



# NELGA GOOD PRACTICES: Peer-to-Peer Learning Between **Ethiopia and Uganda** on Land Governance

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.



## 1. Peer-to-Peer Learning

The primary challenges hindering the **sustainable development** of most developing states, particularly in the eastern African region, stem from gaps in the governance of land and natural resources. **Ineffective land governance** exacerbates tenure insecurity, mismanagement of land, and uncontrolled land markets. This, in turn, hampers the contribution of land to economic growth, worsens social injustices, and increases instability and environmental insecurity.

Most eastern African countries have limited **technical and infrastructural capacities**, lack adequate institutional arrangements, policies, and legal frameworks, and have insufficient financing mechanisms to strengthen responsible land governance. Such governance is essential to achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063, the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and broader global agendas on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification.

In the IGAD region, Member States are at varying stages of development, with diverse

absence of comprehensive land policies and legal frameworks, fragmented institutional arrangements, and limited infrastructure and human resource capacities. These challenges have long been recognised by the African Union and other international bodies, including the United Nations, development partners, and donors.

In an effort to address these regional and continental challenges, the Heads of African Union Member States have made several declarations on **land issues and adopted frameworks** aimed at **strengthening land governance** as a means to ensure food security and sustainable economic, social, and environmental development.

Regional Economic Communities, under the mandate of the African Union, are tasked with assisting African countries in strengthening their land governance. Since 2016, IGAD's Land Governance Unit has played a critical role in supporting its Member States by facilitating mechanisms and platforms for exchanging experiences, best practices, skills, and knowledge.

The African Land Policy Centre has also committed to supporting these efforts through the commissioning of GIZ's "Strengthening Advisory Capacities for Land Governance in Africa" (SLGA) programme and its interventions in Ethiopia and Uganda.

In this context, GIZ has partnered with IGAD to enhance regional learning and the exchange of experiences and best practices in land governance between the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development of Uganda and the Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia.



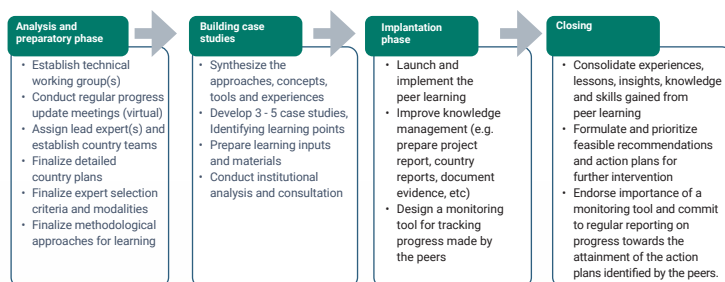


The GIZ's SLGA Ethiopia Country Component has leveraged a **peer-to-peer learning platform** to **strengthen the capacities** and selected themes of land governance identified by the beneficiaries based on their knowledge needs and challenges. The peer-to-peer learning included twinning exercises in Ethiopia and Uganda, followed by a closing workshop. The twinning exercises involved learning visits to key institutions and administrative units in both countries. The closing workshop aimed to **consolidate the successes and lessons from the twinning exercises**, identify and prioritise key recommendations, and integrate action plans into the ministries' strategic plans to improve land governance.

IGAD used its **political convening power** to coordinate the peer-to-peer learning, while both ministries led the twinning exercises in their respective countries. The Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia (comprising ten land experts) participated in peer learning in Uganda from 29 January to 14 February 2024. Similarly, ten land experts from the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development of Uganda undertook peer learning in Ethiopia from 11 to 26 March 2024, followed by a joint closing workshop in Ethiopia from 27 to 29 March 2024.

## 2. Methodology

An **innovative approach** was employed in the peer-to-peer learning process. Countries participating in the programme took the lead in thematic areas where they were relatively more advanced than their peers, allowing them to share their experiences. This approach has been **instrumental in strengthening** a knowledge network on land administration, enabling participants to continually learn from and support one another in their efforts to improve land administration systems. Ultimately, this contributes to consolidating regional integration and advancing the **digital transformation of land information management** and services. The overall implementation of peer learning followed four phases.



## 3. Potential Effects and Impacts of the Peer Learning

The peer learning initiative enabled the two ministries to **identify and address gaps in policies**, legal frameworks, processes, procedures, workflows, and services related to land governance activities in their respective countries. The impact statements outlined in subsections (a) and (b) reflect commitments made by the delegations from the two ministries.

### a) Expected impact of peer learning on land governance in Uganda

- ✓ **Improvement** of the ongoing land policy review by incorporating valuable lessons and insights gained from the twinning exercise.
- ✓ **Leveraging** community participation in decision-making processes related to land governance by implementing a comprehensive awareness programme aimed at fostering mindset change for community-level service delivery, driven by self-motivation.
- ✓ **Empowerment and recognition** of the role of traditional, cultural, and community leaders in participatory dispute resolution and grievance redress in land governance.
- ✓ **Strengthening** capacity-building programmes and training institutions by enhancing diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate, alternative dispute resolution, and continuous professional development training.
- ✓ **Development** of institutional capacities for maintaining the land information system, thereby reducing dependency on external consultants.

- ✓ **Ensuring** the mandatory participation of women and vulnerable groups in land rights registration to foster an inclusive and participatory decision-making process.
- b) **Possible effects on land governance in Ethiopia**
- ✓ **Creation of awareness** and sensitisation among politicians on the importance of a national land policy, leading to the development of a concept framework for formulating a comprehensive national land policy.
- ✓ **Enhancement of awareness** of land laws among key stakeholders, fostering a better understanding and promoting effective implementation at all levels.
- ✓ **Development and adoption** of an improved framework for land governance institutional arrangements through in-depth assessments, consultations, and dialogues.
- ✓ **Improvement** of digital land services through enhanced information and communication technology infrastructure, enabling interconnected land transactions and information management across 120 towns or woredas.
- ✓ **Development and adoption** of standards to enable the digitalisation of land information, data interoperability, and the management of documents and archives.
- ✓ **Revision and implementation** of a comprehensive client charter to improve service delivery and organisational operations.
- ✓ **Increased** transparency and accountability in land transactions through the adoption of document acknowledgement and notification mechanisms via SMS and email.
- ✓ **Implementation** of financing mechanisms for land transactions to ensure sustainability and enhance revenue.
- ✓ **Integration** of land services with other key government services such as national ID and revenue systems, leveraging the digital ecosystem through the implementation of a system-of-systems approach.
- ✓ **Strengthening** legal frameworks. Insights gained from peer-to-peer learning helped to refine and finalise the “Revised Rural Land Management and Use Legislation,” enacted on 14 May 2024 by the Ethiopian Parliament. This legislation enhances

financial access for smallholder farmers, secures land utilisation entitlements for women, youth, and underprivileged groups, and improves land tenure security for pastoralist communities.

## 4. Key success factors, lessons learned, and challenges

### 4.1. Critical success factors

- a) **Leveraging** the IGAD Land Governance Unit’s political convening power, technical capacities, and experience to address the knowledge and skills gaps in Uganda’s Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development and Ethiopia’s Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate within the Ministry of Agriculture. IGAD experts facilitated the development of a realistic project concept note and prepared relevant learning objectives that met the needs of both ministries, laying a solid foundation for peer-to-peer learning.
- b) **Effective** cooperation and partnership between IGAD’s Land Governance Unit and the two ministries, along with support from key institutions in Ethiopia and Uganda, contributed significantly to success. The establishment of a joint, effective planning and coordination mechanism ensured successful implementation of the peer-to-peer learning. A joint technical working group (comprising directors and experts from both ministries, as well as focal points technical working group (comprising directors and experts from both ministries, as well as focal points from IGAD and GIZ) and country teams (experts with designated leads) played a pivotal role in planning, coordinating, and overseeing the peer learning. They provided leadership and guidance in preparing country-specific learning programmes, identifying learning objectives, case studies, best practices, and methodological approaches, as well as implementing the twinning exercises and compiling reports.







- c) **Efficient** and effective implementation. The strong commitment and leadership from the ministries, directors, country team members, and experts were crucial for the successful implementation of the twinning exercises. The country team members diligently organised daily logistical arrangements, liaising with the institutions visited and managing the needs of the visiting teams. They executed the country-specific programmes with minimal changes, demonstrating a high level of preparedness, coordination, and leadership.
- d) **Effective** communication. Continuous communication fostered strong coordination, synergy, and accountability, enabling effective planning and successful implementation of the twinning exercises.
- e) **Demand** for learning and improvement. The strong appetite for peer-to-peer learning among both country teams played an instrumental role in the success of the twinning exercises.

#### 4.2. Main Lessons

- ✓ **Focus on greater impact beyond peer learning.** The effectiveness of peer learning relies on integrating the outcomes and recommendations into the ongoing, short-term, and mid-term priorities of the beneficiaries. This ensures that peer learning has a lasting impact on social, economic, and environmental development, beyond the duration of the twinning exercise.

- ✓ **Measure impacts.** A monitoring and evaluation framework is essential for tracking the implementation of action plans or recommendations from the peer learning exchanges. The absence of such a framework in previous cross-country peer learning initiatives led IGAD's Land Governance Unit to commit to developing and implementing one, with both ministries agreeing to submit annual reports detailing the implementation of the endorsed action plans.
- ✓ **Flawless logistical arrangements.** Successful implementation of the twinning exercise requires well-organised logistical arrangements. Cross-country peer learning exchanges demand careful budget planning, resource mobilisation, and effective coordination, communication, and engagement with all stakeholders involved in the learning process. IGAD's Land Governance Unit and the two ministries played key roles in ensuring this.

#### 4.3 Challenges

- ✓ **Gender responsiveness.** A major challenge was the lack of clear and objective selection criteria to ensure gender balance, particularly women's participation. To address this, it is highly recommended to enforce gender-responsive selection criteria, contributing to gender equality in peer learning and other land administration capacity-building initiatives.
- ✓ **Building institutional capacity.** Peer-to-peer learning aims to strengthen institutional capacities in land governance in both countries, leading

to greater impacts across various economic and cross-cutting sectors. However, gaps were identified in developing strategic action plans and linking the learning outcomes with institutional capacity-building efforts at all levels to achieve the desired impact.

- ✓ **Proactive budgeting.** Cross-country peer learning exchanges require proactive budget planning and resource mobilisation. Financial limitations, both in terms of amount and budget categories, were encountered, leading to adjustments in implementation, such as reducing the number of learning days.



## 5. Beneficiaries

- ✓ Peer-to-peer learning has **benefited key** actors in the land sector in both Ethiopia and Uganda. The direct beneficiaries include land ministries, sub-national land bureaus/offices, and select academic and research institutions involved in land governance. IGAD's Land Governance Unit and twenty land experts from Ethiopia and Uganda have also benefited. These beneficiaries play a significant role in advancing land reform processes in their respective countries and supporting the implementation of the IGAD Land Governance Business Plan (2020–2030), aligned with the AU declaration on land issues and challenges. Politicians and decision-makers from the Ugandan Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia, and the IGAD Land Governance Unit have provided **strategic leadership, guidance, and coordination**.

They have overseen the planning and implementation of the initiative and actively participated in decision-making, resource mobilisation, facilitation, moderating discussions, and framing and endorsing recommendations and action plans to further improve land governance in both countries.



## 6. Scalability

- ✓ The **innovative approaches** used in peer-to-peer learning fostered the development of tools and procedures that enabled a collaborative environment for joint planning and implementation of the twinning exercises, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effects and impacts on the land reform processes of the participating countries. These well-tested and effective peer-to-peer learning approaches can be **replicated to strengthen land governance** in Africa and other regions where it is needed most. IGAD's Land Governance Unit (refer to the methodological approach in Section 2) provides valuable insights for scaling up peer-to-peer learning across diverse geographic regions and thematic areas, encouraging regional economic communities and AU Member States to exchange experiences and best practices.

## 7. Gender Equity

### a. Reach Level

- ✓ The peer-to-peer learning initiative created opportunities to strengthen land governance in both countries by ensuring careful consideration of women's specific issues, needs, and interests. Strategic land reform priorities related to gender and women's needs were comprehensively addressed in both the design and implementation phases, as well as in the recommendations for future improvement.



Key issues such as **women's access to land and finance, gender-responsive policies and laws, and active engagement in land registration and certification processes were addressed.** Reforms in policy and legal frameworks and capacity development initiatives were also included. Women decision-makers, alongside other participants, provided strategic leadership, guidance, and oversight in the planning and implementation of peer-to-peer learning. They also contributed to the coordination and consolidation of lessons and experiences gained from the twinning exercises. Additionally, women technical experts participated in the peer-to-peer learning and consolidation meetings. The twinning exercises included formal meetings at the lowest administrative units exclusively with women to ensure that the outcomes of peer learning reflected their perspectives.

#### b. Benefit Level

- ✓ Peer-to-peer learning has **benefited women in multiple ways.** Women decision-makers gained new insights and knowledge that will help them advance the land reform agenda, while women technical experts acquired valuable experience, lessons, insights, and skills that will enable them to strengthen the technical capacities of their respective institutions and make a greater impact on land governance.

#### c. Empowerment Level

- ✓ While this initiative has fostered individual and institutional learning, it has not yet reached the empowerment level of gender equity.

## 8. Conclusions

- ✓ The cross-country peer learning exchange provided unique opportunities to share best practices, experiences, lessons, knowledge, insights, and



skills, all of which have had significant impacts in addressing land governance challenges in Ethiopia and Uganda. Peer-to-peer learning has demonstrated its critical role in **fostering convergence** in the digital transformation of land information management, the delivery of land administration and management services, and the adoption of harmonised frameworks. These include IGAD's Land Policy Convergence Framework, the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, all of which support gender equity and human rights-based approaches. This has contributed to achieving the IGAD Land Governance Business Plan, the AU Agenda on Land, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- ✓ More broadly, peer-to-peer learning has proven to be an effective platform for creating a collaborative environment that fosters strategic alignment and cooperation in addressing regional challenges while meeting national needs. IGAD's Land Governance Unit has played a leading role in facilitating peer learning activities, including planning, coordination, and implementation. A key strength of the learning process was the **effectiveness and efficiency** of the two ministries in managing peer learning. The ministries took the lead in setting learning goals, implementing peer learning, identifying recommendations, and developing action plans to further improve land governance in both countries.



- ✓ Uganda's experience, in particular, can be seen as a best-practice example. The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development in Uganda promptly integrated the peer learning recommendations and action plan into the ongoing land policy review process, highlighting the relevance and strategic significance of peer learning when integrated with national reform agendas. Similarly, Ethiopia's Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture immediately applied the experiences, lessons, and knowledge gained from peer learning to the final review and refinement of the "Revised Rural Land Management and Use Legislation," enacted in May 2024. This demonstrates the significance and impact of peer learning when aligned with national reform efforts.
- ✓ Another key takeaway is the importance of adopting a monitoring tool to track the implementation of the work plans developed by peers to strengthen land governance. Monitoring the interventions made by the two ministries based on the learning objectives will help measure improvements in land governance in Uganda and Ethiopia, while also creating a repository of good practices and innovations that can be adapted by others. Such a monitoring mechanism can be a powerful tool for communication, outreach, and advocacy, raising awareness at platforms like the IGAD Land Governance Steering Committee Meeting, the Eastern African Land Administration Network, the Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa, and the African Land Policy Centre conferences. Overall, the outcomes of peer-to-peer learning between Ethiopia and Uganda have the potential to be scalable across other geographic regions and disciplines.







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