



# Incorporating Land and Resource Governance into Democracy and Conflict Programming

JULY 2022

Land and natural resources are discrete, finite, and fundamentally important assets. In developing countries, they constitute a substantial part of personal and national wealth. A country's approach to land and resource governance (LRG) contributes significantly to its broader socioeconomic development. LRG is increasingly recognized as a foundational component of many key environment and sustainable development strategies, and effective LRG strategies at all scales can contribute to achieving positive human well-being and environmental outcomes.

Strengthened LRG is a catalyst for sustainable economic growth. If well governed, land and natural resources are also fundamental for achieving many other development objectives, from conserving biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change, to empowering women and bolstering civil society. Secure LRG can also provide a basis for property tax systems that support public sector service provision. If poorly managed, they can exacerbate environmental degradation and increase inequality, corruption, and conflict.

This reference sheet is part of a series of materials aimed at USAID Missions and other Operating Units interested in integrating LRG into their programming. Each reference sheet in this series briefly outlines existing evidence on the links between LRG and an adjacent development topic—in this case, democracy and conflict—and provides practical guidance for integrating LRG considerations across the Program Cycle.

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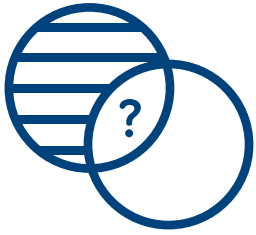
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# Why LRG Matters for Democracy and Conflict

The devolution of land and resource governance to local communities can, if adequately resourced, increase participation and build social capital.

Control and competition over land and resources affects, and is affected by, politics, governance, and conflict around the world. Electoral contests and political power are often influenced by the ability of candidates to use LRG issues to recruit and reward supporters. Democratic governments face complex challenges in legislating and managing LRG in ways that integrate formal and customary tenure rights, gender equity, concerns of Indigenous Peoples, resource sustainability, and effective strategies for economic growth. Research shows that countries experiencing multiple simultaneous land challenges may also be more likely to experience an increase in the intensity of conflicts (de Jong, De Bruin, Knoop & van Vliet, 2021). While corruption and political interference in LRG decision-making can undermine citizens' perceptions of government legitimacy, the devolution of land and resource governance to local communities can, if adequately resourced, increase participation and build social capital (Paudel et al., 2010; Paudel, 2016).

Land governance links to conflict in many ways. Just a few examples include jurisdictional disputes caused by overlapping and contradictory land tenure laws, historic and current elite capture of lands, changing land rights among identity groups, and tensions between traditional "insiders" and newly arrived "outsiders" as the result of environmental stresses or demographic shifts. Where the design or implementation of rural land use rules is perceived to be unjust, as is often the case in farmer-herder disputes, violence can

erupt quickly. Disputes over access to land and high-value minerals precipitated wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the nearly 25-year war in Sri Lanka was fought over geographic claims to an ethnic homeland for the country's minority population. Africa, in particular, has historically been a hotbed of land-related conflict: between 1989 and 2011, "territory" was the most common cause of non-state conflict on the continent. Land-use conflicts, particularly where access to agricultural land or water resources are at stake, accounted for one quarter of all African conflicts from 1989 to 2011 (Von Uexkull and Pettersson, 2018).

The twin forces of climate change and global consumption threaten to exacerbate this trend. Climate change is forcing populations to migrate in search of food and jobs, adding to rural-to-urban migration and the growth of precarious, informal urban settlements without legal rights, basic infrastructure, or essential services. With the global demand for food, fuel, and other natural resources continuing to rise, large-scale, land-based investment exposes local communities to land grabbing and related conflicts.

Land, poverty, weak governance, and conflict often intersect at sites around the world where industrial or artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) takes place. ASM is often unlicensed, unregulated, and unlawful, exposing millions of artisanal miners and local communities to dangerous environmental practices and health and safety risks. In countries like the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and Colombia, already struggling to manage conflicts in remote areas outside the effective control of the state, ASM has generated mineral revenues used by armed groups as a source of conflict financing. Because mining sites are potentially so lucrative, particularly in areas where other economic and livelihood opportunities are limited, it is easy to understand why sites are fiercely contested by various actors, whether artisanal miners, industrial mining operators, or conflict entrepreneurs. Land and resource governance challenges are often at the core of these conflicts.

In the Amazonian regions of Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil, the development of mining, oil and gas, logging, and infrastructure projects is often perceived as a threat to cultural heritage, livelihoods, and the environment by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, spurring protests against economic development based on “extractivism.” Fundamental disagreements about land use models and the proper use of natural resource assets are reflected in the polarization of political actors in the region. Decisions about land and resource governance have significant implications for foreign investment, citizen rights, biodiversity, and national security and stability.

Insecure land and resource rights are significant factors in the incidence and recurrence of conflict, violence, and instability. At the same time, strengthening land and resource rights could help to prevent conflicts, mitigate crises, and ensure a strong and rapid post-conflict recovery.

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## HOW DOES STRENGTHENED LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE BOLSTER DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE, AND PREVENT CONFLICT?

Evidence suggests that LRG programs can help foster community-based institutions that improve natural resource management and strengthen women's rights; decrease the likelihood and recurrence of conflict through land rehabilitation and intercommunal dialogue; contribute to post-conflict stability by ensuring that those who return after fleeing a conflict are secure in their land tenure and property rights; and build social capital and trust. Some examples include:

- In Burkina Faso and Mali, the use of land use agreements between farmers and herders has clarified access to shared resources, built trust and reduced crop damage and violence (Brottem, 2021).
- Studies from the Horn of Africa have shown how projects in climate-affected pastoralist rangelands that combine landscape rehabilitation, resource sharing, and dialogue can make significant contributions to peacebuilding (Stark et al., 2017; Stark et al., 2018).
- A study from Ethiopia found that improving land use planning, paired with strengthening customary courts and empowering customary authorities, can help reduce the incidence of inter-clan conflict (Stevens et al., 2020).
- Strengthened LRG is critically important to post-conflict recovery because property is often the most valuable asset of those displaced by conflict. For example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, property restitution programs helped to reestablish the rule of law and contributed to reconciliation between parties to the conflict. Similarly, in Iraq, land and property rights have been found to be critical to the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people (Ibid.).

However, despite a growing number of empirical observations on specific sets of issues and cases, more robust evidence is needed on the intersection of LRG, conflict, and governance. This research remains a work-in-progress.



# Insights from the Field and Research

Past and ongoing USAID projects and research demonstrate that land and resource governance programming can effectively contribute to democracy and conflict-related development objectives.

In Colombia, USAID's [Land and Rural Development Program \(LRDP\)](#) helped the Government of Colombia restitute land to victims of the country's half century long conflict, and improved the capacity of regional and national GoC institutions to formalize rural property rights and allocate public lands. By building public entities' capacities to restitute land to victims of the conflict, and strengthening smallholder land rights, LRDP helped foster the necessary conditions for lasting peace. USAID is continuing this work through its [Land for Prosperity Activity](#).

In Liberia, USAID's [Land Governance Support Activity \(LGSA\)](#) worked to strengthen the Liberian Land Authority, a relatively new agency that consolidated multiple disparate land-related agencies and is also developing a new land policy. A well-functioning land governance institution, which now includes a Gender Unit to improve equitable access to land, coupled with significant improvements to the land governance processes will enable Liberia to implement its land policy through new land administration services, in an effort to halt the deterioration of land resources and stave off conflict.

In the Central African Republic, USAID's [Artisanal Mining and Property Rights \(AMPR\)](#) project supports the establishment of legal, responsible supply chains and strengthening peace in artisanal mining areas. In cooperation with the country's Ministry of Humanitarian Action and its network of Community Peace and Reconciliation Committees, AMPR is supporting inclusive community dialogue to resolve conflict over land and natural resources, and enhancing the role of women in artisanal mining.

In a 2021 issue brief titled [Pastoralism in Contested Spaces in Southwest Central African Republic](#), USAID examined how the struggle to control grasslands and water resources is fueling violence in Southwest Central African Republic. The brief found that the country's deep-seated political and economic instability is linked in part to struggles over the country's natural resources. Pastoralists, armed groups, and sedentary communities are actively negotiating new land governance arrangements to control access to surface and subsurface resources. The brief provides recommendations for improving land and resource governance in an effort to limit conflict and improve stability.

A 2020 issue brief titled [Artisanal & Small-Scale Mining: USAID Activities & Approaches](#) explores land and resource governance within the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. The brief examines the ways in which securing land and resource rights within the ASM sector can mitigate conflict and promote more robust local governance.

# Talking Points

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To make the case for LRG as a democracy and conflict solution, use the following talking points that link LRG with democracy and conflict outcomes, policies, and priorities.



Evidence shows strengthened LRG fosters community-based institutions that improve natural resource management and strengthen women's rights.



Strengthened LRG decreases the likelihood and recurrence of many land and resource-related conflict.



Strengthened LRG contributes to post-conflict stability by ensuring that those who return after fleeing a conflict are secure in their land tenure and property rights; and build social capital and trust.



Corruption and political interference in LRG decision-making can undermine citizens' perceptions of government legitimacy.



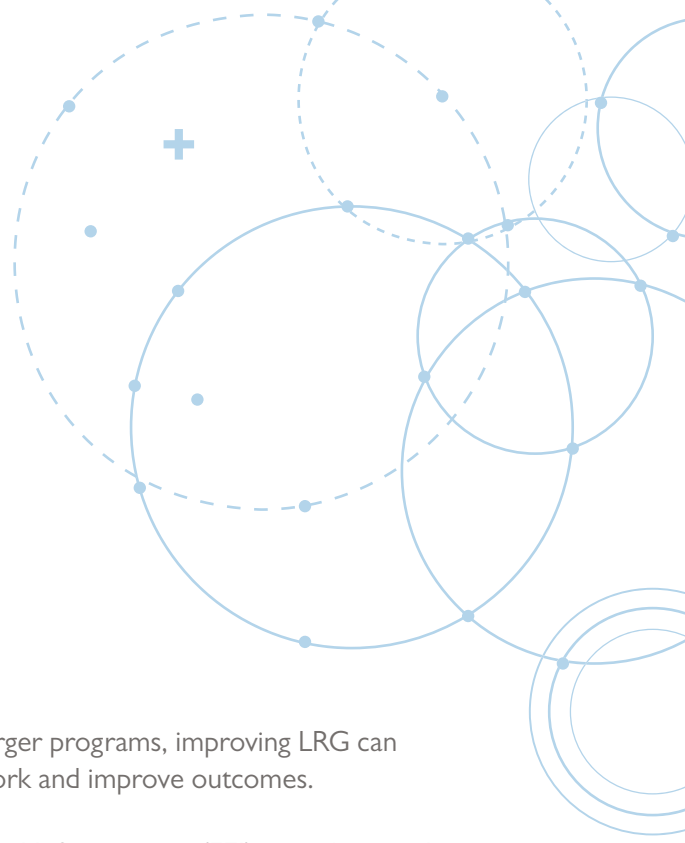
The devolution of land and resource governance to local communities can increase participation and build social capital.



Strengthened LRG is critically important to post-conflict recovery because property is often the most valuable asset of those displaced by conflict.



# Further Resources



## PROGRAMMING LRG

Whether through standalone programs or as a component of larger programs, improving LRG can increase the effectiveness of USAID's democracy and conflict work and improve outcomes.

The LRG Division in USAID's Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure (EEI) provides a wide range of evidence-based technical advisory services and tools to help Missions better understand LRG trends as they relate to democracy and conflict. The resources can help effectively plan, implement, and evaluate LRG programs. These include:

### **How to incorporate LRG across the Program Cycle** ([see Annex A](#)):

- Integrating LRG into the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)
- Designing LRG Projects and Activities
- Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning from LRG Programs
- [Geospatial analysis, strategic planning, and LRG assessments and analysis](#)

### **Available mechanisms to support LRG programming** ([see Annex B](#)).

## ADDITIONAL LEARNING

Need more inspiration? Check out these additional resources linking LRG and democracy and conflict.

- Land and Development: [A Research Agenda for Land and Resource Governance at USAID](#)
- Issue Brief: [Land and Conflict](#)
- Issue Brief: [Artisanal & Small-Scale Mining: USAID Activities & Approaches](#)
- Issue Brief: [Gender Issues in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Sector](#)
- Issue Brief: [Small-Scale & Artisanal Mining Impacts on Biodiversity in Latin America](#)
- Evaluation: [Community Land Protection Program in Liberia](#)
- Evaluation: [Property Rights and Artisanal Diamond Development Project II in Guinea](#)
- Toolkit: [Intimate Partner Violence and Land](#)



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# Integrating and Funding LRG across the Program Cycle

The EEI/LRG team is available to help Missions and Operating Units with each of the following Program Cycle analysis considerations.

## Integrating LRG into the Country Development Cooperation Strategy

Incorporating LRG into the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) process should start with examining how LRG will present the Mission with opportunities to achieve high-level development outcomes. The assessment above will assist in this regard. For example, if the Mission is contemplating a development objective (DO) related to democracy-building outcomes, understanding the impact of improved land and resource rights on these broader outcomes will help the Mission understand whether to incorporate LRG into the DO or Intermediate Result (IR) that feeds up to the DO. Even if the Mission determines that LRG does not warrant a DO or IR, it may still be useful to consider LRG trends, both during the life of the CDCS and beyond, as part of scenario planning.

## Integrating LRG into Project Design and Implementation

Integrating LRG may entail a stand-alone project, or it may involve integrating LRG as a component of a broader project. The general process is as follows:

- **Initial Assessment:** Consider how an LRG project or component would contribute to achieving a DO or IR within the CDCS Results Framework. This step should involve an assessment of the particular development challenge, how LRG impacts that challenge, and how LRG solutions can contribute to addressing that challenge. This [Toolkit](#) (Sections 5 and 6, particularly) provides questions to ask and key considerations. One critical task is to identify key stakeholders, who may include national and municipal institutions (for example, the national or local land ministry), civil society organizations, other donors, private sector actors, and local communities within the planned intervention area. In particular, it is important to pay attention to stakeholders with traditionally vulnerable land and resource rights, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous Peoples.
- **Project Design:** Prior to developing a project, in addition to mandatory analyses, it may be beneficial to conduct additional analyses relevant to LRG, including political economy analysis, future scenario planning/analysis, youth analysis, and conflict analysis. As the project is being designed, it is key to embed local ownership in the process by consulting with key local stakeholders to ground-truth the appropriateness of the activities. It is especially important to include sub-national government actors as stakeholders.

## Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning from LRG Programs

Regular monitoring and review of LRG projects can support both adaptive management and accountability. All LRG activities should follow the Agency's monitoring and evaluation guidance in ADS 201.

- **Develop a Project Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan as part of project design and update it during project implementation.** The MEL Plan should define how the project team will collect, organize, analyze, or apply learning gained from project data collection, along with appropriate indicators and disaggregation. The MEL Plan should also define a learning plan, especially given the cross-cutting and context/setting-specific nature of LRG work. Such a plan might examine opportunities for relevant stakeholder engagement within the Mission, or with other donors, the national government, and beyond in order to enhance collaboration and synergies across sectors and settings. Similarly, a learning plan could highlight how to share and apply implementation lessons regarding opportunities, needs, or constraints in one context or setting, or around the complex interplay between sectors and rural/urban settings. Finally, a learning plan might specify analytical tools to be used, processes for developing participatory learning/research agendas, and reflective processes to ensure that triggers for change in approach are noted and acted upon. If the MEL Plan contemplates an impact evaluation, this evaluation should be planned at the outset of the project, as impact evaluations are more difficult to incorporate once a project is under way.
- **Facilitate an intentional approach to collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA).** CLA is particularly important for LRG activities because they are often components of larger projects, and because LRG interventions must work in concert with other activities to be effective. Collaboration approaches could include joint work planning and regular partner meetings that facilitate knowledge and/or data sharing. Discussions during these meetings could focus on challenges and successes in implementation to date, changes in the operating environment or context that could affect programming, opportunities to better collaborate or influence other actors, emerging risks that threaten the achievement of objectives, and/or other relevant topics.

# Available Mechanisms

EEL/LRG manages an Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ) and several Task Orders related to land and resource governance.<sup>1</sup> The following mechanisms are available for Mission and Operating Unit (OUs) buy-ins.

- **Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II (STARR II) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ):** Managed by EEL/LRG, the STARR II IDIQ is a \$650 million, multi-faceted field support mechanism available for Missions and other Operating Units to buy into for activities through July 2025. STARR II is designed to provide short- and long-term technical assistance to improve land tenure, property rights, and resource governance through targeted interventions or integrated activities in support of broader development objectives. Missions and OUs can either buy into the existing STARR II Task Orders listed below, or procure a new Task Order under STARR II. [Read more here.](#)
- **Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM):** This Task Order under the STARR II IDIQ is available for Missions and OUs to buy into for activities through July 2025. INRM provides on-demand support services and technical assistance across a wide array of environmental and natural resource management issues and sectors. The activity aims to strengthen the impacts of environmental programs, identify and adopt best practices for integration, respond to strategic shifts at the Agency, and build constituencies for integrated programming to achieve development and humanitarian assistance outcomes. INRM is designed to support the uptake of principles and approaches outlined in the Agency's Environmental and Natural Resource Management (ENRM) Framework. [Read more here.](#)
- **Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG):** This Task Order under the STARR II IDIQ is available for Missions and OUs to buy into activities through July 2021, with option years extending to July 2023. ILRG can provide short- and long-term technical assistance, analytical services, and field implementation across the following areas of support: land and resource law and policy development; policy implementation, including clarifying, documenting, registering, and administering rights to land and resources; building land and resource governance capacity of local institutions; and facilitating responsible land-based investment. [Read more here.](#)
- **Artisanal Mining and Property Rights (AMPR):** This Task Order under the STARR II IDIQ is available for Missions and OUs to buy into for activities through September 2021, with option years extending to July 2023. AMPR is USAID's flagship project for addressing complex development challenges in the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector. The program is primarily focused on diamonds in the Central African Republic, but is designed to provide on-demand, short-term technical assistance to any USAID Mission and Operating Unit (OU) on development challenges associated with ASM. [Read more here.](#)

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, "Funding/Contract Mechanisms," *LandLinks*, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.land-links.org/tools-and-mission-resources/funding-contract-mechanisms/>.



**Activity Title:** Integrated Natural Resource Management  
**Sponsoring USAID Office:** Center for Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure  
**Contract Number:** 7200AA20F00010  
**Task Order Number:** STARR II – 7200AA18D00020  
**Period of Performance:** July 30, 2020 – July 19, 2025  
**Contracting Officer:** Stella Alexander-Sergeeff  
**COR:** Ioana Bouvier  
**Ceiling Price:** \$34,976,131  
**Contractor:** DAI and partners: American Museum of Natural History Center for Biodiversity Conservation, Conservation Strategy Fund, New America, Resource Equity, Social Impact, Stantec, and University of Rhode Island Coastal Resource Center  
**Date of Publication:** May 2022  
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This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared with support from the Integrated Natural Resource Management Task Order, under the Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II (STARR II) IDIQ.

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.



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