



## Global Programme Responsible Land Policy Good Practice

ETHIOPIA: COMMUNITY-INVESTOR-GOVERNMENT FORA (CIGF) – A REGULAR EXCHANGE  
PLATFORM FOR COMMUNITIES, INVESTORS AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

# Programme

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME RESPONSIBLE LAND POLICY (GPRLP) IS PART OF THE SPECIAL INITIATIVE 'ONE WORLD, NO HUNGER' OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ), WHICH AIMS TO REDUCE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER.



The programme is implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* in countries across Africa and Asia. Its main objective is to secure access to land as a critical prerequisite for poverty and hunger reduction in rural areas, especially for women, marginalized groups and indigenous peoples.

## THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED ALONG THREE FIELDS OF ACTION:

- Improving procedures to secure land ownership and user rights for the rural population
- Strengthening civil society
- Improving the framework conditions for responsible agricultural investments

The Ethiopian module of the GP “Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments II (S2RAI II)” aims to improve the access to land for the beneficiaries in the regional states of Benishangul-Gumuz (BG), Gambella and Amhara. It supports key stakeholders in implementing internationally recognized principles and guidelines for land governance and responsible investments in land. S2RAI II includes the component “Responsible Governance of Investments in Land (RGIL)” in Ethiopia, which is co-financed by the EU and BMZ, and aims at ensuring that investments in land are fair, productive and contribute to sustainable land management. To improve the relationships and resolve the conflicts between the main stakeholders in investment, namely between the investors, the impacted communities and the respective government bodies, the project supports the set-up of a regular exchange platform, the “Community-Investor-Government Fora (CIGF)”.

# Starting point

**The Ethiopian government** has been trying to attract investors to bring foreign funding and technology transfer into the country. In the first years of this initiative more than 3 million hectares of land were leased to national and international investors, hoping to bring further benefits such as:

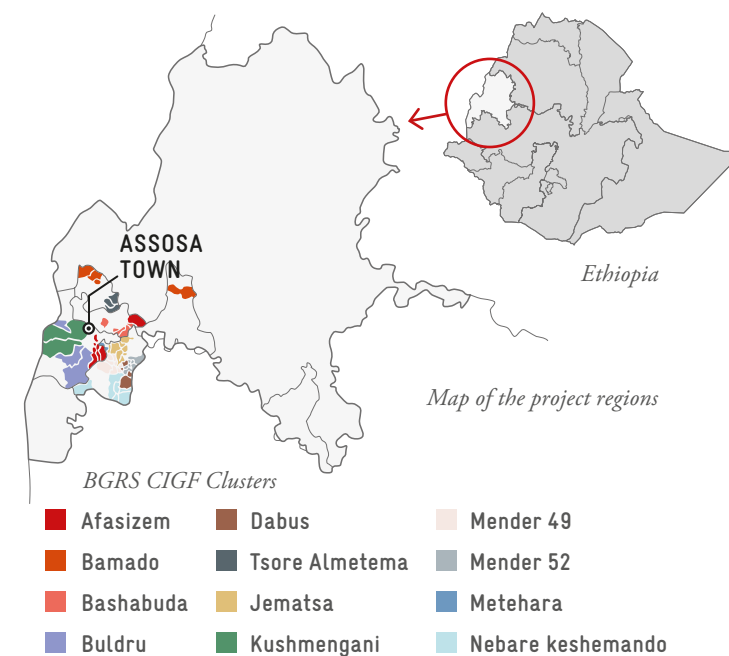
- Provision of inputs for agricultural production
- Employment opportunities for community members
- Infrastructural improvements in the rural areas where investments take place.

These agricultural investments are also expected to ensure environmentally sustainable production by integrating conservation measures at every stage. According to a recent performance evaluation of agricultural investment projects in BG, the investments made in this region have met the expectations only to a limited extent. Only a fraction of the land leased has actually been developed by investors and their productivity has been lower than that of smallholder farmers. The environment has been degraded at an alarming rate due to the poor integration of conservation practices and deforestation. In addition, the promised infrastructure development projects, such as education facilities, are also often not realized,

either by the government or by investors. Cases where local communities have lost communal land with its access to resources like water and forests without compensation are frequently reported. Conflicts and disputes have also been observed between investors and local communities due to the lack of the involvement of local communities in the process of land identification and transfer of land. In addition, investors have reported incidents of threats and thefts by community members.

In a nutshell, the investments are not delivered in a responsible manner by the investors and government is not able to enforce this. The majority of investments from the early years of this initiative have failed and much of the land was retaken by the government. Both government and investors are often not aware of major international standards such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the International Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) or even national regulations. Neither investors nor the government engage sufficiently with the local communities or civil society organizations (CSO) who are often advocating on behalf of the impacted communities.

Since 2017, S2RAI II cooperates with Green Love Appreciative Development (GLAD), formerly known as Assosa Environmental Protection Association (AEPA), a CSO working on environmental protection issues. The cooperation focuses on the improvement of the investor-community relations and the reduction of the investment-related conflicts among farmers and investors in 60 communities in BG. The main approach to achieve that is the development of a regular exchange platform, the Community-Investor-Government Fora (CIGF).



# Positive changes

Overall, in the 60 communities approximately 330 people have joined the discussion fora. This total number of participants includes 30 investors and 300 community members and representatives of the government from all administrative levels. The main aim in organizing these fora is to improve the community-investors-government relationships and the establishment of lasting communication channels between the stakeholders. In the long term, this contributes to better management of agricultural land and to reducing poverty in BG's rural areas.



Community representatives of the Mender 53 cluster

## Community members of all 12 clusters confirm that the fora have positive effects, such as:

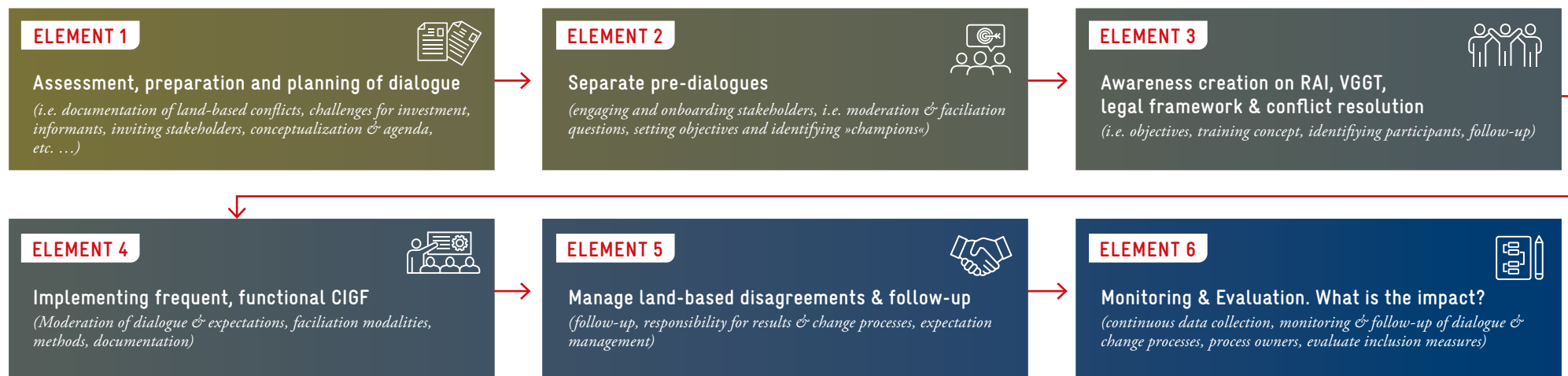
- Overall, better relationships between investors, communities, and local governments are established.
- Fewer land and boundary conflicts end up in courts and are instead resolved amicably at the fora level.
- More women from the local communities are employed by investors with more flexible working conditions to cater for their needs.
- An increased number of youth and men are employed by the investors, for example, for harvesting, but also for loading and unloading duties.
- Improved working conditions for employees.
- Increased transfer of farming technology from investors to local farmers (e.g., line sowing and irrigation).
- More tractors and other machineries are rented by communities from investors, which has increased their agricultural productivity.
- Roads have been constructed and better transportation facilities for local communities are available.
- Issues regarding heavy trucks destroying roads are handled more efficiently.
- Communities are supported by investors through the organization of social activities as well as the construction of churches.
- Encroachments by cattle on investment land are amicably resolved, i.e., if cattle are finding their way onto the fields, investors collect them and return them to the village (cases where investors hid cattle in their own stables were previously reported).

## Investors taking part in the fora confirm the following positive changes:

- Relationships with the communities and local government are improved.
- Issues and problems are resolved in direct exchange.
- Less damage to investor properties is reported. Communities take care that cattle do not encroach on fields during planting season.

# Approach

## IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL CIGF – SIMPLIFIED ELEMENTS OF IMPLEMENTATION



CIGF consist of six key elements.



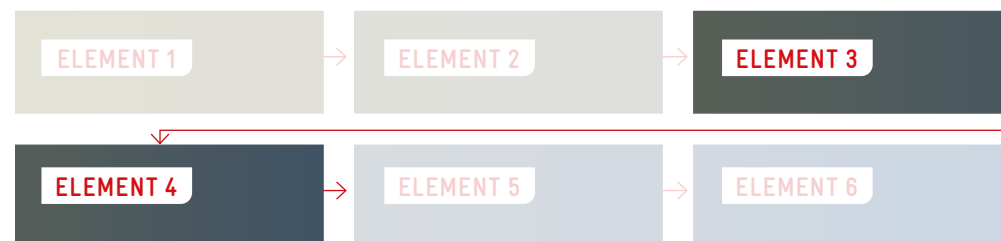
**THE FIRST ELEMENT** focuses on the assessment of the community-investor-government-relationships, an analysis of the local context and the planning of the process. The CSO GLAD first receives a list of investors and community representatives from government offices in a particular area. GLAD then analyses the available information, maps out stakeholders, and documents conflicts. For the following dialogue forum, GLAD subsequently identifies

potential participants. Special care is taken to properly map and support vulnerable stakeholders during the process using, e.g., the “Getting It Right Guide” created by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).



**IN THE SECOND ELEMENT**, GLAD organizes separate pre-dialogues with different stakeholders and potential participants of the CIGF. At this stage, stakeholders present their perspectives on the conflicts and problems and describe the relationships that exist (between investors, communities, and government officials). Furthermore, GLAD creates understanding of the CIGF process for onboarding members.

# Approach



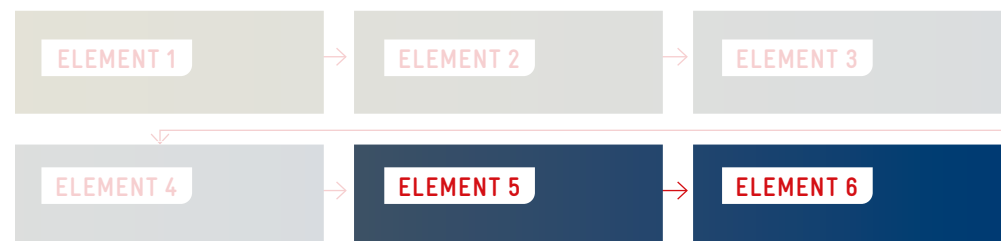
**THE THIRD ELEMENT** aims to raise awareness of RAI and VGGT principles and national regulations on land and investments as well as conflict resolution mechanisms. This element centres around the empowerment of the communities and the creation of awareness regarding their rights. Furthermore, it focuses on the management of the expectations of the communities relating to what an investment project may achieve, regarding to the support in e.g., infrastructure, education and health. It also provides information on the responsibilities of the investors and the government in investment projects. The stakeholders involved in this element include investors and community representatives, e.g., kebele leaders and elders, religious leaders, administration from the women's affairs office, and youth and government representatives. Furthermore, this element can also be used to separately address the needs of vulnerable groups and, e.g., provide training to foster confidence and negotiation skills.



**IN THE FOURTH ELEMENT**, clusters are established, and responsibilities are assigned. CIGF are organized along regional clusters, combining stakeholders affected by the same investments. Since their establishment in 2018, 12 clusters have been formed in three woredas. The first one, the Mender 52 cluster, has been active for five years and functioned as a model for the following cluster set-ups. Since then, eleven further clusters have started community-investor-government fora, with the latest ones in 2022. In addition, this element focuses on the preparation and implementation of the dialogue fora. The clusters include not only communities directly bordering the land where the investment takes place, but all those that are directly and indirectly affected by the investment activities. Negative effects on communities may include environmental degradation, water shortages or road damages caused by heavy trucks. Positive effects may include employment and marketing opportu-

nities. The forum at the cluster level is subsequently established. In average, five to ten investors and five kebeles are part of one cluster. This element also includes the assignment or election of chairpersons, one from the community (the kebele leadership selects the representatives, such as elders, kebele chairpersons, women's association representatives and opinion influencers) and one from the investors. Their role is to lead the discussions, as well as to invite for and organize the meetings. A meeting should not exceed one to two hours. GLAD's role is to facilitate the process, including setting the agenda and organizing transportation.

# Approach



**THE FIFTH ELEMENT** focuses on the management of land and investment-related disagreements and follow-up activities. After each meeting, the discussed problems and proposed solutions are documented. In a joint planning process the follow-up steps are identified and subsequent responsibilities are distributed among the participants. The agreed follow up activities can now be implemented by the responsible person in the agreed time frame. In addition, results and positive outcomes of the CIGF are used to campaign and lobby with other stakeholders. It is of key importance to update all participants of the CIGF regularly on the progress of the implementation of the follow up activities. GLAD supports in the facilitation of this process, e.g., organizing follow-up meetings, logistics and documentation.



**THE SIXTH ELEMENT** consists of the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the whole process. The monitoring and evaluation is part of the design of the CIGF. It is considered in all implementation steps and must be understood by implementors and meeting facilitators. Results of the monitoring and evaluation are reported back to the fora on regular basis. GLAD supports the monitoring and evaluation through providing guidance and the development of standardized tools. The partner currently develops a logbook for the chairpersons leading the CIGF meetings. Amongst others, in this logbook discussion points shall be recorded, but it also includes a monitoring plan to document changes along the set indicators.

CIGF strongly contribute to the S2RAI/RGIL project in enabling local land users in Ethiopia, especially smallholder farmers and marginalized groups, to defend their legitimate rights regarding land and to advocate for their needs in land investment processes. At the same time, the CIGF have an increased value for all stakeholders if they are carried out in combination with the second-level land certification (SLLC) process. If the SLLC process has not been carried out earlier, there tend to be lot of unsolved conflicts in the communities for which the CIGF is not the adequate platform to solve. These conflicts may overshadow the discussions in the CIGF, and experiences show that when SLLC are issued, the focus can be on investment related issues like encroaching, employment, infrastructure, etc.

# For replication

It is planned that the CIGF will be replicated in the Amhara, Gambella and Oromia regions. This extension will be realized in close collaboration with GLAD in Gambella and other CSOs such as the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) and Land for Life Ethiopia in Oromia. In addition, investors and communities as well as woreda and kebele governments from the concerned areas will participate. GLAD has been engaged in a one-week exchange workshop with partners from Addis Ababa, Amhara and Gambella to transfer their knowledge and experience to the two regions.



*Knowledge transfer workshop*

For replication in other regions of Ethiopia and in other countries, the following **major requirements** may need to be considered:

- **AWARENESS RAISING:**  
Many conflicts arise because communities, investors and some government officials lack awareness of the responsibilities and good procedures for responsible agriculture investments.
- **INCLUSION OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES:**  
This was something learned in the earlier stages of the CIGF, when government representatives were not included in the process. However, GLAD realized that government representatives are essential stakeholders, who can support the overall success of CIGF.
- **FORMATION OF CLUSTERS:**  
It is of key importance to include not only communities directly bordering investment land, but also all those that are directly (e.g., by damaged roads) and indirectly (e.g., by less water accessible in the region) affected by the investment.

Even though the CIGF are implemented with success there are still **challenges remaining**, which include the:

- limited (long-term) engagement and participation of investors.
- limited involvement of youth and other marginalized groups (e.g., landless farmers and women as well as people with disabilities).
- continuous documentation and reporting on the progress of the fora, including e.g., the documentation of lessons learnt.
- constant development and improvement of the CIGF methodology and approaches, such as including more structural exchange between the clusters, introducing further expertise on conflict resolution and dialogue to build internal capacities, and training the facilitators.

**The project is constantly trying to address these challenges and develop the CIGF further.**



# Further information



➤ [Building Harmonized Private and State Land Data and Information Systems in Ethiopia](#)

➤ [Responsible Land Policy in Ethiopia Factsheet](#)

➤ [YouTube: Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments Project in Ethiopia](#)

➤ [LinkedIn](#)



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