

ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL LAND AND IMPROVEMENT OF INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH IN UGANDA

Introduction

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is implementing the project Responsible Land Policy in Uganda (RELAPU) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the Global Programme for Responsible Land Policy (GPRLP). The Nexus pilot on "Access to agricultural land and improvement of income and employment prospects for youth" was commissioned under RELAPU, and implemented in collaboration with the Promoting Rural Development (PRUDEV) project in Northern Uganda.

The National Context

Land governance in Uganda is influenced by a blend of customary land tenure systems and statutory laws, each playing a crucial role in shaping land ownership and management in the country. The legal foundation for land governance in Uganda is anchored in the Land Act of 1998 and the Land Amendment Act of 2010. These laws establish the framework for land tenure, ownership and administration. Despite this legal framework, Uganda faces challenges, as about 80% of all land in Uganda and 90% in the northern region is held under customary tenure, a system that often lacks clear documentation and formal legal recognition. Customary land is usually allocated to families, not to individuals. This entails that the younger generations often don't have access to land and are therefore not able to provide for their own family as long as the parents are still depending on the land, either for production or renting it out. The delicate balance between protecting customary land tenure and fostering economic development continues to challenge land governance efforts.

The Pilot concept

The overarching concept revolves around an intergenerational business model, which is designed to ensure the availability of land over an extended period, typically five years, as opposed to the conventional one year lease. The goal is to prevent depletion of soil fertility by promoting climate smart cultivation practices and allowing for investments in perennial crops and possible also infrastructure such as irrigation systems.

One essential element of these models is the registration of user rights to customary land in the name of the parents, with the younger generation also mentioned as users on the land title. This arrangement allows the land title to be integrated into a business plan, potentially to be used as collateral and reduced interest rates when seeking loans from banks. The pilot model encompasses **three methods of family interaction**:

- **Model 1:** Youth leasing land from parents strictly on a commercial basis.
- **Model 2:** Involvement of parents or siblings as employees or in other capacities.
- **Model 3:** Shared responsibilities for production and profit-sharing between generations.

The model has been further refined to include options to lease land from neighboring farmers on a commercial basis. Similarly, the approach of family-based business development has been expanded to encompass the youth group as the basic unit for business engagement.



Figure 1: Discussing the intergenerational business model

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Nexus Pilot basic data

The pilot was implemented in Amolatar district. Initially the pilot started with two youth groups in Arwotcek in October 2021. Out of these, 75 families from the youth groups were assessed. Eventually, 25 families were selected to test the suggested intergenerational business models. These families were chosen based on their primary engagement in farming, with 10 female farmers managing 18 acres and 15 male farmers managing 28 acres. Later, it was decided to further test the model with youth groups that already had the option of getting their land certified. Hence, the area was expanded and 4 more youth groups were included, two in Muntu and two in Awingiri sub-counties. These groups had a total of 82 members, 52 males and 30 females.

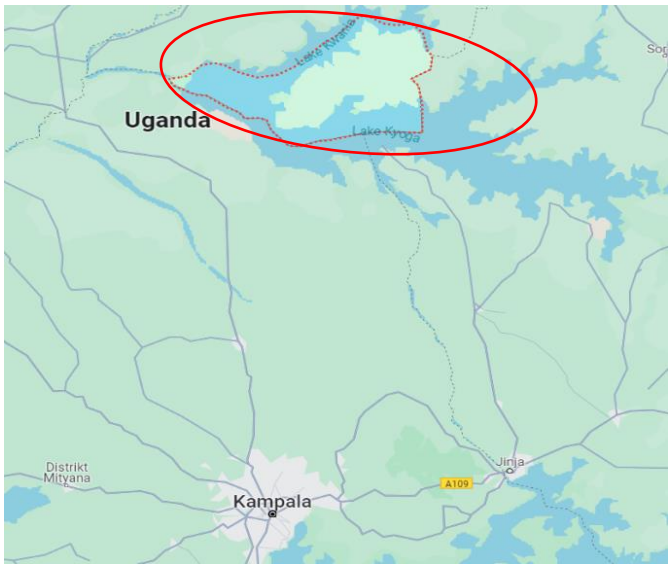

Figure 2: Pilot area - Amolatar District

District		Amolatar	
Sub-county	Awotcek	Muntu	Agwingiri
Members	82 (52m, 30f)	45 (26m, 19f)	37 (23m, 14f)
Pilot families	25 (15m, 10f)		
Trained as trainers	8 (4m, 4 f)	8 (4m, 4f)	8 (5 m, 3 f)
Farmers trained	54 (30m, 24f)	53 (29m, 24f)	34 (20m, 14f)

Phases of implementation

The combined strategy consists of five interconnected elements designed to empower and uplift the living conditions for the youth in the rural areas. The elements should be implemented in a specified sequence as the numbers indicate, although it is not mandatory for the full completion of one element before commencing the next. The crucial aspect is ensuring that the preparatory conditions are satisfied before initiating each element.:

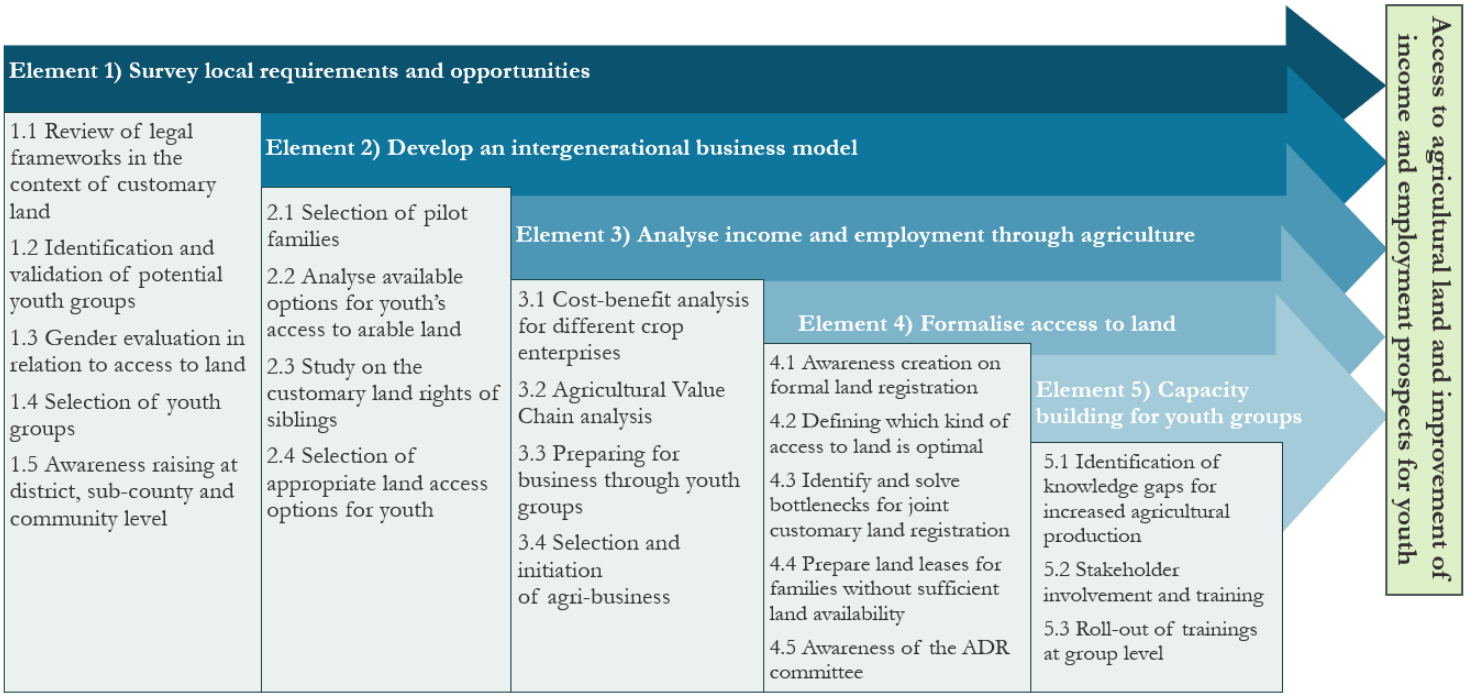

Figure 3: The five key elements of the Nexus Pilot

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Results of the pilot testing

Access to Land: Regardless of the business models, access to land has been made possible, either through family rights to customary land or leased land on a commercial basis. A total of 26 long-term lease agreements were made in Awortcek and Muntu (14 Male & 12 Female) and 54 Members (28 Male & 26 Female) have registered land with their parents to acquire CCOs and LIP in Muntu and Agwingiri Sub Counties.

Long-Term Lease Agreements: were introduced. The above mentioned (min. 5 year lease) long-term lease agreements enhance sustainable land management and contribute to environmental conservation. Local authorities and clan leaders have actively supported this shift, by taking ownership of the process.

Improved Agricultural Skills: With access to land and enhanced farming skills, 141 Members (79 Male & 62 Female) were trained in basic agricultural practices relevant for Sunflower, Maize, Sesame, Soya bean and Rice.

Commercial approach introduced: The analysis, based on anticipated average costs and yield, showed that renting land on normal commercial terms would provide a profit between 95,000 and 677,000 Shilling per acre, lowest for maize and highest for rice and sesame. This profit was after including the cost of 250,000 for land rent, meaning that it would be possible to pay normal market price for the land rent.

Emerging Agri-Businesses: Agribusiness were promoted, especially within the value chain development, which stimulates economic growth, creating job opportunities and empowering local youth.



Figure 4: Example of a maize storage facility

Lessons learned

The intergenerational business models: The tested business models have been only partly successful. After initial intentions of applying model two or three, all pilot families eventually applied model one. The underlying reasons seems to be rooted in reasons explained below, with emphasis on the fact that the youth were not sufficiently skilled in agricultural cultivation, that the return would be sufficient to cover the costs for renting the land and that the groups proved to be better equipped for doing agri-business compared to the families.

Commercial strategy: A cost benefit analysis tool for agricultural production of maize, sunflower, soybean, sesame and rice was introduced with the purpose to demonstrate that agriculture is a commercial viable business.

The current capacity to cultivate land is low, leading to poor profit margins: The intervention shed light on the critical issue of limited agricultural skills among the target community, emphasizing the necessity of addressing this knowledge gap to ensure the sustained success of future initiatives.

The youth groups are a strong vehicle for further development: The identified role of youth groups as a potent force for further development was a major takeaway from this intervention. Leveraging the strength and collective potential of these groups can increase the impact and sustainability of similar endeavors in the future. Below are some proposed initiatives that were discussed as these would have business potential for the local youth groups.



Figure 5: Harvested maize ready for transportation

Sustainability and way forward

The model provides a solid foundation for designing and replicating comparable interventions in similar contexts. By adopting a commercial approach to land lease, implementing long-term lease contracts, and increasing the number of official family registrations for communal land, the model ensures that youth have access to land.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the success of gaining access to land hinges on the youth's familiarity with efficient agricultural practices. Simply acquiring land without essential skills will not significantly impact the livelihood of the younger generation. Therefore, comprehensive training in basic agricultural practices, climate-smart agriculture, and commercial analysis is essential for the model's success.

An important aspect to highlight is the potential for youth groups to play a more substantial role, particularly in agri-business activities. Consequently, there is a recognition of the necessity to prioritize and enhance the involvement of youth groups, especially in cases where agri-business activities are a focal point. This emphasis on youth participation underscores the model's adaptability to diverse circumstances and its responsiveness to the nature of interventions in similar contexts.



Figure 6: Sunflower field

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