



SNAPSHOT

Making Land Registries a Reference Point for Reform



Photo: The newly installed waiting area at the registry that was funded by USAID

"Prior to USAID support, it used to take between 3-4 days for a file to be retrieved at the registry, with both phase one and two completed, USAID has helped the Kilifi Lands Registry reduce that amount of time to 2-3 minutes! This is helping the registry meet its intended objective."- Peter Joakim Project Manager- Kilifi Lands Registry

In the coastal region of Kenya, poverty, lack of proper formal education, heavy dependency on illegal substances as well as landlessness are the region's biggest challenges. In spite of the region being endowed with natural resources and beautiful physical features, land remains the largest hindrance to the region's economic advancement. Land disputes in the six counties in the area have been a constant source of conflict among the local inhabitants with feelings of aggression from the ancestral land owners towards those they perceive as illegitimate owners due to their suffering during forced evictions and displacement from land their families had historically owned and occupied. With the 2010 Constitution laying down a framework for major land reforms that offer a more equitable land tenure management, key policies are yet to be fully put into place highlighting the need for a model land registry that the people of the coast can identify with and relate the much needed change in the land reforms.

To advance land reform at the Coast as well as increase the level of user satisfaction by the residents, USAID helped to support the Kilifi Lands Registry Office (KLRO) to improve its efficacy in key processes including access, retrieval and sharing of data as well as building the capacity of the registry staff to ensure maximum efficiency at the registry and heightened satisfaction by the registry users.

Building off the successes of USAID's initial support to the registry that involved providing additional storage facilities for the land files, increasing the physical security of the registry and its precinct in order to protect critical land documents and creating an improved work environment for the registry workers, USAID and the Kilifi lands registry office noted that there was an existing gap in the need for appropriate documentation of crucial land files. In an effort to eliminate land brokers and promote accountability at the registry USAID partnered with the KLRO to create a simplified electronic filing and management system. The system would significantly reduce the transaction times at the registry.

With USAID's support the registry was able to engage a consultant, who duplicated the database developed in the Kitale Lands registry in a previous grant by USAID, with the activation of the database the registry was able to engage interns who inputted land registry files enabling secure data access and sharing. "The new electronic filing system has greatly impacted service delivery at the registry, especially during searches where clerks have correctly identified a file and given accurate information on it, with USAID's support, the Kilifi lands registry is creating a new track record in service provision" said Peter Joakim, Project Coordinator- KLRO

To ensure a culture of knowledge sharing, USAID helped support staff from the Kilifi lands registry to visit the Kitale lands registry so as to glean from them on what pitfalls to avoid and share lessons learned and experiences. In addition to this USAID also helped the Kilifi lands registry team to have a team building retreat in which they were taken through a change management course to enable them to embrace the new developments at that the registry. With the success of the project Mr. Joakim stated that "The digitalization of land, the exchange visit and the change management training USAID supported the registry with, has left a mark of excellence in the Kilifi lands registry making it a reference point where other land registries will have to benchmark themselves on"

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