# Customary Land Mapping Utilizing Fit for Purpose Approach: Case Study from Buliisa District, Uganda

Substantial resources have been mobilized to capture and formally register land in Uganda; however, as across most of Africa, registered land in Uganda amounts for less than 20 percent of plots across the country. Following the successful implementation of the National Land Information System (NLIS) with the support of World Bank funding, the next phase of support to the Ugandan land sector is now in the advanced stages of design, with a focus on exploring ways to build the capacity of district and sub county level institutions to locally capture and integrate customary land into the NLIS. Uganda is among the first countries to fully recognize customary land tenure on the same level with other forms of tenure. According to the 1995 Constitution and the 1998 Land Act, there are four ways to own land in the country: 1) freehold, 2) leasehold, 3) mailo, is a system introduced during the colonial period and 4) customary land under Customary Certificates of Ownership (CCO).

A number of ground breaking initiatives are currently being implemented in Uganda by several organizations focussed on identifying cost effective and efficient tools and processes for the demarcation and registration of customary lands using CCOs. These include the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) of UN Habitat, GIZ and ZOA. Each of these programs is utilizing different software solutions, however currently none of the software solutions being used have been integrated with National Land Information System (NLIS). GLTN is using the Social Tenure Domain Network (STDM) software, GIZ has developed their own software based on an open source model, and ZOA are using Open Tenure developed by FAO under the Solutions for Open Land Administration (SOLA) initiative.

Functionality, complexity of and accessibility to hardware and software tools combined with the efficiency and effectiveness of processes for collecting and managing data, as well as citizen access to and trust in, the land administration process are critical to the sustainability of any land registration program. This is particularly critical when considering the large amount of land that needs to be demarcated and the relative scarcity of resources, as is the case in Uganda. The Systematic Land Adjudication and Certification (SLAAC) currently being implemented by the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) with support from the World Bank, is focused initially on peri-urban areas, predominantly involving freehold and leasehold applications which represent a relatively small fraction of the total land in the country. The goal of the SLAAC is to issue a finite number of titles to populate the NLIS. Cadasta Foundation, a non-profit focused on sustainable and fit-for-purpose approaches to securing land rights, is currently working in a number of districts in Uganda and has employed an approach aimed at building the capacity of relevant stakeholders, in this case sub-county, district and central government actors to issue CCOs and locally manage data while sharing key data attributes directly with the NLIS.

The introduction of various fit-for-purpose approaches is intended to ensure sustainability and leverage low cost and accessible tools that can be utilized for the capture of general boundaries using a community led approach, thereby improving the likelihood of success and speeding up the process.

Cadasta is currently implementing a pilot project that adopts a fit-for-purpose approach to demarcate boundaries, capture relevant information about owners, and other interests in the land. The Cadasta approach will ensure that local government agencies have the tools to collect and manage data locally and cost effectively, while replicating key data components to the NLIS. This ensures local access and ownership of data, while at the same time allowing for complete cadastral coverage nationally. The Cadasta platform and data collection tools utilizes available mobile telecommunications technologies, and a field approach focusing on the capture of general boundaries captured with direct community

participation and ensuring trust in the process given the community participation and local access to data.

The activity will capture ownership of customary land though the respective Communal Land Associations (CLAs), families and individuals. The approach will empower members of the community and the area land committees in the demarcation, inspection and validation process using a mobile application that allows the capture of boundaries of the land in a digital format along with the details of ownership, land use and rights. This software has been fully integrated with the NLIS. The process of integration was a learning process for all stakeholders and empowered the MLHUD personnel and contributed to efforts to integrate other software solutions with the NLIS.

The mobile application uses the Land Administration Domain Model (LADM) structure which is compatible with the national land information system and guarantees the integrity of the information captured. The nature of the software allows usage of the tool even when off-line, with the usage of the aerial photography and transfer later the information to the NLIS.

Buliisa District in the Albertine Rift in Western Uganda was selected by MLHUD for the initial pilot due to pressing needs of oil. Kigwera Sub County was identified by the District Government because of the relatively low number of land related conflicts and the fact that it is the location for the planned oil pipeline. The initiative significantly strengthens the capacity, equity and resilience of all stakeholders including government representatives, civil society actors and beneficiaries to effectively deal with pressures on land tenure associated with the extraction of oil in the region.

Cadasta is focussed on working through Government, providing technical expertise to the stakeholders and empowering another local innovative IT company Ujamaa Tribe which will continue to provide technical support. Cadasta is also working in close cooperation with a local non-government organization Civic Response on Environment and Development (CRED) to manage community mobilization. Cadasta provided necessary support to training relevant representatives of the MLHUD, the Buliisa District Land Officer and District Land Board (DLB), Area Land Committee (ALC) and the Sub-county level. A critical contribution of Cadasta is its close working relationship with MLHUD and the fact that the software solution adopted will facilitate full integration of CCOs with the NLIS to avoid duplication of plotting and secure land tenure in Uganda.

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