

Advancing Sustainable Land Management in Ethiopia

REILA

Responsible & Innovative
Land Administration

2011 - 2024



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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

NIRAS

***Advancing
Sustainable
Land Management
in Ethiopia***



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List of Acronyms

A2F	Access to Finance
ACSI	Amhara Credit and Savings Institute (now Tsedey Bank)
AgroBIG	Agro-Business Induced Growth Programme (MFA/Finland)
BG	Benishangul Gumuz
BoEFLA	Regional Bureau of Environment, Forestry, and Land Administration (formerly EPLAUA)
BoL	Bureau of Land (formerly BoRLAU)
BoLCs	Bureau of Land and Cooperatives (formerly BoEFLA)
BoRLAU	Amhara Regional Bureau of Rural Land Administration and Use
CALM	Climate Action through Landscape Management (World Bank)
CORS	Continuously Operating Reference Stations
COWaSH	Community-Led Water Sanitation and Hygiene (MFA/Finland)
EMA	Ethiopian Mapping Agency
EPLAUA	Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority
ESIF/SLM	Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management
DFID	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office/ UK
FLLC	First Level Land Certification
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
GoF	Government of Finland
HRBA	Human Right Based Approach
IDPs	Internally Displaced Peoples
iWORLAIS	Interim Woredas Rural Land Administration Information System
KIA	Key Informant Agents
KLAUC	Kebele Land Administration and Use Committee
LaGo	Land Governance (GIZ)
LGAF	Feed the Future Ethiopia Land Governance Activity (USAID)
LIFT	Land Investment for Transformation Programme (DFID)
LRSPs	Land Rental Service Providers
MELA	Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Administration
MELS	Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Sector
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
NRLAIS	National Rural Land Administration Information System
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
OS	Occupational Standard
PIA	Public Information and Awareness
REILA	Responsible and Innovative Land Administration Project (MFA/ Finland)
RLAS	Rural Land Administration System

RLAUD	Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate
RLAUD	Rural Land Administration and Use Lead Executive Office (formerly RLAUD)
RLLP	Resilient Landscape and Livelihood Programme (WB)
S2RAI	Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments (GIZ)
SARDP	Swedish support through Sida Amhara Rural Development Programme
SARDP	Sida Amhara Rural Development Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLLC	Second Level Land Certification
SLMP	Sustainable Land Management Project (WB)
SSGI	Space Science and Geospatial Institute (formerly EMA)
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical, Vocational and Educational Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VGs	Vulnerable Groups
WORLAIS	Woreda Rural Land Administration Information System

Disclaimer: The quantitative data included in this book reflects information up to June 2024.

Foreword by the State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture



It is with a great sense of ownership and pride that I present this book, which illustrates the transformative journey of the Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) programme in Ethiopia. For the past decade and a half, REILA has been a cornerstone of innovation and digitalization in the rural land sector. It has laid the foundations for a harmonized rural cadaster and a land administration system that has benefited millions of rural landholders, ensuring their land tenure security, enhancing fit-for-purpose land administration practices, and efficient service delivery. The REILA project, a genuine collaborative effort between the governments of Ethiopia and Finland, has been implemented in two phases from 2011 to 2024. This book captures the essence of our journey, highlighting the project's activities, outcomes, successes, and impacts.

REILA is a strategic project for the land sector, operating adaptively and proactively to address critical challenges and bottlenecks, and drive technology-enabled solutions in the rural land sector. Throughout its implementation, REILA has achieved numerous milestones. The project has fundamentally contributed to the government's efforts to enhance land tenure security, including for women and vulnerable people, improve land governance based on human rights principles, and foster sustainable land management practices. These achievements have not only contributed to the socio-economic development of rural communities but have also laid a strong foundation for rural transformation and the prosperity of rural dwellers.

The strategic importance of the REILA project to rural land sector development cannot be overstated. Its contributions at the national level have been instrumental in laying the foundation for an equitable, transparent, and inclusive land administration system in Ethiopia that sustains rural land rights. Significant progress has been made in harmonizing rural land registration through NRLAIS and surveying practices for Second Level Land Certificate (SLLC) across the country, meaningfully impacting rural communities. Beyond any doubt, the rural land administration sector of Ethiopia can stand as an example for the African continent. But our work is far from complete; it is a work in progress. Continued commitment and support from our development partners, especially the Government of Finland, is crucial in sustaining and expanding the results achieved in the rural land sector. We need to make our systems sustainable. Our focus must also extend beyond certification to improving livelihoods and stimulating rural economic growth. Facilitating access to finance through land-based mortgages, supporting rural households in exercising their land use rights in a meaningful way, providing tailored land management advice to address climate change impacts, and using modern technology to achieve this is our goal.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Finland and the Finnish Embassy in Ethiopia for their unwavering support and partnership. I also extend my appreciation to the Rural Land Administration and Use Lead Executive Office, the REILA team, the regions, and all other partners for their relentless efforts and commitment to the project's success and contribution to rural land sector reform, paving the way towards sustainable land management.

As we celebrate the successful completion of REILA's second phase, we are also at the point of launching REILA III. This new phase will build on the solid foundations of previous Ethiopian and Finnish investments, continuing to support, innovate, and digitize the rural land sector.

I hope this book serves as a valuable resource for all those dedicated to contributing to the advancement of rural land administration and governance in Ethiopia.

Sincerely,

H.E. Prof. Eyasu Elias
State Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia

Foreword by the Head of Cooperation, Finland Embassy in Ethiopia



I am pleased to present this comprehensive documentation of the Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) Projects. REILA is a collaborative effort between the governments of Ethiopia and Finland, which has significantly benefited rural landholders across Ethiopia. This initiative showcases Ethiopian partners' dedication and hard work at federal and regional levels, the REILA project team, the Embassy of Finland, and partner donor programs. Their combined efforts have made this project a resounding success, profoundly impacting the lives of many in rural Ethiopia. Finland has significantly invested in Ethiopia's land sector, reflecting our long-standing relationship and development cooperation. Ethiopia stands as our largest country program in Africa, built on decades of robust partnerships focused on poverty reduction. Our engagement in Ethiopia's rural development dates back to the 1980s, particularly in the Amhara region, with initiatives including community-led WASH and AgroBIG projects. This long-term collaboration eventually led to the REILA project.

Despite rapid urban growth, Ethiopia remains largely rural, with subsistence agriculture as the main source of income and employment. Land tenure security is a key element in rural development and poverty alleviation efforts, as it prevents uncertainty and insecurity among farmers, enabling them to invest in and sustainably manage their land. Establishing and enforcing land rights empowers farmers, secures their livelihoods, and promotes long-term agricultural productivity and food security. These are the rationales underpinning the REILA project.

REILA aims to support the land sector in developing innovative and technologically enabled solutions that help the government undertake mass registration and certification of rural land and establish a modern land administration system, thereby securing land rights for rural landholders. The project emphasizes inclusivity, ensuring the land rights of women and vulnerable groups. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and in collaboration with regions and donor organizations, the project has been instrumental in catalyzing change in the land sector. REILA's journey from idea to project is a testament to the ambition and effort of many brilliant individuals and institutions. The land sector has achieved significant milestones with critical support from REILA. Notably, 30 million land parcels have been certified nationwide, securing land rights for rural landholders and positively impacting millions of lives. A National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) is operational in over 450 Woredas and has been endorsed as the national land registry system. The system is improving and expanding land administration and services. Land use rights can now be used as collateral for loans, enabling investments and improving well-being.

Achieving secure rural land rights required institutional and legislative changes. Today, necessary laws and regulations ensure well-established and inclusive land rights that consider diverse groups and human rights, including women's rights. The establishment of formal study and training programs, including the land administration TVET program, is a significant achievement and fundamental in human capacity development for land administration. REILA achieved this through multi-stakeholder partnerships and with leadership from the Ethiopian government. The project's success is built on trust, honesty, long-term orientation, alignment with government goals for the rural land sector, effective leadership, and addressing the people's real needs. Significant community mobilization has been undertaken to ensure their active participation. The project emphasizes digitalization to advance rural land administration and services in Ethiopia. REILA focuses on co-developing technologies with local communities, fostering responsibility and ownership. Collaboration and closely working with the Ethiopian government, institutions, and the community were key success factors. The project evolved from a small-scale initiative to a national program through its close collaboration with large donor programmes like CALM-WB, LIFT, GIZ, and RLLP. The government's recognition of land certification methodology and the NRLAIS through the newly adopted federal land proclamations highlights the significant success in the land sector and by REILA.

Despite significant progress, the modern land administration system is not fully operational everywhere, and further work needs to be done. The relevance of the REILA project remains strong. The focus is now on including communal lands and pastoralist areas in the national system to provide tenure security. The success of REILA during the two project phases has led to a new five-year phase, reaffirming Finland's commitment to supporting Ethiopia's efforts towards sustainable land management. The project's achievements have exceeded our expectations. We are very proud and pleased to be part of Ethiopia's land sector development journey.

Sincerely,

**Tomi Särkioja, Head of Cooperation,
Embassy of Finland**

Message from the Lead Executive, RLAUD



It is with great pleasure that I introduce this book, prepared by the REILA project, which documents its engagement and journey with the rural land sector in Ethiopia over the past 13 years. This book captures not only REILA's activities, interventions, and achievements but the essence of the rural land sector's evolution in Ethiopia. REILA operates within the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), directly connected to the Rural Land Administration and Use Lead Executive Office (RLAUD formerly RLAUD) and the regions. The project aligns its priorities with those of the government and investing substantially, to support the effective execution of the government's annual land sector plans and implementation of large donor program. Over the past decade, significant reforms have taken place in the rural land sector, and REILA, as a joint program by the governments of Ethiopia and Finland, has been a key player driving and accelerating these changes.

Therefore, the REILA story captured in this book is also the story of RLAUD, the regions, and the land sector as a whole. It cannot be told separately. It is also my story, as someone who has been part of the land sector throughout its planning and transformation journey. It is an exciting story to tell.

For decades, the lack of clear and secure land rights has made it difficult for these farmers to assert their ownership of the land they have been cultivating for generations. This has resulted in disputes and conflicts with other parties. Fear of redistribution or confiscation attributed to key to historic events exacerbate tenure insecurity and prevented farmers from practicing sustainable farming which led to land degradation and deforestation. Recognizing the need for change, the government initiated a mission to register and certify land rights, establishing a modern land administration system to ensure secure land right for rural land holders. So, over the past decade, the government focus has been on improving tenure security and transforming the traditional land administration system to address these issues effectively. We were successful in effectively coordinate our development partners towards meeting these objectives.

The land sector transformation began with the government issuing a constitution recognizing rural landholding rights. A key milestone was proclamation (No. 456/2005), of rural land administration and use, which laid the foundation for a modern rural land administration system. In 2008, the Ethiopia Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF I) was developed, outlining a 15-year strategy for the natural resource sector, with rural land administration being one of the major components. Recently, the government has enacted progressive Rural Land Administration and Use proclamation (No. 1324/2024), which reflects the progress made so far in the sector. During the First-Level Land Certification (FLLC), regions used various methods: GPS, total stations, and traditional rods and compasses. This led to highly disharmonized land registration and surveying practices, leading to inconsistencies and complexities. In an effort to advance from the FLLC to the Second Level Land Certification (SLLC) and certify 50 million land parcels efficiently and cost-effectively, we rigorously tested various technologies with USAID support. Our goal was to find the most effective, flexible, and easy-to-maintain technology that provided accurate results, ensuring a harmonized system for land registration and surveying nationwide.

The REILA project was tasked to pilot testing orthophoto technology for rural land surveys and developing an operational manual for systematic rural land registration and certification. Consequently, the project facilitated experience-sharing and exposure visits to Rwanda for the land team at the federal and regions levels, followed by pilot testing of the orthophoto method in different locations in Ethiopia. The pilot exercises demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and accuracy of orthophoto technology, leading to its nationwide adoption. The method development prioritized cost-effectiveness by adopting the "fit for purpose" principle, utilizing a low-cost, less technologically intensive approach with a trainable workforce. Our decision to adopt the orthophoto method and emphasizing the fit for purpose principle and undertake mass registration and certification of rural land with the existing capacity was a game changer.

The REILA project achieved a significant breakthrough in the land sector by harmonizing rural land registration and surveying nationwide. This was accomplished through the development of a standardized operational manual for SLLC following the rigorous piloting testing of the orthophoto method. The manual, disseminated across the country, enabled a unified approach to land registration and surveying processes and ensuring consistency. This operational manual represents a monumental achievement in the land sector, made possible with REILA's support. All programs came to support the rural land sector after this operational manual is directly proceeding with production with the need to undertake pilot testing. All donor programs supporting the rural land sector have since adopted this operational manual. RLAUD, with support from development partners, has certified over 30 million land parcels across ten regions. This achievement marks

a significant milestone in Ethiopia's land sector, showcasing remarkable progress in securing rural land rights. The development and operationalization of the National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) is a significant milestone in Ethiopia's land sector, fully supported by the REILA project. This project invested heavily in developing and maintaining the system, which modernizes land administration by digitizing and standardizing land records. NRLAIS offers a robust platform for efficient data management, land transaction processing, and informed based decision-making. So far, NRLAIS operates in 450 woredas across 10 regions, with essential technical support from REILA. Over 27.8 million land parcels are recorded and managed in the system. REILA's role in the rollout, maintenance, and periodic updates has been crucial to the system's successful implementation and functioning.

REILA has pioneered institutional and human capacity development in land administration, laying the foundation for formal training and study programs. With REILA's full support, we introduced a land administration TVET program for levels II to IV at Assosa TVET College in Benishangul Gumuz, developing occupational standards and curriculum. This program now serves as a center of excellence, producing mid-level technicians nationwide. The training program's documents and materials are disseminated to all regions and agencies to support rural land registration and certification. Recognizing the critical importance of skilled managers and administrators, REILA facilitated and supported MSc and BSc sponsorship programs in land administration at Bahir Dar University, marking a significant breakthrough in capacity building. This initiative is instrumental in addressing the skilled workforce gap, ensuring a consistent supply of trained professionals. Other programs are now building on this foundation to further support the training and study programs. Out of the major success factor in the rural land sector is adopting the "fit for purpose" principle, prioritizing cost-effective solutions, and leveraging existing capacities for widespread land registration and certification. Our innovative approach to human capacity development played a key role. Additionally, we strategically coordinated various development projects and programs, aligning their efforts towards unified objectives. Close collaboration between our development partners was crucial for the results achieved in the land sector.

REILA's technical support has significantly contributed to the progress made in the rural land sector. REILA is different from other donor projects supporting the sector. The project closely integrates with the Ministry and target regions, providing essential technical and programmatic assistance. The project's flexibility in responding to government needs and evolving priorities is extraordinary. Initially focused on land registration and certification in Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz, REILA adapted to pilot orthophoto methods for land surveying and harmonization, and developed and maintained NRLAIS at the government's request, benefiting the entire country. This flexibility, driven by government interests, ensures the project's continuity and enhances government ownership. Ensuring the sustainability of achievements in the land sector after project funding ends is crucial. We need to establish an income-generating mechanism similar to other public service providers. Our primary objective is to implement a cost recovery mechanism. This includes introducing service fees for land transactions and services, and leveraging the NRLAIS database to generate revenue from various users beyond the land sector. This approach will help recover costs and ensure the continued development of our institutions.

Looking ahead, our focus is shifting from certification to "Beyond Certification" initiatives that empower farmers to leverage their land use rights for economic empowerments. These initiatives include facilitating access to finance using land use right as collateral, promoting land rental markets, and expanding crop insurance coverage for certified landholders. This initiative focuses on unlocking the full economic potential of land to transform subsistence farming into commercial agriculture, contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable rural development. A key lesson learned is the importance of integrating "Beyond Certification" initiatives early on, alongside tenure security efforts, to link secure land rights with economic empowerment.

Our current priorities are expanding NRLAIS coverage to all woredas, ensure certification of all 50 million land parcels, implementing cost recovery mechanisms, advancing the "Beyond Certification" program and promotes "family agri-business" concept among land holders to encourage land consolidation and commercialization. We must also emphasize on the broader land administration functions within sustainable land management framework, including land valuation, land use planning, and land development. While our focus has been on tenure security, integrating all land administration functions is essential. The continued commitment and support from our development partners are essential to achieve these objectives. The Finnish government's support through the REILA project is exceptionally important for sustaining achievements, expanding impact, and advancing the land sector.

As you read this book, I hope you gain a deeper understanding of the project's impact and the positive changes it has brought in the rural land sector.

Tigistu G/Meskel
Lead Executive,
Rural Land Administration & Use Directorate

Section I

Introduction and Background


In Ethiopia, land tenure insecurity has long hindered rural landholders from making investments that could boost productivity and promote sustainable farming practices. The adverse effects of land degradation on rural communities and the country's overall economic growth are well recognized. To address these challenges, the Ethiopian government launched a national flagship initiative (SLLC) to promote sustainable land management under the Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management (ESIF/SLM I) in 2010.

■ First Level Land Certification (FLLC)

In the late 1990s, Ethiopia initiated a rural land registration program through the First Level Land Certification (FLLC) initiative, covering nearly 98% of the country's highland areas (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and SNNP regions). Under the FLLC initiative, over 12 million rural land rights were registered. The FLLC in Ethiopia aims to improve land tenure security for rural landholders by providing legal recognition of their land rights. This legal recognition helps secure landholders' rights to their land holdings. With secure land tenure, farmers are more likely to invest in their land, leading to improved agricultural productivity. The certification also encourages landholders to participate in land rental markets, allowing for more efficient use of land resources and collectively contributing to improved livelihoods and sustainable land management practices. The program has also made progress in including women's names on land certificates, promoting gender equality in land rights. However, the FLLC has faced shortcomings. Traditional surveying methods resulted in imprecise spatial information, hindering accurate boundary delineation and digital land registration, making it difficult to update land records, including land transactions such as transfers of land rights, and allowing easy access to land information (Bezu and Holden 2014). Additionally, while including women's names on certificates is significant, broader gender norms and practices still limit women's control and transfer rights over land, leading to gender disparities in land rights registration. The Ethiopian government introduced the Second-Level Land Certification (SLLC) program to address some of these shortcomings.

■ Enhancing Land Tenure Security in Ethiopia: The Second Level Land Certification (SLLC)

Building on the significant lessons from the FLLC exercises, RLAUD, with support from its development partners, initiated the Second Level Land Certification (SLLC) program in 2004. The SLLC aims to provide a more precise, secure, and comprehensive system for land tenure by addressing the shortcomings of the FLLC. This is achieved through the identification and implementation of a scientific and reliable methodology that offers more detailed and accurate information on land parcels. Additionally, the program includes mechanisms for updating land records to reflect changes during land transactions, thereby enhancing and sustaining tenure security. The SLLC initiative also focuses on addressing socio-cultural and gender norms, practices, and barriers that prevent women and vulnerable groups (VGs) in communities from accessing and controlling land. Under the SLLC initiative, the Ethiopian government aims to register approximately 50 million rural land parcels using surveying and mapping of parcel boundaries and ultimately establish an improved rural land administration system in the country. The MoA/RLAUD realized the need for innovative solutions that are fit for purpose, efficient, and affordable to register, certify, and manage rural land parcels of this size.



Additionally, this undertaking calls for increased land administration and implementation capacity at the federal, regional, and woreda levels, and strong partnership, collaboration, and cooperation between the land sector's development partners and stakeholders. The REILA project emerged as a response to these pressing national priorities.

Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA)

The Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) project, launched in 2011, stands as one of the pioneering initiatives in Ethiopia, substantially contributing to the establishment of a harmonized rural land certification method and land administration system. This bilateral land sector development project, jointly undertaken by the governments of Ethiopia and Finland, spans two implementation phases: REILA I (2011-2016) and REILA II (2017-2024). The project has been designed with the overarching objective of enhancing the livelihoods and economic well-being of rural populations by promoting sustainable land management practices in the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions focusing on fifteen targeted woredas. The project also aims to contribute to the development of an improved, equitable, and transparent land administration system across Ethiopia, through its support at the federal level during the two project implementation phases. As part of the project's support at the federal level, REILA aimed at improving the capacity of the Ethiopian Mapping Agency (EMA), now Space Science and Geospatial Institute (SSGI), to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of rural land surveying and mapping.

The REILA projects were implemented with a total budget of 23.8 million euros allocated for its two project phases. The Government of Finland (GoF) contributed the majority of the budget, approximately 20 million euros, in technical assistance and financial support. The Government of Ethiopia (GoE) matched this with 3.8 million euros in cash and in-kind contributions, channelled through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC). The Rural Land Administration and Use Lead Executive Office (RLAUD), formerly the Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate (RLAUD), under the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), led and managed the implementation of REILA projects. The projects were implemented collaboratively with key implementing agencies, including the Amhara Regional Bureau of Rural Land Administration and Use (BoRLAU), currently Bureau of Land (BoL), Regional Bureau of Environment, Forestry, and Land Administration (BoEFLA), currently the Bureau of Land and Cooperatives (BoLCs) in the Benishangul Gumuz region, and the EMA, currently SSGI. NIRAS Finland, as the lead consulting company, provided technical assistance, supported project management, managed Finnish funds, and ensured quality project delivery.

The REILA project was designed and launched as part of the Finnish government's long-term commitment to support Ethiopia's overall development plan, initiated through the strategic partnership and cooperative agreement signed between the Governments of Ethiopia and Finland. This partnership was forged specifically to support the implementation of the country's land sector development objectives envisioned in the Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management (ESIF/SLM), covering the period of 2010-2023 G.C.

REILA Project

Objectives, Outcomes, and Impact

With the overall objective of supporting and contributing to the land sector development plan pertaining to “Improving the Land Administration and Governance System of Ethiopia’s Land Resources,” REILA anticipated achieving the following outcomes during the two project implementation phases:

- 1 Equitable and transparent land administration system established in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and other regional states.
- 2 Increased institutional capacity: Strengthening institutional capacity and effectiveness in rural land administration across Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and other regions.

These project outcomes will collectively lead to the anticipated project impact in which “people in rural Ethiopia have land tenure security and are empowered to manage land use in a participatory way to reduce land degradation.”

Key Result Areas and Project Components

Broadly, REILA I focused on developing and incubating innovative methods and systems for rural land certification and administration. It also aimed at building and strengthening basic land administration capacity at federal and regional levels, and laying the foundation for a harmonized rural land certification process and administration system in Ethiopia.

REILA II was launched as a follow-on project to solidify the achievements and outcomes of REILA I while continuing to develop innovative solutions as needed and required by the land sector. Specifically, REILA II focuses on supporting the rapid and mass scale-up of innovations and interventions, further developing systems, supporting system rollout, operationalization, and maintenance, and capacity strengthening.

Although the project components and result areas of the two project phases are highly interconnected, the specific result areas for the two project phases are set distinctively as follows:

REILA I

Public Information and Awareness (PIA):

Raising awareness in the fifteen target woredas (districts) in Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz for socially inclusive and equitable land certification and administration.

Capacity building and harmonization:

Developing methods and systems to strengthen land administration in Ethiopia.

Building basic land administration capacity in Benishangul-Gumuz: Laying the groundwork for standardized land certification and administration.

Strengthening land administration capacity in Amhara regions: Supporting land certification and administration in the Amhara Region, Tana-Beles Growth corridor.

REILA II

Improved regional land

administration capacity: Enhancing certified land tenure security for land users.

Enhanced capacity for planning and

coordination: Strengthening MoA/ RLAUD (now RLAUD), BoEFLA (now BoLCs), BoRLAU (now BoL), and EMA (now SSGI) for accurate and efficient land surveying.

Skilled manpower development:

Ensuring a skilled workforce for the land administration sector.

Beneficiaries

At the community level, the REILA project aims to reach 2 million people in 400,000 households across 447 kebeles in fifteen woredas of the Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara regions. The ultimate beneficiaries include:



1. **Rural landholders (individuals):** Individuals who hold land rights, including women and VGs (orphans, girls, youth, people with disabilities, marginalized, and those under poor economic conditions) whose circumstances hindered them from accessing and controlling land.
2. **Groups or communal landholders:** Community-based landholding entities or groups, including cooperatives, associations, and communal land management bodies.
3. **Private investors in the land sector:** Investors seeking to engage in land-related activities.

As a result of REILA's innovative interventions and improved land administration services, these segments of the community benefited from maximum security of land tenure and improved livelihood.

At the system level, the following stakeholders are immediate beneficiaries of the REILA project:

1. **Project owners and implementing partners:** The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Rural Land Administration and Use Lead Executive Office (RLAUD) directly benefit from the project. The Ethiopian Mapping Agency (EMA), now SSGI.
2. **Regional land administration institutions:** Land administration institutions at regional, zonal, woreda, and kebele levels in Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara regions benefit from strengthened capacity for improved land certification, administration, and service.
3. **Higher educational institutions:** Assosa Agricultural Technical, Vocational and Educational Training (TVET) Colleges and Bahir Dar University benefit from technical assistance and training. Students enrolled in the different formal training and study programs benefit from the project.

Rural landholders across Ethiopia and land institutions in other regions indirectly benefit from the project's support to the federal RLAUD, regions, and EMA (now SSGI).

Stakeholders and Partners

As part of the project design, REILA has identified key stakeholders, implementers, partners, and actors at the federal, regional, and woreda levels. Collaborating with these entities is crucial for effective, efficient, and cost-effective project implementation, ultimately achieving the intended objectives and outcomes of the project.

At the federal level

Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)/ RLAUD: Responsible for land administration and governance.

Embassy of Finland: Supports the project as a key partner.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland: Engages in diplomatic relations and project coordination.

Space Science and Geospatial Institute (SSGI, former EMA): Ensures accurate land surveying and geospatial data.

Federal Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED): Manages financial aspects of the project.

Members of the Supervisory Board (SVB): Provide oversight and guidance to the project implementation.

At the regional level

Bureau of Rural Land Administration and Use (BoRLAU), now Bureau of Land (BoL): Coordinates the project implementation, manages land certification and administration in the Amhara region, and ensure land tenure security for rural landholders.

Bureau of Environment, Forestry, and Land Administration (BoEFLA), now Bureau of Land and Cooperatives (BoLCs): Coordinates the project implementation and manages land certification and administration in Benishangul Gumuz, ensuring land tenure security for rural landholders.

Kebele Land Administration Use Committees (KLAUCs): Coordinate and manage land registration and administration at the local level (Kebele level).

Woreda Land Administration Offices: Implement project activities in the fifteen REILA target woredas.

Educational institutions: Bahir Dar University Institute of Land Administration (ILA), Assosa TVET Agricultural Colleges, and Agarfa TVET Agriculture Colleges: Key partners in introducing formal land administration study and training programs.

Relevant stakeholders: Woreda Courts and Judges, Women, Youth, and Children Affairs offices play essential roles in protecting the land right of women and VGs.

Partners - Bilateral and Multilateral Land Programs

The project established solid partnerships with bilateral and multilateral land programs supporting Ethiopia's land sector, notably:

- **Climate Action Through Landscape Management (CALM) Programme:** Funded by the World Bank Group.
- **Resilient Landscape and Livelihood Program (RLLP):** Funded by the World Bank Group.
- **Land Investment for Transformation (LIFT):** Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (DFID) of the United Kingdom.
- **Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments (S2RAI):** Funded and implemented by GIZ.
- **Land Governance (LaGo) project:** Funded and implemented by GIZ.
- **Feed the Future Ethiopia Land Governance Activity (LGAF):** Funded through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- **Agro-Business Induced Growth Programme (AgroBIG):** A bilateral agribusiness development program financed by the governments of Ethiopia and Finland.
- **Community-Led Accelerated Water Sanitation and Hygiene (COWaSH):** Funded by the government of Finland

Project's Alignment with National and International Development Goals

Ethiopia's Development Goals

The REILA project objectives and outcomes fully support and align with Ethiopia's overall development plan, as conceptualized in **the Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I: 2010-2015 and GTP II: 2015-2020)**, both of which prioritize landscape restoration as a key investment. The project outcomes directly contribute to the key strategic pillars of **the Pathway to Perspective Development Plan (successor to GTP II)**, which focuses on ensuring quality economic growth, undertaking institutional transformation, ensuring equitable participation of women and children, and building a climate-resilient green economy. REILA's objectives and outcomes are designed to correspond well with **the land sector's development plan, ESIF – SLM (2010-2023)**, designed by the MoA for nationwide implementation. This strategic framework aims to guide a systematic approach in combating pressure on land resources through the adoption of sustainable land management practices. It identifies six components to address the interlinked problems of poverty and vulnerability in rural communities, mainly by averting the effects of land degradation and ensuring land access and security of land tenure.

The project specifically aims to support the implementation of component 2 of the ESIF/SLM, which focuses on improving the land administration and governance system of Ethiopia's land resources. The project supports a significant portion of **the ESIF-SLM component 2, specifically sub-components 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6**, all aimed at enhancing land administration and promoting sustainable land management practices in Ethiopia. Through the REILA project, the GoF's commitment aligns with Ethiopia's long-term land sector development plan, fostering sustainable land management and empowering rural communities. By bridging gaps and promoting innovative solutions and technologies, REILA contributes to Ethiopia's journey toward a more secure and prosperous future.

Finland's Development Goals

The REILA project's result areas and outcomes align closely with the development objectives and outcomes of **Finland's Development Policy (2016 and 2020), specifically outcome 1.2**: "people in rural Ethiopia have land tenure security and are empowered to participate in land use management in order to reduce land degradation." The project embraces **Finland's core societal values and country strategy and vision for Ethiopia** in its design and implementation. This includes ensuring the rights of women and girls, reinforcing developing countries' economies to generate more jobs, livelihoods, and well-being, and creating democratic and well-functioning societies, including taxation capacity. Additionally it ensures food security, access to water and energy, and the sustainable use of natural resources while securing access and control over land to smallholder farmers, including persons with disabilities, with special attention to women, indigenous, and local communities.

The project is closely aligned with **Finland's Country Programme for Ethiopia, 2021-2024**, which anticipates that "improved land administration enhances livelihood opportunities and sustainable land management" in Ethiopia. The project emphasizes and aligns with the cross-cutting objectives set by Finnish development cooperation that promote and support gender equality, non-discrimination, climate resilience, and low emissions development.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The REILA project's innovations, interventions, and impacts directly contribute to several components of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), including:



SDG 1.4: ensuring equal rights to economic resources, basic services, and control and ownership for all, especially the poor and vulnerable, and providing access to appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.



SDG 5: ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.



Other SDGs that the project contributes to directly or indirectly include those related to hunger eradication (SDG 2.1), resilient urban development (SDG 11), climate resilience (SDG 13.1), combating climate change (SDG 13.3), reversing land degradation (SDG 15), and promoting inclusive societies (SDG 16).

Key Strategic Approaches

The REILA project employs several key strategic approaches to achieve its objectives and support Ethiopia's efforts towards sustainable land management:

Innovations

The REILA project focuses on developing innovative and technologically enabled solutions that help transform Ethiopia's rural land sector. The project continuously assesses the needs, priorities and challenges of the land sector, explores best practices both locally and globally to identify appropriate approach and technologies, develop, contextualizes, pilot tests, and adapts fit-for-purpose methods and systems for the rural land sector to enable effective land registration, certification, administration, and service delivery.

Digitalization (Use of Technology)

The project embraces digitalization to advance the rural land administration system in Ethiopia, transforming it from analog/paper-based system to fully digital one that allow continuous updating of land parcels and holders information and sustain tenure security for rural landholders. This approach enhances data accuracy, reduces administrative burdens, and improves overall transparency and accountability within the land administration system. The digitalization efforts ensure that the system is not only more efficient but also adaptable to future technological advancements.

Catalyzing Change

The project accelerates change in the land sector by developing and demonstrating best practices that are scalable, adaptable, and advocating for buy-in and resource allocation from key stakeholders and partner organizations for pilot implementation and scale up. It provides critical technical support to RLAUD and its partner land programs and leverages resources for the mass and rapid scale-up of innovations beyond REILA's project areas throughout the country to maximize output and outcomes.

Collaboration and Leveraging

The project emphasizes effective collaboration and resource leveraging with land programs supporting the land sector to increase its effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes for both the project and land sector development.

Flexibility and Adaptive Management

The REILA project embraces a flexible and adaptive project management approach to effectively respond to and meet the demands and evolving needs and priorities of MoA/RLAUD, the regions, and partners. Adaptability allows efficient resource utilization by shifting focus and investment to strategic tasks that have an impact at the national level. The project remains open to reallocating resources, including technical assistance and leveraging efforts, to areas where mutual interests align to maximizing outcomes for both the project and MoA/RLAUD. Regularly evaluating the land sector's situations, needs, and gaps in the land sector helps inform targeted actions and solutions, enhancing REILA's efficiency and its role in driving change in the rural land sector.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

REILA adopted HRBA as a guiding principle in all phases of the project implementation, from planning to execution. This approach ensures that everyone equally benefits from the project implementation, including women, people in vulnerable situations, indigenous communities, and minority ethnic groups, and that their right to access and control over land is protected. The project adheres to fundamental human rights principles, securing land tenure for all, and ensuring that duty-bearers meet their obligations in protecting and respecting land rights for all. Gender equality, non-discrimination, equity, justice, transparency, and accountability are integrated into land registration, certification, and administration processes, as well as service delivery, using various strategies and actions.

Public Information and Awareness (PIA)

PIA is considered a key strategy for applying HRBA in land registration, certification, and administration processes. PIA ensures participatory and socially inclusive land registration, certification, and administration processes. On one hand, PIA focuses on raising land right holders' awareness and knowledge of their land rights and obligations, restrictions included in the rural land law, and recognizes their rights and responsibilities to actively participate in the process to protect their land rights. On the other hand, PIA enhances duty bearers' capacity and awareness to recognize and discharge their responsibilities to protect and respect the land rights of all, especially women and vulnerable groups.

Women Empowerment

The project actively promotes women's empowerment through its design and implementation. Key strategies include the realization of co-titling of land rights between husband and wife, including for women in polygamous households, and ensuring equal participation of women in land use-related decisions as joint right holders. The project employs pragmatic and affirmative actions to bring women into land administration leadership and service delivery.

Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development

REILA recognizes the critical need for strong institutional capacity in land administration at all levels: federal, regional, zone, woreda, and kebele. Building strong institutions requires a skilled workforce, and the land sector in Ethiopia faces significant constraints in this regard. REILA has adopted a comprehensive approach to human resource capacity development. While regular capacity-building training, on-the-job training, experience exchange programs, and demand-driven technical assistance remain at the core of this effort, the project introduced formal training and study programs in land administration as a strategic approach to address the capacity gap and ensure a continuous supply of skilled professionals.

The Four Eyes Principle

Safeguarding land rights, especially for women and vulnerable groups (VGs), is a key priority for the project. Hence, the project applies "the four eyes principle" to prevent, control, and manage potential corruption and malpractices, including data manipulation in the land certification and administration processes that could endanger the land rights of rural landholders, especially women and vulnerable groups.

REILA's Transformative Impact on Ethiopia's Land Sector

The REILA project was initially designed to support rural land registration, certification and improve rural land administration systems in the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, focussing on fifteen woredas. During its formative years, the project recognized the needs and priorities of the MoA/RLAUD and the targeted regions for innovative solutions that enable effective, efficient and affordable rural land registration, certification, and administration. Additionally, the lack of institutional and human resource capacity for land administration at both federal and regional levels emerged as a key challenge for the project's implementation and the land sector at large. Consequently, the project adaptively and strategically aligned its activities to respond to these pressing, sector-wide needs and priorities, achieving sustainable outcomes for both the land sector and the project over two project phases spanning from 2011 to 2024.

REILA's involvement in the land sector and its achievements over the past fifteen years can be summarized in three major categories: innovations and technologies, information and data management, and institutional and human capacity development.

Innovations and Digitalization

REILA has actively developed, pilot tested, conducted adaptability trials for innovative methods for rural land cadaster and land administration systems. These methods and systems are guided by fit-for-purpose principles, making them efficient, cost-effective, adaptable, scalable, and technology-enabled. REILA supports the implementation and large scale rollout of these innovations across ten regions in Ethiopia, including the two project-targeted regions.

Method Development

Building on previous efforts by RLAUD and its partners, REILA has developed harmonized, efficient, affordable, and scalable methods for rural land cadaster and certification in collaboration with partners, under RLAUD's leadership. These methods primarily involve the utilization of orthophoto/satellite imagery as a basis for field surveying and defining land parcel boundaries in rural Ethiopia. REILA successfully adopted the orthophoto/satellite imagery method from Rwanda's experience, pilot-tested it in diverse geographic locations, contextualized it, fully developed the method and implemented a trial phases. This method is endorsed by RLAUD as the default method for systematic rural land registration and certification (SLLC) in the country. Since 2014/2015, RLAUD, with support from REILA, WB-CALM, LIFT, and WB-RLLP, has undertaken the mass scale-up of SLLC rollout using this method and achieved breakthrough results in registering and certifying over 30 million land parcels across ten regions. This represents about 60% of the national target for rural land certification and has made Ethiopia the first country in Africa to undertake mass rural land registration.

Zero Order Geodetic Network

An improved Zero Order Geodetic Network is essential for achieving reliable cadastral surveying and land certification. It is a strategic intervention for REILA, RLAUD, and partners involved in SLLC. Ethiopia has been using a coordinate system established over 60 years ago, which required significant improvement. As part of the institutional capacity-building initiative, REILA made significant investments to enhance the technical capacity of the EMA, now SSGI. The aim was to improve the quality of rural cadastre by providing reliable control points for accurate surveying and mapping. REILA provided technical assistance to EMA (now SSGI) in **establishing 29 new Zero Order Geodetic Network**, including technical **support for the implementation and maintenance of 6 Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS)**. The project's support also included capacity-building training and sponsored MSc programs for EMA staff. The new geodetic network ensures high accuracy and reliability in land measurements, supporting precise land mapping and enhancing the overall quality of cadastral data.

The REILA project substantially contributed to the advancement of Ethiopia's Geodetic Network, which is paramount for the success of rural cadastral surveying and land administration efforts. The improved network is available free of charge for all land programme and other sectors.

System Development

REILA designed and developed an IT strategy and information system for the land sector to enhance rural land data management, accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness. The project developed the National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) in close collaboration with partners and leadership from RLAUD. The primary purpose of NRLAIS is to register, store, and manage digital spatial and textual information of rural land parcels and landholders obtained through the SLLC process. The system uses open-source technology, making it highly cost-effective, adaptable, and scalable. It is designed to be functional at different administrative levels. This complex software development process spanned from 2015 to 2017. It evolved through several development phases, starting from IT strategy and software development, comprehensive pilot testing and comparative trials including additional sites comparative trials undertaken in Oromia, Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions in 2018, roll-out, endorsement and official launching and scale up initiated in 2019, followed by the full-scale implementation of the system in 2020.

The system's effectiveness and adaptability facilitated its rapid and mass scale-up across majority of the regions, implemented by all land programs. Currently, **NRLAIS is operational in 458 woredas across ten regions, with critical technical support from REILA, managing data for over 27.8 million land parcels data**. NRLAIS has emerged as one of the largest database systems in Ethiopia, next to those used by banks, insurance companies, and customs authority. The innovative SLLC and NRLAIS have fundamentally transformed Ethiopia's rural land sector. They enable mass land registration and administration in a simple, affordable, reliable, participatory, and inclusive manner while standardizing processes nationwide.

Information and Data Management

The Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Administration (MELA) is an innovative system developed by REILA and implemented in close collaboration with the CALM program. MELA aims to ensure the accurate and timely flow of information from woreda land administration offices to regional and federal levels.

MELA enhances the management capacity of RLAUD and the regions, enabling them to monitor and assess the progress of all program activities, evaluate outcomes against expected results and impacts, and allocate resources accordingly. It enables real-time, evidence-based decision-making and informs policy formulation. MELA's implementation is in its initial phase, and its scope is limited to monitoring and assessing the progress of the CALM program activities. Eventually, it is expected to evolve into a fully functional Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system that monitors and tracks the progress of all activities across various programs, projects, and government initiatives.

A functional MELA system is critical for the sustainability of the major outcomes achieved in the land sector and the success of the REILA project.

Human Capacity Development

REILA has been extensively involved in developing institutional and human resource capacity for land administration at various levels. Under the leadership of RLAUD and in collaboration with partners, REILA designed multilayered capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives targeting a wide range of actors, including land administrators, experts, mid-level technicians, policy and decision-makers, political leaders at federal, regional, woreda, kebele, and community levels. The project followed a comprehensive and sustainable approach to capacity development by combining formal study and training programs on land administration with on-going capacity-building training, on-the-job training, international experience exchanges, oversees short-term training, and knowledge transfer through demand-driven technical assistance. **In 2014, REILA successfully introduced the first land administration TVET program at Assosa Agricultural TVET College in Benishangul Gumuz**, in collaboration with the regional government and the TVET College, targeting mid-level technicians. This best practice was replicated in Oromia, at Agarfa Agricultural TVET College with REILA's support. The TVET programme was instrumental in building land administration in the Benishangul Gumuz region and considered strategic in ensuring a consistent supply of skilled manpower to the land sector.

The project facilitated and supported the launch of land administration **MSc and BSc scholarship programs for land administration staff at regional, zone and federal levels; and EMA staff**. Additionally, REILA facilitated the development and **introduction of Fast-Track training courses at six academic institutions and Assosa TVET College** to strengthen the capacity of existing land administration staff. These training and study programmes were introduced in partnership with six universities and regional land administration bureaus with financial support from the CALM programme. Numerous regular and on-the-job training sessions were conducted for implementers at regional, woreda, and kebele levels in the project's target regions. The para-surveyors training conducted every year before the commencement of fieldwork has created a significant mass of technicians in the rural land sector of the country.

International experience exchanges and short-term training programs were facilitated for policy and decision-makers and senior experts at federal and regional levels in an effort to explore, identify and adopt effective method and system for rural land certification and administration in Ethiopia. Public information and awareness were major components of capacity building at kebele and community/landholder levels. These multilayered capacity-building initiatives significantly transformed land administration capacities in REILA target regions, at the federal level, and in eight other regions. Through these initiatives, **REILA capacitated and produced over 10,000 land administrators, decision-makers, high-level experts, mid-level technicians, and key stakeholders**.

The diagram below illustrates and summarizes the interventions and results achieved by the REILA project during its two phases from 2011 – 2024.

REILA's Key Intervention and Achievements



INNOVATION

- Second level and certification – SLLC
- Digital Cadaster – NRLAIS
- Geodetic Network – CORS
- Communal Land Certification & management
- Land Transaction Formalization
- Access to Credit
- Post Conflict Land Administration
- NRLAIS multi-functionality



INFORMATION & DATA

- MELA Development
- Data Sharing Incentive System
- Data Quality Verification System
- Data Migration & ICT Strategy
- Communication Strategy
- Dashboard
- Partner's Data Management & Info Sharing



HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- MSc Scholarship Programme Bahir Dar University - ILA
- Introduction of LA- TVET program
- Gender Equality & Social Inclusivity mainstreaming
- Public Information & Awareness
- Fast Track Learning
- Training of Trainer – ToT
- Experience Exchange & Learning Visits
- Demand Driven Technical Assistance

■ Catalyzing Sustainable Change in Rural Land Administration

REILA, through its adaptive management approach and high level of flexibility help expand its scope and impact within available resources, achieving greater results. These developments unlocked a wide range of opportunities for REILA, fostering greater collaboration, partnerships, and resource leveraging with other bilateral and multilateral programs supporting the land sector. These have maximized outputs and outcomes for the project, RLAUD, and its partners. The project's portfolio expanded to an additional eight regions through the development of innovations, pilot testing, and scaling-up, achieving breakthrough results that fundamentally transformed Ethiopia's land sector. Such engagement positioned REILA as a key player, accelerating sustainable change in the rural land sector in Ethiopia.

Section II

Innovation and Digitalisation



Fit for Purpose Method for Systematic Rural Land Cadaster Registration and Certification (SLLC)

■ The Orthophoto/Satellite Imagery Method: “The Game-Changer”

Since the Ethiopian government first initiated the SLLC programme in 2004, it has collaborated with development partners, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through the Amhara Rural Development Programme (SARDP), World Bank’s Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP-WB), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to identify effective methods for rural land registration and certification. Building on these efforts and responding to the Ethiopian government’s need for a new, cost-effective, affordable and reliable method for rural land registration and certification, the REILA project engaged in the development of an innovative method for rural land cadaster surveying and certification. This method enabled RLAUD to certify over 50 million land parcels across the country.

Under the leadership of the federal MoA/RLAUD and in collaboration with the WB-SLMP, REILA successfully developed a method for rural land registration and certification based on orthophoto/satellite imagery during the first phase of the project implementation. The method was developed through a rigorous process and based on the fit-for-purpose principles.

Development and Testing

To explore, assess, and identify effective surveying methods for rural land registration, REILA organized international experience exchanges and study tours for a team of senior experts and decision-makers from land administration institutions at both federal and regional levels. These study tours took place in Rwanda and across Europe (Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, and Austria) and South Korea. Two study tours were conducted to Rwanda by ministers and senior experts. The first round was facilitated and financially supported by USAID’s Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF), while REILA organized and supported the second round visit.

The project led the assessment of various methodologies utilized globally to identify and select technology suitable for Ethiopia’s diverse context. Consequently, the orthophoto method was adopted from Rwanda’s successful use of this method for rural land surveying and registration. This method was fully developed through a two-year development process.

The Orthophoto Method for land surveying and registration involves using orthophotos, which are aerial photographs that are geometrically corrected (orthorectified) to ensure uniform scale and remove distortions caused by terrain and camera angles. This method is highly accurate and combines the visual detail of photographs with the precision of maps. The first step in utilizing orthophotos for land registration is capturing high-resolution images from aircraft or drones. These images undergo geometric correction to remove distortions, resulting in orthophotos with a uniform scale. The corrected images are then overlaid onto existing maps or used to create new maps, helping to accurately identify and delineate land parcels. Additionally, orthophotos are used to update or create land records, ensuring precise boundaries and reducing disputes.

General Boundaries are used to define land parcel boundaries by utilizing natural and visible features such as rivers, trees, roads, and other landmarks. The boundaries are confirmed by community members who have knowledge of the land and its history. This communal knowledge plays a crucial role in identifying and agreeing upon the boundaries. This approach has enabled the precise location and geo-referencing of rural land parcels using orthophoto maps.

REILA successfully pilot-tested and contextualized the orthophoto/satellite imagery method as a basis for field surveying and defining land parcel boundaries in rural Ethiopia. The pilot testing, conducted from 2012 to 2013, took place in seven distinct geographical locations across the Oromia, Amhara, SNNP, Tigray, and Benishangul Gumuz regions, followed by a trial phase. The project developed an orthophoto manual that provides detailed, step-by-step guidance on how to utilize this method for land parcel surveying and production.



Trial Phase and Development of Operational Manual for SLLC

From 2012 to 2014, REILA conducted a trial phase of the SLLC method, certifying approximately 20,499 land parcels using orthophoto/satellite imagery method. REILA provided technical support for the rollout of the trial phase, while WB-SLMP funded the activity. Based on lessons learned from pilot and trial experiences, REILA developed an operational manual for SLLC, leveraging existing technical knowledge with in the project to ensure standardized procedures across regions.

The first version of the SLLC manual, distributed in 2012, offered step-by-step guidance on land registration and certification procedures. The updated and harmonized manual (version 4.0), officially distributed in 2017, serves as a comprehensive guide for all regions, standardizing procedures and practices to ensure consistency and accuracy across different regions and locations.

Endorsement and Implementation

In 2014, the Ethiopian government officially endorsed orthophoto/satellite imagery as the default method for systematic Second Level Land Certification (SLLC) nationwide. Consequently, all land programmes involved in SLLC across the country use this method. The method's cost-effectiveness was a key factor in gaining support from donors such as the World Bank and DFID, facilitating large-scale systematic land registration and certification in Ethiopia.

The acceptance of the general boundary principle by the RLAUD marks a significant milestone in rural land certification efforts. Remarkably, there has been no documented contestation regarding boundary precision in court.

REILA championed a fit-for-purpose approach for rural land registration and certification, emphasizing flexibility, inclusiveness, and participatory processes. This approach ensures that land registration and certification (SLLC) is cost-effective, affordable, reliable, attainable, and scalable.



The SLLC Process and Procedures

STEPS

The SLLC process involves rigorous field-level engagement with active participation from all land rights holders and claimants, including women and vulnerable groups. It comprises a series of procedures to ensure accurate land parcel demarcation, public participation, and equitable distribution of certificates. The key steps are:

1

Preparation and Community Awareness

Preparation is crucial for the rollout of SLLC. It involves procuring necessary equipment producing field materials for awareness raising, recruiting contract staff, and training government staff and local officials on the certification process.

Community mobilization activities are undertaken among community members/landholders, including women and vulnerable groups, and relevant stakeholders at different levels, to inform them about their land rights, the benefits of SLLC in ensuring their land right and the process involved. Public Information and Awareness (PIA) is embedded as an integral part of the SLLC process, ensuring it is participatory, gender-transformative, and socially inclusive.

2

Demarcation and Adjudication (Field Surveying and Mapping)

The demarcation and adjudication procedure involves detailed, step-by-step activities, undertaken with active participation from community members. Key activities include:

Identification of land parcels: Define parcel boundaries using general boundary principles with active involvement and confirmation from community members. Orthophotos (ortho-mosaic images) are used to accurately map parcel boundaries and ensure precise representation of land parcels.

Public notification: Local authorities notify the public about the adjudication process, allowing anyone with a claim to the land parcel to come forward.

Investigation and verification: Claims made by individuals are investigated. This includes document verification, interviewing claimants, and sometimes conducting field inspections.

Conflict resolution: Resolve disputes or overlapping claims, the adjudication process includes mechanisms to resolve these disputes. This might involve mediation or legal proceedings.

Registration: Once claims are verified and any disputes resolved, the land rights are registered. This includes systematically recording the details of the land parcel and the recognized landholders.

These steps are critical to determine and officially recognize existing land rights and claims to land parcels, address any discrepancies, and ensure the integrity and reliability of the land administration system. The process ascertains the 3Rs (Rights, Responsibilities, and Restrictions) of landholders.



3

Data Entry and Digitization

This step involves digitizing parcels and entering SLLC data. It includes checking the quality of field data, scanning, geo-referencing, creating Unique Parcel Identification Numbers (UPINs), and preparing index maps.



4

Verification and Corrections

The Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees (KLAUCs) verify and confirm the boundaries and names of the landholders. The collected and processed data, including boundaries and ownership details displayed for the public. This display typically occurs in a central, accessible location within the community, such as a Kebele office or a community center.

Seven days before the public display, the Woreda administration informs the Kebele Administrators (KAs) and KLAUCs of the display date. The KAs and KLAUCs then disseminate the information to the public, including the place, time, and purpose of the public display, using the PIA structure. The public display requires the attendance of all joint holders (husband and wife), including all wives in polygamous households, female-headed households (FHH), and vulnerable groups. The process lasts for about 30 days, providing ample time for all stakeholders, including those who might be away or have limited mobility, to review and verify the information.

During the public display period, landholders and community members are encouraged to review the displayed information. They can verify the accuracy of the boundaries and ownership details of their land parcels. If there are any discrepancies or errors, they can request corrections to the spatial or textual data related to their land parcels. Necessary data corrections are then made to the land parcels, followed by parcel map preparation. This process ensures that the land registration is participatory, transparent, and inclusive, addressing any potential disputes or errors before the final certification.

5

Production of Certificates

SLLC are prepared for each land parcel, which includes detailed maps and landholder information, and photographs of all land right holders.



6

Issuing of Certificates

At this stage, land certificates are distributed to landholders, ensuring they understand their rights, obligations and responsibilities, including those related to land transactions.



■ Key Features of SLLC

Geospatial precision: SLLC provides detailed and accurate information about land parcels, including boundaries, size, and geographical location, using the orthophoto method and general boundary principles. It records both textual and spatial data during the initial demarcation and registration process.

Updating records: SLLC includes mechanisms for updating land records to reflect changes during land transactions.

Digital transformation: Stores parcel data in digital format with geographic information. Shifts from paper-based/tabular data to standardized digital formats, enhancing efficiency and updating capabilities. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) enable efficient management and retrieval of land information. Land certificates now include detailed maps showing the exact boundaries of each parcel, enhancing clarity and transparency.

Public display: As a safeguarding mechanism involving public verification of land parcel data. Community members and landholders participate in verifying and validating the information before certificates are issued. This ensures transparency by publicly displaying the collected data for community review and feedback.

Inclusive certificates: Land certificates include full names and photographs of all right holders, including co-titling of land rights between husbands and wives, and women in polygamous households, ensuring gender equality in land certification.

Comprehensive information: Contains detailed information about the landholder(s), including names, identification numbers, and photographs.

User-friendly format: Designed to be easily understood by landholders, with clear maps and information.

These features make the SLLC a powerful tool for enhancing land tenure security, promoting sustainable land management, and supporting rural economic development in Ethiopia.

■ Benefits of SLLC

Enhanced land tenure security: Grants secure land tenure to rural landholders, including women and vulnerable individuals. Provides more precise land right holding documentation and stronger legal recognition and protection of land rights. Serves as an official document that can be used in legal and administrative processes.

Investment incentives: Provides landholders with the security needed to invest in their land, leading to improved agricultural productivity and livelihoods.

Empowerment and participation: SLLC empowers landholders, especially women and vulnerable groups to know, claim, and protect their land rights. It uniquely empowers women to exercise their right to participate in land-related decisions on the land they hold jointly.

Market confidence and access to finance: Increases landholders' and user's confidence to engage in land rental transactions through formal registration. Provides access to individual loans using SLLC as collateral to engage in diversified economic activities.

Dispute resolution: Reduces land-related disputes by facilitating easier resolution of land disputes due to precise boundaries and legally recognized documentation.

Improved land management: Facilitates better land use planning and management practices. Facilitates rural land transactions that lead to the efficient use and allocation of rural land. Promotes responsible land management and investment in sustainable farming practices, including permanent tree planting and soil and water conservation.

Rollout of Second Level Land Certification (SLLC) and Achievements

Since 2015, RLAUD has registered and certified over 30 million rural land parcels out of the 50 million targeted by the SLLC initiative, using the SLLC method developed by REILA. This is achieved with support from development partners including REILA, DFID-LIFT, WB-CALM, and WB-RLLP programmes.

These mass certification undertaking covered regions including Oromia, Amhara, SNNP, Tigray, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambela, Sidama, South West Ethiopia, Central Ethiopia, and Hareri regions.



This achievement marks a major breakthrough for the rural land sector in Ethiopia and sets a global example unmatched by any other rural nation. The results were achieved in a highly participatory and inclusive manner. Remarkably, 81% of the land certificates were issued to women-headed households and married couples through co-titling, including women in polygamous marriages. Ethiopia's success in empowering women through land certification surpasses the 30% target set by the African Union for African countries by 2030.

REILA has actively supported rural land registration and certification in fifteen target woredas (districts) in the Benishangul Gumuz region and along the Tana Beles growth corridor of the Amhara region since 2015. The targeted woredas in the Amhara region include Bahir Dar Zuriya, Mecha, North Achefer, South Achefer, Fogera, Libo Kemkem, Gonder Zuriya, and Dembiya. In the Benishangul Gumuz region, the projects targeted Bambasi, Assosa (now split into Aburamo and Oura woredas), Bullen, Mizhiga (former Belojigangoye), Pawe, and Kamashi woredas. REILA project activities have been suspended in Bullen, Kamasi, and Mizhiga since the last quarter of 2018 due to security situations, and later the project extended its coverage to Oundulu woredas.

During the two project phases, REILA certified some 1.45 million land parcels for 321,504 rural households across 306 kebeles in the 15 woredas in the in a highly participatory and inclusive process. Out of the total land certificates issued in the project intervention woredas, 80% were registered under married couples (co-titling) and female-headed households in the Amhara region. In Benishangul Gumuz, 78% of the total land certificates issued by REILA were registered under married couples (co-titling), including women in polygamous marriages and female-headed households, which aligns with federal-level achievements.

This result for women significantly surpassed the African Union's 30% target for women by 2025. REILA's achievements have set the standard for gender-disaggregated SLLC targets for other programmes support rural land certification. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, social unrest, and conflict in certain areas of the project intervention region, REILA successfully undertook land certification and exceeded its targets, benefiting a total of 1.45 million individuals. The project's resilience and adaptability contributed to its success.



The project effectively utilized and integrated Public Information and Awareness (PIA) for SLLC to ensure maximum participation and engagement of landholders, including women and vulnerable groups (VGs), in the process to protect their rights and validate the process.

Securing Futures: The Story of Girma Kebede and Enquanesh Worku



Girma Kebede and Enquanesh Worku have been married for 26 years and have six children. They are farmers living in Esala Gula Gulema Keble, on the outskirts of Bahir Dar city in the Amhara Region.

Girma illustrates how the last land registration and certification benefited him and his family “Before land certification, my three siblings and I used the land we inherited from our parents. However, the land was still registered under our parents’ names, and we only used the portions they had gifted us. This lack of tenure security and unclear boundaries often led to conflicts, especially between me and my eldest brother, who forcefully held the largest portion of land. We often fight because our parcels were adjacent. The 1989 E.C. land registration recognized all land in one holding, which did not demarcate our individual shares. We fought over the land for more than seven years.

My brother took my land, considering me as a child as I was the youngest. We fought constantly. When the Second-Level Land Certification (SLLC) program was introduced, it demarcated and registered the land under each of our names. Initially, my brother resisted because he held the largest portion, but since this was a government initiative and law, he had to accept it. The certification was binding, ensuring that no one could violate the boundaries. My brother had no choice but to accept what was rightfully his, and the same applied to all of us. SLLC solved our biggest problem. Without it, one of us might have been killed due to the intense disputes. Community members, including our uncles who knew our parents and the land history, provided testimony during the survey. They clearly showed the demarcation, indicating which land belonged to whom. Based on their input, our lands were registered, and my brother agreed to register what was his. The issuance of land certificates has brought immense benefits to farmers in our kebele. Now, we know the exact size of each parcel of land we hold. Previously, we could only guess the land size, as it wasn’t mentioned in the old records. The new certificates provide detailed information, including the size of each plot. I can now easily sum up the size of my five land parcels and know the total area me and my wife hold jointly.

Once the land was properly divided and registered under our names, we began cultivating it, gaining significant economic benefits. Previously uncultivated land is now productive. We have planted crops and a large number of permanent trees, such as mango, avocado, orange, and khat. We also produce substantial amounts of maize, sorghum, and teff each year. Before certification, the land was often left fallow due to insecurity of tenure.

My wife and I understand the benefits of the land tenure security very well. In our father’s time, we only cultivated a portion of the land and left the rest for livestock, using it minimally and only for yearly consumption. Now, we are aware of the land’s potential and use it efficiently to produce various crops, including cash crops, benefiting greatly. We never intended to invest or plant permanent trees before due to insecurity and the potential for conflict. We couldn’t invest in something we weren’t sure we owned. But once we received the certificates and were certain of our land rights, we began using the land properly and investing with confidence. The livelihood of everyone in our community has improved since the certification. Disputes have significantly reduced. Everyone is busy developing their land parcels based on the demarcated boundaries, avoiding conflict because any violation is penalized. Today, no land parcel is left fallow in our area. There is a high competition

among farmers to produce more, and no one wants to be seen as lazy by the community. This sense of ownership has driven us to work hard. The land certification has greatly benefited my family and me, significantly improving our lives and our children's future”.

Enquanesh emphasized on the impact of the land tenure security “we work together and make decisions together. I have no fear because I know my land rights and how to protect them. We are improving year by year. Our economy is developing, and our life is changing because we are certain of our land rights.”

Protecting the Land Rights of Women and Vulnerable Groups (VGs)

REILA set a good example in securing the land rights for women, including those in polygamous marriages, and people in vulnerable situations. PIA played a crucial role in addressing deep-rooted socio-cultural and gender norms and practices that hinder women's and VGs' participation in protecting their land rights. The project conducted targeted PIA sessions among women and VGs, disseminating necessary information, raising their awareness and knowledge about the planned SLLC activities, the process involved, their rights and obligations, and the critical importance of being present and/or represented in the SLLC process to protect their land rights.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) measures were implemented to further promote and enhance the participation of women and VGs. Social baseline assessments, conducted mainly by KLACUs before SLLC activities commenced, were utilized as a key strategy to identify women and VGs in the kebele planned for SLLC activities. Based on the social baseline data collected, the PIA team reached out to women and VGs, conducted targeted awareness-raising activities, engaged with them, and ensured they had the necessary information and support to participate in the SLLC process. These efforts ensured a gender transformative and inclusive SLLC process.



Triumph Over Adversity: Senedu Sharew's Fight for Land Rights



Senedu Sharew, a 30-year-old woman with disability. She is from Weybeyigne Kebel, Bahirdar Zuria Woreda in the Amhara region. Senedu has faced numerous challenges in her quest to secure her land rights. She has two brothers and a sister who suffers from mental illness. The siblings inherited land from their parents, which was jointly registered under their names during the first land registration in 1996.

“My parents passed away before the first land registration in 1996. During the registration, the land was registered under one certificate with a group title called ‘Ene’ for the four of us. My sister and I were young and didn’t understand much, so our elder brother took charge of everything. As we grew older, he divided the land between himself and our other brother, taking a significant portion for him but not to me and my sister because we are women, vulnerable, and didn’t have the means to defend our rights. My other brother gave me half a hectare of land to use from his share out of courtesy, and I am still using that piece of land. My sister remained under his care of our elder brother, using her land, claiming he rented it, but he never gave her a share of the produce.

In the 1996 land registration, our elder brother registered the land in his and his wife’s names without our knowledge. At that time, we were not aware of the implications and trusted him. During the last registration, he managed to certify the land under his and his wife’s names with a map. One day, when we went to the kebele to access fertilizer, we were asked for the land certificate. We said we had a book under the group title, but they told us we were not registered. The land rights were in his and his wife’s names.

When we confronted him, he said, ‘You are already using the land, so what’s the problem?’ We told him we wanted to register it under our names. He refused and resorted to disputes, claiming we couldn’t do anything since the land was registered in his name. What triggered me the most was when his daughter got married, and he gave her some land. I asked why and how she could get a share of our land while I didn’t. This led to a dispute and drove me to be determined to ensure my land rights through legal processes. I became aware of my rights through the land committee, which taught us multiple times at the church and in the village about our land rights and the law but we trusted our brother and didn’t follow through. We didn’t expect him to betray us like this. I was shocked when I found out what he did.”

I reported the case to the kebele land administration desk, and they advised us to take it to the woreda’s Land Administration Office for investigation. The woreda office helped us investigate the case. Since my elder sister has mental health issues, she was not involved much. My other brother and I asked our elder brother to give us the land book and process the land certificate in our names for the land we are using. Despite involving elders and the kebele land office, he refused.

The woreda office then guided us to go to the regional office in Bahirdar to request the revocation of the certificate. Following the regional bureau's order, an investigation began. The 1996 land committee confirmed that the land was originally registered in the names of the four siblings, with him being the eldest. Despite his attempts to intimidate and attack the witnesses, the investigation proceeded. Based on the verification results, he was asked to return the original book and certificate, but he only provided copies. Consequently, the woreda office revoked his book and prepared a new certificate and book under the four of us as joint holders.

When I asked him to return my equal share of land based on the new certificate, he refused. The woreda land office then connected me with the prosecutor's office to take the case to court and also with the women's affairs office for support. Although he initially denied the claims in court, the court ruled in our favor. He appealed, arguing that the law allowed him to claim the land after ten years, but the court upheld its decision in our favor.

Due to the current security situation, the court's decision has not yet been implemented, but we have our certificate. The authorities cannot go on-site to divide and register the land in our names until the situation improves. The process has taken me two years since April 2014. I fear that my brother and his children might harm me because I challenged them and protected the land rights for me and my siblings. I stay away from the land and work in Bahir Dar city due to the potential threat of violence. However, I rely on the law and believe that once the court's decision is implemented, and the land is divided and certificates are issued for each of our holdings, this fear will dissipate. I will then be able to use my land and ensure my sister's rights are also protected. Since we started the court case, she has been sheltered at the church.

The woreda's land office has been incredibly supportive. They connected me with the women's affairs office and prosecutors, who assisted me with court cases and ensured we were represented. We fought for our rights all the way to the Zone and regional levels, with significant support from the woreda's land office. I eagerly await the division of the land and the certification of my share in my name and my sisters'. Securing my land rights will allow me to rent it out and ensure mine and my sister's food security throughout the year, significantly improving my livelihood. Currently, I struggle to make a living with labor work in the city, but I am confident that securing my land rights will greatly enhance my living conditions.

I am deeply grateful for the services provided by the woreda, the staff, the court, the prosecutors, the women's affairs office, the kebele, the land committee, and my neighbors. Their collective efforts have been essential in ensuring my land rights.



Securing Land Rights for Women in Polygamous Marriages

Securing land rights for women in polygamous marriages in the Benishangul Gumuz (BG) region is one of the key successes of REILA. The project leveraged Ethiopia's supportive legal framework for gender equality in land, marriage, and inheritance rights, as well as the regional land proclamation in Benishangul Gumuz, to advocate for and support the enactment and enforcement of laws ensuring the land rights of all women in polygamous marriage arrangements are protected.

Targeted PIA activities were instrumental in reaching women in polygamous households, raising awareness of their land rights, and emphasizing the critical importance of participating in the certification process. Consequently, the land rights of women in polygamous households in the Benishangul Gumuz region are recognized and protected through the certification of their land holding rights, either solely (for their share of the land) or through co-titling with their husbands and all parties involved in the union. This best practice can be replicated in other areas with similar socio-cultural and religious norms and practices.

REILA influenced the incorporation of the land rights of women in polygamous households in the revised federal land administration and use proclamation No. 1324/2024, passed by the federal parliament in 2024.

The inclusion of pictures of all wives in polygamous unions in the SLLC has empowered women in the Benishangul Gumuz region. Both the process and the outcome of SLLC have influenced power dynamics in male-headed households, including polygamous marriages, and decreased the prevalence of divorce. As a result of obtaining legal documentation of their land rights, women's assertiveness in protecting their rights has significantly increased.

Empowering Land Rights: *The story of Marriam and Nesra*



Marriam is a 50-year-old woman from Aburanu Woreda, Afa Megel Kebele, in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region. She is in a polygamous marriage and is the first wife, with six children.

Her husband Walid has a second wife, who is much younger than Marriam, and they have one child together. Both wives married their shared husband, Walid, before the Second Level Land Certificate (SLLC) was issued. Traditionally, older wives receive less attention from their husbands and subjected to divorcee without any right to land, which causes distress for many of them. Although Marriam learned about her equal land rights with her husband and his other wife during a community meeting for raising awareness on the SLLC, she was unsure and found it difficult to understand how this would work, like many other women in the village.

“At first, I thought my husband would never be willing to recognize my right and give me my share of the land. He would give it to her because she is young and he is in love with her. I was so skeptical. But during the land registration, the committee allocated a larger portion of land to me because I have six children. The second wife, with one child, received her share proportionally. Our husband agreed to it, he didn't have any choice. I was surprised to see that happen. When I received the land certificate with my name and photo on it, I was so happy and couldn't believe it. Now I know that I have the right to the land. Even if he wanted to marry a third wife, I don't care. I will be able to raise my children without any problem. This certificate means a lot to me.”



Nesra Mohamed, a widowed woman with five children. She is a member of KLAUC in the kebele. She was the only wife in her household.

“Previously, we (women) were only entitled to a small piece of land given by our husbands, usually just the backyard for vegetables, livestock, or other activities. We didn’t have control over the main farmland. It was the husband who controlled the land. If he decided to marry a second or third wife, no one questioned him. He would bring her and give her a place to live and a piece of land.”

As the husband married more wives, the resources had to be divided among all of them. Culturally, husbands had full control over the land. Women didn’t have equal rights to the rest of the farmland, which was fully controlled by the husband. If he divorced one of his wives, she was only entitled to her household items, the livestock she herded, and perhaps gold or other wedding gifts. She was not entitled to any share of the land they held together. She would just go back to her parents without land. Therefore, most women stayed in the marriage even if they didn’t like their situation.

After the Second Level Land Certification, everything changed. Now, if a husband and wife divorce, she takes her equal share of the land, including mango trees. They even divide the house equally.

After I was selected to serve as KLAUC, I received intensive training about landholding rights and obligations, laws, processes, and the land rights of women and vulnerable groups. I was very much involved in raising awareness, especially among women. I was the first to get my land registered under my name because I understood the benefits very well. My husband passed away before the registration, and I was vulnerable. In our area, it was common for someone to come and settle on certain land and start farming, and you couldn’t do anything about it. So, SLLC solved many problems.

After our land was registered, women in this area became well aware of our land right and knew how to protect it and the public awareness activity played a major role in this regards. The majority of women are now empowered to say no to their husbands when they intend to bring a second or third wife. They are confident enough to tell their husbands that they can marry, but they cannot bring them onto their land. If the husband insists, they even go as far as divorcing and taking their equal share of the land without fear of community perception or cultural norms and influence. This registration is really good, Wolahii (in the name of Allah). Women have benefited a lot from SLLC.



Support the Establishment of a New Zero-Order Geodetic Network for Improved SLLC Provision

Improving the capacity of the EMA, now SSGI, has been identified as a critical step to improve the precision, overall geospatial data accuracy, and efficiency of land surveying practices in Ethiopia. Specifically, the establishment of a new zero-order geodetic network appeared to be essential in achieving reliable land certification. An improved geodetic network helps surveyors strategically position control points, measure land boundaries accurately, and create precise land certificates. Ethiopia's coordinate system traces back to the Nile Basin Initiative survey conducted over 60 years ago, based on the Adindan datum (ground reference for the coordinate system). Although the system has undergone some improvements through the incorporation of GPS measurements, its fundamental attributes of the coordinate system have remained unchanged.

The establishment of a new zero-order geodetic network is highly relevant to RLAUD, the REILA project, and partners involved in the SLLC in Ethiopia. The SLLC process relies on accurate geodetic data, including coordinates, elevations, and boundary information, and the zero-order network ensures consistency and reliability in these measurements.

The EMA, now SSGI, recognized the need to renew the datum and geodetic reference network to:

- Improve current parameters for transforming Global Positioning System (GPS) measurements to the Ethiopian system better synchronizing with global systems that facilitate surveying and transformation between coordinate systems.

- Establish a new zero-order network with ground reference points to enable accurate and homogeneous surveying throughout the country.

- Utilize zero-order network points consisting of concrete pillars that also serve as monumentation for Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS), Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receivers that continuously measure and transmit their observations and location coordinates using a radio link.

REILA provided significant support to EMA, now SSGI, to improve its capacity and ensure accurate and efficient land surveying. The project deployed a senior land surveyor at EMA to provide technical assistance in establishing of new zero-order geodetic networks. REILA's support includes:

- Developing technical specification for the establishment of a CORS network. A comprehensive transformation manual has been developed to use the new coordinate system parameters in various surveying and mapping software.

- Implementation and maintenance of 6 CORS stations with concrete pillars for the measured zero-order network points. The CORS were installed three meters deep in the ground to ensure stability, enhancing the quality of the information they send. The CORS are installed in 4 locations throughout the country. It is anticipated that these CORS will serve for as long as 70 years. REILA also surveyed and established 29 zero order geodetic networks

- Providing capacity-building training to EMA's staff to equip them with the skills needed to operate and maintain the CORS, manage geodetic data, and conduct surveys.

- Supporting the development of data access policy for users, including the pricing that users should pay to maintain the CORS.

The new zero-order geodetic network and CORS installation have significantly improved SLLC by providing reliable control points for accurate surveying and mapping. Specifically, the improved geodetic network:

Enhanced data integration and coordination: The new geodetic network facilitates the integration of data from various sources (e.g., cadastral surveys, satellite imagery) into a unified system. This improved coordination among different data types and sources supports better decision-making and policy development.

Simplified referencing: It simplifies the referencing of aerial and satellite images used for cadastral measurements. This streamlined process is quicker and more cost-effective.

High-quality information and mapping: Provides high-quality and accurate information for each land parcel. Accurate maps enhance clarity and precision.

Ensures homogeneous accuracy: Consistent referencing reduces errors and ensures uniform accuracy across the system.

Efficient surveying for high-value land: Enables efficient surveying and registration of relatively high-value land that cannot be registered using orthophotos or satellite imagery methodology.

Dynamic land records: Allows for updating land records after the completion of rural land registration. This adaptability ensures that land information remains current and relevant.

This service is made available free of charge to all programmes involved in rural land certification and other users.

Tenure Security for Communal Landholdings and People in Post Conflict Situation



As REILA continues to respond to the evolving needs and demands of the land sector at both federal and regional levels, a new focus has emerged: securing tenure for communal landholdings and the restitution of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. During the final year of the project implementation, REILA initiated an additional work stream to develop and test best practices for securing tenure for communal landholdings and to support the development of guidelines to reinstate the land rights of IDPs and returnees.

Security of Tenure for Communal Landholdings

Current Landscape

The SLLC provision primarily focuses on certifying individual and joint landholdings. Communal lands have received little attention in terms of certification and management, accounting for only a small percentage of the total land parcels certified under SLLC initiatives nationwide.

The Importance of Certifying Communal Land

Ensuring tenure security for communal land is crucial for rural landholders, especially women and vulnerable groups (VGs), as it provides them with opportunities to generate additional income and is vital for their livestock management. Certifying communal land is also important for improving the management of forests, grazing areas, and land conservation. Communal lands with native species are reservoirs of biodiversity for future development of forest resources. Uncertified communal land is often subject to government expropriation and distribution.

REILA's Initiatives

As the land sector renewed its focus on tenure security for communal land, it emerged as a new priority that called for innovation in migration, registration, and certification using NRLAIS. During the final year of the project implementation, REILA took the initiative to develop and test best practices for communal land certification and administration by adopting the SLLC process and experiences. Initial pilots were launched in partnership with GIZ's Nexus project, funded by BMZ. Additionally, REILA initiated a series of pilots in Benishangul Gumuz, designed a training module for communal land registration and management, and tested it in training events in the same region. The project successfully conducted awareness-raising and advocacy activities for communal land tenure security to be included in the results frameworks of RLAUD and the CALM programme. Partnerships with CALM were solicited to test approaches and methodologies for efficient communal land certification. The project supported resource mobilization for pilot development, specifically for the CALM project to finance six pilot woredas in six regions.

In addition, REILA developed a simple inventory tool to capture the current status of communal landholding certification. This tool was distributed to regions and woredas to conduct the inventory. The project drafted a training of trainers course outline to capacitate land administration staff in selected woredas and regions, focusing on the basic principles of communal landholding certification and the facilitation of producing management plans for such areas.

REILA's Contribution to the Establishment of Technical Assessment and Task Force for Communal Land

REILA produced a technical assessment note on communal holding certification and management. The project prepared an annotated bibliography, drawing from practical and successful global experiences, to assist RLAUD forming the Task Force on Communal Land Certification. Subsequently, RLAUD established the Task Force on Communal Lands with support from REILA and other partners. The aim is to enable RLAUD to develop and produce an operational manual that guides communal land certification and management by compiling the pilot results, best practices, and lessons from SLLC provision.

REILA played a significant role in incorporating legal personality for communal lands and users in the Federal Land Administration and Use Proclamation passed on 14/05/2024. As part of the drafting team, the project enriched previous drafts with essential proposals, including granting communities legal personality as part of the SLLC process.

■ Land Restitution for Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) and Returnees



Context

The outbreak of armed conflict in certain REILA intervention woredas and kebeles led to the suspension of ongoing SLLC efforts. Communities were displaced for extended periods, and upon their gradual return, they faced significant challenges in accessing their land. Some had already lost their land certificates during the conflict, while others reported that their parcel certificates had been destroyed. The presence of secondary occupancy on both certified and uncertified land parcels became a critical concern. Restoring livelihoods and ensuring household food security by supporting access to farmland was imperative. Retrieving land right data from the existing database at regional land offices and restituting landholders increases the reliability of the land administration system. This required a government-led process that is fair and transparent to restore land rights and promote peace and stability in the area. Inter-agency collaboration and access to landholding data were essential in places where the land certification process was completed.

REILA's Adaptive Response

In response to this emerging need from the BoLCs of the Benishangul Gumuz region, REILA provided technical assistance on land restitution in conflict-affected areas and supported efforts to secure the land rights of IDPs and returnees through land restitution. The project developed a tailored Guide for Rural Land Restitution for IDPs and Returnees through a multi-stakeholder validation and review process. This involved engaging in a validation process with representatives from the government, as well as various other institutions in the Benishangul Gumuz region, and international and local non-government organizations actively operating in the region. The guide was approved and submitted to the BoLCs for implementation to restore and secure the land rights of conflict-affected and displaced communities and secure their livelihood. RLAUD intends to adopt and use the guide in other conflict-affected areas across Ethiopia.

Support Formalization of Rural Land Transactions for Sustained Tenure Security

Context and Status

The provision of SLLC represents a significant milestone in granting security of land tenure to rural landholders. Nevertheless, it's essential to recognize that SLLC is a one-time activity that brings parcel information into the land register and issues certificates for each land parcel. The achievement of SLLC can only be sustained if land transactions are formally registered and managed in the land registry system. Formal registration of land transactions provides the ultimate assurance for tenure security for rural landholders.

Land transactions are recognized as administrative and core transactions. Core transactions, often initiated by landholders, include the transfer of landholding rights permanently through inheritance, gift, divorce, marriage, and exchange, as well as temporary restrictions on land use rights to access loans from Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and regular banks using SLLC as collateral, and renting out land through formal registration of the transactions. Administrative transactions involve changes in land parcel configuration (e.g., consolidation, boundary corrections) or corrections on land parcels and/or land right holder data.

Formal registrations of land transactions are initiated at the kebele level and finalized at woredas land administration offices with the updating of the land parcel record in NRLAIS based on the changes made. Nonetheless, the majority of rural land transactions occurs in the informal system and are based on trust between transacting parties. Despite an increasing trend in requests for formal land transactions, only 1.7 million (6-7%) of the 27.8 million land parcels recorded in NRLAIS have been formally registered and managed.

Supporting the formalization of rural land transactions is strategic for REILA to ensure the vitality of NRLAIS and the sustainability of REILA's project outcomes and impact. If land transactions are not registered, the accuracy and value of the NRLAIS database will progressively deteriorate, and cadastral information will become obsolete over time, endangering rural land rights. All investments made in undertaking the SLLC and NRLAIS will be lost altogether. Although land transactions are not a direct focus area of REILA, the project has taken several actions to address the urgent need for innovative mechanisms that improve the proportion of formally registered land transactions in the land registry. These include:

REILA's Interventions

REILA actively monitors land transaction trends to provide RLAUD with vital information to undertake for evidence-based interventions that help increase the volume of rural land transactions through formal registration. Interventions that ensure the formal registration of land transactions become a good practice that is embedded in both land administration service delivery and landholders' behaviour. A comprehensive transactions assessment proposal and field instruments have been developed to assess the volume and patterns of land transactions.

In collaboration with GIZ and CALM programmes, REILA undertakes assessments of the process of land transaction formalization. This joint effort aims to enhance understanding and identify key factors influencing landholders' engagement in both formal and informal transactions. This assessment helps RLAUD and partners develop and implement evidence-based strategies to address underlying factors and boost the volume of formally registered land transactions, a critical component for NRLAIS sustainability.

Public Information and Awareness (PIA) on Land Transactions

Raising the awareness of rural landholders about the benefits of formal land transactions is a key intervention to increase the volume of transactions managed through NRLAIS. To this effect:

- PIA activities on land transactions have been integrated into the SLLC process. This activity starts to occur at the certificate distribution phase.
- Targeted PIA activities are undertaken on a regular basis in REILA project target woredas, as part of routine land administration tasks, promoting formal land transactions after SLLC issuance.
- A PIA module on land transactions has been incorporated into the national PIA and GESI guide for SLLC to standardise the process across regions; and support and encourage regular PIA activities.

Incentive-Based Reporting and Monitoring System

As part of the MELA initiative, REILA developed an incentive-based reporting system and supported its implementation in CLAM programme woredas. This approach encourages woredas to promote and support land transactions through formal registration and improve service delivery. Woredas receive payments based on their performance in terms of increased volume of land transactions registered in NRLAIS and SLLC activities. REILA designed a land transaction monitoring system for the CALM project, assessing monthly transaction volumes at the woreda level.

In REILA project woredas, significant improvements have been observed in formal land transaction registration following SLLC provision, reaching 1.29% and 1.6% of the total land parcels recorded and managed in NRLAIS in the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions, respectively.



Beyond Tenure Security

Unlocking Economic Potential of Second Level Land Certificate

While the primary aim of SLLC is to enhance tenure security, its impact extends far beyond this fundamental aspect. The promotion of Access to Finance (A2F) from Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and regular banks using SLLC as collateral, along with the development of the rural land rental market, are not directly supported by the REILA project. However, SLLC is a key factor and requirement for rural households to access improved individual loans. Similarly, SLLC has played a crucial role in improving the rural land rental market, increasing both renters' and rentees' confidence to engage in land rental transactions. Additionally, both A2F and land rental transactions are enabled by NRLAIS functionalities, which temporarily restrict land use rights for the period of a land rental contract and as collateral to access individual loans. Both SLLC and NRLAIS are innovations by REILA, achieved through direct financial and technical support to the RLAUD. The results achieved through the innovative A2F and the development of land rental market interventions are extended benefits of SLLC and NRLAIS and can be considered as REILA's project impact.

A2F and land rental market development interventions were initiated, developed, pilot-tested, and scaled up by the DFID-funded LIFT programme. These interventions were achieved through a series of policy advocacy activities for the amendment of regional proclamations and regulations to allow SLLC-linked loans and the promotion of land rental service providers to facilitate land rental transactions including incentive-based service provision. The interventions were further scaled up by WB-CALM and GIZ-supported programmes in the majority of the regions, including REILA's intervention woredas. Remarkable results have been achieved in securing individual loans for rural households and improving the land rental market.

Access to Finance (A2F) using SLLC as collateral

Lack of collateral has been a major challenge for rural landholders to access individual loans from MFIs and other financial institutions. Given that land ownership belongs to the state and landholders are granted only holding and use rights, they cannot use their land as collateral for loans. The endorsement of SLLC as collateral for loans is a major breakthrough in rural land sector and economic development, addressing the key bottleneck of collateral, recognizing the potential produce as an asset. This was made possible through intensive policy advocacy activities for an enabling legal framework and NRLAIS functionality that enabled correct, reliable, and efficient system processing of microfinance applications.

Facilitating access to finance for rural landholders with certified land parcels in REILA intervention woredas has become increasingly important in the latter stages of the project, especially after the passing of laws at the regional and federal levels endorsed SLLC as collateral for loans. Additionally, there is demonstrated political willingness to initiate and expand the access to finance scheme in both REILA target regions.

During the second phase of project implementation, REILA engaged in massive awareness creation activities among rural landholders in Amhara woredas to access agricultural credit lines through the Amhara Credit and Savings Institute (ACSI), now Tsedey Bank. The project also collaborated with the AgroBIG project on loan products for women and youth while analyzing the situation of Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs) to further pilot and scale up credit delivery. The Amhara region is well advanced in engaging multiple MFIs to avail the loan products for rural landholders and farmers. In 2023, the Amhara BoL signed MoUs with three banks and six MFIs related to SLLC-linked loans. REILA started incubating a similar enabling environment in the Benishangul Gumuz region.

SLLC as collateral A2F is one of the innovations achieved by the RLAUD, partners, and the regions

showcasing the extended benefits of SLLC beyond tenure security. The impact of SLLC in generating tangible economic benefits for rural landholders is exhibited in the amount of loan disbursed, the demand, and the level of engagement of landholders, including women, in regions where A2F activities are well advanced, such as Amhara. Individual loans are facilitated to rural landholders in cash and machinery leases helping them increase the productivity and efficiency of their land and engage in diversified economic activities to generate additional income, thereby improving livelihoods and stimulating rural economic development. A2F interventions give special emphasis to female-headed households in distributing loans, which contributed significantly to REILA’s project crosscutting objectives, i.e., women empowerment.

Key Achievements

Conducive Legal Framework

One of the key achievements of the land sector related to SLLC linked A2F is the legal endorsement of SLLC as collateral for loans through intensive policy advocacy activities. The Amhara region, being an early adopter, revised and amended the regional Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation no. 252/2017, extending landholders’ and farmers’ rights to use land as collateral to access finance. The Benishangul Gumuz region amended its regional land administration and use Proclamation in 2018, followed by regulation in 2023, creating a conducive legal ground to start SLLC-based initiatives and test their implementation. The federal government issued proclamation 1147/2019 to provide for movable property security rights. In this proclamation, the land holding certificate is defined as movable property and can be used for collateral purposes in any financial institution in the country. This provision was further solidified by the National Bank of Ethiopia directive No. MCR/02/2020. The use of SLLC as collateral for loans has been incorporated into the revised Federal Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation No.1324/2024. This proclamation was passed by the federal parliament, indicating growing momentum for access to finance using SLLC as collateral at the national level, further enhancing the impact of SLLC.

Loan Disbursement

SLLC-enabled A2F initiatives have led to substantial loan disbursements. Rural landholders have benefited from individual loans provided in cash and machinery leases. A2F interventions give special emphasis to female-headed households in distributing loans, significantly contributing to REILA’s crosscutting objective of women’s empowerment.

- Over **4.9 billion ETB** total loan disbursed in value and for agricultural machinery in various regions.
 - Over **2.7 billion ETB** (47 million USD) total loan in value disbursed to **57,000 clients**, of which **65% are male and 35% female** beneficiaries.
 - **2.2 billion ETB loans** disbursed for agricultural machinery purchases (tractors and combine harvesters) benefited **3,000 landholders**.
 - **24,731,446 ETB loan disbursed** in the REILA woredas of the Amhara region.
- A total of **55.7 million ETB savings mobilized**.
- **12 Financial Institutions** (FIs) disbursing the SLLC-linked loan.



Benefits of A2F Using SLLC as Collateral

Benefits for Landholders

Individual loan access: Landholders can now access individual loans without the need to form loan groups for social collateral loan products.

Higher loan amounts: Individual landholders can access higher loan amounts, ranging from 50,000 to 200,000 ETB. This surpasses the maximum group loan amount of 71,000 ETB made available for farmers.

Diversification of income: SLLC creates opportunities for landholders to engage in non-farm income-generating activities and improving their livelihoods.

Women's empowerment: Active engagement of women in financial matters and decision-making within households has significantly increased, contributing to women's empowerment.

Access to rural financial markets: SLLC provides landholders with opportunities to benefit from the rural financial market.

Benefits for Financial Institutions

New client base: Financial institutions attract a new client base for their financial products.

Savings mobilization: SLLC offers a significant opportunity for savings mobilization.

Increased borrowers: Financial institutions can serve more potential borrowers by offering the new collateral option.

High repayment rate: Due to the nature of the collateral, SLLC-linked loans exhibit a high repayment rate with minimal defaults.

Risk mitigation: The use of SLLC as collateral reduces the risk associated with lending, as land tenure is clearly established and legally recognized.

Enhanced product offerings: Financial institutions can develop new financial products and services tailored to the needs of landholders with SLLC, such as specialized loans for agricultural development or property improvements.

Market expansion: The introduction of SLLC-linked loans helps financial institutions expand their market reach into rural and previously underserved areas.

The A2F initiative has increased the creditworthiness of rural landholders, promoting and improving financial inclusion. Studies show high demand for SLLC-linked loans, with 50% of rural households expressing interest. However, supply-side restrictions limit MFIs to serving only 50% of this demand. Recently, regular banks have shown interest in developing SLLC-based loan products, marking a major milestone for the A2F initiative and expanding the benefits of SLLC and NRLAIS for rural landholders beyond land tenure security.

■ Development of the Rural Rental Land Market

Context and Status

Land rental transactions offer a valuable opportunity for rural landholders to generate additional income and improve their livelihoods. They also provide a viable option for landless farmers and youth to access and use land while increasing the efficiency and productivity of land. However, the rural land rental market system faces significant challenges, hindering its optimal functioning and potential. Rural landholders have low intention to engage in land rental transactions, or they engage in short-term rentals deals often informally due to fear of losing their land rights. Studies suggest that 41% of land rental transactions occur in the informal system.

Lack of awareness and knowledge among landholders about their right to rent out land, laws and regulations, the benefits of land rental transactions through formal registration, and the process involved are among the contributing factors for the low intention to engage in rental transactions. Lack of access to market information, bad behaviours of market actors (mainly brokers), less attractive prices for land rent, and the inability of landholders to evaluate their land for rent are other factors contributing to the ill-functioning of the land rental market. Often, women and VGs are the ones involved in land rental transactions due to a lack of labor to cultivate their land. Additionally, they rent out land without formal registration of the transaction, increasing their vulnerability and tenure insecurity. Those who rent-in land in the informal system also face risks related to contract enforcement, leading to minimal investment in rented land, resulting in low productivity and income. It also discourages them from taking actions to protect the environment and prevent land degradation. These collectively contribute to the poorly functioning rural land market, affecting productivity, efficiency, and the underutilization of rural land parcels.

■ Interventions

Standard Land Rental Contracts and Land Rental Service Providers

The introduction of a standard land rental contract format and the promotion of LRSPs in the rural land rental market are innovative developments to address rural land rental market constraints. Land Rental Service Providers (LRSPs) are volunteers selected by the community based on reputation to facilitate land rental transactions in their respective kebeles. They play a crucial role in improving the rural land market by:

- Providing current market information to renters and rentees (e.g., current prices, available land for rent, evaluating land).
- Link/connect renters and rentees.
- Supporting negotiation of better deals for both renters and rentees.
- Promoting and supporting the use of standard contract formats and following through with the formalization of the transactions.
- Raising awareness among landholders, especially women and VGs, about their right to rent out land and the benefits of formal land rental transactions, and supporting them in the process.

The LRSP intervention was initially developed and piloted by the LIFT programme under RLAUD's leadership and proven to be successful in improving the rural land rental market. WB-CALM and GIZ-supported programmes further expanded these interventions across regions, including REILA's intervention woredas.

Remarkable results have been achieved in terms of increased confidence among renters and rentees to engage in land rental transactions, improved pricing and volume of land rental transactions through formal registration, and enhanced productivity and efficiency of land. REILA's project outcomes SLLC and NRLAIS plays a key role in improving the rural land rental market development, enhancing renters' and rentees' confidence to engage in land rental transactions. NRLAIS functionalities that enable secure possession and land use rights during the contract period.

Achievements

Widespread adoption of the land rental contract format: The standard land rental contract format is now in use across 458 NRLAIS operational woredas in ten regions.

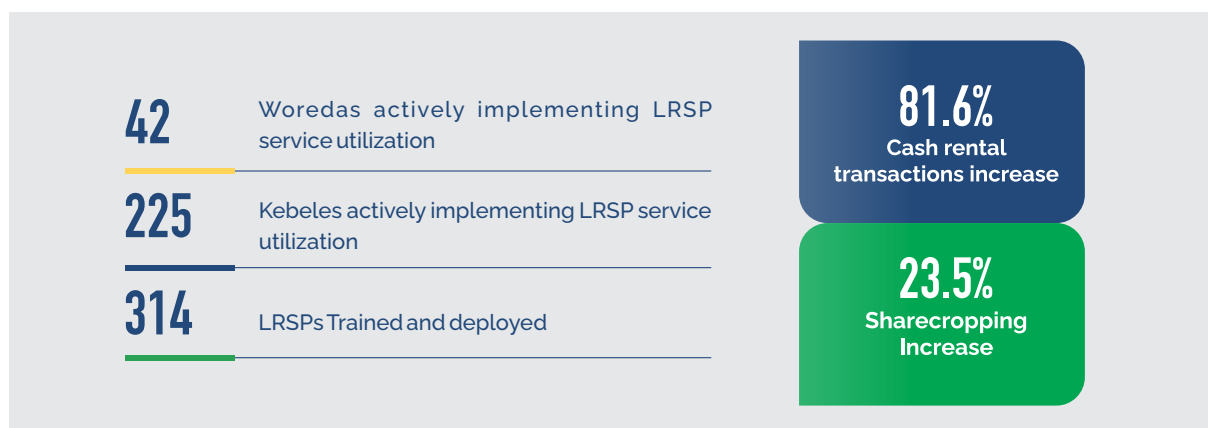
LRSP service coverage: LRSPs actively facilitate land rental transactions in 225 kebeles across 42 woredas.

Certified LRSPs: A total of 314 LRSPs have been trained, certified, and deployed.

Increased intentions: Significant increase in households and rentees intending to engage in land rental transactions (both cash land and sharecropping).

Transaction volume: Cash rental transactions have increased by 81.6%, while sharecropping has seen a 23.5% increase.

Landholder confidence: Landholders are now more confident in renting out land for longer periods, especially after receiving SLLC for their parcels.



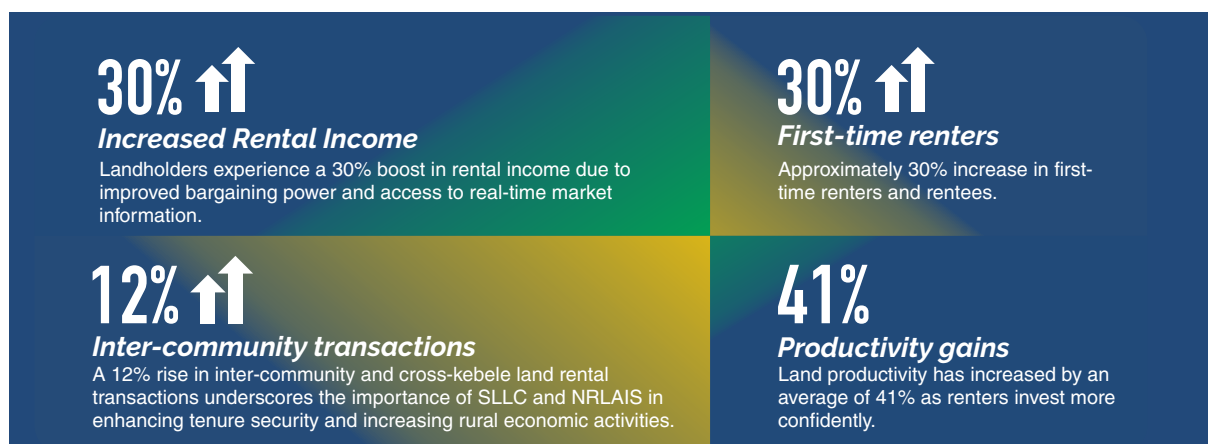
Impact on Livelihood

Increased rental income: Landholders experience a 30% boost in rental income due to improved bargaining power and access to real-time market information.

First-time renters: Approximately 30% increase in first-time renters and rentees.

Productivity gains: Land productivity has increased by an average of 41% as renters invest more confidently.

Inter-community transactions: A 12% rise in inter-community and cross-kebele land rental transactions underscores the importance of SLLC and NRLAIS in enhancing tenure security and increasing rural economic activities.



REILA's Contribution

REILA contributed to the rural land rental and credit market development through the provision of technical support to RLAUD in developing sector wide Monitoring and evaluation system. (MELA). These systems capture valuable information and knowledge from pilot initiatives and monitor the real impact in the field, translating them into policy actions and regulations necessary to further develop and enable rural land rental and credit markets.

The incentive-based reporting system developed by REILA as a support system to MELA is improving performance in rural land administration and service delivery, thereby improves the formal registration of land rental transactions. This contributes significantly to rural land market development and functionality.

A2F and land rental market development interventions demonstrate the tangible economic benefits of SLLC and NRLAIS, contributing to the overall REILA project objective of fostering long-term positive impacts on rural livelihoods. SLLC has emerged as a transformative factor beyond mere tenure security. SLLC combined with NRLAIS has yielded remarkable results, impacting the lives and livelihoods of rural landholders, financial institutions, and overall land market and rural economy dynamics.



The National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS)

“The game changer”

Under the leadership of RLAUD and in close collaboration with partner programmes, REILA developed an IT strategy for the land sector with comprehensive technical specifications and initiated the pilot development of a National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) based on this strategy. The primary purpose NRLAIS is to register, store, and manage digital spatial and textual information related to land parcels and landholders, enabling continuous updates as changes occur in rural land parcel and land holders data. This data is obtained through mass registration (SLLC) of basic information, including the names of land right holders, parcel boundaries, parcel sizes, and the value of real property.

The system developed using open-source technology, officially recognized by the Open Source Initiative (OSI), is designed as a flexible platform capable of customization to meet local needs and conditions. It adheres to common data models and standards, facilitating effective data sharing across different administrative levels.

REILA worked closely with the LIFT programme during the design, development, testing, and scaling up of NRLAIS. The iMASSREG and iWORLAIS, which contain basic information about land parcels registered through SLLC initiatives by the LIFT Programme, played a crucial role in expediting the NRLAIS development process and scaling up its operation. Additionally, REILA collaborated with the WB-SLMP project in the pilot development of NRLAIS, where the project financed numerous workshops conducted as part of the development process.

REILA successfully undertook the pilot development of NRLAIS by engaging an international software company with technical leadership from the project. It is a complex software development process spanning from 2015 to 2017. The core structure of NRLAIS was established during the first phase of the REILA project implementation. The second phase of the REILA project focused on testing, comparative trials, and providing technical support to rollout and operationalization of NRLAIS across ten regions. The development of NRLAIS involved an extensive review of key documents, including harmonization documents, BPR, RLAS manual, technical requirement documents, requirement analysis documents, and system analysis documents. Business processes were selectively adopted from each of these documents as necessary and appropriate. NRLAIS underwent comprehensive testing, validation, adaptability and comparative trials across multiple sites. REILA successfully conducted pilot testing and comparative trials of NRLAIS in thirteen sites between 2015 and 2017.

The Evolution

Step I IT strategy development for the land sector with comprehensive technical specifications followed by software development.

Step II NRLAIS pilot phase: Once the software was fully developed, it was installed and tested in five primary locations, including MoA/RLAUD, regional land administration bureaus in SNNPR and Tigray, and two woredas' land administration offices (Meskan-SNNPR and Raya Alamata-Tigray).

Step III Comparative trial: In 2018, a comparative trial of NRLAIS was conducted in three additional regional land administration bureaus (Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and Oromiya regions) and five woredas' land administration offices (Gozamin, Yilmanadensa, Bahir Dar Zuriya, Bambasi, and Hitosa). The aim was to test the system in real ground scenarios, assessing its configurability and adaptability across different regions and contexts. This rigorous testing and comparative trial process confirmed the system's readiness for large-scale production and implementation at multiple sites, and its effectiveness and reliability in facilitating land administration processes throughout the country.

Step IV Rollout and endorsement: RLAUD endorsed NRLAIS as the single national land register system for use by the government and all programmes involved in rural land registration and administration across the country.

Step V Official launching and full-scale up: In 2020, NRLAIS was officially launched in the presence of government officials, the Embassy of Finland, and other key stakeholders, marking the full-scale implementation of the system

NRLAIS is a comprehensive rural cadaster software system with multi-functionalities designed to manage rural land administration across the country. It functions as a rural land register, enables continuous updating and maintenance of land parcels and landholder data as necessary and required, mainly due to land transactions subsequent to SLLC provision.

Key Features of NRLAIS

NRLAIS offers several key features:

Unique Identifiers: Each land parcel and holding is assigned a unique identification number, ensuring precise tracking and management of land records.

Administrative Integration: NRLAIS integrates all processes of rural land administration from the central RLAUD to the woreda level, ensuring consistency and transparency across all administrative levels.

Web-based Approach: Utilizes a web-based approach to ensure accessibility and ease of use for land administration offices at various levels.

Modular Architecture: The system follows a modular “toolkit” approach, making it flexible and easily adaptable to the different legal requirements of Ethiopia’s regional states.

Data Management: NRLAIS maintains a centralized database that stores all land-related data, including spatial (geometries) and non-spatial (textual) information. This ensures that all data is easily accessible and manageable.

Scalability: NRLAIS is designed to handle large volumes of data, making it scalable to accommodate the growing number of land records as the system expands to more regions and districts.

User-friendly Interface: The system provides a user-friendly interface for data entry, retrieval, and management, making it accessible for land administration offices at various levels.

Interoperability: NRLAIS is designed to be interoperable with other systems and databases, facilitating data sharing and integration across different government departments and agencies.

Data Integrity and Security: The system employs various measures to ensure data integrity and security, including regular backups, encryption, and access controls. This helps protect sensitive land information from unauthorized access and corruption.

Transparency and Accountability: Through the application of “the four eyes” principles, NRLAIS promotes transparency and accountability in the land administration process and service delivery.

NRLAIS Modules

NRLAIS is modular software designed for use at different administrative levels (federal, regional, zonal, and woreda), each with varying access to the system:

Mass Registration (Massreg)

Designed for systematic land registration.

WORLAIS

Designed for use at woreda land administration offices to register and maintain land parcel information. Data entry into NRLAIS is exclusively done only at the woreda level.

ZONLAIS and REGLAIS

Designed for use at zonal and regional land administration offices to enable monitoring and analysis of land data and ensure quality assurance.

CENLAIS

A central level module for overall monitoring, policy guidance, and future integration with the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI).

Technical Capacities

NRLAIS is a web-based digital cadastre capable of managing over 20 transaction types contains textual and spatial datasets, totaling 5000+ gigabytes of data. It excels in data migration, aggregating cadastre data from woreda to federal levels. New system functionalities allow importing information from existing cadastral systems. It adheres to LADM Compliance (ISO-19152). The system is adaptable, cost-effective, and supports multilingual usage. Rigorous quality assurance processes are enforced.

These features and capacities make NRLAIS a robust and efficient tool to manage and maintain accurate, secure, and comprehensive land records, supporting efficient land administration processes and service delivery, promoting transparency, and enhancing land administration in Ethiopia.

Support for NRLAIS System Rollout, Operationalization and Maintenance

REILA, through its support to RLAUD, successfully collaborated and leveraged resources from large bilateral and multilateral donor programmes for the mass and rapidly scale up of NRLAIS throughout the country. REILA collaborated with the LIFT and CALM programmes that have a comparative advantage in terms of large resources and geographic coverage to undertake a massive scale-up of NRLAIS. The project played a central role in the scale-up of NRLAIS to SLLC programme woredas covered by these programmes. It provided indispensable technical assistance in system installation, rollout and operationalization, system functioning and maintenance, and problem-solving in all SLLC programme woredas in ten regions, including REILA project target regions and at the federal level.

REILA's technical assistance includes training of woreda land experts and NRLAIS operators, provision of TOT to regional staff, data migration, and year-round problem-solving using various digital platforms. The technical team addressed operational challenges and ensured data quality during migration. REILA supported RLAUD in conducting data quality assessments in all regions and establishing effective data cleaning guidelines, work plans, and progress monitoring procedures. Rural Land Administration System (RLAS) manuals were developed to ensure smooth operation of the system and promote harmonization of land administration services across regions.

In REILA project target regions, the project full responsibility for rolling out and operationalizing NRLAIS in the fifteen project target woredas, regional land bureaus, and educational institutions. The regional technical team supported data cleaning, checking, verification, data migration to the NRLAIS system, and system functioning, while the REILA team at the federal level provided continuous support for system maintenance and problem-solving. The project's support extended to upgrading office facilities and supplying equipment for NRLAIS operationalization in the targeted woredas. In the final year of the second phase, REILA extended equipment support beyond project-targeted woredas. This included providing high-capacity computers and printers to non-REILA woredas in the Benishangul Gumuz regions to facilitate further operationalization of NRLAIS and strengthen land administration capabilities throughout the regions. REILA remains the primary actor providing operational and technical support for NRLAIS maintenance across the country while continuing to develop new functionalities.



NRLAIS Coverage and Achievement

NRLAIS is operationalized in 458 woreda land administration offices across ten regions, covering all programme woredas under REILA, LIFT, RLLP, and CALM, as well as at the federal level with critical technical support from the REILA project. RLAUD plans to expand NRLAIS coverage to all woredas in the country over the next few years. Additionally, NRLAIS has been installed in strategic educational institutions for training and research purposes. These institutions include the Institute of Land Administration at Bahir Dar University, Assosa Agricultural TVET College, and the Center for Geospatial Technologies and Land Administration at Ambo University, Hawassa University, and Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Since 2019, out of the 30 million land parcels certified under the SLLC initiative, over 27.8 million land parcel records have been meticulously checked, cleaned, and migrated from woredas' interim land registry systems (iMASSREG, ISLA, and iWORLAS) to NRLAIS. These efforts align with the ISO Land Administration Data Model standard. More than 1.7 million land parcels have been formally transacted and registered in NRLAIS.

The project has successfully supported the operationalization of NRLAIS across ten regions. The functionality of NRLAIS is verified annually through an independent verification process under the CALM programme. In 2023, 399 REILA-supported woredas were verified, and 341 woredas (99%), including REILA's targeted woredas, demonstrated successful NRLAIS functionality based on a common set of achievement criteria. As a result, the CALM programme disbursed approximately 75.9 million USD to well-performing woredas in fiscal year 2023, following the Payment for Results (P4R) principle. For the 2024 annual verification, 370 woredas are planned to be verified in August out of the total 458 operational woredas. Additionally, 541 woredas have been approved by the World Bank for verification in June 2025.

NRLAIS has become a reliable and advanced land administration system, smoothly operating throughout the country. It has enabled efficient rural land administration and services, benefiting rural landholders nationwide. This singular digital rural cadaster, with legally relevant stored information, represents a significant achievement for REILA and the land sector. Under strong leadership from RLAUD and in collaboration with regions and partners, REILA transformed Ethiopia's land administration from a paper-based analog system to a digital one.

Development of New Functionalities for NRLAIS

REILA has continuously developed new functionalities for NRLAIS to enhance the system's vitality. The project introduced new NRLAIS functionalities for processing formal land rental transactions and accessing finance using SLLC as collateral. These functionalities fostered the development of the rural land rental market and facilitated access to individual loans for rural landholders using SLLC as collateral. This extends the benefits of SLLC for rural landholders beyond tenure security, stimulating rural economic development and improving livelihoods.

Building Capacity for NRLAIS

Operationalizing NRLAIS required robust technical and administrative capacity at the woreda, regional, and federal levels. Core tasks, such as data cleaning and migration, demanded well-trained staff and additional technical support to ensure data quality and control. REILA provided numerous capacity-building training sessions for land administration staff at different levels across ten regions. In-depth

NRLAIS is operational in

458

Woredas across ten regions

27.8M

Land parcels data are recorded and are being managed

1.7M

Land transactions processed

technical training was provided to woreda staff operating the system by the software company on diverse problem-solving issues, including tracking and resolution of specific software issues, clarification of new functions, and bug reporting.

Later, REILA shifted from directly training woreda staff to adopting the Trainers of Trainers (ToT) model for capacity building for NRLAIS. The project focused on capacitating regions to ensure efficiency and the viability of training efforts, facilitating close monitoring and supportive supervision of woredas. REILA provided ToT to regional staff, who then cascaded the training to woreda offices while REILA monitored the activities. This model allowed for the inclusion of advanced thematic areas and broader principles of land administration in the capacity-building training, further strengthening capacity at the regional level. Given that the operationalization of NRLAIS to new woredas occurs gradually, the ToT model enables efficient utilization of human resources, making the capacity-building effort more practical, feasible, and sustainable.

REILA **trained a total of 1,688 technicians and data managers** at woreda, zone, and regional levels to operate and maintain NRLAIS, with full or partial financial support. The project trained 50% of all trained technicians operating and maintaining NRLAIS in the 458 fully staffed woredas, each with seven fully trained technicians.

1688

Technicians trained to operate NRLAIS
and manage data

50%

of the total technicians trained and
operating NRLAIS in **458 woredas**

As a follow-up activity, REILA continuously conducted training needs and gap assessments to identify essential areas of training related to NRLAIS sustainability. These training needs were discussed with key stakeholders during the NRLAIS regular implementation performance workshops, leading to further actions by stakeholders and partners. Based on the identified needs and gaps, REILA, in collaboration with partners, provides refresher and other training.

In addition, REILA, in collaboration with partners, organizes NRLAIS performance workshops every three months. This platform is utilized to facilitate experience exchange sessions on NRLAIS among the different land programmes, including CALM's NRLAIS mobile IT team, RLLP, S2RAI-GIZ, CLM-GIZ staff, and USAID-LGAF.

The two-year pilot development process and operationalization of NRLAIS and maintenance significantly contributed to the institutional and human capacity development of land administration institutions at the woreda, regional, and federal levels. **REILA has invested over 2.2 million Euros in NRLAIS pilot development**, support system rollout and operationalization, new functionality development, system maintenance, and problem-solving.

■ Data Safeguarding and Averting Potential Corruption

NRLAIS features and functionalities are meticulously designed to safeguard the rights of landholders, particularly women and vulnerable groups (VGs), and prevent potential corruption. It has also adopted the “four eyes” principle for a rigorous check and balance mechanism. The system operators are required to adhere to official processes and procedures embedded with several safeguarding mechanisms, promoting good practices. This includes data locking mechanisms to prevent data tampering, manipulation, or corruption; strict access controls where only authorized users at the woreda level have access for primary data entry, editing, and updating, while other administrative levels (regional and federal) can view and monitor data; a rigorous verification process where each data entry or update undergoes multiple layers of review by different cadastral technicians before final approval and insertion; and transparency and audit trails that log all user actions and data changes, supporting accountability and providing a mechanism for tracking and reviewing data integrity over time.

NRLAIS represents a crucial milestone in establishing an equitable, transparent, and trustworthy land administration system in Ethiopia.

NRLAIS Sustainability Frameworks

The REILA project has introduced several sustainability frameworks to ensure the long-term viability of NRLAIS. These include:

IT Strategy: REILA prepared a national IT strategy, including network infrastructure for land administration. This strategy incorporated sustainability factors for the land administration system, such as training, capacity building, development of IT-support services, and knowledge management. This strategy has been updated periodically to adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

Capacity Building and Training: REILA has focused on extensive training and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that land experts/technicians, administrators, and stakeholders can effectively use and maintain NRLAIS. This includes training on both the technical aspects of the system and the broader principles of land administration.

Technical Support and Maintenance: The project has established robust technical support and maintenance frameworks. This includes online support platforms, the development of IT support services, and the involvement of local software experts in the development and maintenance of NRLAIS.

Data Migration and Integration: NRLAIS has been designed to integrate data from existing systems, such as iMASSREG, iWORLAIS, and ISLA. This ensures the adaptability of the system across different regions and administrative levels without losing valuable historical data.

Offline Functionality: Recognizing the challenges of internet connectivity in rural areas, NRLAIS has been designed to function with and without regular internet access. This ensures that the system remains operational even in remote locations with internet connectivity issues.

These frameworks introduced by REILA have significantly contributed to the sustainability and effectiveness of NRLAIS.

Benefits of NRLAIS

NRLAIS has significantly benefited rural landholders, the land sector, and the country at large. At the community/rural landholder level, it ensures the sustainability of land tenure security through continuous updating and management of land parcels during land transactions, and facilitates improved access to individual loans from financial institutions using SLLC as collateral and additional income-generating opportunities through improved land rental transactions.

At the system level, NRLAIS facilitates efficient land records management, promotes evidence-based decision-making, provides gender and age-disaggregated data essential for protecting the rights of women and vulnerable groups, increases harmonization of land administration processes across regions and at the federal level, enhances the capacity and performance of land administration institutions at woreda, regional, and federal levels, promotes impartiality, accountability, and good governance, improves handling of land-related disputes by woreda civil courts and land administration offices, improves the government's ability to plan and manage future rural land use, enhances access to and quality of land administration services, ensures the availability of land information for broader use and national development purposes, ensures high data accuracy through rigorous verification processes, maintains the integrity of land information, and supports the integration of land administration with other sectors, such as infrastructure development, environmental management, and urban planning.

NRLAIS has emerged as the most advanced national rural land information system, becoming one of the largest databases in Ethiopia, second only to those used by banks, customs, and revenue authorities. With this system in place, RLAUD achieved greater harmonization and standardization of land administration processes and improved service delivery across the regions. It has significantly contributed to the first phase of implementing the roadmap towards a sustainable rural land administration system in Ethiopia. This system is recognized as the basis for developing other information systems, such as the Commercial Agriculture Management Information System and the Urban Land Administration System.

There is huge potential to integrate NRLAIS with other systems and government initiatives such as the National ID system (Fayda) and NRDS-MIS (Data Lake). This integration will enhance the system's utility by linking land records with national identification data and other key databases, facilitating more comprehensive data analysis and improved service delivery. In the long term, NRLAIS data will be frequently and standardly used in many other sectors, such as courts, banks, insurance companies, and rural extension services. NRLAIS is seen as a crucial component in developing the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) in Ethiopia.

■ Supporting the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) to Enhance the Vitality of NRLAIS

The National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), also known as the National Geospatial Information Management (NGIM), refers to the national policy, strategy, and plan aimed at standardizing, harmonizing, and effectively utilizing the country's digital map resources. The development of NSDI plays a crucial role in supporting further harmonization within the land sector. It will help ensure the continued vitality of the innovative rural land information system (NRLAIS) as a result of increased demand and utilization of NRLAIS data across public and private sectors. Such heightened demand encourages the development of new products and more efficient operational processes.

Conversely, NRLAIS serves as the foundational condensation core for the development of a multi-purpose cadaster. Over the long term, the NSDI can strengthen the entire land administration system, contributing to the sustainability and improvement of land administration practices.

REILA's Contribution

Recognizing the strategic importance of NSDI for NRLAIS sustainability, REILA deployed an international consultant at the Information Network Security Administration (INSA) to provide technical assistance during the initial steps of developing an implementation methodology for the Ethiopian National Spatial Data Infrastructure (ENSDI). This support covers various aspects of an operational ENSDI, including the establishment of the necessary legal and institutional foundations for ENSDI, defining standards and technology requirements related to core and thematic data, incorporating metadata into the data infrastructure, capacity-building training, preparing a roadmap for further ENSDI implementation, supporting MoA's IT department in designing and formulating studies that analyze NRLAIS data alongside other relevant datasets (e.g., watershed data), and facilitating international study tours focused on spatial data infrastructure.

Following the study tours, a dedicated department responsible for leading the NSDI initiative was created. INSA also developed an NSDI portal ensuring efficient access to geospatial information. Currently, the NSDI has transitioned to ESSGI (Ethiopian Space Science Society and Geospatial Information) due to recent institutional restructuring.

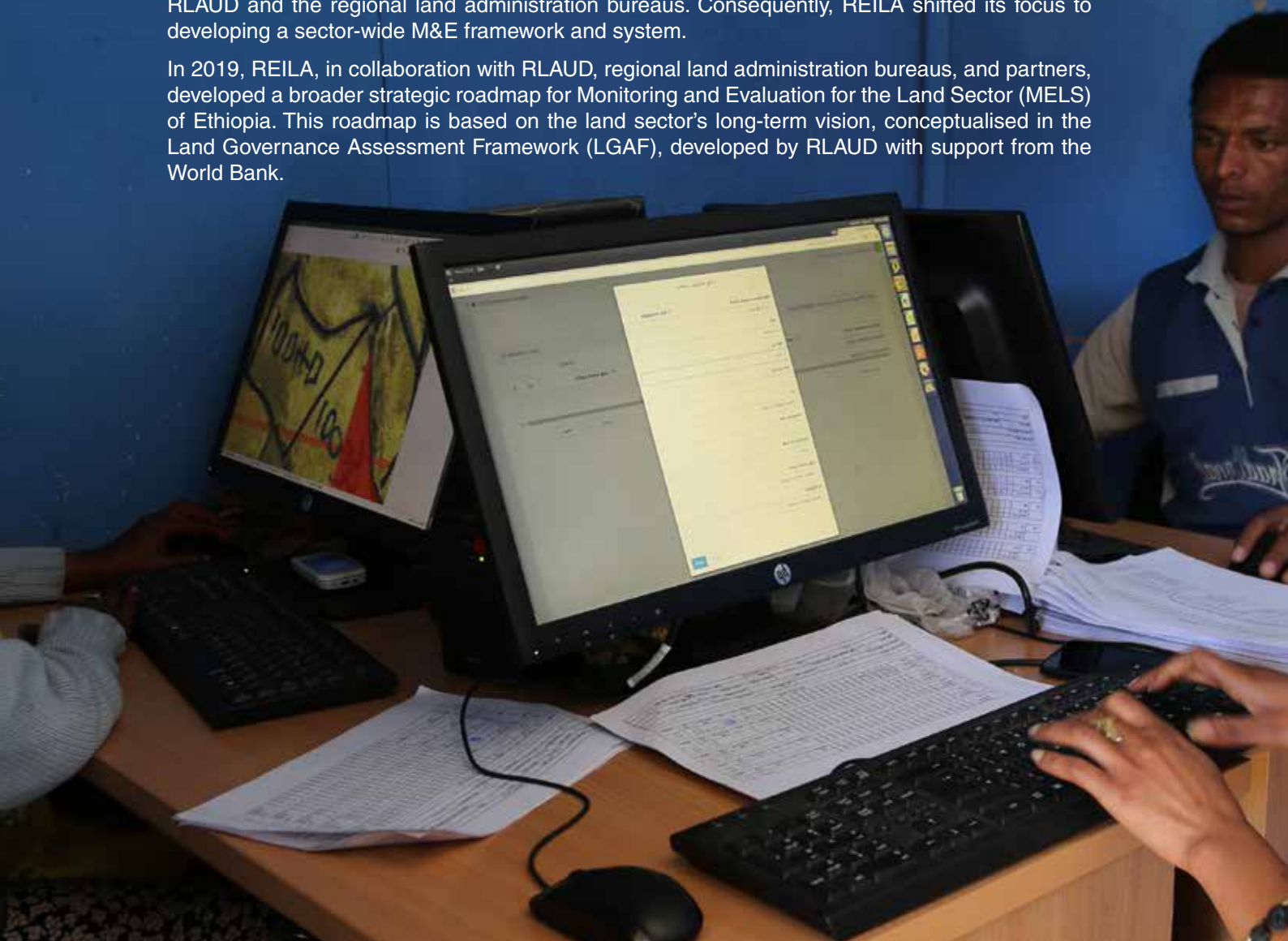
Section III

Information and Data

REILA has implemented a project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to monitor and track progress, assess results against its framework, and inform project implementation. This M&E system is specifically designed to monitor routine land registration and administration activities such as SLLC implementation and associated activities, including PIA, capacity building, and strengthening activities in the Amhara and BG regions.

During the second phase of the REILA project, establishing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system for land administration became a priority for the land sector. The critical role of a well-functioning, sector-wide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is recognized by RLAUD, REILA, and partner programmes. At the request of RLAUD's, the development of Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Administration was included as a sub-component of REILA's project result areas during the second project phase. This M&E system is anticipated to cover the needs of RLAUD and the regional land administration bureaus. Consequently, REILA shifted its focus to developing a sector-wide M&E framework and system.

In 2019, REILA, in collaboration with RLAUD, regional land administration bureaus, and partners, developed a broader strategic roadmap for Monitoring and Evaluation for the Land Sector (MELS) of Ethiopia. This roadmap is based on the land sector's long-term vision, conceptualised in the Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF), developed by RLAUD with support from the World Bank.



The Strategic Roadmap for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Land Sector (MELS)

The Monitoring and Evaluation of the Land Sector (MELS) roadmap is a comprehensive, sector-wide strategy that encompasses both rural and urban land administration. MELS was developed collaboratively through a rigorous consultative process with key stakeholders. Numerous national workshops were conducted as part of this process, providing a platform to gather insights from relevant experts. M&E experts from land-related sectors participated in the development process. The MELS roadmap was reviewed and further refined by an international senior land administration expert.

Under the comprehensive MELS strategic roadmap, Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Administration (MELA) aim to empower RLAUD and the regions to effectively manage and monitor activities and progress within RLAUD, as well as the activity implementation and progress of partner projects and programmes across the regions. MELA envisions a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning system that informs the planning, management, and coordination of activities and programmes in the land sector.

The strategic roadmap comprises five sections with multiple subsections, including a theory of change. These sections include:

MELA Strategy

MELA MEL Framework

MELA Learning, Knowledge Management, and Communications Plan

MELA Monitoring & Reporting Manual

MELA MIS

Under the MELS roadmap, MELA is designed to support the four functions of land administration and management, with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) proposed for each function, and crosscutting pillars of land administration:

Function I: Land Tenure (Titles, Mortgages & Easements, Secure legal rights with 49 indicators)

Function II: Land Value (Assessment of land value, collection of property tax with 29 indicators)

Function III: Land Use (Spatial planning, control of land use with 17 indicators)

Function IV: Land Development (Construction planning and permits, regulation and implementation with 33 indicators)

Crosscutting Issues/Pillars V (Institutional framework, geospatial information, capacity building, policies, and legal frameworks with 48 indicators)

The vision of MELS for land administration is to ensure the sector's contribution to sustainable development in Ethiopia.



Monitoring and Evaluation System for Land Administration (MELA)

This sector wide M&E system aims to enable better coordination between the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and development partners’ interventions and activities in the sector, facilitating the monitoring activities, progress, achievements and impacts. The MELA system is anticipated to be more than just a tool for monitoring individual projects and activities; it will serve as a comprehensive tool for monitoring development in the land administration sector in Ethiopia. Over time, it could evolve into a Management Information System (MIS) for RLAUD and the regions.

REILA developed the MELA system in close collaboration with the CALM Programme, led by RLAUD. MELA facilitates the flow of timely, consistent, accurate, and trustworthy data from woreda land administration offices to zones, regions, and ultimately to the federal RLAUD. By analyzing progress and performance information, MELA enables real-time, evidence-based decision-making and informs policy formulation. The key functions of MELA include:

Enhancing management capacity: MELA empowers land administrators at federal and regional levels to monitor project implementation and assess progress. It helps identify bottlenecks and challenges and take the necessary measures, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

Assessing impact: MELA helps evaluate progress against expected results and ensures that land projects are on track. It also assesses the impact of activities, contributing to evidence-based decision-making.

Targeted funding: MELA provides insights into what’s working and what needs improvement. This information guides resource allocation, ensuring efficient use of funding.

Beyond the technical functions, MELA promotes collaboration and synergy among partners and stakeholders. It encourages coordination between RLAUD, partners, and various actors within the land sector, collectively leading to an equitable and transparent land administration system.

The Development of MELA

Initial Stage of MELA Establishment – The Building Blocks

As the initial stage of MELA development, the existing LIFT Programme Management Information System (MIS) was customized to RLAUD – MIS with technical and financial support from the REILA Project. The system was later adapted to CALM – MIS, anticipating that all programme woredas supported by LIFT, SLMP, REILA, and the government will eventually be handed over to and managed by the CALM programme.

CALM – MIS: The Cornerstone of MELA

The primary objective of CALM – MIS is to track, monitor, and report on SLLC and land transaction activities across SLLC programme woredas. REILA meticulously developed the core modules of CALM – MIS through a consultative process, which were then operationalized upon endorsement by the RLAUD. These core modules serve as the building blocks for the anticipated MELA system:

SLLC – MIS: The module designed to monitor and report on SLLC activities on a weekly basis.

NRLAIS monitoring system: Ensures monthly land transaction monitoring and reporting.

PIA activity monitoring: Tracks information dissemination and awareness-raising efforts related to land certification and administration.

Together, these modules form the foundation of MELA. While the initial phase focuses on land administration, MELA extends to supporting all four functions of land administration and management: Land Tenure Security, Land Valuation and Taxation, Land Use, and Land Development as envisioned in the strategic roadmap of MELS.

Incentive-Based Reporting as a Support System for MELA

REILA developed and successfully tested support systems for MELA, such as an incentive-based reporting and data verification system. The incentive-based reporting aims to improve the performance of projects and interventions implemented by RLAUD and partner organizations, encouraging and ensuring the consistent and timely flow of reports of activities and results from woreda to region and federal RLAUD. This system enables RLAUD to monitor and report on the progress of various programme implementations in a timely manner. The incentive-based reporting system is integrated as part of CALM–MIS. It operates based on the principles of Payment for Results (P4R), where woredas receive payment according to their performance related to report flow.

The World Bank disbursed a two-million-dollar payment through the CALM Programme to highly performing woredas. The design of the incentive system took into account the government’s existing financial, technical, and human resource capacities to ensure long-term sustainability.

MELA Key Milestones and Achievements

Operational Achievements

Currently, CALM – MIS is operational in SLLC programme woredas supported by partner programmes and the government. Eventually, the scope of CALM – MIS will expand into a fully functioning MELA that monitors all land sector activities, projects, progress, and results. Ultimately, MELA will evolve into a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) for land administration, benefiting RLAUD and the regions.

MELA Key Millstones

While the MELA system is still under construction, significant progress has been achieved. REILA laid the groundwork by establishing the foundational infrastructure and protocols for MELA, which include:

1. **MELA Strategy:** Guiding the overall approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
2. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework (MELA-MEL):** Providing a structured framework for assessment.
3. **Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for MELA:** Ensuring effective measurement of progress.
4. **Operational Manual for MELA:** A comprehensive guide for system implementation.
5. **Data Collection Tools and Reporting Templates:** Streamlining data capture and reporting.

These milestones represent major achievements in the journey toward a fully functional MELA system development.

Building Capacity for MELA System Operation

REILA initiated capacity-building training for monitoring and evaluation experts, equipping them with the skills needed to operate the MELA system. During the final project period of REILA, the project conducted capacity-building training and mentoring activities for land administration staff involved in M&E. These activities were undertaken for each of the MELA building blocks and support systems such as the incentive-based reporting and data verification systems.

As MELA becomes fully functional and integrates with the NRLAIS, it will serve as a powerful tool in the land sector. Together, these systems will ensure equitable, transparent, and effective land administration and service delivery. REILA, under the leadership of RLAUD and in collaboration with the CALM programme, has played a significant role in transforming the land sector’s monitoring.

Section IV

Institutional and Human Capacity Development

Context

Rural land registration, certification, and administration require robust institutional and human resource capacity. At the outset of the REILA project implementation in 2011, the institutional capacity for land administration in Ethiopia was extremely limited at both the federal and regional levels. The situation was particularly serious in the underdeveloped regions like Benishangul Gumuz (BG), one of REILA's intervention areas. In BG, only a case of team of three individuals within the Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority (EPLAUA), was responsible for land administration. This posed a significant challenge for REILA's project to support the systematic rural land registration, certification, and establishment of an improved administration system in the region.

Conversely, the Amhara region had relatively stronger institutional capacity for land administration. Nevertheless, it still required substantial capacity building and reinforcement at both the regional and woreda levels to effectively carry out mass registration of rural land, certification, and administration activities in the region and REILA-targeted woredas.

A skilled workforce is a critical component in building and strengthening institutional capacity. However, the scarcity of skilled manpower for land administration remains a key challenge across the entire land sector in the country. According to a human capacity needs assessment conducted for Ethiopia's land sector in 2014, the demand for skilled manpower is projected to reach 138,000 over the next 20 years. Of this, 70% are expected to be mid-level technicians, while the remaining 30% will require higher education. The study recommended two approaches to address this challenge: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, and higher-level education streams. The Ethiopian government recognized this massive need for a trained workforce to realize its ambitious plan to register, certify, and manage over 50 million land parcels across the country.

Capacity Building Efforts and Achievements

Initiated by RLAUD, REILA has designed and introduced comprehensive human resource capacity building and strengthening initiatives in collaboration with partners and academic institutions. These initiatives aim to develop a new mid-level workforce capable of managing rural land registration, certification, and administration activities in REILA-targeted regions and beyond; strengthen the capacity and increase the proficiency of existing land administration staff, experts, and decision-makers at federal, regional, zonal, woreda, and kebele levels; and engage and enhance the awareness and knowledge of other relevant stakeholders, including community and rural landholders, in REILA-targeted regions.

The project employed a mixed approach to capacity development. While ongoing training provision and demand-driven technical assistance remain key components of the project implementation, the focus is on introducing formal training and study programmes in land administration at both academic and vocational levels. These formal training programmes are designed to benefit not only the project's target regions but also to have a long-term impact on the land sector, benefiting land administration institutions across all regions. This strategic approach addresses the lack of a trained workforce and ensures a suitable supply of skilled manpower for the land sector. Additionally, international experience exchange programmes, study tours and overseas short term trainings are considered strategic elements in the capacity-building effort.

Formal Training and Study Programmes



Establishment of rural cadaster and land administration TVET programme: A three-year comprehensive training programme launched at Assosa Agricultural TVET College, aimed at producing new and mid-level technicians capable of undertaking rural land surveying and registration, and administration.

Fast-Track Training Courses: One-month short courses are designed to enhance the capacity of existing land administration staff and complement the TVET courses.

BSc and MSc Scholarship programmes: Targeting existing land administrators and experts to ensure a pipeline of skilled professionals in the land sector.

International Short-Term Training: Targeted training for senior experts at federal and regional levels to enhance technical, management, and land governance capacity.

Regular Capacity Building Trainings

- 1. Ongoing capacity building trainings:** Continuous training for land administration staff at federal, regional, woreda, and kebele levels, including relevant government stakeholders to ensure effective project implementation. This includes training for legal officers and judges, EMA (now SSGI) staff, and PIA implementers.
- 2. Para-surveyors training:** One to two-week training sessions for para-surveyors (contract workers) enable them to carry out field activities for limited periods.
- 3. On-the-job training:** Practical training for para-surveyors and land administration staff to improve skills and efficiency in land surveying, registration, certification, and administration.
- 4. Technical training for NRLAIS operators:** Aiming to equip NRLAIS operators with the technical knowledge and skills to operate and maintain the system across ten regions.
- 5. International Experience Exchange:** Facilitated for senior experts and decision-makers in the land sector to explore and gain insights from global best practices in rural land cadaster and administration.

Demand-Driven Technical Assistance

Dedicated technical assistance to RLAUD: Supporting the planning and implementation of RLAUD's annual work plans, addressing specific challenges, needs, and priorities.

Technical assistance to REILA-targeted regions: Ensuring efficient and effective project implementation.

Technical assistance to EMA (now SSGI): Improving the country's geodetic network for accurate land surveying and registration.

Technical assistance to non-REILA regions: Extending direct and indirect support for NRLAIS rollout, operationalization, and maintenance in eight non-REILA regions.

Through these comprehensive and multilayered capacity-building initiatives, REILA has trained some 10,000 individuals, including new mid-level technicians, experts, highly skilled professionals, and leaders for sustainable land governance. These initiatives have collectively contributed to the institutional capacity building for land administration across all levels in REILA project regions, at the federal level, and in other regions. Moreover, formal training and study programmes for land administration have been effectively institutionalized, ensuring a sustained pipeline of a skilled workforce for the land sector.

The Introduction of Formal Training and Study Programmes in Land Administration



The Establishment of Rural Cadaster and Land Administration TVET Programmes

Under the leadership of RLAUD, REILA facilitated the establishment of the first Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme on rural cadaster and land administration in collaboration with the Assosa Agricultural TVET College in the Benishangul Gumuz region. The primary objective of the TVET programme is to produce mid-level technicians capable of undertaking rural land registration, certification, and administration tasks in the Benishangul Gumuz (BG) regions. Further, the initiative aimed at institutionalizing the rural cadaster and land registration training programme to ensure a sustainable supply of mid-level skilled workforce for BG and other regions.

During the initial project implementation phases, REILA developed a new Occupational Standard (OS), curriculum and course module for rural cadaster and land administration TVET courses for Level III. This development was based on assessments and evaluations of existing TVET courses and through a multi-stakeholder consultation process. The new OS and curriculum were designed to address the identified gaps in existing courses and meet the required standards, adhering to the country's TVET Qualification Framework developed by the Ministry of Education. The programme was introduced in collaboration with the BG regional government and MoA, and received approval from key stakeholders and accreditation by the Federal TVET Agency (FTA). In October 2014, the first land administration TVET course (Level III) was launched at the Assosa Agricultural TVET College, with a full boarding school arrangement. REILA supported the TVET programme throughout the first project phases. Building on the success of the Level III TVET training programme, OS and curriculums for Level II and Level IV TVET courses on land administration were developed during the second phase of REILA project implementation and launched with full accreditation by the Federal TVET Agency and the MoA.

The TVET programme began with two teachers hired and capacitated by REILA. Later, the project collaborated with the regional government to hire an additional two teachers. REILA capacitated these teachers through intensive on-the-job training, both in the field and office. As part of the capacity-building effort, these teachers fully participated in the development and review of OS, curriculum, and course modules. They were also enrolled in a fully sponsored Master's programme at Bahir Dar University Institute of Land Administration (ILA), facilitated and financed by REILA.

Infrastructure and Equipment

As part of establishing the programme, REILA set up a fully equipped laboratory with the necessary surveying equipment for teaching as shown in the table below.



Equipment

Antipassts/Total station	5
RTK GNSS	5
Leveling instrument	5
Stereoscope	5
Large format plotter	1
Computers for IT lab	25
A3 Scanner	2
Handheld GPS	30

Additionally, the project organized a standard library stocked with reference books relevant to the study. Since the programme was launched as a full boarding initiative, REILA provided support to set up a fully equipped kitchen, including a bread bakery mixer, plates, cooking dishes, and cups. The regional government, in turn, provided dormitory accommodations.

Achievements

By the end of 2022, a total of 389 students graduated from Assosa TVET in regular and extension programmes, of which 142 are female. GIZ financed an additional 50 candidates from the Gambella region to enroll in the Assosa TVET programme. Women candidates were encouraged and supported to join the programme, bringing more women into the land sector workforce.

Out of the total students graduated, 83% are working in public offices, with 78% employed in the rural land administration offices in the BG region. These TVET graduates played a crucial role in establishing land administration offices at the woreda and kebele levels and undertaking SLLC activities, land administration, and service provision in the BG region. About 4.5% of the TVET graduates are employed in the municipality and woredas administration, addressing the overall gap of the trained workforce in the region. The TVET programme significantly contributed fundamentally to land administration institution building in the then-emerging BG region and enabled the region to roll out SLLC and land administration.



389

Students graduated from Assosa TVET



142

Female Graduates

83%

Employed in Public Offices

78%

Employed in the rural land administration offices

Sustainability of the TVET Programme

The TVET programme was developed in close collaboration with and ownership of the regional government to ensure its sustainability. The Benishangul Gumuz regional government assumes responsibility for managing the rural cadaster and land administration TVET programme in Assosa TVET College, smoothly running the programme, and offering training from Level II up to Level IV. The region has been managing and fully financing the programme for over seven years after REILA handed it over, covering all the costs, including student services. Currently, the land administration TVET programme admits 30 to 40 students annually. The regional government hired two more teachers who were enrolled in REILA's sponsored MSc programme. This demonstrated the regional government's commitment to the study programme, which is vital for its sustainability. The department is now run by six highly qualified teachers, all capacitated by REILA.

The TVET programme has attracted other development partners who have further strengthened its capacity. Leveraging the infrastructure established by REILA, projects such as KFW and GIZ have contributed to the programme's growth. KFW built two additional fully equipped laboratories, while GIZ established a smart class/lab. Altogether, the department now boasts four fully equipped labs, including the one initially set up by REILA.

Expanding Impact to Other Regions

The rural cadaster and land administration TVET programme established at Assosa TVET College provides a competitive advantage to Assosa Agricultural TVET College, positioning it as the first institution with unique expertise in land administration training. The institution successfully conducted one-month fast-track courses for 900 woreda-level Land Administration (LA) experts from regions including Amhara, SNNP, Oromia, Sidama, and Benishangul-Gumuz (BG). Assosa TVET College commissioned this task by competing with well-established higher educational institutions such as Bahir Dar, Ambo, and Wondogent universities. The training is provided in 12 rounds in collaboration with the MoA, with technical support from the REILA Project. These courses cover topics such as land administration, land law, surveying, GIS, NRLAIS, and natural resources and land use. The TVET programme is playing a crucial role in building and strengthening land administration capacities in BG and other regions and becoming a strategic institution for mass training. The land administration programme has also created income opportunities for the institution and the teachers, which also contributes to the programme's sustainability.

The Assosa TVET programme on rural cadaster and land administration is the first of its kind in Ethiopia. The programme complements the degree-level courses offered at Bahir Dar University, Institute of Land Administration (ILA).

Replicating the Rural Cadastre and Land Administration TVET Programme

The successful practice established in BG is shared with other regions by RLAUD in collaboration with federal TVET. Essential materials used to set up the land administration TVET programme in Assosa are procured and submitted to facilitate the replication of the model in other regions. Consequently, REILA supported the establishment of a new rural cadaster and land administration TVET programme in the Oromia regional state, at Agarfa Agriculture TVET College, covering TVET courses from Levels II to IV. An MOU was drafted to foster cooperation between Assosa and Agarfa TVET colleges. Experience and knowledge exchange visits, along with on-the-job technical training, were facilitated for eight staff and teachers from Agarfa TVET at Assosa TVET College. In November 2022, a rural land cadaster and land administration TVET programme was launched at Agarfa TVET College, enrolling 141 students (81.48% male and 19.52% female) in regular and extension programmes.

REILA has successfully institutionalized rural cadastre and land administration TVET programmes from Level II to Level IV in both Benishangul Gumuz and Oromia regions. The TVET programme benefits the land sector, educational institutions, the regions, individuals involved (teachers and students), and the country as a whole.



From Educator to Leader: The journey of Delnesa Fentahun's in the Land Administration TVET programme

Delnesa Fentahun is a senior instructor and head of the department in the rural cadaster and land administration TVET programme at Assosa Agricultural TVET College. His journey began in 2011 when he joined the land administration TVET programme, hired by the REILA project as one of the first two instructors to teach land administration courses. He graduated from Bahir Dar Polytechnic College with a BSc degree in Land Administration and had been teaching cadaster courses at Bahir Dar Polytechnic.

“As I joined the programme, I was provided with a 15-day on-the-job training, attached to land surveying and registration activities within the REILA pilot woredas. For the first year, before teaching started, I was assigned to Bambasi woreda in the Benishangul Gumuz region to coordinate land surveying and registration at the kebele level. This hands-on experience enriched my understanding and equipped me with practical knowledge, skills, and experience in land surveying and registration.”

As part of the capacity development activities, the two teachers who first joined the TVET programme actively participated in designing and developing the Occupational Standard (OS) and curriculum for the TVET courses Level III. International and national consultants, well-versed in rural cadastre land administration, guided the development process. Delenesa pointed out that “working with the international and national senior consultants on OS and curriculum development significantly enhanced our capacity and prepared us well to teach the training programme. It was a valuable opportunity for knowledge transfer.” The OS, curriculum, and course modules drew from industry knowledge and pilot experiences in the SLLC woredas in the BG region.

To meet the academic requirements to teach at TVET, REILA facilitated and sponsored the TVET teachers to join MSc programme Bahir Dar University, Institute of Land Administration while teaching the TVET programme. “I was one of the teachers enrolled in the MSc programme and studied land information and system management while I was teaching the TVET programme. As one of the beneficiaries, the study programme helped me to expand my knowledge and expertise, bridging theory and practice.” Currently, Delnesa is the head of the the department of rural cadastre and land administration TVET programme at Assosa TVET collage.

As he stated “before the TVET programme was initiated in the BG region, there was a severe shortage of trained workforce in land administration. Experts from unrelated fields were assigned to handle land issues without basic knowledge of land administration. The TVET programme filled this critical gap, producing mid-level technicians who played essential role in establishing and building land administration capacity in the Benishangul Gumuz region and enabling mass land registration, certification, and administration across the regions, to which REILA rightfully takes credit.”

In addition to the basic TVET course (Levels II, III, and IV), the department has developed tailored training modules for a one-month capacity-building training programme “subsequently we provided the training to existing land administration staff at the woreda, zone, and regional levels of the Benishangul Gumuz (BG) region, in collaboration with the REILA project. The training programme covers essential areas such as land law, land economics/valuation, land surveying and GIS: the whole process up to the production of land certificates using GIS software, basic land administration, and data maintenance (NRLAIS).”

Evidently, the Assosa TVET programme is contributing to the development and strengthening of land administration capacity in other regions and enhancing land administration practices. Delenesa

elaborates “the Assosa TVET land administration programme, in collaboration with the MoA, has successfully provided a one-month Fast Track training course to 900 woreda-level land experts from Amhara, SNNP, Oromia, Sidama, and BG regions. The training focuses on land administration and land law, surveying and GIS, NRLAIS, natural resources, and land use. The institution was commissioned with this task through a competitive process with well-recognized higher educational institutions. This is a significant achievement for the department, the institution, the teachers, and the region at large.

The department remains committed to designing and developing specialized training programmes, following the fast-track training model. “Recent our focus has been on developing four essential modules related to land use, including land use law, land use technical procedures, GIS and remote sensing for land use, and participatory and integrated land use planning. These modules, developed in collaboration with GIZ, the regional land bureau, and the job and skill bureau, have received official approval and are ready for training provision in the BG region. Our plan is to collaborate with relevant federal authorities to facilitate the provision of these training to other regions as well.”

As Delenesa stated, the TVET programme continues to make itself relevant for the land administration section in the BG region and the country at large. “We aim to become a national center of excellence for mid-level land administration training. REILA’s contribution in this regard is substantial. The project laid the foundation for institutionalizing land administration training programmes in the region while other development partners and the regional government are building on it. In collaboration with the regional BoLCs, we also envisioned establishing a degree programme in land administration at Assosa University in collaboration with the regional BoLCs”.

The establishment of the rural cadaster and land administration programme has yielded multiple benefits. The Assosa TVET College’s institutional capacity has significantly improved, and its profile has risen. Currently, different development organizations are working with the institution on various initiatives, building on the infrastructure established by REILA. “We’ve become a preferred and recognized training center for land administration, with our highly qualified instructors and well-equipped facilities, including labs and library. Moreover, it also created opportunities for the institution to generate income through training provision to other regions.”

Delenesa highlighted benefit at a personal level, “the TVET programme has been transformative for me and other teachers, opening doors to a fulfilling career in the land sector and providing invaluable self-development opportunities. As an instructor, I’ve witnessed firsthand the impact of this programme, not only on my own path but also on my colleagues. This can be illustrated in terms of:

1. Skills and expertise: Through comprehensive capacity-building training, formal advanced study, and over 11 years of practical experience, we TVET instructors have become top mid-level trainers in the land sector. The multidisciplinary approach equips us to teach various subjects, from land law to surveying, land registration and certification, economics, land use, and information management.

2. Economic benefits: There are tangible economic benefits for teachers involved. I earn additional income by providing fast-track training courses facilitated by REILA and financed by the CALM project. Moreover, opportunities to travel to other regions for training facilitation have expanded my horizons and income streams.

Looking ahead, I aspire to become a senior consultant in the land sector. My extensive knowledge positions me as a valuable resource person in the land sector. As the sole institution for mid-level land administration training, the TVET programme attracts various projects for collaboration. These interactions offer immense growth potential for both the institution and the teachers. My plan is to pursue a PhD in land-related studies.”

Empowering Women Through the TVET Programme

The land administration TVET programme has significantly contributed to the project's cross-cutting objective of women's empowerment. Designed with principles of equal rights and opportunities for all, the project has successfully supported female trainees in joining the training programme. Out of the total students who graduated from the TVET programme, 33% are women. Through this programme, more women are attracted to the land sector's skilled workforce pool and land administration service delivery. This is instrumental in protecting the land rights of women and vulnerable groups (VGs) and promotes non-discriminatory practices in land administration and service delivery.



Empowering Change: Hadiya Mohammed's Journey in Land Administration

My journey in the land sector began in 2012 after I completed TVET training in land administration. Initially, I enrolled in the Agriculture department at Assosa TVET, but when the opportunity for the REILA Land Administration program started, I was given the chance and encouragement from the REILA project to participate in the training program. I competed, passed, and switched to the new land administration training program." Hadiya recalls.

Her determination and hard work paid off as she became the first graduate of the Land Administration TVET program in 2007, earning a medal for her outstanding performance. She started working at land administration office in 2015, assigned to the woreda office, Hadiya's role evolved from working at the kebele level to an officer handling land administration tasks and services and one of technician operating NRLAIS at the woreda. Hadiya stated "the three years training equipped her with the knowledge and skill to work according to the law and regulations and procedures, significantly enhanced my her ability to undertake the day to day tasks of the land administration and service efficiently and address land-related issues".

Hadiya's work involved high level of community engagement and raising awareness about the benefits of land certification, particularly among women. "We give special emphasis to women including women in polygamous household in created awareness and make sure that they have adequate knowledge that they have equal rights to land," Hadiya explains. This initiative has been instrumental in ensuring that women are recognized as rightful land right holders, challenging the traditional norms where men predominantly held land titles. Hadiya stated "One of the most significant impacts of the REILA project has been its role in empowering women through the targeted awareness raising activity, increases their participation to protect their land right. This is resulted in changing power dynamics in rural households".

Hadiya's efforts, along with the support of KLACUs and community elders, in raising community awareness have led to a significant reduction in land-related conflicts. "Inter-community disputes have significantly reduced because of our awareness-raising activities and certification," she notes. According to her, the provision of second-level land certification has been a vital initiative in their region, especially for women who now understand their land rights and are empowered to perfect it and to seek justice in court if necessary, without the fear of any social and cultural barriers". Through intensive public information and awareness (PIA) activities, Hadiya and her team have mobilized the community to participate in land surveying and registration. "If we do not undertake community awareness, the community would not come out for surviving and registering their land," Hadiya emphasizes. The involvement of KLACUs and community leaders has been crucial in gaining the trust of the community, particularly among indigenous groups who were initially skeptical of the land certification program.

The REILA project's intervention has brought about a significant shift in perception and behavior towards land, land administration. "Now, the majority understands that women have equal rights to land," Hadiya proudly states. This change has not only empowered women but also fostered a more equitable and just community. Hadiya Mohammed's journey continues to illustrate the profound impact of the REILA project on her personal and professional development, as well as its broader influence on empowering women and changing power dynamics in rural households. Hadiya's enrollment in the TVET program was a turning point in her life. "Personally, the fact that I enrolled in the TVET program gave me a job," she shares. While many of her friends in other disciplines are still searching for employment, Hadiya's role in land administration has provided her with continuous learning opportunities and personal growth. "Working in the land sector is different; it is a continuous learning opportunity. Every time you need to revise the law, procedures, and cases, it requires understanding community dynamics and perceptions," she explains.

Hadiya's job involves resolving disputes, which has honed her problem-solving skills. "When there is a land related dispute, I have to think and come up with strategies to solve it within the framework of the SLLC manual for dispute resolution. There is always some problem to solve," she says. This dynamic environment has not only enhanced her professional skills but also her ability to engage with different people and cases, significantly improving her interpersonal skills. Hadiya believes her working in the land administration office has a major impact on the women in her community. She recalls a moment when a woman came to her in distress, with a small child, after being thrown out of her house by her husband. "I told her to write a two-line letter and take him to court. She cried, but I assured her that she would get what she deserved and supported and guided her through the process following the law". The woman followed her advice and guidance; and eventually secured her share of the land. "She always says to me, 'You wiped my tears,' and I am happy I was able to do that because I have the knowledge and the mandate and I deal with similar cases every time" Hadiya says with pride. Explaining the impact of her work in her personal competency, Hadiya state "before I was involved in the community awareness activity, I was too shying to stand in front of the community and talk. Now, I acquired the skill, courage, and confidence to do that". Hadiya's aspirations continue to grow and remains determined to further her education. "I want to improve my diploma to a degree and even go further to do my MSC and go up to the maximum. I want to continue in the land sector". Her work in the land sector has not only empowered her professionally but also at the household level. "I have the ability to express myself better; I can negotiate for my rights and those of others," Hadiya notes. Her experience has given her the confidence to advise other women, even in challenging situations. "For example, I'm Muslim, but I believe Sharia is hard on women's rights. I advised a woman to go to civil court instead of Sharia court to protect her rights," she explains.

Hadiya's story illustrates the impact of the TVET program in attracting women in the land administration, service delivery and decision making, and help them build career around it while creating a favorable enabling environment for women in the community and effective social support to ensure their land right.



The impact of Land Administration TVET Programme at the National Level

The TVET initiative extends beyond serving the needs of the REILA project areas. It represents a best practice development with a national impact. The model is considered an effective mechanism for mass production of the much-needed mid-level technicians in the land sector and ensures a consistent supply of a skilled workforce.

The land administration TVET programme remains relevant and strategic to the land sector now and in the foreseeable future to meet the demand for a trained workforce across the nation, anticipated to reach up to 138,000 in the next 20 years, with 70% requiring vocational level of education. Additionally, the TVET programme is instrumental in addressing the challenge of high staff turnover (up to 50% annually) in the land sector, further increasing the demand for newly trained workforce joining the sector.

Fast-Track Courses to Enhance the Capacity of Existing Land Administration Staff

Under the leadership of RLAUD and in collaboration with six academic institutions, REILA designed and facilitated fast-track training courses for existing land administration staff. These courses aimed to strengthen the capacity of staff in land administration institutions at the woreda and kebele levels and supplement the output of full-cycle TVET courses. The project mobilized financial support for the initiative through advocacy efforts. As a result, the fast-track course was incorporated into CALM's programme training plan, with the necessary financial support made available.

The fast-track course content was collaboratively developed by land sector (the industry) and academia, involving a rigorous review process and due consideration to practical field applications. The collaborative design of the course modules facilitated by REILA enhanced the training's effectiveness. This initiative fostered strategic collaboration and partnerships between academic institutions and the land sector at both federal and regional levels.

In August 2021, the fast-track training courses were launched at Bahir Dar University, Institute of Land Administration (ILA), Ambo, Wondogenet, and Hawassa Universities, and Assosa TVET College in collaboration with the CALM programme. This one-month training programme offers short courses in land surveying, land registration and administration, land valuation, land administration-related IT, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and gender equality in land rights.

Achievements

Through the fast-track training initiative, 6,274 land administration staffs (23.2% female) from the Amhara, SNNP, Oromia, Sidama, and Benishangul Gumuz regions were trained in the six academic institutions. The fast-track training model significantly enhances land administration capacity at the woreda and kebele levels across the country. This model has proven to be an effective mechanism for mass training provision.

The number of land administration staff trained through the Fast-track training initiative in:

Amhara | SNNP | Oromia | Sidama | Benishangul Gumuz

6,274

Land administration staffs trained.

23.8%

Female

76.2%

Male

The fast-track courses are instrumental in improving land certification, administration performance and service delivery. The training programme also help address the persistent challenge of high staff turnover in the land sector, as staff began to see personal development opportunities in the land administration offices as a result of receiving fast-track courses. After receiving these training courses, many have advanced to higher positions in their offices or in another woreda. This has also improved the competitiveness and staff retention of the land offices.

In REILA project woredas in BG and Amhara regions, fast-track courses significantly strengthened institutional capacity for systematic land registration, certification, and land administration at the woreda and kebele levels. In the BG region, 294 land administration staff received fast-track courses in four training rounds. About 1,700 existing land administration staff were trained from the Amhara region. This initiative effectively capacitates a large number of land administration staff within a short timeframe across the regions.

Scholarship Programme (BSc and MSc)



The REILA project, RLAUD, and partners recognized the need and critical role of experts and high-level professionals in institutional capacity development for land administration at federal, regional, zonal, and woreda levels. In collaboration with the CALM programme, REILA facilitated and supported land administration BSc and MSc scholarship programmes in land administration, with leadership from RLAUD. The programme primarily targeted experts and land administrators at the woreda, zonal, and regional levels, RLAUD, and EMA (now SSGI) staff at the federal level. REILA facilitated the signing of contracts between MoA/RLAUD and six academic institutions to provide undergraduate and postgraduate studies in different land administration disciplines. The sponsorship programme was launched in 2013 at Ambo, Dilla, Debre Markos, Hawassa, and Oda Bultum universities offering BSc programmes, while Bahir Dar University offers both BSc and MSc programmes.

High-priority land-related disciplines were offered through this initiative, including Land Surveying and Administration (BSc and MSc), Land and Property Valuation (BSc and MSc), and Land Administration-related IT (BSc and MSc). The programme was arranged in a way that allows government officers to engage in the studies during summer time and on weekends, and complete the studies over a long period while they are still on their jobs. The MSc and BSc sponsorship programmes offered equal opportunities for women and men.

Achievements

Under this initiative, a total of 1,342 BSc and 154 MSc candidates enrolled and graduated in various land administration-related disciplines in the six academic institutions with financial support from the CALM programme. In addition to providing technical assistance and facilitating the launch of the study programme, REILA financially supported a total of 76 MSc candidates during the first and second project phases. The study programmes were facilitated for candidates from BoRLAU (now BoL), BoLC, RLAUD, and EMA (now SSGI) in partnership with the Institute of Land Administration (ILA) at Bahir Dar University. These candidates enrolled to specialize in Land Information Management System, Real Property Law, and Real Property Valuation. Out of the total REILA-sponsored MSc graduates, 94% (73 of them) continue working in the land sector at different levels, advanced to higher positions within the land administration office, or joined various development projects that support the land sector, and at Assosa TVET College where six of them are teaching and leading the land administration TVET programme. The programme significantly helps improve land administration and governance capacity in the REILA project target and other regions, and at the federal level, resulting in improved performance, efficiency, and effectiveness in the rollout of SLLC, operationalization and maintenance of NRLAIS, and service delivery.

Total number of candidates enrolled and graduated through the MSc and BSc Sponsorship programme.



1,342 B.Sc. **154** M.Sc.

Candidates financially sponsored by REILA
76 M.Sc.

Considering the minimal institutional capacity for land administration and lack of foundational skilled experts and experience in the then-emerging BG region, REILA gave special emphasis to the region, where 49% of the total MSc scholarships sponsored by REILA were offered to staff in BoEPLAU (now BoLCs) and Assosa TVET College.



Building Expertise and Confidence: Ahmed Rahama's Journey in Land Administration

Ahmed, the Director of the Land Administration Directorate at the BoLCs (formerly BoEFLA), was one of the 31 MSc students sponsored by REILA from the Benishangul Gumuz region. He joined the BoEFLA in 2013 with a BSc in Agricultural Resources Economics and Management. "I was working as a land expert at the BoEFLA. At that time, the land administration section was staffed by experts from different backgrounds, including myself, lacking basic knowledge and expertise in land administration. When REILA offered the MSc scholarship programme in land administration studies, I seized the opportunity and enrolled at Bahir Dar University's Institute of Land Administration (ILA). In 2016, I successfully completed my MSc in Land Administration. Following two years as a senior eland expert and team leader at the BoEFLA, I was promoted to the director's level in 2018."

Ahmed emphasized the importance of other capacity-building initiatives implemented by REILA, including "the experience exchange programmes at national and international levels, that shaped my understanding and perception of land resource and administration. These capacity building initiatives combined with the MSc study opportunity and the practical on the job trainings and experience have transformed my capacity and helped my build competency to lead the land sector in BG region with increased confidence and knowledge. I now possess scientific knowledge, exposure and experience with deep understanding of the sector and regional context to lead the sector effectively." Ahmed emphasized REILA's capacity-building initiatives are innovative and comprehensive, targeting everyone from community members at the grassroots level to experts, higher professionals, and government officials at all levels. "The project implemented innovative capacity-building initiatives in the short, medium, and long term to build and enhance basic land administration capacity in the BG region, enabling the region to undertake mass registration and certification of rural land and implement a modern land administration system. Collectively, these capacity-building efforts have substantially contributed to the land administration institution's capacity building and created a pool of sound land administration expertise in the region. REILA's awareness raising initiatives has uniquely and significantly changed community's awareness, knowledge, and perception regarding land and land administration and practices. It was also instrumental in creating awareness and building capacity at local authorities and leaders, key stakeholders and regional officials and helps the region realize mass land registration and certification and land administration".

Emphasizing on the TVET programme, the director stated that "the establishment of the land administration TVET programme has provided a profound learning opportunity for those engaged in the land sector. The TVET programme holds strategic significance for the regional government. Beyond merely enhancing the region's capacity in land administration, it has also elevated the region's profile and reputation. Considering this is an emerging region with limited initial capacity in the public sector, including land administration, the achievement of Assosa TVET in successfully providing fast-track courses to trainees from well-established regions (such as Oromia, SNNP, and Amhara) with robust institutions for land administration is remarkable achievement for the region, showcasing the newfound competency within regions through the our TVET institution and the region as a whole. This initiative has not only transformed land administration in the BG region but also changed the region's image and profile. We take immense pride in this accomplishment and are committed to maintaining it. The regional government has demonstrated firm commitment to sustaining the TVET programme's success and further strengthening it. This programme serves as the backbone of land administration efforts in the region. Currently, we are closely collaborating with the Assosa land administration TVET programme to develop a degree programme and launch it at Assosa University. Our goal is to ensure a steady supply of qualified professionals for the land sector. REILA's contribution is foundational and irreplaceable in our region in laying the very foundation of land administration in a sustainable manner".

"On a personal level, the project has also helped me fulfil my personal development objectives. I would not be where I am today without REILA's capacity-building initiatives. I have personally benefited from the project."

International Short-Term Trainings

As part of identifying and developing a fit-for-purpose method and system for rural land certification and administration, international experience exchange visits, study tours, and short-term trainings were organized and facilitated by partners supporting the land sector for land administration leadership and core experts at the federal and regional levels.

REILA organized short-term international trainings for senior experts from federal and regional land administration institutions. These trainings aimed to equip senior land experts with specific and in-depth technical knowledge crucial in establishing of fit for purpose method and system for rural cadastre and administration; and leading rural land registration, certification, and administration. The training focused on two main areas: Geo-informatics and Land Administration, and Building Infrastructure for Geo-information Sharing, Spatial Databases and Design, and Land Governance.

A total of **37 senior experts** received short-term technical training at internationally recognized institutions:

- Nine-month training on Geo-informatics and Land Administration at the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in the Netherlands.

- Three to four-week training on the Application of Remote Sensing, GIS, and GPS in Cadastre Management, and Cadastral Database Development and Management at the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) in Nairobi.

International Experience Exchange Programme

REILA facilitated international experience exchange programmes for a total of **80 senior experts and decision-makers** from land administration institutions at the federal and regional levels. These exchange programmes took place in Rwanda, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, South Korea, and Austria across different rounds. The objectives were to:

- Explore and identify methods:** Study various approaches and methods used for rural land cadaster and certification in African countries and globally, and identify and adopt a practical and contextually applicable methodology for land surveying and registration in Ethiopia.

- Explore and learn from other land administration systems:** Understand land administration systems used by other countries to effectively record and manage rural land parcel information. The visits included learning about policy and institutional development evolutions of the visited countries and grasping lessons.

The experience exchange programme for senior experts focused on specific technical issues, including the use of aerial photography, techniques, methodologies, system setup, and spatial data infrastructure. Decision-makers participated in sessions that covered high-level policy issues, strategies, legal frameworks, institutional setups, budgeting, cadaster, and registration systems. The experience exchange was delivered through presentations, plenary discussions, demonstrations of system functionalities, and practical field-level demonstrations.

As a result, the team of experts and decision-makers embarked on adopting the use of ortho-photo/satellite imagery along with general boundaries as an efficient method for rural land registration and certification in Ethiopia. The team established a fundamental understanding and knowledge of land administration systems used to record and manage land parcel data, which stimulated the development and operationalization of the NRLAIS system across the regions. The extensive exposure and experience sharing, coupled with overseas short-term trainings, significantly enhanced the technical and management capacity of land administrators and experts at RLAUD and the regions. It led to a major shift in mindset among experts and leaders regarding land resources, their management, and administration.

I participated in the experience exchange visit to Austria facilitated by REILA. It was an exciting and encouraging experience that shifted my perspective related to land administration. Our team collectively realized that establishing a modern land administration system in our region is indeed achievable.

Muleta Bizu, Senior GIS and Remote Sensing Expert at BoLCs (former BoEFLA).

Regular Capacity Building Efforts in the Project Targeted Regions and Beyond



Regular capacity building training and on the job training are key components of human capacity development initiative and effective implementation of the REILA project. These initiatives aim to enhance the skills, knowledge and competency of implementers at various levels, thereby improving performance, problem-solving capabilities, and the adoption of new technologies and innovations. These training targets land administration staff at different levels and multiple actors and stakeholders relevant to land certification and administration activities. Training is also core components in PIA implementation and advocacy activities targeting decision and policy makers to create a supportive, enabling, and legal environment for rural land registration and certification, ensuring the security of land rights for rural landholders.

REILA designed and undertook numerous capacity-building trainings for implementers at different levels in REILA-targeted woredas in Amhara and BG regions and other regions on a variety of thematic areas. The major capacity-building efforts conducted as part of the project implementation activities include:

- 1. On-the-job training for para-surveyors and permanent land administration staff:** On-the-job training for para-surveyors (contract workers) and land administration staff during land survey and registration to equip them with practical skills and knowledge to effectively carry out rural land surveying and registration. REILA undertakes para-surveyors training every year before the commencement of fieldwork, creating a significant mass of technicians in the rural land sector of the country. During REILA II, a total of **1350 para-surveyors were trained**.
- 2. Technical training for NRLAIS operators:** REILA provided technical training to 1,668 NRLAIS operators across 458 woredas in ten regions, including the project's target areas. Some of these trainings were financially supported by partner programmes and the government. To ensure

practicality, efficiency, and sustainability, the project focuses on capacity building for NRLAIS at the federal, regional, and zonal levels. Instead of offering full-package training directly to woredas, REILA adopted the TOT model. Consequently, regional and zonal experts cascade the training to other woredas and kebeles within their respective regions. To support this capacity-building effort, REILA, in collaboration with RLAUD, produced a comprehensive video covering both theoretical and practical aspects of NRLAIS, including a live demonstration. This video is available on RLAUD's YouTube channel.

- 3. Awareness raising and training on regional proclamations and directives:** Numerous awareness-raising and capacity training sessions were conducted in REILA target regions focusing on regional land proclamations, directives, and regulations for land administration staff at kebele, woreda, zone, and regional levels, and other relevant stakeholders, including regional and woreda authorities and public legal officers. The aim is to create awareness, ensure compliance, and enforce laws, including those pertaining to women and vulnerable groups' rights.
- 4. Capacity building and awareness for Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees (KLAUCs):** REILA II provided regular training, including refresher events, to a total of 2,142 Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees (KLAUCs), of which 612 were women. These KLAUCs operate in the fourteen intervention woredas in Amhara and BG regions. KLAUCs are officially designated bodies at the kebele level, responsible for handling various administrative tasks, including certificate distribution, dispute resolution, cadastral field data verification, recording land transaction requests, liaising with the woreda land administration office, leading the implementation of PIA activities at kebele and sub-kebele levels, and collecting social baseline data.
- 5. Capacity building for PIA:** REILA conducted capacity-building training for PIA implementers in the fifteen REILA woredas across the Amhara and BG regions. A total of 10,667 Key Information Agents (KIA) team members received capacity-building training focused on the SLLC process. Among these KIAs, 17% (4,065) are female.
- 6. Capacity building training for MELA:** Training M&E personnel and conducting learning workshops across CALM-MELA implementing woredas.
- 7. Strategic capacity building training for the justice sector:** REILA conducted strategic capacity-building training and workshops for 278 public legal officers and judges in the Amhara and BG regions. The training workshops focused on land administration and use laws, as well as Ethiopian legislation related to the rights of women and vulnerable groups (VGs), including sections dealing with potential ethnic and religious discrimination.

Through the multilayered institutional and human capacity development initiatives, both formal training and study programmes and regular capacity-building trainings, REILA capacitated over 10,000 land administration staff at the federal, regional, woreda, and kebele levels, EMA (now SSGI) staff, as well as key stakeholders and actors at woreda and kebele levels.



Demand-Driven Technical Assistance

At the federal level, technical assistance lies at the core of REILA's project implementation. The project engaged national senior experts to provide critical technical assistance to the main project owners and implementers: MoA/RLAUD and the regional land bureaus. These experts possess extensive knowledge of Ethiopia's land administration landscape, having worked in government institutions with reputable records and achievements.

The REILA project was strategically situated at the RLAUD office since its inception, making this technical assistance readily accessible and abundantly available to the directorate, facilitated effective knowledge transfer. The daily physical presence of the REILA team allowed on-the-job capacity building, coaching, and mentoring of permanent RLAUD personnel. In addition, this arrangement uniquely positioned REILA to respond to emergent challenges, needs, and priorities identified by RLAUD, including method and system development for rural land registration, certification and administration; and institutional capacity development for land administration. The project also involved numerous ad hoc engagements with a wide range of land administration actors.

During the second phase of project implementation, several technical experts from REILA were made fully available to support the directorate, including part-time engagement. These tasks included supporting the rollout of SLLC and NRLAIS (the development, rollout, operationalization, system maintenance, and problem-solving), monitoring and evaluation of SLLC and NRLAIS-related activities by RLAUD and its partners (especially WB-CALM), and providing strategic guidance for communal land certification and NRLAIS sustainability. This was made possible through the flexibility, adaptive programming, and adaptive project management approach embraced by REILA, with 15 years of strong and consistent leadership from RLAUD.

The uninterrupted technical assistance provided to RLAUD and the targeted regions for about 15 years fundamentally transformed land administration institutional and human capacities. The knowledge transfer occurred in the process of pilot development of methods and systems for SLLC and NRLAIS, and the scale-up of innovations throughout the nation significantly contributed to the realization of strong land administration institutions at all levels.

RLAUD, established in 2010 with just a few experts at the start of the REILA Project, evolved into a fully functioning office with three case teams staffed by highly qualified and experienced senior technical experts well-versed in all aspects of land administration and governance. RLAUD and the regions developed sound project management and monitoring, planning, and land governance capacity. This enabled work toward harmonization and setting minimum technical standards for land administration throughout the country.

In the REILA project targeted regions; the project established a fully functional technical assistance team/office within the BoL and BoLC in the Amhara and BG regions, respectively, to support the implementation of the REILA projects in the fifteen targeted woredas and at the regional level. The technical team strategically positioned itself at the regional land bureaus to facilitate knowledge transfer and make technical assistance easily accessible to the regional bureaus. The regional team provided comprehensive operational, administrative, and technical support to the regional land bureaus. The team provided technical assistance in planning, monitoring, and quality assurance aligned with the approved plan by the supervisory board (SVB).

In the BG region, where overall public sector capacity was limited, REILA assembled a technical team comprising highly qualified experts. This team included a team leader, a land administration expert, three national and international PIA specialists, and administrative and support staff. In the Amhara region, where land administration capacity was relatively strong with land administration system well-functioning, a similar technical assistance team was established, albeit with a more streamlined composition.

During the initial project phase, the team focused intensively on supporting systematic land registration, certification, and building basic land administration structures in the BG region, and strengthening land administration capacity in the Amhara region in the targeted woredas and at regional levels. Specifically, the regional technical team provided extensive support for recruiting and training para-surveyors (contract staff) for each intervention woreda. This included criteria development, selection, and quality assurance. Close monitoring and supportive supervision were key aspects of the technical assistance,

quality assurance of the overall project implementation, and timely reporting. Additionally, the REILA team filled expert gaps as needed and provided support to the bureaus on an ad hoc basis. The regional technical team monitored the implementation of the systematic land registration and certification (SLLC) process, ensuring that every activity, including PIA, adhered to the SLLC procedure outlined in the operational manual. The project made a significant investment in front office operations within kebele administrations by supporting the selection and continuous training of KLAUCs, including refresher trainings, in the fifteen intervention woredas.

In the second phase of the project, REILA continued to provide full operational, administrative, and technical support to the BoL and BoLCs through regional land administration experts. During the second phase, the regional technical assistance focused on the rollout of SLLC, operationalization and maintenance of the NRLAIS. The project successfully supported the implementation of NRLAIS in fourteen woredas and regional land bureaus. The technical support included the provision of continuous training on NRLAIS management, GIS applications, and land transaction procedures; data cleaning, migration, and system functioning, while REILA's federal-level team provided ongoing support for system maintenance and problem-solving.

Infrastructure Investment

REILA's investment funding was provided directly to the regional BoL and BoLC based on regular investment proposals required to implement project activities in the targeted woredas. The financial support included covering salaries for contract staff (cadaster technicians) in the fifteen targeted woredas throughout the first phase in the Amhara region and throughout the first and second phases of project implementation in the Benishangul Gumuz region. Additionally, the project supplied necessary equipment and vehicles for field and office work related to the rollout of SLLC and NRLAIS operationalization. This included the purchase of hardware such as high-capacity computers, printers, plotters, and a high-capacity server along with related office supplies.

Impact of Capacity Building Initiatives in REILA Targeted Regions

REILA's multi-layered institutional and human capacity development initiatives—including the innovative TVET program, Fast Track Courses, scholarship programs (MSc and BSc), international experience exchange programs, overseas short-term training, full operational and administrative support, intensive technical assistance, and other routine on-the-job capacity-building trainings—have significantly contributed to institutional transformation. This has led to improved performance and land administration service delivery in the REILA project intervention woredas, zones, and at the regional level in the BG and Amhara regions and at the federal level.

In the BG region, land administration, established in 2007 as a case team with just three experts at the regional level under EPLAUA, has transformed into a fully staffed directorate expanded to zonal, woreda, and kebele levels, having all the required staff in place for land administration. Recently, the region's land administration evolved into an independent Bureau of Land and Cooperatives (BoLCs) and gradually emerged as a strong institution capable of scaling up rural registration, certification, land administration, and service delivery in collaboration with REILA and other partners.

“REILA primarily focused on system and institution building. The establishment of a land administration TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programme and the operationalization of the NRLAIS and PIA marked significant milestones. Although the region possesses vast land resources, we lacked the knowledge of how to effectively administer and manage them. Without proper land registration, there is no foundation for administration or management. In this regard, REILA laid the groundwork for rural land registration, certification, and administration in the BG region. The project set the stage for other projects such as WB-CALM, RLLP, and GIZ to support the region using the basic infrastructure established by REILA. The introduction of PIA represents a unique and revolutionary intervention that fundamentally changes both the perception and practice related to land among the community and the government, facilitating mass land registration, certification, and administration in our region.

Currently, 30% (350,000) of land parcels in the region are certified by REILA, RLLP, GIZ, and the government out of the one million land parcels in BG, of which 153,249 were certified by REILA.”

—
Ahmed, Land Administration Directorate Director, BoLCs



Significant institutional transformation has been occurred in Amhara region. The institutional capacity building and strengthening initiatives in the Amhara region have yielded significant results. These initiatives have enhanced implementation capacity, improved land certification and administration processes, and motivated staff to improve their performance and the quality of land administration services. Specifically, in the eight project target woredas and at the regional level, there has been notable progress and achievement. Additionally, the initiative has strengthened the management, coordination, and land governance capacity of the BoL and the proficiency of its experts.



From Junior Expert to Leader: Derebew Ayale's Journey in Land Administration

Derebew Ayale began his career as a land administration expert in 2009 at the Amhara regional land bureau. Over the past 14 years, he has achieved significant milestones, largely due to the support of the REILA project. Now, he is a senior member of the technical and management team and serves as the deputy project coordinator for the CALM project.

Derebew emphasizes the fundamental role REILA has played in his professional growth and in building a strong land administration institution in the Amhara region. "REILA started during the transition

from FLLC to SLLC," he recalls. "Identifying effective technology for land surveying and registration was critical need of the land sector. REILA's testing of various methods led to the adoption of orthophoto technology, advancing rural land surveys and the rural land certification."

According to Derebew the lack of institutional capacity and trained workforce in the region was another challenge in undertaking mass land registration and establishing a modern land administration system. He explains "the lack of proper training and resources hindered our performance, leading to inefficiencies, malpractice, and poor service quality and availability. However, the situation has changed significantly with REILA's comprehensive capacity building initiative. The project played significant role in building land administration institutional capacity from the ground up through innovative approaches including tailored short-term training, long-term study programs, and ongoing operational and technical assistance. The introduction of land administration TVET program, Fast Track courses, and BSC/MSC sponsorship programs are innovative in ensuring sustainable solution. REILA also provided ongoing capacity building, on-the-job training and international short-term training and experience sharing opportunities. These initiatives equipped staff from kebele to regional levels with the knowledge and skills needed for mass land registration, certification and improve land administration system in our region."

Derebew highlighted the project's essential equipment support to the project target woredas and the regional bureau to enhancing operational capacity including vehicles, computers and generators. "REILA supplied the first map-printing machines to the regional bureau, enabling efficient mass registration and certification processes," Derebew states. REILA also supported the establishment of 42 ground control points. "Once the groundwork was completed, the SLLC rollout began in eight REILA target woredas, covering about 108 kebeles. Over 1 million parcels were certified with full support from REILA; using the orthophoto method and SLLC manual, which was a major breakthrough for the region."

Derebew has witnessed the project's impact firsthand. He joined the regional bureau of land as a junior land administration expert with a geography background and later enrolled in the REILA-sponsored MSc scholarship program at Bahir Dar University's Institute of Land Administration (ILA). "I was one of the 12 land administration staff enrolled in the MSc sponsorship program to study Land Administration Management System. This opportunity advanced my knowledge and enabled me to contribute more effectively to institution building," he says. After graduation, he was promoted to cadaster section director. Currently, he serves as the regional deputy coordinator for the CALM project.

REILA's sponsored advanced study program significantly enhanced the roles of Derebew and his colleague's in the land administration institution. "Initially, the institution had only one component i.e. land administration and use with one case team. After the first batch of MSc students, including myself, completed our studies, we applied our knowledge to expand the institution to include four components: Land Tenure Security, Resource Valuation, Land Use, and Land Information Management System, with technical support from REILA. This structural expansion helped build a robust land administration institution in the region".

Derebew underscored the international experience exchanges and short-term training facilitated by REILA enriched his understanding of modern land administration systems. “These opportunities were instrumental in building the institution. It was eye-opening experience for the regional staff and leadership. REILA’s role in institution building is irreplaceable. The project’s comprehensive approach enabled the region to build strong institutional capacity for land administration. This is evident in the region’s performance and achievements in terms of SLLC coverage, the operationalization of NRLAIS, and its ability to deliver improved land administration services.”

Building on REILA’s foundational work, the region scaled up SLLC with support from donor programs like LIFT, CALM, and RLLP. As a result, over 12.5 million land parcels have been certified out of the targeted 18.2 million parcels in the region, securing land rights for 4.6 million rural landholders. The region achieved 60% SLLC coverage in the past decade using orthophoto methods and substantial investment in capacity development by REILA. These donor projects headed directly to implementation of SLLC using the manuals, forms, formats, and procedures developed by REILA and leveraging the strong institutional structure and trained workforce.

REILA’s ongoing capacity building efforts have significantly improved the competence of experts and the performance of land administration offices. We have built the capacity to register and certify up to one million land certificates annually, a process that previously took 4-5 years. The Amhara region now leads in SLLC rollout, covering 47% of the national total. The CALM program supports NRLAIS operationalization in 280 woredas, with 113 already achieved in the Amhara region due to strong institutional and human resource capacity built with REILA’s support. The land administration in the region has become one of the largest and strongest institutions. It is now strategic for both the regional and national governments. This institution serves as a model for emerging regions, including Benishangul Gumuz, Sidama, and South West regions. We share our experiences and help these emerging regions in building a strong land administration institution. This makes me happy.”

The development and operationalization of NRLAIS, supported by REILA, was a game-changer in modernizing land administration systems. NRLAIS is operational in 113 woredas in the region, handling 12.5 million parcels data for 4.6 million landholders and process over 615,000 land transactions so far. Even before NRLAIS was operationalized, REILA developed essential local software and tools, such as Kebele Digitizer for the region. This software enabled us to utilize the existing ISAL data for orthophotos and land surveying; and organized data.

Derebew underlined that REILA’s project implementation approach is unique. The project engaged deeply at the grassroots level, creating community awareness and building the capacity of local authorities, implementers and stakeholders to increase community participation and ensure of the land rights for all including women and vulnerable groups are protected. Emphasizing on the project’s tangible impact at the institutional, individual, and community levels in the region, Derebew stated “the increased tenure security has created a strong sense of ownership among rural landholders, leading to greater investment in their land, resulting in improved productivity and efficiency. This, in turn, has enhanced their livelihoods. SLLC and NRLAIS have opened significant economic opportunities for rural landholders beyond tenure security. Land right holders can now use SLLC as collateral to access loans up to 100,000 birr. About 900 million birr in SLLC-linked loans has been disbursed in the region. With these loans, landholders can improve productivity and efficiency and engage in off-farming activities.”

For Derebew, working in the land sector is more than a job. His journey from a junior expert to the coordinator of a large donor project reflects his dedication and opportunities for growth. “The REILA project helped me build my career in the land sector. The opportunity for advanced study facilitated by the project helped me achieve good results for both the institution and my personal development. I am grateful for that.” Derebew is proud of the sustainable changes in rural land administration and the impact of this work on millions of lives. “It drives me to continue contributing to the sector, transferring my knowledge and experience, and remaining a reliable resource in the land sector.”

Derebew envisions a future where Ethiopia’s land administration system is fully web-based and integrated with other information systems. Inspired by a study tour in the Netherlands, he dreams of a day when anyone can transfer land rights from home or anywhere. “It is possible, and that is the vision of the land sector, and I believe NRLAIS is heading in that direction,” he asserts.

Section V

Public Information and Awareness (PIA) a means to mainstream Human Right Based and Approach and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

REILA incorporates a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and emphasizes Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in project implementation. These principles are crucial for ensuring equitable benefits across all societal segments, including women, girls, vulnerable individuals, marginalized, and indigenous communities. By mainstreaming gender equality and non-discrimination, REILA aims to achieve its cross-cutting objectives of ensuring equality in access to and control over land. These objectives align with Ethiopia's constitution, federal and regional land proclamations, as well as Finland's core societal values and development strategies.

To achieve these goals, REILA has introduced Public Information and Awareness (PIA). PIA enables active community participation and engagement in land registration and certification administration, ensuring the process adheres to HRBA principles, promoting gender equality and social inclusion. The PIA targets community members and landholders, including women and vulnerable groups, as well as key duty bearers and stakeholders.

PIA Objectives and Focus

At the community and individual levels, PIA focuses on empowering all segments of the community by helping them understand, assert, and protect their rights. Specifically, it disseminates clear messages about SLLC activities, increasing community awareness and understanding of SLLC, emphasizing its significance, benefits, and the process involved. Landholders' rights and obligations under national and regional land proclamations are highlighted, along with the critical importance of their active participation throughout the process. Special attention is given to women and vulnerable groups (VGs), including girls, the elderly, orphans, economically disadvantaged individuals, and marginalized communities, to ensure they are well-informed and supported in participating in the SLLC process and safeguarding their land rights. Additionally, PIA fosters two-way communication, allowing landholders to express their concerns, fears, and specific issues while receiving adequate responses.



PIA plays a crucial role in addressing deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices, particularly those related to gender norms, power relations, and roles that impact women's ability to protect their equal land rights. It also addresses customary practices and norms that often marginalize women, girls, and vulnerable groups, preventing them from participating in decision-making and planning processes that directly affect their lives and livelihoods. Furthermore, PIA focuses on reducing information asymmetry, especially among women and vulnerable populations.

At the system level, PIA focuses on sensitizing and building the capacity of main duty bearers and relevant stakeholders on protecting land rights for all. Its primary goal is to increase awareness and knowledge of land administration staff at all levels about the equal land rights of all individuals, including women and vulnerable groups (VGs), ensuring that non-discriminatory practices are upheld and that land rights are protected at each stage of SLLC, land administration, and service delivery. Additionally, PIA targets relevant stakeholders and government sector offices, such as kebele and woreda administrations, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and women and children affairs offices at the woreda and kebele levels. These stakeholders play a crucial role in ensuring the land rights of women and VGs.

PIA interventions also include advocacy activities aimed at engaging land administrators, decision-makers, and policymakers. The goal is to create an enabling policy environment for improved land administration service quality and availability, including the enforcement of laws and regulations to ensure the security of tenure for women, including those in polygamous marriage arrangements.

PIA Strategy and Implementation Approach

REILA, in collaboration with partner programmes and under the leadership of RLAUD, has developed a standardized PIA and GESI Guide for SLLC based on lessons learned from previous initiatives. The goal is to guide and standardize PIA activities related to SLLC across different regions. Recognizing word of mouth as a widely effective communication channel in rural communities, the primary strategy for PIA rollout is face-to-face communication (interpersonal communication). Within this overarching approach, PIA employs tailored methods to target and engage women and vulnerable groups (VGs) separately, equipping them with essential information, addressing their specific concerns, clarifying misconceptions, and tackling socio-cultural issues.

To implement face-to-face communication, PIA mobilizes key information agents (KIAs) at all administrative levels. Leveraging existing land administration structures at the federal, regional, zone, woreda, and kebele levels, PIA teams have been established. Additionally, PIA collaborates with other relevant stakeholders and community-level structures to form Key Information Agents (KIAs). These efforts are crucial for systematically reaching community members and landholders, especially women and vulnerable groups. The identified PIA teams and KIAs are adequately capacitated to facilitate the rollout of PIA activities using different methods and platforms.

PIA activities are carried out using various methods, including large community meetings, focused/small group discussions, and house-to-house (bet le bet) outreach. These complementary methods are designed to effectively engage different segments of the community, including women and vulnerable

populations. Large community/public meetings are utilized to create general awareness of SLLC activities. Focus/small group sessions and house-to-house activities are employed to intensify PIA activities and allow interactive sessions. These methods are also instrumental in reaching women and VGs with SLLC messages, supporting their participation in the SLLC process. The house-to-house outreach PIA is introduced to ensure everyone in the community is reached and no one is left behind. Additionally, focus/small group sessions are utilized to engage and capacitate community leaders and influencers/messengers such as religious leaders and leaders of women's groups, social associations, and development groups. These groups are instrumental in disseminating SLLC messages to the wider community using different community platforms and influencing social change.

Reinforcing PIA through a Multi-Channel Approach

Face-to-face PIA activities are reinforced through the production and dissemination of print materials and promotional items in local languages, including brochures, pamphlets, and t-shirts, as well as radio public service announcements and pre-recorded audio messages. This comprehensive approach has successfully mobilized communities, resulting in high turnout for PIA activities and increased participation of landholders, including women and VGs, in the SLLC process to protect their land rights.

Establishing PIA Teams and KIAs

PIA teams have been established at the federal, regional, zone, and woreda levels. These teams are responsible for leading and monitoring the implementation of PIA activities, establishing KIAs at woreda and kebele levels, and building the capacity of PIA teams and KIAs.

PIA Teams: The PIA teams consist of land administration experts and decision-makers at the federal, regional, zone, and woreda levels. Both federal and regional PIA teams have undergone capacity-building training. Their primary responsibilities include establishing and capacitating PIA teams and KIAs at the zonal and woreda levels, as well as supporting and monitoring PIA activities at the woreda and kebele levels. Woreda PIA teams, comprising woreda land experts and team leaders, are responsible for establishing KIAs at the kebele level, cascading training, and leading the implementation of PIA activities at the woreda, kebele, and community levels.

Key Information Agents (KIAs): KIAs are composed of various stakeholders, including woreda land administration staff, Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees (KLAUCs), representatives from kebele and woreda administrations,





women's affairs representatives at the kebele and woreda levels, development group leaders, school directors, religious leaders, elders, and law enforcement bodies (woreda court/judges, police, and prosecutor offices).

The role of KIAs is to disseminate essential information about SLLC to community members, including women and vulnerable groups, utilizing their respective institutional and community structures. They are also instrumental in enforcing land-related laws within their respective jurisdictions to protect the rights of all, especially women and vulnerable populations.

Capacity Building for PIA



Capacity building lies at the heart of PIA interventions. Once the PIA teams and KIAs are established, they undergo comprehensive training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for the effective implementation of PIA activities. Customized training modules are designed for PIA teams and KIAs at various levels, aligning with their specific roles and responsibilities within the PIA intervention. The training focuses on several key aspects, including the significance and benefits of SLLC, landholders' rights and obligations, the importance of participation of landholders, including women and VGs, at every stage of the SLLC, the role of PIA and GESI actions in land certification and administration, non-discriminatory approaches, the importance of social baselining, PIA strategy and implementation approach, and the responsibilities of PIA teams and KIAs, and the rollout of PIA at each SLLC stage.

Once duty bearers at all levels have gained awareness and capacity for PIA, the PIA teams and KIAs engage in community mobilization to raise awareness about the SLLC.

PIA Activities at Different Stages of SLLC

General Awareness: During this initial stage, PIA focuses on creating widespread awareness about the planned SLLC activities. This covers the significance and benefits of SLLC, the process involved, the critical importance of landholders' active participation throughout the process, including women and VGs, the need for all right holders to be present at each stage of the SLLC, especially in cases of joint land right holding, and landholders' rights and obligations as defined by relevant laws and regulations.

Focused PIA Activities: The second stage is more targeted and intense. It focuses on a particular SLLC process about to take place, occurring approximately one week before specific SLLC processes, such as adjudication and demarcation, public display of land information, and certificate distribution.

PIA Activities on Land Transactions

PIA also plays a crucial role in promoting formal land transactions, which are essential for maintaining the land tenure security achieved through SLLC. PIA activities related to land transactions begin during the final stage of the SLLC process, i.e., certificate distribution. Promoting formal land transactions becomes an ongoing effort, integrated into routine land administration tasks until desired social changes occur in landholder behaviour and practices regarding formal land transactions.

Institutionalizing PIA



Over the past decade, the PIA intervention has significantly evolved based on implementation experiences. Under the leadership of the RLAUD, REILA, in collaboration with the CALM programme, compiled valuable lessons and developed an updated national guide on PIA and GESI for SLLC. This guide was created through a participatory process involving key stakeholders. The Embassy of Finland and the RLAUD participated in a design workshop to validate the content. Additionally, representatives from regional land bureaus in Benishangul-Gumuz (BG), Amhara, SNNPR, and Oromia contributed to the design workshop and review process. The updated guide incorporates a PIA module focused on land transactions and has been widely disseminated across all regions. It plays a crucial role in institutionalizing PIA and GESI principles while ensuring standardized practices, serving as a valuable resource for regional land administration bureaus and woreda offices throughout Ethiopia.

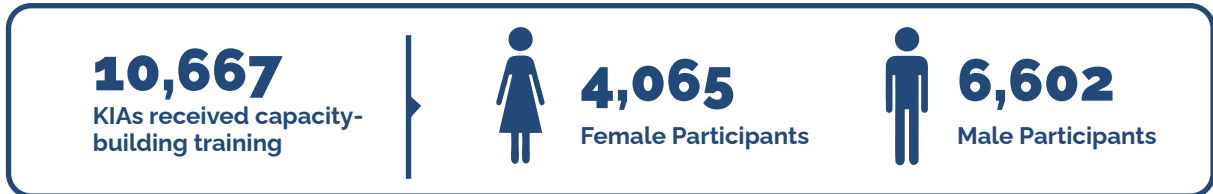
As the SLLC expands its coverage into new geographic areas and adapts to diverse socio-cultural norms, the guide remains dynamic and subject to ongoing updates.

PIA Implementation in REILA Target Woredas and Achievements

As part of the SLLC rollout, the REILA technical team, in collaboration with RLAUD, initiated the establishment of regional PIA teams in the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. These teams received comprehensive capacity-building training of trainers (ToT) on PIA. With support from REILA, the regional PIAs then established KIAs at the woreda and kebele levels. They subsequently cascaded PIA training in the fourteen targeted woredas across the two regions, following guidelines outlined in the PIA manual. Throughout the project implementation periods, REILA conducted extensive capacity-building training for PIA implementers at all levels of land administration. Given that most procedural actions related to SLLC and land administration occur at these local levels, capacity-building efforts targeted woreda land administration staff, kebele land administration and use committees (KLAUCs), kebele land administration experts, woreda and kebele administrations, and other relevant sector offices.

Capacity Building for KIAs in REILA Target Woredas: Achievements

In the fourteen REILA woredas across the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz (BG) regions, a total of 10,667 KIAs received capacity-building training focused on the SLLC process. Among these KIAs, approximately 17% (4,065) are female. The KLAUCs, which are integral to the KIA structure, underwent specialized training to enhance their knowledge and skills as key drivers of SLLC and PIA activities at the kebele and sub-kebele levels. Additionally, KLAUCs play a crucial role in safeguarding the land rights of women and vulnerable groups.



PIA Activities and Achievements in REILA Target Woredas



In the fourteen woredas of the Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara regions, trained KIAs actively carried out PIA activities for SLLC, guided by the PIA manual. REILA played a critical role in supporting and leading the implementation of PIA throughout the two project phases. PIA activities primarily targeted community members/landholders at the kebele level, including women and vulnerable groups (VGs).

REILA successfully mobilized and engaged a total of 317,220 participants during REILA II and an additional 46,350 during REILA I. Out of the total community reached, 32% were female. As a result of extensive PIA efforts, REILA certified over 1.5 million land parcels in the fourteen woredas, with an average of 78% of certificates issued to women solely or jointly with their husbands in the two regions.



Applying Multi-Layered GESI Actions

GESI Responsive PIA Activities

Targeted PIA Activities

REILA achieved remarkable results in implementing a highly participatory and socially inclusive SLLC process. Leveraging social baselining data, the project effectively identified and reached women and VGs, employing targeted PIA activities through house-to-house visits (bet le bet) and focus group discussions conducted by land administration experts and KLAUCs, particularly women KLAUCs. Additionally, the project ensured that women and VGs received the necessary support to actively participate in or be represented during the SLLC process, safeguarding their land rights. The success of these efforts is evident in the issuance of land certificates across the fourteen REILA woredas during the two project implementation phases.

- In the Amhara region, **80% of the total land parcels certified** in REILA project woredas were issued to married couples (co-titling) and female-headed households during the two project implementation phases.
- Similarly, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, **78% of the total land parcels certified** were issued to married couples (co-titling), including women in polygamous marriage arrangements and female-headed households.

REILA's achievement of **an average of 78% of land certificates** issued in the name of women, either individually or jointly with their husbands, is well aligned with the national target.

Protecting the Land Rights of Women in Polygamous Households

One of REILA's distinctive accomplishments in systematic land registration is safeguarding the land rights of women in polygamous marriage arrangements within the Benishangul-Gumuz region. The project achieved this through targeted PIA activities focused on polygamous households, along with active engagement with key stakeholders. These efforts included awareness-raising, capacity building, and advocacy for the amendment and enforcement of laws related to equal land rights for women in polygamous unions. Consequently, the land rights of women in polygamous households in the Benishangul-Gumuz region are protected through the registration of their land holdings, either solely in their names (for their share of land) or jointly with their husband and all parties involved in the marriage.

Drawing from valuable lessons learned during the REILA project's extensive experience in the Benishangul-Gumuz region over the past decade, the land rights for women in polygamous unions have been recognized and protected in the Federal Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation No. 1324/2024, which was adopted by the federal parliament. Additionally, REILA has actively participated in the federal Women's Land Rights Task Force, advocating for the protection of women's land rights and contributing to legal reforms at both the federal level and within the two project regions.

PIA intervention has been instrumental in promoting gender equality and social inclusion while addressing inequalities in land certification and administration procedures. In addition to PIA, REILA employed critical GESI actions to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in land certification, administration, and service delivery.

Social Baseline Assessment for Effective PIA in SLLC

Social baselining is considered a strategic tool for advancing gender equality and reducing discrimination in rural land administration. It plays a crucial role in the implementation of PIA, enabling SLLC and PIA teams to effectively identify, target, and engage women and VGs and ensure their participation in the SLLC process to safeguard their land rights. As part of PIA activities, the KLAUC, woreda land experts, including gender and social experts, collect social baseline data. This data helps identify specific household characteristics in a given kebele that is targeted for SLLC activities. These characteristics include households in polygamous marriage arrangements, female-headed households, persons with disabilities, orphans, and other vulnerable individuals whose unique circumstances may hinder them from protecting their land rights.

The social baseline assessment occurs at the kebele level before SLLC activities take place. The PIA team utilizes this data to easily trace and engage women and VGs. They can then tailor PIA activities to address their specific needs, ensuring that they receive essential information about the SLLC process. The team assists them in participating effectively at all stages of the SLLC process and ensures proper representation to safeguard their land rights. Furthermore, social baseline data enables the REILA team to enhance monitoring of women's and VGs' participation throughout the SLLC process, allowing for accurate reporting.

Free Legal Aid Support to VGs

REILA has fostered collaborative efforts with regional justice offices and the Assosa University Law School free legal aid center. The primary objective of these partnerships is to facilitate free legal aid services to women and VGs facing land rights violations. These institutions have undergone capacity-building training and participated in various legal-related workshops facilitated by REILA as part of this joint initiative..



Applying Multi-Layered GESI Actions

Duty Bearer Action

Gender Quotas for KLAUC Membership

REILA has implemented strategic measures to promote and ensure gender balance in land administration and service delivery at both the kebele and woreda levels. These actions aim to create a more equitable and inclusive land administration system. One key measure involves setting gender quotas for the composition of KLAUCs. These committees play a crucial role in local land governance. REILA actively promotes and facilitates the inclusion of two women in the seven-member KLAUCs within each kebele. Across the REILA project woredas in the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, a total of 2,142 KLAUCs are adequately trained by REILA and discharging their responsibilities, out of which 612 are women.



Affirmative Action in Recruitment of Women Experts at the Woreda Land Administration Office

REILA also advocates for the recruitment of women experts in land administration offices at the woreda level. While woreda expert recruitment typically considers educational background and technical qualifications, an additional gender-specific score is factored in to support the hiring of women experts. The objective is to ensure that at least two women experts are part of the seven-member team in each woreda land office. These experts handle critical tasks related to land certification, administration, and the operation and maintenance of the NRLAIS. The increasing enrolment of women in land administration TVET programs has been instrumental in bringing more qualified women experts into woreda land offices. This affirmative action actively encourages women's participation in land administration roles, contributing to a fair and non-discriminatory land administration system and improved service delivery.



Strategic Capacity Building in Law Enforcement: Empowering Justice Sector Professionals in REILA Target Woredas

REILA, in collaboration with key stakeholders, has successfully implemented a strategic capacity-building initiative for law enforcement professionals in the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. The training focused on land administration and use laws, as well as Ethiopian legislation related to the rights of women and vulnerable groups (VGs), including sections dealing with potential ethnic and religious discrimination. The training aimed to identify and address critical gaps in the implementation of land laws, primarily among woreda judges and public legal experts. Enhancing their capacity and awareness helps create a shared understanding of the essential values and principles within this legal framework, preparing them to uphold the law effectively. A total of 275 public legal officers and judges received these training workshops, of which only 12% of participants were female. The gender disparity is a reflection of the limited number of female public officers in government offices.

REILA's strategic capacity-building efforts contribute to a more informed and empowered justice sector, ultimately ensuring the consistent implementation and enforcement of land laws across both regions. The training remains strategically significant in safeguarding the land rights of women and vulnerable groups.

Joint Field Monitoring

The REILA regional technical team has established a regular practice of conducting joint field monitoring alongside land administration staff for SLLC activities. This ongoing process serves as a platform for discussing and addressing any identified gaps related to gender equality and non-discrimination practices.



Applying Multi-Layered GESI Actions

Transformation Through SLLC

Setting Gender-Specific Targets in the REILA Results Framework

REILA has incorporated gender-disaggregated indicators into the project's results framework as a crucial tool to promote and mainstream gender equality and non-discrimination practices in land certification and administration. These indicators allow the project to monitor and measure progress on SLLC, women's participation in PIA activities, and training. REILA has introduced an innovative indicator specifically tailored for polygamous households. Gender-disaggregated data are captured in NRLAIS to monitor progress on gender equality and non-discrimination practices. These indicators have proven to be effective tools in adhering to the "leave no one behind" principles in land certification and administration. The project extends its gender-disaggregated indicators to the broader land sector through the RLAUD Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

Co-Titling: A Norm for Land Certification

Joint titling of land parcels between spouses is a key GESI tool in land certification. Legal provisions, including constitutional and regional land laws, strongly advocate for equal rights between women and men. Co-titling is a practical application of these rights, where land parcels are jointly titled in the names of both husband and wife. This action is transformational in recognizing and ensuring the equal land rights of women in male-headed households, including women in polygamous unions. This is based on the couple's declaration of interest for joint land titling during the PIA and SLLC process and has increasingly become a common phenomenon that empowers women.



Mandatory Women's Presence in SLLC and Land Transactions

Requiring women's participation and attendance throughout all stages of the SLLC process and subsequent land transactions is a practical approach to achieving participatory and inclusive SLLC and equitable land administration. By implementing this requirement, women are empowered to assertively exercise their equal rights to land and actively engage in decision-making related to land use, similar to their male counterparts. This is reflected in the proportion of women who certified their land rights solely and jointly with their spouses in the REILA target woredas. This practice is driving positive social change and significantly contributing to women's empowerment.

Enhancing Good Governance Through NRLAIS

Digitalization

NRLAIS is a digitized rural cadastre that stores and manages digitized textual and spatial data related to land parcels and their rights holders. After introduction of such data in the system, subsequent changes can only be made by woreda technicians, with each of these having a unique log-in identity that is required to modify primary data. Hence any changes can be traced back to individuals. Digital data management hence creates a high degree of accountability.

The Four-Eye Principle in NRLAIS

NRLAIS upholds transparency and accountability in land administration and service delivery through the implementation of the “Four-Eye principle.” Under this principle, cadastral data storage and management follow strict controls. Primary data entry is restricted to woreda experts, involving multi-layered verification. Data corrections and changes to entry fields require input from multiple land experts, effectively preventing data tampering and corruption. Despite some bureaucratic processes, this practice serves as a safeguard against corrupt practices and contributes to enhanced good governance.

NRLAIS Usage by Judiciary Services

NRLAIS cadastral data increasingly serves as a powerful tool for resolving land-related disputes. At the woreda level, judiciary services utilize SLLC and NRLAIS outcomes to address land disputes effectively. When the justice office requests it, woreda land administration offices promptly provide reliable and accurate land data for specific parcels, facilitating streamlined dispute resolution. Extending NRLAIS access to woreda judiciary services contributes to good governance by promoting transparency, efficiency, and accountability in land administration processes. This action ensures that land-related dispute decisions are well-informed, fair, and timely, benefiting citizens, particularly women and vulnerable groups. However, despite REILA’s efforts to create awareness, a significant number of judges still do not utilize the SLLC and information from NRLAIS as conclusive evidence, instead relying on other documentary evidence and witnesses.

Systematic Land Titling to Ensure Equitable SLLC Provision

The successful development and implementation of the SLLC combined with the NRLAIS play a critical role in achieving social and gender justice. The SLLC method follows a systematic process, adhering to good governance principles that treat all landholders equally. This approach ensures equitable land certification without discrimination based on landholder profiles. Regardless of their background or status, every landholder within a designated kebele area targeted for certification undergoes the same standardized procedures, leading to the issuance of a land certificate. Unless specific land disputes exist, all parcels within the kebele area are simultaneously recorded for certification. There is no evidence suggesting that certain kebeles or parts of them have been overlooked during certification based on social variables.



WOMEN Empowerment

Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action

Co-Titling

Women in KLAUCs

Co-Titling

Women's Presence in SLLC

Women's Presence in

Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action

Co-Titling

Women in KLAUCs

Co-Titling

Women's Presence in SLLC

Women's Presence in

REILA's innovative land certification process ensures that women's land rights are recognized and protected throughout Ethiopia, significantly contributing to women's empowerment. The NRLAIS operation further reinforces and maintains women's land rights achieved through SLLC. This achievement is facilitated by the RLAUD-REILA's innovative method for land certification and system for land administration, developed with a strong focus on gender equality and inclusion. REILA's gender-responsive PIA approach has played a crucial role in enhancing women's access to information, increasing awareness and knowledge of their land rights, and emphasizing their equal participation in important decisions related to land. As a result, women are empowered to assertively protect their land rights, actively engaging in the SLLC process and subsequent land transactions. The overall PIA intervention, including advocacy activities implemented at the community, service provider, and decision-maker levels, has improved the enabling environment and equitable service delivery. It has created a more favourable environment for women to exercise and defend their land rights.

Targeted GESI actions, implemented by REILA and other innovative interventions, along with legislative reforms, the promotion of women in land administration, service, and leadership, have substantially improved the situation for women and collectively contribute to women's empowerment. Some key actions and interventions include:

Title Deeds (SLLC): Land certificates bearing women's names and photos for each parcel of land, whether held solely or jointly with their husbands, assert women's equal rights. These physical attestations serve as powerful declarations of women's land rights. As a result, women experience a significant increase in their sense of empowerment and autonomy, knowing that their land rights are legally recognized and protected.

Co-Titling: Co-titling between wife and husband ensures that married women, including those in polygamous unions, have equal land rights for land they jointly hold with their husbands. The inclusion of their names and pictures alongside their husbands' on each land parcel and in landholding records empowers women and strengthens their assertiveness in protecting their rights. Husband and wife are not required to present a marriage certificate to confirm the "union" in the SLLC process. The union, formal or informal, between wife and husband is locally validated by KLAUCs as well as neighbouring community members.

Mandatory Women's Presence in SLLC and Land Transactions: Requiring women to be present during each stage of the SLLC process and land transactions is a pragmatic procedure embedded in land certification and administration. It enables women to actively participate in the process and protect their equal land rights without fear of socio-cultural or religious impediments, empowering them to exercise their decision-making rights related to land.

Inclusion of Women in KLAUCs: In each kebele within fourteen REILA woredas, two women are included in the seven-member KLACUs. This gender balance in land administration and leadership creates a supportive environment for women to safeguard their land rights. Women in KLACUs bridge critical information gaps among women through outreach activities without cultural or religious barriers, enabling women to participate in the SLLC process. This action significantly contributes to the empowerment of women in REILA target woredas.

Affirmative Action for Women's Recruitment: The inclusion of a gender-specific scoring in the woreda expert recruitment evaluation criteria promotes the recruitment of women experts in woreda land administration offices. This approach creates gender balance in land administration and services, enhancing gender responsiveness and contributing to overall gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender-Specific Targets: The project sets gender-specific targets and performance indicators, ensuring the integration of gender equality actions into SLLC and land administration processes. These targets significantly contribute to women's empowerment.

Improved Judiciary System: A gender-responsive and improved judiciary system empowers women to exercise their rights and protect their land rights effectively.

Access to SLLC-Linked Loans: NRLAIS enables access to individual loans using SLLC as collateral. This allows women to engage in diversified economic activities and manage financial matters, granting them significant financial independence and empowerment.



Abdurahim and Aberash's Story of Empowerment

Abdurahim Oumer and Aberash Negatu are a young couple with three daughters. Aberash is his only wife, and they jointly registered their land. Abdurahim once desired to marry a second wife. "I wanted to marry a second wife, but with the land certificate, the chance of doing that is very low. When I asked my wife about bringing a second wife, she told me it was my right, but I would need to find new land and marry her there, not on this land."

Aberash believes it is his right to marry a second, third, or even fourth wife, as allowed by Sharia law. “But Sharia doesn’t say he can bring a second wife using my resources. He can only use his share of the land. I’m worried about the future of our three daughters. If he brings a second wife here and she gives birth to boys, all the land rights will go to the boys during inheritance. The culture doesn’t allow women to inherit land. Parents pass land to their sons, and daughters only get what their brothers are willing to give them. This practice is still prevalent and widely accepted by the community, despite what the law says and our increased awareness. So I’m doing this to protect the rights of my three girls as well.”

In the past, I wouldn’t have been able to do this, but with my land rights certificate in hand, I can protect my rights and those of my daughters. I have gained adequate knowledge and awareness through various platforms during land registration. I know my rights. If I take him to court, I know I will be able to protect my rights. I told him that too. If we get divorced, I will secure my share of the land rights through civil court, and I can build a service quarter to rent out, generating income to feed and send my daughters to school. I teach my daughters to be strong and stand up for their rights.



I feel so happy to see my name and picture on the certificate. I’m excited for all other women in our areas able to get equal rights and go out, sit equally with men, attend meetings, and speak in public without fear. The land certificate protects our rights and increases our confidence.

I feel sorry for my mother. She used to have a large piece of land with my father, but one day my father asked her to sign some papers, telling her they were employment papers allowing him to work as a guard in some institution. She signed them, but he was actually selling the land and this was before the certification. She suffered and struggled to raise us as she lost a significant portion of her farmland. We were little children then. I wish this registration and certification had started back then so that should would be able to build and lead a better life for herself and her children.





Prepared and Empowered: Amelher's Stand for Land Rights

Amelher is married to Ali, and she is his only wife so far. They have registered their land jointly, and she is very aware of her land rights. However, in the back of her mind, she always thinks that one day Ali might bring a second wife, and she is prepared for it.

“The love of today and the love of tomorrow are different,” she says. “He may bring a second wife. I may allow him to get married because it is our custom, but I will not give her full entitlement to my land. I might allow him to give her 25% of the land, but only if he asks me respectfully and includes me in the decision. Otherwise, I will not permit him to bring a second wife onto my land. I have the right; he cannot do it by force or violence because now I know my rights very well, and I know how to protect them. I will tell him that he can only give from his share of the land, not mine. Other women in our area do the same. He can get married as our religion allows, but the religion doesn't say that I have to give my resources to another. Women in this area are now aware of their rights, and they are not afraid or shy to protect them.”



Section VI

Collaboration, Value for Money and Sustainability

Collaboration, Partnership and Leveraging for Maximized Project Outcomes

REILA recognizes collaboration, partnership, and coordination as essential strategic approaches for successful project implementation. Such alliances increase efficiency, help optimize resource utilization, maximize project outcomes, and expedite positive change in the land administration sector. Under the effective leadership and coordination of RLAUD, REILA has established robust partnerships with a wide range of bilateral and multilateral land programs that support the rural land sector. These collaborations significantly contribute to project success. Bilateral agreements between partner organizations facilitate mutual support for activities aligned with RLAUD's defined needs and priorities and support the directorate in the design and implementation of annual work plans to realize the land sector development plan outlined in the ESIF/SLM.

REILA has established strong partnerships and leveraged resources with major land programs, including the WB-SLMP, DFID-funded LIFT program, WB-CALM, GIZ-CLM, and GIZ-Land Governance (LaGo) program, S2RAI and RLLP projects. These collaborative efforts centered around key innovations and interventions, such as pilot developments, testing, and scaling up methods for SLLC, NRLAIS, and MELA, and capacity development initiatives. As a result of these collaborations, REILA achieved outcomes beyond its initial project objectives, extending its impact across ten regions and ensuring the sustainability of its innovations. Furthermore, RLAUD, REILA, and its partners effectively leveraged expertise, pooled resources, and shared accountability, resulting in significant advancements in rural land administration and fundamentally transforming Ethiopia's land sector. The project also explored opportunities for cooperation and synergy with Finnish government-supported programs, including AgroBIG and CoWASH in water catchment protection.

REILA's successful collaborations and partnerships with various land programs enabled the rapid and extensive scaling up of the SLLC and the NRLAIS across ten regions. RLAUD achieved remarkable results by certifying over 30 million land parcels out of the targeted 50 million, while NRLAIS installation in 458 woredas with 450 fully operational (June 2024), managing data for more than 27 million land parcels. These significant achievements were realized through effective collaboration and partnership between land programs, leading to legislative and political recognition of SLLC and NRLAIS.



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WB-SLMP

The innovative and fit-for-purpose method for systematic rural land certification (SLLC) has been developed through effective collaborative efforts. REILA developed the method building upon previous efforts by partners, including USAID, and involves effective collaboration between the RLAUD, regional land bureaus, and the WB-SLMP program. This method, subsequently endorsed as the standard for SLLC, has significantly transformed the land sector in Ethiopia. During the initial project phase, REILA collaborated with WB-SLMP in the trial of the method for rural cadaster and certification. The project collaboratively developed a meticulous plan for the trial of the orthophoto method across seven distinct topographies in five regions. REILA then fully developed the method and successfully undertook the trial phase of the orthophoto/satellite imagery method for SLLC in the five regions.

In the Amhara region, REILA produced digital orthophotos covering a total area of 16,900 km². Meanwhile, WB-SLMP extended its coverage to other areas within the region, with technical support from REILA and BoRLAU, now BoL, in fieldwork, particularly in geo-referencing images.



GIZ Land Programs

In collaboration with GIZ land programs, RLAUD-REILA tested further digitization of SLLC process. The project provided significant technical support to test the use of pre-loaded tablets (referred to as MassReg Mob) for SLLC field work. The development of MassReg Mob exemplifies the success of mutual exchange of expertise and technical support among partners, positioning SLLC for advanced digitized innovation. This tool enhances efficiency, reduces overhead costs of land certification, ensures an error-free SLLC process, and maintains superior data quality and security. Additionally, it promotes a high degree of transparency to prevent ill practices.



DFID/LIFT Programme

The collaboration between REILA and the LIFT programme is evident in the design, development, testing, and scaling up of the NRLAIS. REILA built upon the foundation of the Rural Land Administration System (RLAS) developed by LIFT, streamlining the NRLAIS development process. LIFT played a significant role in expanding NRLAIS, leveraging its extensive resources and broad geographical coverage.

REILA provided crucial technical support to LIFT during the NRLAIS scale-up, including installation, operationalization, migration of SLLC data from an interim database system to NRLAIS, which involved data harmonization and cleaning, system maintenance, and quality assurance. The project provided support to the development of guidelines for data cleaning and migration, enhanced NRLAIS functionalities, and facilitated capacity building for NRLAIS operators and IT staff. Even after LIFT phased out in 2019, REILA continued its support as the CALM programme took over NRLAIS management of LIFT woredas. REILA significantly leveraged the existing IT infrastructure established by DFID/LIFT and rolled out NRLAIS across 150 woredas.



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WB/CALM Programme

The CALM Programme, launched in 2019, set out with substantial resources and an ambitious goal: to certify eight million land parcels across a vast geographic area. This initiative created numerous opportunities and comparative advantages, particularly in collaboration with the second phase of the REILA project. Running from 2019 to 2025, the CALM programme is fully implemented by the RLAUD and regional land bureaus, leveraging existing government human resources. Budget management falls under the Ministry of Finance (MoF), with disbursements directly tied to performance indicators. These factors underscore the importance of REILA's robust technical support to RLAUD, enabling the successful implementation of the CALM programme. REILA closely collaborated with CALM during programme design and operational phases, providing exceptionally high and dedicated technical assistance to kick-start CALM's implementation.

Besides providing technical support for the overall CALM programme implementation, REILA actively collaborated and leveraged resources with the programme in various activities. These include scaling up the NRLAIS, maintaining system functionalities, digitizing the SLLC process, enhancing human resource capacity for land administration, and implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for land administration. In a comprehensive collaboration and partnership, REILA gained greater flexibility to reallocate scarce resources from routine activities to more strategic undertakings. During the second phase of the REILA project, the CALM programme assumed responsibility for scaling up the SLLC in the eight REILA project woredas in the Amhara region. As a result, REILA shifted its focus to supporting the expansion of the NRLAIS in CALM woredas and beyond. This support includes the rollout, operationalization, and system functionality, as well as providing training to NRLAIS operators.

Collaboration in NRLAIS Scale-Up: System Rollout, Operationalization, and Maintenance

In 2019, RLAUD initiated the full rollout of the NRLAIS across all CALM and RLLP programmes woredas, achieving altogether coverage of 113 woredas. This mass scale-up was made possible through critical technical assistance and input from the REILA project. Throughout the second phase of the project, REILA provided comprehensive technical support for NRLAIS rollout, encompassing various aspects:

- Data cleaning and migration, system installation, operationalization, system functionality and maintenance, problem-solving, and enhancing NRLAIS capabilities through new functionalities development.
- Preparation of detailed NRLAIS activity plans.
- Development of verification manuals and checklists for NRLAIS assessment reports.
- Preparation and evaluation of staff recruitment exams for NRLAIS operators.
- Development of training manuals for short-track NRLAIS courses and provision of training to staff operating NRLAIS.
- Preparation of draft cadastral data Quality Assurance and Quality Control parameters and procedures.

Collaboration in Human Resource Capacity Development

REILA has successfully institutionalized formal land administration training and study programmes through collaboration with the CALM programme and higher educational institutions. Initiated by the RLAUD, REILA worked closely with six higher education institutions to facilitate and support the launch of fast-track courses, as well as BSc and MSc scholarship programs in various land administration disciplines. These programs specifically targeted existing land administration staff, with funding provided by the CALM programme.

REILA's technical support included curriculum and module development, as well as coordination for the scholarship programme's implementation. A total of 6274 land administration staff received fast-track training, while 78 government staff enrolled and 76 graduated from the MSc scholarship programs. These training initiatives have significantly strengthened land administration and implementation capacity across the regions, resulting in improved performance in land registration, certification, administration, and service delivery.

Collaboration in MELA Development and Implementation

The initial phase of the MELA system's development and implementation represents a crucial collaboration between the REILA project and the CALM programme. REILA has invested significantly in creating the core modules for the MELA system, initially designed to monitor and track CALM programme activities. Later, this system will expand to cover all projects and government activities. In return, CALM has committed financial resources for the system rollout in its programme woredas.



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WB-RLLP

The REILA technical team actively supported the World Bank's Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods Project (RLLP) by standardizing the configuration of administrative units and integrating them into the NRLAIS database. The continuous technical support included selecting potential RLLP woredas for NRLAIS operation, system installation and configuration, migrating SLLC data from interim database systems to NRLAIS (involving data cleaning, quality assurance, and harmonization to meet NRLAIS data requirements), operationalizing the system, standardizing NRLAIS information fields, and providing capacity-building training across regions with operational rural land administration functions. Additionally, REILA supports the project's piloting of drone and tablet use for SLLC.



GIZ Programmes: S2RAI, CLM, and LaGO

REILA has collaborated on several initiatives with GIZ-funded projects, including the following:

Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments II (S2RAI)

- Development and piloting of MASSREG Mobile for collecting digitized field data using tablet technology.
- Conducting User Acceptance Testing for the MASSREG Mobile Application.
- Providing technical support and on-the-job training for NRLAIS management, end-user skills development, and manual and web-based SLLC activities.
- Supporting the procurement of NRDS-MIS, a system designed to integrate and harmonize data collection and processing for informed decision-making in the Natural Resource Development (NRD) sector.

Climate-Sensitive Innovations for Land Management (CLM)

- Contributing to the development of a Data Lake for the NRD Sector,

serving as a Management Information System (MIS) to facilitate data collection, processing, and sharing.

- Conducting land fragmentation analysis for 340 NRLAIS operational woredas.
- Designing and implementing land transaction assessments.

Land Governance (LaGO)

- Piloting the preparation of locally adapted land consolidation and testing other instruments to address land fragmentation.
- Developing manuals and procedures to replicate learning experiences from piloting and enhance the technical capacities of relevant authorities and land administration experts.



USAID – LGA/ELTAP/ELAP

- Conducting data quality audits.
- Supporting feasibility studies for the use of the NRLAIS in urban areas.



Norwegian Refugee Council

- Producing a guide on land restitution for conflict-affected areas.

REILA's technical support to RLAUD through collaboration and resource leveraging with bilateral and multilateral partner programmes is estimated at up to **150 million Euro**, significantly surpassing the total budget of 22.6 million project budget for both REILA phases. Although quantifying these contributions precisely poses challenges, the project's impact remains visible.

REILA's strong and strategic partnerships have not only facilitated the achievement of project goals but have also positioned it as a key player driving innovative change in rural land management.

RLAUD's Effective Leadership and Coordination

The RLAUD consistently demonstrates excellent leadership, management, and coordination in rural land administration. Guided by the principles of the RED & FS donor coordination platform, RLAUD effectively manages various donor programmes, including REILA projects, DFID/LIFT, WB/CALM, and several GIZ and USAID-funded projects. This adept leadership fosters resource optimization and synergies between the government and donors. RLAUD successfully coordinates government and donor activities related to rural land using the WB/CALM programme as a crucial platform, facilitating bilateral contributions, technical assistance for innovations development, testing, and scaling up.

Value for Money and Efficiency

REILA has achieved remarkable value for money and operational efficiency in its project implementations. The project's fit-for-purpose approach in developing methods for rural land certification and cadaster systems ensures that processes and outcomes are closely tied to cost-effectiveness and relevance.

■ Optimizing Land Parcel Certification Costs

The project successfully delivered value for money by achieving an estimated cost of €2.51 per parcel in REILA target woredas in the Amhara region and €6.92 per parcel in the Benishangul Gumuz region. These costs align with the project's established targets of €5 and €9 per land parcel for each respective region. The regional difference in setting targets originates from specific parcel characteristics and access challenges. In Amhara, fixed settled farming systems dominate, with an average plot size of 0.5 hectares. Benishangul Gumuz features dynamic shifting cultivation systems, with larger plots averaging 3.31 hectares.

The significant cost reductions for certification in Amhara are due to strong institutions and existing data in the Information System for Land Administration (ISLA). Economies of scale and a longer experience in land certification contribute to the low cost per parcel achieved in Amhara. In contrast, Benishangul Gumuz faces relatively higher unit costs per parcel due to complex demarcation and adjudication processes as a result of weak institutional capacity and security conditions. Despite these obstacles, REILA maintains its cost per parcel on target in the Benishangul Gumuz region.

REILA's achievement of a low cost per parcel is significant compared to other programmes. For instance, the LIFT programme achieved £3.45 per parcel against a target of £3.75, while the CALM programme's payment-for-performance model retains a value of \$8.24 per parcel across all regions. Despite these variations, the average unit cost for registering a land parcel in Ethiopia is remarkably low compared to other countries, contributing to rapid and mass scale-up.

The average cost per registered parcel was \$7.5 for Rwanda's (LTRSP) from 2009-2013, \$10.0 for Tanzania's Land Tenure Support Programme (LTSP) from 2014-2019, and \$12.0 for Nigeria (GEMS) Project (Menberu et al., 2022, in Cherinet, 2024).

■ Leveraging Open Source Technologies for NRLAIS to Enhance Cost-Effectiveness

NRLAIS is built upon robust open-source technologies, including Ubuntu Linux, PostgreSQL, and QGIS. These tools empower NRLAIS to operate efficiently without the burden of expensive proprietary licenses. For REILA, this translates to **annual cost savings of approximately \$670,000**. Across 450 fully operational NRLAIS woredas in ten regions, the RLAUD achieves an **annual cumulative cost savings exceeding \$15 million**.

NRLAIS offers the freedom to evolve and scale up without incurring additional licensing or upgrade costs. This adaptability ensures sustained cost benefits over time, allowing NRLAIS to stay ahead of changing requirements and technological advancements. By leveraging open-source technologies, NRLAIS fosters a vibrant community, drives continuous innovation, facilitates rapid updates, and provides access to a wide range of plugins and extensions, all contributing to its value-for-money proposition.

■ Strategic Use of Technical Assistance (TA) and Collaboration for Optimized Value for Money and Enhanced Efficiency

The value of REILA's intensive technical assistance to RLAUD and the regions, alongside strategic collaboration and support for partners (including LIFT, CALM, and RLLP), is estimated at up to some **150 million Euro for both REILA phases**. This concerted effort focused on scaling up core activities such as SLLC, NRLAIS management, and the Monitoring and Evaluation for Land Administration (MELA) initiative. Remarkably, these achievements were made without adjustments to the original project budget. Instead, REILA effectively utilized the allocated resources for technical assistance, approximately 45-50% of the 8.8 million Euro total project budget for the second phase. The outcome represents excellent value for money within the land sector with each Finnish Euro invested resulting in an estimated 10 Euro investment from partners.

As a result, REILA not only achieved cost-effectiveness but also increased efficiency and positive outcomes for the land sector and its partners. Notable accomplishments include the certification of 30 million land parcels, the operationalization of NRLAIS in 458 woredas across ten regions, and the successful implementation of the MELA system in 300 programme woredas.

■ Institutional Arrangement for Enhanced Efficiency

The institutional arrangement of REILA has significantly improved efficiency in project implementation. Instead of creating a separate entity like other programmes, the project fully integrated itself into existing federal and regional structures, including the RLAUD, the Bureau of Land (BoL) in Amhara, and the Bureau of Land and Cooperatives (BoLC) in Benishangul Gumuz regions.

These arrangements facilitated co-planning and efficient management of activities. By aligning with existing structures, REILA effectively coordinated with implementing partners, streamlined processes, minimized administrative and operational costs, and reduced bureaucracy. As a result, decision-making became more efficient, leading to maximized project output and positive outcomes. The institutional proximity also allowed REILA to leverage strategic partnerships and collaborations, further enhancing efficiency and project impact.

Sustainability of Project Outcomes

The REILA project's innovations and interventions are designed with careful consideration for cost-effectiveness, adaptability, and scalability within local capacities. The goal is to ensure sustained outputs, outcomes, and impact beyond the project's lifetime. The project's implementation approach emphasizes bringing key implementing agencies to the forefront, encouraging them to take responsibility and ownership of the achieved outcomes. This approach significantly contributes to sustaining key project outcomes at both the federal and regional levels. Key sustainability factors and actions include:

■ Effectiveness of Innovations and Technologies

The effectiveness of REILA's innovations and technologies for rural land registration and administration has played a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes. REILA's approach, based on the "fit-for-purpose" principles, has become the standard practice for rural land registration and administration in the country. This approach prioritizes flexibility, inclusiveness, and participatory processes, ensuring that land certification and administration are effective, affordable, reliable, attainable, and scalable through simple technology.

These innovations have successfully expanded beyond REILA's initial target regions. Currently, the rollout of the SLLC and the NRLAIS covers ten regions. Approximately 30 million land parcels have been certified, representing 60% of the national target. NRLAIS installation has reached 458 woredas (districts) with 450 fully operationalized out of the 700 targeted by the RLAUD. These achievements have led to the recognition of SLLC and NRLAIS in the newly adopted federal land proclamation and their endorsement by the Ethiopian parliament. Such political and legislative support encourages further scale-up efforts by RLAUD and development partners, aiming for full coverage of SLLC and NRLAIS operations in the near future. These efforts ensure the sustainability of outcomes in the rural land sector, as well as REILA's project goals, and ultimately sustained tenure security in rural Ethiopia.

Digital Transformation

REILA has made significant technical and financial investments to transition Ethiopia's land sector from paper-based analogue records to a digital system. The NRLAIS, which manages data for over 27 million land parcels and processes subsequent rural land transactions across ten regions, has become one of the largest database systems in the country, arguably second only to those used by banks, customs, and revenue authorities.

The rural land administration sector is now an integral part of Ethiopia's digital transformation, aligning with the country's overall development priorities. As technology continues to drive change, the demand for modern and integrated land administration services will grow. This evolution will lead to a fully functional and financially sustainable rural land administration service (RLAS). The cost-effectiveness of using open-source technology for NRLAIS encourages further system development, expanding its scope and services. It has the potential to evolve into a web-based platform accessible from anywhere.

Scalability of Innovations and Interventions

REILA's innovations were developed with due consideration for scalability and adaptability, ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes. This has been demonstrated through large-scale programmes such as LIFT, CALM, and RLLP, rapidly expanding the rollout of SLLC and NRLAIS across ten regions. During the initial stages of the second phase of the REILA project, the LIFT programme, with its substantial resources and extensive geographic coverage, heavily invested in scaling up SLLC and NRLAIS. Specifically, LIFT aimed to certify 14 million land parcels and operationalize NRLAIS in the Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, and Tigray regions.

The CALM Program, covering significant areas of the country, provided yet another avenue for mass scale-up. Under the CALM program's implementation, SLLC, NRLAIS, and the MELA system were extended to all ten regions, with REILA's critical technical assistance and collaboration. The collaborative efforts between REILA, LIFT, CALM, and the RLLP resulted in the certification of over 30 million land parcels, significantly contributing to progress in the land sector and ensuring the sustainability of outcomes.

Adaptability and Replicability of Innovations and Interventions

The adaptability of REILA's innovations and support systems, which include the SLLC methods, NRLAIS, PIA, MELA, and TVET program, plays a crucial role in ensuring sustainability. These innovations have been successfully implemented across diverse geographic features, settings, and socio-cultural environments, leading to widespread adoption across ten regions with a high level of effectiveness. REILA's training provision modalities demonstrate flexibility by offering both formal courses and short-track programmes. This adaptability contributes to maintaining a robust land administration and service delivery capacity, thereby standardizing and harmonizing Ethiopia's land administration system and significantly enhancing overall sustainability.

■ Strong Institutional and Human Resource Capacities for Sustainable Outcomes

The REILA project placed significant emphasis on developing institutional and human resource capacities to ensure effective project implementation and sustainable outcomes. Various innovative capacity-building initiatives were implemented, specifically targeting land administration staff at different levels: federal, regional, zonal, woreda (district), kebele (sub-district), and community levels. These initiatives include the introduction of formal training and study programs on land administration training (TVET programme, MSc and BSc scholarship programmes, and Fast Track courses), routine/regular and on-demand capacity-building trainings, on-the-job training and joint monitoring and supportive supervision, international experience exchange and short-term training programs, intensive technical assistance, and PIA activities. These initiatives significantly strengthened institutional capacity for land administration in the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions and at the federal level. Formal training programs were successfully institutionalized within higher educational institutions, ensuring a sustainable supply of the much needed skilled manpower. Increased awareness among community members empowered them to assert and protect their land rights.

As a result of the multilayered capacity building efforts, land certification and administration activities, which initially relied heavily on technical support from development partners (including REILA), are now fully managed by several regional land bureaus and woredas with increased efficiency.

■ Infrastructure and Equipment

As part of institutional capacity building, REILA has made substantial investments in establishing critical infrastructure and equipping institutions for land surveying, registration, certification, and administration in its target regions. These investments encompass the provision of survey equipment, high-capacity computers, printers, servers, and robust IT infrastructure. Specifically, the regional land bureaus in the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions, along with the fifteen targeted woredas (districts) and educational institutions, have directly benefited from these resources. Furthermore, partner programmes and government initiatives are strategically leveraging this infrastructure and the well-established human resource capacity to actively scale up the implementation of the SLLC in the REILA targeted regions. This investment plays a crucial role in sustaining the positive outcomes of the REILA project, fostering efficient land management and administration for the benefit of local communities and regional development.

■ Effective Knowledge Transfer

Implementation Approach

REILA is designed for implementation by the RLAUD and the regional land bureaus, relying on existing government structures and established procedures for recruiting contract staff and procuring equipment. The REILA technical support team is fully integrated within the land administration offices at both the federal and regional levels. Capacity-building efforts focus on in-country and on-the-job training as well as study programs, minimizing the need for experts to be away from their workplaces for extended periods. Moreover, this was achieved with relatively low investment. The implementation approach enhances effective knowledge transfer and fosters a sense of ownership among implementing institutions at all levels, empowering them to maintain results independently.

In-House Capacity for NRLAIS Installation and Maintenance

To ensure the ongoing success of NRLAIS, it's crucial to establish proper knowledge transfer processes. Initially, part of NRLAIS maintenance and new functionality development tasks were outsourced to an external international company (Hansa Luftbild) in a partnership with a local company (INTAPS).

Increased levels of effort under this partnership gradually shifted to the national company. However, for long-term sustainability, the project is exploring ways to internalize these tasks rather than relying solely on external partners. Effective knowledge transfer from the original developers to the in-house team is essential. This transfer ensures that the system can be maintained, upgraded, and supported effectively by local experts. The MoA/RLAUD planned to establish an in-house capacity for NRLAIS. This capacity would be achieved through a small IT development unit that provides support at all levels. In response to this need, REILA has developed detailed terms of reference for the in-house support unit establishment, including a capacity-building program to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Government Support, Stakeholder Buy-In, and Ownership

The strong sense of ownership and buy-in for REILA's innovations and interventions among the RLAUD and the regions is evident through the rapid and widespread adoption across ten regions. This widespread adoption promotes and ensures the sustainability of project outcomes. The effectiveness of REILA's incubated innovations and technologies, such as the SLLC method, NRLAIS, the MELA system, and initiatives for human resources capacity development, played a crucial role in this success. Additionally, the project's institutional arrangements and implementation approach prioritized government partners. REILA emphasized local ownership by assigning significant responsibilities and building necessary capacities within Ethiopian institutions. Furthermore, cost-sharing between the Finnish and Ethiopian governments reinforces ownership of project interventions and their long-term results, contributing to overall sustainability.

Ethiopia's government has reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable land management through the second ESIF-SLM (2024 - 2038) issued recently. This commitment is based on REILA's innovations, particularly the SLLC methods and NRLAIS. In addition, these innovations are now recognized in the newly adopted federal land proclamation, underscoring the government's dedication and creating an enabling legal environment for expanding these successful innovations.

Community Support, Participation, and Inclusivity in Ethiopia's Land Registration and Certification Reforms

Ethiopia has successfully implemented one of the largest, fastest, and most cost-effective land registration and certification reforms in Africa. This achievement is attributed to robust community support, active participation, and inclusivity. The certification of over 30 million land parcels across ten regions, with 81% registered under women jointly with their husbands or on their own, highlights the strong community support and participation in the SLLC. Such community participation and ownership of the process and the output is a key factor in sustaining the outcomes and impact. This success was driven by the innovative PIA intervention embedded in the SLLC process. Overall, the PIA and GESI interventions increased awareness, built knowledge, and boosted confidence among landholders. This led to greater active participation and enabled landholders to sustain their land rights. As a result, rural land certification and administration have become locally owned development processes, with community members, including women, actively participating and leading the way.

The updated PIA and GESI guide for the SLLC, which includes a PIA session focused on land transactions, has been disseminated across the regions to encourage and support the integration of PIA into regular land administration tasks. This will enhance landholders' access to information, particularly for women and vulnerable groups (VGs). As landholders become more aware and knowledgeable about formal land transactions, they are likely to shift away from longstanding informal practices and move toward formal processes. The combined efforts of PIA and GESI empower communities throughout the country, ultimately increasing the demand for reliable, high-quality land administration services. These efforts are crucial for the vitality and sustainability of NRLAIS.

Self-financing Potential for NRLAIS

The NRLAIS has garnered interest from various institutions, signalling the need for system expansion. This presents a significant opportunity to establish a self-financing path for the land administration system. Additionally, NRLAIS's new functionality has attracted a diverse user base beyond regular land users and administration institutions, further enhancing its potential for self-financing and cost recovery within the rural land sector.

The potential integration of rural and urban land administration systems would create opportunities for NRLAIS to provide multifunctional services, broadening its user base and ensuring the system's viability and financial sustainability. This integration collectively contributes to sustainable outcomes for the land sector.

ICT Infrastructure Strategy for Sustainable NRLAIS

The NRLAIS ICT infrastructure strategy plays a crucial role in ensuring system sustainability, data availability, and safety. In collaboration with RLAUD, REILA developed an ICT strategy focused on fully automating data replication across administrative levels. The proposed strategy advocates for a shift to a centralized deployment model for NRLAIS at regional data centers. These centers align with the constitutional responsibilities of the regions, granting them autonomous data management capabilities. This approach offers a sustainable solution, reducing reliance on third-party services while the data center at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)/ RLAUD serves as a backup.

REILA has actively raised awareness on the need to implement the ICT strategy, which has a \$40 million budget, among key donor organizations, including the World Bank and DFID, to enhance data resilience and contribute to a sustainable rural land administration system.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Sustainable Land Administration

The MELA system, developed by REILA, plays a critical role in monitoring, evaluating and taking action to sustain the outcomes achieved in the land sector and the REILA project. Initially, MELA's scope is limited to monitoring the activities and progress of the CALM programme woredas. The core modules of MELA focus on monitoring and reporting SLLC activities, land transactions, access to finance, and PIA activities. Eventually, the system will evolve into a fully functional M&E system that monitors all land-related activities across various programmes, projects, and government initiatives.

MELA ensures the accurate and timely flow of data and reports from woredas to regions and the RLAUD. It enables RLAUD and the regions to effectively monitor and track activity implementation across different projects and government initiatives, ensuring alignment with intended outcomes and holding stakeholders accountable for their roles. Through MELA, RLAUD assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of project activities and interventions, enabling evidence-based decision-making for improved outcomes. MELA helps assess outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and optimize project implementation and resource utilization. MELA is a crucial step toward ensuring the long-term sustainability of land administration efforts and achievements.

REILA was also actively involved in critical learning activities, which include supporting the assessment and compilation of insights related to formal land transaction registration. These activities aim to identify key barriers and facilitators of formal land transactions, as well as constraints on the service side. Additionally, REILA assesses landholders' satisfaction with services and their willingness and ability to pay for these services. This facilitates a better understanding of the land transaction landscape, enabling evidence-based decisions and actions. Creating an environment conducive to land transaction formalization is crucial for sustaining land administration efforts; otherwise, the achievement and impact of SLLC certificates may diminish rapidly.

Section VII

Challenges, Mitigation and Lessons Learned



Challenges and Mitigation

Lack of Institutional and Human Resource Capacity

During the initial stages of REILA project implementation, inadequate institutional and human resource capacity posed significant obstacles, particularly in the Benishangul Gumuz region. Understaffed institutions and high staff turnover hindered efforts of land certification, the establishment and strengthening of land administration systems and service delivery. To address these challenges, REILA, in collaboration with partners, implemented a comprehensive human resource capacity development strategy at various levels: federal, regional, woreda, and kebele. Key components of this strategy included the introduction of formal training and study programs for land administration, regular capacity-building training, fast-track courses, on-the-job training, TOT, international experience exchanges, short-term training programs, and intensive technical assistance.

These initiatives ensured a steady supply of skilled professionals within REILA's target regions and beyond, equipping staff with essential skills and knowledge, addressing specific skill gaps, enriching the exposure of experts and land administrators, and enhancing effective coordination and management capabilities. Collectively, these initiatives resulted in strong land administration institutions at the federal level, in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and other regions.

Community Resistance to Land Registration

During the initial phases of the REILA project, community resistance and pushback posed significant challenges to land certification efforts in both the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions. These challenges were rooted in long-standing community practices, perceptions, and attitudes. Many community members believed that land registration would yield no tangible benefits. They feared potential land loss due to the registration process and were suspicious of the overall intent behind it, worrying about increased taxation or land size reduction. The lingering effects of past incidents and practices in certain program areas contributed to reluctance among landholders.

To address this, the project intensified PIA activities and increased community engagement to understand and address their concerns, fears, and misconceptions. This approach encouraged greater community participation, extending beyond the protection of land rights to active involvement in the SLLC rollout, dispute resolution, and safeguarding the land rights of women and vulnerable groups.

Low Participation of Women and Vulnerable Groups in PIA Activities

The low turnout and participation of women and vulnerable groups (VGs) in public meetings and events related to PIA was a significant challenge due to deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, practices, and gender biases. As a result, women and VGs had unequal access to information, hindering their ability to participate and defend their land rights. To address this information asymmetry, REILA implemented targeted PIA sessions exclusively for women and VGs. These focus group sessions allowed the project to raise awareness and empower these segments of the community to share their perspectives and issues without fear or external influence. Additionally, the house-to-house outreach PIA approach was adopted to ensure that all women and VGs were effectively reached and supported throughout the SLLC process.

The project also increased the engagement of key stakeholders, including Women Affairs offices, the Judiciary, police, and community leaders, to play their role in protecting the land rights of women and vulnerable groups. Social baselining was utilized to identify and reach out to women and VGs in PIA activities.

■ Impact of Security Environment on Project Activities

Various security challenges at federal and regional levels have intermittently hindered the delivery of public services and project activities in the rural land sector, including the REILA project implementation. During the national state of emergency from November 2021 to February 2022, the entire nation and regions faced restrictions. These restrictions included limitations on people's movement, disruptions in internet connectivity (resulting in poor data migration from woreda to region), and hindered on-site support for NRLAIS sites and project activities that required direct social interaction (such as PIA, land registration, and certificate distribution).

Moreover, public officers were diverted to conflict management instead of focusing on their administrative tasks, significantly affecting service delivery and REILA's project activities. Despite these challenges, REILA continued to undertake project activities with close monitoring of the situation alongside government counterparts and local project partner offices. As conflict intensified and the security situation deteriorated in the Amhara region and part of Benishangul Gumuz, the project adjusted its focus. It shifted attention to other project activities that didn't involve field operations, including NRLAIS development, data cleaning, and the TVET programme. In some cases, field-level operations were temporarily suspended.

■ Security Environment Impact on Project Activities in Benishangul Gumuz Region

The multidimensional and long-standing security challenges in Benishangul Gumuz negatively affected REILA's project implementation. Indigenous inhabitants and smallholder farmers displaced from Oromia and Amhara regions due to land conflicts disrupted SLLC activities in REILA target woredas (Kamashi and Bullen) during 2018-2020. Ethnic violence escalated after the June 2021 National Elections, affecting cadastral surveys and outreach efforts throughout 2022. The 2023 Sudan crises have added a layer of incoming displacement in certain areas of the region. The persistent security challenges necessitated significant adjustments and strategic shifts in the project's implementation. The project adopted a new work plan approved by the Supervisory Board (SVB) in 2022. SLLC activities in Kamashi and Bullen woredas were suspended, redirecting efforts to uncertified areas in Assosa woreda and a newly targeted Oundulu woreda. To assist with land restitution for returnees, the project drafted the "Guide for Rural Land Restitution for Internally Displaced Peoples and Returnees" in Benishangul Gumuz.

■ Security Environment Impact on Project Activities in Amhara Region

During the later stages of the second phase of the REILA project implementation, the security environment in Amhara underwent significant volatility, directly affecting project activities. In July 2023, social unrest erupted between federal forces and opposition militia, leading to a six-month state of emergency that remains in effect. This state of emergency imposed restrictions on movement, public gatherings, and funding for several woreda administrations. As a result, field activities were severely compromised. Specifically, curfews discouraged larger public meetings for PIA and land certification distribution. Internet traffic jamming disrupted communication between woredas and zonal/regional levels, exacerbating existing poor network connections, resulting in NRLAIS struggling to maintain updated cadastral data for reporting purposes. Despite these challenges, the eight REILA woredas in the Amhara Region have been less affected. There has been no physical damage to woreda land administration infrastructure, and hence no loss of cadastral information has been reported. Woreda land administrations have continued to operate, focusing on office work, particularly data cleaning.

Impact of COVID-19 on Participatory Approaches for Rural Land Certification and Overall Project Activity Implementation

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the participatory approaches for rural land certification. The SLLC method relies on active community engagement, with key stakeholders physically present during boundary determination. However, pandemic restrictions posed challenges to the SLLC process, which involves landholders, landholders of adjacent parcels, and local authorities (including KLACUs) in ascertaining and demarcating parcel boundaries. Between April and September 2020, a State of Emergency restricted gatherings to no more than four people. SLLC fieldwork typically requires larger gatherings, especially during PIA activities. Consequently, landholders' turnout during PIA, parcel demarcation, and public display was low for an extended period. In adherence to the participatory principles of SLLC, the project temporarily delayed land certification activities.

The pandemic also disrupted critical capacity-building efforts and other enabling interventions. Specifically, it hindered REILA's support for the installation and training of the NRLAIS in new woredas targeted by the RLAUD and its partners. NRLAIS data cleaning efforts, onsite support, and oversight visits were significantly reduced. Additionally, a series of capacity-building training sessions, including the TVET program graduation of fifty students, had to be postponed due to travel restrictions.

In response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project formulated and executed an emergency preparedness plan with support from NIRAS' home office team in Finland and the NIRAS team in Addis Ababa. This proactive approach aimed to mitigate and minimize the pandemic's impact. Regular follow-ups with the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) ensured that REILA's strategies remained aligned with the evolving situation.

Despite the challenges, the project continued its PIA activities for SLLC. To maintain safety while ensuring meaningful interactions, the project shifted from large-scale public meetings to personalized home visits (known as "bet le bet") conducted by KLAUC members. Additionally, the project devolved PIA responsibilities to regional teams after adequately strengthening their capacity and equipping them with essential skills to enable them to roll out PIA activities at the woreda and kebele levels.

Non-Collection of Land Certificates

Non-collection of land certificates by landholders from the woredas (districts) land administration offices continues to be a challenge. The primary reasons for this issue include inadequate awareness of the benefits of having a land certificate and the associated travel costs and time required to visit the woredas office. To address this challenge and facilitate certificate collection, REILA adopted successful experiences from the LIFT programme and implemented certificate distribution campaigns at the kebele level. By bringing the service closer to the community, landholders were more likely to collect their certificates promptly.

Frequent Change of Land Bureau Heads

The frequent change of land bureau heads in the Benishangul Gumuz region posed challenges for project implementation. Recognizing that these appointments are both administrative and political, REILA proactively responds to each change to ensure seamless project activity execution. Whenever a new bureau head is appointed, the REILA regional team promptly engages with them. REILA conducts thorough induction sessions for the incoming bureau heads. These sessions cover essential aspects of the project, including its background, objectives, technical components, and beneficiaries. The induction also highlights the progress made so far and the activity plan. These facilitate a smooth transition and effective project governance while minimizing disruptions during transitions.

■ Low Proportion of Land Transactions Through Formal Registration

Shifting landholders' practices from informal to formal transactions emerged as a new challenge for the rural land sector and the sustainability of REILA's project outcomes. Formal land transactions are crucial for sustaining the vitality of NRLAIS and maintaining rural land rights achieved through the SLLC. Despite a substantial rural cadaster dataset recorded in the NRLAIS, there are indications that the number of formal land transaction requests received by woreda (district) land administration offices remains low as compared to the actual number of transactions processed in an informal system. As per research conducted under the LIFT programme, informal land transactions continue to dominate. If land transactions are not formally registered and managed in NRLAIS, the land records may become outdated over time. Lack of awareness among landholders of the benefits of formal land transactions, low outcome expectancy (landholders perceive limited benefits from formal registration), poor service quality, and lengthy bureaucratic processes associated with the formal land transaction system are among the key barriers that discourage landholders from registering transactions formally. This challenge is well recognized by the RLAUD, partner programs, and regions, who all acknowledge the need for coordinated action to encourage formal land transactions. In support of this effort, REILA focuses on continuous development of NRLAIS functionalities, enhancing the capacity of land administration staff to improve service quality and streamline bureaucratic processes. The project specifically promotes and supports PIA activities related to land transaction formalization in targeted regions.

The PIA initiative aims to increase landholders' awareness of the benefits of formal registration. It informs landholders about service availability at the kebele and woredas levels, the registration process, their rights, obligations, and the risks associated with informal transactions. By doing so, it encourages landholders to engage in formal land transactions and effectively utilize cadaster services.

REILA has integrated PIA for land transactions into the national PIA and GESI guide, which standardizes PIA activities across different regions, ensuring consistency and effectiveness. Additionally, an incentive-based reporting system has been developed and implemented to support the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for the land sector. This system further encourages demand creation activities for land transaction services, where woreda and kebele land administration staff actively engage in PIA activities, leading to an increase in the volume of land transactions through formal registration.

■ ICT Infrastructure Challenges for Functioning NRLAIS

Poor ICT infrastructure poses significant challenges for NRLAIS functioning. The existing ICT infrastructure is inadequate to consistently transfer cadastral data from woreda to higher administrative levels (zonal, regional, and federal). This data exchange is crucial for programming, monitoring and evaluation, statistical analysis, and informed decision-making. NRLAIS was originally designed as a standalone computerized system within each woreda for recording and managing rural land records. However, this isolated approach impedes effective data exchange between administrative levels. Although automated data replication functions were introduced, they do not operate optimally. Factors contributing to this include poor local area networks at woreda offices, which affect data transmission efficiency. Inadequate server and network equipment, weak data security protocols, and insufficient management protocols further exacerbate the situation. Lack of physical security at woreda offices and insufficient involvement of stakeholders are also contributing factors. To support efforts in addressing this challenge, REILA has provided technical assistance (TA) and developed an ICT infrastructure strategy. The goal is to enhance the ICT infrastructure for effective cadastral data transfer from woreda up to zonal, regional, and federal levels.

Lessons learned

Adaptive Management and Flexibility

Increased flexibility and the application of adaptive project management are essential in project implementation. This approach allows the project team to respond quickly and effectively to anticipated or unforeseen challenges, situations, and changes. It provides the liberty to reassess and adjust the project implementation approach and strategy as necessary, accommodating change, responding to emerging needs and priorities, and remaining effective. This ensures the maintenance of project outputs and the achievement of results even in difficult circumstances. Additionally, it helps explore and exploit opportunities to maximize outcomes and ensure sustainability.

Advanced Community Engagement

Active community engagement throughout the land registration and certification process is crucial. When communities validate and take ownership of the process, it gains credibility and community trust, leading to increased participation and sustainable outcomes. Communities play a key role as stakeholders in protecting the land rights of women and vulnerable groups. Engaging key stakeholders, particularly women's affairs offices, the judiciary, and the police, is critical for safeguarding the land rights of women and vulnerable groups (VGs). Addressing information asymmetry among women and VGs is essential in implementing PIA activities for SLLC and land transactions. Due consideration must be given to deep-rooted socio-cultural, religious, and gender norms, as well as their specific circumstances that deter women and VGs from participating in public meetings and gatherings. Employing specific strategies, especially during PIA activities related to SLLC and land transactions, is vital to effectively reach women and VGs.

Recognize that one-time information dissemination is insufficient to change long-standing community practices and beliefs. Repetitive efforts are necessary to influence behaviour change, particularly in transitioning from informal to formal land transactions. Adopting a two-way communication approach to learn from the community, address concerns, clarify misconceptions, and alleviate fears is essential. Advanced community engagement and participation form the foundation for establishing equitable and inclusive rural land certification and administration.

Strong Institutional and Human Capacity for Land Certification and Administration

Effective rural land registration, certification, and the establishment and maintenance of land administration systems require robust institutional and human capacity. To ensure sustainable results in the land sector, it is crucial to build adequate technical, operational, and management capabilities at various levels—federal, regional, zonal, woreda (district), and kebele (local administrative unit). Institutionalizing land administration training and study programs is a strategic step to consistently supply skilled personnel to the land sector.

Taking Services to the Community

Adopting a mobile back-office service delivery model has proven to be very important in addressing environmental barriers and challenges faced by landholders in utilizing land administration services. The mobile back-office model involves bringing essential land administration services directly to the community, reducing the need for landholders to travel long distances and incur associated costs. This approach can encourage and support more landholders to register transactions formally.

Enhancing Formal Land Transaction Registration for Sustainable NRLAIS

Transitioning from informal to formal land transactions within communities requires several key actions. These include behaviour change among landholders, enhancing the capacity of service providers, and creating a favourable environment to improve service quality and availability. To achieve this, PIA activities should extend beyond mere information dissemination. Instead, the program should focus on evidence-based behaviour change communication, addressing underlying behavioural factors and barriers. These comprehensive approaches collectively increase landholders' intention to engage in formal land transactions, thereby increasing the formal registration of land transactions. This, in turn, maintains the vitality of NRLAIS and ultimately enhances and sustains tenure security for rural landholders achieved through SLLCs.



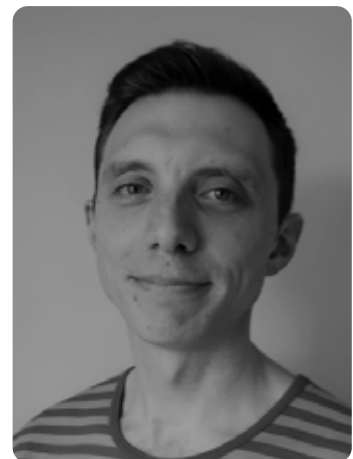
Testimonies from the REILA Team

The development model of REILA being nested in RLAUD and acting as an incubator of innovation, while working with other partners to facilitate the scaling up of innovation throughout the country is key for massive gains in rural land administration service delivery. REILA's core value contribution as an innovator is amply demonstrated by SLLC and NRLAIS development and especially their harmonization for country-wide use. The fit-for-purpose land administration approach adopted by RLAUD and REILA has fully responded to the needs and stands out as a major driver for cost effective land certification and cadastral systems functioning. The Finland investment reflects excellent value for money with a critical multiplier effect. All by all, each Euro invested by Finland was matched by up to 10 Euro investments under roll out programmes. Simultaneously matching technological systems development with institutional support and continuous capacity building are essential for the successful roll out of these innovations. Rural land administration delivery in Ethiopia has also well balanced technical innovation with social support. Continuous awareness raising for land use holders and land administrations on the use of technology, while making principles of inclusion, universality, participation and values of good governance part of technology use are now integral part of service delivery.



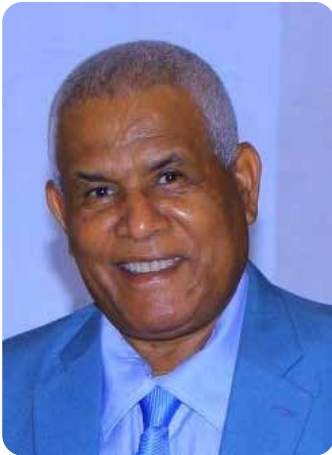
Paul De Wit,
Chief Technical Advisor REILA II and REILA III – NIRAS/ Embassy of Finland

The REILA project stands out as a unique initiative for the Government of Ethiopia, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and NIRAS for several compelling reasons. Firstly the projects comprehensive approach in addressing various facets of land administration, such as land tenure security, capacity building, sustainable land management, and climate resilience. Secondly with the utilization of advanced geospatial information systems and mass registration software, the project enhances the efficiency and transparency of land registration processes. Thirdly, the project integrates gender equality and social inclusion into its land administration policies, ensuring secure land rights for women and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the project's success has led to the Government of Ethiopia formally adopting REILA's registration system for land administration activities. These unique attributes position REILA as a model for land administration projects in Ethiopia and across the region.



Matthew Richard,
NIRAS Finland Project Manager of REILA II and REILA III

Testimonies from the REILA Team



Dr. Zerfu Hailu served in the Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) project since 2011. He participated and observed experiences in the REILA project all the way till end of REILA II. The REILA project established foundations that go all the way in the history of modern and scientific land administration in Ethiopia. Harmonized and unified rural cadaster and land registration methodology is the result of the REILA project. Before 2011, at national level, harmonized cadastral methodology was not established. The methodology is operation through the country. In cooperation with the then Ethiopian Mapping Agency (EMA), currently called Space Science and Geoinformation Institute (SSGI) the REILA project established 30 Zero Order Geodetic control points scattered throughout Ethiopia. The reference stations are expected to serve for more than 70 years. In addition, the project provided 4 work stations to the then EMA for processing spatial data and production of quality maps. The National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) that is serving the rural land administration is vivid and unshakable foundation established by the REILA project.

As said by scholars, manpower development is a process that enables organizations to ensure that there are adequate human resources who will take up the responsibilities thereby ensuring continuous growth of the organizations as well as their readiness to actualize their cardinal objectives. In this regards, the REILA project engaged in human capacity development in the rural land sector Ethiopia and enhance the human capacity significantly. Institutionalization of the Technical Vocational Education and Training program on rural cadastre, at Assosa Agricultural TVET College, is significantly important milestone in the engagement of producing trained manpower at technician level. Launched in October 2014, the college produced 428 TVET graduates and 36% are female. The experience from Assosa Agricultural TVET College is transferred and implemented into Agarfa Agricultural TVET College. The Agarfa ATVET College currently has 181 registered students on land administration. In cooperation with Bahir Dar University Institute of Land Administration (ILA), the project provided MSc scholarship for 78 experts pooled from the rural land administration offices of the country. Furthermore the project capacitated 80 higher level decision makers and senior experts through international experience exchange programs implemented in different countries. With these contributions and many others, the REILA project made significant contribution for the visible transformation of governance of the country.

Zerfu Hailu (PhD)
Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) Project
Senior Land Administration Expert

Digital Transformation in the Land Sector and REILA's Contribution

Digital transformation plays a crucial role in modernizing the land sector, making processes more efficient, transparent, and accessible. In a sector where accuracy and accountability are vital, transitioning from traditional paper-based methods to integrated digital systems has become essential. Digitalization not only accelerates processes, but also ensures data integrity, reducing errors common in manual systems. It enables reliable and structured data storage, accessible in real-time, facilitating better decision-making and oversight. The automation of land records, mapping, and validation strengthens governance by making land transactions and holding details more transparent to all stakeholders. Furthermore, as land administration increasingly interacts with sectors like agriculture, urban development, infrastructure planning, taxation and environmental conservation, digital systems provide the tools for seamless integration and collaboration. This interconnected approach fosters better coordination across governance sectors, supporting sustainable development, climate resilience, and economic growth.

A prime example of this transformation is the National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS), developed and maintained through the REILA project. NRLAIS has been a key driver in revolutionized Ethiopia's rural land sector by providing a flexible, customizable system for managing land information across the country. It enables real-time land parcel mapping, automated validation processes, and ensures adherence to national standards. REILA's contribution in building this system has not only modernized land governance in Ethiopia but also laid the foundation for other programs to replicate the model. By focusing on technology adoption and capacity-building, REILA has strengthened Ethiopia's position as a leader in digital land governance, ultimately enhancing land tenure security and fostering economic growth and environmental sustainability.



Yohannes Redda Gebre
NRLAIS Manager

REILA has successfully secured land rights for rural landholders, especially women and disadvantaged groups, while significantly strengthening local and national land administration institutions. This achievement resulted from multiple project implementation phases, emphasizing on adaptive management and collaboration with various levels of land administration. The project's efforts have fostered awareness, institutional development, and sustainability. Continued efforts are essential to maintain these gains, protect land rights during transactions, restore access to land for internally displaced people and returnees, and link land tenure security with sustainable livelihoods.

Gladys Savolainen
Senior Consultant, PIA & GESI



Testimonies from the REILA Team



Working with REILA has been transformative for me. I have developed new professional skills and expanded my network. Through this experience, I have seen first hand how increased tenure security and digital cadastre can positively impact land conservation, reduction of land disputes, and rural economic empowerment. I have observed that this impact has been acknowledged by smallholder farmers, including vulnerable groups. The project's success is rooted in strong community participation and innovative technology, showcasing the undeniable power of community engagement and the rural land administration information system in driving sustainability. I have also observed how REILA's innovative, harmonized, fit-for-purpose, inclusive, participatory approach, and digital transformation have significantly improved data accuracy, security, transparency and accessibility, and how this has boosted access to land and finance by encouraging a formal land market—a real game-changer in building the country's rural land governance.

Debash Yidersal
Land Administration Expert - Benishangul Gumuz Region



The REILA project has given me better work experience and services including career building as a regional land administration expert. REILA has laid the foundation for the strengthening of a land administration and management system in our country, especially in Amhara region, it has guaranteed landholders and given them secured rights through modern rural land cadastre, ensured that the sections of the society/vulnerable groups that need attention (women, orphans, etc.) know and respect their land rights and obligations, created and enriched sustainable national rural land information management system, and practically substantiated that community participation in a sustainable land administration and management system is important and necessary. REILA had played a great role on the main basis for the sustainable growth and development of the country is to use land and land resources properly and wisely with well based on knowledge in a sustainable way, to build institutions with capacity permanently that manage land, and to cultivate and capacitate experts well in knowledge enrichment and generation building, which has laid the foundation for other projects and programs that work not only on land, but also in other sectors. , REILA is an exemplary project that has shown the line well based on the above parameters.

Gebremichael Maru
Land Administration Expert - Amhara Region

REILA

Responsible & Innovative
Land Administration

2011 - 2024



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Ministry for Foreign
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