



SUCCESS STORY

Alleviating Land Conflict Through Transparent Dialogue

USAID-supported radio program protects farmer rights and mitigates land conflict.



Photo: Mia Warner, USAID/Rwanda intern

Ignace Karangwa, farmer in Rwanda's Gasabo District

“Because of the work done by the USAID radio program, I now feel confident to invest on my land. My wife and I plan to plant crops or build a house on our property.” Ignace Karangwa, farmer

For two years, Ignace Karangwa was afraid to invest in his land because he was told it had been expropriated by a local bank. “I watched as the bank confiscated the land of my neighbors bit by bit. I was unable to invest anything durable on my land because it seemed that my land could also be taken at any minute,” Ignace said. The confiscations apparently continued even after the Mayor of Gasabo said the expropriations would stop.

The USAID Land Conflict Transformation project, implemented by Search for Common Ground, was informed of the problem and decided to produce a radio program specifically on the issue of expropriation in Gasabo District. The program invited the Gasabo District Land Officer, the Gasabo District Legal Advisor, and the Kigali Expropriation Technician to talk with callers on the radio to inform district residents of their rights in the situation and take calls from citizens.

Live call-in radio programs focused on land rights and land policy are one part of the Land Conflict Transformation project that aims to ensure broader awareness among citizens of their land rights and help foster effective dialogue through both state and non-state channels in order to alleviate land disputes.

Land-related issues are a major cause of conflict in Rwanda, a country that has the highest population density in mainland Africa and a high population growth rate. Around 80 percent of Rwanda's population lives in rural areas, while most Rwandans are subsistence farmers and rely on their land to grow enough food for their families.

Before the radio program, district residents tried to solve the expropriation issue by talking among themselves and to bank officials to no avail. Ignace said the radio program made it clear that property in Gasabo hadn't truly been expropriated and that people had a right to invest on their land. He said the program stopped the rumors that people didn't have true ownership of their land.

“Because of the work done by the USAID radio program, I now feel confident to invest on my land,” Ignace commented enthusiastically, “My wife and I plan to plant crops or build a house on our property.”