



NELGA GOOD PRACTICES:

The Central Africa e-learning course on Land and Conflicts

The Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) is a partnership of leading African universities and research institutions with proven leadership in education, training and research on land governance. Currently NELGA has more than **70 partner institutions** in over 40 countries and is organized in 6 regional and 1 technical nodes supported by a Secretariat.



Under the auspices of the **Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)**, the **University of Yaoundé 1 (UYI)** in Cameroon coordinates a network of academic institutions, civil society organisations and researchers focusing on land governance issues in Central Africa.

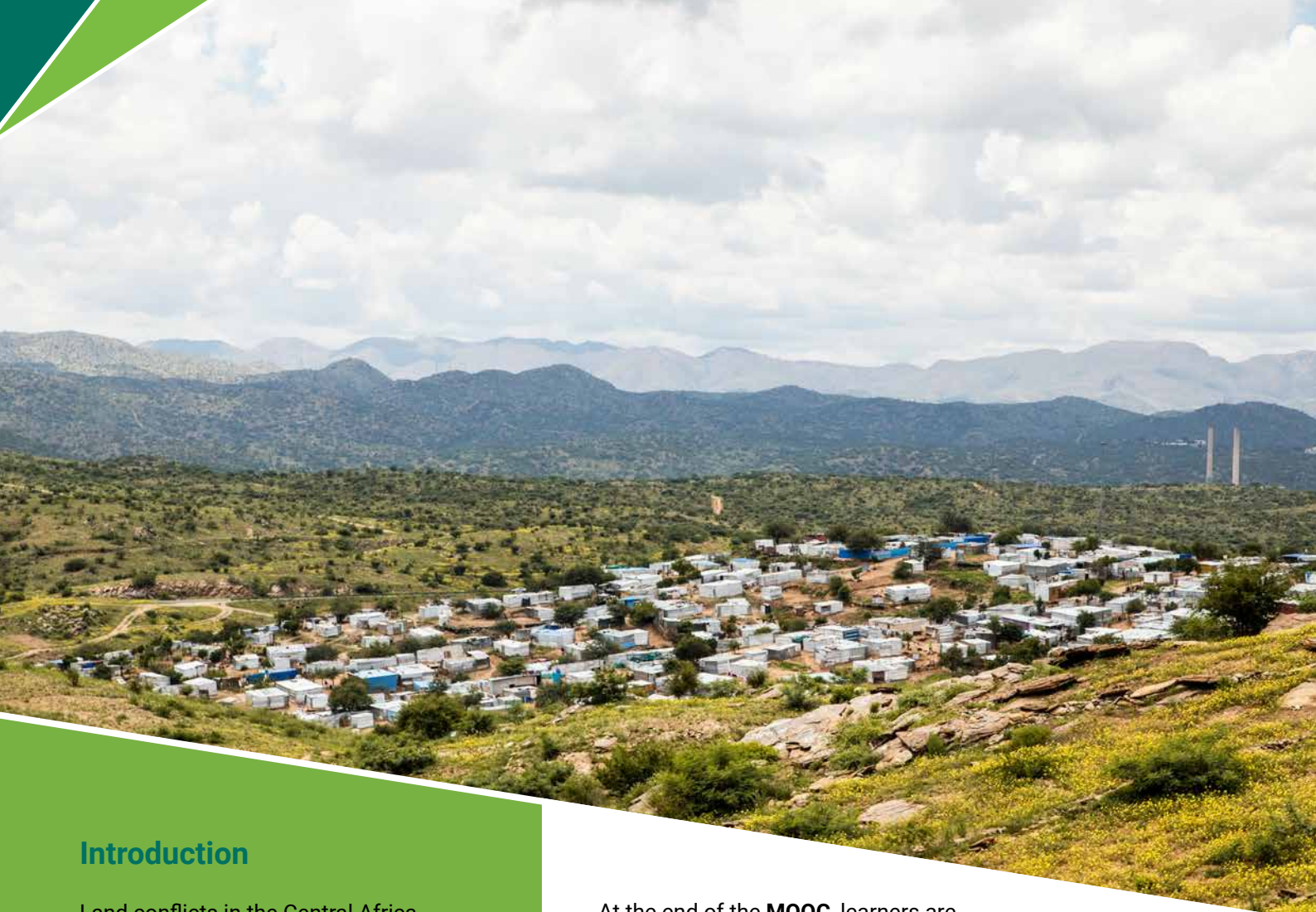
One of the network's mandates is to promote the creation and dissemination of knowledge, as well as capacity-building initiatives in the field of land governance.

NELGA in Central Africa has developed real expertise in analysing land conflicts, working particularly on issues such as raising awareness of legal dualism and land conflicts and building the capacity of traditional chiefs to resolve land conflicts.

In this context, **NELGA** has elaborated a **massive open online course (MOOC) on Land Conflict Management in Central Africa**, in coordination with the **AUF (Francophone Academic Agency)**, the **University of Yaoundé 1** and the **GIZ-supported programme Strengthening Advisory Capacities for Land Governance in Africa (SLGA)**.

The course is currently available in self-paced format at the following link <https://conflits-fonciers.auf.org/>.

This tool focuses on land governance, in general, and land conflicts, in particular.



Introduction

Land conflicts in the Central Africa sub-region are unfortunately a daily reality, particularly because of emerging socioeconomic factors, such as the marginalisation of community land rights, the increased pressure on land, investment and resource exploitation, urban sprawl and rising land prices, and several other historical, geopolitical, demographic, economic and cultural phenomena.

Land governance being a cross-cutting issue, the **MOOC** targets a wide array of stakeholders and thus addresses generic concepts essential to uncover the complexity of the issue of land conflicts in Central Africa.

It contains five modules that address the foundations and consequences of land conflicts, the typology and manifestations of land conflicts in Central Africa and finally the prevention and the resolution of land conflicts.

At the end of the **MOOC**, learners are expected, among other things, to have developed an in-depth knowledge of land conflicts, their typology, characteristics, causes and consequences and to become familiar with a wide range of tools for preventing and resolving land conflicts.

The **MOOC** is 100% self-paced, meaning that the learner isn't under any time constraints.



The first challenge facing land reform on the African continent is the effective integration of customary tenure institutions and practices into the land governance process. As long as equitable land mediation does not give rise to syncretic, uncomplicated, contextualised and appropriate land tenure, the inclusive sustainable development to which our countries aspire will remain an elusive chimera. In order to achieve this, awareness-raising, capacity-building and the sharing of knowledge and good practice are essential prerequisites, although these reforms cannot be superimposed from one country to another. – Prof Paul Tchawa
(English translation)



Implementation

From the development process to the roll-out of the MOOC, a number of actions have been implemented.

1. Technical expertise in e-learning

The AUF supervised the overall technical implementation of the MOOC development, drawing on the expertise of NELGA land experts from several universities. Among others, the AUF was responsible for the elaboration of MOOC roadmap, the development of the pedagogical concept, the design and production of the course and finally the set-up of the e-learning platform and the upload of the MOOC. E-learning expertise being a specific expertise, the fact that the project was led by a renowned institution with proven expertise in this sector was surely a main factor that contributed to the quality of the final product.

2. The academic and pedagogical orientations of a multidisciplinary team

The content of the MOOC was developed by a multidisciplinary team of professors. The team was composed of land experts with backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, law and geography. They ensured the issue of land conflicts was addressed from these various disciplinary

perspectives and as such, the MOOC is accessible to participants from diverse backgrounds. Henceforth, the MOOC targets a wide audience, comprising mostly professionals who are in a position to prevent or settle land conflicts or to include land governance issues in development and post-conflict negotiations. The MOOC also targets students interested in finding jobs in which they will be confronted with land conflicts.

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For me, it was a question of being a bit curious to see how we can analyse a phenomenon from the point of view of several experts. In other words, a phenomenon with which we are all familiar and which is recurrent in our society, but which is analysed from the point of view of several experts: the sociologist who intervenes, the lawyer who intervenes... It was a question of seeing how all these impressions could be brought together to produce something global and unique.” – Martin Yemani / Ingénieur Technopédagogue (English translation)

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Personally, I've learnt a lot from this experience. Above all, I understood the need for close and essential collaboration between content experts and technical educators right from the start of the MOOC development process. It's not enough to have content to have an online course, but that content needs to be worked on in a certain way, so that it's digestible when it goes online. – Dr Jeannette Leumako (English translation)

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3. Incentives and Communication

- **Sensitisation of stakeholders**

NELGA organised an online workshop to launch the MOOC in March 2023. It aimed at situating the MOOC in the wider context of African land conflicts and provided the public with an overview of the content. This was an opportunity to answer questions about the platform and course content, and to gather initial expressions of interest in taking part in enrolling. Communication about the MOOC continues with teachers who work on land issues and who encourage students to participate in the MOOC.

- **Certificate of Completion of the MOOC**

A certificate of participation is issued by the NELGA secretariat to learners who complete the MOOC. Registration and completion of the various assignments/quizzes is compulsory to obtain the certificate.

This certificate of participation is an additional asset in the context of various scholarships offered to students in the sub-region: these include the 2023 research scholarships for field studies in Central Africa, and post-doctoral research scholarships in African universities and research institutes, both provided in the framework of NELGA.

This certificate is also one of the documents required for participation in the NELGA Prize for Excellence for the best master's and PhD theses on land tenure in Central Africa. We have observed that the establishment of such incentive mechanisms really helped in fighting participants' dropouts.



Discussion

Results and lessons learnt

The MOOC has 320 registered users out of which around 130 are “active” participants. However, only 19 participants effectively completed the entire MOOC and performed all required assignments. Considering the 130 active participants, and the full MOOC completion by 19 users, it leads us to an overall drop-out rate of 85%, which is slightly better than the average drop-out rate for MOOC (90%). In addition, we should note that this data excludes the number of users that log in to the course as “guests”.

Since the MOOC is not integrated into an academic curriculum, or part of mandatory training, it is important that the participants have the possibility to follow the course at their own pace. Otherwise, it may be too big of a commitment, since the participants already have, in most cases, a full-time occupation (job/university studies). On the other hand, we observe that some of the participants stopped their learning journey halfway through. This flexibility could possibly be one of the reasons. To keep the participants motivated, automated e-mail notifications are sent. In addition, the course administrators maintain the MOOC’s participants mailing list and regularly engage with them. We have observed that this type of engagement is truly helping to keep the student motivated.

Poor internet connectivity and unstable electricity are challenges faced by the participants. To mitigate this, the AUF offered to host the participants based in Yaoundé in their “numeric campus” (computer room with free and stable internet). However, only few participants made use of the AUF facility so far. Therefore, though the initiative was very much welcomed, we would not consider the availability of such a facility as a key success factor.

Way forward

The MOOC is currently hosted on a Moodle platform provided by the AUF. However, the hosting comes with a yearly fee, which hampers the medium/long term sustainability of the course. Henceforth, to ensure the MOOC remains available for many years to come, it will be migrated to Atingi.org. Atingi is a Moodle-based platform maintained by the GIZ that is free of charge for GIZ projects and partners. In addition, Atingi allows greater control over the various Moodle functionalities, and allows the course administration to be fully automated. A support team is also available in case the learner faces technical difficulties in accessing the MOOC. Another advantage of Atingi is that it is a fully open-access platform with a significant number of registered users, which will increase the outreach of the MOOC.





Conclusion

The African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) has developed and mainstreamed the Guidelines for the Development of Curricula on Land Governance in Africa endorsed by the African Union, offering a set of principles to support the pedagogic teams of universities on curricula development.

The MOOC is in line with the Guidelines as well as the AU's Guidelines on Education, Science and Technology, which encourage member states to use the DOTSS framework (digital connectivity, online and offline learning, teachers as facilitators and motivators of learning) to develop digitisation strategies that are adapted to the context and appropriate to the different sectors of education.

In the digital age, the opportunities offered by digital technology are numerous, particularly in terms of capacity building and research in Africa. It is often said that the internet has simplified access to knowledge.

To reach as many people as possible and popularise knowledge about land governance, NELGA implements a wide spectrum of measures and the MOOC on land tenure conflicts in Central Africa now allows the opportunity to do research or training on the internet.

Access to information is becoming easier both in terms of cost and by providing access in areas where it was previously impossible to deliver.





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