

# LAND AWARENESS WEEK 2017



# Harriet Mbabazi

Oxfam aims at reducing extreme inequality, poverty and injustices . We look at different target groups such as women, youth, disabled and pastoralist, and try to compare with the key productive resources that can help improve on their livelihood. To us land is a key productive resource.

“ Land is a key productive resource ”

In the greater north where we work land is owned in customary and communal way and women being the primary users of land for cultivation and farming find it really difficult to access it. It is from this point of view that Oxfam decided to team up with partners such as Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM), Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF), Coalition of Pastoralists Civil Society Organisation (COPACSO) and The Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) to raise awareness to the land question in the greater north starting with Amuru district. By doing so, we are providing legal provisions on land and getting duty bearers to help people get facts about their land.

Oxfam intends to do more advocacy and push for dialogue between all warring parties and lead to proper demarcation of land boundaries and issuing of proper certificates of customary ownership. We also intend to continue sensitizing communities on their land rights and responsibilities so as to combat land grabbing and encroachment. We are researching the land question so as to engage with enough evidence to inform advocacy on land.





## Oboo Denis - Spokesperson

Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development

One of our obligations is to protect the rights of customary owners. The demand for customary certificates started from this Amuru District in 2007 when civil society organisations together with the district called for the need to formalise ownership. The ministry provided standardization, registry books, certificates and training to the Area Land Committees, District Land Board and the recorders (sub-county chiefs). All this effort was constrained by lack of unique codes which the ministry had not yet generated. Am glad to inform you that we are now ready, requiring only refresher trainings and mass sensitisations of community and leaders.

“ We have modified from tree boundary marking to use of coordinates which innovation we believe will fight land grabbing ”

During the awareness week, we have heard many land related challenges that people are facing. Many people have demanded for the Customary Certificates of Ownership and we shall support the move. We have had the challenges during this awareness week, people have demanded for the certificates and we shall support that move. We have modified from tree boundary marking to use of coordinates which innovation we believe will fight land grabbing. There may be situations where leases were issued on customary land, but the law provides for cancellation if proved to have been done fraudulently. This has worked in the Albertine region, and it can work in Amuru District.





Through the Right to Food Program, local leaders have been empowered on land administration and rights. Awareness and dialogue that bring together all land actors is key in improving land security and productivity.

## Stella Lutalo - Country Coordinator,

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda

We are implementing the “Right to Food” program in partnership with Oxfam, Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) Uganda, Food Rights Alliance (FRA) and Coalition of Pastoralists Civil Society Organisation (COPACSO) and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in the greater North. Our interventions aim at promoting land and seed rights for smallholder farmers especially women and pastoralists. Land and seed are key factors of production which need to be secured.

“ If women are able to own land, their ability to make investment decisions on it is easier. Otherwise, many programs that require credit are a myth to these women; since most of them do not own land which is in most cases used as collateral. Land insecurity therefore makes the poor more and more vulnerable. ”

## Micheal Lakony - L.C.5 Chairperson

Amuru District

We have many interventions to make in Apaa Sub-county but the first is to move a motion in parliament to de-gazette Apaa since it was gazetted in 2002 to become part of the East Madi Game Reserve without consulting the land owners. It doesn't matter whether these land owners are in Adjumani District or Amuru District, their land rights still have to remain. Rivalling about district boundaries should not be their problem as long as they hold proper ownership of their land.

Government intends to move slowly and negotiate with local leaders to get the land in Lakang for investment but a few individuals from Acholi sub-region are trying to fuel land conflicts through bribery and evicting people. This has to end but it can only be stopped by empowering people to have certificates of customary ownership.

**“ ‘It doesn't matter whether these land owners are in Adjumani or Amuru District. Their land rights still have to remain ”**





# Where are we?

Onek Jervise Atunya (76 years old);

Elder from Apaa, Amuru district says;

The government should help clarify our land boundaries. Are we in Adjumani District, the Wildlife reserve or Amuru District? We have had a prolonged challenge with our land since 2006. A court order passed on 9th April, 2012 deterred Uganda Wildlife Authority from unsettling the community but they never listened. Land ownership here is not clear. Trading centers cannot even develop because people fear to invest their money. Government should see us as partners in development.

“ Most women in this community do not own land much as they are allowed to use it for agriculture. This has limited food production to subsistence level with limited intentions for commercial production. Land is either communally owned, male individually owned or publicly owned. ”



# VOICES “FOR” HOPE

**Abalo Irene Otto (28years old)**

**Freelance Journalist**

I have repeatedly reported about women land rights. The fact that women have to get authorisation from men to use the land makes the product of their labor men's property too. To end violence against women, we need to answer the land question. We need to begin viewing women as partners in the development of this country because they are the ones doing productive work especially in agriculture. Women are feeding this nation so they deserve the right to own land.

“ “ To end violence against women, we need to answer the land question. ” ”





## Always standing

**Anek Karomela (65 years old)**

**Resident of Apaa Sub-county**

In the past, I used to protest against land issues in my village. During the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) war, we were told to leave our homes and go to a camp in Pabbo Sub-county for safety. When the war ended in 2005, we returned to our homes in Apaa Sub-county where we were told the land belongs to Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and we were not permitted to stay. But where do they expect me to go? My in laws turned me away after my husband's death and told me that I owned no land in their family. I decided to return to my father's land in Apaa where I have assurance of ownership.

“ But where do they  
expect me to go? ”

I already lost a son to these land wrangles and I have nothing left except this land in Apaa that belonged to my father. Without it I have no source of livelihood.





## Who owns which land?

### Mary Apacho

Nursery school teacher of St. Daudi Agildo  
and mother to a toddler

I have been here for five months in my newly opened school. But we are always chased off the land. When the fighting starts, I usually want to run to safety but parents beg me to stay. Where can we find safety? Who owns which land?

In February 2017 when fighting between the Madi and Acholi began, I had over 140 infants at my school between the ages of three years and six years. I couldn't run with all the children in my care. It was a full week of fear.

“ We are always chased off the land.  
When the fighting starts, I want to run  
to safety ... but where is safety? ”

BEATRICE D.

## Moving boundaries

### Ogena Paul (32 years)

Chief Rwot Kweri, Lajago village, Amuru District,  
Local Council II leader and a Village Health Team  
(VHT) member.

All our grandfathers grew and worked on this land, but we have had challenges with the leaders of Nwoya District. They claim that this land is not customary and want to sell it to interested investors. They further claim that Lajago village is in Nwoya District.

Unfortunately, we do not have documents as proof of ownership of the land. We only know our land by marked trees. NGOs have provided us with information on land registration and some people have already started on the process.





## Land wrangles affect food & school security

**Ocera David**

Local Council III Chairman, Amuru Sub-county

I have participated in over four land conflict negotiations. We shared this issue with the Local Council V Chairperson who in-turn called for meetings with Nwoya District local government but got no response.

Eight years ago, one civil society organization supported some community members to process their Certificates of Customary Ownership, however, when efforts reached district level, the community members were frustrated by the process. The members resorted to customary without registration.

Land wrangles have continued to grow and food production has been affected severely. Some people have been arrested over land cases. Lajago village community primary school was affected over who owns the land and eventually attendance at the school declined.



## On the run

“When I came from the garden, I found people breaking my house. The area District Police Commander (DPC) who was present told me to go or else he would touch my breasts”.

**Jessica** a community member narrates

“Is there any land law that says that if someone’s house is destroyed, they also take the sauce pans?” She asks

“When I went to my cassava garden, I found men with guns, bows, rows and spears. I was told to leave the field immediately for my safety. I had no option!”

**Florence says.**

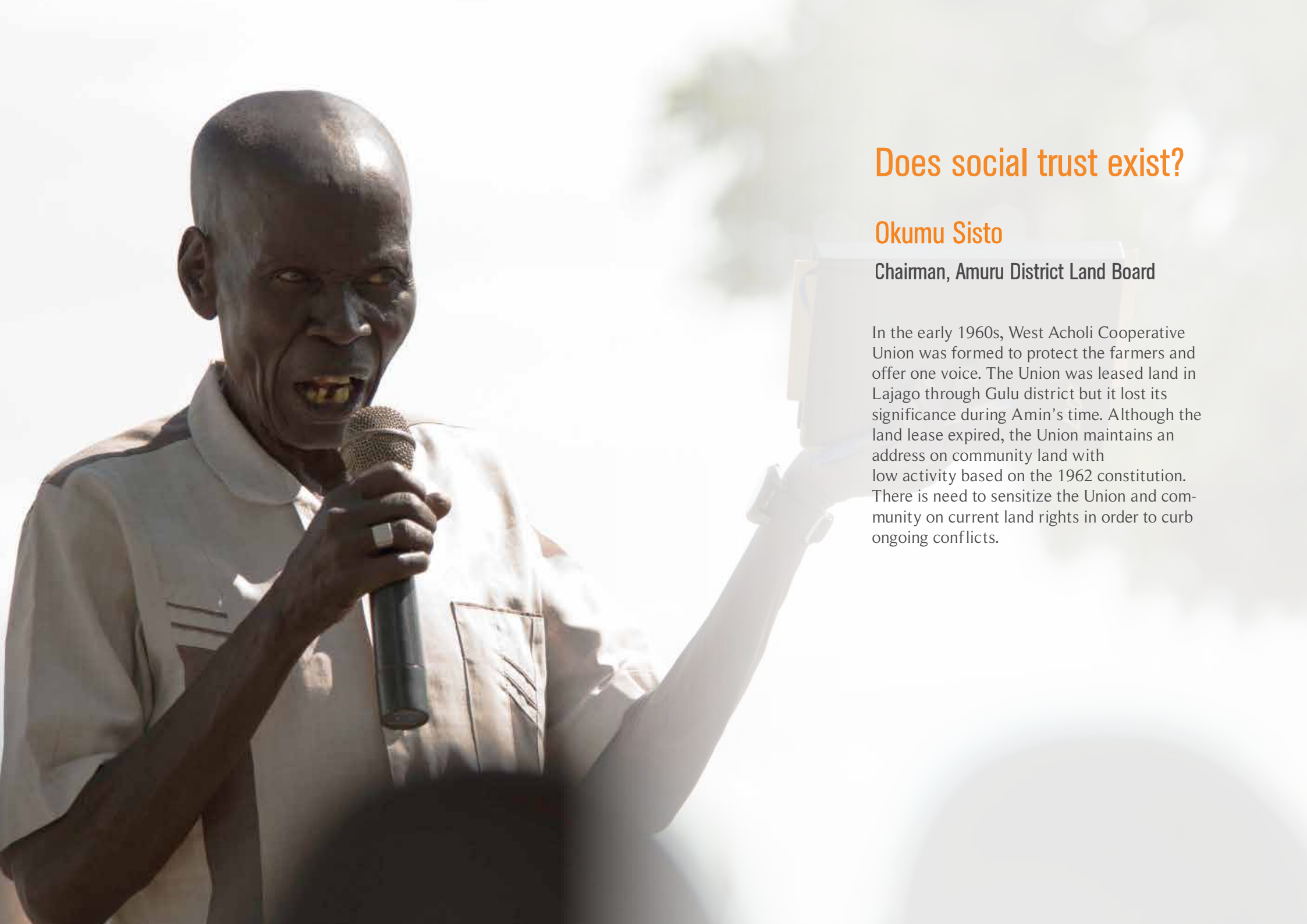
“Men came after me when I had gone to my garden. I fell down and they ran over me. I was told never to return to the land because that belongs to West Acholi Cooperative Union,”

**says Mary**

“I got a share of slaps from the land grabbers. I never got the benefit of my sweat from the cassava I had earlier planted. I was advised to leave the West Acholi Cooperative Union land. Now that Nwoya District was birthed from Amuru District, there is need to define boundaries. NGOs and other people should hurry and save us before we are pushed to take the law into our hands,”

**comments Santa.**





## Does social trust exist?

### Okumu Sisto

Chairman, Amuru District Land Board

In the early 1960s, West Acholi Cooperative Union was formed to protect the farmers and offer one voice. The Union was leased land in Lajago through Gulu district but it lost its significance during Amin's time. Although the land lease expired, the Union maintains an address on community land with low activity based on the 1962 constitution. There is need to sensitize the Union and community on current land rights in order to curb ongoing conflicts.

## Civil Society Perspectives



**Bagaga Ronald** - Program Assistant, Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF),

Under Right to Food Programme implementation in Amuru District, we took the farmers through the Gender Action Learning system (GALS) methodology to empower households on land rights and food security. GALS methodology has also been piloted for communities to meaningfully engage investors. The land awareness week has highlighted the land ownership gap which the communities must first address. Further sensitization about land rights will inform the actions of Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) as well as other partners.



**Jude Sebuliba** - Programs officer – Food Rights Alliance

The land issue in Amuru District is unique. The reality calls for transparent leadership at all levels together with community members. Two major issues that have come out of the awareness week is the failure by community to distinguish public from customary land. Community members do not believe government institutions can protect them. There is need to restore public trust and confidence among community members in government's ability to protect them

“ This land awareness week should be on a monthly ”

**Eric Lajul** - Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI)

People have embraced the idea of the land awareness week with calmness. They have called for more regular land awareness events because they will help them understand their land rights and responsibilities. Such events will also help foster dialogue among the conflicting parties.



## Window of hope

**Micheal Lakony**, L.C.5  
Chairperson - Amuru  
District

We have many interventions to make in Apaa but the first is to move a motion in parliament to de-gazette Apaa since it was gazetted in 2002 without consulting the land owners.

**Alani Jimmy**, ICT officer- Ministry of Lands,  
Housing and Urban Development.

The land information system has been fully operationalized in the Northern region and is accessed through a secured system. We are always open to support the community whenever they have details such as full names and at least a block number. The system uses Global Positioning System (GPS) and shows you which land is customary, leasehold or freehold. It also shows which areas have been gazetted as forests and/or wild life areas.

“ The land information systems shows land that is customary, leasehold or freehold. It also shows areas that have been gazetted as forests or wildlife areas ”



## Olanya Harriet - FIDA Uganda

The land awareness week has made it clear that the history of land needs to be critically assessed. Amuru District has a number of land conflicts influenced by government, investors, community members and local leaders. The land clashes have left community members without housing and food; women have been severely disadvantaged. Deliberate effort is required to sensitize communities to register their land and sensitize women on land rights.





## Lajul Erick - Lawyer

During the land awareness week, a legal clinic was held to offer community members free legal advice. Mary requested for this to be done regularly.



## Social Contribution

**Opiro Bernard a.k.a “Happy Man**

**Best Song Composer during the Land Awareness Week event**

The key message in my song is the need to protect our land through dialogue. We have seen sons of the soil (locals) fight and kill each other over land. The message in the song is appealing to community members to share equally and settle land issues amicably.











Sheik Musa Khalin,  
Khadi Acholi Muslim  
District In our culture,  
men have absolute  
power over land.  
However, women have  
the authority to open  
the granary. The  
awareness is taking the  
right direction, adding  
to our efforts to of  
sensitizing the  
community and in  
particular women rights  
to land ownership.









MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING  
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT



AMURU DISTRICT  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT



