



Land Tenure Supports Sustainable Development

Throughout the rural world, land provides a primary source of income, food security, cultural identity and shelter. It also serves as a fundamental asset for the economic empowerment of the poor and provides a safety net in times of hardship.

Secure access to land and guaranteed property rights are key to improving household livelihoods and supporting poverty alleviation. The role of secure land tenure rights in protecting vulnerable groups from deepening poverty has become critical in today's world where competition for access to resources and efforts to enhance the efficiency of land use are the main drivers of the development process.

Yet, in many parts of the world, land rights are increasingly insecure. Pressure on land resources accentuates tenure insecurity and this insecurity, in turn, discourages people from making medium- and long-term investments to improve the productivity of their land. In worst case scenarios, it means poor and vulnerable groups are in danger of losing access to their land.

Whether in formal land administration or customary tenure arrangements, weak land governance affects the poor in particular. Unprotected land rights may well leave them marginalized and outside the law. Weak land governance may also mean that land is not used appropriately to create wealth.

LAND TENURE – RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT

Secure access to land for the poor and vulnerable is increasingly affected by shocks and stresses induced by climate change, violent conflicts and natural disasters, along with more structural trends such as population growth and urbanization.

Climate change

Shifts in climatic regions, rising sea levels and increases in extreme climatic events are affecting population

movements and forcing people to adapt their livelihood patterns to new circumstances, both of which trigger changes in access to land and land tenure arrangements.

Post trauma

The ordeal of rebuilding following conflicts or natural disasters is particularly delicate in areas that have weak land rights. Victims may not have guaranteed return rights to their land or there may be competing claims to the same land, increasing the vulnerability of displaced populations.

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FAO CONNECTS LAND TENURE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Defining objectives

In its efforts to promote sustainable development and the alleviation of hunger and rural poverty, FAO works with member countries and partner organizations in activities designed to ensure secure access to land and other natural resources for rural people. Through its Land Tenure and Management Unit, FAO contributes directly to a range of development objectives, including:

- strengthening household and national food security,
- reducing household poverty and building sustainable livelihoods,

Need for institutional support

Effective institutions to manage land rights and land access are needed to promote sustainable agricultural development and rural development through enhanced investment, diversification of rural economies and social equity.

- encouraging sustainable natural resource management,
- empowering women and reducing gender inequalities in rural areas,
- supporting sustainable rehabilitation after emergencies and helping rural communities to “build back better”,
- assisting governments in responding to emerging threats and challenges, most notably, climate change.

Disseminating information

FAO publishes and distributes materials that offer background information and guidance on land tenure issues. Recent publications include:

- **Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons.** Handbook for application of the Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution to various situations of displacement. Published by FAO, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-HABITAT, the Office of the UN Commissioner for Refugees and the Norwegian Refugee Council.
- **Access to rural land and land administration after violent conflicts** (FAO Land Tenure Studies 8). Guide prepared to assist those involved in the reconstruction of land tenure and administration systems in countries emerging from conflict.
- **Good governance in land tenure and administration** (FAO Land Tenure Studies 9, produced in collaboration with the World Bank with support from the Government of Finland). Guidelines produced to assist member countries, land administration professionals, policy-makers, and individuals working directly with land tenure issues.

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Land tenure and the Millennium Development Goals

- **Secure rights to land and greater equity in land access are important for poverty reduction and of great relevance to the attainment of MDG-1 for eradicating poverty and hunger.**
- **Land policies and agrarian reforms are of direct relevance to attainment of MDG-3 for gender equality and the empowerment of women, MDG-7 for environmental sustainability and MDG-8 for establishment of effective development partnerships.**



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Land and Water Division

http://www.fao.org/nr/lten/lten_en.htm

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