

SUPPORTING GENDER INTEGRATION IN CUSTOMARY LAND DOCUMENTATION IN MALAWI



USAID is supporting gender-responsive and socially inclusive customary land documentation in Malawi to ensure that women and other marginalized groups participate in land registration and governance.

Malawi's land policies, including the Customary Land Act, permit customary landholders to formalize ownership and improve land tenure security. Despite a legal framework that promotes equality in land documentation, systematic customary land registration efforts often end up being gender-neutral and fail to address barriers to women's land rights and even inadvertently reinforce these barriers.

The approach of the USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) program recognizes social barriers as a key challenge to translate legal provisions into women's access to and control of land in both matrilineal and patrilineal systems. With funding from the Women's Economic Empowerment Fund at USAID, ILRG is working with the Land Reform Implementation Unit (LRIU) at the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development (MLHUD) to integrate gender sensitization into customary land documentation in Malawi.

A gender-responsive and socially inclusive registration process will address the barriers and social norms that often hinder the ability to own, access, use, and control land while protecting the land rights of women and other marginalized groups like youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Strengthening women's land rights and participation in land governance supports sustainable livelihoods, ultimately promoting food and economic security for rural household and communities.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Promote the inclusion of women and youth in the land documentation process through gender-responsive guidelines, manuals, and implementation notes.
- Shift gender norms around women's land rights at institutional, community, and household levels.
- Encourage gender integration into customary land documentation among national and international stakeholders.
- Build the capacity of district level land registry and clerks to manage land records that are trusted and verified by all land users and landholders, including women and youth.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The ILRG Malawi activity will support the LRIU, from August 2021 to March 2023, to document customary land in the Traditional Authority Mwanambo, Nkhotakota District, Central Region.

ILRG will support the documentation of up to 18 group village headpersons, some 5,000 - 10,000 parcels, and support government to ensure gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches inform ongoing efforts.

ILRG will finance three learning platform meetings that bring together government, academia, communities, traditional authorities, and civil society to consolidate experience and build momentum for gender-responsive and socially inclusive customary land documentation approaches.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

Land Reform Implementation Unit under the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development (MLHUD)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES



45,000 people will benefit from gender-responsive customary land documentation with the issuance of land certificates



An improved land administration structure that can support future land documentation processes



More gender-responsive and accountable public sector and customary land authority

ILRG'S GOALS CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI'S OBJECTIVES RELATED TO CUSTOMARY LAND DOCUMENTATION AS WELL AS USAID'S PRIORITY OF ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.



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