

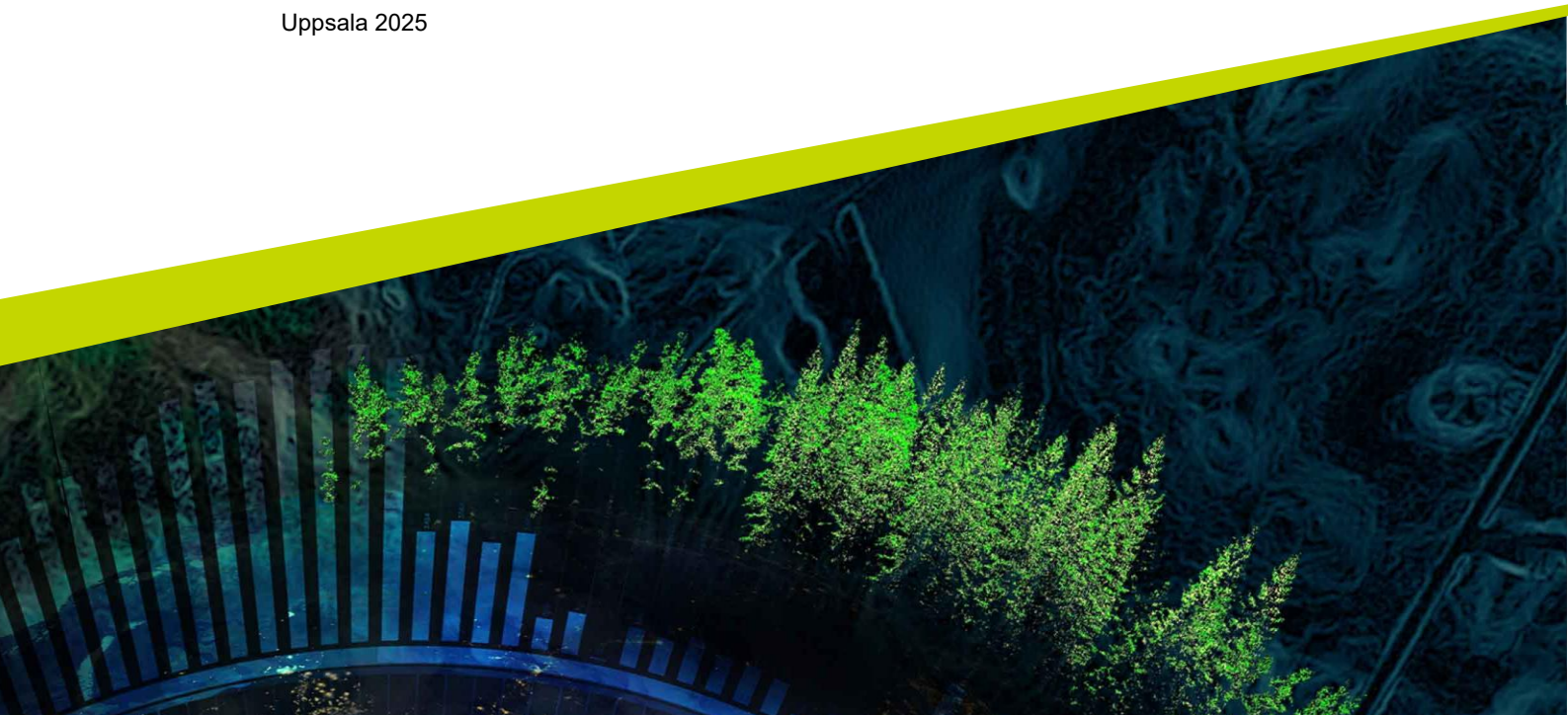


Registration of Certificates of Customary Ownership in Northern Uganda

Analysing the perspectives and experiences of an FAO project through the livelihood approach

Ida Gustafsson

Degree project/Independent project • 30 credits
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Agriculture Programme - Rural Development
Uppsala 2025



Registration of Certificates of Customary Ownership in Northern Uganda - Analysing the perspectives and experiences of an FAO project through the livelihood approach

Ida Gustafsson

Supervisor	Ida Wallin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
Assistant supervisor:	Emmanuel Zziwa, The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO
Examiner:	Katarina Pettersson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
Credits:	30 credits
Level:	Second cycle, A2E
Course title:	Master thesis in Rural Development, A2E - Agriculture Programme - Rural Development
Course code:	EX0890
Programme/education:	Agriculture Programme - Rural Development
Course coordinating dept:	Department of Urban and Rural Development
Place of publication:	Uppsala
Year of publication:	2025
Online publication:	https://stud.epsilon.slu.se
Keywords:	Certificate of Customary Ownership, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, livelihood approach, land rights, access to land, Uganda

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Rural Development

Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the implemented project intervention, the registration of the Certificate of Customary Ownership, by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of United Nations funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in two communities in Northern Uganda. This study aims to understand the perspectives and lived experiences of both project implementers and community members (adopters) of the certificates. By applying the livelihood approach, the study explores if the certificates contributed to securing customary land and supported sustainable livelihoods.

I applied two qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Initially, I conducted individual interviews with key-information informants to gain an overview of the project implementation process and the implementers' perspectives on the outcomes of the certificates. The focus group discussions provided insights into how adopters experienced the project intervention and how the certificates may have affected their rights to land, capabilities in realizing their livelihood strategies.

The findings indicate that the project intervention has contributed to securing access to land, influencing the discriminatory perceptions of land ownership and increased women's decision-making over land. The certificates have supported the communities in realizing livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood goals. However, to fully understand the effectiveness of the certificates in supporting sustainable livelihoods and their long-term impacts, further participatory field studies are required.

Keywords: Certificate of Customary Ownership, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, livelihood approach, land rights, access to land, Uganda

Table of contents

List of tables	6
Abbreviations	7
1. Problem formulation	8
1.1 Aim and objectives of the study	10
1.2 Research questions	10
1.3 Delimitation	10
2. Background	11
2.1 The pre-colonial era	11
2.2 The impacts of colonialism	12
2.3 Current land tenure systems	13
2.4 Sources of land conflicts	14
2.5 The FAO project and contribution of my study	15
3. Methodology and methods	16
3.1 Selection of the field sites and participants	16
3.2 Data collection methods	17
3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews	17
3.2.2 Focus group discussions	18
3.3 Analysing the empirical data	20
3.3.1 Transcribing	20
3.3.2 Coding and thematizing	21
3.3.3 Interpreting the data	21
3.4 Working with an interpreter and the FAO	21
3.5 Validity and credibility	23
3.6 Ethical considerations	23
3.7 The researcher's role	24
3.8 Limitations of the study	25
4. The livelihood approach	27
4.1.1 The five forms of capital	28
4.1.2 Institutions shaping access	28
4.1.3 Livelihood strategies	29
5. Empirical findings	30

5.1	The CCO process and involved actors	30
5.1.1	Roles and responsibilities	30
5.1.2	Application requirements for conflict prevention	31
5.1.3	Building trust and community engagement	32
5.2	The experiences of the certificates	33
5.2.1	Reducing land conflicts and trespassing	33
5.2.2	Shifting perspectives on land ownership	34
5.2.3	Increasing land tenure security and community respect	35
5.3	The CCOs impacts on livelihood strategies	37
5.3.1	Contributing to land developments	37
5.3.2	Increasing confidence through permanent settlements	38
5.3.3	Changing culturally embedded practices	38
5.3.4	Accessing financial opportunities	40
5.3.5	Attracting investors for making developments	41
6.	Analysis and discussion	42
6.1	Creating an enabling environment	42
6.1.1	Decentralization of responsibilities	42
6.1.2	Involving trusted local actors	43
6.1.3	Establishing credibility through participation	45
6.2	Improving communities' livelihoods opportunities	46
6.2.1	Securing access to land	46
6.2.2	Influencing prevailing norms	47
6.2.3	Expanding communities' capabilities	48
6.2.4	Diversifying livelihood strategies	49
7.	Summary of key findings	51
7.1	Implications of the study	52
7.2	Recommendations for further studies	53
	References	54
	Popular science summary	60
	Appendix 1	61
	Involved actors in the CCO process, their functions and responsibilities	61
	Procedure for acquiring a CCO	61
	Appendix 2	65
	Appendix 3	67
	Appendix 4	71

List of tables

Table 1. Overview of the key-information informants.....	16
Table 3. Overview of the participants in the focus group discussions.	17

Abbreviations

ALC	Area Land Committee
CCO	Certificates of Customary Ownership
CiDA	Civil Development Agency
DLB	District Land Board
DLO	District Land Office
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KIIs	Key-Information Informants
LC1	Local Council One
LC2	Local Council Two
LC3	Local Council Three
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPC	Physical Planning Committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
SRC	Swedish Research Council
SSIs	Semi-Structured Interviews
UGX	Ugandan shilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Problem formulation

“Access to productive land is critical to the millions of poor people living in rural areas and depending on agriculture, livestock or forests for their livelihood” (IFAD 2008:4). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges that secure land tenure enables smallholder farmers to access credit, improve their farm productivity, and invest in sustainable land use practices. The IPCC-report states that “secure tenure arrangements can provide farmers with incentives to invest in land improvements and prevent them from being pushed off their land or dispossessed of their profits” (Arneth et al 2019:5). Such investments, in turn, can lead to increased yields, food security, and income as well as improved soil health and biodiversity conservation (IFAD 2008).

Still, in many parts of the Global South, land tenure systems remain highly complex, due to their diverse nature and influence by former colonial land policies. The prior colonization of land led to the establishment of new policies and attitudes overlaying the traditional land systems (Andrew et al 2022; Naybor 2015). In formerly colonized countries like Uganda, legal structures are shaped by a mix of statutory and customary laws, that often interrupt traditional practices. As a result, land tenure systems of former colonies are frequently described as “a multiplicity of overlapping (and, at times, contradictory) rules, laws, customs, traditions, perceptions and regulations” (IFAD 2008:6), leading to great uncertainty, particularly for smallholder farmers (Andrew et al. 2022; Naybor 2015), poor and marginalized communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods (FAO & UNDP 2017) because “people’s rights to use, control and transfer land” (IFAD 2008:27) are governed by the complex systems.

Within this context, women face greater challenges in accessing land. Even though women play a vital role in the global agricultural sector both in terms of food security and rural economies. Their ability and capacity to contribute meaningfully to farming and their livelihoods are hindered by laws, cultural constraints, patriarchy, social structures, discriminatory customary laws, and social norms (UNDP 2016; FAO; IFAD & WFP. 2020; Arneth et al 2019). As noted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) empowering rural women

through secure land right is directly linked to strengthening food systems, reduce poverty, and increase economic development (FAO & SIDA 2020).

By recognizing the importance of secure land rights, the FAO representation in Uganda in partnership with several national ministries launched in 2018 a five-year project funded by the SIDA. The project strived to empower rural communities, by strengthening land right and promoting sustainable livelihoods in two of the most vulnerable and at high-risk districts of northern Uganda. A fundamental project intervention involved the registration of Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCO) bearing the names of the husband and wife. This was an example of a gender-inclusive approach aimed to formalize joint ownership over land and empower rural women in the districts (FAO & SIDA 2020).

As Andrew et al. (2022:237) confirm, “women’s access to, use of, and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and an adequate standard of living.” Despite the growing global interest in strengthening land rights and promoting sustainable livelihoods, such as the CCO initiative, little is known about how these interventions are implemented, received, and experienced at the local level. Particularly in complex land tenure systems, such as found in communities in the northern Uganda.

Several international agencies (CiDA, EU, SIDA, UN-HABITAT) have identified challenges linked to land titling initiatives, such as CCO, arguing the initiatives sometimes fail to secure land rights, improve productivity, or prevent informal settlement growth. “Several other agencies note that titling programmes should develop out of a real need [...] rather than as a means to stimulate rural land markets” (IFAD 2008:31). Concerns about institutional abuse, corruption, lack of participation and democratic processer are also raised by several international agencies (EU, UNDP, UN-HABITAT & World Bank), emphasizing the need for a transparent and inclusive process. SIDA’s position paper (2007) “underlines the importance of applying democratic governance principles for establishing effective and equitable tenure systems” (IFAD 2008:32).

Little is still known about the effectiveness and lived experiences of CCOs. There is a need to explore how such project interventions interact with deep-rooted social norms, power relations and everyday realities in communities. This study seeks to respond to that knowledge gap by examining the FAO’s project intervention in two communities in northern Uganda.

1.1 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of how the implementation of the project intervention, the registration of the CCOs, has influenced the livelihoods of two communities in Northern Uganda. The study seeks to capture and understand the implementation and adoption processes of the CCO in two sub-counties of the Adjumani district. I seek to portray the perspectives and lived experiences of both project implementers and adopters, with regard to the perceived impacts and outcomes of the CCOs on livelihood opportunities. The livelihood approach will serve as the fundamental lens to analyse whether the registration of CCOs bearing the name of both husband and wife has secured land rights and influenced community livelihoods.

1.2 Research questions

How do both implementers and adopters describe their perspectives and experiences of the project intervention and the CCOs contribution to their livelihood opportunities?

Questions supporting the main question:

1. How is the implementation process of the CCO project described by the implementers and adopters, and what actors were involved?
2. How do implementers and adopters perceive the impacts and outcomes of the CCO intervention on the communities' livelihood opportunities?
3. How do the communities describe how they utilize the CCO to strengthen their capabilities in realizing their livelihood strategies?

1.3 Delimitation

The study focuses on the Adjumanin District, in the West Nile Region of northern Uganda. Two sub-counties, Ciforo and Pakelle, served as the field site for this study. The registration of CCOs was implemented in additional sub-counties in Adjumani District. Ciforo and Pakelle sub-counties were chosen as they are strategically located close to each other and easily accessible, as the time frame was a limitation for this study.

2. Background

In Uganda, the agricultural sector is the backbone of the economy and the primary source of employment (FAO & SIDA 2020). Almost all of Uganda's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is generated from the extraction or harvesting of natural resources. Therefore, land plays a crucial role in the country's economic development (Andrew et al 2022). As stated by the Republic of Uganda (2013) "people's livelihoods, for now and in the foreseeable future, depend almost entirely on sound management and sustainable utilization of the natural resource base" (Republic of Uganda 2013:46). Agriculture and farming activities provide employment for over 70 percent of the rural population (FAO & SIDA 2020), and most of the people in Uganda live in rural areas. Small-holder farmers make up most of the agricultural production (Republic of Uganda 2013).

85 percent of the rural population is engaged in subsistence agriculture, and 90 percent of the rural women are involved in agricultural practices (Andrew et al 2022). Despite women's important role in agricultural production, livelihoods and food security for rural households, female farmers experience fewer and weaker land rights compared to male farmers (LANDac 2016). Land is a crucial source of security against poverty. But the unequal land rights put women at a disadvantage (Andrew et al 2022). Women often receive less agricultural extension training and are underrepresented in farmers' organizations (LANDac 2016).

To better understand the context, we must identify the various factors that have influenced the current communities, their livelihoods, their economic opportunities and constraints. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine how existing social networks and institutions have developed, as well as how cultural values and beliefs about land have emerged and influenced existing attitudes and behaviours. In the following sections I will elaborate upon that.

2.1 The pre-colonial era

In the pre-colonial era, Uganda did not have an integrated system of land tenure (Republic of Uganda 2013). Instead, different ethnic groups had their own customs and practices regarding land. Land management was typically overseen by the clan

leader within the clan community. Individuals' rights to own and use land were recognized within the approval from; their family, the clan leader, and the community (Douglas 2013). Traditional land ownership rights were controlled by rural communities in accordance with the king of the area. Women's rights to use the land varied between cultures and tribes (Naybor 2015). The clan community and family were empowered to resolve land disputes, buy any land offered by its members, prohibit the sale of clan land to people outside the clan, and invalidate unauthorized land transfers (Douglas 2013).

Members of the clan community held land in common (Douglas 2013), with areas identified for communal use by the community (Trócaire Uganda 2018). The common land was used for grazing and watering livestock, hunting, gathering wood for fuel and building materials (The Land Act 1998). As a result, customary land tenure in pre-colonial Uganda recognized both individual and community interests in land. But specific tenure requirements varied by ethnic group and region (Douglas 2013). For example, within matriarchy tribes, land rights transferred from mother to daughter, and men were expected to move to the village of the woman they married (Naybor 2015).

2.2 The impacts of colonialism

In 1894, Britain declared Uganda a protectorate, which led to the merging of the 56 indigenous communities that had previously existed separately. The indigenous population consisted of four main language groups. These four ethnic groups had different languages, cultures, and social systems (Odoki 2001). Uganda's status as a former British protectorate has significantly impacted the agricultural crop production, the land rights, and the traditional customs, traditions and practices related to land. During the colonial period, the privatization of land rights resulted in community leaders and men as the head of the household. Land rights in Uganda have changed from community-based ownership to a male-dominated form of ownership, almost completely excluding women as landowners (Naybor 2015).

Women's land rights are often rooted in cultural beliefs that women can only access land through their father, brothers, husband, or sons. As a result, women are highly dependent on good relationships with male relatives to secure their livelihoods (LANDac 2016). Despite the current national laws protecting and guaranteeing equal right to land for both women and men in Uganda, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) and the Land Act (1998), Andrew et al. (2022) highlight the various cultural norms and religious beliefs continue restricting women's access to, control over, and use of land. Naybor (2015) indicates the lack of land rights is linked to Uganda's history of being a former colony.

During the colonial period the transition from the former community-based ownership to the present individual-based (referred to as male-dominated) developed. The introduction of new attitudes towards agricultural land as a supplier of products and the establishment of new concepts such as commodity and investment associated with the land appeared during the colonial period. As a result, women were largely excluded from this emerging market-oriented focus. These new attitudes and concepts completely dissolved and ignored the existing informal land tenure systems and left women in great uncertainty (Naybor 2015) and in a position of increased vulnerability (FAO & SIDA 2020). Farmers have little knowledge of the current laws and policies, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) and the Land Act (1998). So, they are vulnerable to being abused of their rights to land, facing land grabbing or resource-based conflicts (Andrew et al 2022).

2.3 Current land tenure systems

Land tenure systems vary across Uganda, and the customs and habits linked to land are a mixture of traditional practices, colonial regulations, and post-colonial legalizations. The form of land tenure defines the "holding rights in land and specifies how property rights to land are allocated" (Andrew et al 2022:235). The form of land tenure regulates and defines the right of utilizing, controlling, and transferring land, as well as associated responsibilities and obligations (Andrew et al 2022). As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995:148) "Land in Uganda belongs to the citizens of Uganda and shall vest in them in accordance with the land tenure systems provided for in this Constitution". The 1995 Constitution of Uganda and the 1998 Land Act identifies four land tenure systems: mailo, customary, leasehold, and freehold (Republic of Uganda 1995; The Land Act 1998).

Among the four tenure systems, the two dominant varieties of land tenure systems are customary and mailo land tenure systems (Andrew et al 2022). Most Ugandans, particularly in rural areas, hold land under customary tenure (Republic of Uganda 2013). Both systems imply ownership by inheritance and do not automatically indicate freehold ownership rights (Trócaire Uganda 2018). Mailo is the most dominant tenure system in the Central and the Mid-western region. While freehold is more common in the South-western part of the country. and permits full ownership rights. In urban settings, leasehold is the most common tenure system but is also scattered around the country. Leasehold provides temporary access to land through formal lease agreements.

In the Northern, Northeast, and West Nile Regions, the customary tenure is the majority of the holding system (Andrew et al 2022) and allows broad access to land, but the lack of formal documentation can limit legal protection and livelihood opportunities. It is estimated that customary tenure covers approximately 80 percent of all land in Uganda (Trócaire Uganda 2018). In the two communities I visited in Adjumani District, land tenure was held exclusively under customary tenure. This study focuses on customary tenure, as the CCO intervention seeks to formalize land rights within this system. In the following section I will describe this tenure system in more detail, and how it has influenced the communities' livelihoods.

2.4 Sources of land conflicts

Although Uganda's agricultural sector is largely male-dominated as a result of colonial legacies, many farms are in fact managed by women, particularly in female-headed households (FAO & SIDA 2020). Despite their central role in agricultural labour, as they make up 84 percent of the smallholder farming population (Andrew et al 2022) and account for 90 percent of all food produced in Uganda (Naybor 2015). Female farmers control less than 10 percent of the agricultural land and own only 1 percent (Andrew et al 2022).

Due to the characteristics of the agricultural sector and the lack of secure land rights many women are driven into the intergenerational poverty cycle, combined with low productivity, unpaid care burdens, and limited income opportunities (FAO & SIDA 2020). By securing women's land rights, their decision-making power over the land increases. For example, women are more likely to invest in perennial crops with longer growing seasons when they receive decision-making power over the land they till (Andrew et al 2022). This example demonstrates how secured access land rights can empower women.

Access to land is a crucial factor in people's livelihoods and thus an essential asset of human existence. But land is also a major contributor to past and present conflicts over land in Uganda. On the one hand, land disputes are rooted in historical inequalities and colonial laws, "which have resulted in multiple rights and interests over the same piece of land" (Republic of Uganda 2013:5). Past land conflicts were often related to communities losing ancestral lands, tribes disagreeing over the boundaries of their lands and cross-border disputes between ethnic groups. While today's land conflicts are linked to "disparities in ownership, access to and control over land by vulnerable groups: displacement, land grabbing and landlessness" (Republic of Uganda 2013:5) which is a direct consequence of the high population growth and the great demand for land for various investments. Customary

landholders are particularly vulnerable for conflicts, as they often lack formal documentation or clear land boundaries (Republic of Uganda 2013).

One potential solution to reduce both land-related conflict and gender inequality is the process of acquiring Certificate of Customary Ownership. This is a way to protect customary land rights by providing that “any person, family or community holding land under customary tenure on former public land may acquire a certificate of customary ownership in respect of that land” (Land Act 1998:11). In response to the rising land conflicts and frequent evictions, the Ugandan government legalized a process for obtaining Certificate of Customary Ownership. This process is outlined in the Land Act of 1998. I have described the process in more detail. See Appendix 1.

2.5 The FAO project and contribution of my study

The FAO representation in Uganda and the Government of Sweden signed an agreement to implement a five-year project to support rural women in Karamoja and West Nile, the two poorest regions in Uganda. Adjumani was one of the selected districts (FAO 2021:6). The project was implemented and managed by the FAO Uganda and funded by SIDA (FAO 2020;2021). This study focuses on one of the activities carried out to strengthen tenure security for both men and women, by registering CCOs bearing the name of both husband and wife in the within the communities. (FAO 2021). The Embassy of Sweden in Uganda had requested an evaluation inquiry of the project intervention of the registration of CCOs. This topic, and a couple of others, were introduced and encouraged by my local supervisor and proposed as potential research topics for my thesis. I became interested in examining the impacts and outcome of this project intervention, because I want to contribute to the understanding if the registration of CCOs has increased the security of land rights and improved smallholders' livelihood opportunities in Adjumani district.

3. Methodology and methods

The tradition in qualitative research is on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups of individuals attribute to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Therefore, this research methodology became a natural starting point for this study. I continuously developed questions throughout the process, collected data in the setting of the participants, analysed data from particular to general themes, and interpreted the data and produced meaning from it, which Creswell & Creswell (2018) describe as the process of qualitative research. Another aspect justifying the choice of research design is that the study is entirely based on the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants. This is in accordance with the definition of qualitative research by Taylor et al (2015) “the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data — people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior” (Taylor et al 2015:17).

3.1 Selection of the field sites and participants

Before arriving in the Adjumani district, the FAO staff identified one Key-Information Informant (KII) and introduced me to the informant upon arrival. The KII proposed other relevant actors and introduced me to them. This is called snowball sampling, a widely used technique within qualitative research (Bryman & Nilsson 2018).

Table 1. Overview of the key-information informants.

	Gender	Organisation	Involvement
Informant 1	Female	Governmental	Implementation / Sensitization
Informant 2	Male	Governmental	Implementation
Informant 3	Male	Governmental	Implementation
Informant 4	Male	Religious leader	Sensitization / Mediation
Informant 5	Female	NGO	Sensitization
Informant 6	Male	NGO	Sensitization
Informant 7	Male	Governmental	Implementation / Mediation
Informant 8	Male	Cultural leader	Mediation

With the help of KII, the FAO field assistant and interpreter, I was introduced to adopters who were willing to participate in the focus group discussions (FGD).

Table 2. Overview of the participants in the focus group discussions.

Group	Gender	Participation	Min. age	Max. age	Main occupation (n)
FGD 1	Females	10	42	61	Farmers (10)
FGD 2 ²	Males	14	36	72	Farmers (11) Teacher (1) Policeman (1) Businessman (1)
FGD 3 ¹	Females	5	49	65	Farmers (5)
FGD 4 ²	Males	5	38	70	Farmers (3) Solider (1) Teacher (1)

¹In FGD3, two of the women openly informed me of their marital status as widows.

²In this part of Uganda, I was told most people are of the Madi ethnicity and Catholics. One of the men was from the Lugbara tribe and he was Muslim, and another man was Christian.

3.2 Data collection methods

Two data collection methods were selected and used in this study. By applying more than one data collection method, referred to as triangulation, I can increase the credibility and validity of research findings. The two data collection methods are presented below.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The collection of data for this study was made through seven semi-structured interviews (SSIs) with eight KII. Questions were on beforehand determined and structured into a series of questions following a specific order. The order of the questions was discussed with my local supervisor and with a professor at Makerere University. This was to ensure gathering the information needed to answer the study's research questions and to achieve the purpose of the study. The prepared questions functioned as an interview guide in shaping the conversation so that the informant would shed light on what this study intends to investigate. Furthermore, I had structured the questions to create a natural flow of a conversation. The SSIs technique allowed me, if needed, to change the order and introduce new or supplementary questions when interesting discussions arose. It also brought the opportunity to ask for clarifications.

I designed questions with open answers, which is important as it allows the informant to respond in her words and without being affected by the researcher's preconceived biases (Davies 2002). The SSIs require attention to what is said, how it is said, the context, and the relationship between the researcher and the informant. When the SSI is used as a data-collection method, particular attention should be put on the role of the researcher. The researcher always has "to keep one eye on where you are and the other one where you're headed" (Galletta 2013:76). Gillham (2000) stresses further the researcher's role of guiding the informant to open up about topics of interest to the study while avoiding influencing her story. Therefore, I needed to make the informant comfortable sharing her experiences, perspectives, and stories. This was accomplished by having a casual chat with the informant before the interview itself began. During the short chat, we introduced ourselves to each other, I briefly talked about my trip to Adjumani, my experiences with the country, the food, and the people I have met.

See Appendix 3 for details in the interview guide. The interview began with me sharing the letter of consent (see Appendix 2).

3.2.2 Focus group discussions

Various researchers have put attention to FGDs as a form of qualitative research, and its essentially of being a group interview explicitly using the interaction within the group to produce data and insights within a short time span (Morgan 1986). It is a research data-collecting technique based on group interactions on the topics determined and provided by me, which ensures the data will be directly targeted to the study's interests. FGDs assist me in understanding how participants structure and organize their social world, by encouraging the participants to discuss with each other rather than responding to the moderator's questions (Smithson 2008).

Role of the moderator and data collection process

The structure of FGD is not "an alternation between a researcher's questions and the research participants' responses" (Morgan 1997:2) instead, I have a moderating and facilitating role by providing the focus of the discussions. FGD is well suited for bringing light to attitudes and decision-making (Morgan 1996), which is strongly in line with the research topic of this study. Focus groups are a great advantage when studying behaviours that are either too private or habit-ridden and therefore do not offer many opportunities to be observed (Morgan 1997).

In this study I intend to capture group behaviours rather than individual behaviours, therefore FGD is a great technique for collecting qualitative data within groups (Agar and MacDonald 1995). With respect to the limited time for the field study working with focus groups rather than individual interviews is timesaving.

Timesaving both in terms of collecting the data but also analysing the data (Agar and MacDonald 1995), which goes in line with Smithson (2008) as she points out the researcher is able “to observe a large amount of interaction on a specific topic in a short time” (Smithson 2008:3). FGD is largely limited to verbal behaviour and self-reported data (Morgan 1997), however, group discussions enable the participants to collectively develop and bring forward their priorities and perspectives (Smithson 2008).

Structuring topics

The four criteria for conducting effective FGD: it should cover a maximum range of relevant topics, provide data that are as specific as possible, foster interaction that explores the participants' feelings in some depth, and take into account the personal context that participants use in generating their responses to the topic (Merton et al 1990). On beforehand I set up four distinct topics and with related questions. I discussed them with my local supervisor and professor at Makerere University to maintain the focus and avoid the exploration of too many topics. The topics were organized into a guide. Structuring an interview guide “is valuable both in channelling the group interactions and in making comparisons across groups in the analysis phase of the research [...] and to ensure consensus among the various members of the research team” (Morgan 1997:48). For this study, the guide ensured consensus between me, the interpreter, and the local supervisor in terms of which topics were already covered, which were not and the level of details.

This study consists of four FGDs and participants were split into the groups depending on their gender. This was done to ensure the participants would feel comfortable sharing their experiences. In the first two FGDs, ten women and fourteen men participated. However, some participants remained silent, and I wished to improve the interaction within the next groups. Therefore, the number of participants was reduced to five in the two next coming group discussions. Smaller groups “often provide an environment where all participants can play an active part in the discussion [...] smaller groups often yield interesting and relevant data (Smithson 2008:4) and participants acquire enough space and time to explore the various themes. A group of fewer than four participants is at high risk of losing the quality of being a group (Smithson 2008).

See Appendix 4 for details in the interview guide. I started the FGD by letting the interpreter translate and read out loud the letter of consent (see Appendix 2).

3.3 Analysing the empirical data

The analysis work is a process where the researcher tries to understand and interpret the collected data. It is a process with several steps and requires continuous reflection (Creswell 2009) as it is an intuitive and inductive process (Taylor et al 2015). For this study, the analysis of the data has occurred alongside the collection of the data. I have returned to the collected data, reflect on it, and discussed its meaning with my local supervisor, before I moved on to the next interview or next group discussion. This is in accordance with Galetta (2013) the process within qualitative studies and requires the researcher to return to the data frequently.

During the analysis I have created meaning from the raw data and made a broader interpretation of the meaning of the data. I have used two analysis methods for that: transcribing and coding. These methods are two standard analysis methods in qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Since I have used more than one data collection method, there is a need for multiple levels of analysis. The levels include “not only within and across interviews, but also across data sources” (Galetta 2013:120). The analysis is a dynamic and creative process, where the researcher attempts to develop a deeper understanding of the people or settings studied (Taylor et al 2015).

3.3.1 Transcribing

I wrote down the exact spoken words. This technique is referred to verbatim transcription (Fontana & Prokos 2007). In the FGDs a local language was used among the participants, and I had the assistance of an interpreter. The transcript from the FGDs is, mostly, the words of the interpreter and not necessarily the participants. Some adopters spoke English. Creswell (2009) emphasizes the importance of writing down the informant's words to a large extent to avoid the researcher making her interpretation of the conversation. Moreover, the fundamental idea of qualitative research is to portray the informant's experiences in her words.

The transcripts are essential in the analysis process, as they assist me in organizing the data and preparing it for further analysis. I took some notes in the margin of the transcripts of my ideas and insights. As I thought they might serve as a good starting point for coding and analysing. After that I created a grid where I could summarize what each individual or group answered on each specific question. This approach is efficient and helpful when the researcher wants to make and report comparisons between the different informants and groups (Knodel 1993).

3.3.2 Coding and thematizing

By reading and re-reading the material and interpreting and reinterpreting the data, I slowly expanded my understanding of the collected data. After understanding the data broadly, the next step in the analysis process is coding the transcripts by identifying themes. I asked several questions to the material: What is the informant trying to express? What tone does the informant have when she expresses her thoughts and opinions? What impressions do I get from the material? What material is useful? What makes it useful? Asking questions to the material is essential in this stage of the analysis process (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

I tried to find the core and central parts of what the informants expressed by putting the data into various codes. I searched for patterns and common points between the interviews and discussions. After encoding, I tried to interpret these themes in a broader context by using the theoretical entry point for this study.

3.3.3 Interpreting the data

Researchers in qualitative research “are constantly theorizing and trying to make sense of their data [...] and develop concepts and propositions to begin to interpret their data” (Taylor et al 2015:6 chapter. 6). There are many variables I need to consider before I can begin to interpret the data. One important aspect I need to consider is that the focus groups are small and not representative of the entire population, and not all topics are discussed in the same depth in all the groups. In some interviews and group discussions certain information was provided voluntarily, and in other groups not. Therefore, I had to directly bring up some impacts and outcomes expressed in previous interviews or group discussions.

The group discussions with fewer participants are richer. One reason for that could be that I was more knowledgeable about the topics discussed and I was able to ask the *right* supplementary questions. When interpreting the data from the SSIs and FGDs and to understand when the data is worth emphasizing, I used group-to-group validation. Meaning I analysed how much recognition a topic got. Three factors influence how much weight a topic should receive "how many groups mentioned the topic, how many people within each of these groups mentioned the topic, and how much energy and enthusiasm the topic generated among the participants" (Morgan 1997:56).

3.4 Working with an interpreter and the FAO

In the Adjumanin district, multiple languages are spoken, and communities speak their local language. Therefore, it has been necessary for me to work with an

interpreter for this study. Fujii (2013) emphasizes the risks of the research findings if not using an interpreter, as speaking with those who only speak English will affect the selection of informants. Conducting the interviews in English might also affect the richness of the data. An informant with limited knowledge of English "will have limited ways of expressing himself" (Fujii 2013:147). As I am interested in hearing their perspectives and experiences, I do not want to risk the informant might leave out the more complex stories due to her level of English.

Within the translation process, risks arise for distortion of the original information. Especially translations in two steps increase the risk of losing the meaning. It is vital to bear in mind misinterpretation may negatively affect the credibility and validity of the research findings and should be viewed as a study limitation (Fujii 2013). To minimize this and ensure the interpreter translated the questions correctly, we went through the interview guides beforehand and clarified potential misunderstandings. To increase the understanding of the study and to reach a mutual agreement regarding the study's purpose and research questions, they were discussed beforehand.

My local supervisor introduced me to the interpreter who had served as an interpreter earlier in the FAO project. As a result of her previous work experience, she was familiar with the project and knowledgeable of the communities. She played a fundamental role in inviting participant for the SSIs and FGDs. The previous collaboration between the FAO and the interpreter increases the credibility and legitimacy of the study. Her former experiences and interactions with the people in the communities have established trust between her and the communities, and likewise between the communities and the FAO, which is invaluable in the data collection.

However, the relationship between the FAO and communities is most probably characterized by a donor-beneficiary relationship. Meaning the participants might want to exaggerate the impacts of the project activity in their communities, to receive future projects and funding. This nature of the relationship is crucial to bear in mind during the collection and analysis of data. Considerations of to what extent it influences their perspectives and experiences and its impacts on the research findings. I tried to minimize my association with the FAO by introducing myself as a master's student from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). I emphasized my study interest and stressed I was here on behalf of my master's degree project.

3.5 Validity and credibility

The distance between the researcher and the research interest is one of the most relevant questions to verify the credibility of a study. It refers to the researcher's previous experience or knowledge in the field and guides how the data will be understood and interpreted (Esaiaasson et al 2017). I have reduced the distance by discussing potential data collection methods with my local supervisor and professor at the Makerere University at an early stage. Both are knowledgeable in the research field and have previously worked within the communities. Their assessments of what is suitable and necessary to investigate the addressed phenomena, considering the research purpose and questions, have guided me when designing the qualitative methods.

The researcher's former experience and previous knowledge already determine the choice of the research interest and problem formulation (Esaiaasson et al 2017). My knowledge in the research field was strengthened the weeks before the field visit by reading relevant literature proposed by my local supervisor. Experience in the field was prior to my departure, strengthened by having conversations with my local supervisor and the professor at Makerere University about their practical experiences in the communities. They gave me great insights and deepened my understanding of the communities.

Bryman & Nilsson (2018) distinguish the differences between internal and external validity. Internal validity concerns how well the researcher makes presumptions about the findings. In other words, how well I succeed in my interpretations and theorizations depends on my previous experience and knowledge of the research topic. Furthermore, Bryman & Nilsson (2018) define external validity as the generalizability of the study. My choices of well-established qualitative research methods and detailed reporting on the data collection process, the study can easily be replicated by other researchers. The detailed reporting was a way for me to increase the transparency of the research process and increase its generalizability.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council (SRC) (2020) has developed four principles for conducting ethical research. The four principles are the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement, and the utilization requirement (SRC 2017). To address the ethical considerations, I conducted a letter of consent (see appendix 2). The letter includes sufficient information assuring the participants understand their participation in the study. Furthermore, it comprises

information about their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw if they wish to do so at any stage.

The collection, storage, and reporting of information and data will be in accordance with SLU information and management of data terms of reference (SLU¹ 2022; SLU² 2022). By following the guidelines of SLU, the confidentiality requirement for the participants is fulfilled. I am ensuring information security and data protection so only authorized people can access, read or use the data by classifying the data according to SLU's information security aspects (SLU¹ 2022). The respondent's right to privacy is considered and achieved by allowing all participants to undergo anonymization and pseudonymization according to the guidelines of SLU (SLU³ 2022). To avoid using offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language when formulating topics and questions, I have discussed them with my local supervisor and professor at Makerere University.

3.7 The researcher's role

The nature of qualitative research builds upon interpretation, as the data collection methods often build upon intensive interaction between the researcher and informants (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Therefore, it is likely I build a close relationship with the informants, which introduces a number of questions regarding strategic, ethical, and personal considerations. Paying attention to my role in this study is fundamental, because the study may be affected by my "biases, values and personal backgrounds such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, that may shape their interpretations" (Creswell & Creswell 2018:270).

My role was to make the informant comfortable sharing her story and facilitate her responding to themes, topics, and questions of interest for the study. Therefore, I initially interact with the informant by not asking questions linked to the study or the research itself. I asked questions of importance to the informant, such as marriage and number of kids. Qualitative interviews are flexible and dynamic and usually take place face-to-face, and the researcher intends to understand the informant's perspective, life, and experiences (Taylor et al., 2015).

The development of understanding is a social and creative process involving both the informant and the researcher (Davies 2002). Therefore, it was crucial for me to pay attention to mutual misunderstandings which easily could arise due to cultural and personal differences. Therefore, I have asked my local supervisor how to greet the informants, how to introduce myself and how to dress myself. Throughout the interviews, I gave time for the informants to answer the questions and reflect upon them. Davies (2002) states the relationship between the informant and the

researcher shapes the data collection and serves as the basis for the analysis process. As I was using an interpreter, I must maintain a good connection with the interpreter, as the relationship with her was fundamental to the data collected.

The researcher's role is vital in FGDs as her positioning affects the group dynamics and the data collected (Bryman 1988). In this study, I conduct single-gender group discussions, and whether my gender affects the group must be considered. I believe my gender created a safer space for the women to share their stories and experiences. I felt like the men had high trust to my local supervisor, the FAO field assistants and also my female interpreter. I suppose me being a woman in that case did not affect what type of information they shared with me.

“The moderator's impact as a gendered and embodied being needed to be considered both in the set-up of the groups, and in the analysis” (Smithson 2008:6). This is not unique for FGDs, but also individual interviews and surveys, as the respondents may report answers perceived as acceptable by the researcher (Bryman 1988). However, within FGDs this issue can be deepened, as the group may respond out of fear of exclusion or as a result of peer pressure (Smithson 2008). My interpreter was well known in the communities, and I got the feeling she was respected and appreciated. She has lived and worked in the area for many years, and she can therefore relate to their everyday lives. I got the feeling the informants felt comfortable sharing their stories with her.

My interpreter did not represent the FAO, instead she represented the district land office. They all knew she was the right person to address issues or concerns regarding land in the area. Therefore, I hope the informants felt they could be as transparent as possible in her presence. I hope the level of trust was high enough, and this was indicated by how easily it was for the interpreter to arrange the FGDs and how we were greeted. The gender of my interpreter can also impact what the informants feel comfortable sharing or not. After each group discussion, I consulted the interpreter and my supervisor regarding their perspectives on the group discussion. If they suspect information is withheld because of a lack of trust and gender.

3.8 Limitations of the study

It is advantageous to conduct individual interviews if the researcher seeks a deeper understanding of people's opinions. FGDs with 8 to 10 participants lasting 90 minutes generate about a tenth of the information provided during individual interviews with each of them (Morgan 1997). The purpose of the study is not to understand and learn from each individual in detail but to capture the perspectives

and experiences in the communities, shared by individuals in SSIs and FGDs. If there had been enough time, I would strongly consider conducting all the interviews individually, as SSIs have the possibility of creating an environment where more perspectives and experiences are shared. Because individuals can speak more freely and possibly surrender to peer pressure to a lower extent. But since there was not enough time, and I was not willing to reduce the number of informants, I am aware my choice of method is a limitation of the study.

I am interested in understanding possible changes in people's strategies after the registration of the CCO. It is discussed in the FGDs but could have been confirmed through participant observations. The limited time available was a critical factor, and I have not been able to carry out participant observations to any greater extent. Instead, I sought confirmation through interviews with the KIIs and informally with the interpreter. The advantage of participant observation is that it has "an ability to collect data on a larger range of behaviors" (Morgan 1997:9). FGDs can only observe verbal behaviours and interactions taking place within the group discussion. The choice of method is a limiting factor to the study since the interactions are created by me, as I set up the discussion topics and questions.

A strength of FGDs it allows participants to discuss habit-ridden behaviours, rather than allowing the researcher observing them (Morgan 1997). It has been crucial making sure not a single person taking over the discussion. One way to increase participants' willingness of sharing their perspectives and experiences has been to divide the groups based on gender. Another strategy has been not letting the participants in FGDs be strangers to each other. Another consideration is not letting them know each other too deeply, as in having a personal bond like a family member or relatives. As this might constrain their willingness to share information.

This study is based on the informant feeling safe in the presence of me, my supervisor, and the interpreter. "Competency in the local language may also help the researcher to establish trust with people since it demonstrates both her seriousness about the project and respect for the people in her research site" (Fujii 2013:146). I did learn some basic words in the local language, such as greetings, introducing my name and saying thank you and goodbye. This was received with positive response.

4. The livelihood approach

The livelihood approach is a well-known theory in development studies that emphasizes the importance of understanding the complex relationships between people and their natural environment to achieve sustainable livelihoods (Ellis 2000). The livelihood approach aims to understand and improve the well-being of individuals, households, and communities, particularly those in poverty (Scoones 2015). The approach emphasizes the interdependence between economic, social, and environmental factors and the need for holistic and participatory approaches to successful rural development (Chambers & Conway 1992).

The approach is applied to understand the changes in agrarian livelihoods by explaining how individuals, households and communities maintain or improve their well-being. Livelihoods are shaped by a combination of factors, including access to assets, such as land or social networks. They further emphasize the approach considers peoples' ability to make use of those assets, and the external factors that either support or constrain their efforts Chambers and Conway (1992). Ellis (1998) emphasizes the importance of diversification of livelihoods and the effective use of assets to reduce vulnerabilities and risks associated with life circumstances.

When applying the livelihood approach to a specific context, such as a rural community in a low-income country, it is vital to start by understanding the context and identifying the diverse factors that shape the livelihoods (Scoones 1998;2015). Including understanding the natural resources available, the existing social networks and institutions, the economic opportunities and constraints, and the cultural values and beliefs shaping the persisting attitudes and behaviours (Chambers & Conway 1992). This has been covered in chapter 2.

Chambers and Conway (1992) claim that the livelihood approach requires a shift from top-down intervention strategies to a more participatory and inclusive approach incorporating the perspectives and experiences of the people to acknowledge the complexity of livelihoods and whose livelihoods are at risk. They recommend that rural development projects promoting sustainable development of livelihoods focus on enabling people rather than delivering services, thus empowering their decision-making power about their future. A definition of a sustainable livelihood by Ellis (2000:10) "A livelihood comprises the assets, the

activities and the access to these mediated by policies and institutions that together determine the living gained by the individual or household”.

4.1.1 The five forms of capital

Ellis (2000) claims the livelihood approach must focus on identifying and understanding the different forms of capital individuals and communities possess, to be effective and efficient in development projects. There are five forms of capital: natural, physical, financial, social, and human capital. Natural capital refers to the resources found in the environment, such as land, water and biodiversity. Physical capital includes the necessary infrastructure, housing, water and energy systems, tools, and equipment for livelihood strategies. Financial capital refers to the resources used to provide for daily needs, such as household savings, stocks of livestock, money and credit. Human capital encompasses the skills, knowledge, trainings, health, and capabilities of individuals contributing to their livelihood strategies. Finally, social capital encompasses the relationships and networks enabling individuals and communities to access resources and support.

Harriss & De Renzio (1997) break down social capital into vertical linkages (authority relations between parent and child) as well as horizontal linkages (voluntary and kinship networks). They further distinguish three main types of linkages bonding (horizontal associations such as family and kinship ties and common language), bridging (communication networks, etc. that connect separate bonded groups), and linking (generating and encouraging respect, recognition of interdependence, inclusion, reciprocity). Scoones (1998) builds further on the understanding of livelihoods as being shaped by diverse factors and the availability and distribution of assets are influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, and social networks (Scoones 1998). Rural households access livelihood assets to a different extent, depending on social factors or structural constraints.

4.1.2 Institutions shaping access

The level of access to assets is also mediated by different institutions, which underlines the importance of understanding the institutional processes of both formal and informal institutions. That knowledge can assist the researcher in the process of identifying which factors hamper people's access to livelihood resources (Scoones 1998). Institutions are the rules, codes, conventions and norms by which society governs its social, political and economic relations. The role of institutions is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable structure to human interaction (North 1991), and generate reliable, however not always desirable, expectations of behaviours and responses.

Institutions can be formal land tenure systems or informal market structures, which shape the possibilities of finding grazing land or accessing a market (Ellis 2000; Scoones 1998). By exploring the five forms of capital, this approach allows me to understand how different factors interact to create opportunities or constraints.

4.1.3 Livelihood strategies

Ellis (2000:10) defines livelihood as “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living”. This definition emphasizes the importance of understanding the socio-economic context shaping livelihood strategies. Livelihood strategies refer to coping and adaptation behaviours or activities undertaken based on the assets and capabilities to secure a livelihood (Ellis 2000). The household creates different livelihood strategies depending on the choices of activities, the availability of assets, and their capabilities.

Securing land tenure is a crucial asset for the two communities for enabling livelihood strategies. Land tenure security provides a foundation for investment, creates incentives for sustainable resource management, and enables communities to access credit and support services. When farmers have secure land tenure, they can invest in improving their fields, such as building irrigation systems, purchasing better seeds, and investing in livestock. These investments, in turn, increase productivity, reduce the likelihood of poverty, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods (Ellis 2000).

Diversification of livelihoods is "the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diversified portfolio of activities and assets to survive and improve their standard of living" (Ellis 2000:15). In this context, diversification means that households are not only dependent on one or a few livelihood activities but rather engage in other livelihood activities, often non-agricultural activities. Within the framework of livelihood strategies, Ellis (2000) describes substitution as the households' ability or willingness to substitute different assets for one another. Substitution, in turn, has a substantial effect on households' ability to cope and adapt. "Assets that can be freely converted into cash that is then used to purchase other assets provide considerably more livelihood flexibility than assets that cannot be substituted in this way" (Ellis 2000:42).

5. Empirical findings

5.1 The CCO process and involved actors

Various informants told me the government of Uganda had carried out a project of issuing CCOs, as an attempt to secure land rights in communities in other districts. This project had been unsuccessful, as the communities did not proceed with mapping their lands, and conflicts and misunderstandings arose. The implementation of the SIDA-funded project intervention was designed differently to minimize conflicts, misunderstandings and stimulate the uptake. In section 5.1, I will shed light on the experiences of the actors involved in the CCO process.

5.1.1 Roles and responsibilities

The District land office (DLO) is an administrative unit handling the process of applications and is the responsible unit for facilitating the CCO process. The KII¹ explains the role of the DLO:

Our office [the DLO] handles the whole process of acquiring either a certificate of customary ownership, free title or lease. The whole process begins from this office. We give the technical guidance on the processes you as the applicant will go through.

The KII¹ continues explaining the type of support the DLO offers applicants throughout the application process, such as “*where to begin, how to fill in the forms, where to take it*”. The office ensures the delivery of the forms to the relevant administrative sub-county office, in the county where the applicant has applied to acquire the CCO. After that, the application form returns to the DLO, and the KII¹ continues explaining the process “*we help this applicant by ensuring that the application is presented before the District land board wants it*”.

The establishment of the District land board (DLB) and its composition of religious and cultural leaders was of importance. The DLB is the final decision-making body and the board members either approve or decline the applications. I was told the composition of board members had an impact on trust-building, “*now when we [the cultural and religious leaders] were involved in the process, the people, they trust*”.

us, they easily trust the process” explained by the KII⁸. The role of the DLB is to check that the applicant meets all the requirements of acquiring the CCO. The KII⁴ is one of the members of the DLB in Adjumani. He describes the process when the specific sub-county office receives the application, the Area land committee (ALC) of that office “sends it for us. And then we sit, and we check, to avoid conflicts between the government and the people. So, we check the requirements, and then we approve it. We approve it, that the land is taken and that it belongs to the one it is given to.”

5.1.2 Application requirements for conflict prevention

Some of the requirements are (1) attaching a national ID (Ugandan citizen), (2) paying the fees (application fee: 5000 Ugandan shilling (UGX), issuing fee: 5000 UGX), (3) attaching passport-sized photographs of the persons whose names appear on the application, and (4) the signatures of neighbours. The requirement of signatures is a way to guarantee endorsement from the applicant's neighbours and finding out if there is a dispute over the piece of land. The KII¹ explains the reason why the neighbours need to sign the application form:

Because most times human beings are not trusted. If I do not sign on their [the neighbours'] application, and by that time they [the neighbours] are mapping [their land] and if I am not there, you can easily dispersion on my lands. You map an area bigger than your land. That is why we [the DLO] encourage the neighbours to be there, throughout the process. Because if they are not there, they will raise a complaint. “So and so land was mapped when I was not there, and I presume that he mapped on my land also”. This delays the process.

The Area land committee (ALC) of that specific sub-county places a notice. This notice informs the community that someone has registered land in the area. The announcement runs for 14 days. After the closing date, the ALC proceeds by inspecting the land in the application. The KII¹ explains that the notice includes an invitation “on a specific date and a specified time so that the community gathers in that area”. The KII³ clarifies the notice and inspection phase, it is a way for ALC “to ensure that you are the rightful owner of this land” and verify the application, understanding if there are any disputes over the land. The invitation is an opportunity for community members to raise complaints or disagreements about the land. The KII¹ continues describing the role of the ALC “so basically, the Land area committee does that verification and when there is a dispute, they also mediate and report and place it in the file [the application]”. The KII² claims “their report is very important to inform another institution to undertake decision [...] that is the district land board”.

5.1.3 Building trust and community engagement

The DLO collaborated with cultural and religious leaders in Local council two (LC2) and Local council three (LC3). They were involved in the process and participated in the sensitizing activities of the CCO process. Especially the LC3 *“helped us [the DLO] in sensitizing the communities in understanding the process”* resulting in fewer misunderstandings and greater acceptance. The KII⁴ informed me about his involvement in sensitizing the community *“we sensitized through the religious channels. Religious leaders, and cultural leaders, we can do it. And then it is very easy. People will then pick up the method, and they adopting it. So, if it [the sensitizing] is increased, it will be easy for people to adopt it. It is a way of sensitization”*.

The KII¹ informed me about the government led project, and how communities in another sub-county had an initial perspective that the project intervention was a way for the government *“to secure this land. So, that government knows the size of their lands and then, in turn, tax them”*. To minimize the mistrust and misunderstanding between the purpose of the CCO process and the community members, the KII¹ continues explaining how this CCO process differentiated. Regular sensitizing meetings were arranged to raise awareness in the communities. Cultural and religious leaders were involved in informing about *“the importance of having the CCO. How you would use it in the future. The benefits”* and thereafter, *“they easily moved on processing the CCO”* describes KII⁸.

The KII² shared his perspective on the mistrust and misunderstanding by community members in the government led project. *“They [the communities] do not trust and they do not understand that context very well. They do not understand that, it [the certificate] is mainly meant for them to secure rights over their lands”*. He told me that in one district:

They [the communities] rejected it [the project] completely. And why do you think they rejected it? It is due to their attitudes, and it has been politicized. Because very few of them support the government, and they believe that the government is using that as a tool to begin registering the land and later on grabbing it. So, much of CCOs have never been implemented in that region.

The mistrust towards the government in other communities has previously been constraining and delaying the prior CCO process. The KII¹ expressed that the DLO started collaborating with the Makerere University, to build trust and minimize mistrust. The two partners established a trustworthy system when surveying the land in the application. One important step of making the mapping and surveying trustworthy was the mediation team *“who were there to help the communities, to help them with some simple disputes”*.

The empirical findings above are descriptions from informants who have been involved in the CCO process. They described the challenges they have encountered in the prior project, and how the experiences guided them in designing the current process differently. In the next section, I will focus on portraying the adopters' experiences of acquiring the certificates. Most quotations are translated by the interpreter

5.2 The experiences of the certificates

From different types of sources, I was told women have historically been constrained by cultural norms from owning land. One woman in the FGD¹ expressed *“in some communities, people did not want ladies to get the CCOs. Saying that women they do not have right over land. They cannot own land”*. The reason for that is elaborated upon in the second chapter. The project intervention was a strategic approach to secure land rights for particularly women. Therefore, my interest is in understanding how the CCO contributed to women's right to land and their livelihood opportunities.

5.2.1 Reducing land conflicts and trespassing

During the FGD¹ a woman expressed her experience of the CCO:

So, she took interest [in the project] right away, and made sure her land was mapped. She was happy, since because of being a woman there have been a lot of problems and disputes over land. You find that your brothers or your brothers' children or the boys in the home want to chase you away from the home and this land. But when they heard of this [the CCO], and knew they were going to secure their land. They were happy about it.

A man in the FGD² told the reason why he started processing the CCO and the interpreter translated *“because in our culture when you die, your brothers would want to grab your property. So, if his wife's name is there [on the certificate], she will be able to chase the brothers away from the land”*. Another man continued explaining why he included his wife *“because in most cases, men die earlier than wives. So, if he passes on, his wife will stay on this land and take care of his property and also the children. She will be confident”*.

A man in FGD² expressed the aspect of solving land disputes by using the CCO as evidence of the rightful owner:

It has solved the issues of disputes very easy. Because if there is a conflict over this piece of land, he will demand for documentation. So, the person who has a certificate is presumed to be the rightful owner of this land, because of the process that person went through.

Another man in the FGD² highlighted the aspect of the CCOs as proof of ownership from a different perspective. He gave an example and explained the previous issues when the land was customary land owned by the whole clan and how people easily trespassed into the piece of land:

The days before the CCOs. Before they acquired CCOs. If you did not cultivate your land, somebody would just go and cultivate it. And if you ask the person to leave, the person will tell you “What shows this is your land? I can also use it!”. But now, since you know you have a CCO. Nobody can just come and use your land, without your permission. Even if you are not cultivating it.

Another woman in the FGD¹ highlighted her perspective why she processed the CCO *“to avoid land-grabbing. Because she knows, if somebody wants to grab her land, the CCO is there. And it will speak for itself.* While another woman in the FGD³ stressed the benefit of the impossibility of registering the same piece of land under another name and how it has reduced land disputes of trespassing in her community:

After registering that land and receiving the certificates we [the family] are comfortable [...] I know any problem that will come, I can easily succeed. Sometime back, there was a problem and I just told them “I have registered this land, you cannot touch it”. And indeed, they cannot touch it. And even, ignorantly, if they touch it. If they go inside. When time comes, they will have to leave that land. Because that land is registered in our names. So, there can be temporarily activities on that land, but they cannot register. Which is another benefit we have got.

A man in the FGD⁴ explained how the certificate made adopters sleep peacefully at night, as they no longer worry about the conflicts or trespassing. *“If someone trespass, we can easily remind him, and he will leave our land without any problem. This has made us to sleep well. Our heart is settled.* Another man shared his experience of acquiring the CCO *“For us, who got the certificates, our worries they are lessened. But for those people, who did not get, their worries are too big”* and continue explaining that the non-adopters are staying relatively peacefully because it is the dry season but during the rainy season it is more challenging to see your boundaries, and that accelerate conflicts of trespassing in the areas.

5.2.2 Shifting perspectives on land ownership

A man in the FGD⁴ expressed a different perspective on why male adopters in Ciforo included their wife’s names on the certificates *“The reason why we add our wife’s name is that, for example, when you are cultivating your garden. Your neighbours have seen that you are cultivating you and your lady together. Even the clan knows where you have the boundaries of your garden”.* However, one man in the FGD⁴ did not include his wife’s name on the certificate *“because the woman*

can leave him at any time. At any time. The women here are in such that, if she decides to leave you, she can just leave you, and go away. And finish. You cannot do something. That is why he did not include his wife's name on the certificate". Instead, he included his sister's name and explained that he trusts her more than he trusts his own wife *"she can oversee my land, even if I pass away"*.

Initially some men were not willing to include either the names of their wives or sisters on the certificate. Some men, even after sensitizing, had the perception that their sisters only can own land where she is married. Another occurring perception of women owning land of her father and not in her husband's land. This misconception was explained in more detail by the KII¹:

They [the women] came to our office to check whether their names were there [on the certificate]. And realizing their names were not there. They raised complaints. Some were handwritten, others vocal. "I also need to be on this certificate!" So that made us to call the men, the applicants. "There is a complaint from your sisters, that you have not included them in the CCO. What is the problem?" They say "these sisters got married in other areas, so I do not see any reason why their names should be on the CCO"

The KII¹ continued explaining that the DLO consulted these men with this wrong perception. I was told, after regular sensitizing meetings, it was successful, as many men understood the importance of including their sisters on the CCO. The KII¹ said the DLO used arguments such as *"you do not know what will happen at her husband's home [...] if her name is there [on your certificate], she will be confident in case of any domestic violence, any divorce, any separation. She is able to come home, instead of dying from the other side"*.

Another woman in the FGD³ shared her experiences of buying land and explained what the landowner would ask women wanting to buy land before the project reached her community:

"Who are you? You are the daughter of who?". But this time, they [landowners] know women are empowered, and they know that you [women] can own land. And they will not ask you or tell you to bring witnesses. And it is you, to decide who are your witnesses. If you are a woman. You bring your father, you bring your brother, husband, you bring your son. It depends on you. So, the community they are waking up. They know women now can access land.

5.2.3 Increasing land tenure security and community respect

One woman in the FGD¹ also highlighted the aspect of respect obtained in the community after the implementation of the project intervention:

She got married and came back to her father's home and there, there is normally a problem between her and her brothers, and also the children of her brothers and those other relatives, the mother, the stepmother and the aunties. They always complain about the women, who marry

away from the family and then come back home, due to some other reasons that would have made them come back. So, when she got this opportunity, she processed her certificate and made sure she picked it, and now at home in her family, she is also respected, and no one can touch her piece of land.

A man in the FGD² shared his experience of being discriminated land, as he was the last-born son in his family, and he also explained the community's perception and view of why women are not respected landowners. The project intervention helped him in securing land in the community and also changed the community's perception of neglecting female landowners:

Before this project came here, I had no land. Because I am the least child, the least male child in the family. For us, we believe that land is only for male children. Women they do not have land in their families. They only have it in their husband's place. So, when this programme came. Then I said, "This is the right time when I am also going to get some land here". Because I can build a house here [...] So, I told myself "This could be the right chance for me to also get land here".

A woman in the FGD³ presented the benefits she and other women experienced in the community after acquiring the CCOs. *"Women have now been empowered. My voice is respected. And the women's voices are respected"*. Male adopters also discussed the outcome of mutual respect within the household and between family members. A man in the FGD² stated this by giving the example of joint decision-making within his family as a result of the project intervention:

It has brought respect for the lesser family, because if you register this title in the name of your wife and your children. In any decision on this land, on how to use it or utilization, the decision must be taken jointly by all. So, there is respect. The wife will respect the husband, and the husband will respect the wife, and the children will respect the parents. Because they all have the right to make a decision over the land.

A man in the FGD² highlighted the aspect of feeling community cohesion as a result of the CCO, and he gave his perspective on why land conflicts had reduced drastically *"it [the CCO] has reduced conflicts in the communities, because it has brought togetherness. Everyone is now together, and people are living happily"*. A woman in the FGD³ explained how she feels respect in her family as she is an accepted landowner. She gave an example of how the CCO contributed to her authority of calling for family meetings to solve intra-household conflicts due to different interests in land usage:

I am very proud of being part of the family, and especially in owning the land. It means that I also have a voice. In case if any member of the family tried to misuse the land, I have the right to talk about that land, whether the boys are trying to sell that land. I have the right to stop him, and I have the right to call the rest of the family, to come and talk about that land. There is no discrimination.

While a woman in the FGD¹ expressed that after acquiring the certificates, men need the consent of their wives in any decision. Furthermore, she describes that *“the CCOs have given more rights over the land than the men [...] now without the decision of the woman, without the consent of the woman you [men] can now not do what you [men] want, so, somehow the man have been limited”*. Another woman continues saying *“Even if your husband dies, you remain like a man in the home. Because your name is on the CCO.”* The women became both powerful and empowered by the certificates.

The aspect of feeling powerful after acquiring the CCO was brought up during the discussions. A man in the FGD² shared his experience of the people refusing the project intervention at first and who neglected to participate in the processing of CCOs, that they have now started *“on realizing that other people, who have gotten their CCOs and have now become very powerful. And they [non-adopters] feel now that they have lost out”*.

5.3 The CCOs impacts on livelihood strategies

After acquiring the CCOs, adopters and especially the female adopters, expressed that they now feel empowered as their decisions were respected. Land conflicts seemed to have been reduced. In this section I will present the impacts of the CCOs on their livelihood strategies, their livelihood capabilities and opportunities.

5.3.1 Contributing to land developments

A woman in the FGD¹ said she is now able *“to decide on how to till the land, how much to till, the types of crops to be planted. More than that of men do.”* Something she did not experience before the project intervention. She continued explaining, after acquiring the CCO, she was able to pay the school fees for the children. The CCO allowed her to get an income from the cultivated and sold crops. This income was non-existent before she had acquired the CCO.

Another woman from the FGD¹ said the CCO gave her *“the right to freedom to use the CCO to get a loan. Or any credit in a credit facility, like the circles [local financial institution] to do developments which she deserves, or she wishes”*. The men told me similar stories of how they now feel confident in making any land development as an outcome of acquiring the CCO. One man in the FGD⁴ shared his perspectives on confidence-building because of the certificate:

Now that I have the certificate, I can do any work on my land. With a strong heart. Before, getting the certificate, if I wanted to do any small thing on my land, neighbours would come inside and disturb. Now when I have the title, I can now do anything with strong heart [...]

Even if I want to plant trees, I can now plant trees with strong heart. There is no interference now.

5.3.2 Increasing confidence through permanent settlements

By having the ownership of land, it contributed to the motivation of putting more effort into land development, described by a woman in the FGD¹ *“they [women] are able to work harder and do a lot more than before. Even when cultivating, you know that your husband’s land it is also yours”*. A man in the FGD⁴ explained the advantage he saw in the communities by certifying the lands *“it [the certificate] has really increased agricultural production in our area because it gives us the confidence to undertake agricultural activities even on larger areas”*.

The feeling of being temporarily on the land shifted toward being permanently settled was another aspect of the project intervention many adopters experienced. The KII⁶ explained this shift in mindset in more detail:

Especially for tree planting you had to consult the clan leader. Tree takes long over this land, if you need to plant. And for constructing permanent houses, you used to consult. And there were threats, even if you stay for many year, more than 60, you could still be threatened that you are just here temporarily. Now the CCO has confirmed and given confidence for people that “I will be here permanently”. Even for those who are not members of the clan. They have got confidence.

The CCO likewise contributed to adopters’ feeling confident in constructing permanent houses or having permission to establish a business on the land. A man in the FGD⁴ shared his perspectives:

Now, I have the right to construct permanent house. If you are not the owner of the land, you cannot construct permanent houses, they [the cultural leaders] will stop you from that. Now you can even establish a business on the land. I even have the right to cultivate a big farm.

The KII⁶ elaborated a bit more on this:

The certificate has confirmed that you are the owner. And you can now. Take decisions over permanent things. You know, these things, it disturbs people’s minds. If you are in a place, but you still have the feeling that you are there temporarily, you cannot think of doing bigger things. It has opened people’s minds and thinking, of doing tangible many things over their lands.

5.3.3 Changing culturally embedded practices

Some adopters started investing more in their lands by growing new types of crops and changing agricultural methods, such as growing perennial crops instead of mainly annual ones. This was directly linked to the feeling of being permanently settled on the land. A man in the FGD² explained why he started growing perennial

coco plants *“Because, when you plant coco, you know this is your coco, and it will remain for the children. You do it with confidence [...] It has even brought confidence for people, to undertake long-term investments on our land.”* Some adopters had even started adopting other agricultural methods and sustainable management practices after acquiring the CCO. One man in the FGD⁴ shared his experience:

Now, since you have the certificate, and you are a person of land yourself. You are able to plant the land, you are able to look for good seeds and you can even do agroforestry. Mixing crops with animals, you can even see some people, they are tying the cows, we did not use to tie the cows here, normally what we used to do is free grazing. Just chase them around, all over the land. The cows they go everywhere. But now people are even tying the cows by their legs, and you keep them within this place.

These communities have traditionally been utilizing their lands for free grazing, but nowadays they build fences around their lands and keep the cattle in premises. This uptake of new agricultural methods improved agricultural production, especially animal production. As highlighted by a man in the FGD² *“people are able to use the land in a proper way, rather than misusing it, in this old system where the land is owned by the community. And where anyone can come and do anything on it.”* By keeping cows within their premises, the livestock stay healthier, and the number of livestock can easily increase, explained by one man in the FGD⁴ *“you are able to protect them from thieves, and they can easily increase [in number], you even protect them from disease, as they [diseases] can be spread from other animals. So, people they have improved their life system.”*

Another man continued and shared his perspectives on keeping his cows within premises:

It is also improving our agricultural methods, we use now the cow manure to make our soil fertile, but now this is your land it is yours; you must add to grow better. You must add cow manure, to grow better. These new novel ideas have been taken up these days. Because before, people were going to that grassland, or going to that grassland. These things they have ended. People have improved their agricultural activities.

The KII⁶ explained *“during these CCOs, we are planting trees on the boundaries. We mark boundaries by planting trees. So, the number of trees, where the CCO has taken place is more than where we have not done”*. He continued *“that is the beauty of this project. It has improved the environment”*. The choice of planting trees was of various reasons, improve soil, but some explained they planted fruit trees, as they are now confident, they will stay on the land until the trees start giving fruits. A man in the FGD⁴ described why he started planting trees *“you grow a tree, you know this will be your tree, you will sit under it, and with all assurances [...] you will eat the fruits, it is yours, and nobody will come to interfere.”*

5.3.4 Accessing financial opportunities

The CCO has contributed to assuring land as an asset for the adopters, explained by a man in the FGD² *“now when we have the certificate, we can use the land as an asset.”* Another man continued *“we can mortgage our land with this certificate”*. *Prior to the implementation of the project intervention, mortgaging and utilizing the land as collateral was impossible in their communities and directly linked to the adopters acquiring the CCO.*

The KII² informed me that in *“the Adjumani town council circle here, you go and present that asset [the CCO] as a collateral security. And they give you some small money to boost your business or your agricultural activity”*. A woman in the FGD³ shared her perspective *“we can use those certificates to acquire loans for a bigger project. From any financial institution.”* Utilization of more extensive land areas also requires more labour. Another advantage of borrowing money from the financial institution stressed by a man in the FGD⁴:

Because the circle they accept the certificate. We are now able to put in more work. Because we can borrow money. The money helps us to increase agricultural labour, we hire agriculture labour. You ask your neighbours *“Come and cultivate here and I will give you 5 000”*. This certificate is helping us in this way.

A woman in the FGD¹ shared her reflections on using the CCO as collateral:

She is saying that she feels that she can use this CCO, to get a loan. For any project. For handling any issue in her home. Whether a child is sick, she can use the CCO. To get a loan. And be able to treat this child or any family member. Also, the same CCO can be used to get a credit elsewhere to pay school fees for the children.

The possibility of paying school fees for the children or treating sick family members were two of the main reasons why the adopters sold their land or might consider selling a small piece of their land. The factor of being the rightful owner made it feasible for the adopters to sell and get some money from it. A man in the FGD⁴ explained the reasons why his family would consider selling land:

If we sell it, we sell it for cases, for treatment for when someone is very sick and needs medical attention and it needs money, and we do not have any other money. I will call my children and my wife, and we can decide on sell that land because we have the certificate on that land. Only for sickness or for school fees.

The possibility of leasing your land or piece of land was another experience. Prior to the certificate, the communities were unable to lease their land at a cost. One man in the FGD² expressed the advantage of leasing, especially for the women and their income when their right to decide over land was respected *“the woman will have the right to make decisions over this piece of land. Which has been left by her*

husband. Or is being used by her husband. So, she can rent it to somebody, to utilize it temporarily. And also, get income for the family.”

5.3.5 Attracting investors for making developments

The opportunity of transferring the land to anyone, the government, an organization, or an NGO to perform investments, was another aspect highlighted by several adopters as a direct outcome of the CCO. One man in the FGD⁴ shared his experiences *“in Ciforo here, we have lost a lot of chances of development because we did not have the certificates in our hands.”* He exemplified when the government was *“planning on constructing more houses here for the hospital, to upgrade the hospital here in Ciforo. But it has even been lost”* due to the previous and traditional customary land tenures and land issues. Another man shared a positive example of when an NGO wanted to establish a market in Ciforo:

When the market came, the NGOs they started constructing here, they were given the land. And there was no problem. Because the person had the certificate, the land was just transferred. It [the certificate] gives us the right to transfer land to the government or any NGO to establish development.

Also, this project intervention has attracted further implementations of project interventions by the FAO. One project intervention was establishing an irrigation facility and vegetable garden with an irrigation system. The CCOs made it possible to attract these types of developments in Ciforo, as development agencies require certified lands for their developments. One man in the FGD⁴ told the story of when a group of unemployed but newly graduated university students came to him and asked him for some land:

I offered them land about 10 acres, and they [the FAO] put this irrigation there, FAO put the irrigation there. And these unemployed graduates, they are now using horticulture. They are growing crops there. We think these certificates they can help development agencies who come up with good programmes. Who wants to do that on certified land. If we would not have certified our land, the project would have gone away, so this certification it has even attracted donors to do programmes on our lands with confidence.

6. Analysis and discussion

6.1 Creating an enabling environment

When analysing international projects, an aspect of the livelihood approach is determining the degree of empowering communities to take power over their decisions and creating an enabling environment for people and their livelihoods rather than delivering services (Chambers and Conway 1992). I have identified three themes that I interpret as crucial to successfully create the enabling environment and empowering the communities. These themes are discussed below, with attention to how they contributed to strengthening different types of capitals and building trust within the communities.

6.1.1 Decentralization of responsibilities

The empirical findings highlight a previous and similar government-led project focusing on registering customary lands. However, the uptake of the CCOs was described as low, and the project was considered unsuccessful by multiple respondents. One key reason for this lack of acceptance can be interpreted by low levels of various capitals. Strengthening these forms of capitals was particularly important in Adjumani, where mistrust within families, towards neighbours and government was part of their everyday lives and constraining their livelihoods.

When the FAO had the coordination responsibility for this project intervention, the implementation process was largely in line with the procedures prescribed in the Land Act (1998) and described in appendix 1. The responsibility for managing the entire application process shifted from the central government to the local land office of the Adjumani district. This resulted in a higher level of acceptance and engagement. This decentralization process indicated a shift in responsibilities for delivering guidance from central to local level. It brought services nearer and simplified the procedure for the communities. Decentralization was particularly important in building trust in the communities, as it brought decision-making closer to the people. The adopters felt more empowered, heard and supported, when interacting with local authorities who understood their perspectives, conditions and

experiences. Lastly, I believe decentralization was necessary for creating an environment where community members felt they had influence over their decisions, rather than the government delivering a programme.

This approach also brought the decision-making body, the district land board closer to the people. In this way, physical capital was strengthened in the communities. Ellis (2000) describes physical capital as a system including the necessary infrastructure contributing to livelihood strategies. I interpret this concept as the formal governmental infrastructures and existing informal social and cultural networks. The physical capital created opportunities for dialogue, which influenced the communities to take decisions to improve their livelihoods. The perspectives and experiences of the people are of the utmost importance to acknowledging success in creating the conditions for sustainable livelihoods. Because only by acknowledging people's knowledge and understanding of their livelihood opportunities, the recognition of the complexity of vulnerable communities can be assured (Chambers and Conway 1992). Finally, I believe by decentralizing the services to the district, people could more easily relate to them and accept them, but more importantly, they were more accessible to everyone.

Local NGOs, governmental institutions and influential actors were engaged in the implementation of this CCO process. This aligns with Chambers & Conway's (1992) argument that successful livelihood development projects, particularly in vulnerable communities living in poverty, must include local voices and community involvement. By involving local actors, the implementation process became more participatory and supportive as the adopters could seek support, information or guidance locally. The implementers understood the communities' opportunities very well, as they shared similar perspectives and experiences. When community members felt recognized, it created the enabling environment for them to act.

6.1.2 Involving trusted local actors

Religious and cultural leaders were members of the district land board. Individuals who were seen as highly trustworthy and influential in the communities. Their inclusion created a sense of belonging and understanding between the decision-making body and the adopters. Which was non-existent in the governmental led project and prior to the establishment of the board. The religious and cultural leaders' great trustworthiness and influential can be understood as their high level of possession of social capital. According to Israr and Humayun. (2010) social capital consists primarily of group affiliation and decision-making power at the community level. The adopters perceived the CCOs as relevant and worth participating in, first after the encouragement from the cultural and religious leaders. The involvement of respected community members helped building

legitimacy for the process and increased the communities' choices to register their customary land.

Especially, the leaders' involvement during the sensitization process has been vital. During those meetings the adopters' realized how they could make use of these certificates in realizing their livelihood strategies. During the FGDs the adopters could easily explain what a CCO was and the process. Therefore, the meetings strengthened the community awareness, and thereby the level of human capital. According to Israr and Humayun (2010) and in line with Ellis (2000) some key indicators for human capital for realizing individuals' capabilities are knowledge, education, training and skills. Religious leaders used their channels to communicate the importance of these certificates. The leaders broadcasted announcements and information campaigns on local radio and TV channels. These channels were considered a trustworthy source of knowledge and information. As trust grew among the adopters, they began encouraging other community members to start registering their customary land.

This confidence building and possession of human capital, have strongly impacted the adopters' decision to register their lands. The prior project coordinated by the government encountered significant protests and was widely rejected. The communities interpreted it as a method for the government to control land ownership and tax the households' land. Rumours and misinformation quickly circulated within the communities, as neither religious nor cultural leaders were involved in the process. The prevailing scepticisms towards the government, can be interpreted as the governments possesses a low level of social capital. Contrary, the degree of high level of social capital possessed by the trusted leaders is demonstrated through their ability to build relationships of trust through reliable communication channels. In line with Serrat (2008) this was made possible through mutual understanding, shared values and behaviours and common rules. Furthermore, social relations are governed by shared codes, conventions and norms (North 1990) which facilitated trust building in the two communities. The communities can easily relate with the members, who are member of their own villages and traditional systems. Their involvement has reduced suspicion that the government has hidden intention of taxing land.

The exclusion of trusted local leaders can be understood as a barrier constraining the communities' engagement, and why they neglected the government-led project. This refusal can be explained by Harriss & De Renzio's (1997) definition of social capital into vertical and horizontal linkages. The relationship between the trusted actors and the community members can be interpreted as being made up of horizontal linkages. Because these relationships are created through strong bonding elements, as they all share the same culture, language and religion. While the

relationship between the government and the communities are better understood by the definition of vertical linkages. Which creates an unfavourable environment, where the government led project can be interpreted as delivering solutions rather than empowering the communities. There was an existing physical capital between the adopters and the leaders, as they had different established ways of communicating with each other. To enable dialogue between the government and the adopters, the physical capital had to be created. The horizontal linkages and bonding properties were important for facilitating the sharing of correct information, strengthened local empowerment and contributed to legitimacy.

6.1.3 Establishing credibility through participation

The establishment of institutions responsible for facilitating the access to assets, such as support and correct information, can according to Chambers and Conway (1992) be understood as a way of creating an enabling environment. As the adopters could fully participate in the process and make decisions about their livelihoods. To reach sustainable livelihoods in Adjumani district, it was vital to create the necessary conditions of a well-functioning CCO process, combining both formal and informal institutions. As Coleman (1988) argues trust is a foundation for cooperation and the ability to work toward common goals within a community. I have recognized lack of trust, due to low levels of various capitals, and insecure land tenure systems resulting in land-based conflicts as two factors constraining the registration of customary land. By creating formal institutional structures and recognizing existing informal social networks, helped building an enabling environment for people and their livelihoods.

This lack of trust can be understood by individuals trespassing into someone's land, destroying someone's planted crops, or stealing crops. The formal structures, such as the handling procedures for processing the CCOs played a crucial role in reducing mistrust. Because of the communities' low level of social capital, a participatory process became central to support credibility for the process, minimize conflicts and empower the communities. One requirement to overcome mistrust and land-based conflicts was letting the registration announcement run for 14 days and inviting community members to raise complaints or disagreements. Furthermore, the incorporation of neighbours' endorsements and signatures on the application was a highly formalized or institutionalized requirement. By involving the community members in the process, they felt included in the decision making.

Social capital consists of three important dimensions: trust among individuals, shared social norms and the trust emerging from the norms, and membership in social networks (Putnam 1995). In Adjumani, low level of social capital can not only be interpreted by the human behaviours described above. Also, it can be

understood by the community members hesitation to register their land in the governmental led project. Therefore, I believe it was necessary to establish a CCO process strengthening the social capital in all three dimensions. The establishment of a mediation team can be understood as way to create legitimacy for the mapping process. Because it created the possibilities for adopters to raise complaints about the land boundaries or conflicts related to land. The certificate itself brought togetherness, respect and cohesion, and can be understood as it provided a membership in a social network. Another sign of the creation of a social network is how the adopters were constantly referring to, *we are, we have, we were*, rather than I am, I have or I was, when describing their experiences of the CCOs. Lastly, the people who did not process their land described the people who received the CCOs as powerful.

The certificates can be interpreted as an institution as they provided an informal structure of common rules. Behaviours such as trespassing, destroying or stealing crops were behaviours that drastically decreased and were almost non-existent among those households' holding the certificate. This reduced uncertainty within the social network, in line with North (1990), Ellis (2000) and Scoones (1998) definition of institutions generating expected behaviours and responses creating stability.

6.2 Improving communities' livelihoods opportunities

The livelihood approach addresses three indicators for determining and understanding people's livelihood opportunities: their access to assets, their ability to make use of those assets, and the external factors either supporting or constraining their efforts (Chambers and Conway 1992). Below I elaborate on how the CCOs improved the living conditions by applying the livelihood approach and particularly determined by these three indicators.

6.2.1 Securing access to land

For the two communities, land is their predominantly source of livelihood and income. Uganda's colonial history and the impacts of colonialism have prevented women and marginalized groups from controlling assets and deciding on the land management practices (FAO & SIDA 2020). Women have been primarily allocated to household activities and growing crops for household needs. This division in labour and crop production, due to patriarchal systems and cultural norms, has constrained women the opportunity to utilize their skills to improve their livelihood strategies.

The fundamental driving characteristics creating livelihood opportunities are strongly linked to the availability of and control over land. The certificates provided a transition from holding user rights to full ownership over land. This changed the way land rights were perceived and experiences. This shift directly influenced the community members livelihood opportunities by securing their access to the most critical asset, namely land. The certificates can therefore be understood as the properties shaping the communities' access to natural capital in line with Ellis (2000) and Scoones (2015) definition of natural capital. The certificates reshaped the underlying structures by improving women's capabilities to contribute to their livelihood strategies.

The certificate increased land tenure security and stability. The adopters knew their customary land tenure was finally protected and formalized by the laws. For the women, whose access to land has been largely dependent on good relationships with male relatives the certificates addressed also this imbalance. As women are usually victims of land grabbing by their in-laws and siblings. The CCO has provided certainty over land ownership in case her husband passes away. The CCOs provided women with the opportunity to not only improve their lives but also reshape their identities and roles within the family and community.

6.2.2 Influencing prevailing norms

It is important to understand how the prevailing institutional structures and social networks influence livelihood opportunities such as how values, attitudes, and norms shape and maintain specific behaviours (Chambers & Conway 1992). The women who received the certificates described themselves as empowered and more powerful than men, as they now have a voice over how the land should be managed. Men now need to seek consent from their wives in any decision, and if their husband passes away, the women remain like the man in the household. The CCOs can therefore be understood as strengthening the women's human capital, as the certificates reshaped the underlying structures by empowering women and improving women's capabilities to contribute to their livelihood strategies.

The sensitization meetings created the necessary conditions for the communities in realizing women should have equal rights to land as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) and the Land Act (1998). The CCOs were a documented proof of that, because both names were printed on it. This resulted in reshaping the underlying institutional structures and discriminatory behaviours in the communities. The certificates changed specific behaviours, such as the whole family now needed to be involved in making decisions about land. This collective decision-making is another important process shaping the livelihood opportunities by giving the women the same right to make choices for her livelihood strategies.

The CCO provided women with the means to decide not only what crops to grow but also how to spend the revenues. This positively influenced their access to financial capital and thus their overall capabilities in realizing their livelihood strategies. The CCOs challenged the existing values, norms and attitudes by formalizing women's rights to land ownership. This shift in perceptions about gender roles in land was essential for reshaping specific behaviours constraining women's conditions. The certificates enabled the communities to take full advantage of their natural assets, as they improved their ability to identify new opportunities, make informed decisions, and access markets.

6.2.3 Expanding communities' capabilities

Ellis (2000) emphasizes that livelihoods should be understood as dynamic. As households adapt and adjust their activities to improve and sustain their living conditions over time. The livelihood strategies comprise of a combination of activities and choices that people make to achieve their livelihood goals. Chambers and Conway (1992) use the concept of capabilities to describe individual's ability to realize their potential as human beings. It refers to an alternative set of actions the individual can make use of to improve its living conditions. The CCO become the vital condition upon which the communities could adapt, improve and sustain their livelihoods. They expressed how the CCO had given them the capability to use the certificate to undertake more sustainable management practices.

Another identified driving characteristic creating the necessary conditions for the communities is how the certificates changed their perspectives from being temporarily on the land, to a mindset of being permanently settled. This change in mindset can be understood as the tipping point for the adopters. This shift expanded their imagined capabilities, in line with Ellis (2000) definition, it increased their portfolio of choices and activities to improve their living conditions. The CCOs provided the adopters with the confidence in constructing permanent houses and planting trees, without the need to consult the clan leader. The certificates also offered the adopters the possibility to take decisions over permanent things. Some adopters described how it opened their minds of doing bigger and tangible things. This is closely linked to Chambers and Conway's (1992) definition of capabilities, as people began to gain access to alternative ways of managing their land.

Financial resources also play a key role in the ability to make choices or adjust activities to improve the livelihood conditions. Without access to sufficient capital, farmers are often constrained to invest in the tools, technologies or extension services needed to undergo sustainable management practices. Access to financial capital is particularly important for small-scale farmers who may have difficulty accessing loans or financial support in a community where customary land rights

have not yet been formalized. The adopters in Adjumani made the choices to use the CCO as a collateral to seek financial support from the local financial institution. This access to financial resources enabled the communities to make land improvements, buy better seeds, pay school fees for their children or buy medicine to treat sick family members. The households' substitution can according to Ellis (2000) be high, as their ability or willingness to convert land into cash was possible by the certificates. Furthermore, adopters described how their natural asset had given them the right to buy, sell, lease, rent and transfer land. This combination of activities and choices was made to achieve their livelihood goals and improve their living conditions.

6.2.4 Diversifying livelihood strategies

To achieve sustainable livelihoods, Ellis (2000) emphasizes the importance of understanding the complex relationship between humans and the environment and their utilization of natural resources. This is because various factors reflect and shape the livelihood opportunities and capabilities of individuals, households, and communities (Scoones 1998; 2015). People in rural areas have traditionally been identified with agriculture as main source of living. The concept of diversifying is referred to people diversifying their income to include off farm income generating activities. The reason why household diversify their livelihoods is either made of necessity or choices to improve their standard of living (Ellis 2000). In Adjumani off farm activities was not described, but diversifying on farm strategies to improve their livelihoods was experienced in many ways.

The adopters used their natural capital, their certified land, to make choices to undertake other management practices. They started growing new types of crops and growing more perennial instead of annual crops. After acquiring the certificates adopters took decisions to shift from free grazing to captive grazing livestock. By letting the livestock stay in their premises, they become healthier, are better protected from thieves and can more easily increase in numbers. The increased number in livestock can be interpreted by strengthening the communities' financial capital, in line with Ellis (2000) definition. The manure from the livestock was collected and applied as fertilizer to improve the soil. These livelihood strategies reflect how the relationship to the nature is transformed through access to assets. When their land tenure was secure, adopters changed the way they used to utilize natural resources and engaged in more sustainable land management practices.

Furthermore, the access to land has shaped the adopters' capability to plant trees. Planting trees was a choice made for various reasons. For example, fruit trees were planted because people who registered their lands were now sure they would be able to enjoy the fruits. Some adopters planted trees to mark land boundaries, which

reduced conflicts and trespassing. Finally, adopters described they began to adopt the novel method of agroforestry. The combination of individual choices to realize their specific livelihood goals resulted in an increasing number of trees in the areas where people had access to natural capital. The diversification of livelihood strategies did not just improve their livelihoods. It improved the environment, and this is vital to sustain their current situation and future condition.

7. Summary of key findings

The previous government-led project failed mainly due to low levels of social, human and physical capital. This created distrust both within and between communities and towards the government, leading to low participation and high resistance. Two key findings are decentralization and shifting responsibility to local authorities and actors. This significantly increased acceptance and participation. By bringing decision-making closer to the people, trust, empowerment and accessibility were strengthened. It is therefore recommended that future CCO projects prioritize decentralization of responsibilities to create local ownership.

Religious and cultural leaders were found to be key actors in legitimizing the CCO process. Their high level of social capital, reduced suspicion and increased community engagement. The communities' relationships to the leaders can be described as horizontal relationships. These are built upon bonding properties and creates confidence and trust. In contrast to vertical and authoritarian structures, which existed between the communities and the government, these relationships increased the mistrust. Therefore, future projects should actively include and strengthen collaboration with local trusted leaders to build trust.

Strengthening the community awareness was also crucial. Information campaigns and local sensitization meetings improved understanding of the process and benefits of the certificates. Access to local communication channels enabled both women and men to make informed decisions. Therefore, it is recommended that projects prioritize knowledge dissemination in the initial phase, and use existing and trusted local channels for effective communication.

Another important achievement was creating institutional structures and networks facilitating dialogue and exchange of information. The involvement of governmental institutions at district level, NGOs and local actors contributed to an inclusive and participatory process in which local voices were recognized. This shows how important it is to include both formal and informal institutions in building social networks. Furthermore, the transparent CCO process including the establishment of a mediation team and the opportunity to raise complaints during mapping of land significantly reduced land related conflicts. This shows that

participatory institutional support structures can compensate for weak capital and should be coordinated in similar interventions.

As demonstrated in this thesis, land is the most critical resource for the communities' livelihoods. The certificates formalized customary land tenure and thereby strengthened the communities' natural capital. Customary land is largely governed by cultural traditions, which are strongly patriarchal. The CCO was found to influence prevailing social norms and thereby changing discriminatory behaviours constraining women's land rights in the communities. The certificates strengthened women's access to land, increased their decision-making and reduced their vulnerability. Despite their great potential, the registration of customary land is still limited, largely due to low awareness, strong resistance in communities and insufficient institutional support. This study highlights that projects can be successful by strengthening various forms of capital, building confidence and create participatory processes.

The certificates led to a shift in perspective to permanent settlement. This confidence improved the communities' livelihood opportunities by expanding their capabilities. Community-members started building houses, growing perennial crops, keeping livestock within their premises and planting trees. The adopters no longer need to consult clan leaders, which has expanded their agency and capacity to realize their livelihood strategies. The certificates increased their access to financial capital, as the CCO was used as collateral for loans. These resources enabled investments in agriculture, payments of school fee or medicine. The results show that secured land tenure was fundamental for households to diversify their livelihood strategies and improve their living conditions.

Although the process was subsidized, the relatively low fees can be a barrier for some farmers wishing to register their land. There are still insufficient resources for the key institutions and involved actors, as this project was funded by SIDA. The government should allocate funds for the process of issuing CCOs to benefit the population equally. Farmers' customary land rights should not be dependent on the implementation of international development programmes or projects in their specific geographical area.

7.1 Implications of the study

The study shows how local ownership and decentralized responsibilities are crucial for building trust and increasing participation in customary land registration processes. This indicates the need to move decision-making power closer to the people, especially in communities with a historical mistrust toward the government.

The inclusion of religious and cultural leaders created legitimacy and credibility for the process. This study shows that social capital is an invaluable tool for enabling the implementation of land registration processes. Trusted local leaders should not only be informed by the project but also activated as key actors in the process. Project strategies should build on existing social networks and cultural systems. The findings in this study could be useful for policymakers, international development actors and NGOs when developing customary land registration projects. The results from this thesis show how project design could be constructed to increase participation and acceptance, while at the same time minimize distrust and conflicts.

7.2 Recommendations for further studies

This study responded to an identified knowledge gap by examining the FAO's project intervention in two communities in northern Uganda. I have portrayed how the perspectives and experiences of both project implementers and adopters. However, there is still a need to explore how such project interventions interact with deep-rooted social norms, power relations and the long-term effects of the CCOs. Future research should examine how tenure security may change over time, as well as how certificates influence decisions regarding inheritance.

This study shows that certificates can help challenge patriarchal structures and strengthen women's right to land. However, the extent to which this shift in perceptions about gender roles are maintained over time is still unclear. Further studies could provide valuable insight into how institutional change affects everyday practices and challenges patriarchal systems in other critical areas of life.

There is a need to study the economic outcomes of strengthened customary land rights through CCOs. Several participants in this study described to how the certificates enabled sale of land. This could lead to new development opportunities, as international development actors require documented ownership to make investments in the communities. Future studies could investigate whether and how CCOs attracted investors, improved local economic development or access to public services.

References

- Agar, M. & MacDonald, J.(1995). Focus Groups and Ethnography. *Human Organization* 54(1), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.54.1.x102372362631282> [2022-09-28]
- Andrew et al. (2022). Women’s Land Rights as a Pathway to Food Security in Uganda. *African Journal on land policy and geospatial sciences* 5(1), 234-245. <https://doi.org/10.48346/IMIST.PRSM/ajlp-gs.v5i1.30465> [2022-09-29]
- Arneth, A.F. et al (2019): Framing and Context. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (Ed.)]. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157988.003> [2020-12-22]
- Bryman, A (1988). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. 1st Edition. Oxfordshire: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203410028> [2020-09-08]
- Bryman & Nilsson (2018). *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*. 3rd Edition. Stockholm: Liber. ISBN: 9789147112067. [2020-09-08]
- Bergström & Boréus (Ed.) (2012). *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskapliga text- och diskursanalys*. 3rd Edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur. ISBN: 9789144117928. [2020-09-08]
- Creswell, J.W (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications. ISBN 9781412965576. [2020-09-08]
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D (2018). *Research Design – Qualitative, quantitative & mixed methods approaches*. 5th Edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications. ISBN: 9781506386706. [2021-01-04].
- Chambers, R. & Conway, G. (1992). Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies (IDS) (IDS Discussion Paper 296). ISBN: 0903715589. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/sustainable-rural-livelihoods-practical-concepts-for-the-21st-century/> [2023-04-21]
- Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1), 95-120. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/228943> [2023-04-22]

- Davies, C.A. (2002). *Reflexive ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203069370> [2020-11-19].
- Douglas, M.M. (2013). *The Customary land tenure and the importance of certificate of customary land ownership. A case study in Acholi-Madi Sub-Region*. Diss. Kampala University. [2022-09-22]
- Ellis, F. (2000). The determinants of rural livelihood diversification in developing countries. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 51(2), 289–302. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-9552.2000.tb01229.x> [2023-04-22]
- Ellis, F. (2000) *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198296959.001.0001> [2023-04-21]
- Esaiasson et al (2017). *Metodpraktikan: konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 5th Edition. Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer. ISBN 9789139115151. [2020-09-08]
- Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nations (2015). *Climate change and food security: risks and responses*. Rome: FAO. ISBN 978-92-5-108998-9. <http://www.fao.org/3/i5188e/I5188E.pdf> [2021-05-23]
- Food and Agricultural Organization of United, International Fund for Agricultural Development & World Food Programme. (2020). *Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices*. Rome: FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1331en> [2021-05-23]
- Food and Agricultural Organization of United & Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (2020). *Project Brief: Climate Resilient Livelihood Opportunities for Women Economic Empowerment (CRWEE) in Karamoja and West Nile Regions of Uganda*. [2022-09-12]
- Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nations & United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Gender and Adaptation Planning in the Agricultural Sectors: The Case of Uganda*. Rome: FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4c9f0a46-e33b-4df2-85a8-4e739883458e/content> [2022-09-29]
- Fontana, A & Prokos, A.H (2007). *The interview: From Formal to Postmodern..* New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315418131> [2020-05-11]
- Fujii, L. A. (2013). Working with Interpreters. In L. Mosley (Ed.), *Interview Research in Political Science*. 144–158. New York: Cornell University Press. doi.org/10.7591/9780801467974-010 [2022-10-06]
- Galletta, A. (2013) *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*, New York: New York University Press. ISBN: 9780814732939. [2022-09-28]
- Gillham, B (2000) *The research interview*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. ISBN: 9781441160232. [2022-10-06]
- Gillham, B (2005) *Research interviewing the range of techniques*. New York: Open University Press. ISBN: 9780335215867. [2022-10-07]

- Gillham, B (2007) *Developing a questionnaire*. 2nd Edition. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. ISBN: 9780826496317. [2022-10-06]
- Harriss & De Renzio, 1997. Policy Arena: ‘Missing link or analytically missing?: The Concept of social capital. Edited by John Harriss. An Introductory bibliographic essay. *Journal of International Development*. 9(7), 919-937.
[https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1328\(199711\)9:7<919::AID-JID496>3.0.CO;2-9](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199711)9:7<919::AID-JID496>3.0.CO;2-9) [2023-04-21]
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (2008). Improving access to land and tenure security: Policy. Rome: Palombi e Lanci.
https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49709009/land_e.pdf/3919ace8-efda-f78a-35b3-5fcd76118dbb?t=1726613487728 [2021-05-23]
- Israr, M. and K. Humayun. 2010. Availability and access to capitals of rural household in Northern Pakistan. *Sarhad J. Agric*. 26(3): 443 – 450. [2023-04-21]
- Knodel, J. (1993). The design and analysis of focus group studies: A practical approach. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.) *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art*. 35–50). Newbury Park: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483349008.n3> [2022-09-29]
- Kyomugisha, E. (2008) Land tenure and agricultural productivity in Uganda. In: IFPRI Briefs. Uganda Strategy Support Program (USSP) Brief No.5.
<https://hdl.handle.net/10568/161663> [2024-12-27]
- Merton, R. K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P. L. (1990) *The focused interview. A Manual of Problems and Procedures*. 2nd Edition. New York: Free Press. ISBN 9780029209868 [2022-09-09]
- Morgan, D. L. (1986). Personal relationships as an interface between social networks and social cognitions. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 3(4), 403–442.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407586034001> [2022-09-09]
- Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. In: D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art*. 3–19. Newbury Park: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483349008.n1> [2022-09-09]
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. In: Hagan, J. & Cook, K. S. (Ed.), *Annual review of sociology*, 22. 129–152. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129> [2022-09-09]
- Morgan, D. L. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984287> [2022-09-09]
- Naybor, D, 2015, Land as fictitious commodity: the continuing evolution of women's land rights in Uganda, *Gender, Place & Culture – A journal of Feminist Geography*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 22 (6), 884-900.
doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.917275 [2020-10-19]
- North, D.C. (1990). *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678> [2023-04-17]
- North, D.C. (1991). Institutions, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1), 97-112.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.5.1.97> [2023-04-17]

- Odoki, B.J. (2001). The Challenges of Constitution-making and Implementation in Uganda. In: Oloka-Onyango, J (Ed.) *Constitutionalism in Africa; creating opportunities, facing challenges*. Fountains Publisher. 264-286.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678> [2024-12-29]
- LANDac (2016) Food Security and Land Governance Factsheet Uganda. Netherlands Academy on Land Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development. [2024-12-27]
- Putnam, R.D. 1995. Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65-78. doi.org/10.1353/jod.1995.0002 [2024-12-29]
- Republic of Uganda. (1995) *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995. Arrangement of the Constitution*. Kampala: Government of Uganda. [2024-12-27]
- Republic of Uganda 2013. Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development; the Uganda National Land Policy (February 2013). [2024-12-29]
- Scoones, I. (1998). Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis [online]. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies (IDS). (IDS Working Paper 72).
<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/3390/Wp72.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [2023-05-01]
- Scoones, I. (2015) *Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development*. Rugby. Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing. ISBN: 9781853398759. [2023-05-01]
- Smithson, J. (2008). Focus Groups. In: Alasuurtari, P. Bickman, L., Brannen, J. (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*. 356-371. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446212165.n21> [2022-09-10]
- Serrat, O (2008). The Sustainable Livelihood Approach. Asian Development Bank (ADB) <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27638/sustainable-livelihoods-approach.pdf> [2023-05-19]
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (2007). A position paper for SIDA: Natural Resource Tenure.
<https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida37805en-natural-resource-tenure-position-paper.pdf> [2025-05-04]
- Swedish Research Council (2017) Good Research Practice. ISBN: 978-91-7307-354-7. [2021-01-13]
- Swedish Research Council (2020). Ethics in research and good research practice.
<https://www.vr.se/english/mandates/ethics/ethics-in-research.html> [2021-01-13]
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences¹ (2022) *Collect, organise, and store data*.
<https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/archiving-and-publishing-research-data/collect-organise-store-data/> [2022-09-30]
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences² (2022) *Archive and preserve data*.
<https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/archiving-and-publishing-research-data/archive-and-preserve-data/> [2022-09-30]
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences³ (2022) *Process and analyse data*.
<https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/archiving-and-publishing-research-data/process-and-analyse-data/> [2022-09-30]

- Taylor et al (2015). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. 4th Edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781394260485> [2020-09-08]
- The Land Act 1998*, c.227. Available at: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/uga96350.pdf>
[2024-12-27]
- Trócaire Uganda (2018). The Step by Step Guide to Customary Land Registration in Uganda. Easy Steps to Secure Customary Land Tenure. [2022-09-22]
- United Nations Development Programme (2016). UNDP Support to the integration of Gender Equality across the SDGs Including Goal 5.
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/5_Gender_Equality_digital.pdf [2021-05-25]

Popular science summary

In many parts of the world, having secure rights to land is essential for rural people's ability to feed their families, earn a living and build a stable future. In rural Uganda, most people rely on farming to survive. But complex land laws, historical inequalities, and traditional customs can make it difficult for people to claim ownership of the land they use for farming activities. For women, the barriers are even greater due to deep-rooted gender norms and historical discrimination.

To address this issue, a project led by the Food and Agriculture Organization and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency was launched in northern Uganda. One of the main goals was to strengthen land rights for rural families through something called a Certificate of Customary Ownership (CCO). A CCO is a legal document that officially recognizes a person's right to use and own their piece of land. The certificates were issued in both the husband's and wife's names. This was a step toward promoting gender equality in land ownership in northern Uganda.

This thesis explores how this project was put into action in two communities in northern Uganda. Through interviews and group discussions with community members who implemented the project (referred to as implementers) and those who received the certificates (referred to as adopters), the study explores how this project intervention worked in practice and if the CCO has made a difference in community members' lives.

The findings show that the certificates did not just give people legal land rights. The CCO helped in changing social attitudes, especially about women's rights to own land. Many women reported feeling more empowered in making decisions about land use practices, such as what type of crops to grow. The communities also felt more secure in planning for their future, knowing they could not easily be chased off their land. This resulted in growing perennial crops and planting trees.

However, the study also found that these changes are just a first step toward promoting gender equality in land ownership in Uganda. While the certificates helped support better livelihoods, more research is needed to understand the long-term impacts of the CCO in the local communities.

Appendix 1

Involved actors in the CCO process, their functions and responsibilities

- **The Chairperson of the Area Land Committee/local Council**
Responsible for ensuring that the procedures for application for CCOs required by The Land Act 1998 are followed.
- **The Area Land Committee**
Responsible for handling land applications, hearing any claims from people affected by the application, and trying to resolve disputes. After investigating and mediating, the committee writes a report with recommendations and sends it to the applicant and the district land board.
- **The District Land Board**
Responsible for facilitating the registration and transfer of interests in land, ensuring that land is surveyed, and maps are drawn. In each district there should be a district land office. The District Land Board evaluates the committee's report and has the authority to approve, modify, reject, or request further investigation before a CCO is issued.

Procedure for acquiring a CCO

In order to better understand the data and analysis presented in this thesis, it is important to first understand the process through which CCOs are acquired. The process provides a deep understanding of the context for interpreting how land rights are secured or denied, particularly in relation to land-related conflict. The description of the process presented below is based on a step-by-step guide developed by Trócaire Uganda (2018) for communities in the Acholi Sub-region who wished to register their customary land in accordance with Ugandan law. This guide was created to inform and facilitate local decision-making groups, clan leaders, and clan members. This guide is legally grounded and designed to be practically applicable in rural contexts where customary tenure systems dominate (Trócaire Uganda 2018).

Step 1

The applicant calls for a meeting with her family, clan or community to express her interest in acquiring a CCO.

Step 2

All the forms required to undergo the land registration process are available at the land management institutions. These institutions may be the District Land Board (DLB) or the Area Land Committee (ALC). The applicant will obtain the application form after paying the fee of 50000UGX and shall fill in three copies of the application. If information is insufficient, the applicant can seek information from the clan leader in that area in order to fill in the application form correctly. After the applicant has paid all the required fees and secured receipts for all payments, the application form and receipts are submitted to the committee in the parish (ALC) where the applicant's land is located.

Step 3

The ALC in that area shall publish a notice and post "it in a prominent place in the area and on the land which is the subject of the application (Land Act 1998:13). The notice shall state the location and the approximate area of the land. All persons desiring to make their claims or objections to the application shall do so within two weeks from the publication of the notice. The ALC shall organize a meeting and hear and determine all claims.

Step 4

All persons claiming any interest in the land, are required to attend the meeting at a specified time and place. At the meeting they shall raise their claims to the application for the committee. If any person does not attend the meeting, the committee will arrange a second meeting, where the person shall present her/his claims. If the person claiming the application does not appear at the following meeting, the committee shall proceed without considering the claims. If the person appears at the meeting with the committee, she/he shall produce evidence of her/his claim. Examples of claims requiring documentary evidence are land sale, land registration and land transfer.

Step 5

During the meeting with all persons who have made claims to the land, the committee must consider and try all claims. Before the land demarcation process begins, "the committee shall use its best endeavours to mediate between and reconcile parties having conflicting claims to the land" (Land Act 1998:13). If the committee cannot resolve the dispute at this stage, the committee shall not proceed with the land demarcation application. Instead, ALC shall report the reasons for

withdrawing the application to the DLB. This gives the parties the opportunity to resolve the conflict on their own and without the influence of the ALC.

Step 6

In the case where everyone agrees on the ownership of the land, the ALC shall proceed with marking out the land boundaries. This is carried out by a surveyor and in the presence of a physical planner who informs whether the land is in an development or environmental sensitive area or not. At this point, when the land boundaries are marked, all neighbours whose lands border the land are required to be present and agree to the land boundaries. The local council chairperson (LC1) of the municipality, clan and religious leaders or any other interested persons may be present in this step of the process. During the land boundary marking, a map of the land area is generated. The map shall be signed by the applicant, neighbours, LC1, clan leaders and selected elders within the community. The map shall be attached to the land demarcation form.

Step 7

The ALC prepares a report on the application. The report shall include all claims to the land, how the claims have been considered, the evidence of the claims, and the committees conclusions and recommendations. If all parties agree, the report shall be forwarded to the DLB with a recommendation to issue a CCO on the land. If all parties do not agree, the report shall include a recommendation for a meeting to resolve the claims and land conflicts. Once all conflicts have been resolved, another report shall be presented to the DLB with a recommendation to continue the process of issuing a CCO on the land.

Step 8

The ALC shall provide three copies of the report. One copy shall be given to the applicant, another copy shall be submitted to the DLB, and the third copy shall be archived within ALC. This copy shall be made available for all the parties who submitted claims.

Step 9

After receiving the report, the DLB shall “consider the application in the light of that report and those recommendations and may” (Land Act 1998:14) confirm, disagree, return or reject the report of the ALC. The DLB is required to meet at least once every two months to decide on land demarcation applications.

Step 10

If the DLB differs or rejects the report of the ALC, the DLB shall give reasons for its decision and propose recommendations. If the DLB confirms the report of the ALC, the DLB shall direct the applicant to issue a CCO.

Step 11

If any person disagrees by the decision of the DLB, she/he may appeal to the Land Tribunal. Appealing to the Land Tribunal means calling for alternative dispute resolution methods such as mediation and negotiation. If these methods fail, the person may proceed and seek judicial review from the court. The court may confirm, vary, reverse or modify the decision of the DLB, and issue another order.

Appendix 2



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban
and Rural Development



Assessment of the implementation, adoption and contributions of the Certificate of Customary Ownerships (CCO) in the Adjumani district

Letter of Consent

You are asked to participate in a Research Study which is part of a Minor Field Study (MFS). The MFS is a student's independent master's degree project within the Rural Development and Natural Resources Management Programme. The student studies at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). The MFS is conducted within the ongoing project coordinated by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), funded by the Swedish Government, and titled Climate Resilient Livelihood Opportunities for Women Economic Empowerment (CRWEE) in Karamoja and West Nile Regions of Uganda.

Before you agree to participate, it is essential that you read this letter to understand the study and the procedures it involves. If you have any questions about the study, your role, or your involvement, we encourage you to ask them directly to the student. After your participation, if you wish further information. She will be more than happy to answer your questions or concerns. You may contact her at: idgn0001@stud.slu.se

The objective is to examine the implementation, adoption, and contributions of the Certificate of Customary Ownerships (CCO) in the Adjumani district. You are asked to participate in this study, as you have either (1) been involved in the implementation of the CCO, or (2) have obtained the CCO. The study will collect the perspectives and experiences of 8 key-information informants (KII) knowledgeable of the community and involved in the implementation process and 34 farmers obtaining the CCO.

The collection of information is through:

- Semi-structured interviews with KII
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with farmers obtained the CCO

If you decide to take part, depending on your link to the CCO, you will either be asked questions following the Interview Guide for KII or FGDs. The interviews with KII are conducted individually by the student. While the FGDs are performed in groups and with the assistance of an interpreter.

The information provided will be used for the student's thesis and the research findings will be publicly published. It will also serve the FAO to report and evaluate the implementation of the activity. It will not be used for commercial purposes. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the process. Withdrawing without being pressured or influenced.

This study attempts to capture and come in contact with your perspectives, experiences, and perceptions. Therefore, your participation is fundamental for the outcomes of the study. It is not anticipated you will experience any direct benefits from this study, but the information may be beneficial for developing future programs and activities, which indirectly may benefit you. Therefore, you have the full right to decide on your participation and under what conditions you are participating.

The information and data provided will be handled with utmost confidentiality to protect your privacy. The groups participating in the FGDs should respect each other and not share the information with others outside the group. You will undergo anonymization and not be identified by name in any publications resulting from this research. The recorded interviews will be stored so unauthorized persons cannot access the data. After the acceptance of the thesis, the recordings will be deleted.

If you want to participate in this study: *Assessment of the implementation, adoption, and contributions of the Certificate of Customary Ownerships (CCO) in the Adjumani district*, you are requested to give your oral agreement.

You agree that:

- you have read and understood the information in this form
- you have been encouraged to ask questions
- your questions have been answered to your satisfaction

You have been informed by:

- the purpose of the study
- your participation
- how the data will be stored and reported

Appendix 3



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban
and Rural Development



Assessment of the implementation, adoption and contributions of the Certificate of Customary Ownership (CCO) in the Adjumani district

Interview Guide: Key-Information Informants

1. Self-introduction

- My name is Ida Gustafsson, and I am Swedish. I am turning 30 years in December. I am a master's student at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. I study Rural Development and Natural Resource Management, and as mentioned in the letter of consent you just read, this data collection is part of my thesis project. I got married in April this year. I live with my husband in Italy. We met during my exchange studies, as I went to Italy in august 2019 to study for one year.
- Letting my supervisor introduce himself.

2. Presenting the objective of the interview

- The objective of the interview is
 - (1) understanding the organisation/institution you are representing and its involvement/function in implementing the CCO in the communities
 - (2) understanding the enabling and constraining processes for implementing and adopting the CCO in the communities
 - (3) understanding the enabling and constraining community structures for implementing and adopting the CCO in the communities
 - (4) understanding the perspectives and experiences of the contributions of the CCO in the communities concerning (i) farming systems/households (ii) land conflicts (iii) women's vulnerability and land, and (iiii) community

- Is the objective of the study clear to you?

3. Describing the informant's valuable participation

- I am interested in hearing your stories and coming in contact with your perspectives, experiences, and perceptions, and I am here to learn from you.
- Therefore, I want to hear as many different inputs about this topic as possible and if your perspective, experience, and perception are a little different from someone's else – that is why I want to hear from you.
- The interest of this study is finding similarities and differences and discovering agreements and disagreements.

4. Asking the informant for her/his approval of being recorded

- This part of the interview will serve as the data collection for my master's thesis, and I will be analysing what is discussed here today.
- My thesis is intended to be valuable for the FAO in reporting on the outcomes of the SIDA funded project.
- Therefore, I am wondering if I have permission to record the interview from now and onwards. If you are not okay with that, we may cancel the interview.
- If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can do so at any time. If you want to do so, I will not consider the information you provided during the interview.
- Informing I am now starting the recording.
- Start recording

General background information		
	Name of informant	
	Age of informant	
	Organisation/institution	
	Type of organisation	
	Position	
The organization/institution's involvement in the implementation of the CCO		
	Would you tell me...	
		about the organisation's/institution's involvement/function in the community with respect to the implementation of the Certificate of Customary Ownership (CCO)?

		what tools/methods/strategies your organisation/institution have been involved in when implementing the CCO?
		what tools/methods/strategies were particularly effective when implementing the CCO?
		If any, why?
		what tools/methods/strategies were ineffective when implementing the CCO? if there have been any challenges linked to the process of implementing the CCO?
		If any, why?
		about if your organisation/institution collaborated with other organizations/institutions/actors during the involvement/function/processes when implementing the CCO?
		How would you describe the collaboration in terms of what enabled and constrained the collaboration?
		If any, what are your suggestions on how to address these challenges? (= the reasons constraining the collaboration)
Land-based culture		
	What is / are the main form(s) of land tenures in this district?	
	How is land mostly acquired in this district?	
	What is / are the majority of land use in the district?	
	Is the majority of land in this district owned formally or informally? Explain	
	What rights do the CCO entail for the adopters?	
		Are there any differences in rights between the genders?
Enabling and constraining the implementation/adoption of the CCO		
	From your knowledge of and experience in the community...	
		do you think all relevant actors within the community were able to engage in implementing and adopting the CCO?
		If not, what additional actors would you think of engaging, and why?
		What are your suggestions on how to engage these actors?
		what are the community structures (societal / cultural / political) enabling the implementation/adoption of CCO in the district?

		what are the community structures (societal / cultural / political) constraining the implementation/adoption of CCO in the district?
		If any, what are your suggestion(s) on how to address the challenge(s)?
		What are the perceptions linked to the CCO?
		What do you think are the reason(s) and motive(s) behind some adopters:
		(i) accepting their wife's name on the certificate?
		(ii) refusing their wife's name on the certificate?
		What are your suggestions on how to address this?
The contributions of the CCO		
	From your knowledge of and experience in the community if and in what way the CCO contributed to the communities concerning: (benefits)	
		The farming systems / households
		The land conflicts
		The women's vulnerability and land
		The community
The end of the interview		
	Do you feel like sharing something else, that so far has not been discussed here today?	
	Do you have any questions for me?	

5. Thank the informant for her participation and contribution to this study.

- Stop recording.
- Thank you so much for your participation and taking the time to meet us. It was my pleasure meeting you and learning more about the implementation, adoption, and contributions of the CCO.
- I will now transcribe the interview and thematizes the material into relevant themes, if something is unclear when I go through the material, may I contact you to get a clarification of what is unclear?
- Thank you and goodbye.

Appendix 4



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban
and Rural Development



Assessment of the implementation, adoption and contributions of the Certificate of Customary Ownerships (CCO) in the Adjumani district

Interview Guide: Focus Group Discussions

1. Self-introduction

- My name is Ida Gustafsson, and I am Swedish. I am turning 30 years in December. I am a master's student at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. I study Rural Development and Natural Resource Management, and as mentioned in the letter of consent you just read, this data collection is part of my thesis project. I got married in April this year. I live with my husband in Italy. We met during my exchange studies, as I went to Italy in august 2019 to study for one year.
- Letting my supervisor introduce himself.
- Letting the interpreter introduce herself.
- Asking how many of the participants are married.

2. Presenting the objective of the Focus Group Discussions

The objective of the Focus Group Discussion is

- (1) understanding the organisation/institution's enabling and constraining processes for implementing and adopting the CCO in the communities
- (2) understanding the enabling and constraining community structures for implementing and adopting the CCO in the communities
- (3) understanding the adopters' perspectives and experiences of the contributions of the CCO in the communities concerning (i) farming systems/households (ii) land conflicts (iii) women's vulnerability and land, and (iiii) community
- Is the objective of the study clear to you?

3. Describing their valuable participation and highlighting my role

- I am interested in hearing your stories and coming in contact with your perspectives, experiences, and perceptions, and I am here to learn from you.
- Therefore, I want to hear as many different inputs about this topic as possible and if your perspective, experience, and perception are a little different from someone's else – that is why I want to hear from you
- My role is to moderate and facilitate you
- Your (the participants') roles are to generate and sustain the discussions
- I am also inviting you all to use this group discussion as an opportunity to discuss with each other, and share your stories, so we can find similarities and differences, and discover agreements and disagreements, as this is of interest for this study.

4. Asking the participants for their approval of being recorded

- This part of the group discussion will serve as the data collection for my master's thesis, and I will be analysing what is discussed here today.
- My thesis is intended to be valuable for the FAO in reporting on the outcomes of the SIDA project.
- The reason for recording the discussion is that valuable information should not be missed. And I have the opportunity to get fully engaged in the discussions instead of taking notes.
- Therefore, I am wondering if I have permission to record the interview from now and onwards. If you are not okay with that, we may cancel the interview.
- If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can do so at any time. If you want to do so, I will not consider the information you provided during the interview.
- Informing I am now starting the recording.
- Start recording

General background information		
	Name of participant	
	Age of participant	
	Ethnicity of participant	
	Religion of participant	
	Occupation	
The adoption of the CCO		
	Would you share with me...	

		from whom and how you first heard about the Certificate of Customary Ownership (CCO)?
		What was your first impression of the CCO?
		Is your current perspective the same as the first impression?
		If not , in what way has it changed?
		What made you change your mind?
		how you got involved in adopting the CCO?
		the enabling community structures (societal / cultural / political) for adopting the CCO?
		the constraining community structures (societal / cultural / political) for adopting the CCO?
		If any, what are your suggestions on how to address this?
		what rights do the CCO entails for you?
		what are your spouse's rights?
		your reason(s) and motive(s) behind accepting your wife's / your husband accepting your name on the CCO?
		What do you think are the reason(s) and motive(s) behind some farmers not accepting their wife's name on the CCO?
		What are your suggestions on how to address this?
The contributions of the CCO		
	Would you share with me...	
		if and in what way the CCO contributed to the communities concerning:
		The farming systems / households
		The land conflicts
		The women's vulnerability and land
		The community
		the most notable changes for you after the registration of the CCO? (would rank them?)
		the most notable changes for your spouse after the registration of the CCO? (would rank them?)
		if you would recommend (or already have recommended) other farmers in the community to adopt the CCO?
		If yes , what arguments would you use to justify the adoption?
		If no , explain

The end of the discussion	
	Do you feel like sharing something else, that so far has not been discussed here today?
	Do you have any questions for me?

5. Thank the participants for their participation and contribution to this study.

- Stop recording.
- Thank you so much for your participation and for taking the time to meet us. It was my pleasure meeting you and learning more about the implementation, adoption, and contributions of the CCO.
- I will now transcribe the group discussion and thematizes the material into relevant themes, if something is unclear when I go through the material, may I contact you to get a clarification of what is unclear?
- Thank you and goodbye.

Publishing and archiving

Approved students' theses at SLU can be published online. As a student you own the copyright to your work and in such cases, you need to approve the publication. In connection with your approval of publication, SLU will process your personal data (name) to make the work searchable on the internet. You can revoke your consent at any time by contacting the library.

Even if you choose not to publish the work or if you revoke your approval, the thesis will be archived digitally according to archive legislation.

You will find links to SLU's publication agreement and SLU's processing of personal data and your rights on this page:

- <https://libanswers.slu.se/en/faq/228318>

☒ YES, I, Ida Gustafsson, have read and agree to the agreement for publication and the personal data processing that takes place in connection with this.

☐ NO, I/we do not give my/our permission to publish the full text of this work. However, the work will be uploaded for archiving and the metadata and summary will be visible and searchable.