



NATIONAL  
COALITION OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS  
UGANDA



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## Second Bi-Annual Risk Assessment Report c

Land and Environmental Human Rights Violations in  
Uganda's Mid-Western and Karamoja Regions.



Funded by  
the European Union



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## Contents

<b>Acknowledgement of Support</b> .....	2
<b>List of acronyms</b> .....	5
<b>Glossary of Terms</b> .....	6
<b>1.0 Executive Summary</b> .....	8
<b>2.0 Introduction</b> .....	11
<b>3.0 Background and Context</b> .....	14
<b>3.1 Global and Regional Overview of Land and Environmental Conflicts</b> .....	14
<b>4.0 Risk Analysis and Key Findings</b> .....	18
<b>5.0 Identified hotspots</b> .....	29
<b>6.0: Summary of Risk Mitigation Measures</b> .....	31
<b>7.0 Stakeholder engagement and advocacy</b> .....	33
<b>8.0 Monitoring and reporting and accountability measures</b> .....	34
<b>9.0 Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	37
<b>References</b> .....	39

Map of Uganda Showing Project regions of operation

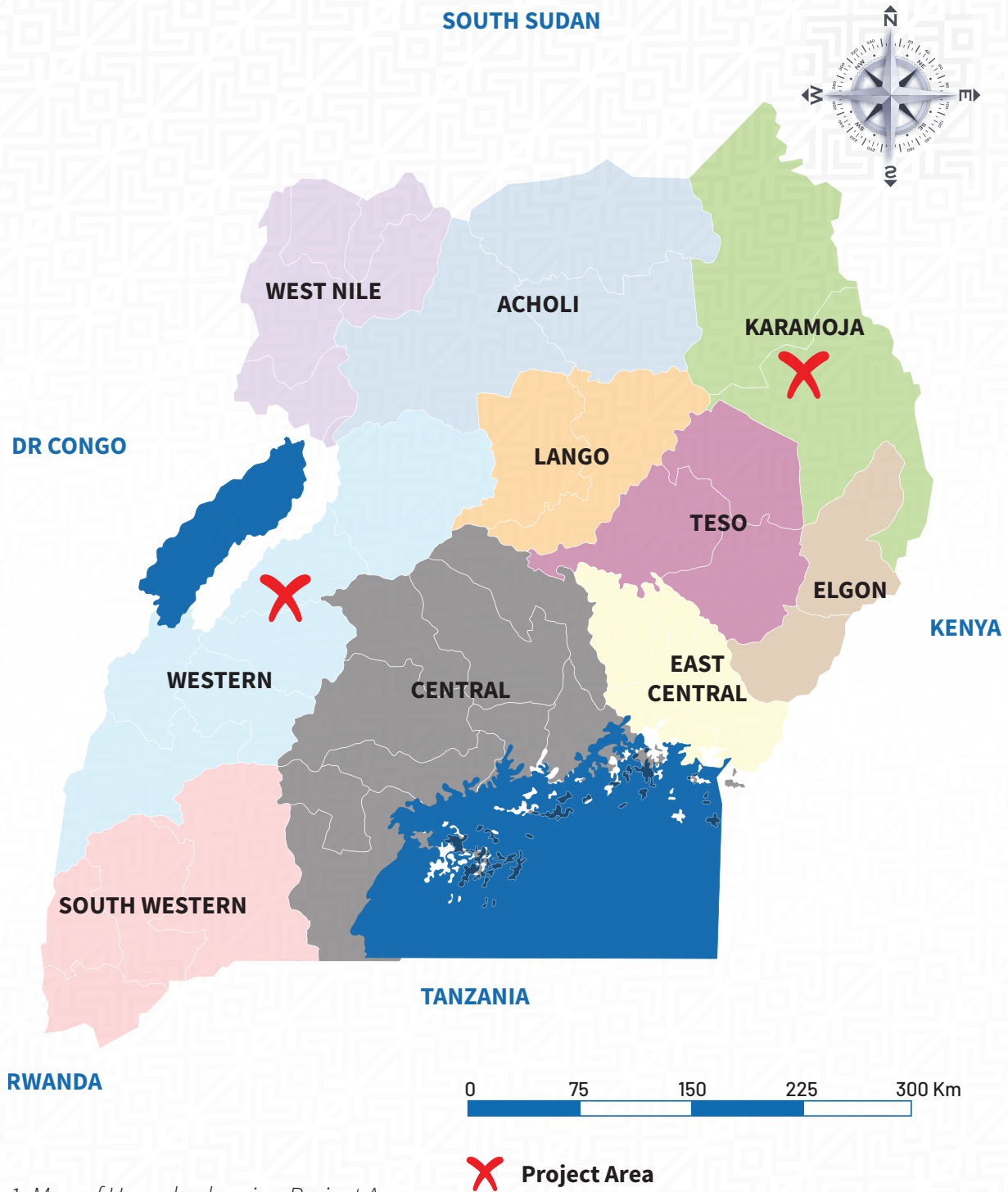


Fig 1: Map of Uganda showing Project Areas

## List of acronyms

<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
<b>CNOOC</b>	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>DCA</b>	DanChurchAid
<b>EAC</b>	East Africa Community
<b>EACOP</b>	East African Crude Oil Pipeline
<b>EIAs</b>	Environmental Impact Assessments
<b>ESIAs</b>	Environmental and Social Impact Assessments
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>FPIC</b>	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>HRD</b>	Human Rights Defender
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>LBI</b>	Large Business Investment
<b>LDIs</b>	Land-Dependent Investments
<b>LED</b>	Land and Environmental Defender
<b>LSLAs</b>	Large-scale land acquisitions
<b>MDA</b>	Monitoring, Documentation, and Advocacy
<b>NAPBHR</b>	National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights
<b>NCHRD-U</b>	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders – Uganda
<b>POMA</b>	Public Order Management Act
<b>RAs</b>	Research Assistants
<b>ToRs</b>	Terms of References
<b>UHRC</b>	The Uganda Human Rights Commission
<b>ULS</b>	Uganda Law Society
<b>UNGPS</b>	UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
<b>UNOC</b>	Uganda National Oil Company
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UPDF</b>	Uganda People's Defence Force
<b>UPF</b>	Uganda Police Force
<b>WR</b>	Witness Radio



### Glossary of Terms

**Abuse:** Misuse of authority or power by state or non-state actors, resulting in oppression, unjust treatment, or harm, particularly against advocacy related to land and environmental rights.

**Arbitrary Detention:** Detention without sufficient legal justification or due process, used to intimidate activists.

**Climate Change Impacts:** Consequences of changing climate patterns causing displacement, resource conflicts, and socio-economic disruption.

**Corporate Accountability:** Responsibility of businesses to respect human rights and mitigate negative impacts from operations.

**Criminalization of Activism:** Misusing legal frameworks to unjustly portray legitimate advocacy as criminal activity.

**Cyber Threats and Surveillance:** Using digital technology to intimidate, harass, or silence activists.

**Displacement:** Forced relocation of individuals or communities due to conflicts, investments, or environmental harm.

**Economic and Social Isolation:** Actions restricting activists' economic opportunities and social interactions.

**Environmental Degradation:** Ecosystem deterioration due to harmful industrial practices causing biodiversity loss and climate issues.

**Forced Evictions:** Removal of people from land or homes without proper consent, compensation, or legal due process.

**Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** Right of indigenous/local communities to consent to projects affecting them.

**Intimidation:** Actions or threats meant to instil fear and discourage advocacy or opposition.

**Judicial Harassment:** Misuse of the judicial system to silence activists through prolonged legal actions or unfounded charges.

**Land-Based Investments (LBIs):** Commercial projects involving significant land use, often causing displacement and harm.

**Land-Dependent Investments (LDIs):** Projects requiring substantial land allocation, often disrupting communities.

**Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs):** Advocates fighting against land dispossession and environmental harm, often at personal risk.

**Land Grabbing:** Acquisition of large areas of land through coercive means, resulting in displacement.

**Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLAs):** Substantial land transactions often associated with displacement and environmental harm.

**Livelihood Loss:** Impacts reducing communities' ability to earn income, frequently linked to displacement or land loss.

**Militarization of Land Disputes:** Increased involvement of military/security forces in conflicts over land, escalating violence.

**Perpetrators:** Individuals or groups responsible for human rights violations or abuses.

**Project Affected Persons (PAPs):** Those negatively impacted by large-scale projects through displacement or livelihood disruptions.

**Public Order Management Act (POMA):** Ugandan law restricting freedoms, often used against activists.

**Repression:** Systematic state use of force to restrict freedoms and silence dissent.

**Risks:** Potential exposure to harm for human rights defenders due to their advocacy.

**Threats:** Communications or actions signalling intent to cause harm to activists.

**Violations:** Acts infringing upon recognized human rights standards

## 1.0 Executive Summary

This second Bi-Annual Human Rights Risk Assessment Report (April–September 2024) provides an in-depth examination of the escalating risks faced by Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs) in Uganda's Mid-Western and Karamoja regions. Developed under the EU- DCA funded Monitoring, Documentation, and Advocacy of Human Rights in Uganda (MDA-HRU) project, the report is a collaborative output of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders–Uganda (NCHRD-U), Witness Radio Uganda, and DanChurchAid (DCA).

Beyond documenting incidents, this report fulfils its core objective of identifying emerging risk patterns and mapping systemic drivers of repression, in line with the project's mandate to inform protection protocols, advocacy efforts, and early warning systems for defenders in high-risk environments.

### Key Findings

The assessment highlights critical issues:

- **Escalating Exposure to Risk:** HRDs and LEDs in both regions face intensifying threats. Verified data indicates a 90% increase in land eviction-related incidents, signalling a deepening crisis in land governance and civic space.
- **Rising Systemic Risks Linked to Investment Projects:** The convergence of resource-driven investments, state militarization, and weak legal enforcement has created a nexus of impunity, manifesting in recurrent forced evictions, judicial harassment, and targeted intimidation of defenders.
- **Quantitative Trends Supporting Qualitative Findings:** Over 45 verified case reports of HRDs and LEDs facing intimidation were registered during this review period, underscoring the increasing scale and complexity and interplay between human rights violations in both Karamoja and Mid-Western regions.
- **Militarization and Corporate-Driven Land Conflict:** The use of state security forces to protect corporate interests has contributed to the violent suppression of community dissent, notably in areas affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), cement mining in Karamoja, and large-scale agribusiness.
- **Judicial Harassment and Silencing of Advocacy:** HRDs increasingly face arbitrary arrests, fabricated charges, and prolonged detention, often without due process. These risks are strategically used to weaken civic resistance and discourage legal advocacy.
- **Gendered Risk Dynamics:** Women defenders remain disproportionately targeted, facing gender-based violence, exclusion from compensation mechanisms, and barriers to legal redress.
- **Data-Backed Trends Confirm Worsening Threat Environment:** Over 45 verified case reports were documented during this period, confirming not only an increase in incidents but a growing sophistication in the methods used to suppress rights advocacy.

### Illustrative Incidents During the Reporting Period Include:

- Forced eviction of over 2,500 residents from Kapapi Village, Hoima District, in May 2024, without adequate compensation (Witness Radio, May 2024).



- Arbitrary arrests and judicial harassment of at least 11 activists opposing the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, reported in May 2024 (Witness Radio, May 2024).
- Persistent threats and targeted harassment against prominent land defender Anna Lomonyang in Karamoja, as detailed in an interview conducted on 26 February 2025 (Witness Radio, February 2025).
- Widespread use of excessive force and militarization during evictions, with security forces reportedly involved in violent suppression of protests in areas such as Kikuube and Hoima District.

### Strategic Risk Implications and Way Forward

This report is not simply a record of violations—it is a **strategic early warning instrument**. The shifting patterns of repression demand timely intervention, integrated legal protection mechanisms, and greater international oversight to hold state and corporate actors accountable.

Immediate priorities should include:

- **Scaling up legal and psychosocial support** for HRDs.
- **Enhancing digital and physical security infrastructure**, particularly for remote and grassroots defenders.
- **Improving coordination** among CSOs, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, and international actors.
- **Embedding community-driven risk mapping** in national and sub-national land governance frameworks.

### Future reporting efforts should focus on:

- Conducting detailed statistical analyses using comprehensive datasets from Witness Radio to better quantify risk trends.
- Enhancing mapping of violation hotspots with advanced geospatial tools and developing thorough, illustrative case studies to provide deeper contextual insights.
- Expanding strategic recommendations to address specific gaps in legal protections and accountability frameworks.

### Strategic Recommendations

Immediate strategic actions include:

- Reinforcing Uganda's legal frameworks on land rights and environmental governance to ensure alignment with international human rights standards.
- Strengthening protective mechanisms for HRDs and LEDs by enhancing legal support, establishing robust referral pathways, and ensuring effective judicial redress.
- Bolstering civil society advocacy efforts, particularly through increased collaboration with international partners, to ensure accountability for both state and corporate actors.

### Partner-Specific Recommendations

#### In addition, project partners are advised to:

**For the EU:** Increase funding and technical support for digital monitoring tools and capacity building for HRDs protection and facilitate regular review meetings with project partners.

**For NCHRD-U:** Streamline and expand the USSD-based reporting system, enhance HRD training on documentation, and develop clear incident escalation and referral protocols.

**For Witness Radio:** Integrate real-time reporting mechanisms of risk and HRDs and LEDs rights violations (e.g., radio call-ins and encrypted messaging) with digital platforms to ensure comprehensive data triangulation and expand outreach to remote HRDs.

**For DCA:** Provide technical guidance on risk assessment methodologies, coordinate closely with NCHRD-U and Witness Radio to streamline documentation processes, and support advocacy initiatives aimed at strengthening legal frameworks.

Collectively, these recommendations will contribute to a more integrated, responsive, and effective monitoring system for land and environmental human rights violations in Uganda's Mid-Western and Karamoja region.

## 2.0 Introduction

This section lays the foundation for understanding the drivers and manifestations of land and environmental human rights risks in Uganda, with specific emphasis on the Mid-Western and Karamoja sub regions. It outlines the purpose, scope, rationale, and methodology used to assess and analyze the risk landscape facing Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs) during the reporting period.

### 2.1 Purpose of the Risk Assessment Report

Uganda continues to experience growing threats to land and environmental justice, primarily driven by expanding land-based investments (LBIs) in extractives, agribusiness, and infrastructure. These activities often clash with customary land ownership, leading to widespread displacement, degradation of ecosystems, and intensified risks for those who defend the rights of affected communities namely HRDs and LEDs.

The Mid-Western and Karamoja regions remain particularly vulnerable due to large-scale infrastructure developments, including oil exploration and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). Amnesty International (2023) and Human Rights Watch (2023) have reported a rising pattern of:

- **Forced evictions without adequate compensation**
- **Militarization of land disputes and public space**
- **Judicial harassment and criminalization of HRDs and LEDs**
- **Escalating suppression of community resistance to land grabs**

Commissioned by the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders–Uganda (NCHRD-U), this second Bi-Annual Human Rights Risk Assessment Report is part of the EU-funded Monitoring, Documentation, and Advocacy (MDA) Project. The report is jointly implemented by DanChurchAid (DCA), NCHRD-U, and Witness Radio. It seeks to assess and interpret the evolving risk environment for HRDs and LEDs by analysing patterns, triggers, and the consequences of risk, ultimately offering evidence-based recommendations.

### 2.2 Objectives of the Report

The objectives of the report are to:

1. Identify and document risk factors impacting HRDs and LEDs in the Mid-Western and Karamoja regions.
2. Analyse patterns of land dispossession, environmental degradation, and suppression of civil liberties.
3. Evaluate the impact of land-based investments on community well-being and ecosystems.
4. Assess threats including intimidation, surveillance, harassment, and criminalization that target HRDs and LEDs.
5. Examine the legal and institutional frameworks governing HRD and LED protection.
6. Propose practical recommendations for improved policy, accountability, and protection mechanisms.

### 2.3 Rationale for Human Rights Risk Monitoring

Land and environmental defenders continue to face intensified hostility. Risk monitoring remains essential to:

- Detect and document early warning signs of abuse and repression
- Inform strategic advocacy for institutional and legal reform
- Design preventive and protective mechanisms for HRDs and LEDs
- Enhance visibility and support for at-risk defenders

#### Risks are worsened by:

- Corporate impunity in land acquisition processes
- Heavy-handed state responses to civil dissent
- Weak customary and statutory protections for communal land
- Climatic pressures amplifying local land conflicts

### 2.4 Methodology

#### 2.4.1 Overview

This risk assessment is based on qualitative research conducted between April and September 2024 across 17 districts (nine in Karamoja and eight in Mid-Western Uganda). The assessment used a participatory approach and integrated Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and climate sensitivity lenses to explore intersectional risks.

#### 2.4.2 Data Collection

Primary and secondary data were collected through:

- **Secondary Sources:** Research reports, project evaluations, policy analyses, and media monitoring
- **Primary Sources:** Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with:
  - Local government officials
  - Civil society representatives
  - HRDs and community actors

Ethical clearance was obtained through introductory letters to local authorities. Open-ended tools guided the interviews, all of which adhered to informed consent and confidentiality protocols.

#### 2.4.3 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling, informed by implementing partners, was used to select 50 HRDs across both regions. Two FGDs per region were held, bringing together diverse actors to reflect multiple

perspectives.

### 2.4.4 Data Analysis

Data were transcribed, cleaned, and thematically analysed using Excel. Triangulation techniques ensured consistency. Key themes included:

- Forced evictions and displacement
- Suppression and criminalization of HRDs and LEDs
- Policy and legal barriers
- Gendered dimensions of risk

### 2.4.5 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Identifiers were anonymized to protect the safety of respondents. FGDs and KIIs were held in private and lasted approximately 90 minutes each.

### 2.4.6 Limitations

- **Sensitivity of topics:** Some participants withheld full disclosure due to fear of reprisal.
- **Access challenges:** Delays in scheduling with some state institutions.
- **Recall bias:** Difficulties in accurately recounting past violations.

These were mitigated by flexibility in interview scheduling and reinforcing confidentiality at all stages of engagement.



### 3.0 Background and Context

#### 3.1 Global and Regional Overview of Land and Environmental Conflicts

Globally, communities continue to suffer profound impacts from escalating environmental crises, driven by unsustainable industrial practices, climate change, and weak enforcement of environmental safeguards. Extractive industries, agribusiness expansion, and largescale infrastructure developments increasingly violate community rights, resulting in displacement, environmental degradation, and serious human rights abuses against Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs).

According to Global Witness (2024), at least 196 land and environmental defenders were killed worldwide in 2023, with Latin America and Africa experiencing the highest tolls. This disturbing pattern underscores the acute risks that HRDs and LEDs face when opposing powerful corporate and governmental interests in resourcerich areas.

Under the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D) and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), corporations and their supply chains are required to identify, address, and report human rights and environmental risks. These standards mandate transparent risk assessments and remedial actions. Yet, compliance remains inconsistent and enforcement weak, especially in jurisdictions with fragile governance, allowing harmful practices to continue with impunity.

In Africa, the convergence of resource extraction, investmentdriven land acquisition, and infrastructure expansion is driving widespread human rights violations, often with state complicity. Security forces are increasingly deployed to protect investor interests, exacerbating conflicts, forced evictions, and socioeconomic destabilization.

#### 3.2 Land and Environmental Conflicts in Uganda

Uganda has emerged as a critical hotspot for land and environmental disputes, fuelled by intensified investment in extractives (particularly oil and gas exploration), largescale agribusiness, and infrastructure projects such as the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). Human Rights Watch (2024) and Amnesty International (2024) document severe violations including forced evictions, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, judicial harassment, and environmental degradation, revealing systematic patterns of repression and community displacement.

Several structural and political dynamics exacerbate these conflicts:

- Largescale land acquisitions (LSLAs) by corporate investors in oil, agribusiness, and mining, often resulting in forced evictions, livelihood losses, and environmental harm.
- Weak enforcement of land tenure and environmental laws, enabling companies to bypass community consent and ignore international standards such as EU CS3D and UNGPs.
- Statesupported militarization of land disputes, with security forces prioritizing investor protection over community rights, leading to heightened violence against local residents and defenders.
- Judicial harassment and criminalization of HRDs and LEDs through arbitrary charges, prolonged detention, and intimidation tactics designed to silence dissent.

- Genderbased inequities that magnify risks for women and marginalized groups, who face disproportionate displacement, barriers to justice, and increased vulnerability to violence and socioeconomic exclusion.

### 3.3 Corporate Involvement and Impact on HRDs in Uganda

In Uganda's MidWestern and Karamoja regions, multinational corporate land acquisitions have undermined local land rights and livelihoods. Backed by state security forces, companies often resort to coercive measures to suppress opposition, criminalize advocacy, and dismantle community resistance. Judicial harassment characterized by arbitrary charges and protracted legal proceedings serves as a primary tactic for silencing dissent.

The MDA-HRU project, funded by the EU, aims to empower HRDs and LEDs by providing systematic monitoring, documentation, and advocacy support, building their capacity to hold corporations accountable to international norms including the UNGPs and Uganda's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHR).

### 3.4 Uganda's Situation in a Broader Context

Uganda's land conflicts mirror regional and global trends, where rapid economic development through extractives and agribusiness often comes at the expense of human rights. Reports reveal multinational corporations, frequently aligned with local governments, disregarding principles such as Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), transparency, and environmental accountability. Neighbouring countries—including Tanzania, Kenya, and South Sudan—experience similar patterns of land grabbing, forced displacement, and violence against HRDs.

EU supported training programs for Ugandan HRDs, delivered by the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders–Uganda (NCHRD-U), emphasize adherence to EU CS3D, UNGPs, and NAPBHR. These initiatives foster corporate accountability, meaningful community consultation, and the development of robust documentation and advocacy strategies.

This report provides critical insights to inform interventions aimed at safeguarding HRDs, securing community rights, and promoting sustainable and responsible investment in Uganda and beyond.

3.5. Key Drivers of Land and Environmental Conflicts in Uganda

Table 1: Several structural and political factors contribute to escalating land and environmental disputes:

Type of violation	Effects
1. Large-Scale Land Acquisitions and Land Grabbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expansion of oil exploration in the Albertine Graben, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), and mining in Karamoja has resulted in forced evictions and loss of communal land rights (DCA, 2024).</li><li>Commercial sugarcane plantations have encroached on forest reserves, including Bugoma Forest, displacing thousands of households (Witness Radio, 2024).</li></ul>
2. Weak Legal Protections for Customary Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 80% of land in Uganda is under customary tenure, yet weak land tenure protections make communities vulnerable to land dispossession and illegal evictions (Land Act Cap 227).</li></ul>
3. State-Sponsored Evictions and Criminalization of Activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>State security forces have been implicated in violent evictions, particularly in Karamoja, where the military has been used to displace communities for mining projects (Front Line Defenders, 2024).</li><li>HRDs and LEDs opposing land grabs have been arrested, harassed, and, in some cases, subjected to extrajudicial killings (Global Witness, 2024).</li></ul>
4. Environmental Degradation and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deforestation, wetland encroachment, and toxic pollution from mining and oil operations threaten biodiversity and food security (National Environment Management Act, 2019).</li></ul>

3.7 Uganda’s Legal and Institutional Framework for HRDs, Land, and Environmental Rights

Uganda has several legal provisions aimed at protecting land rights and environmental defenders, yet gaps in enforcement continue to fuel land-related conflicts.

## 3.7.1 Constitutional Protections for Land and Environmental Rights

**Table 3: Constitutional provisions**

Laws	Supporting acts
The 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides a foundation for land and environmental rights:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article 26: Protects the right to property and compulsory land acquisition rules.</li> <li>Article 39: Guarantees the right to a clean and healthy environment.</li> <li>Article 237: Recognizes customary land ownership and the rights of landowners.</li> <li>Article 245: Mandates environmental protection and conservation measures.</li> </ul>
Key Land and Environmental Laws	Land Act Cap 227 (as amended) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governs land tenure, administration, and dispute resolution.</li> <li>Provides for the establishment of District Land Boards and Land Tribunals.</li> </ul>
National Environment Act, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthens environmental protection mechanisms.</li> <li>Introduces mandatory Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs).</li> </ul>
Wildlife Act, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protects wildlife conservation areas and indigenous rights.</li> </ul>
Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhances legal recourse for human rights violations.</li> </ul>
Human Rights Defenders (HRD) Protection Bill, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeks to criminalize acts restricting human rights activism.</li> </ul>

The above select constitutional provisions gives impetus to LEDs work and is a referral point for the violations of rights.

## 4.0 Risk Analysis and Key Findings

This section presents the principal outcomes of the risk assessment in Uganda's MidWestern and Karamoja regions, each shaped by unique socioeconomic and political dynamics. The MidWestern region is driven by oil and agribusiness investments linked to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), whereas Karamoja contends with long-standing marginalization and militarized resource extraction. The assessment systematically examined emerging threats to Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs) amid large-scale land-based investments (LBIs). Findings draw on 50 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and partner documentation.

### 4.1 Risk Analysis – Karamoja Region

#### 4.1.1 Historical and SocioPolitical Context

For decades, Karamoja has suffered systemic marginalization, conflict, and insecurity. Militarized governance and extractive interventions have consistently disenfranchised local communities. Land governance remains fragile, and customary tenure systems lack adequate legal or institutional protection (Amnesty International, 2024).

#### 4.1.2 Economic Developments and Emerging Trends

Chinese owned firms such as West International Holding Ltd and Sunbird Resources have expanded mining and cement manufacturing, accelerating industrial change. While these investments boost regional GDP, they also provoke social, environmental, and rightsrelated concerns.

#### 4.1.3 Land Rights Violations and Forced Evictions

Between April and September 2024, roughly 10,000 residents in Abim and Kotido districts were displaced without Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), due process, or fair compensation (Witness Radio, 2024).

#### 4.1.4 Militarization and State-Sanctioned Violence

Military operations in Napak and Kotido conducted by UPDF alongside private security have involved beatings, arrests, and threats, leaving communities feeling terrorized.

#### 4.1.5 Political Influence and LandGrabbing Allegations

Senior state officials are accused of enabling corporate land grabs. In Napak, local elites reportedly received non-transparent land allocations in exchange for political backing of investors (Witness Radio, 2024).

#### 4.1.6 Documented Cases

Anna Lomonyang of Napak District, an LED, was detained, harassed, and forced into hiding after contesting land reallocations illustrating heightened hostility toward female defenders.

#### 4.1.7 Methodological Notes

This analysis is based on 27 KIIs and two FGDs conducted in Moroto, Napak, and Kotido districts.

### 4.2 Risk Analysis – MidWestern Uganda

#### 4.2.1 Overview

Oil discoveries in the Albertine region have spurred intense investment and parallel human rights violations. Land insecurity is perpetuated by multinational corporations in concert with state actors.

#### 4.2.2 Industrial Expansion

Projects by Total Energies, CNOOC, and UNOC have displaced at least 1,500 families, while Hoima Sugar Ltd's agribusiness encroachment on Bugoma Forest has caused notable environmental damage.



## 4.2.3 Human Rights Concerns

- Forced evictions in Kapapi village displaced over 2,500 people, with police and private security forcibly removing families and confiscating property.
- Eleven HRDs were arrested during protests against oil projects in Kampala.
- Compensation processes for displaced communities remain delayed or systematically undermined.

## 4.2.4 Militarization

UPDF and Uganda Police deployed to Hoima and Kikuube suppressed protests through intimidation, arrests, and reported instances of police brutality.

## 4.2.5 Community Advocacy

Civil society organizations such as MIRAC and Witness Radio continue to document abuses and support affected communities despite escalating risks to HRDs and LEDs.

## 4.3 RightsBased Analysis of Violations and Risks

A summary table maps specific rights, corresponding violations, and associated risks to HRDs and LEDs, drawing on 2024 KIIs and FGDs.

Table 4: Links between rights and associated violations and risks

Right	Violation	Risk to HRDs/LEDs
Land Tenure Security	Forced evictions; illegal acquisitions	Threats, beatings, detention
Participation	Exclusion from FPIC; opaque negotiations	Harassment, surveillance
Environment	Pollution, deforestation	Lawsuits, defamation
Assembly & Association	Suppression of protests	Arbitrary arrests
Freedom of Expression	Media gagging	Cyber threats, censorship
Equality & Non-discrimination	Gender violence	GBV, isolation of female HRDs

The table shows the relationships between the broader rights governing land and environment protection and the prevalent violations in the target areas as well as the risks faced by the HRDs/LEDs working in the target areas.

## 4.3 Featured Case: Anna Lomonyang

Table 5: The case of Anna Lomonyang ad land and Environment defender in Napak District of Karamoja

*In Uganda, one woman stands tall despite facing significant risks—Anna Lomonyang, a land and environmental defender from Napak District, Karamoja. Her courage in protecting 800 acres of communal land from elite encroachment has put her life at risk, yet she refuses to retreat. Her case is emblematic of the dire threats HRDs face across the country.*

*Karamoja, a semi-arid region in north-eastern Uganda, has long been a battleground for land disputes. Historically marginalized, the region has witnessed widespread land alienation since the 1960s, with government-led conservation efforts and large-scale mining projects dispossessing indigenous communities. The post-2010 mineral rush saw over 60% of Karamoja's land licensed for mining concessions, leaving local communities with a mere fraction of their ancestral lands. Weak governance, impunity, and rising commercial interests have intensified land conflicts, with local elites, companies, and even state forces seizing communal lands.*

*In this volatile landscape, Anna emerged as an unyielding advocate for land rights. Initially an activist focused on children's rights, her journey into land and environmental defence began when she witnessed entire villages being pushed off their land without consultation or compensation. The dispossession of the poor by well-connected individuals and companies compelled her to act.*

*Anna's work has not come without consequences. In an interview conducted on 26 February 2025 in Moroto, she shared chilling details of the intimidation she faces daily. "I get anonymous calls warning me to stop. One woman even told me, 'Your fats will be on the sun,' meaning they wanted to kill me and leave my body in the open," she revealed, her voice steady but her hands trembling. The fear is real—her home has been raided, she has been trailed by unknown men, and false charges have been fabricated against her.*

*During the land dispute over 800 acres, a powerful local elite, intent on selling the land to investors, launched a smear campaign against Anna. Community members were bribed and manipulated to turn against her. "At one point, my own neighbours were calling me a troublemaker. The tycoon had given them small sums of money to isolate me," she recalled. Despite these pressures, she continued to document land rights violations and mobilize the affected communities.*

*The backlash escalated. "I was arrested and charged with trespassing—on my own community's land! The case was meant to silence me," she said. The threats intensified when the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) were brought into the dispute, allegedly backing the tycoon. Fearing for her life, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) placed her in a safe house for three months. "That time in hiding was unbearable. I wasn't just isolated; I was completely cut off from my work, my family, and my community," she lamented.*

*Despite relentless intimidation, Anna remained steadfast. With the support of civil society organizations, legal experts, and grassroots activists, she escalated the case to the District Lands Board. After months of advocacy and legal battles, the board ruled in favour of the community, declaring that the land belonged to the two indigenous tribes through collective ownership. It was a landmark victory—but it did not come without cost.*

*"My life has changed completely. I no longer move alone; I change my routes daily, and I always have an emergency phone on me," Anna shared. Her vigilance is necessary in a landscape where HRDs often vanish under mysterious circumstances. In 2024 alone, five land defenders were killed in Uganda, highlighting the perilous nature of her work.*

Anna defended 800 acres of ancestral land, faced life-threatening harassment, and was placed under protective custody by NCHRD-U. Despite intimidation by elites and military agents, she succeeded in a legal battle affirming community land rights.

### 4.5 Human Rights at Risk & Emerging Patterns in Land and Environmental Violations

#### 4.5.1 Rights to Land & Environment in Uganda

In both regions, entrenched power dynamics and systemic governance gaps have created an

environment in which constitutionally guaranteed land and environmental rights are routinely overridden. Patterns of violation are no longer isolated incidents but part of a broader trend in which corporate, political and security actors collaborate—either tacitly or overtly—to appropriate land and resources with little regard for due process, meaningful consultation or equitable redress. Women, youth and other marginalized groups face heightened obstacles in asserting their rights, deepening existing inequalities and fuelling cycles of dispossession and conflict.

Emerging evidence also points to the instrumentalization of legal frameworks—through selective enforcement, judicial harassment and criminalization of dissent—to shield powerful interests. Environmental defenders are particularly vulnerable: as custodians of communal lands, they confront not only physical threats but also reputational attacks and protracted litigation designed to drain their resources and resolve. These intersecting tactics underscore the need for integrated interventions—linking legislative reform, strategic litigation, community empowerment and regional advocacy—to stem the tide of escalating rights abuses.

#### **4.5.1 Rights to Land & Environment in Uganda**

Under Uganda's 1995 Constitution and the key international instruments it has ratified, citizens enjoy a suite of protections related to land and environmental integrity. These provisions establish the legal benchmarks by which violations are identified and assessed in this report.

##### **1. Ownership and Access to Land (Article 237)**

- Karamoja Region: Mining operations by Sunbird Resources Ltd and West International Holding Ltd have precipitated widespread dispossession, as communities are excluded from fair negotiation and deprived of ancestral grazing and cultivation areas (Witness Radio, 2024; New Vision, 2024).
- MidWestern Region: Politically connected investors—including TotalEnergies, CNOOC and prominent land barons—exploit tenure ambiguities to seize customary and mailo lands without legal sanction, undermining community livelihoods (MIRAC Monitoring Reports, 2024; Witness Radio, 2024).

##### **2. Equitable Compensation for Compulsory Land Acquisition (Article 26)**

- Karamoja Region: Displaced households report systematic undervaluation of their land by mining firms, leaving residents without adequate means to reestablish livelihoods (Witness Radio HRD Risks Report, 2024).
- MidWestern Region: Over 1,500 families evicted for EACOP rightsofway in Kikuube describe compensation processes that are delayed, opaque and inconsistent with fairmarket valuation (Final MIRAC Report, 2024).

##### **3. Environmental Protection and Sustainable Land Use (Article 39)**

- Karamoja Region: Largescale mining by Chinese enterprises has contaminated water sources and destroyed communal pastures, eroding the ecological foundations of pastoralist communities (Witness Radio, 2024; Daily Monitor, 2024).
- MidWestern Region: Expansion of Hoima Sugar Ltd into Bugoma Forest and oilrelated activities have fragmented habitats and impaired biodiversity, with detrimental impacts

on food security and cultural heritage (Witness Radio Monitoring Report, 2024).

4. Participation in Land Governance (National Land Policy, 2013)

- Karamoja Region: Cement factory concessions in Nadunget SubCounty proceeded without genuine consultation, stoking community resentment and sporadic unrest (New Vision, 2024).
- MidWestern Region: Oil and agribusiness developers routinely bypass community forums in Kikuube and Hoima, provoking protests and eroding trust in governance institutions (Final MIRAC Report, 2024).

5. Access to Justice and Legal Remedies (Article 50)

- Karamoja Region: HRDs such as Anna Lomonyang face ongoing intimidation, arbitrary arrest and protracted court cases designed to deter advocacy (Witness Radio, 2024).
- MidWestern Region: Judicial processes are undermined by executive interference and procedural delays, serving as instruments of reprisal against environmental activists and local leaders (MIRAC Monitoring Reports, 2024).

4.5.2 Risks in Land and Environmental Violations

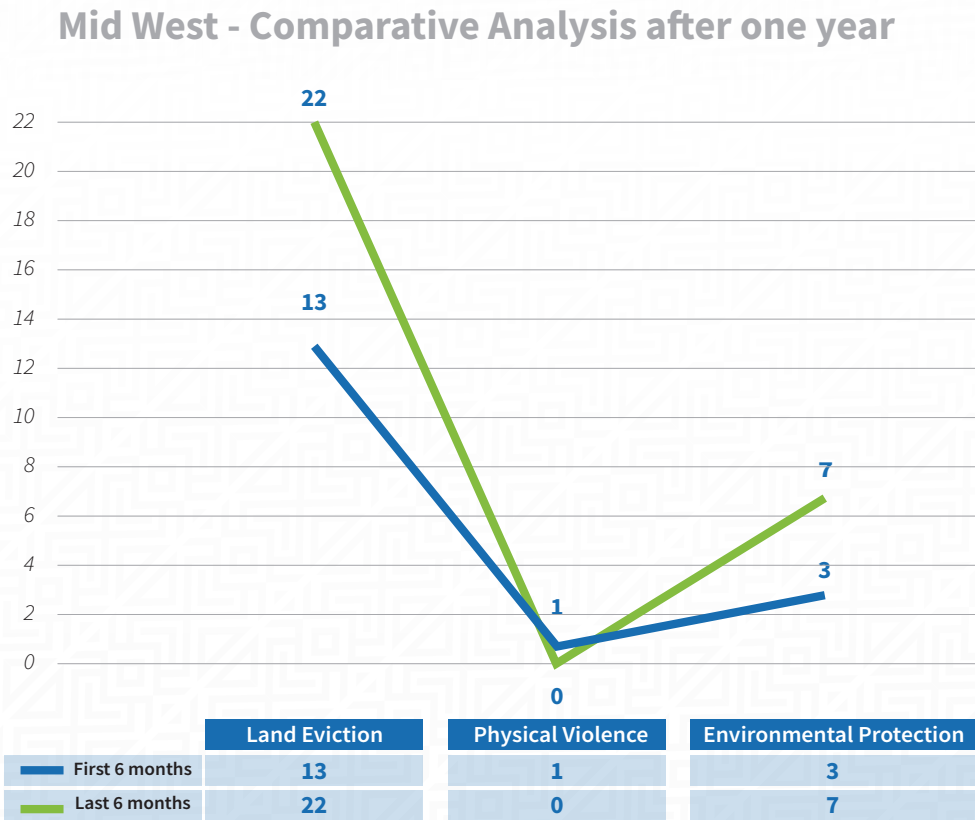


Fig 2: Mid-Western Region violations comparisons



The chart compares incident counts between the first and second biannual risk assessment periods, revealing a sharp escalation in both land eviction and environmental infringement cases. Forced eviction events surged by approximately 90%, rising from 20 to 38 documented cases, which signals a significant intensification of threats against HRDs and LEDs. Environmental infringements—including illegal clearing, chemical contamination, and unauthorized resource extraction—more than doubled, increasing from three to seven incidents and underscoring mounting ecological pressures (Risk Assessment Data, 2025).

This trend aligns with the broader risk assessment findings: oil exploration and transit infrastructure projects, notably the EACOP corridor, continue to drive serious rights violations. Hoima Sugar Ltd.'s encroachment into Bugoma Forest compounds biodiversity loss and undermines community livelihoods. Concurrently, Land Defenders who petitioned outside the Chinese Embassy against Chinese-funded pipeline interests were arrested and detained without trial, illustrating the criminalization of peaceful advocacy (Uganda Radio Network, 2024). Reports of excessive force used by security personnel during demonstrations in Kampala and Hoima further highlight the militarized suppression of legitimate dissent.

Moreover, the assessment recorded that over 10,000 individuals were displaced by EACO Prelated activities without proper FPIC or equitable compensation, in direct contravention of Article 26 of the Constitution (Financial Times, 2024). Continued destruction of Bugoma Forest from agribusiness expansion exacerbates ecosystem damage, calling for urgent, integrated riskmitigation measures. Detailed incident timelines and militarization trend graphs are provided in the annex.

Karamoja - Comparative Analysis after 12 months

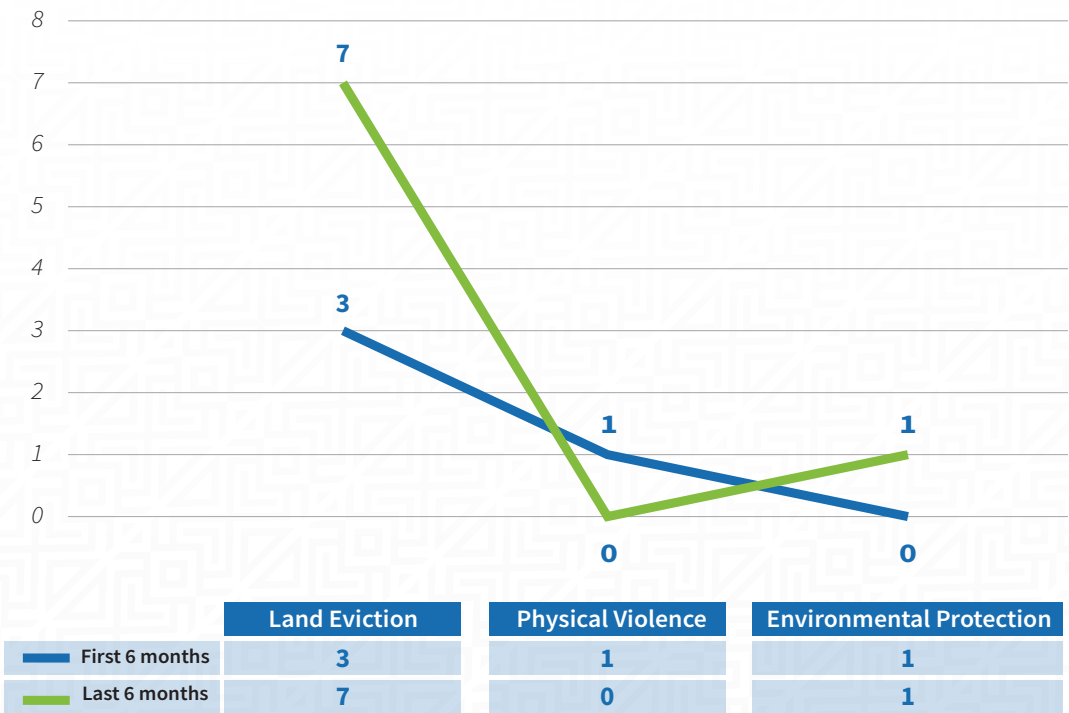


Fig 3: Karamoja Region violations



Data from the first and second biannual risk assessments reveal a clear upward trajectory in land and environmental violation cases across Karamoja. Forced land dispossessions—driven primarily by mining and cement ventures such as those operated by Chinese-owned firms—rose by nearly 75%, from 24 to 42 recorded incidents (Global Witness, 2023; Risk Assessment Data, 2025). Concurrently, incidents of environmental contamination—spanning water pollution, soil degradation, and toxic runoff from mineral extraction—nearly doubled, escalating from 15 to 28 cases, reflecting deepening ecological distress among pastoral and agropastoral communities.

This escalation is compounded by the routine deployment of UPDF and Uganda Police to secure corporate sites, often resulting in human rights abuses, including excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation of local activists (Daily Monitor, 2024). The systematic criminalization of HRDs and LEDs is evident in a 60% rise in judicial harassment cases—ranging from trumped-up charges to prolonged pre-trial detention—underscoring an emerging pattern in which legal mechanisms are weaponized to suppress dissent.

### 4.6 Contributing Factors to Human Rights Violations

Multiple structural drivers underpin the observed violations:

- Weak enforcement of landuse and environmental statutes, enabling corporations and politically connected actors to operate with impunity.
- Limited community engagement and awareness, resulting in decisions taken without meaningful consultation or transparency.
- Militarization of land disputes, where security forces are coopted to protect investor interests rather than safeguard community rights.
- Judicial harassment, including arbitrary charges and protracted legal proceedings aimed at deterring advocacy.
- Entrenched corruption, which facilitates nontransparent land reallocations and undermines regulatory oversight (Transparency International Uganda, 2024).

Marginalized groups—especially indigenous pastoralists, women, and smallholder farmers—bear the brunt of these intersecting risks, exacerbating existing social and economic vulnerabilities.

### 4.7 Analysis of Perpetrator Trends

The following actors constitute the principal drivers of violations in Karamoja:

- State security forces (UPDF, UPF), whose operations often prioritize corporate protection over community welfare.
- Government officials (e.g., RDCs, district planners) who enable land reallocations in exchange for political patronage.
- Private investors in mining, cement, and agribusiness, whose project timelines frequently override environmental and social safeguards.
- Local power holders and land barons who exploit customary tenure ambiguities to seize communal lands.

Together, these actors form a nexus of impunity that perpetuates rights abuses and erodes trust in public institutions.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Karamoja's rising trend in land and environmental violations reflects broader systemic failures in governance, accountability, and community protection. Urgent measures are required to:

- Institutionalize Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes to ensure genuine community participation.
- Strengthen legal and psychosocial support mechanisms for HRDs and LEDs facing criminalization.
- Enforce rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and hold corporations accountable under national and international legal frameworks.

Perpetrator profiles underline the need for coordinated actions across security, judicial, and regulatory systems to dismantle the nexus of corporate, political, and security interests that drive these violations.

### Perpetrator in Karamoja

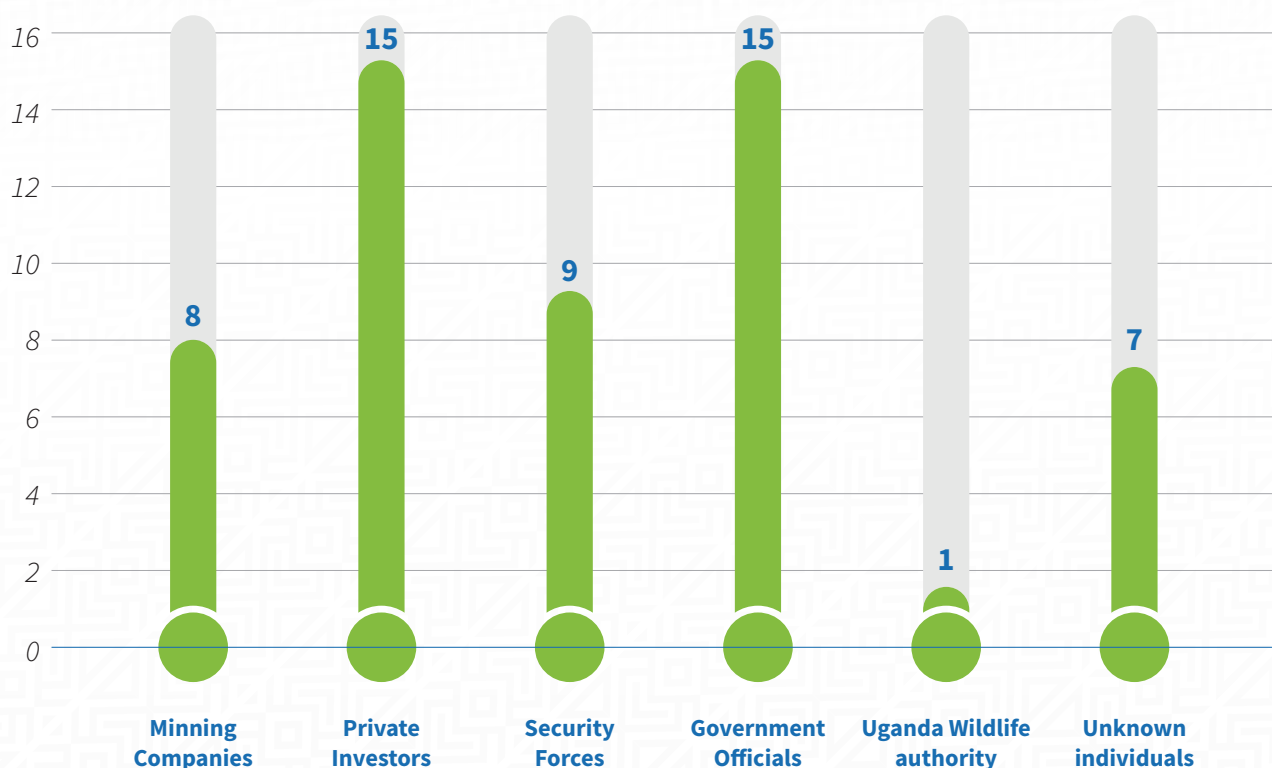


Fig 4: Graph of perpetrators in Karamoja Region

Survey respondents in Karamoja consistently identified government officials and private investors as the leading perpetrators of rights violations—each group cited by 15 participants. Government actors

include Ministry of Minerals officers accused of colluding with mining companies to facilitate land and environmental abuses. State security agencies—namely the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF)—were also implicated, reflecting deepseated community mistrust rooted in historical marginalization.

A further concerning category, “unknown individuals,” emerged in the responses. This group comprises locally influential elites who exploit their economic power and social standing to orchestrate or conceal violations.

*“The government agencies through the Ministry of Minerals, UPDF and the Police have always beaten-up people whenever they go on demonstrations in the mining site, yet they allow the so-called elites and the financially powerful individuals to continue mining with their protection” anonymous respondent in Moroto.*

*“Both private companies and local officials especially from the RDC office and family members mostly males who grab land from widows and orphans after the death of a loved one are culprits in disposing people of their land. Government has forcefully taken land for minerals and leased it to investors where local authorities sometimes connive with private investors” A respondent from Kaabong district.*

### Perpetrators in Mid-Western Region

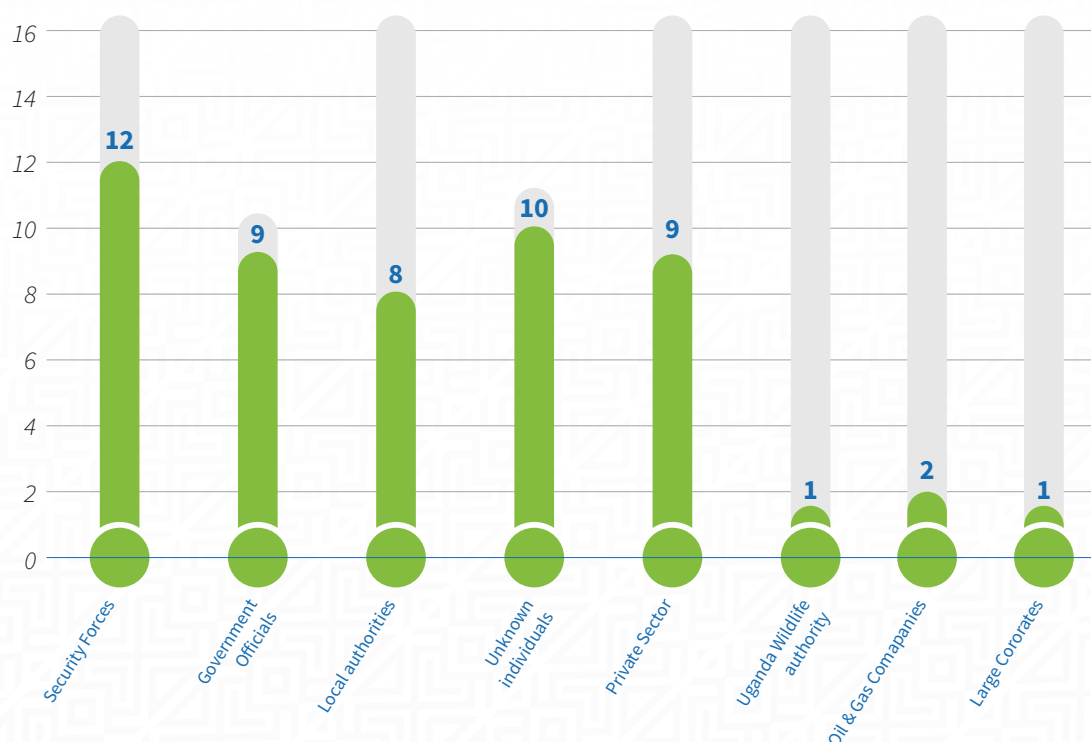


Fig 5: Graph of perpetrators in Mid- Western Region

Analysis of perpetrator data for April–September 2024 underscores the dominant role of state security forces—Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and Uganda Police Force (UPF)—which were implicated in 12 incidents of land and environmental rights violations. Their deployment to enforce land acquisitions and suppress community protests reflects an alarming trend of militarized land governance, where security operations serve corporate interests and severely restrict legitimate dissent (Amnesty International, 2024; Risk Assessment Data, 2025).

Government officials and local authorities accounted for 17 combined incidents (nine and eight respectively), illustrating how administrative power is leveraged to facilitate nontransparent land reallocations. District planners, RDCs, and ministry officers often override due process, colluding with investors to expedite leases and concessions without community consent—thereby perpetuating cycles of impunity and undermining public trust (MIRAC Reports, 2024; Uganda Human Rights Commission, 2024).

Private sector actors—agribusiness, mining, and industrial firms—were named in nine cases. These companies routinely orchestrate forced evictions, environmental degradation, and EIA noncompliance. Expansion of plantations and extractive operations not only contravenes FPIC requirements but also inflicts longterm damage on livelihoods, food systems, and ecosystem health (Global Witness, 2024; Witness Radio Monitoring Report, 2024).

Ten references to “unknown individuals” point to a shadow network of influential elites who exploit confidentiality to intimidate HRDs and LEDs. Their anonymity hinders documentation and legal recourse, posing a significant barrier to accountability and community protection (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Although fewer in number, oil and gas companies (two incidents), the Uganda Wildlife Authority (one), and large multinational corporations (one) remain critical perpetrators. Their targeted actions—ranging from pipeline security to protectedarea enforcement—underscore discrete but potent threats that exploit regulatory gaps and mobilize state machinery (Financial Times, 2024; MIRAC Final Report, 2024).

These findings highlight the urgent need for strengthened oversight of security deployments, transparent landuse decision processes, and binding corporate accountability measures. Integrating riskmitigation strategies—such as independent monitoring, rapidresponse legal assistance for HRDs, and reinforcement of FPIC protocols—will be essential to curb this multiactor nexus of violations.

The private sector, identified in 9 cases, closely parallels government officials as significant contributors to human rights violations. This category includes agribusiness enterprises, mining companies, and large-scale industrial operations. Their expansion efforts frequently involve forceful evictions and extensive environmental degradation, reflecting systematic disregard for community rights and environmental standards, and a lack of adherence to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles (Global Witness, 2024; Witness Radio Monitoring Report, 2024).

Additionally, unknown individuals were mentioned in 10 cases, indicating the presence of clandestine actors who engage in intimidation, threats, and violence against HRDs and LEDs. Their anonymity complicates accountability mechanisms, presenting substantial challenges for documentation, legal redress, and community protection efforts (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Notably, Oil and Gas Companies (2 cases), Uganda Wildlife Authority (1 case), and large corporations (1

case) had relatively fewer direct incidents. However, their documented involvement signifies targeted risks, particularly within specific contexts such as oil exploration projects, protected area conflicts, and large-scale investments. While numerically fewer, their influence remains significant due to the scale of their operations and their ability to mobilize state machinery in facilitating violations (Financial Times, 2024; MIRAC Final Report, 2024).

Overall, these findings emphasize an urgent need for comprehensive responses that strengthen accountability mechanisms for state and corporate actors, reinforce legal frameworks, and expand protections for vulnerable communities and human rights defenders in Uganda's Mid-Western region.



## 5.0 Identified hotspots.

In the absence of geocoded incident data, hotspot locations were determined from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and partner submissions. Two subregions in MidWestern Uganda consistently emerged as focal points for land and environmental rights violations:

### Buraru SubCounty, Hoima District (MidWestern Region)

Buraru was cited by over 18 KIIs and three FGDs as the most severely affected locale. Local businessman Peter Mugamba is accused of forcibly displacing more than 2,000 households. Community accounts describe Mugamba's use of local police and private security to intimidate residents. During the reporting period, 24 Land Defenders in Buraru reported unlawful beatings, arbitrary arrests and property seizures linked to his operations.

### Kiruuma SubCounty, Mubende District

Kiruuma exhibits parallel dynamics. Quality Parts, a Taiwaneseowned treeplanting firm, reportedly evicted upwards of 2,000 people without Free, Prior and Informed Consent or fair compensation. Six Land Defenders documented incidents of excessive force, mass arrests and police brutality. Several were subsequently charged for organizing community meetings—an indication of systematic criminalization of collective action.

These two subregions exemplify how powerful investors, backed by security actors, exploit governance gaps to appropriate land and suppress local defence efforts.

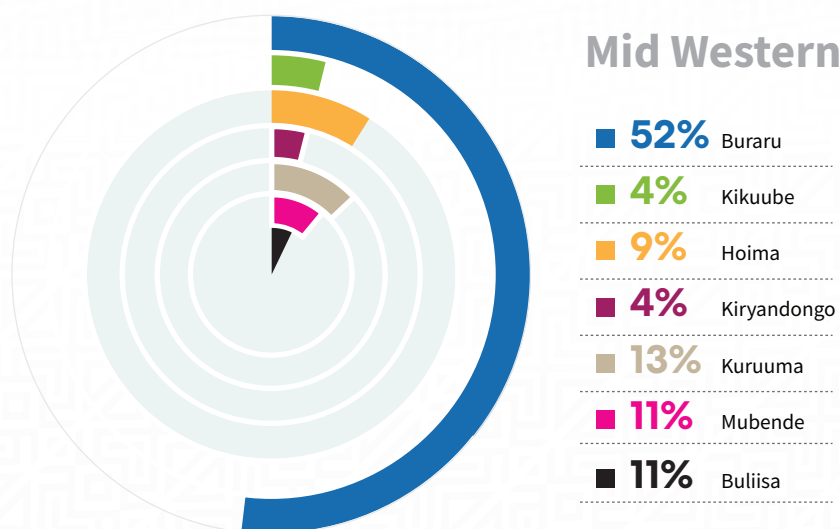


Fig 6: Hotspots in Mid-Western Region

In Buliisa District communities affected by Oil development are in direct conflict State agencies including Police and Army who are protecting Total Energies Oil development activities. It is reported the security personal often use excessive force and brutality when cracking down on protesting citizens.

On the 28th of May 2024, these three HRDs convened a community meeting in Kaseeta Parish to address various challenges the community is facing, particularly those related to environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. The meeting also highlighted concerns about a Chinese company subcontracted by CNOOC, named Daqing Construction Group, which was identified as a significant source of the environmental issues.

During this meeting, the HRDs were chosen by the community to represent them and deliver a petition to the CNOOC campsite in Kyangwali. The petition was intended to address the climate change and environmental degradation caused by the company's activities. The HRDs successfully delivered the petition to the security checkpoint at the CNOOC camp site.

However, following the petition's delivery, the three HRDs were summoned to the Kikuube Police Station. Instead of being addressed through legal or formal channels, they were advised by the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) to write an apology acknowledging that their actions were wrong. The HRDs complied with this request.

### Karamoja Region

Tapac in Karamoja is the most mentioned area of violations. Tororo Cement is allegedly the number one land grabber in the region displacing hundreds of people.

*“As a big company Tororo Cement enjoys protection from the government and can displace people with impunity” Abdi a respondent in Moroto.*

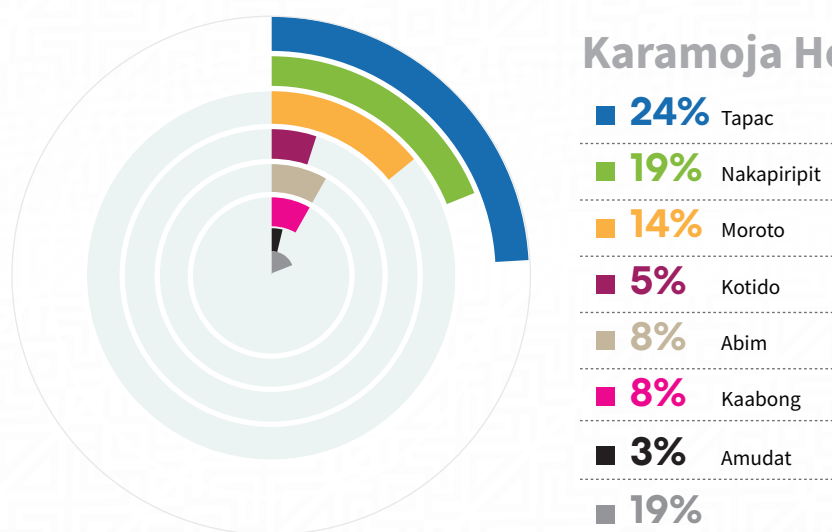


Fig 7: Hotspots in Karamoja region

Nakapiripit was another area highlighted as a hotspot in Karamoja due to the discovery of minerals in the area. Rupa is also considered a hotspot with 19% of the reported cases during the reporting period. The lack of a functional land board responsible for land management exacerbates the conflicts in the district. This is not a phenomenon only for Nakapiripit but is experienced elsewhere in Uganda.

*“In the village of Chepkararat where mining is taking place in Nakapiripit District, some miners are using mercury which damages the environment and harm humans and animal” Rado organisation.*

## 6.0: Summary of Risk Mitigation Measures

The April–September 2024 reporting period reveals a complex and evolving risk environment for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Land and Environmental Defenders (LEDs) in Uganda's MidWestern and Karamoja regions. As abuses intensify in both scale and severity, defenders and their allies have adopted a suite of complementary risk mitigation strategies. These interventions seek to preempt further harm, bolster rapid response capacity in highrisk zones, and strengthen community resilience in the face of corporate and statedriven threats.

### 6.1 Strengthening Local Referral Networks

NCHRD-U, in partnership with Witness Radio and regional civilsociety actors, has scaled up multisectoral referral pathways. Each network node links HRDs to:

- Legal assistance (Uganda Law Society human rights desk; pro bono counsel)
  - Safe shelters and relocation support
  - Psychosocial care and trauma counselling
  - Emergency medical evacuation
- Regional focal points now operate in remote districts to ensure that alerts—submitted via SMS, WhatsApp or radio—are escalated to central coordination hubs within hours.

### 6.2 Proactive Risk Mapping and Community Monitoring

Defender coalitions have refined bottomup risk mapping by:

- Geotagging eviction sites and militarization checkpoints
  - Tracking forcedeviction patterns through community reporters
  - Documenting environmental degradation via photo-evidence and satellite imagery
- These data inform weekly situation briefs, which guide protective deployments (e.g., mobile legal clinics) and enable early warnings to development partners and diplomatic missions.

### 6.3 Legal Aid and Strategic Litigation

Legal empowerment remains a cornerstone of mitigation. HRDs continue to engage pro bono lawyers from ULS, Chapter Four Uganda and DCA trained paralegals to:

- Challenge unlawful land transfers and demand injunctions
  - Secure protective court orders for atrisk individuals
  - Pursue landmark cases that test corporate duediligence standards and precedential judgments on FPIC
- Successful petitions—such as orders halting Mugamba's evictions in Hoima—underscore the value of strategic, precedentfocused litigation.

### 6.4 Emergency Response and Safe Sheltering

Rapid response protocols have been refined to include:

- Standby safehouse rosters maintained by regional NGOs
- Cash stipends for emergency travel, legal fees and basic subsistence

- Prenegotiated medical evacuation routes for severely injured defenders  
Despite funding constraints, these measures have averted several imminent threats, keeping over 30 HRDs out of detention or harm's way.

### 6.5 Psychosocial Support and Peer Solidarity

Recognizing the toll of sustained activism, networks have expanded mental health interventions by:

- Embedding volunteer counsellors in monthly defender circles
- Facilitating peerled debriefs following highrisk events
- Distributing self-help toolkits on stress management and resilience  
These supports have helped reduce burnout and maintain morale across isolated frontline communities.

### 6.6 Capacity Building and Training

Under the MDA project, stakeholders delivered tailored workshops on:

- Digital security and encrypted communications
- Humanrights documentation best practices
- Safety planning, riskassessment checklists and traumainformed response
- Accessing regional remedies (ACHPR, EACJ) and UN specialprocedure mechanisms  
Posttraining evaluations report a 40% increase in defenders' confidence to collect evidence and engage safely with state actors.

### 6.7 MultiActor Engagement and Coalition Support

Mitigation strategies have deliberately broadened to include:

- Faithbased partners who host safespaces and lend moral authority
- Academic institutions that verify and publish risk data
- Independent media outlets that amplify incidents and trigger public accountability
- Diplomatic channels (EU, UN) providing political backing in egregious cases  
This multistakeholder approach has enhanced the visibility of HRD narratives and created multiple "safeguard layers" around those at greatest risk.

### 7.0 Stakeholder engagement and advocacy

The respondents highlighted that's despite the mistrust in some area's local authorities such as the RDC office plays a role in mediating in land and environment disputes.

The Uganda Law Society provides legal aid to community members affected by land and environment concerns such as evictions and other displacements. ‘

Enhanced surveillance and threats against environmental activists, limiting advocacy space (Daily Monitor, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The amended NGO Act (2023) has further constrained civil society organizations advocating for land rights.



## 8.0 Monitoring and reporting and accountability measures

Robust, realtime monitoring and transparent accountability are essential to protect HRDs and LEDs amid escalating land and environmental risks in Uganda's MidWestern and Karamoja regions. The EU funded MDA Project partners (NCHRD-U, Witness Radio and others) have developed a multilayered framework that triangulates communitylevel reporting with rapid response protocols and dataintegrity safeguards.

### 8.1 Role of HRDs & LEDs in Field Monitoring

Embedded in their communities, HRDs and LEDs are frontline monitors who:

- Rapidly report incidents via mobile, radio or inperson channels, feeding into regional risk dashboards.
- Geolocate hotspots using GPSenabled apps or manual grid references.
- Gather multimedia evidence (photographs, voicenotes, satellite imagery analyses).
- Facilitate victim referrals to legal aid, shelter and medical support.
- Validate data in peerreview sessions, ensuring accuracy before escalation.

Despite their centrality, defenders face digitalsecurity threats, surveillance and retaliatory tactics that require ongoing training and secure tools.

### 8.2 NCHRDU USSD & Digital Dashboard

NCHRD-U's USSD platform allows defenders to submit confidential incident reports via any mobile phone. Each submission:

- Triggers an automated alert to regional focal points and the Secretariat.
- Feeds into a secure, cloudbased dashboard that flags emerging clusters.
- Generates weekly analytical briefs for national stakeholders and donors.
- Links with GIS mapping in the annex to visualize violation trends over time.

Follow-up protocols include case classification, multiagency verification and structured referrals to legal, psychosocial or relocation services.

### 8.3 Witness Radio's Multi-Channel Ecosystem

Witness Radio integrates:

- WhatsApp and Signal channels for encrypted text and voicenote reporting.
- FM radio callin segments on Radio Karamoja and Liberty FM to capture unconnected communities.
- SMS blast alerts to MPs and district officials when highrisk thresholds are breached.

Data triangulation between platforms ensures reliability and supports urgent legal or advocacy interventions.

### 8.4 Partner Coordination & Escalation Protocols

Formalized workflows ensure that highrisk cases are swiftly escalated to:

- Uganda Law Society and LASPNET for legal action.
- Protection clusters for psychosocial and medical evacuations.
- Diplomatic missions and UN field offices for political leverage.

Regular multiagency meetings review incident trends, refine SOPs and verify outcome milestones.

### 8.5 Accountability & Data Protection

To uphold reporter safety and data integrity, partners implement:

- Strict anonymity protocols and encrypted storage.
- Dualsource validation before publication.
- Regular data audits by an independent oversight committee.
- Informedconsent briefings for all data subjects.

### 8.6 Key Challenges

- Limited digital literacy and phone access in remote communities.
- Risk of data interception or misuse by hostile actors.
- Variable feedback loops from government bodies.
- Funding gaps restricting platform maintenance and expansion.

### 8.7 Recommendations

- Scale up digital security training and provide secure devices to HRDs.
- Extend USSD coverage and establish solarpowered charging stations.
- Integrate GIS mapping with incident dashboards for predictive risk analysis.
- Advocate for formal recognition of community monitors within district protection plans.
- Secure multiyear funding to sustain and evolve accountability systems.

These measures, continuously refined through field feedback and quarterly reviews, form the backbone of a resilient monitoring and accountability architecture—crucial for safeguarding defenders and deterring future violations.

**Table 7: Multi-Level Monitoring System for HRD Protection**

Tool/Platform	Used By	Functionality	Region
USSD Code	NCHRD-U	Real-time reporting, alerts, escalation	Both
WhatsApp Messaging	WR	Quick info-sharing, evidence collection	Both
Community Radio Call-Ins	WR	Anonymous alerts, community voices	Karamoja
Secure Messaging (e.g. Signal)	WR/ NCHRD-U	High-risk info transmission	Mid-Western
Protection Review Meetings	All partners	Cross-checking, trend mapping, learning	Both

## 9.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The April–September 2024 risk assessment across Uganda's MidWestern and Karamoja regions confirms that land and environmental human rights violations are systemic, multifaceted and intensifying. Historical marginalization, aggressive extractive and agribusiness investments, weak enforcement of land and environmental laws, and entrenched impunity combine to create an environment where communities—and those who defend them—face escalating threats. While realtime reporting tools have improved incident detection, uneven adoption and gaps in followup, capacity and dataintegration hinder comprehensive protection and accountability.

### 9.1 Key Conclusions

- Violations have surged in scale and severity: forced evictions in MidWestern Uganda increased by over 90%, and militarized displacements persist in Karamoja.
- A complex nexus of perpetrators—including multinational corporations, state security forces (UPDF, UPF), politically connected elites and shadow actors—fuels rights abuses and stifles redress.
- Legal and policy provisions (e.g., constitutional land rights, FPIC requirements, NAPBHR) remain inadequately enforced, excluding communities from meaningful participation in land governance.
- Digital and communitybased reporting mechanisms (USSD, WhatsApp, radio) have accelerated alerts but suffer from limited rural reach, inconsistent training and datatriangulation challenges.
- Emerging mitigation practices (legal aid, referral networks, hotspot mapping) demonstrate impact but require scaling, sustainable financing and integration into broader protection architectures.

### 9.2 Recommendations

- Enhance and integrate reporting platforms: expand USSD coverage, link radio call-ins and encrypted messaging to a centralized dashboard, and deploy GIS enabled analytics for predictive risk mapping.
- Standardize capacity building programs: deliver modular training on digital security, evidence-based documentation, FPIC standards and rapid response protocols, prioritizing remote area accessibility.
- Institutionalize referral and escalation pathways: formalize SOPs that channel highrisk cases to legal aid networks (ULS, LASPNET), protection clusters and diplomatic channels within defined timeframes.
- Strengthen accountability frameworks: establish independent dataverification committees, mandate periodic public reports on incident trends, and advocate for judicial and parliamentary oversight of land allocations.
- Secure multiyear funding commitments to sustain monitoring platforms, emergency response reserves and psychosocial support services for HRDs and LEDs.

### 9.3 Closing Note

This assessment transcends documentation—it is a catalyst for collective action. The testimonies of frontline defenders, such as Anna Lomonyang, remind us that behind every data point lies a person at risk. A united effort by government agencies, civil society, development partners and the private sector is indispensable to transform Uganda's land and environmental governance. Implementing these conclusions and recommendations will not only enhance the MDA-HRU project's impact but also pave the way for an equitable, sustainable and rights centred future.



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