



How to Establish an Effective Land Sector



UN-HABITAT

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Abbreviations

HAC	Harmonisation, Alignment and Coordination
LIMS	Land Information Management System
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PBA	Programme-based approach
SPA	Strategic Partnership with Africa
SWAp	Sector-wide approach
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme

1. Introduction

This guide presents a general overview on institutional harmonisation processes, i.e. the various factors and tools included in fostering institutional harmonisation in a sector. The experiences informing this document mainly result from the tacit knowledge of the land sector in Kenya by UN-HABITAT and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN). They are complemented by experiences from other sectors (such as water, governance and decentralisation), African countries and from state as well as non-state actors. Non-state actors include civil society organisations, the private sector and professional associations.

Institutional harmonisation processes are complex and span over a long period of time. They involve various actors with distinct, sometimes conflicting, agendas. In most cases the beginning of the process can be clearly identified. However its precise lifespan can hardly be anticipated. Initiating an institutional harmonisation process should be done without the pressure of fixed deadlines and with flexibility as well as courage for innovation.

The guide, although not intended as a blueprint, provides viable approaches of how to pursue institutional harmonisation processes. It also addresses the issue of risk management. The guide aims to inform decision-makers engaged in the land sector, be they representatives from national governments, bilateral and multilateral implementing agencies and donors as well as non-state actors.

2. Harmonisation as sector reform

Institutional harmonisation processes are in the first place reform processes. They aim to change the way business is done in a sector: in other words, how cooperation and coordination is carried out, support and financing modalities are used, consensus is built and decisions are taken. They are guided by the overarching aim of improving the sector's performance in

delivering services for the citizenry, especially those who are economically and socially disadvantaged. Improvement of sector institutions' governance and strengthening their pro-poor orientation, i.e. how well they respond to the needs of people living in poverty, are key issues in every harmonisation process.

Reforms always include revision of stakeholder roles and mandates, adjustment of their relations and development of their capacities. "Reform" also implies that stakeholders change their behaviour, their way of thinking and attitudes. This change of mind-set can, in itself, be a lengthy and challenging process.

The success of institutional harmonisation depends, to a large extent, on the commitment of all actors to create a partnership built on transparency and mutual trust. Actors will have to employ patience and understanding towards one another, especially during the initial stages. Candid dialogue on expectations and risks will help overcome inevitable bottlenecks.

Institutional harmonisation can be especially helpful in post-conflict situations to create more transparency and increase coordination and cooperation. However in such cases harmonisation processes need to be pursued with caution and sensitivity, as political and administrative conditions are still volatile and institutions lack essential capacities. Furthermore, public financial management systems are weak and stakeholders might be reluctant to trust each other. At such times it is even more important to keep everyone's expectations realistic.

2.1 Cross-cutting issues

Crosscutting issues, such as Governance and Subsidiarity, Gender and Equity provide important guiding principles for institutional harmonisation processes to which all stakeholders subscribe. They can help to adhere to the pro-poor orientation and to refocus the reform on its priorities whenever conflicts and misunderstanding are experienced.

Mainstreaming of crosscutting issues into the joint strategic plan and/ or road map for the harmonisation process is key. This can be achieved by formulating specific indicators and identifying priority activities.

UN-HABITAT has created a platform, through the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) that supports the development of pro-poor, gendered and large-scale land tools. See the GLTN website for valuable information and contacts on the above-mentioned crosscutting issues' (see www.gltn.net).

3. The new aid architecture

The increased attention on institutional harmonisation, often referred to as Harmonisation, Alignment and Coordination (HAC), coincides with intensifying discussions on the effectiveness of aid. Since the early 1990's aid modalities and their effectiveness have been repeatedly scrutinised. A number of challenges have been identified that jeopardize the impact of aid and hence of development as such.

Frequently cited challenges include: the unpredictability of aid flows in terms of timing of disbursement and volume; the establishment of structures for implementation, reporting and monitoring which are parallel to existing recipient government structures; the multiplicity of donor financial reporting and accounting systems; the frequency of donor missions, which overburden the recipient government's administration and increase transaction costs.

A new "aid architecture" has been emerging, aiming to overcome these challenges. On a global level this framework is based on the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are a set of prioritised, precise and time-bound development goals. On a national level the framework is based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and subsequent National Development Plans. The Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness (2005) sets a framework of reference points for the international development community. More recently Joint

Assistance Strategies are complementing the Paris Declaration on partner country level. They aim to provide transparent and reliable donor support to the partner country over a certain period of time (see Bibliography for further information).

3.1 Sector-wide approaches

Within this new development framework, assistance at the sector level has gone through different phases, towards more alignment, harmonisation and ownership. Sector-wide approaches (SWAp) have become a preferred approach for financial and technical support. SWAp are more than just a new way of channelling aid. They constitute a vehicle for institutional harmonisation and thus for reform processes.

All significant funding, whether internal (partner government contributions) or external (donors contributions), supports a sector policy in a SWAp. Further, the expenditure programme is under government leadership and the SWAp adopts approaches for planning, financing, reporting and monitoring across the entire sector. It is generally accompanied by progressing towards relying on partner government procedures to disburse and account for all funds.

Most SWAp, even the advanced ones, are in the middle of a process of broadening support from different sources of funding. The nature of the sector, the composition of stake-holders and the political, social and economic

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