

# LANDESA IN RWANDA



## Land is a farmer's most valuable asset.

In Rwanda, land is a scarce resource. Eight in 10 workers engage in agriculture—in the country with the highest population density on the continent.

Heightened land conflicts following Rwanda's devastating past exposed the need for land reform as a tool for sustainable peace and increased social equity. In 2007, to improve gender equality regarding land access and optimize land use, the Government of Rwanda embarked on a national land registration program to title every plot of land in the country. By 2013, approximately 99% of individually-

More than 77% of Rwanda's farming households managed plots of less than half a hectare, according to a 2020 national agricultural survey.

held land in Rwanda was registered. While the Land Tenure Regularization Program was a major achievement, discriminatory social norms still persist, precluding many women from accessing land.

Today, disputes over land remain the most common cause of conflict in rural Rwanda. And while conflict affects entire communities, women face greater obstacles resolving land disputes due to patriarchal customs.

But enforceable, reliable, gender-equitable rights to land have the power to not only **reduce conflict** but also:

- **boost crop yields,**
- **increase income,**
- **improve household nutrition,**
- **empower women,** and
- **protect climate-sensitive environments.**

Landesa began working in Rwanda in 2003 with the national government and community partners to strengthen **land rights**, improve **livelihoods**, and cultivate **peace and stability**.



**"When women's land rights are not supported, this often impacts children. They don't go to school, there is conflict in homes, and families can't climb out of poverty."** — Rose Ntabageninmana, a community educator in Rwanda

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Agricultural Systems Change

Landesa is laying the foundation for smallholder farmers to make long-term investments in their land, ultimately seeking to reduce extreme poverty, protect the environment, and shape a more gender-equitable future for rural Rwanda. Through land policy reforms, support for dispute resolution, and enhanced land administration services, Landesa is improving both women's and men's agency and ability to invest in their farmland. Implemented in partnership with One Acre Fund with funding support from Co-Impact, **the initiative seeks to strengthen land rights for 566,893 households, helping to generate a long-term economic impact of more than \$37 million.**

### Legal Support

Landesa drafted recommendations for the **Government of Rwanda's 2005 Land Law** and after its passage, Landesa supported development of the corresponding regulations at the request of the Ministry of Lands and Environment. Concurrently, Landesa assessed women's access and rights to land, including those of women widowed from HIV/AIDS and the Rwandan genocide.

### Land Registration

Landesa helped assess the impact of **awareness raising efforts on the registration of land in women's names** in addition to the influence of documented land rights on **women's decision-making authority over land**. Landesa also supported a Rwandan women's rights NGO to offer legal assistance to women registering their land.

### Core Capacities

- Regulatory reform & government support
- Inclusive land administration sensitization
- Land dispute resolution capacity strengthening
- Land rights awareness raising

### Promoting Peace Project

Landesa created and trained a network of Community Resource Persons to resolve land disputes, resulting in **peaceful resolution of more than 400 land-related disputes**. At the same time, Landesa facilitated approximately 350 community dialogues, aired 90 community radio programs, and answered nearly 1,800 telephone calls via an informational hotline, increasing knowledge around women's land rights and inciting transformational change in attitudes around land dispute resolution.



**LANDESA** is an international non-governmental organization that fights rural poverty and provides opportunity and security for women and men through the power of land rights. Landesa opened an office in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2023.



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