





Chapter Twelve

Land Conflicts and Development in Africa: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Land conflicts are a pervasive and longstanding issue in Africa, with significant implications for peace and development. Land conflicts are disputes or struggles over land ownership, use, and control between individuals, communities, or groups. These conflicts can arise due to various factors, including historical injustices, unequal access to land, conflicting land use practices, population growth, urbanisation, and environmental degradation. This chapter examines the relationship between land conflicts and development in Africa, focusing on the implications for peacebuilding and sustainable development. The chapter argues that land conflicts are a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development in Africa and that a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the root causes of these conflicts. Drawing on case studies from different African



countries, the chapter analyses the drivers and consequences of land conflicts and their impact on sustainable development. The chapter also examines the role of land governance, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement in addressing land conflicts and promoting sustainable development. The chapter also identifies gaps in existing policy frameworks for addressing land conflicts and offers recommendations for a more comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and development in Africa. The chapter argues that addressing land conflicts requires a comprehensive approach that prioritises conflict prevention, resolution, and transformation and integrates social, economic, and environmental considerations into development planning.

Introduction

Land conflicts are a pervasive and longstanding issue in Africa, with significant implications for peace and development across the continent (Kalabamu, 2019). By definition, land conflicts are disputes or struggles over land ownership, use, and control between individuals, communities, or groups (Kandel, 2016). These conflicts can arise due to various factors, including historical injustices, unequal access to land, conflicting land use practices, population growth, urbanisation, and environmental degradation (Kandel, 2016). Despite the critical role of land in sustaining livelihoods, culture, and identity, many African countries experience frequent disputes and violent conflicts over land ownership and use (Palmer, Fricska & Wehrmann, 2009). These conflicts are often fuelled by various factors, including historical injustices, population growth, climate change, and competition for resources, making land issues increasingly complex and contentious (Clover & Ericksen, 2009).

There is growing recognition of the need for comprehensive approaches to peacebuilding and sustainable development that consider the complex interplay between land, conflict, and development (Bhanye, Matamanda, Kohima & Bandauko, 2024; MacGinty & Williams, 2016). Such approaches require a deep understanding of the drivers and dynamics of land conflicts in Africa and potential solutions and strategies for promoting peace and sustainable development (Bhanye,

Shayamunda, Mpahlo, Matamanda & Kachena, 2023). This chapter contributes to this critical discussion by exploring the nature and causes of land conflicts in Africa and their impact on development. It focuses on the potential for peacebuilding and sustainable development approaches to address these conflicts. Drawing on case studies from across the continent, this chapter examines the role of various actors and institutions in land governance and management, their implications for conflict prevention and resolution, and for promoting sustainable development. The chapter provides insights and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in peacebuilding, development, and land governance to promote a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing land conflicts in Africa. The chapter contributes to building peaceful, prosperous societies grounded in social justice, equity, and human rights.

Review Approach

The methodology for this chapter follows a review of existing literature on land conflicts in Africa, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. The first step in the review methodology was to identify relevant databases for literature search. In this case, databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Google, Scopus, and Web of Science were used. The second step identified relevant keywords such as land conflicts, peacebuilding, sustainable development, conflict resolution, community empowerment, and legal frameworks. The third step was to search the identified databases using the keywords comprehensively. The fourth step was to screen the articles to identify those that meet the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included articles on land conflicts, peacebuilding, and African sustainable development. The fifth step was to assess the quality of the selected articles based on factors such as the validity of the study, reliability of the data, and the relevance of the findings to the research questions. The sixth step was to extract relevant data from the selected articles. The data included information on the causes of land conflicts in Africa, the implications of land conflicts for peacebuilding and

sustainable development, and the various approaches to land conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The extracted data were analysed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships. Finally, the findings from the selected articles were synthesised to answer the research questions and make recommendations for future research and policy.

Conceptualising Land Conflicts, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development

Land conflicts refer to disputes or tensions arising from competing claims over access, use, or ownership of land between individuals, communities, or institutions (Boone, 2014). These conflicts can occur in various forms, such as disagreements over customary land rights, disputes over land acquisition and development projects, and conflicts over boundaries and resources (Peters, 2013). Land conflicts can be complex and multi-faceted, often involving economic, social, cultural, and political factors. In some cases, land conflicts can escalate into violent conflicts, posing a significant threat to peace, security, and development.

Peacebuilding refers to a process of activities and initiatives that aim to prevent violent conflicts, resolve disputes peacefully, and promote sustainable peace and development (Lederach & Appleby, 2010). Peacebuilding involves various actors, including governments, civil society organisations, community leaders, and international organisations, to address the root causes of conflicts, build social cohesion and trust, and foster inclusive and participatory governance (Cox, Osborn & Sisk, 2017). Peacebuilding efforts often include conflict resolution and mediation, institution-building, capacity development, reconciliation and transitional justice (Sharp, 2013). The ultimate goal of peacebuilding is to create sustainable peace by addressing the underlying factors that contribute to conflicts and promoting a culture of peace, social justice, and human rights.

Sustainable development refers to a development approach that meets the needs of the present generation

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Borowy, 2013). It is based on the idea of balancing economic, social, and environmental factors to achieve long-term development goals that are socially inclusive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable (Barbosa, Drach, & Corbella, 2014). Sustainable development recognises that economic growth and development must be accompanied by social progress and environmental protection and that the three pillars of sustainable development are interconnected and interdependent. Sustainable development aims to address the challenges of poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change and promote inclusive and equitable growth and development (Gupta & Vegelin, 2016). It emphasises the importance of integrating economic, social, and environmental considerations into policies and decision-making processes and encourages participation and collaboration among various stakeholders to achieve sustainable development goals. Figure 12.1 shows the sustainable development framework.



Figure 12.1: Sustainable Development Framework. Source: ?

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a framework to guide countries, organisations, and individuals in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. They provide specific targets and indicators that help track progress towards sustainable development at the global, regional, and national levels. The goals are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, meaning that progress in one goal can positively impact progress in others.

Land conflicts, peacebuilding, and sustainable development are interconnected in various ways. Land conflicts can arise due to various reasons, such as scarcity of resources, land grabbing, ethnic tensions, and political instability (Bhanye *et al.*, 2023). These conflicts can lead to violence, displacement of people, and destruction of property, which can severely affect sustainable development (Justino,

2011). Peacebuilding efforts aim to address the root causes of conflicts and prevent them from escalating (Schirch, 2008). This involves promoting dialogue, negotiation, and mediation to resolve conflicts peacefully. By peacefully resolving land conflicts, communities can create an environment conducive to sustainable development. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This involves creating economic, social, and environmental policies that are sustainable in the long run. Land conflicts can have a negative impact on sustainable development by disrupting economic activities, destroying infrastructure, and hindering the implementation of development projects (Omer, 2008). However, sustainable development can also play a role in preventing land conflicts by addressing the underlying causes of the conflicts. For example, by promoting sustainable agriculture and resource management practices, communities can reduce their dependence on scarce resources and mitigate conflicts arising from resource scarcity.

Land Conflicts, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development in Africa

Land conflicts in Africa are complex with multi-dimensional issues that have been a persistent problem across the continent for many years (Bhanye *et al.*, 2024; Ikome, 2012). Conflicts over land ownership, access and use are a major source of tension, violence and displacement in many African countries. These conflicts often arise due to competing claims and interests, including ethnic, religious, cultural, economic and political factors (Bhanye *et al.*, 2024; Bhanye, 2023; Kymlicka & Norman, 2002). This section will explore some specific examples of land conflicts in Africa. One of the most notable examples of land conflict in Africa is the case of the Maasai people in Tanzania and Kenya (Nelson & Makko, 2005). The Maasai are a pastoralist community who rely on grazing lands for their livelihoods. However, their traditional lands are subject to encroachment and land grabbing by large-scale agriculture and conservation projects, leading to violent confrontations between the Maasai

and these groups. In 2017, there were reports of clashes between the Maasai and farmers in Tanzania over land use, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of families (Bluwstein, Lund, Askew, Stein, Noe, Odgaard, Maganga, & Engström, 2018). Another example of land conflict in Africa is the case of the Ogoni people in Nigeria (Ukeje, 2001). The Ogoni are an Indigenous community in the Niger Delta region who have been protesting against the exploitation of their land and natural resources by multinational oil companies (Naanen, 2012). The conflict led to widespread environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, and human rights abuses. In 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a prominent Ogoni leader and environmental activist, was executed by the Nigerian government for his role in the protests (Osha, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, land conflicts have been a major issue since the country gained independence in 1980. The government's land reform program, which sought to redistribute land from white farmers to Black Zimbabweans, was mired in controversy and violence (Masaka, 2011). The program was criticised for its lack of transparency, corruption, and violation of property rights. In some cases, white farmers were forcibly removed from their land, leading to protests and violence. The land reform program has also been blamed for the country's economic decline and food shortages (Hove & Gwiza, 2012). In Ethiopia, land conflicts are also a persistent problem. Recently, the government has promoted large-scale commercial agriculture and infrastructure projects, which displaced Indigenous communities and small-scale farmers (Dube, 2009). For example, in the Omo Valley, the government's plan to build a hydroelectric dam and large-scale plantations led to protests by local communities, who fear that their land and livelihoods will be destroyed (Abbink, 2012). These examples illustrate the complex nature of land conflicts in Africa and the various factors that contribute to them. Land conflicts are often deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and political contexts and require comprehensive approaches to address them.

Implications of Land Conflicts for Sustainable Development in Africa

Land conflicts have severe implications for sustainable development in Africa. The challenges posed by land conflicts are multi-faceted and often hinder the achievement of sustainable development goals. In this section, we examine the implications of land conflicts for sustainable development in Africa with the aid of specific examples. One of the major implications of land conflicts for sustainable development in Africa is the disruption of agricultural production. Land conflicts often lead to the displacement of farmers and the destruction of crops, causing devastating impacts on food security in the affected regions (Adelaja & George, 2019; Hufe & Hueuermann, 2017). For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, land conflicts between communities displaced over a million people, and the destruction of farms left many without food (Kelly, 2014). Another implication of land conflicts for sustainable development in Africa is the displacement of communities. Land conflicts often result in the displacement of communities from their homes, which can have a negative impact on their social and economic well-being. For instance, Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region witnessed several land conflicts, leading to the displacement of entire communities (Mmom & Igwe, 2012). These communities' displacement significantly impacted their access to education, healthcare, and other essential services.

Land conflicts can also lead to environmental degradation, undermining sustainable development efforts. In Kenya, the Mau Forest Complex has been a site of ongoing land conflicts between communities and the government (Chaudhry, 2019). The deforestation caused by these conflicts, led to soil erosion, reduced water availability, and loss of biodiversity, have long-lasting impacts on the region's ecology and human well-being. In addition, land conflicts can create social unrest and undermine political stability, which are crucial components of sustainable development. In Zimbabwe, land conflicts between the government and white commercial farmers led to widespread unrest and violence, undermining the country's political stability and hindering economic development (Mlambo &

Raftopoulos, 2010). Finally, land conflicts can undermine efforts to promote inclusive and equitable development in Africa. In Ethiopia, land conflicts between Indigenous communities and the government over land use for commercial agriculture raised concerns about the potential for large-scale land acquisitions to perpetuate social and economic inequalities (Ojulu, 2014).

Implications of Land Conflicts for Peacebuilding in Africa

Land conflicts in Africa have significant implications for peacebuilding efforts on the continent. These conflicts often arise due to contestation over land ownership, access, and control, leading to tensions and violence among communities. The implications of land conflicts for peacebuilding in Africa are complex and multi-faceted. One of the primary implications of land conflicts for peacebuilding in Africa is the exacerbation of existing social and political tensions (Moyer, 2014). Land conflicts are often deeply rooted in historical and cultural issues and often involve multiple stakeholders with competing interests. These conflicts can result in violence, displacement, and loss of life, all of which undermine peacebuilding efforts on the continent. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), land conflicts perpetuate violence and instability (Rugaza, 2022). The conflict in the eastern part of the country claimed the lives of millions of people and is linked to disputes over land and other natural resources. Similarly, in Nigeria, the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders displaced thousands of people and undermined peacebuilding efforts in the country (Vande, 2023).

Land conflicts also have economic implications for peacebuilding in Africa. These conflicts often disrupt agricultural production, a critical livelihood source for many communities on the continent. In some cases, land conflicts destroy infrastructure, including schools and health facilities, further undermining development efforts (Juana, Kahaka & Okurut, 2013). In Zimbabwe, land conflicts resulting from the country's Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP)

had significant economic implications for the country. The program, which aimed to redistribute land from white farmers to Black Zimbabweans, led to violent evictions and contributed to the country's economic decline (Moyo, 2013). The resulting instability undermined peacebuilding efforts in the country. Another implication of land conflicts for peacebuilding in Africa is their potential to exacerbate existing political tensions. In other instances, political actors manipulate land conflicts to gain power or control resources (Bhanye *et al.*, 2023). This often resulted in the marginalisation and disenfranchisement of certain groups, which can lead to further conflict (Bhanye, 2023). For example, in South Sudan, land disputes between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups have been exploited by political actors, contributing to the outbreak of civil war in the country (Serfa, 2016). Similarly, in Ethiopia, land conflicts are linked to political tensions between the government and opposition groups, contributing to the country's ongoing instability (Smith, 2007).

Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Land Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding for Sustainable Development

The findings of this chapter on land conflicts and peacebuilding and sustainable development in Africa reveal a complex web of social, economic, and political factors that contribute to land conflicts in the region. The study found that land conflicts result from scarcity of land resources and various forms of inequalities, including economic, social, cultural, and political. In addition, the chapter highlights the importance of peacebuilding and sustainable development as critical components in addressing land conflicts in Africa and promoting peaceful and sustainable development. One of the key findings of this study is the significant role that historical and structural factors play in fuelling land conflicts in Africa (Alao, 2007; Boone, 2017). The legacy of colonialism, the resulting policies of land dispossession, and the persistent patterns of inequality and marginalisation contribute to the underlying tensions that often erupt into violent conflicts over land resources (Forde, Kappler

& Björkdahl, 2021; Thu, 2012). Furthermore, the findings show that land conflicts are often intertwined with other forms of conflict, including ethnic, political, and religious conflicts, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to peacebuilding and sustainable development (Bob, 2010; Sriram, Martin-Ortega, & Herman, 2017).

Another important finding of this study is the impact of land conflicts on sustainable development in Africa. The loss of land and natural resources due to conflicts undermines communities' ability to sustain themselves and hampers economic growth and development. Moreover, the displacement of communities due to land conflicts often leads to increased poverty and insecurity, exacerbating the already dire socio-economic conditions in many parts of the region (George & Adelaja, 2022; Mpandeli, Liphadzi & Mabhaudhi, 2022). The study also reveals the challenges that arise in efforts to promote peacebuilding and sustainable development in the context of land conflicts in Africa (Annan, 2004). The lack of political will, weak institutional capacity, and limited resources often constrain the ability of governments and other actors to effectively address the root causes of conflicts and promote sustainable development (Brinkerhoff, 2005). In addition, the fragmentation of land tenure systems and the complexity of land use patterns make it difficult to develop comprehensive and inclusive solutions to land conflicts.

Despite these challenges, the study finds a range of practical approaches and best practices that can contribute to peacebuilding and sustainable development in the context of land conflicts in Africa. This section presents possible approaches that could be adopted to achieve a lasting solution to land conflicts in Africa. A comprehensive approach to land conflict resolution and peacebuilding is required to address the root causes of conflicts and promote sustainable development. Such an approach should involve strengthening legal frameworks, promoting dialogue and negotiation, strengthening institutions, empowering local communities, and addressing underlying issues (Figure 12.2).

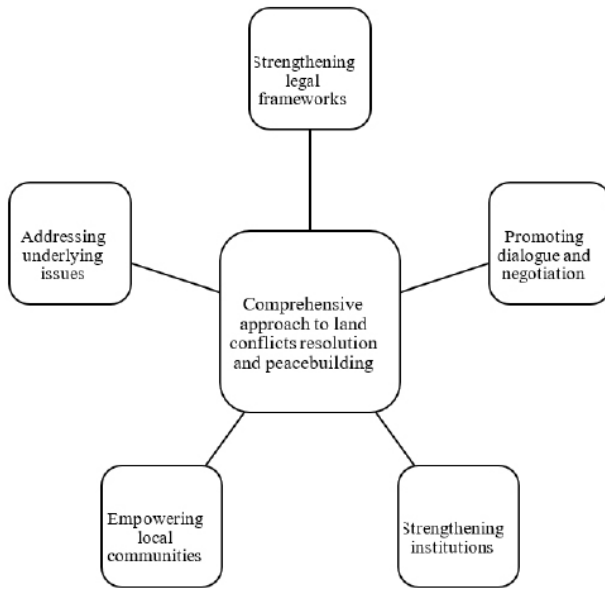


Figure 12.2: Comprehensive Approach to Land Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding. Source: Authors

Strengthening legal frameworks

Land conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa require a multi-faceted approach that addresses the underlying causes of the conflicts. One key aspect of this approach is strengthening legal frameworks that govern land ownership and use (Williamson, 2010). This involves a comprehensive review of existing laws, policies and regulations to identify gaps and inconsistencies and make necessary adjustments to ensure they are aligned with international best practices. In Kenya, for instance, the government adopted the Community Land Act (2016), which provides a legal framework for recognising, protecting, and registering community land. Many land conflicts in Africa stem from unclear land tenure systems, weak land governance institutions, and inadequate legal frameworks for resolving land disputes. Enhancing the legal frameworks for

land governance and dispute resolution is crucial for promoting peacebuilding and sustainable development in Africa. This can be done by enacting and enforcing laws that protect the land rights of vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and marginalised communities. For example, the Land Tenure Act in Nigeria recognises women's land rights and prohibits discriminatory practices that deny them access to land. Similarly, the Land Act in Uganda establishes a legal framework for recognising and protecting customary land rights. The implementation of such laws can help to prevent land conflicts that arise from the denial of land rights to vulnerable groups.

Another way to strengthen legal frameworks is by establishing effective dispute-resolution mechanisms for land conflicts (Van Leeuwen, 2017). Many African countries have established land dispute resolution mechanisms, but they often lack the capacity to handle the high number of cases that arise. Therefore, it is essential to invest in the training of personnel and the establishment of effective mechanisms for the resolution of land disputes. For example, the Community Land Bill in Kenya establishes a community land tribunal responsible for resolving disputes over community land. The tribunal has the power to enforce its decisions, and its establishment helped to reduce the incidence of land conflicts in Kenya. Furthermore, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration can effectively resolve land conflicts (Menkel-Meadow, 2015). These mechanisms can be less costly and time-consuming than traditional litigation processes, often resulting in mutually beneficial outcomes for conflicting parties. For instance, in Ghana, the Land Administration Project established community land secretariats that use mediation to resolve land disputes at the community level. Mediation helped reduce the backlog of land disputes and improve access to justice for those affected by land conflicts.

In addition to the above, adopting land governance policies that promote transparency and accountability can help reduce the incidence of land conflicts in Africa (Deininger, Selod, & Burns, 2014). For instance, the Land Governance Assessment Framework developed by the African Union Commission

provides guidelines for assessing the effectiveness of land governance policies and institutions. The framework evaluates land governance's legal, institutional, and social aspects and promotes good governance practices such as transparency, accountability, and participation.

Promoting dialogue and negotiation

Promoting dialogue and negotiation is important for resolving land conflicts, building peace, and promoting sustainable development in Africa (Robertson & Finnegan, 2013). Dialogue and negotiation are essential tools for resolving conflicts, as they allow conflicting parties to discuss their interests, concerns and needs peacefully and respectfully. Through dialogue and negotiation, conflicting parties can reach a mutual understanding and find common ground, leading to a peaceful conflict resolution (Saunders, 2009). This approach requires a structured process that involves identifying the parties to the conflict, establishing common ground, and exploring possible solutions. In Uganda, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) has been instrumental in resolving land conflicts in northern Uganda. Through its interfaith approach, ARLPI brought communities and leaders from different religions together to dialogue and find solutions to land conflicts.

In the context of land conflicts, promoting dialogue and negotiation can be particularly effective. For example, in Kenya, the National Land Commission (NLC) has been promoting dialogue and negotiation to resolve land disputes. The NLC brings together all parties involved in a land dispute, including the local community, government officials, and investors, to discuss the issue and find a mutually acceptable solution. Through this process, the NLC has resolved many land disputes peacefully and sustainably, reducing the risk of violence and promoting sustainable development. Another example of promoting dialogue and negotiation to resolve land conflicts in Africa is Liberia's Land Conflict Resolution Program (LCRP). The LCRP brings together communities, government officials, and investors to discuss land issues and develop solutions through dialogue and negotiation. The program successfully resolved

many land disputes, promoted peaceful coexistence, and enabled sustainable development in Liberia.

In addition to resolving land conflicts, promoting dialogue and negotiation can also help prevent conflicts from occurring in the first place (Moore, 2014). Creating a platform for dialogue and discussion can identify and address potential conflicts before they escalate into full-blown conflicts. This proactive approach to conflict prevention is important to peacebuilding and sustainable development in Africa. To promote dialogue and negotiation to resolve land conflicts and build peace in Africa, there is a need for strong political will, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and an enabling environment that encourages the participation of all stakeholders. Civil society organisations, community leaders, and religious groups can also play an important role in promoting dialogue and negotiation and creating an environment of peace and cooperation (Zanker, 2014).

Strengthening institutions

Strengthening institutions is another important approach to land conflict resolution and peacebuilding for sustainable development in Africa (Issifu, 2016). Institutions are critical in land management, administration, and dispute resolution (Bhanye *et al.*, 2023). Weak or ineffective institutions can exacerbate conflicts and undermine peacebuilding efforts, while strong and effective institutions can contribute to sustainable development and peace. The capacity of institutions such as courts, land registries, and local governments should be strengthened to manage land conflicts effectively. This involves equipping these institutions with the necessary skills, resources, and technology to manage disputes and enforce the law. In Rwanda, the government established the Land Tenure Regularisation Program (LTRP), which seeks to improve land governance and management by establishing a comprehensive land registry. One way to strengthen institutions is to ensure they have the legal and regulatory frameworks to operate effectively (Bryson, 2018). This includes laws and regulations that define the roles and responsibilities of institutions in land

management, administration, and dispute resolution. These frameworks should be clear, transparent, and enforceable to ensure institutions operate fairly and effectively. In addition, institutions must have the necessary resources and capacity to carry out their functions effectively. This includes sufficient funding, trained personnel, and appropriate technology and infrastructure. When institutions are well-resourced and have the necessary capacity, they can better manage land conflicts and promote peacebuilding.

Another way to strengthen institutions is to promote collaboration and coordination between different institutions involved in land management and conflict resolution. This can include government agencies, civil society organisations, and traditional leaders. Collaboration and coordination can help to ensure that different institutions work together to address land conflicts and promote sustainable development. One example of strengthening institutions for land conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa is the Land Policy Initiative (LPI), launched in 2006 by the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank. The LPI aims to strengthen institutions and promote sustainable land management in Africa by providing policy advice and technical assistance to governments and other stakeholders.

Empowering local communities

Empowering local communities is a crucial component of a comprehensive approach to land conflict resolution and peacebuilding for sustainable development in Africa (Akande, Kaye, & Rukuni, 2021). Land conflicts often arise due to power imbalances and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups such as women, youth and Indigenous people (Bob, 2010). In other instances, land conflicts arise due to the marginalisation of local communities from the decision-making processes that affect their land and resources (Castro & Nielsen, 2001). Empowering local communities through capacity building, raising awareness, and participation in decision-making processes can help address these power imbalances and prevent land conflicts (Allen,

2006). In Namibia, the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) has been instrumental in empowering local communities through its community-based natural resource management approach. This approach helped reduce land conflicts by involving communities in managing natural resources.

One way to empower local communities is to recognise and protect customary land tenure systems (Syn, 2014). In many African countries, customary land tenure is the primary means of land management and resource allocation in rural areas. However, these systems are often unrecognised by formal legal frameworks, leading to conflicts when outsiders seek to exploit the resources, or the government attempts to allocate the land for development. Recognising customary land tenure systems and integrating them into formal legal frameworks gives local communities greater control over their land and resources, leading to more sustainable and peaceful outcomes (Toulmin, 2009). Another way to empower local communities is through providing legal and technical assistance (Walker, Roberts, Jones III & Fröhling, 2008). Many local communities lack the resources and knowledge to effectively advocate for their rights or to engage in complex negotiations with external actors. Therefore, providing legal and technical assistance can help to level the playing field and enable local communities to participate more effectively in decision-making processes. This can be done through training on negotiation and conflict resolution skills and legal support to help communities protect their land rights.

Finally, empowering local communities requires the provision of opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes (Ahmad & Talib, 2015). This can include creating mechanisms for community consultation and involvement in developing policies and projects that affect their land and resources. It can also include ensuring that local communities have access to the information they need to make informed decisions and to hold decision-makers accountable. Examples of successful community empowerment initiatives can be found across Africa. In Ghana, the Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) program empowered local

communities to manage their resources and to participate in decision-making processes related to land and natural resource management (Murray, 2019). In Tanzania, the Land Rights Research and Resources Institute (HAKIARDHI) provided legal support to local communities to help them defend their land rights. It advocated for recognising customary land tenure systems (Massay, 2020). These examples demonstrate that empowering local communities can be a powerful means of resolving land conflicts, promoting peacebuilding, and achieving sustainable development in Africa.

Addressing underlying issues

Land conflicts are often a symptom of underlying issues such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion (Perdesen, 2002). Addressing underlying issues is crucial in resolving land conflicts and promoting sustainable development and peacebuilding in Africa. The underlying issues are often complex and deeply rooted in historical, cultural, economic, and political factors. Failure to address these issues can result in temporary and ineffective solutions to land conflicts (Palmer *et al.*, 2009). Addressing these underlying causes requires a holistic approach. This involves providing social services such as education, healthcare and infrastructure to marginalised communities. In Ghana, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme provides cash transfers to vulnerable households to improve their livelihoods and reduce poverty. One of the main underlying issues contributing to land conflicts in Africa is the issue of land tenure (Lund *et al.*, 2006). Many African countries lack clear and well-defined land tenure systems, often leading to overlapping claims and disputes over land ownership. This problem is particularly acute in rural areas where customary land tenure systems are prevalent. To address this issue, clear and well-defined land tenure systems must be developed that consider the needs and rights of local communities. Another underlying issue is the unequal distribution of resources and economic opportunities (Corak, 2013). Land is a valuable resource, essential for local communities' livelihoods. The unequal distribution of land and other resources can lead to conflict

between different groups, particularly when access to resources is linked to political power and patronage. To address this issue, there is a need for policies and programs that promote equitable distribution of resources and economic opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

Political instability and weak governance also contribute to land conflicts in Africa (Mackatian, 2014). In many African countries, political instability and weak governance have resulted in the failure of the state to enforce laws and regulations related to land use and ownership. This led to the emergence of informal and often violent mechanisms for resolving land disputes. There is a need to establish strong and effective governance systems capable of enforcing laws and regulations related to land use and ownership to address this issue. The issue of ethnicity and identity also contributes to land conflicts in Africa (Robinson, 2014). Land is often associated with ethnic identity, and disputes over land ownership can easily escalate into inter-ethnic conflicts (Kweyu, 2022). To address this issue, inclusive governance systems that recognise and accommodate different groups' diverse identities and interests need to be promoted.

Contextual Analysis in Land Conflict Resolution

The application of the comprehensive and integrated approach should consider the specific drivers of land conflicts across cases, for example, in Tanzania, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia, among other African nations. Each presents unique challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding and sustainable development, calling for the importance of tailored strategies that reflect the diverse socio-political landscapes of the continent. For example, the conflict involving the Maasai people highlights tensions between traditional pastoralist rights, conservation efforts, and agricultural expansion. An effective resolution would legally recognise pastoralist routes that coexist with conservation and agriculture, mediated through community-led dialogues. This ensures all stakeholders, including Indigenous communities and commercial interests, have a voice in shaping land use practices that respect cultural

traditions while promoting economic development. The struggle of the Ogoni people in Tanzania against multinational oil exploitation underscores the necessity for frameworks that prioritise environmental justice and corporate accountability. This includes enforcing regulations that protect local ecosystems and ensure that communities affected by resource extraction activities have a significant role in resource management decisions, thereby preventing conflicts and fostering sustainable development.

In Zimbabwe, the historical injustices stemming from the land redistribution policies necessitate a reconciliation approach incorporating historical grievances and current governance needs. This should aim at equitable land distribution through transparent processes that reconcile the need for redress and the imperative for economic stability and productivity. The displacement of Indigenous communities by government-led development projects in regions like the Omo Valley in Ethiopia calls for development approaches that include community consent and benefit-sharing agreements. Such measures would ensure that development projects do not exacerbate existing land conflicts but rather contribute to community welfare and national development goals.

Comparatively, these cases demonstrate that despite their differing origins, common themes such as the need for legal reform, community empowerment, and inclusive dialogue are crucial. These elements should be integral to a unified framework for addressing land conflicts. This approach emphasises governance structures adaptable to specific historical, cultural, and political contexts, ensuring relevance and efficacy in conflict resolution strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the critical role that land plays in shaping peace and development in Africa and the complex and diverse nature of land conflicts on the continent. These conflicts are often driven by various factors, including historical injustices, population growth, climate change, and

competition for resources, making them increasingly difficult to address. At the same time, there is growing recognition of the need for a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to land governance and management, which considers the interplay between land, conflict, and development. Such an approach requires the engagement of various actors and institutions, including governments, civil society, traditional leaders, and the private sector, and integrating multiple policy domains, such as land tenure, agriculture, and environmental management.

Through case studies and examples from across the continent, this paper highlighted the potential of peacebuilding and sustainable development approaches to address land conflicts in Africa. These approaches require a focus on conflict prevention through the promotion of inclusive land governance and management systems grounded in social justice, equity, and human rights, and they must consider the diverse needs and perspectives of all stakeholders. This paper revealed that addressing land conflicts in Africa requires a more comprehensive and sustainable approach that integrates various policy domains and engages multiple actors and institutions.

Based on the analysis presented in this chapter, the following recommendations (Table 12.1) are offered for addressing land conflicts and promoting sustainable development in Africa.

Table 12.1: Recommendations for Addressing Land Conflicts and Promoting Sustainable Development in Africa

Recommendation	Explanation
Engage multiple stakeholders	Effective land governance and management require the engagement of multiple stakeholders, including governments, civil society, traditional leaders, and the private sector. Building inclusive and participatory platforms for dialogue and collaboration is crucial, where all stakeholders' diverse needs and perspectives are considered.

Recommendation	Explanation
Foster conflict prevention	Preventing land conflicts is more cost-effective and sustainable than resolving them. It is essential to promote conflict prevention through the promotion of inclusive land governance and management systems grounded in social justice, equity, and human rights, taking into account the diverse needs and perspectives of all stakeholders.
Address historical injustices	Historical injustices such as land dispossession and marginalisation significantly drive land conflicts in Africa. Therefore, it is essential to address these injustices through land restitution and compensation processes, and to ensure that the rights of marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and Indigenous communities, are protected and respected.
Promote sustainable land use	Promoting sustainable land use practices is critical to ensuring that land is used to support development while preserving its ecological integrity. This requires promoting sustainable agriculture, forestry, and environmental management practices that enhance soil fertility, reduce land degradation, and increase the resilience of land systems to climate change.
Strengthen institutional capacities	Strengthening institutional capacities is critical to ensuring effective land governance and management. This includes strengthening the capacities of government agencies responsible for land management, as well as building the capacities of civil society and traditional leaders to engage in dialogue, advocacy, and conflict resolution.
Promote regional cooperation	Land conflicts in Africa are often transboundary in nature and require a regional approach to address. It is therefore crucial to promote regional cooperation and collaboration in addressing land conflicts and promoting sustainable land use practices.

These recommendations emphasise the need for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to land governance and management in Africa, considering the complex and multi-faceted nature of land conflicts on the continent. This will

make it possible to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development across the continent and build more just, inclusive, and equitable societies.

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