

Changing rural development dynamics and challenges for land tenure and land policy in ACP countries

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Land access and rural development: new challenges, new opportunities

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Land access, distribution and growth

- Significant improvements in economic growth and social welfare achievable through modest institutional reforms including tenure reforms (China, Vietnam)
- Land concentration and inequality not only excludes the poor but holds back growth
- Land reforms may appear as simple keys to unlocking rural development.....BUT:
 - Despite worldwide experimentation with appropriate tenure interventions, building on existing social practice, a lack of resources and institutional capacity to deliver secure land rights at scale
 - Land redistribution confronted by political opposition, failures to deliver development support and drift of rural poor to cities



Lessons learnt and related challenges

- pragmatic low cost approaches to tenure security
- innovative ways to improve land access in adverse political contexts
- reform inefficient and corrupt land administration organisations to better deliver land reforms
- develop decentralised land administration services
- build on pre-existing tenure institutions and practices
- strengthen women's rights and opportunities
- long term engagement; and better harmonisation of donor supported activities

Ghana Land Administration Project

- Technical and institutional reforms in land administration processes
- Attempt to improve tenure security by strengthening and incorporating customary / traditional land management arrangements into the formal sector through the development of customary land secretariats (CLS)
- Process led by land sector bureaucrats – expecting them to reform themselves when balance of incentives favours the status quo
- Powers of customary chiefs over land rights supported by former colonial regime and by present government
- Chiefs derive revenue from dealing in land rights especially in peri-urban areas and benefit from unregulated land markets

No effective links to rural development opportunities or to territorial planning – how to use land interventions to promote rural development in practice ?

Mozambique Community Lands Initiative

- Attempt to implement progressive land law recognising rural communities' land rights through an independent land fund to deliver land delimitation, tenure security and related economic opportunities
- Government primary interest in promoting investment, land allocation practice skewed towards private sector and concern that community land rights will inhibit investment e.g. biofuels
- Project has to prioritise impacts of major investment and link community land rights to development opportunities
- Very weak land administration service and limited capacity in private sector / civil society to deliver
- Missing link in the chain is territorial planning despite relevant legislation - links to other sector plans and to central policy also crucial
- Project management agents have to design and manage innovative delivery systems – in absence of capacity by government and donors

Lessons from current generation of interventions

- Projects intended as harmonised donor initiatives for the land sector
- Lack of capacity to manage on donor and government sides - lack effective donor “agency” to manage and so have to invent and sustain new arrangements
- Challenge to negotiate relations between rural communities and elite interests, without falling into the trap of being driven by them (Ghana: local traditional elites; Mozambique external / political elites)
- Initiatives need effective governance arrangements which links them to the challenges of rural change
- Need to determine proper linkages of land allocation and tenure regularisation to decentralised territorial planning and governance



Rural change driven by demographic growth, urbanisation and global integration

- Rural out migration, especially younger generations
- Diversification of rural livelihoods with agriculture no longer being necessarily most important
- Increasing importance of rural areas for residential purposes, particularly for women and the elderly, income transfers (pensions, remittances) are a significant part of rural incomes
- Global and urban markets create increased demands for efficient production of food and other agricultural products, and vertical integration of value chains and quality standards create big comparative advantages for agribusiness, not smallholder farming
- Urban areas make increasing demands on rural areas for recreational, leisure, tourism as well as residential purposes
- Rural areas also become important for energy production (renewables and biofuels) and for environmental services



Challenges for rural areas

- Geography, resource endowment, social history, technology, infrastructure leadership and governance all affect ability to respond
- Wide variation of fortunes of rural areas including vicious and virtuous development cycles: prosperity / stagnation + social inclusion / exclusion
- Outcomes for poor depend on:
 - Pre-existing distribution of property rights and power relations
 - quality and effectiveness of governance arrangements for rural development, including territorial planning, conflict management and responsiveness of central / sector policies to local needs



A minority of rural areas combine growth with social inclusion and sustainability

- Investment in market linked development by small family farmers including credit and technical support
- Support for the poor to benefit from rural diversification – to access new opportunities in tourism, environmental services etc
- Presence of strong rural social movements, advocating for defence of small farmers' and minority groups' land and natural resource rights and broader interests
- Availability of income transfers derived from remittances, pensions, poverty alleviation and social protection programmes
- Institutions and policies to promote partnerships and alliances between small farmers, private sector and external actors
- policies and governance of rural development must to some degree have a territorial focus



Key messages for land policy and reform

- A sectoral focus on land institutions, land tenure security and land reform is unlikely to succeed by itself
- Land reforms need to be:
 - Located within broader policy and regulatory reform, improved governance and decentralisation
 - Linked to wider programmes of support to agricultural development and rural diversification, and to
 - Inclusive and participatory territorial planning to help reconcile the interests of different groups and actors and manage land use and related social conflict