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LANDLINKS

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# #LandMatters Research Edition #2

## October 2022

### Land and Conflict

Welcome to Land Matters, Research Edition, a quarterly publication that spotlights research that is critical to advancing our collective land and resource governance work. These editions are meant to present research produced and/or identified as critically important by USAID's Land and Resource Governance (LRG) Division, identify ties to policy and programs, and highlight observations about the ways that the land and resource rights field is advancing.

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### Land and Conflict

On February 24, Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine, rapidly displacing more than a third of Ukraine's population, forcibly grabbing hundreds of miles of territory and causing billions of dollars in damage to homes, agricultural land and other property. It is but the latest example of the complex relationship between land and violent

conflict, in which property is both a driver and a casualty of war.

For most households across the globe, land is the most valuable economic asset. It is the source of both shelter and livelihood, a cultural and social anchor. So it is unsurprising that, as our recently released [Land and Conflict Toolkit](#) lays out:

**“Throughout history, people have fought over land and the resources on and under land. Climate change, urbanization, rising demand for lands and resources across a variety of landscapes, and environmental stresses have exacerbated the perception of land as a dwindling resource, tightening the connection between land, resources and violent conflict.”**

Yet, just as land can be a driver of conflict, it is also a critical element in peacebuilding and economic reconstruction and development. Research shows that secure tenure rights and the presence of strong local resource governance institutions reduce the incidence and severity of disputes and conflicts related to parcel boundaries, land uses and land management.

Understanding the links between land and conflict is critical to USAID’s efforts because it helps us develop programs that do no harm, and move swiftly to address the land-related drivers of conflicts in the countries in which we work. For that reason, USAID has funded a range of research to better understand the relationship between conflict, violence and land in countries like Colombia, Ethiopia, Central Africa and elsewhere.

Below is a sampling of USAID research and evaluations that have helped us better understand the dynamics between land and conflict:



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## **[Mining and the Green Energy Transition](#)**

In order to meet the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius, countries are shifting away from fossil fuels and towards alternative energy sources through a process called the green energy transition. And yet the raw “green” minerals needed to fuel this transition--including cobalt, graphite, lithium and

aluminum--are at the heart of surging global demand resulting in negative consequences such as land grabbing and other conflicts over land and resources. This report reviews both the challenges and opportunities that donors like USAID face as the world rapidly shifts from its reliance on fossil fuels in pursuit of a sustainable green energy future.



## **Impact Evaluation, Land Tenure Assistance Activity**

An impact evaluation of the Feed the Future Tanzania Land Tenure Assistance Activity (LTA) found that LTA's activities, which included training households on their land rights and providing them with land documentation, sharply reduced their concern about property conflicts. The impact evaluation found that LTA's activities reduced the probability that respondents felt they would experience a boundary dispute in the next 5 years by 32 percent. Providing land documents also appears to have changed whether and why households think about future dispute risk. By the time of the endline survey (in 2020), 66 percent of LTA households that were not worried about future boundary disputes said it was because their household had documentation to prove their land rights.



## **Evaluation of the Land for Prosperity (LFP) Activity in Colombia**

The baseline impact evaluation of the USAID-supported "Land for Prosperity (LFP)" activity in Colombia found that a relatively small proportion of households reported conflicts and disputes over land. However, among households that experienced disputes, the most common sources of conflict were plot boundaries (30.4 percent of all households with disputes), inheritance (18.8 percent), and land titling

(11.8 percent). Interestingly, the baseline found that men are also more likely than women to know where to obtain help for land conflicts, and to feel they would have access to representation if a land dispute should arise. This finding suggests the need to raise women's awareness of land laws and their land rights.



## **Pastoralism in Transition Report**

This study, conducted as part of USAID's Artisanal Mining and Property Rights project, examined the changing nature of pastoralism in the Central African Republic and the nuanced relationship that different groups of herders have with armed groups, artisanal diamond mining, and farming communities.

Researchers found that more than half of herders reported being attacked by armed groups, often multiple different ones, and that resource disputes were common between herders, farmers and those engaged in the diamond trade. The overlapping of land uses, and a lack of good mechanisms to mediate land disputes, leads to escalating and violent conflicts. Researchers put forth recommendations to the national Government and to local government and traditional leaders, for reducing these conflicts over routes, land and resources.

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The Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) Bureau is increasingly focused on the ways in which environmental change, inclusive of climate change, affects conflict and stability. A common variable in resource-related conflict is land use change and, in equal measure, equitable access, change, and governance. Indeed in many of the recent conflict assessments produced by the Center for Violence Prevention, land and resources were central to country-specific conflict. Therefore updating and highlighting how land and conflict interact – and how we can best approach land issues with conflict sensitivity - is directly in line with the goals of CPS. More critically, this toolkit is an important

step to providing missions with needed resources to program directly upon the interesting challenges of land, conflict, and climate change.

## Learn more about our work at the nexus of land and resource governance, and conflict

Many of the LRG Division's programs and research efforts work at the interface of land and resource governance, and conflict. Check out the resources below, or visit <https://land-links.org/issue/conflict/>.

- [Toolkit](#): Land and Conflict
- [Reference Sheet](#): Integrating LRG into Conflict and Democracy Programming
- [Land and Development](#): A Research Agenda for Land and Resource Governance at USAID
- [Issue Brief](#): Environmental Defenders
- [Issue Brief](#): Pastoralism in Contested Spaces of Southwest Central African Republic
- [Guidelines on Compulsory Displacement and Resettlement in USAID Programming](#)



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