



BITING THE FEEDING HAND

VOICES OF WOMEN ON LAND

UGANDA LAND ALLIANCE

act:onaid
international uganda



Biting the Feeding Hand

Womens voices on land

UGANDA LAND ALLIANCE

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ACRONYMS

AAIU	ActionAid International Uganda
ULA	Uganda Land Alliance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women



FOREWORD

ActionAid International Uganda (AAIU) and **Uganda Land Alliance (ULA)** are pleased to publish, ***'Biting the Feeding Hand'*** another booklet that documents women's experiences on land rights in six districts of Uganda.

While land is the most vital natural capital asset in Uganda, only 7% own land and therefore the majority have only user rights and cannot make decisions regarding its use. AAIU and ULA are concerned by this situation because of the direct linkage between women's lack of secure access to land and poverty and development. Secondly, in Uganda today most women can only access land through their male relatives or spouses and as such land ownership is a privilege and not a right.

'Biting the Feeding Hand' shares real stories of especially poor women in the districts about their struggles, dilemmas, challenges in securing their rights to land. It also shows that while the Government of Uganda has

made several strides in making the land law take into consideration the needs of men and women, it still falls short of guaranteeing secure land tenure for women. The cultural norms and values which give more and better privileges to men have inculcated the belief among men and women that 'land is a man's issue' where women should not dare.

In this publication, AAIU and ULA presents several recommendations that if taken into consideration will enable women to retain and cultivate land as required. There is need for reviewing the existing law to include the lost clause on co-ownership, considering providing certificate of ownership within the customary land tenure system and increasing women's access to legal justice. This calls for more readiness and willingness by policy makers for the changes to take place. Public awareness for both women and men should be intensified in order to change attitudes and to understand that land is an asset that should be

owned by both men and women in order to promote development. Women need to be helped to gain knowledge and confidence in order to make this process a success.

We hope that ***'Biting the Feeding Hand'*** will inspire policy makers, NGOs, donors, women's groups, men and women to take definite steps in addressing the above problems and hence secure women's land rights.

INTRODUCTION

Why the documentation

AAIU and ULA believe that the struggle for respect and promotion women's land rights has to continue until women's access to land is secure. The women's experiences here present a way forward for the campaign for women's land rights. They provide a basis for women's land rights activists to monitor the impact of the Government amendment made in 2004 to section 40 of the 1998 Land Act, and take action accordingly.

Over the years, AAIU in collaboration with Uganda Land Alliance have carried out several initiatives aimed at promoting women's land rights by setting up a land rights centre in Kapchorwa. More centres have since been established by ULA in four other districts and they provide the communities with information about land rights as well as providing legal support where necessary for the poor. This documentation was conducted to also assess the extent to which this

work has contributed to the protection, respect and promotion of women's rights to land.

Lastly, this publication provides an opportunity for women to share their untold stories and put forward their demands for land rights. We believe that while the process of recording these experiences may have caused sadness among the interviewed women by re-opening the scars and agony of what they went through, it at the same time lifted up their spirits because they begin to realize that it is important to open up as part of the healing process and also to seek support.

Specific Objectives

- To document women's realities and experiences regarding to access to, ownership of and control over land and the benefits of their labour.
- To identify and highlight the linkages between women living and affected by HIV/AIDS and women land

rights.

- To review the impact made by the 'Family Land Rights' clause in the Land (Amendment) Act 2004.
- To assess the status of Land Committees and their impact on the rights of women.

DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

Methodology:

The exercise was conducted in six districts namely; Kibaale, Luweero, Kapchorwa, Apac, Mbale and Kampala. These districts represent the different regions of Uganda and also have different land tenure systems.

The methodology used to document women's experiences took a participatory approach and as such methods of data collection included interviewing, focus group discussions, audio, still and video documentation and physical visits to the respondents homes. The women whose stories are presented in this booklet were selected randomly across the districts.

Various kinds of people at both community and national level were approached during this exercise and these included men and women in the districts, members of community

based organizations, local council officials, women councils, members of land tribunals and land committees, women and men representing the urban poor were also targeted. Specifically at national level, interviews were conducted with women land rights activists, policy makers and banking institutions for purposes of collecting their opinions, views on the existing land act and how it impacts on women's land rights.

OVERVIEW OF LAND ISSUES IN UGANDA

Land is a vital resource for rural livelihoods. Rural livelihoods are a key concern today as post-colonial countries in southern and eastern Africa propose changes in their natural resource policies and practices, including the regulation of land rights. These changes have been prompted by international, as well as national and local initiatives.

In Uganda land is the major productive resource because its economy is dependant on agriculture about 41% of the GDP. Of the estimated 26 million people in Uganda, over 80% live in rural areas and derive their livelihoods from subsistence farming. Men traditionally have user and ownership rights to land while women, who supply 80 percent of agricultural labour, are simply not expected to own land. In most cases, they cannot make decisions over what to grow and how to spend the money from the sale of agricultural output. The situation is even worse when the husband dies and the relatives demand that the widow leaves the land because it

does not belong to her even when the family is deriving its sustenance from it.

THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

The constitution, the land act of 1998 and the land amendment Act, 2004 despite their inadequacies, guarantee the land rights of all Ugandans. Below are some of the provisions that provide for the protection and promotion of women land rights;

Legal provisions for the recognition of women's land rights

The 1995 Constitution

Article 21 of the Constitution provides for equality of all and freedom from any form of discrimination on any ground.

Article 32 State shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender for the purpose of addressing

imbalances, which exist against them.

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|------------|---|
| Article 33 | (1) Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity with men. |
| Article 33 | (2) The State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance them to realize their full potential and advancement. |
| Article 33 | (3) The State shall protect women and their rights, taking into account their unique status and natural maternal functions. |
| Article 33 | (4) Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in public, political and social activities. |

Article 33 (5) Without prejudice to Article 32, women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom.

Article 33 (6) Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the, dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status are prohibited by this Constitution.

The Land Act, 1998

Section 8 (7) a certificate of customary ownership shall be recognized by financial institutions, bodies and authorities as a valid certificate for purposes of evidence of title.

Section 16 (4) (b) Communal

Land Associations, the Officers of the Association shall be not less than 3 persons and at least a third of which shall be women.

The above provisions were considered not enough in seeing women's land tenure and during the 2004 Land Act amendment, various people concerned about women's rights decided to urge for laws that would enable women to jointly own land on which the family home is situated or where the family derives livelihood, usually subsistence. This is a clause that had been earlier, in 1998, proposed by one outspoken women's rights activist and then a member of Uganda's parliament, Miria Matembe. This clause provides for the protection of families, particularly those headed by women, against ruthless land owners who take away property belonging to widows or divorced women.

Despite Uganda's 1995 Constitution, which recognizes gender equity and reserves a significant number of seats in Parliament for women; the numerous study reports that have

shown that women ownership of property can boost economic development; the nation wide campaign and network of people supporting women's land rights in Uganda; the increased discussion and debate about women's land rights by scholars and in the media, advocates for women's land rights have only achieved a measured victory. *Parliament passed an amendment to Section 40 of the 1998 Land Act 'by broadening the definition of spousal land and preventing a spouse's objection to its sale from lapsing'. While section 40 of the land act requires spouses to give consent before any transactions on land, women's rights and land activists believe that this can only be possible if the spouse required to give consent has an interest in the land. Without the clause on co-ownership this section is incomplete and will remain unenforceable.*

This publication therefore provides an opportunity to readers to assess the extent to which this amendment has guaranteed secure land tenure for women.

WOMEN AND LAND: THE REALITY



Fiesta Namutebi

In this section, we present stories of different women from five districts in Uganda whose testimonies were collected during the documentation exercise. The section covers the four major areas through which women have been able to access land in Uganda and what their experiences have been.

Access through marriage

Just like in other parts of Africa, women's land rights are dependant on their relationship to a male, usually a father, husband, brother or son. It is mainly through marriage that women acquire user rights on land as their husbands allocate plots of land for cultivation to produce mainly food for home consumption. Because women have user rights and not ownership rights, they are hardly given any information about the land and as Fiesta says below " Land issues are for men" This belief is deeply entrenched in the minds of both men and women and hence the

neglect of women's land rights; **Fiesta Namutebi** lives with her husband in Gango Village in Luwero district. One morning she went to her garden, as usual, to dig. In the process, a car pulled up and two people got out and told her to stop working on their land. She was puzzled but could not ask them why they were telling her so since this was her husband's land and therefore he knew better. She instead led them to her husband. *"Land issues are for men. What could I tell them?" she says.*

Throughout the discussion, Fiesta just listened and never uttered a word. The issue became complicated and her husband referred it to local authorities. *"I wondered where I would get food for the family incase my husband lost the land. How can one stay with a man without land?" She laments.*

For some reason, the two people have never shown up again, and she has continued cultivating the land,

although she is still worried that one day they may take the land away.

Can women be consulted before their husband's sale off the land that they do not own?

Like Jane Bukirwa, women often get to know that their family land has been sold off at the death of their husbands when it is too late to stop the process;

Jane Bukirwa lives in Kyengaju village, Kibaale district. She used to live with her husband as tenants on the land since 1976. At that time they had a grass thatched house which they later replaced with one with iron sheets. Her husband later died, living her with nine children. Upon his death, one man came to claim the land on which she was now living with her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law produced an agreement that showed that the land was in her names and those of her husband. Some of it had been given to their son (Jane's husband) but no agreement was signed to that effect.

Jane did not even know how much

land was theirs. She did not know how much was sold and at what cost. She had no idea where the boundaries were. When the landlord was claiming the land she left most of the arguments to her aged mother-in-law. It was a shock for her to discover that her husband had sold off most of the land before he died. She did not know what he did with the money because all her children of school-going age had not gone to school due lack of school fees.

Jane was secretly planning to sell some land to get money to take her children to school. The transaction had delayed because most buyers found *the area swampy*. *She was not going to tell the landlord. What she did not know was that she could have sold land that had already been bought and ended up in deeper trouble.*

While family land is sold off by the man without the consent of the wife, Specioza like many other women retains the responsibility of fending for the family. Domestic violence has also escalated as women claim their rights to family land;



Jane Bukirwa an her daughter

Specioza Mbabazi lives with her husband who earns a *living* by using his motorcycle for transporting people. She joined her husband in 1979 and they built a house close to his relatives. They later developed misunderstandings with the family and the husband opted to sell the land and move to another area far from his relatives. He identified the land he wanted to buy and even took Specioza for her approval before payment. Despite her approval, her husband changed his mind a few days later saying he had seen a better piece of land. He again sought Specioza's approval and she looked forward to the day they would move. It has been such a long waiting because up to now, Specioza has not moved. Meanwhile, her husband has sold all the land except the house is situated.

The person who bought the land from her husband does not allow her to carry out any cultivation and she has



Specioza Mbabazi

to walk about four miles to her parents' home to cultivate food for the family. Sometimes she has to work on other people's gardens where she is in turn given some food or allowed to cultivate on their land. Her husband turns violent when she asks about moving to the new land. She has no idea what he did with the money from the sale of the land.

Access through inheritance

It is not very easy to estimate the number of women who inherit land in practice because no national level data exists to this effect. However studies by NGOs indicate that women inherit land as daughters or widows. It should be noted that while Eddisa Najemba inherited land through her father, this practice is very limited because of the cultural bias that women are not supposed to own land.

Eddisa Najemba lives with her husband. Her father died leaving three daughters and a son. Before he died, he distributed his land and each one, including the daughters, got a share. She now lives with her husband as tenants on the land they occupy. If something happened and they lost the land she is better off because she still has the one her father left her. *"The fact that I am married and have produced children, I stand a chance of getting a share of my husband's land. Sometimes, at the time of marriage, a woman finds her husband poor. Through hard work, she contributes to the acquisition of wealth including land. It is only fair that at the time of distributing the land the man gives her a share. Unfortunately here most men give land to their sons and ignore their daughters and wives. My father was an exception."*

Mary's story below is however different. it depicts another form of access to land where by widows inherit land through their sons. In most cases they are required to keep custody of the land until the sons are of age to inherit directly.

Mary Bayeza is a widow with four children, the eldest being 20 years. She was married for thirteen years before the death of her husband in a car accident. Upon his death, Mary had to stomach insults from her in-laws whose intent was to chase her off the land. She persevered for four years until she felt that her life was under threat and she left. However during this period, she kept telling her in-laws that her children had a right on their late father's land and as their mother, she had to cater for their interests.

Mary however did not have any records to show ownership of the land because the husband left no will nor did they have an agreement as proof for purchase of land because they bought the land from a close relative.

A small ceremony was instead organized as proof of transfer of the land. Those who had witnessed the ceremony did not also come to her rescue when she was being harassed by her in-laws. When she approached the local authorities to help her stay on the land she was not given attention because she was a woman.

Mary left with her children and rented a small house far from her in-laws. Soon after she left, the in laws occupied the land and even constructed houses for rent. They claimed that since he had left no will, the land should return to them. Later on, she approached the Land Rights Center and a mediation process was initiated between herself and the in-laws. Her in-laws insisted that they would give the land to her son when makes 18 years. An agreement was signed to this effect. Mary has not yet gone back to follow-up on the matter now that her son is 20. *"I lost out on everything although I was his only wife who bore him four children. "Women are largely undermined when it comes*

to property ownership. Even if my son gets a share of the land, his plans of how he could utilize the land could be different from mine. I wouldn't gain anything," she concludes.

None registration of the majority of land in Uganda makes it very hard for women like Helen Okello to inherit land and women cannot confidently claim their land rights in the absence of certificates of ownership especially for customary land.

Helen Okello is a widow aged 60. She lives with her children on the land left by her late husband. Helen does not have proof of ownership of land because her late husband just inherited it. A small ceremony was however performed to declare him owner of the land. Upon his death, his cousin claimed the land arguing that since the owner had died, the land had to return to the family. Helen also argued that since her husband left a wife and children these were also his family. *"Here in Lango the culture is*



Helen Okello

so entrenched. I knew he wanted to claim that a woman cannot own land". But I also have sons who customarily inherited their father's land. He was just taking me for granted because I am a woman" she says

Helen, who has eight children, could not let go of the land because she had no where to go. She approached the Land Tribunal and presented her case and won. *"Men should distribute their property when they are still alive. The wife and children should not be ignored otherwise they got through s lot of suffering when the man dies. A man should write a will and in it he should remember his wife. It is not just about giving property to only boys."* Helen concludes.

Anna Ajok was born in Apac Town Council in 1971. Her father was given the land by his grandfather in 1964. Both her father and grandfather are dead. She lives with her mother and brother. Her father died in 2002 and immediately an elderly man in his sixties came to claim the land. As far as Anna can remember, the land had been given to her father by his grandfather. No one had ever claimed the land before.

Anna watched helplessly as her mother made various trips to the local authorities and to the Land Tribunal. At that time Anna was down with AIDS and could not even move with her mother as she struggled to save their land. The elderly man sent brokers to uproot their crops and Anna was too weak to argue with them. *"I was helpless and I hated to see what was happening to us. We have an elder brother but he was of no help, so it was my mother walking up and down and at the same time taking care of me," she says.*



Anna Ajok

The Land Tribunal ruled in her mother's favor but other people told her that she had lost. This forced her mother to travel to Lira, a neighboring district to get a good lawyer to appeal the ruling. It was an expensive venture but her mother could not see their only home taken away. The identified lawyer followed up the case and found that Anna's mother had already won the case. During this time, one of Anna's brothers dropped out of school because all the little money was being spent on the land case.



Access through the land market

As land becomes more of a commodity for sale, some women have been able to access both user rights and ownership rights from purchasing land. This is definitely so for very few women because the cost of land is so high that very few women can afford it. Chelim Zainabu is among the lucky few who have managed to access a piece of land in this manner;



***Chelim Zainabu** is a single woman aged 74. She lives in Litei village on a one and a half acre piece of land that she bought from her younger brother. She was married thrice but all the marriages were not successful. Her younger brother realized that his sister was getting more and more miserable as she left one marriage for another. He decided to sell her some land so that she could settle down with her children who happened to be girls only.*

Traditionally women do not inherit land in Kapchorwa. However, the brother thought it wise to defy culture. The land he owned was inherited from their father. *"We were five boys and four girls but it is only boys who got a share. Our father acted according to culture but for me I will give land to my daughters," she said.*

Even after paying for the land from her brother, some people attempted to grab it from her because she was a woman. She sought help from a neighbour who had witnessed the transaction as she bought land from the brother but in vain. When she heard of the Land Rights Center she went there and after some discussions and negotiations she now lives in peace.



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Land reform processes

Land reform is one way through which Governments could allocate land to the poor. In Uganda it is not very common. Government mainly allocates land to foreign investors whose investment is expected to bring in revenue for the country. The impact of these allocations on the poor is very bad as squatters and tenants become landless when evicted from the land. Government has also allocated land to peasants during the process of resettling them from the land that has been gazetted. Kokop Kisa is an unfortunate story of landlessness as a result of government resettlement programme.



Kokop Kisa

Kokop Kisa lives in Yatui village. She has been landless since 1983 when government re-settled people in some villages including hers. In 1993 the village she lived in was gazetted off as a national park and now park rangers are harassing them to leave.

Her first husband died when they were still living in the moorlands where they were not allowed to cultivate the land. When he died, she did not inherit anything because culturally it simply could not happen. She was inherited by another man and she became his second wife (Widow inheritance is still a common practice in this part of Uganda.) During this time, Government resettled all families including hers on smaller pieces of land compared to where they lived before. Her husband later died living her with one child. Because she was a second wife she benefited absolutely nothing

from that marriage. The older children even chased her away saying she had no right over the property in the home.

Kokop was later inherited by a third man who eventually was shot dead during a fight with his relatives over a cow. About to be inherited by a fourth man, her relative took pity on her and gave her a piece of land which she now calls her own. *“I have grown old and no one admires me now. I have also grown weaker. I have problems with my leg and moving is becoming increasingly difficult. I do not know what lies ahead for me. I have come a long way and no one admires what I have been through”* she says.

Kokop has eight children and she lives with all of them on her relative's land. She will not wander any more. *“If women were also allowed to own land, I would have got my own piece of land during the government re-allocation process. I would have got my own land and managed it. I hope that my children will live a better life than me,”* she says.

NGO Donations and support

Non Governmental Organisations have also provided support to a few women in difficult circumstances in terms of providing land for cultivation or for building a house. Victo Kibirige is one of the beneficiaries and below is a recording of her experience;

Victo Kibirige is an entrepreneur from Wobulenzi town council in Luwero District. She lost her husband in 2001 while in a polygamous marriage for seventeen years during which the two worked together and accumulated some property including land.

Upon her husband's death, her in-laws informed her that she had no authority over the family property despite the fact that she continued occupying the land. Her older step sons even ordered her to quit the land. Having no where to go, Victo endured the insults and chose to stay until one day she came across a sale




Victo Kibirige

agreement for the land in question, which she had signed with her late husband as they purchased the land. With this agreement she gained courage to face her in-laws. She told them that she had the authority over the land and any other property.

Victo's in-laws were not prepared to have her take charge of her deceased husband's property. Some teamed up with the older children and threatened her life. When she could not bear it any more, a friend took her to Habitat for Humanity a non government organisation (NGO) which gave her a small piece of land. She built a small house and is now striving to get a land title for it in her names.



Claudia with her children



Claudia Sunday was supported by Kapchorwa Land rights centre established by Uganda Land Alliance and ActionAid to reclaim part of their family land but such disputes are not easy to handle and the mediation processes takes such a long time.

Claudia Sunday was abducted and forced into marriage in Cheptia village. While she was walking home from school one evening some men pounced on her and took her to their village where she was kept under custody. While in custody, these men approached her parents to negotiate for her hand in marriage. They gave her parents three cows and the marriage was sealed. This certainly marked the beginning of a new life for Claudia!

Throughout her marriage with a drunken husband, Claudia had to endure daily battering without reason as the husband came in from the local bar. They owned a small piece of land where they practiced subsistence farming. Without her

knowledge her husband started selling off this land and using the money for drinking. Claudia discovered this after giving birth to her fourth child.

Afraid of becoming landless and tired of the daily battering, Claudia reported the matter to the in-laws who summoned the husband and tried to discipline him. Mad with humiliation, her husband went home, beat her and even threatened to kill her. A few days later she escaped with her children and left to join her elder sister in another village.

Claudia was told about the Land Rights Center in Kapchorwa established by Uganda Land Alliance and ActionAid International Uganda and she rushed there to seek assistance. A mediation process between Claudia and the buyers of the land was initiated. The husband's relatives were also involved in the negotiations. To date Claudia has gotten back part of the land which she is utilizing for cultivation.

Urban Women and Access to Land

While factors causing women's limited access and control over land may be similar, the experiences of the urban poor women differ from the rural women and as such, *Biting the Feeding Hand*' highlights these unique stories

Sarah Kanyike is a widow living in St. Francis Zone, Bwaise III Parish, Kampala Municipality. This area is swampy and slummy. She has however lived here for the last 30 years. By the time of her husband's death in 1991, the husband had bought the plot of land on which they lived. Land in this area is crown land (Kabaka's/monarch's land) so the inhabitants cannot fully own it. While some of it has been leased out, the majority of the poor cannot afford the costs.

The main problem for Sarah is the property tax that she pays to city council. "The money demanded from



Sarah Kanyike

me is so high that paying it drives her crazy. This was not a problem ten years ago, every one could afford it but now the cost of living is so high. The basis upon which this rent is assessed for each house also not clear to us" she said. "My appeal is that let the tax be revised and made less. We also need to be educated on how it is arrived at because I do not understand how someone with a big permanent house can pay the same tax as one with a small collapsing

Survival mechanisms are not many in such a swampy and slummy area. Agriculture impossible even when you have access or control over the land. Mastula narrates her dilemmas in trying to earn a living from her plot of land.

Mastula Nabunya bought her small plot of land in 1979. She has not been able to lease the land because it is an expensive venture. Mastula has also been unfortunate because she has built her house three times because it keeps on collapsing during the rainy season. *"I bought the land during the dry season; little did I know what happens when the rains come. In the wet season one could think that all of us have lost our minds to stay in such a place. Water gets inside our houses and before we know it a house or two have collapsed," she says.*

Mastula built some rooms to rent out with the hope of making some income from her land but she says things did not quite work out as the rooms get filled up with water during the rainy season. "If the water does not get in



Mastula Nabunya

directly, it slowly sips through the ground, keeping the floor constantly wet. No one wants to stay in such a house," she says.

Mastula has therefore not benefited much from her land. Property tax is depriving her of all the little money she has. In addition she takes care of some orphans. "This is the cheapest place one can stay in. I am old and I do not have the money to buy another piece of land and construct a house. Leaving this place is out of the question".`

Mary Namwanga rents a small room in Bwaise. She started living in this area with her husband in 1993 who died two years later. She has four children aged 15 to 18 years. Mary is a person living with AIDS. She set up a small retail shop which she has been running since she came. "The problem is that I do not have many customers. Most of them keep away from me because of my sickness. I have not bought new stock in a long time and most of the time I am weak".

Mary has found it very difficult even to get money for rent. But she keeps in Bwaise because it is the rent and food are cheap.



Mary Namwanga

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

1.1 Need for certificates for customary ownership of land

This was an overriding issue in all the districts where the documentation was done. Most women who were being threatened with eviction did not have the necessary documentation as rightful owners of the land upon the death of a husband.

Certificates for customary ownership would also mean that the land is surveyed properly and each owner or tenant is aware of how much land he or she owns. In some cases it was evident that although women were struggling to keep their land, they did not know how much land they were struggling for. They were not fully aware of the boundaries.

Thirdly certificates of customary ownership will go a long way in settling land disputes. Most of the disputes

were along boundaries with neighbors accusing each other of stealing their land. Since a survey would have to be done, boundaries would then be clarified to the satisfaction of all parties that are entitled to the certificate.

Most interviewees felt that the certificate would protect their rights against landlords who currently seem to be protected. Many were of the view that it is not right for the land lord to own the developments that they had put on the land, for example some had grown trees for sale as timber but a landlord was cutting them down because he owned the land and had a title for it.


1.2 Review of the consent clause (Article 40 of the Land Act)

The consent clause demands that a person who wishes to use a land title as security

should seek consent from the spouse and children if the land title in question is the one they live on and earn their living.

Some women felt that the consent clause would work only in a monogamous setting. In a polygamous setting where most of them lie, it would cause conflict. Agreeing or not agreeing to use the land titles could make the other woman (women) unhappy and do evil things.

There was also a feeling that the consent clause does not really empower women or protect their land rights. The fact that the woman does not own the land still remains. If she consented and somehow the land is taken she would be landless. If she did not consent, she would still be landless because the mere fact that she has not consented does not give her ownership. In any case refusal to consent in a rural setting



could earn a woman some serious battering.

It was suggested that the consent clause be revised to cater for rural settings as well. In areas where land is customarily owned, it would be very difficult for it to be effected.

1.3 Need for change of cultural attitudes

This was especially so in the area of girls/women inheriting land. In reality the current cultural attitudes domed a woman to a life of landlessness all her life. When a woman gets married she thinks she is entitled to benefit from the property including land. But the reality is that even where she is married she has no rights on the property. Some women moved from one marriage to another seeking a place to belong to but at the end of the day it is

their relatives who bailed them out. It is therefore much better for parents to give their girl children land so that they do not have to suffer. In the search for a place to belong some have got HIV and passed it on to others.

1.4 Revisit the land reform process and re-allocate land (Benet)

The Benet people of Kapchorwa continue to suffer from the allocation and re-allocation processes of 1983 and 1993. Some of those who owned land are now completely landless. Government re-allocations methods were found poor and faulty. Women were caught in-between and have since continued to suffer. Communities are not allowed to cultivate the land, they are harassed by park rangers and there are no social services for them.

The Benet community continues to appeal to government to settle their land problems which were cause by the land reforms. This time round, women are ready to join in the struggle to own their own land.

CONCLUSION

Women's right to land is a vital and very concrete issue to address. Women's lack and control over land is a human rights violation enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which focuses on equality in property as one of its important directives.

The Constitution of Uganda 1995 also provides for women's property ownership. Fulfilling this right therefore could serve as an entry point portal to addressing other poverty issues affecting women and hence accelerate development. Chelim's story gives us hope that livelihoods would improve if women were also given the authority to determine what to grow, when, how much and decide on how the proceeds from the land should be spent.

'Biting the feeding hand' has provided an opportunity for sharing experiences of women in accessing their land rights and strategies for change. It is important to note that in

all the stories shared herein, women's rights to land are far from being fulfilled. The factors leading to this mainly include the patriarchal values and attitudes that allude to the fact that women cannot own land. The law of the land has also not been able to effectively address this inequality.

'**Biting the Feeding Hand**' is therefore meant to challenge all stakeholders namely; policy makers, donors, men and women to take actions that would ensure realisation of women's rights to land and hence improve the lives of the poor men, women, boys and girls.

UGANDA LAND ALLIANCE

The Uganda Land Alliance (ULA) is a consortium of national and international NGO's, lobbying and advocating for fair land laws and policies that address the land rights of the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and individuals in Uganda.

The Alliance was set up in 1995 as a non-governmental, independent autonomous legal entity and registered as a company limited by guarantee.

Vision

Ugandan society where there is equitable access and control over land and the poor women, men and children are actively participating to eradicate poverty.

Mission

To enhance access, control and ownership of land by the poor women, men, children and marginalized females and males through the promotion of fair policies and males through the promotion of fair policies and laws for the protection of land rights.

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ULA's Objectives:

- 1) To increase land rights awareness among poor women, men, children and other marginalised groups in at least five districts by 2005.
- 2) To lobby and advocate for fair land laws and policies to protect the land rights of poor women, men, children and other marginalised groups.
- 3) To strengthen participation of members of the Alliance programmes and collaboration with other organs/institutions.
- 4) To improve efficiency and effectiveness in planning and management of the Alliance

ULA's strategies

1. Research and Documentation
2. Advocacy
3. Networking and Information Sharing.
4. Capacity Building

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF ULA

The General Assembly is the highest decision making body at ULA. The policy making body is the Executive Committee, composed of nine persons headed by the chairperson elected every two years by the General Assembly. ULA has a secretariat headed by a Coordinator and staff who implement its programmes. Staff are employed on contract terms to implement programmes and activities.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat implements policies as formulated by the General Assembly and the Executive Committee. It is headed by the Coordinator and supported by six other staff.

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ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

ActionAid International Uganda (AAIU) is part of a global family working with the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help them secure lasting improvements in the quality of their lives.

Our Vision: A world without poverty in which every person can exercise his or her right to a life of dignity.

Our Mission: To work with poor women, men, boys and girls, the local civil society and other development players to eradicate absolute poverty in Uganda by overcoming the injustices and inequalities that cause it.

How we began: ActionAid has been working in Uganda since 1982 when we started working in Mityana Sub county, Mubende district. Since then we have expanded our operations throughout Uganda as part of our long-term commitment to working with the socially and economically disadvantaged.

At the same time, we support a number of partner NGOs and CBO's in over 33 districts on a number of poverty eradication initiatives. We currently

support over 260,000 families, 17% of Uganda's poorer population.

How we work

Our approach towards poverty eradication rests on strong pillars of our long experience of working and learning from disadvantaged and marginalized people across the world. We seek to strengthen the already considerable abilities of the poor to cope with and combat vulnerability and deprivation, and empowering them to overcome the barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. We work directly with poor communities as well as local community based organizations, NGOs and other development players such as local councils, and the district governments. We also work along other national and international players in an effort to influence pro poor policy processes, to help create an enabling environment for the struggles of poor communities.

Where we work

ActionAid Uganda has 12 District Initiatives (DIs) in Mubende, Bundibugyo, Kalangala, Kawempe,

Apac, Masindi, Nebbi, Pader, Kapchorwa, Katakwi, Pallisa and Kumi.

Programme strategies

- Strengthen the capacity of emerging Community Based Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations networks and alliances to influence policy and decision-making in favour of the poor and strengthen local services.
- Support partners pioneering innovative ways of addressing poverty issues, and lobby government to scale up proven best practice.
- Build capacity of leadership at district and sub-county levels to engage with their local constituents and deliver effective reduction strategies.
- Support partner interventions and policy advocacy on education, agriculture/food security, HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health, peace-building, relief and rehabilitation and women's rights.