



# The Green Negotiated Territorial Development (GreenNTD) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Promoting a peaceful and lasting resolution to land conflicts in a protracted crisis context through a fair and environmentally sensitive approach**

## → Context

Since the late 19th century, the vast natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have constantly provoked violent interventions from outside the country and fueled internal conflicts. Population pressure, competition for land resources, mining, forestry and hunting, lack of secure access to land, weak governance and the instability of the institutional framework have caused tension between different actors. Thus, competition over access to natural resources is a structural problem and one of the main factors fueling power struggles in the region.

In the current context of constant insecurity, arable land is under-used and productivity is limited. Conflicts contribute to a shortage of livelihoods for the most vulnerable rural communities, environmental degradation, and underpin a propensity to use violence to resolve problems. Land disputes represent a serious threat to the development and stability of the country, particularly in the east, where frequent movements of people fleeing conflicts increase tensions between groups, particularly host communities.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed an integrated approach to address the multidimensional and multi-stakeholder problem of land conflicts: the Green Negotiated Territorial Development (GreenNTD), a socio-ecological and people-centred approach to the territorial development that is characterized by openness and inclusion.



## Key facts

*Land disputes reveal the link between conflict and food security. The land issue is becoming a bottleneck for the process of peace stabilization and reconstruction. Land insecurity hampers and hinders the resumption of production activities and more generally of economic activities and development.*

**Geographical coverage** → Luhonga, Nord Kivu region, Democratic Republic of the Congo

## What is GreenNTD and how does it contribute to improving the resilience of livelihoods?

GreenNTD is a negotiation-based approach that promotes a multi-stakeholder dialogue on territorial development opportunities without damaging ecological integrity. The process aims to facilitate the interaction between different stakeholders involved in land disputes, in order to find solutions to competition problems related to accessing land and limited natural resources.

The approach aims to better understand the relationship between humans and nature, and is adaptable to different scales of intervention and various categories of stakeholders, namely policy-makers; tenants; communities; entrepreneurs and Non-governmental Organizations; and those who provide expertise and economic resources, including academics, government scientists, consultants, investors and donor agencies.

The process consists of five phases and is concluded by the signing of a Socio-Ecological Territorial Agreement (SETA). The signing of SETA represents the beginning of a reconciliation process that guarantees its legitimacy thanks to the inclusive approach of a dialogue and represents an opportunity to strengthen social cohesion. The agreement is the most appropriate means to facilitate access to land, the main obstacle to securing livelihoods. This process allows the recovery of agriculture, a prelude to economic growth, and consequently improves the resilience of livelihoods.



## → Challenges

Land conflict resolution must take into account the complexity, interdependence and specific context of the various factors of conflict. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the GreeNTD approach aims to address the various causes of stress, including:

- protracted crises, internal and regional;
- population movement and border migration, especially in the east;
- haphazard and unplanned land occupation;
- the tangle of property titles;
- land use change and conflicts related to the use of space;
- lack of clarity in land administration: imperfect decentralization, conflict between formal and customary rights; and
- lack of confidence in the state and the pervasive insecurity.

## → Impact

The intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has strengthened the resilience of agricultural livelihoods of vulnerable populations by reducing land disputes, including the following results:

- Access to arable land allowed people to return to their land and female victims of sexual violence to regain their independence and reintegrate into the community. Land access creates a sense of safety for agricultural production, enabling them to choose their livelihoods and provides a degree of autonomy and dignity.
- The dialogue mechanism has promoted reconciliation and intercommunal social cohesion, thus improving the sustainability of the stabilization process.
- The capacity development activities and the distribution of quality agricultural inputs have strengthened production, thus improved income and food and nutrition security.

The GreeNTD approach is promising and has shown results on many levels. To enhance its impact and strengthen the resilience of affected populations, the monitoring and measuring of the impact of GreeNTD combined with agricultural support will have to be evaluated in terms of improved well-being and long-term ecosystem services.

## → Sustainability

The sustainability of this practice is favoured by the following:

- The project aims to consolidate and ensure access to arable land in the long term, thanks in particular to the signing of SETA.
- Community, farmer organizations and women have strengthened their autonomy and their capacities.
- Dialogue participants have acquired the capacity to replicate the GreeNTD approach.
- The entire sector has been strengthened and access to factors of production has been facilitated, strengthening the production chain.

*Access to land favours securing agricultural production; it allows women who are often victims of sexual violence to find autonomy and dignity.*

*In North Kivu, in Luhonga, the sustainability of the signed agreement is guaranteed by the search for social legitimization of all stakeholders. This is the uniqueness of this approach.*





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## → Methodological approach

The GreeNTD methodology follows a multistep process to meet key challenges: ensuring access to and sustainable use of land and natural resources, secure land tenure and investment, and improving cooperation between different actors.

To be legitimate, territorial planning must emerge from a dialogue that includes all stakeholders, so that it is accepted and respected over the long term. In the context of the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, GreeNTD was chosen in light of the weak governmental structures and the need to strengthen social cohesion.

The land tenure security project implemented in Luhonga includes both a process of negotiation as well as distribution of agricultural inputs and training activities in improved production techniques. These activities offer an economic alternative that may thus constitute a compensation for damage experienced by some households involved in the resolution of land disputes.

The process starts with a participatory territorial analysis of natural resource access in order to describe and understand the root causes of territorial disputes. The diagnosis concludes with a map that includes the history and perceptions of different stakeholders. On this basis, a SETA is negotiated. Rights, duties, termination clauses, surface use, working conditions, etc. are negotiated, approved and included in the text. This document crowns the beginning of a reconciliation process by ensuring its legitimacy through inclusive dialogue.

*The GreeNTD integrated approach includes not only a process of consultation but also the introduction of alternative economic activities and the sustainable use of natural resources.*

## The five phases of GreeNTD

**Preparatory phase: Identification of territorial perimeter**, of the relevant concerned stakeholders and their motivations to intervene.

**Phase I. Views: Understanding the territory as a socio-ecological system;** preparing a first analytical framework of concerned stakeholders, differentiating their positions, interests and strategies; identification of interrelations, power relations, and social, economic and productive dynamics at the given territory. Creating an information system (socio-economic, productive, eco-systemic) spatially delimited, to better understand the typology, intensity or magnitude of impacts, risks and conflicts of players on different contributing factors. Reconstruction of historical developments and future trends on the main topics of interest; building partnerships and arrangements necessary to monitor the process of awareness, communication and capacity development, especially for the weaker players, to bring them to the negotiation table.

**Phase II. Horizons: Outlining coherent and feasible proposals for territorial development;** setting scenarios to facilitate consensus; identification of dynamics that negatively affect the territory.

**Phase III. Negotiation: seeking consensus for territorial development;** creation of roundtable negotiations involving all stakeholders (communities, local authorities, landowners and land administration institutions); analytical work for a coherent, feasible, efficient and sustainable intervention, with FAO acting as a facilitator of the process.

**Phase IV. Stakeholders signing the SETA,** the fundamental basis for the implementation of short-, medium- and long-term business plans; formalization of the rights and duties of each party; creating an implementation platform composed of all stakeholders (communities, local authority, landowners and land administration institutions).

**Phase V. Monitoring and evaluating the activities undertaken.**

## → **Replicability and upscaling**

The activities can be replicated on a larger scale, if the following actions are put in place:

- **Implementing the SETA after signing:** accompany the signature with funding and implementation of the agreed activities.
- **Encouraging the government to reform the land tenure system,** while taking into account the current decentralization and duality between the written land law and local customs.
- **Developing a strategy at provincial level.** In the case of North Kivu, the provincial government created a steering committee comprised of representatives of several ministries, which took note of the GreeNTD approach for the resolution of land disputes at community level and will approve future socio-territorial agreements.
- **Encouraging local actors to continue the process until the signing of the SETA, even if it takes time.** In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the GreeNTD approach has become an essential tool for resolving land conflicts in North Kivu. Its adoption is a success considering the difficulties of dialogue on land issues that characterize the context.
- **Promoting replicability of GreeNTD:** In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the process is being promoted in the Ruzizi plain and Rutsuru.
- **Supporting the National Department of Land Affairs** in the organization of consultations at provincial level to implement the GreeNTD across the entire national territory.
- **Encouraging other international organizations to use the same approach.** UNHABITAT, for example, is inspired by the GreeNTD to improve its prevention and resolution of land dispute projects.

*After signing, a **second phase** for the implementation of SETA and the land use plan would be required to consolidate the sustainability of GreeNTD results.*

*Promoting autonomy and capacity development of individuals, families, communities and local institutions is essential for prevention and resolution of conflicts.*

## THE PILOT CASE OF LUHONGA

The GreeNTD pilot was implemented in Luhonga village (Masasi - North Kivu) in the context of the OSRO/DRC/303/UND project. Some 578 families, including 242 headed by women, were involved. The indigenous population had abandoned their land several times because of various conflicts but had always been able to re-occupy the same land as soon as security permitted. However, the last time, people no longer had the right to access the land because the new occupants held a land title. Through the implementation of all phases of GreeNTD, the process has resulted in the development of a land use plan and the signing of the SETA between 24 producer representatives and eight concessionaires. In the pact, the parties agreed on securing access to 1 ha of land for each household, including internally displaced persons who were still in the camps. Currently, residents of Luhonga (estimated population: 4 096 people) can stay in a secure area, although it is limited (24 ha) until the full implementation of the covenant. The project also provided technical supervision and monitoring of individual fields. Two community nurseries, in addition to the 24 ha, have been installed to facilitate technical support and strengthen social cohesion. Their management is provided equally by Luhonga households and surrounding villages.

## → **For more information**

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