Secure Land Rights for All

UN-HABITAT

GLTN contributes to the implementation of pro poor land policies to achieve secure land rights for all
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GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK

The Global Land Tool Network

The main objective of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is to contribute to poverty alleviation and the Millennium Development Goals through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure.

The Network has developed a global land partnership. Its members include international civil society organizations, international finance institutions, international research and training institutions, donors and professional bodies. It aims to take a more holistic approach to land issues and improve global land coordination in various ways. These include the establishment of a continuum of land rights, rather than a narrow focus on individual land titling, the improvement and development of pro-poor land management, as well as land tenure tools. The new approach also entails unblocking existing initiatives, helping strengthen existing land networks, assisting in the development of affordable gendered land tools useful to poverty-stricken communities, and spreading knowledge on how to implement security of tenure.

The GLTN partners, in their quest to attain the goals of poverty alleviation, better land management and security of tenure through land reform, have identified and agreed on 18 key land tools to deal with poverty and land issues at the country level across all regions. The Network partners argue that the existing lack of these tools, as well as land governance problems, are the main cause of failed implementation at scale of land policies world wide.

The GLTN is a demand driven network where many individuals and groups have come together to address this global problem. For further information, and registration, visit the GLTN website at www.gltn.net.

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Graffiti in Valparasio, Chile. Photo © U. Westman/UN-HABITAT. 2006

Foreword

The Millennium Development Goal 7 Target 11 commits the international community to improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. However, rural urban migration, natural increase and expansion of urban centres all contribute to rapid urbanisation resulting in the constant increase in the number of slum dwellers.

It is now well-recognised that secure land and property rights for all are essential to reducing poverty, because they underpin economic development and social inclusion. Secure land tenure and property rights enable people in rural and urban areas to invest in improved homes and livelihoods. They also help to promote good environmental management, improve food security, and assist directly in the realization of human rights, including the elimination of discrimination against women, the vulnerable, indigenous groups and other minorities.

We are now seeing important changes in land policies, which reflect these principles in a variety of countries across the world. Today, however, land resources face multiple pressures and demands as never before, and developing countries still lack the tools, systematic strategies and support necessary to deliver secure land rights for all.

Sound land policies should protect people from forced removals and evictions, or where displacement is determined by legitimate processes as necessary for the greater public good and is carried out in conformity with national and international norms, ensure they have access to adequate compensation. Another critical dimension is ensuring gender equality, because women face such widespread discrimination in questions of land and property. Yet when women enjoy secure and equal rights, everybody benefits. Also, a secure land rights for all citizen contributes to conflicts reduction and improvement in environmental management as well as household living conditions.

This publication will assist policy makers to understand and apply the practical way in which people's land rights can be made more secure, while at the same time improve land policies as a basis for the better, fairer and more sustainable urban and rural development.

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Land resources face multiple pressures and demands as never before, and developing countries still lack the tools, systematic strategies and support necessary to deliver secure land rights for all.

Valparasio, Chile. Photo © U. Westman/UN-HABITAT. 2006

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Introduction

Some facts about access and rights to land:

- *Urbanisation is continuing due to endogenous population growth, lack of economic opportunities and the pressures on rural land, together with the effects of natural disasters, climate change and conflicts, which increase urban migration.*
- *Stopping urban growth is not an option. The world's rural population has essentially reached its peak; but the global urban population is projected to double by 2030. Urbanisation will require increasing supplies of land, more efficient land use and accessible forms of tenure; this is particularly the case in major cities, but also for growing small and medium-sized towns and in peri-urban areas.*
- *Agriculture remains a fundamental source of livelihood, subsistence and food security for rural people; it is a basis for economic growth in developing countries. In this context, secure land tenure for rural people is also extremely important.*
- *Promoting inward and local investment requires secure access to land. This may bring investors into competition with existing land-holders. Options are needed to encourage investment and enable the urban and rural poor to benefit from development.*

This publication is for policy-makers and public officials. It is for all those in land management and development who are looking for the best ways of securing rights and meeting increasing demand for land. It stresses the need for policies that facilitate access to land for all sections of their existing and future populations – particularly those on low or irregular incomes. This publication updates and revises UN-HABITAT's 2004 publication 'Urban Land for All'. The focus is on urban, rural and peri-urban land issues.

Secure land rights, and the way of providing them, are important for development and poverty reduction. Rather than a complete and comprehensive guide to the broader issues of land policy, management and reform, this brochure explains how secure land rights and equitable, effective institutions can support good land governance.

The greatest challenges in providing secure land rights are in urban, peri-urban areas, and the most productive rural areas. Together these areas face growing demands for land for housing, property development and commercial investment in agriculture. In rural areas, insecurity is increasing poverty and driving people off the land. For urban and peri-urban areas, a 'twin-track' approach is needed: it would increase tenure security in informal settlements wherever possible while making additional land available to meet future needs.

Rural land is coming under multiple pressures. They include population growth and increasing fragmentation, land use conversion, commercial investments, environmental degradation due to drought, soil erosion and nutrient depletion, as well as natural disasters and conflicts. If incomes and food production are to be safeguarded, and the growing pressure on urban areas is to be mitigated, the land rights of poor rural people must be made secure; on top of these, robust arrangements for the effective management of land use change, competition and conflict are in order.

A range of policy instruments can help address these challenges, and they must be adapted to meet local conditions. It is also important for government officials first to identify those land management and tenure systems

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