



Land Governance

Advisory Service

The challenge

A large part of the world's population depends on land to survive. However, global changes are endangering this resource through the continually growing population in need of ever more food and land. Ongoing industrialisation and urbanisation are consuming more and more fertile land. In addition, climate change is jeopardising soil productivity and agriculture in many countries, while rising prices for land and food have also intensified land speculation in recent years. By reducing the amount of available land, these developments are continuously increasing competition and conflict over land. Those who stand to lose the most in the competition for available land are those who have been cultivating it for generations: indigenous peoples and smallholder farming families. Their property, use and disposition rights, which are based on tradition and social ties, are often undocumented. Creating and documenting fair land rights is one of the main challenges for rural development. Legal certainty and long-term planning for land users are the key to investments and a sustainable and productive rural economy, as well as an important factor for stabilising democratic structures.

Our approach

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH seeks to strengthen the property, use and disposition rights of people in our partner countries. We help our partners to introduce the good governance practices needed to use land and related resources in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable way. This includes e.g. developing laws and creating institutions to improve land administration and use. Land policy measures must be implemented in a transparent and public process. We are committed to strengthening local capacities for resolving conflicts, for example by training mediators.

Our services

We offer advice on drafting and implementing national land policies, share practical knowledge on all aspects of land governance and help with land registration and sustainable integrated land use planning. To this end, we work to raise awareness among decision-makers and mediate between stakeholders engaging in dialogue on land governance. We advocate the equal participation of all stakeholders and encourage respect for traditional, often unwritten rights, provided that they comply with human rights and democratic principles. We focus on safeguarding the property, use and disposition rights of disadvantaged groups such as pastoralists and indigenous peoples. We are particularly committed to securing the rights of women. Secure access to land for different population groups has been thus enshrined in policy and law for the first time.

We also offer advice on developing transparent land administration structures and introducing tools for land management as part of reform processes. We provide support e.g. in opening land registry offices, creating cadastral, establishing land evaluation as a basis for taxation, developing a land market and initiating land use planning. The introduction of IT systems is fundamental in the documentation of land rights since they increase transparency, improve data management in public administration and simplify the data use for landowners.

We make a significant contribution to the implementation of international guidelines and initiatives, such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security.



The benefits

As a development organisation with operations around the world, GIZ has considerable experience and broad technical and methodological expertise in land governance at its disposal. We tailor our advisory services to each country and situation. Our partner countries benefit from the establishment of institutions that guarantee individual and collective property, use and disposition rights, and sustainable land use planning. This certainty encourages responsible investments and the sustainable use of land resources, which contributes to rural and urban economic development. The resulting structural policy changes and the use of professional strategies for conflict mitigation help to reduce and resolve conflicts over land – and strengthen democratic developments.

An example from the field

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ has been implementing the global project “Responsible Land Policy” since 2015. In eight countries, the project has been working with civil society, private sector and policymakers to improve the framework conditions for land policy (Ethiopia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Laos, Peru and Uganda). Together with its partners, the project aims to introduce transparent procedures and mechanisms in land administration, thereby improving the population’s situation with respect to land rights, contributing to the resolution and reduction of land conflicts and strengthening the social and ecological sustainability of private investments. The global project has already achieved important results: since 2015, it has already been able to strengthen the land rights of over 110,000 small farming households in the mentioned partner countries. Of these, more than 44,000 households have registered their land rights in the name of the woman or together as a couple. In addition, the project has helped to resolve nearly 3,700 land conflicts and sensitised almost 60 agricultural investors to sustainable and responsible investments based on international guidelines.

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