policy is to guide all levels of planning, resource allocation and implementation of development programmes with a gender perspective. The emphasis on gender is based on the recognition that ‘gender’ is a development concept that is useful in identifying and understanding the social roles and relations of women and men of all ages, and how these impact on development.

- The Local Governments Act (Cap. 243) and the Uganda National Land Policy 2013, which harmonise diverse views on historical land injustices, land management and land use. They protect the rights of citizens to own land and the access to and control of land by vulnerable groups, and prevent illegal evictions and land grabbing.
- The Access to Information Act (ATIA) 2005, which aims to support the public to effectively scrutinise and participate in government decisions that affect them.

Despite significant policy strides, hurdles to overcome conflicts and violence between men and women at all levels still persist, with patriarchal norms deeply embedded in Northern Ugandan society. The 2017 Participatory Poverty Assessment revealed that women’s inadequate control over livelihood assets such as land, labour and financial capital remains one of the root causes of poverty. For instance, although 83 per cent of women are engaged in agricultural production, only 25.5 per cent have control over the land they cultivate – such as deciding where and how much land to cultivate, what to plant and where, and how proceeds are used (Uganda Social Economic Demographic Household Survey, 2017/18). This scenario creates enormous challenges for women as they are increasingly taking on the burden of providing for their families (in particular food), as men are reluctant to engage in agricultural production and to provide for their families – thus seriously undermining the sustainability of household livelihoods, because women have too many responsibilities.

# Key findings: analysis of conflicts and their drivers

## Natural resource governance and related conflicts

Natural resource conflicts in the two study districts were found to cut across different levels – from household, family, clan and community to sub-county and district. One challenge is the increased population, which has resulted in a surge in the amount of land and associated land resources being used by host communities and refugees who live alongside each other. For instance, in Ayilo B refugee settlement in Pakele sub-county in Adjumani District, there are strict rules set by the local council leadership (the hosts) and the Refugee Welfare Committees (RWCs) about indiscriminate cutting of trees; big trees that are painted blue should not be cut, according to the rules. This is a result of community efforts to curb degradation and preserve the social benefits of such trees, such as provision of shelter for host communities. However, the Madi and Dinka ethnic groups from South Sudan prefer to fence off their homesteads using poles and other long-standing vegetation, resulting in indiscriminate cutting of trees and destruction of other vegetation cover. Although host communities do sometimes allow refugees – usually women – to freely pick grass for thatching (because it is seen as women's responsibility), the situation with the tree cutting has exacerbated tensions between host communities and refugees.

Host communities believe they should access the same benefits as refugees from international and national organisations running projects in the area, but reported that this is not the case, due to funding and organisational rules that name refugees as beneficiaries and the practicality of serving hosts and refugees equally. Refugees said that some of the conflicts and tensions with hosts are rooted in the perception that refugees are advantaged by the support they receive and should therefore pay for resources.

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**They say we receive free food and so they feel we should not be using their resources because they sweat for what they eat. The hosts feel that they should probably share our rations so that they can also benefit and allow us to access land and other resources.**

**A man refugee respondent living in Ayilo B refugee settlement**

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Access to a stream in Belkech village, in Purongo sub-county in Nwoya District – which does not host refugees – has also created tensions. Women are most affected, because tradition prescribes that it is their role to fetch water for domestic use. Community members prefer fetching water from a nearby stream to avoid paying for the maintenance of boreholes. However, the households neighbouring the stream claim ownership and stop others from accessing it.

There are a number of inter- and intra-clan conflicts in Nwoya District, especially between the Paromo and Payira clans, who have previously fought over grass and land; most fights within clans emerge over grass and land. The presence of wetlands – where community members (both men and women) have been in conflict over fertile plots for crop cultivation – has also been a central point of disputes.



**A tree near Boroli village which has been marked with blue paint to prevent it from being cut down past a certain period of maturity.**



A widows' group help a group member to demarcate their family land in Pakele sub-county, Adjumani District.

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## Relationships between communities and investors

The existence of investors mining rocks to make ceramic tiles has also created tensions and conflicts in Owiji, Okutulu and Mundugwa villages in Ibibiaworo parish in Pakele sub-county. The communities feel sidelined by the local authorities and government on natural resource management, despite owning the land. The communities are concerned that they will be evicted from their land by the investors without prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation. In one instance, the community learnt of a land takeover and possible eviction, reported the case to the local authorities, set up barricades in the road and camped in the disputed area, which in the long run stopped the investors from accessing the area.

**Land acquisition process:** Commercial actors – such as investors in agribusiness and tourism – who visited the districts had a basic understanding of the legal frameworks governing land in the country and of the tenure systems practised in Northern Uganda. The investors indicated that with the customary tenure system, most land owners have no official documentation to prove legal ownership. For this reason, land acquisition processes are usually done through the district officials and clan leaders. However, communities were concerned that they are never consulted and, with limited due diligence, investors end up getting involved in boundary and family conflicts. The Nwoya District officials also reported that there are a number of investors operating in the district without their knowledge; this is because investors prefer to deal directly with authorities at the national level. Once they have all the necessary documentation to acquire land, they come to the district quietly to start operations without informing or consulting the relevant district authorities. However, officials also said some politicians want to use investors for their political interests.

**Environmental degradation:** Opening up land for commercial agriculture has left the ground bare – no trees have been planted to replace those that have been cut. District authorities said that most investors, especially those in commercial agriculture, do not carry out an environmental impact assessment. Communities are concerned about river and stream water contamination by chemicals used on farms. Cultivation without a buffer zone has led to silting as a result of soil erosion. Authorities and communities reported that the discovery of oil in the Murchison Falls National Park and subsequent oil development activities have, over the years, interfered with the ecosystem, pushing animals onto community land and destroying crops and livelihoods. They also said that while the oil company Total E&P had promised to conduct studies on the relationship between oil activities and animal movements, nothing has ever materialised.

In order to regulate investments in Nwoya District, a district investment policy was recently developed by the Nwoya District local government. The policy provides contextual information, including on land tenure systems and their potential for conflict. The policy stresses the need for potential investors to follow the right channels of land acquisition and outlines how they can identify and resolve conflicts relating to the land that they would like to purchase or hire.

**Failure to manage community expectations:** Some investors encouraged communities to grow cassava, which factories would use as raw material. They jointly agreed with the community that the produce would be bought at 1,000 Ugandan shillings per kilogramme. However, after a bumper harvest, the investors lowered the price to 300 shillings, causing a lot of frustration, mistrust and tension between communities and the investors. This relationship is further exacerbated by environmental pollution emitted by the factories. A case in point is one agro-processing investor who disposes of waste from the production of alcohol into the community's water source, resulting in contamination and health risks.

## Climate change and migration effects

Climate change is a driver of conflict; it can contribute to the likelihood of violent conflict, inhibit peacebuilding, increase the human costs of war, and compound social, economic and political challenges, migration, overall fragility risks, existing gender inequalities, and threats to food security. In Uganda, there is limited knowledge of climate change resilience mechanisms and few programmes to support these initiatives.

In Oruka sub-village in Purongo sub-county, Nwoya District, there have been longer dry spells than normal. For instance, there were nearly no harvests of maize, rice and groundnuts in the second season of 2018 and the first season of 2019 in particular. In Adjumani, the long dry spell has led to substantial crop failure and losses. People used to plant *sim-sim* in the months of July and August, but have now resorted to cultivating it between April and June in order to get a harvest. Our researchers observed that these changes in weather patterns affect community and household livelihoods and cause domestic conflicts, sometimes leading to families separating. This is because there are often low yields and inadequate harvests and therefore not enough food to feed a family. People told us that because women are in charge of crop production for home consumption, they usually get the blame for low yields – with men and husbands beating them because of low food provision and shortages.

In Adjumani, respondents revealed that women would rather return to their parents' homes with their children than continue staying with a man or husband who cannot provide for the needs of the family due to their livelihood source – crop production – being impacted by the effects of changing weather patterns, such as long dry spells. In some cases, this has resulted in tension, as the women's brothers and other close relatives have difficulties dividing the family's land for the women and their children to live on – as traditionally land is owned by men. When a woman's father's relatives allow her to stay with them, she is often asked to send the children back to her husband because there is not enough food for them. In some instances, due to frustrations

caused by a perceived loss of masculinity and a desire to retain their dignity in the community, some men 'steal' portions of food from their household to sell in order to have money to buy alcohol. This has resulted in domestic violence, with men reportedly beating their wives when they question where food and money have gone – money that would have been used to pay children's school fees and meet other domestic needs. Men also want to show women that they are the household heads, so they try to reassert the power they fear they are losing.

To cope with the threats to their livelihood – such as prolonged drought – pastoralists (commonly known as *Balalo*) from Western Uganda have migrated to Northern Uganda to access water and pasture for their animals. The pastoralists (mostly men) have been accused of trespassing and grazing their animals in gardens belonging to the local communities, which has destroyed crops. Grazing boundaries and animal theft among the pastoralists and indigenous communities have also been instrumental in causing conflicts. The most affected areas are the fertile lands of Got Okwara, Got Apwoyo, Lungulu and Nyamukino. According to key informants, the issue of regional migration is a new phenomenon and is complex, because some pastoralists have genuine documentation that allows them to settle with their animals.

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The cattle keepers who rent land from the Indigenous communities are very hostile and have guns. They sometimes leave their animals unattended to encroach into people's gardens and destroy their crops. When the owners of the gardens react, they are threatened.

A key informant

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Focus group discussion with a community action group in Pakele, Adjumani District.

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## Boundaries and land conflicts

Most land-related conflicts were found to be at the household, family, clan and tribe levels. However, contextual variances were also observed. For instance, in Nwoya District, there are conflicts between communities and investors. These conflicts result from issues relating to boundaries, ownership claims and inheritance, rights to access land, and rights for passage or transit. People explained that failure to resolve these issues has in many cases escalated into gender-based violence (GBV) between individual women and men – the fact that women’s voices are not considered with regards to land ownership<sup>1</sup> and control under customary land tenure can lead to arguments between women and men and this often results in violence. It also leads to conflict between communities and families.

In 2018, in Tangiri village in Adjumani District, people – mostly men – from an estimated 200 neighbouring households attacked each other over a boundary conflict, burning huts, destroying gardens, and spearing people and livestock with bows and arrows.

In Adjumani, the creation of new sub-counties has resulted in disputes over boundaries and local revenue. Respondents reported that boundary conflicts between Itirikwa and Pakele sub-counties mean that communities live around boundary lines with no sense of belonging – as it is unclear where the original boundaries are. Demarcation errors were made during a Itirikwa-Pakele boundary demarcation exercise, which was carried out by the Adjumani District local government.

Tensions continue to build between local leaders in Itirikwa and Pakele, as the latter feel that Itirikwa sub-county is giving authority to individuals to engage in lumbering activities within the jurisdiction of Pakele sub-county.

## Land gifted without documentation

A common practice in the study area is a clan head or family members giving friends or relatives land as a gift. Although the government commissioned a land registration exercise with issuance of title deeds to the rightful owners and buyers, the growing importance of land as an asset – given the centrality of its customary nature in the study area – has led to a new phenomenon where relatives demand back land which was donated as a good-natured gift by other family members, especially when people don’t have documentation to evidence the gift. Land gift retraction by relatives, in particular after the head of a family or clan has died, is becoming a common occurrence. Respondents in Adjumani cited several such cases involving land used by clans and schools. Homesteads and schools have been razed or forcefully closed by the family of the giver or other relatives. Young people, often without any knowledge of the size and terms of the agreement of the land gift, were accused of perpetrating such conflicts through questioning why their families had given away land in the past. In particular, after realising that such land has gained in value, young people try to get the land back, which causes further tension.

On arrival in Uganda, refugees are allocated small plots of land (30x30 feet), and, if they want to produce food themselves, they are forced to rent additional land from host communities. However, discussions revealed that refugees often lose their crops – mainly maize, sesame and potatoes – because landlords (from the host communities) rent them land, wait for the crops that the refugees are harvesting to be ready, then seize the land back with the crops; they are able to chase the refugees off the land as there was no documentation at the time of the rental transaction. This leads to tensions between refugees and host communities.

## Clan conflicts over ancestral and clan land

Land that is predominantly customary in nature is held in trust by either clans, family heads or individuals. A recent phenomenon is traditional leaders using customary regulations that are enshrined in the clan principles, practices, rights and responsibilities of the customary tenure system. This is specific to the Madi and Acholi people of Adjumani and Nwoya Districts respectively. Under this tenure system, decisions on land management and administration are made by household heads, who are usually men. Although the principles, practices, rights and responsibilities of customary tenure in Madi and Acholi defend the rights of marginalised groups (including women, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with special needs and youth), significant disparities between the rights of women and men still persist, and continue to fuel rights violations. Generally, land is ‘owned’ by men. However, in the event that a portion of land is given to a wife by her husband, she is supposed to divide it among her children. If a man has more than one wife and is well off, special consideration is given to the first wife when he dies; the second wife does receive a portion but this is not equivalent to the first wife.

“**Land belongs to the clan and no woman comes with land from her father’s home. So she has no say on issues regarding land where she married. She is merely a visitor who has to keep quiet and let them [men] decide on what to give her.**

A research participant

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Women may or may not be given land by their fathers. If a father apportions land to his children, the girls are usually given a smaller portion or none compared to the boys. This is because it is believed that women will eventually marry and leave their maiden homes, and are therefore entitled to land where they marry; while men will marry and settle with their families on the land apportioned to them by their father.

“**Women are voiceless. According to the Acholi tradition, they are not allowed to speak or even complain about land. It is up to the clan head/family head or even husband to decide what portion a woman is given.**

A research participant

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In instances where women are given family land and then marry, it was revealed that their brothers usually grab the land back. In the event that a woman returns home from a broken marriage with children, she is expected to ask her father for a portion of his land – if the land has not yet been apportioned. As children are supposed to own or inherit their father’s land, when a woman divorces and her children settle on their maternal grandfather’s land, the children grow up thinking they are entitled to a portion of that land. This is causing conflicts among families as relatives end up evicting the children when they become adult men and are

then in need of land in order to marry. This usually occurs in cases of indiscipline, however; if they are well behaved and responsible, they are accepted by the family and given land.

## Theft of food and livestock sets families, neighbours and communities on a collision path

Respondents reported that the long dry spells have led to food scarcity, and food shortages and petty thefts were found to be a cause of conflict across communities. Gender norms dictate that men provide for their families, so this suggests that men are the catalysts of these conflicts. Respondents in Leanguru village, Adjumani District, noted that young men who are unable to find work and provide for their families often succumb to pressure by stealing agricultural produce. If stolen from another family, neighbour or community, there will be a violent retaliation – if the case is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. In some instances, conflict occurs between various co-wives when one wife might have more children but is expected to share limited resources equally.

## Failure to repay loans leads to GBV

The analysis found that gender norms take a variety of twists and turns among communities in Nwoya and Adjumani, often resulting in intimate partner violence and preventing peaceful coexistence. The following serve as examples:

- Women respondents commonly reported GBV as being orchestrated by men. For instance, men will amass work-related or credit/debts from community saving schemes and women will be expected to sell items to repay these debts. When women are unable to produce the required money, they are subjected to violence by men, as a way for men to blame them for their problems and assert their power.
- Similarly, men fail to consult women about the sale of land, which is often sold in the interest of debt servicing. Women feel ignored and frustrated when their husbands inform them that their land has been sold to pay back a debt.

## Control over agricultural production at the household level

Respondents in Purongo sub-county, Nwoya District, reported that men are less involved in crop production than women. Men were said to normally engage in the production of commercially viable crop enterprises and not the production of food for the home. If there is no food, men beat the women. Planting and weeding are done jointly by men and women. However, fighting occurs if men sell produce but do not share the profits with their wives or children, even when money is needed for food and other basic necessities. Usually, men keep the crop income to buy alcohol.

“**Husbands usually go drinking after getting money from the sale of crops. When their wives ask for money to buy food and other items for the home, fighting and severe abuse follow.**

A research participant

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## Power dynamics and household control over use of land

Similar to host communities, if refugees have access to land then both women and men will access it. However, the majority of the refugee population are women and children (around 85 per cent in 2019). Usually women and children arrive first; men sometimes follow them, but many stay in South Sudan or return there after a stay in Uganda. When a woman arrives in the settlement and registers as the head of her household, she is allocated a plot of land to build a house and is the only person in the family who is allowed to receive food rations and cash from refugee support programmes as the registered card holder. This makes her the main income provider, as there are few other forms of income provision in the area that refugees can easily access. Our analysis revealed that this has created domestic disputes and violence in terms of who presides over matters in the home, because men feel they cannot fulfil South Sudanese cultural norms that dictate that men are the household heads and income providers. Some refugee women also become involved in extramarital relationships with host community men due to necessity, in order to gain access to land for cultivation. As well as being a driver for intimate partner violence, this affects host community women as their husbands may go to live in the refugee settlements and leave them with the burden of having to cultivate land or make an income on their own.

# Existing perceptions of how conflict resolution structures achieve peace

The study revealed that the presence of varied dispute resolution structures has led to questions over who has the power to resolve conflicts, and concludes that in some cases, structures for conflict resolution themselves are potential sources of conflict. Below is a synopsis of the structures.

**The cultural and traditional system:** This includes clan heads, elders and opinion leaders, who are mostly men. The Rwot Kweri (one of many community leaders in the Acholi tribe) plays an instrumental role in overseeing land use and mediation of land conflicts. In Nwoya District, the Rwot Kweri is the person who is approached the most to resolve community land conflicts. This is because they physically live close to and know the people who live in the places where land conflicts occur, they are knowledgeable about the boundaries, and they understand the history and context of the land conflicts. Their approach is mediatory and reconciliatory, with the aim of providing enduring solutions. Respondents also reported that their services are inexpensive. Respondents said that, in the past, the responsibility of resolving conflicts was a reserve of the traditional system. However, this structure was reported as a source of conflict: some community members have lost confidence in this system, as decision makers can be easily influenced by people with power to resolve disputes in their favour. Respondents in Nwoya reported that decisions (in particular on land, which is customary by tenure) are in most cases not in favour of women and girls and, if a woman cannot bear children and her crop production is not successful, she is mistreated by her husband's family and eventually chased away from the home. Notions of masculinity and cultural norms that

are supported by the traditional system have fostered the use of violence by men in order to attain or maintain their status.

In Adjumani, the study revealed that respected family members – for example, grandparents, uncles and brothers – are often preferred and approached to resolve family-level conflicts, especially conflicts involving GBV. Inter/intra-clan conflicts are often resolved by a nearby clan that is chosen by the two conflicting clans.

**Refugee Welfare Committee:** In the refugee settlements, the RWC resolves conflicts (such as tree and grass cutting and domestic violence). The RWC is composed of a 2:3 women to men ratio. Refugee community members are tasked to take any natural resource issue to the RWC in the same way that host communities report matters to the local council village leader (the LC1). Host communities commonly report the destruction of grass and cutting of trees by refugees – as well as any other issues involving natural resources – to the LC1, who then invites the RWC to a dispute resolution meeting, which also involves the rest of the community.

**The local council system 1, 2, 3 and 5:** These structures were established by the constitution and are frequently approached to resolve disputes. They usually comprise a nine-member committee including three to four women, although decision-making is normally dominated by men. The LC1 represents the authority in villages, LC2 in parishes or group of villages, LC3 the sub-county level (which consists of several parishes), and LC5<sup>2</sup> the district. Each local council is made up of a group of several people – both men and women.



Families who had formerly been in conflict plant a tree boundary to mark the end of a long-term conflict.



A community discusses land conflict issues in Lodi village, Nwoya District.

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In the event that a conflict is not resolved satisfactorily it can be referred to other formalised government structures, including courts of law. However, a challenge that was frequently mentioned in this study is that this option is usually more effective for people with influence – who are mainly men. In Adjumani, women respondents reported that when the family system fails to preside over disputes between them and their husbands, the cases are referred to the LCs. When this happens, women might be labelled as ‘bad’ wives or chased away from their home. Interviews with women in Nwoya revealed that while they have the right of access to these structures, they fear that accessing them will only make matters worse in the home. Some LCs are biased and favour men because men tend to bribe them; the majority are not objective.

**The resident District Commissioner (RDC).** This position was reported as being very instrumental in resolving land disputes among host communities. RDCs are appointed by Uganda’s president to monitor all government programmes and contribute to resolving land-related conflicts and security threats in their districts of operation. They usually identify and intervene in situations of threats and violent conflicts. Key informants indicated that women prefer to go to the RDC to resolve land conflicts because of their perceived neutrality and ability to refer cases to other relevant institutions. However, this structure comes with challenges, as conflict resolution decisions are always viewed as political.

**The police:** The police are the institution that is most commonly approached by both women and men to handle criminal, GBV and other cases involving any form of physical injury. Respondents revealed that richer parties in land conflicts influence the police to frame the matter as a criminal offence committed by the poorer party, or by refugees against host communities. Respondents cited that because of poorly functioning community policing mechanisms, the police often pay less attention to criminal matters that are reported by people who are less well-off. One respondent reported that the biggest challenge with the police is that they demand money for transport in order to travel to crime scenes; most of the time, people do not have the money to pay for this. People therefore decide to take matters into their own hands to resolve the conflict, which can result in violence.

**Relatives/in-laws:** Issues that are family related – including intimate partner violence – are mostly reported to the women’s parents (usually the father) by women. However, this is not a helpful solution for cases of conflict when the wife has a difficult relationship with her in-laws, because the women’s parents are required to involve the in-laws in the case. Our analysis shows that most women have resorted to tolerating these situations for the sake of keeping their families together. In the event that cases are not resolved, they are taken to local councils and to community development officers, in that order. However, referring matters to local councils or community development officers is a rare occurrence, because men do not like the idea of being reported to formal structures and will refuse to attend. They might also threaten to separate from their wives, if they are involved in relationships with other women. Women involved in these conflicts therefore rarely seek justice beyond the family level. While women have the right to access conflict resolution structures, they fear that it will only make matters worse.

**Women:** Across the study districts, women were part of structures that resolve conflicts. This is either due to affirmative action or awareness of their right to participate in such structures. For instance, women are integral at all levels of LC1, 2, 3 and 5, although men hold the majority of leadership and decision-making positions. During focus group discussions in both Nwoya and Adjumani Districts, respondents reported that, in land dispute resolution meetings, boys, men and elders tell lies – about land and GBV-related conflicts – mostly to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the women involved in the conflict. It is important to note that even if women are involved due to affirmative action or as a result of awareness-raising campaigns, they don’t usually have leadership roles so therefore do not make decisions.

**Civil society organisations** were mentioned as being crucial for ensuring that different groups are included in peacebuilding processes and in sensitising groups on their rights in conflict resolution structures. Civil society organisations also promote tenure security by supporting communities to process certificates of customary ownership and by providing legal counsel.



Community members in a focus group discussion.  
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## Conclusions and recommendations

A major conclusion of this conflict analysis is that existing and potential conflicts in Nwoya and Adjumani Districts are complex in nature, but are manageable through careful analysis, including gender-sensitive analysis, transparent action planning and participatory processes. Some of the conflicts are institutionally, economically, culturally, communally and politically driven. There are, however, critical factors that need to be addressed urgently. The observed differences between social and gender norms, locations (Nwoya and Adjumani) and context are highly important features of this study and highlight how the dynamics and drivers of conflicts are not uniform – this suggests that some aspects of programming may need to be differentiated by district.

The following are recommendations for possible programme areas. These recommendations are based on an analysis of the findings of this research.

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**Existing and potential conflicts in Nwoya and Adjumani Districts are complex in nature, but are manageable through careful analysis.**

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### **Government of Uganda: ministries, departments and agencies**

- An emphasis on social norms, including gender-related norms, should be a major focus for any programme intervention and could be differentiated by location and context.
- Conduct a gender-sensitive conflict analysis in areas experiencing these types of conflict, to examine the links between gender norms and conflict as well as gender inequalities. Use the findings to guide the design of any programme intervention.
- Employ and adopt mechanisms to engage communities in gender-sensitive conflict analyses. Ensure there is meaningful participation of women and make sure their concerns are addressed in future programming.
- National-level authorities, such as the Uganda Investment Authority, should insist that all investors consult with local-level authorities and other relevant local stakeholders in order to understand existing social and gender dynamics in their areas of interest before starting operations.
- Carry out community sensitisation on land matters, including women’s rights and referral pathways or mechanisms that deal with land rights. There is also a need to sensitise communities on succession laws.

- Strengthen sustainable livelihood strategies and strengthen community resilience against conflict and environmental changes. These should mainly target young people but also men and women, given the impact on GBV.
- Work with local, women-led organisations as partners, allocating enough funding so that they can implement their agendas.
- Communities (both men and women) could be supported by the government and development partners with items like tree seedlings to mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as adopting climate-resilient crop varieties.

### Civil society organisations

- Conduct sensitisation through different channels to relay information and knowledge on conflict-sensitive issues, natural resource governance and land rights, as well as gender inequalities, women's participation, and GBV prevention, management and response.
- Conduct community awareness-raising campaigns on gender-related norms across all levels, and promote community dialogue on gender-related concerns, with the meaningful participation of women.
- Promote women's equal and meaningful participation in decision-making and conflict resolution processes.
- Through trainings, strengthen the capacity of conflict resolution structures to respond to and manage land conflicts. For instance, strengthen families' capacity to resolve conflicts, as they – and particularly in-laws – handle most conflicts at the family level. Increase women's participation in these structures.
- Create safe spaces for meaningful dialogue between investors, communities and local authorities. Create a forum to bring together representatives from communities, investors and authorities.
- Facilitate traditional leaders to conduct community sensitisation on customary practices that are often interpreted by people to their advantage. Ensure that women are part of these as decision makers.

### Communities

- Through trainings, strengthen the implementation and monitoring of community dialogues/interventions and action plans (and ensure a gender focus is included) by parish chiefs, community development officers, local council leaders and civil society organisations.

### District authorities

- Engage in dialogues with investors, communities and government authorities using community days and radio talk shows, ensuring that women participate meaningfully in all dialogues and that women's concerns are addressed.

### Investors

- Acquire land through a consultative process that engages all parties concerned in a transparent manner, to reduce risks of land-related conflicts.
- Undertake gender- and conflict-sensitive participatory impact assessment studies prior to large-scale investments and use the findings to design or adjust commercial activities that are conflict sensitive and inclusive, to avoid community outcry and environmental pollution. This will lessen tensions, reduce costs for the investor/company, and improve the relationship between communities and investors, while supporting efforts to address gender inequalities and gender drivers of conflict.

## About the project

Saferworld and RICE-West Nile are jointly implementing an Irish Aid-funded project, 'Strengthening inclusive development and equal access to resources for marginalised citizens in Uganda'. The project is being implemented in the two districts of Adjumani and Nwoya.



## About RICE-West Nile

Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-West Nile) is a nationally registered NGO working in Uganda's West Nile and Acholi sub-regions. The work of RICE-West Nile covers the thematic areas of the environment, natural resources, sustainable agriculture, development research, human rights, peacebuilding, governance and community health. RICE-West Nile works in partnership with community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, local networks, and national and international organisations. Over the years, RICE-West Nile has made significant contributions to human rights promotion in West Nile and Northern Uganda.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The term ownership does not necessarily apply under customary tenure since land is held in trust by the clans and heads of household for the current and next generation.
- <sup>2</sup> LC4 no longer exists in local government administrative structures.



## About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Cover photo – Women take part in a Saferworld-led community meeting to discuss resolving land conflicts in Otuke district.

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Rialtas na hÉireann  
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## SAFERWORLD

### UK OFFICE

Saferworld  
The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square  
London N1 6HT, UK

Phone: +44 (0)20 7324 4646

Email: [general@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:general@saferworld.org.uk)

Web: [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

 [www.facebook.com/Saferworld](https://www.facebook.com/Saferworld)

 [@Saferworld](https://twitter.com/Saferworld)

 [Saferworld](https://www.linkedin.com/company/saferworld)

Registered charity no. 1043843

A company limited by guarantee no. 3015948

### UGANDA OFFICE

PO Box 8415, 4th Floor NIC Building  
Pilkington Road, Kampala  
Uganda

Phone: +256 (0) 414 231 130/50