SAFERWORLD

in Uganda

SAFERWORLD
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

Introduction

Saferworld's achievements in Uganda

Following decades of conflict, Uganda is now in a state of relative peace and economic growth. However, there are still serious threats to stability. Social divisions and disputes over land, oil and minerals are fuelling corruption and conflict. The country's openness to refugees is impressive, but it can pose challenges in relations between refugees and host communities if not properly managed.

While sections of Uganda's governance system are inclusive and coordinated, many communities – especially rural and isolated communities – face politicised, parallel, non-inclusive and uncoordinated processes. Contradictory laws and policies on natural resource governance limit access to resources and rights for marginalised citizens. Karamoja and northern Uganda have been historically marginalised, largely due to legacies of armed conflict that continue to affect post-conflict development, peace and security in these regions. Investment in the land and extractives sectors, as well as large infrastructural projects, have intensified conflicts between investors and marginalised communities. The arrival of over a million refugees fleeing conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo has strained governance structures and service delivery in the north of the country, while the humanitarian response to the crisis lacks elements of conflict sensitivity. This has led to tensions between refugees and host communities, as well as an erosion of trust in international and local relief organisations.

- We supported marginalised people to claim their rights; in 2018, a woman and man from one of our community action groups were elected as local council representatives.
- We provided training and technical advice on conflict sensitivity to the Democratic Governance Facility, Irish Aid, Oxfam, WaterAid, the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development.
- We contributed to the development of the national policy on firearms, ammunition and incidental matters – resulting in a more structured approach to monitoring small arms and light weapons in Uganda.
- We influenced the process and content of Uganda's new mining policy. The acquisition of land rights is now a requirement for mineral licence holders.
- We developed acquisition guidelines for land-based investments in northern Uganda to reduce land-related conflict. Investors are now more aware of conflict issues and consult more frequently with communities.
- We convened the first working group in Uganda on SDG16+ (the 2030 Agenda commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies).

SOUTH SUDAN

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Gulu

Moroto

UGANDA

Kampala

KENYA

RWANDA

BURUNDI

TANZANIA

Gulu
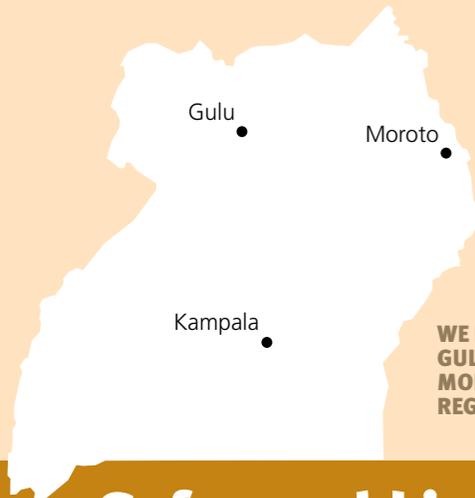
Moroto

Kampala

WE WORK IN FOUR REGIONS OF UGANDA.

WE HAVE OFFICES IN GULU (NORTHERN UGANDA), MOROTO (KARAMOJA REGION) AND KAMPALA.

Saferworld in Uganda at a glance

SINCE 2016 WE'VE HELD OVER

130

TALKING CIRCLES – SAFE SPACES FOR PEOPLE TO MEET AND DISCUSS ISSUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM.

IN 2018, WE DIRECTLY REACHED

993

COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN NORTHERN UGANDA.
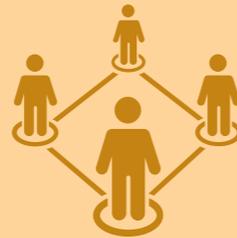
WE HAVE FORMED

10

COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS, WHICH PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL ADVOCACY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN NORTHERN UGANDA.

WE'VE PRODUCED

30

PUBLICATIONS SINCE 2005, HIGHLIGHTING OUR RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY MESSAGES IN THE COUNTRY.

About us

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We are a not-for-profit organisation operational in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Saferworld has worked in East Africa since 2000 and has offices in Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland. Our work focuses on improving governance, ensuring safety and security services are responsive to people's needs, and reducing violence related to gender, elections, land, access to weapons, power and resources.

Since 2001, Saferworld has worked with communities, civil society organisations, the private sector and the government in Uganda to prevent and reduce conflict and promote peace. With a national office in Kampala and field offices in Gulu and Moroto, we operate in the West Nile, Northern, Central and Karamoja regions. We conduct research on areas of conflict, and we help organisations to become conflict-sensitive in their approaches to land and mineral governance. We facilitate dialogue, set up discussions in safe spaces known as 'talking circles', and conduct participatory conflict analysis.

Our work helps promote people's participation in decision-making processes, redress power imbalances and improve relationships between all groups concerned. We coordinate a national civil society working group on Sustainable Development Goal 16+ (on peace, justice and strong institutions), which consists of approximately 15 organisations that work on peace, justice and governance. We also coordinate a civil society working group on land and investments, with a focus on land grabbing and tenure rights.

CORE VALUES THAT UNDERPIN OUR WORK INCLUDE:

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

GENDER SENSITIVITY

INCLUSIVITY

PARTICIPATION

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Our work

Uganda is faced with a number of key challenges. Disputes over land and resources – coupled with poor governance – continue to cause conflict and insecurity, especially in the northern regions. Saferworld's work in Uganda aims to promote sustainable peace, with a focus on five thematic areas. We work on:

Extractive industries: We bring people together to ensure Uganda's resources sustainably benefit all Ugandans. We promote transparency and accountability in relation to people's rights. We know that this sector has huge economic potential, and we advocate for its governance in a way that takes potential and future conflict issues into consideration.

Land governance: We believe that all people deserve to know and understand their rights to land. We help people participate in finding peaceful solutions to land-related conflict, and support them to hold authorities to account. We also raise awareness of land issues, and ensure that marginalised people whose rights might be violated because of the multiple vulnerabilities they face – such as people with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, widows and the elderly – are informed of and claim their rights.

Gender, peace and security: We work to ensure that the gender norms – the behaviours and roles expected of men, women and youth – that can fuel conflict are understood and addressed. We support communities, authorities and civil society to understand the links between gender and conflict.

Conflict-sensitive humanitarian response: We contribute to peaceful co-existence and long-term resilience among host and refugee communities. We do this by advocating for analysis that incorporates people's views, in order to inform programming that is sensitive to conflict dynamics. We train local government and humanitarian service providers – including international organisations – in conflict sensitivity and conflict resolution, so that they can take steps to avoid exacerbating conflict and instead operate in a way that contributes to long-term peace and development, as well as working with organisations, government and communities to find peaceful solutions to conflict.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: We work with civil society organisations and engage with the government to ensure that the commitments outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 16+ to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies are translated into action in Uganda.

Our approach

We use a people-centred approach to tackle issues that cause conflict and insecurity, which can emerge when people's rights are violated or when they are excluded from social, political and economic opportunities. Saferworld's experience shows that using evidence from our programming increases the effectiveness of advocacy for structural change nationally and internationally. Our programme in Uganda uses evidence and analysis from our work with communities to influence the policies and legislative agendas of the Ugandan government, civil society, investors and international donors.

EVALUATE AND LEARN

PREPARE AND ANALYSE

IMPLEMENT

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME

PRIORITISE

ACTION PLANNING

Research

Extractive industries

Saferworld's research ensures that our programming and advocacy is underpinned by sound analysis. We conduct research, analysis and surveys of local perceptions and use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace.

Our recent research in Uganda has focused on a range of objectives:

- We spoke to communities living in and around mining areas in northern Uganda to understand how they are affected by mining activities. Based on our research, we provided recommendations to government, corporations and civil society that support peaceful, transparent and mutually beneficial mining operations.

- As part of a process to test a Saferworld toolkit for gender analysis of conflict, we examined how gender norms interact with conflict dynamics in Moroto District by running locally facilitated focus group discussions with men and women in three rural locations.

- We looked at causes of land conflict and tension in the Karamoja region to provide guidance for investors in the mining sector on adopting business practices that reduce conflict and promote a prosperous mining industry.

Uganda's extractives sector is rapidly transforming from small-scale and artisanal mining to a large-scale industry. This shift has created a number of challenges, including inadequate protection for miners and their communities.

People who live in mining areas often have limited access to information and knowledge about mining laws and policies. This prevents them from fully participating in decision-making about activities that can negatively affect their lives. Land grabbing, insufficient regulations, clashes between different communities, and disputes between communities and companies cause grievances and conflict – with serious consequences.

Saferworld works in Moroto and Amudat districts to ensure that all people involved in mining benefit from the industry, without jeopardising trust or compromising peace and security. We work with communities, local authorities and investors to make sure that their engagement in the mining sector is cognisant of the conflict dynamics in the region, and that their actions do not exacerbate tension or create conflict. We do this through raising awareness, encouraging and supporting dialogue processes, facilitating training on mineral and land rights, conducting conflict analysis, and encouraging conflict sensitivity and resolution.

We also share information on international extractive practices and on the national policies and laws that govern this sector, so that the actions of relevant stakeholders do not conflict with established standards.

We work collaboratively with the Department of Geological Survey and Mines to advocate for transparent extractive industry policy processes that include communities. We have engaged on issues such as the allocation of licences to commercial actors without proper guidance on surface rights acquisition; gaps in the monitoring of land acquisition processes for mineral extraction; and the exploitation of artisanal and small-scale miners by licensed private companies and intermediaries.

Supporting mining communities

Land governance

TALKING CIRCLES

A talking circle is an innovative, two-way dialogue approach. An individual stands in the middle and shares their concerns or grievances, while other participants stand around them in a circle and listen. Any participant who would like to share information or respond to issues raised then walks into the circle and responds to the concerns raised, while the rest of the participants listen. The talking circle encourages open communication; one of its rules is that no one is victimised for the information they share.

The formation of platforms such as the Amudat District Mineral Watch Platform and the Moroto District Mineral Watch Platform has provided space for authorities, civil society organisations, artisanal and small-scale miners and commercial actors in the mining sector to collaborate better. For example, the newly formed Ukosulota Mining Association engaged with district officials on miners' registration, and association members shared their experiences of registering through radio talk shows and dialogue meetings.

Traditionally, mining communities in Karamoja have lacked a collective voice when it comes to advocating for land rights and negotiating for improved benefits from mining activities. One of the main challenges is a lack of access to information about mining registration, rights and regulations.

Saferworld supports artisanal and small-scale miners to effectively engage with relevant people and authorities in order to advocate for their rights. We create safe spaces – through 'talking circles' – for them to speak out on the issues affecting them, and make sure they get registered and recognised by forming mining groups and associations.

Land is an important but sensitive resource for Ugandans. It is essential for cultural identity and for sustaining livelihoods. In northern Uganda, land offers lucrative rewards for those with purchasing power and extractive technologies. If managed fairly, land investment offers promising opportunities for peace and development. However, land ownership in Uganda has a complicated history marred by conflict and political interference. Historically, borders and boundaries have been regularly changed to suit political interests, often displacing or denying people's rights. Many internally displaced people, some of whom spent over 20 years in camps as a result of civil war, have returned home to find that their land has been taken and sold and is now 'owned' by another person or entity. This has increased contention over land ownership, heightening tensions and violence. Customary law prevents women from owning land, which undermines women's rights and fuels further conflict.

To prevent and resolve conflict around land rights, we work with communities, investors, civil society and local government authorities in Otuke, Amuru, Nwoya, Adjumani, Nebbi and Mityana, and with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development. We promote conflict-sensitive and inclusive approaches to natural resource governance. This means bringing together representatives from these groups in a safe space where they can initiate dialogue on land conflict issues. By doing this, we create links between communities and local- and national-level policymakers.

2030 Agenda

Land conflicts in rural Uganda range from family-based disagreements to border disputes. In the north-east of the country, Otuke District has experienced a range of land-related problems. Following two decades of violence and fear generated by the Lord's Resistance Army, which once dominated northern Uganda, residents of Barima village have regularly encountered attacks from armed individuals and groups from the neighbouring Abim District. In the past decade, displacement and high levels of cattle rustling have left locals unsettled and unsure of their rights.

Saferworld has worked closely with the governance structures that deal with land in Otuke since 2015 (and later in Abim), including with district officials, cultural leaders and community representatives, to resolve and prevent conflict. Our work has promoted conflict-sensitive and human rights-based approaches to land governance. This has resulted in Saferworld and partners, including the Uganda Land Alliance, forming community mediation committees that resolve disputes in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner and that prevent disagreements escalating into conflict.

"The mediation team has a book in which they've been documenting cases since 2015. In 2015, 102 cases were registered ... in 2017, 56 have been registered ... a significant reduction."

Okello David Omara, an Otuke community member.

In 2016, Saferworld facilitated several community meetings involving relevant officials from the two districts. During one meeting, members from both communities formed a joint committee to analyse the current conflict and provide constructive recommendations to the two district heads of governance. Based on their analyses, a police post was set up to provide security to Barima's residents. The community's safety has since vastly improved.

Saferworld was at the forefront of efforts to ensure the inclusion of peace in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, including the commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16+), we have focused on translating this global goal into national action. Over the past three years, Saferworld has worked in a number of conflict-affected contexts to adapt SDG16+ commitments to specific contexts.

In Uganda, Saferworld coordinates a SDG16+ working group, which consists of approximately 15 civil society organisations that work on peace, justice and governance. Through the group, we raise awareness of SDG16+, strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations to act on this agenda, and support them to develop civil society reports on progress towards SDG16+ targets.

Gender, peace and security

Gender analysis is becoming more common in conflict analysis, but in most cases it fails to look at how the different roles and behaviours of women, men and sexual and gender minorities affect conflict and impact people's lives.

Understanding the links between gender, peace and security is fundamental to Saferworld's work, and we integrate a strong gender perspective into our programming. We work with partners to understand the particular challenges faced by women and girls and support women's participation in public debate, policymaking and peace processes. In 2016, we launched our gender analysis of conflict toolkit.[1] This aims to help national and international non-governmental organisations and other peacebuilding practitioners integrate gender perspectives into conflict analysis, to provide a foundation for more gender-sensitive peacebuilding programmes.

The toolkit was piloted in Moroto District in northeastern Uganda, with the Uganda Land Alliance. Our work has explored how gender norms – the ways in which societies expect women and men to behave – are influencing conflict dynamics. For example, in Moroto we found that powerlessness in the face of mining companies and their government backers further exacerbated men's feelings of emasculation and injustice, potentially leading to more serious outbreaks of violence. Saferworld and partners have since held community discussions on masculinity and femininity and their impact on conflict dynamics; as a result, changes in gender norms are being reported.

1 Saferworld (2016), 'Gender analysis of conflict', July.

CASE STUDY:
WOMEN CLAIM THEIR LAND RIGHTS

Women, and in particular widows, are a vulnerable group when it comes to land rights in Uganda. Due to dominant patriarchal norms and structures that dictate who can and should own land, women who lose their husbands and male family members often also lose their land.

Despite strong constitutional provisions safeguarding women's land rights, many women face eviction and loss of livelihoods after the deaths of their husbands and male family members. In Uganda, Saferworld addresses issues related to the intersection of gender and land through our programming. We do this by providing opportunities for women's voices to be heard. By using talking circles – meetings held every month in which people can voice their problems in a safe space, while community members and authorities listen – marginalised women such as widows have been able to challenge gender norms and claim their rights.

In Pakele sub-county in Adjumani District, during the district talking circle organised by Saferworld and the Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment in West Nile, women challenged gender norms by openly speaking and articulating their conflict and human rights issues in the presence of men and cultural leaders for the first time.

Through organising themselves and joining together with other vulnerable groups – such as people living with disabilities, people living with HIV, elderly people and youth – widows have found a strengthened position within decision-making forums that was previously not open to them.

In Mityana District, authorities are paying more attention to the plight of widows after Saferworld provided training on rights-based approaches to land governance. In Malangala sub-county, two widows approached the sub-county chief over persistent eviction threats and refusal of their ground rent payments by a landlord. The sub-county chief engaged the two parties in a discussion, during which she articulated the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, making reference to Saferworld's informative posters and the legal provisions in the Land Act. The conflicting parties were able to come to an understanding, after which the landlord accepted the ground rent payments and the widows retained their land.

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For further information about us and our work in Uganda, please visit **www.saferworld.org.uk/uganda**

You can keep up to date with our work by signing up for email updates at **www.saferworld.org.uk/stay-informed** or by following us on social media.

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