

Sustainable Development and Management of State-owned/Crown Lands

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SUMMARY

As populations continue to grow, the pressure for “available land” to be transparently and appropriately allocated to individuals, developers and investors is also increasing. In many countries, the available inventory of land assets is held by the state/Crown/national government (heretofore referenced as “state-owned lands”). It is the responsibility of these governing bodies to distribute and/or assign rights to these lands to eligible applicants, as defined under the legal mandates of each body.

There are several challenges that are faced by the governments with the state-owned lands:

- First, the accurate identification of where these assets are located geographically and geospatially (that is, in relation to other properties). Often the government understands that they “own” large tracts of land, yet have not actually inventoried “where” these lands are located.
- Second, there exists incomplete information about what land has already been allocated and/or what rights have been allocated on a particular parcel and to whom these rights have been granted.
- Third, monitoring and managing long-term and short-term rights allocations (e.g. leases) is critical in order to ensure revenues and collected and renewals of licenses and/or permits are completed in a timely manner.
- Fourth, the timeline for responding to requests for an allocation followed by the securing and registering of these allocations, in a transparent and publicly accessible environment.
- Fifth, ensuring that existing customary tenure rights are not over-written by the government for

the benefit of investment and the detriment of the customary rights holder.

- Sixth, proactive planning on how state-owned lands will be used is critical to ensure that “reactive” responses to requests are part of a broader allocation strategy. This is critical to protect, preserve and/or effectively utilize natural resource areas, agricultural lands, historic/sacred sites, et.al.
- Lastly, the ability to monitor and audit the allocation of state-owned lands is critical to the elimination of cronyism and fraud from within the land administration offices.

This paper will look at several case studies from Australia, United States, the Caribbean and West Africa and present how the above challenges have been addressed and any lessons learned. Additionally, the role of various tools, technologies and trainings that have been employed in these case studies will be highlighted and any best practices that have emerged as a result will be presented.

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