

FACTSHEET: BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

Restoring Justice Through Community Dialogue How Alternative Justice Systems Are Strengthening Women's Land Rights in Mt. Elgon, Bungoma County



1. OVERVIEW

The **Women Empowerment for Resilient Rural Areas (WE4R)** project, led by CARE Kenya with support from GIZ, advances women's land rights, access to productive resources and voice in decision-making through the **3Rs: Rights, Resources and Representation**.

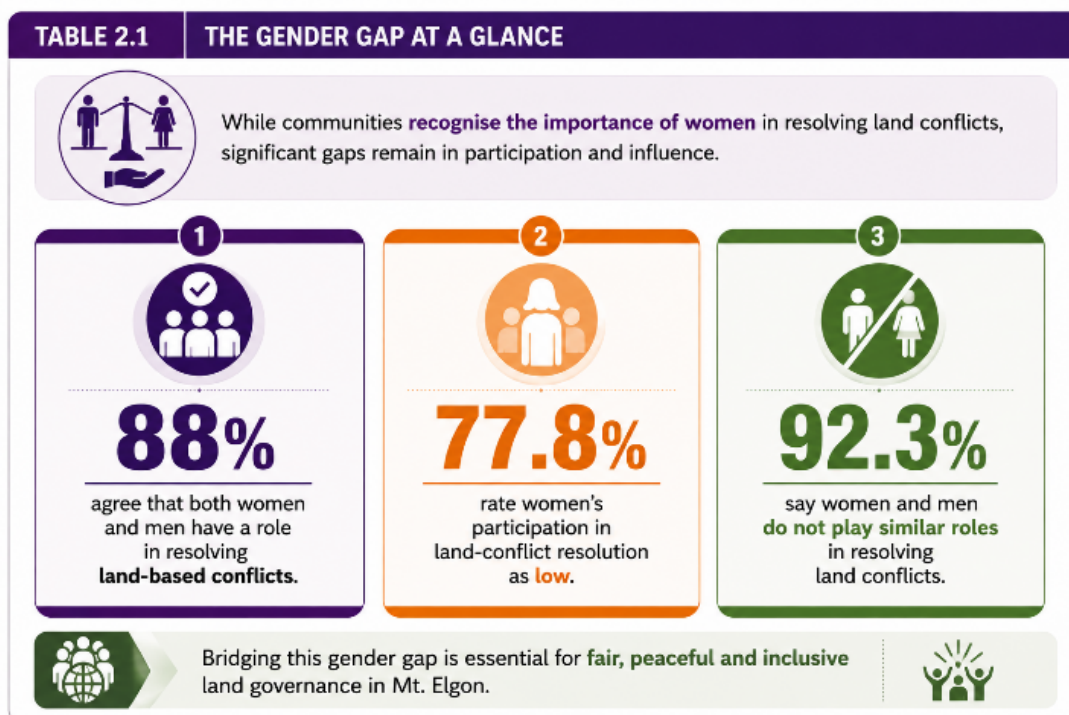
In Mt. Elgon, Bungoma County, CARE Kenya partners with **ADS Western Kenya** to strengthen locally led, gender-responsive approaches to land justice and peacebuilding. Through capacity strengthening in evidence-based advocacy, documentation, learning and partnerships, CARE supports ADS Western to work with community and local justice structures to improve women's access to land rights and dispute resolution.

2. THE CHALLENGE

In Mt. Elgon, land is central to **livelihoods, identity, inheritance and community stability**, yet long-standing disputes over ownership, allocation and inheritance continue to fuel conflict and insecurity. Women - particularly widows and other vulnerable households - face additional barriers arising from patriarchal norms that have historically limited their ability to **own, inherit and control land or influence decisions about it**.

Although community attitudes increasingly recognise women's role in resolving land disputes, their actual participation and influence remain limited. Access to formal justice is also constrained by cost, complexity, distance and lengthy processes, increasing the need for **accessible, community-rooted and gender-responsive pathways to justice**.

2.1 THE GENDER GAP AT A GLANCE



3. THE WE4R RESPONSE: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE



4. IMPACT & RESULTS



4. IMPACT & RESULTS

What is Changing for Women in Mt. Elgon?

Community-led justice processes are contributing to important shifts in women's access to justice, agency and recognition as rights-holders in Mt. Elgon.



1

GREATER ACCESS TO JUSTICE



Women, widows and vulnerable households are increasingly reporting land disputes and seeking support through community justice systems.

2

STRONGER CLAIMS TO LAND RIGHTS



Women are demonstrating greater confidence in claiming inheritance and land rights, including when faced with threats, eviction or intimidation.

3

STRONGER JUSTICE NETWORKS



Collaboration between chiefs, elders, interclan committees and peace ambassadors has strengthened community responses to land-related disputes.



4 FASTER DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Community mediation is helping resolve some disputes within **days or weeks** rather than years, improving access to timely and locally accessible justice.



5

WOMEN AS RIGHTS-HOLDERS & PEACE ACTORS

Women are increasingly recognised not simply as beneficiaries, but as **rights-holders, peace actors** and contributors to community stability.



FROM PARTICIPATION TO AGENCY

The emerging change goes beyond women's access to dispute-resolution mechanisms. Women are becoming more confident in asserting their rights, while community leaders and justice structures are becoming more aware of women's constitutional land rights.



JUSTICE IN ACTION: SILVIA CHEMTAI

How community-led justice helped a widow reclaim her land and restore her dignity.

See her story next



5. JUSTICE IN ACTION: SILVIA CHEMTAI



HER VOICE

"Before, women could not openly claim land rights. Today, many women are reporting cases and seeking justice through community systems."

After her father's death, **Silvia Chemtai faced the risk of losing access to family land**. Through ADS Western-supported community mediation, her case was brought before local peace and justice actors, including peace ambassadors, clan representatives, local leaders and chiefs.

Through dialogue and mediation, **Silvia's concerns were heard, her land rights protected and further family conflict avoided**. Her experience demonstrates how accessible, community-rooted justice mechanisms can help women assert their rights while resolving disputes peacefully.

6. THREE LESSONS FROM MT. ELGON



6. THREE LESSONS FROM MT. ELGON

Insights from community-led justice work that can inform gender-responsive land governance across Kenya and beyond.

01

LOCAL JUSTICE WORKS WHEN IT IS TRUSTED AND ACCESSIBLE



Community-rooted justice mechanisms can provide faster, more affordable and culturally understood pathways for resolving land disputes, particularly where formal justice remains difficult to access.



02

TRADITIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS CAN BECOME ALLIES



Engaging chiefs, elders, interclan committees and peace actors is critical to shifting community practices and strengthening locally led responses that recognise and protect women's land rights.



03

PARTICIPATION MUST TRANSLATE INTO INFLUENCE



Women's presence in justice processes is not enough. Sustainable gender transformation requires women to have voice, agency and meaningful influence in decisions affecting land, inheritance and community justice.



The Mt. Elgon experience shows that locally rooted justice can do more than resolve disputes—it can help shift power, strengthen women's agency and build more inclusive communities.



7. PARTNERSHIP FOR LOCALLY LED CHANGE

The progress emerging in Mt. Elgon reflects the value of **locally led partnerships** that combine community knowledge, trusted justice structures and gender-responsive advocacy. Through WE4R, CARE Kenya's capacity-strengthening support to ADS Western is helping strengthen locally rooted approaches that advance **women's rights, voice and access to justice**.

PARTNERS

CARE Kenya, GIZ, ADS Western Kenya, National Government Administration Officers, interclan committees, councils of elders, chiefs, assistant chiefs, peace ambassadors, religious leaders, community mediation structures, and community members.

Women Empowerment for Resilient Rural Areas (WE4R)

