

## **Improving Land Governance in the IGAD Region: Project overview and lessons learnt**

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### **Background**

Land rights are powerful resources for people to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Insecure land tenure condemns the poor and vulnerable to the margins of society and economies, fuels conflicts, drives unsustainable land-use patterns and destroys the livelihoods of those in most need. Hence, securing and guaranteeing land rights is fundamental for socio-economic development across the world and is increasingly associated with environmental resilience and peace building. Similarly, land plays a central role to both the livelihood and economic well-being of people in the IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) region. Yet, only few IGAD Member States have mainstreamed land governance issues in their institutions and into development plans and programmes. Improving Land Governance in the IGAD Region - through a partnership with the African Land Policy Center (ALPC) - is one of Switzerland's engagement to support the implementation of the African Union Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in accordance with the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa. The project aims to mainstream land governance issues in the programs of the IGAD secretariat with development of strategy on land governance in IGAD programmes. The establishment of strong coordination and partnerships platforms and mechanisms that address existing knowledge, resources and capacity needs and building capacity of the secretariat to be able to engage member states on land policy development and implementation are main priorities of the project. Enhanced capacity of IGAD and its member states in reviewing, developing and implementing land governance frameworks are expected to improve the lives of the people living in the region.

### **Key land issues and challenges in the IGAD region**

The eight member states in the IGAD region have different laws governing land as a consequence of their colonial history, diversity of cultural and religious norms and endowment with natural resources. The region is also characterized by high political instability and recurrent droughts. As a result, the region hosts the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the continent. Land conflicts have an enormous impact on the fight against hunger and poverty, on the goal to empower women, on building peace and security, and on sustainable land use. Desertification, climate variability and climate change are additional challenges for sustainable land management and governance in this region. Some of the major issues that have been identified and prioritized for policy formulation and implementation in the region include diffusive plural legal systems in land governance, land and natural resource degradation, migration, land administration challenges, conflict, insecure land tenure systems - particularly for women and youth - and large scale agricultural investments. Women in the IGAD region and worldwide face major challenges with regard to access to land and tenure security. Securing women's land rights increases women's economic security, but it has far greater benefits for society more generally.

Overall, land governance plays a central role in the region's developmental agenda as well as in IGAD's programmes. The project helps IGAD and its member states to address the various land policy and governance issues and constraints faced by countries in East and the Horn of Africa.

### **Main achievements and challenges**

The project in its first phase mainly contributed to capacitate the IGAD secretariat by providing human resources and technical backstopping through the ALPC. By adopting and applying guidelines to mainstream land governance issues, the project contributed to the mainstreaming of land in the IGAD

projects and strategy including the five years' strategy of IGAD and the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan. The project generated knowledge through assessment studies highlighting the nexus between land governance and migration, linkages between natural resources degradation and migration in the IGAD region. A study is also ongoing to identify land governance issues linked to the IGAD Protocol on Transhumance, allowing transhumant pastoralist communities to cross-border migrate in search of pastures and water that are paramount to the survival of their livestock and themselves.

A Regional Land Governance Multi-Stakeholder Platform has been established to facilitate experience sharing, lessons learnt and dissemination of best practices in land policy formulation, implementation and monitoring based on Member States' experiences. These regional dialogues seek to bring civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to interact with the Member States and as such creating new pathways for national dialogues to emerge on land governance.

Furthermore, the development of a regional land policy convergence framework is underway. The implementation of this regional framework will enhance land policy cohesion within the region in support of regional integration and other developmental goals. The project has also been engaged in the land governance Monitoring & Evaluation framework (M&E), which focuses on tracking progress in implementation of the African Union Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges and to enhance monitoring of land policy development and implementation in the IGAD secretariat and its Member States. Three IGAD Member States; Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda were identified as pilot countries to implement the M&E framework.

### **Conclusion and lessons learnt**

The project has made key achievements in strengthening the capacities of ALPC and IGAD to support land governance programmes, establishment of a functional regional land policy dialogue multi-stakeholder's platform and in mainstreaming land governance in IGAD programmes. These efforts need further support to sustain and scale up results.

The Global Program Food Security (GPFS) will continue supporting the harmonization/convergence of land policies of the IGAD Member States and other African Union Member States, including by strengthening their capacity to achieve the 30% target for allocation of land to women to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and AU Agenda 2063. In addition, supporting knowledge generation and dissemination in priority land issues including access to land for women and youth under customary tenure and common property systems, pastoralism and land administration will be important. In addition, urban- and peri-urban land use planning dynamics for integrated development will be another area that needs particular attention.

The achievements and challenges in this project demonstrate important lessons on how to work with RECs to pursue a continental agenda. The knowledge generated can be duplicated to other Member States and regions as most RECs have little institutional capacity, financial support and at times political willingness to address the land issues. Major lessons include the acknowledgement that land governance reforms are long-term endeavors, unfolding their benefits only with time, and the indispensable need to obtain political willingness to improve land governance. Switzerland thus continues to support national and local governments to fulfil their commitment and achieve long-lasting changes in the land sector and in people's daily lives.