

NATIONAL LAND OBSERVATORY IN BURKINA FASO (NLO) Burkina Faso Land Actors Work Toward a Common Understanding of Land Tenure Issues and Practices

Photo Credit: NLO



**Staff Members and Experts of the NLO
Executive Secretariat at a Conference
Organized by the Laboratoire
Citoyennetés**

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

In pursuit of its mission to reduce land conflict and improve land governance, the Burkinabe National Land Observatory is laying the foundation for permanent monitoring, analysis and facilitated debate of land issues in the country. When the NLO was established, it was very difficult to envision how to actually produce valuable information to a large public in order to serve the decision-making regarding the land reform in Burkina Faso.

CHALLENGE

In July 2014 the National Land Observatory was established in Burkina Faso to monitor and analyze land tenure practices in the country, and to share the specialized information with a broad community of stakeholders. The ultimate goal of these activities is to improve land governance and mitigate the currently pervasive risk of land conflict.

The NLO Charter classifies the new organization as an “association” – a hybrid category that differentiates the NLO both from government agencies and NGOs. Consistent with its legal status the NLO comprises four collèges, or constituent organizations, including the Central Government, Local Governments (known as Territorial Collectivities), Civil Society (generally represented by NGOs) and the Private Sector. This inclusive coalition of actors shares a common interest: access to improved and more accurate information regarding land tenure and land property rights issues in Burkina Faso, and achievement of informed policy-making based on independent and impartial studies.

The challenge is to build a decision-making tool capable of gathering and analyzing key data coming from different horizons, at different scales and quality, and feeding the data into a standardized system founded on rigorously and broadly vetted sets of thematic indicators. For example, evaluation of trends regarding formalization of land property rights may in part be based on property records including location, shape and related tenure information or number of new ownership certificates delivered by local land bureaus. The same data may be analyzed to evaluate such diverse trends as relative access to land on the part of women, the relationship between formal land rights and investment, or the growth of agribusiness in specific settings. Along with these multiple themes and data needs is the challenge of

storing and managing information in efficient and usable ways. Success depends on proper design and management of a specialized database.

METHODOLOGY

The first step was to identify and hire a local specialist with maximum knowledge of database management including spatial information. The knowledge and skills of the NLO database specialist regarding land tenure and property rights was ensured through a rigorous training program completed during the first few months following establishment of the NLO. More recently, USAID database specialists have been working with the NLO to design and build a specialized yet standardized database. In parallel, several workshops have been organized to develop and finalize the 5-year observation program of the NLO. The 5-year program specifies 3 primary domains for observation (rural, urban and climate change) and 14 land tenure issues areas, each with a set of associated monitoring indicators. In order to avoid duplicating efforts that had already been made, and to benefit from currently available information, an additional workshop was co-sponsored by the NLO and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization to inventory, evaluate and document all existing databases of land information in Burkina Faso.

SUCCESS

The NLO land information system has been designed and is now ready to be populated with data being gathered from different institutions and members of the NLO. The baseline data coming from the land administration and the institute of geography including local government boundaries (communes, department and regions) and the road network have been concatenated and are being completed with topographical, hydrological and other types of thematic information. The system is in the process of being secured with user-access rights in order to respect security of private information and ensure transparency of information. In short, the community of land tenure stakeholders in Burkina Faso is now looking forward to transformation of the raw data into information assessing the initial status of the 14 issue areas identified in the 5-year observation program based on the standardized monitoring indicators adopted for each theme.