

Land reforms and implementation of the framework for effective land administration (FELA): a case study for customary land registry implementation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Since 2012, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been engaged through the support of GLTN/UN-Habitat in a land reform process, which aims to develop a national land policy as well as a new legal and institutional framework for effective land management. The development of the land information system was one of the innovative outcomes of the process made possible through a customary land registry implementation approach as a tool/driver for the effective land administration framework implementation tested in two pilot sites (Mambasa and Mai Ndombe).

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a complex land governance system that has led to mixed results, including insecurity of land tenure in urban and rural areas, land disputes, and the proliferation of land hoarding. In this context, the land reform program piloted jointly by GLTN with national (Ministry of Land Affairs/National Commission on Land Reform) and local partners has initiated pilots' projects in Ituri and Maindombe provinces on Customary land registry as a participatory and inclusive tool that empowers local communities to manage their land rights and resources and contributes to peacebuilding and sustainable development in the post-conflict context.

One of the land administration innovations that the Framework for Effective Land Administration supports is the development of customary land registries, which are designed to capture and document the rights and interests of customary landholders, who often lack formal recognition and protection. The CLR is a simplified Land Information System (LIS) premised on the objectives of a local cadaster, enabling the identification of plot ownership, and the extent of rights to the land in the context of the rights of the local communities, duly mapped with support of modern technology – the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM)⁶.

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The case study in this paper focuses on the case of community land registry implementation in Babila Bakwanza Chiefdom, Ituri Province, a conflict affected region with a diversity and complexity of land tenure systems. The paper innovative approaches that combine participatory mapping, legal empowerment, and customary authority recognition can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of land administration interventions in rural areas. The paper presents the main features and outcomes of the community land registry project, which aimed to secure the land rights of local communities and prevent land conflicts in a post-conflict context and advocates for a flexible and participatory approach to land information management as part of a broader land reform initiative. The paper also discusses the challenges and lessons learned from the project, as well as the implications for scaling up and replicating similar initiatives in other parts of the DRC and beyond.

Theses interventions in Mambasa and Mai Ndombe produced encouraging results as it made possible that more than 340 families' plots being identified and mapped in Ituri. More than 100 land conflicts have been identified and resolved thanks to the local land committee, which is one of the institutional components of the Community Land Registry, while about sixty land certificates have been produced and issued to local communities. In Mai-Ndombe, more than 250 families have been identified/mapped and more than 60 land conflicts identified and about 60% resolved.

This session will demonstrate the findings of the diagnostic contextual assessment of customary Land rights interoperability as well as the significant gains that have been achieved at community level in terms of robust trainings, document and map communities land rights/plots, formal registration of communities land rights for to establish a valuable community Land Registry as a tool for to promote documentation of rights, achieve sustainability, good land governance and peace at local level.

Objectives:

General Objective of the session is to share experience of DRC Land Reform Project in terms of using geospatial technologies, innovations, and connectivity as a response of complex land governance system.

Specific objectives include:

- Presents the main features and outcomes of the community land registry project, which aimed to secure the land rights of local communities and prevent land conflicts in a post-conflict context.
- Advocates for a flexible and participatory approach to land information management as part of a broader land reform initiative.

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- Discusses the challenges and lessons learned from the project, as well as the implications for scaling up and replicating similar initiatives in other parts of the DRC and beyond.

Expected Outcomes:

- Participants have an enhanced understanding of the relevance of Community Land Registry in the documentation process of rights along the continuum of land rights in the DRC context.
- Participants have an increased awareness and appreciation of the benefits of investing participatory approach to land information management to prevent to build sustainable land governance and prevent Land conflicts.
- Participants gain valuable insights from the lessons learned through the process and outcomes of Community Land Registry implementation as a powerful tool in terms of implementation of the Land Reform in DRC.
- Participants have an increased understanding and appreciation of the role of geospatial technologies, innovations, and connectivity as a response of complex land governance system.

Target Audience: The session will attract experts from a land governance, management, and tenure background as well as development economists and other practitioners in the land-information value chain.

Duration: Duration of the presentation will be 15 – 30 mns depending on the organizers planning.

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