

INTRODUCTION AND HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM

It is estimated that only 10% of the 2.5 billion rural and indigenous people who depend on collectively managed lands and natural resources have formally recognized rights to their lands. **Without formal recognition or documentation, these communities' lands, livelihoods, and cultures are more vulnerable to dispossession** by those with political, legal, and economic power.

Population growth, climate change, and increasing global demand for land and natural resources are putting pressure on land. Rural, nomadic, and forest-dwelling communities are experiencing an influx of investors seeking land for logging, mining, infrastructure, and agribusiness ventures. In addition, national elites and government agencies are claiming millions of hectares of land for investment ventures, mega-projects, and speculation. Even when communities welcome private investment, investment activities may lead to environmental degradation, human rights violations, and other injustices. As communities lose their lands, competition, conflict, and environmental degradation are exacerbated. These trends underscore the **urgent need to increase community land protection efforts** across the world.

Many countries do have laws or legal provisions that make it possible for communities to secure tenure over their lands in ways that respect local custom and culture. But those **laws have largely not been implemented** due to financial and capacity constraints – and lack of political will. Communities cannot afford to wait for their governments to protect them. **Proactive community-based action to leverage and demand legal protections is critical.**

Namati's Community Land Protection Program supports communities to use existing laws to proactively strengthen their ability to protect, document, and steward their customary and indigenous lands. As **communities empower themselves to use these laws to document and secure their land rights**, they also strengthen their own local mechanisms to govern their lands equitably and sustainably, and to advocate for their own interests into the future.

Over the past six years, Namati and our partners – the Sustainable Development Institute in Liberia (SDI), the Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU), and Centro Terra Viva (CTV) in Mozambique – have developed, tested, and evaluated innovative strategies to support communities in community land protection.¹ Over the years, we have adapted our approach to suit various local contexts and modified the process to address obstacles, leverage community expertise, and ensure positive outcomes. The five-step approach laid out in this Guide is the culmination of our collective findings, innovations, and creative adaptations.²

1. The Community Land Protection Program's efforts are derived from a two-year randomized controlled trial investigation designed to facilitate the documentation and protection of customarily held lands through legally established community land titling processes; understand how to best and most efficiently support communities to successfully document their lands; and support communities to establish mechanisms to address intra-community injustice and discrimination relative to land and natural resource rights. The findings and conclusions of that effort are detailed in a series of reports available at <http://www.namati.org/work/community-land-protection/phase-one-findings-and-reports/>

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