

U4 Expert Answer



Ethiopia: Overview of corruption in land administration

Query

Please provide us with an overview of the corruption and corruption risks in urban and rural land administration in Ethiopia. What are the drivers? How can donors influence in building a solid and transparent land administration?

Purpose

We would like to prepare our approach to the issue and our dialogue with the government.

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Summary

Land is a vital resource and a driver of economic growth and development. The way it is governed and administered therefore has a significant impact on a country's future. Experts agree that land is not put to good use in Ethiopia. Food insecurity and under-nutrition continue to be major problems. In addition, the country is plagued with corruption that permeates all sectors, including land administration. Land administration is seen to be rife with petty corruption as well as state capture. This is driven by an absence of

clear policies, strong institutions, transparency and public participation, and resources.

Improving land governance is key in assuring that land resources can be enjoyed by all parts of the population. Donors can play an important role in combatting corruption in land administration and building a well-functioning land administration by both supporting domestic government efforts as well as engaging in international and multi-country initiatives. However, donors are advised by experts and civil society organisations to be mindful of the possible impact of their interventions on issues of land grabbing and forced relocations.

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1 Corruption risks in land administration in Ethiopia

Background

Land is a key resource for growth and development. Access to rural land holds the promise to reduce poverty and foster sustainable development (Solomon and Mansberger 2003). At the same time, in the context of rapidly growing urban populations – such as in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, one of the fastest growing urban areas in the world (New Geography 2012) – urban land and access to adequate housing becomes a highly sought-after commodity (World Bank 2012b).

In Ethiopia, access to land is extremely important and has become a major socio-economic asset. This is particularly the case for rural land, as Ethiopia has a very large rural population, which has stayed consistent at approximately 83-85% of the total population since 1998 (FAO 2014b). Though the labour force in agriculture has slightly decreased in recent years (from 83% in 1998 to 75% in 2013), agriculture remains a key part of Ethiopia’s economy (FAO 2014b). For example, coffee production alone constitutes about 10% of Ethiopia’s Gross Domestic Product and is the country’s largest export item (UNECA 2013).

Access to rural land has also been a potent political issue. For example, it was a key focus of the 1974 revolution that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie (World Bank 2012a). Today, Ethiopia’s constitution guarantees rural populations free access to rural land.

While Ethiopia is rich in agricultural and mineral resources, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Under-nutrition of the population continues to be a major problem. According to statistics by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), there was a 40% prevalence of under-nutrition in 2010-2012 (FAO 2014b). Although Ethiopia has made improvements in its Human Development Index¹ results (with an increase of 44% since 2000), it continues to rank among the lowest, at 173 out of 187 assessed countries (UNDP 2012). Food insecurity caused by droughts and inadequate land policies are common and the survival

of the population often depends on international food assistance (FAO 2014a). Even after years of foreign development assistance and food aid, the country still struggles to address the root causes of food deficits and poverty (Tetra Tech 2013).

Landlessness is a major problem in Ethiopia. One of the reasons is the high and increasingly growing population (Ethiopia is currently Africa’s second most populous country). Another is the issue of land grabbing and resettlement. Human rights activists and experts warn about the negative impacts of agricultural investments and the government’s so-called “villagisation” programme, which have forcibly displaced thousands of people from their lands (Oakland Institute 2013).

Land, in particular rural land, has become scarce in Ethiopia (World Bank 2012b). This scarcity affects especially younger peasants, women and re-settlers (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010). Adding to the problem is that despite rural overcrowding, Ethiopian land policies are argued to be preventing rural-urban mobility (Solomon and Mansberger 2003).

Overview of land administration in Ethiopia

Due to the significance of land for a country’s growth and development, experts argue that the need for its appropriate administration and management is key for the country’s future. Land administration is defined as the regulatory framework, institutional arrangements, systems and processes that encompass the determination, allocation, administration and information concerning land (Solomon and Mansberger 2003).

A detailed overview of Ethiopia’s land administration can be found in two World Bank studies from 2012: the [Land Governance Assessment Framework study on Ethiopia](#) and the [Diagnosing Corruption in Ethiopia](#) report.

Land tenure in Ethiopia has undergone dramatic shifts – from feudalistic systems under the monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) to socialist land policies under the Derg military government (1974-1991), to the current system under the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) who took control in 1991. This has left populations uncertain about their rights (Tetra Tech 2013). Today, experts see Ethiopia’s land administration as a major source of

¹ The Human Development Index is a summary measure for assessing human development in three dimensions: life expectancy, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The score ranges from 0 (worst) to 1 (best).

concern given the country's level of poverty and development.

In Ethiopia, all land is under public/state ownership. While land is not subject to sale or other means of exchange, the government does recognise use rights and holdings (Solomon and Mansberger 2003).

The country's legal and institutional structure with regard to land administration has been criticised for being unnecessarily complicated. While the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is the key responsible organ for the implementation of land administration laws, existing legislation is found on a piecemeal basis in different parts of the civil code and rural and urban land laws (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010). Moreover, Ethiopia's federal structure² gives its regions a lot of autonomy, which, in turn, has led to a coexistence of different laws and institutions with unclear responsibilities at different levels (World Bank 2012b).

Urban land

Urban land administration is delegated under the federal constitution to city governments and municipalities (World Bank 2012a). However, there is no common system to administer land in urban areas (World Bank 2012a).

Urban land is provided through a lease system,³ a perpetual permit system⁴ and separate legislation for condominiums (World Bank 2012a). While the 2002 [Urban Land Lease Holding Proclamation](#) stipulates that the leasehold system will apply to all urban land areas irrespective of how they were acquired, relevant authorities have yet to adopt the leasehold system (World Bank 2012b). This has led to the coexistence of different systems and a high level of informality (World Bank 2012b). In addition, there is no real system to

² Ethiopia's constitution provides for a federal government with nine regional states. Experts agree that the constitution allocates significant powers and responsibilities to regional states (Habib 2011). In the case of land, for example, the [constitution](#) states that state governments have the right to administer land and natural resources in accordance with laws enacted by the federal government (Art. 52(c)) and determine and collect land use fees (Article 99.2).

³ The lease system has terms ranging up to 99 years. It requires payment of the agreed-on lease amount to the relevant government within a period of time to be determined by regions or city government within the lease contract (World Bank 2012b).

record rights and restrictions, and the registry faces capacity issues (Yirsaw 2010).

There is a standard registration fee of ETB 45 (US\$4) per registered property plus an additional stamp duty of 2% of property value (World Bank 2012b). Nevertheless, as property value estimates are considered to be very low due to the absence of a standard property valuation system, experts argue that there is a significant loss of potential revenue (World Bank 2012b).

The urban planning and expansion of Addis Ababa, the capital, is also a contentious issue. This is particularly in the context of urban investments and growth. The World Bank study highlights the encroachment of the city's master plan in current urban developments (World Bank 2012a). For example, most of the green areas and some of the roads in the master plan have been allocated for private use (World Bank 2012a).

Moreover, the city's expansion also has consequences for the surrounding Oromia region. According to a new iteration of Addis Ababa's master plan, which has been met with opposition by Oromo residents, Oromia would lose an additional 36 towns and cities to Addis Ababa (Think Africa Press 2014). According to researchers, the city's expansion in the past has led to forced evictions and displacement of local Oromo residents (Think Africa Press 2014). Protesters fear that seceding Oromo lands to Addis Ababa would lead to more losses in Oromo identity and culture (Think Africa Press 2014).

Rural land

Rural land administration is delegated to the regions. These take the form of administrative bodies such as, for example, in the regions of Amhara and Tigray, the "Environment Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority" or in the region of Oromia, the "Lands and Environmental Protection Office" (World Bank 2012a). However, unclear responsibilities at different levels of government have led to overlaps. For example, in rural areas, both the land administration institutions and the investment authorities have a mandate to allocate land to investors (World Bank 2012b).

In addition, land registration and certification is also delegated to voluntary, community-elected Land Administration Committees at *kebele* (village) and

⁴ The permit system predominantly refers to permits granted prior to 1993 under which an annual land rent is paid to the government (World Bank 2012b).

woreda (district) level. While these committees have been argued to build community trust in land registration (World Bank 2012a), others point out that these committees are not always provided with sufficient resources (USAID 2011).

The Ethiopian constitution maintains that all rural residents are entitled to indefinite-term use rights to land (Gebeheyu 2014). However, the transferability of use rights is primarily restricted to inheritance (World Bank 2012b). Moreover, land laws also mandate that landholders either farm their land or risk losing it through redistribution or expropriation (Gebeheyu 2014). In other words, rural landholders cannot lease out and stay away from their holdings and pursue non-agricultural livelihood strategies (Gebeheyu 2014). For example, in the Tigray region, land use right can be lost if the holder leaves the *kebele* for more than two years (Zevenbergen 2006).

Critics of the government-owned land system have argued that the fear of land redistribution have heightened the farmer's sense of tenure insecurity and undermined investment in productivity (USAID 2013). At the same time, critics also argue that it diminishes rural-urban mobility as farmers are bound to a life of farming in order to remain landholders (Gebeheyu 2014).

While land use is free for rural farmers, there are fees collected during rural land registration, namely for certificate costs (World Bank 2012b). However, these are waived for first-time registration in some states (World Bank 2012b). Registration fees range between ETB5 (US\$0.60) to ETB2 (US\$1) depending on the state (World Bank 2012b).

While experts have praised Ethiopia's rapid, pro-poor and gender-sensitive⁵ rural land right registration over the past years, issues still remain (World Bank 2012b). For example, only five of the nine regions have actually enacted laws to register rural land holdings (World Bank 2012a). In addition, Ethiopia does not have sufficient land record-keeping systems. This risks undermining the land registration process itself (World Bank 2012b). The tenure insecurity that this causes is argued to lead to informality and hinder rural income diversification (World Bank 2012a).

⁵ This has been done by granting joint land ownership. For example, in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, the names of both spouses are recorded on land certificates and, after divorce, each is awarded half the land (Zevenbergen 2006).

Forms of corruption in land administration in Ethiopia

Corruption is perceived to be a serious problem in Ethiopia. It is ranked 111th out of 177 countries in Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index, with a score of 33 out of an achievable 100 (Transparency International 2013a). On the 2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Ethiopia scores 47.9% - lower than the continental average 51.6% (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2013).

Moreover, surveys also indicate that the situation may be deteriorating. A significant proportion of respondents (43%) of Transparency International's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) think that corruption levels in Ethiopia have increased in the two years preceding the survey (Transparency International 2013b). This is also reflected in the World Economic Forum's 2013/2014 Global Competitiveness Report, which states that the assessment of Ethiopia's institutions has been falling over recent years across almost all indicators, including property rights, ethics and corruption, undue influence and government efficiency (World Economic Forum 2013).

While the number of extensive studies on corruption in land administration in Ethiopia is limited, they indicate that corruption in the land sector in Ethiopia is a significant problem. The most detailed information can be found in two World Bank studies from 2012 (the Land Governance Assessment Framework [study on Ethiopia](#) and the [Diagnosing Corruption in Ethiopia](#) report). The land sector has also been a key focus area of investigations by the country's Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC). In its 2007/2008 Annual Report, 28 of the 63 cases investigated during the year were in the land administration and development sector (World Bank 2012b).

Corruption in the land sector can take a variety of forms, ranging from petty/bureaucratic corruption and corruption in auctioning processes, to state capture.

Petty and bureaucratic corruption

Bribery is noted to occur in many of Ethiopia's public services.⁶ Executives surveyed in the 2013/2014 Global

⁶ Bribery was stated to occur most frequently in exchange with the following public services: utilities (46%), tax revenue (41%), registry/permit (36%), and health (35%) (Transparency International 2013b).

Competitiveness Report list inefficient government bureaucracy and corruption as the second and third most problematic factors for doing business, respectively (World Economic Forum 2013).

The payment of bribery and informal fees also occurs in the land sector. For example, according to the 2010/2011 Global Corruption Barometer, 50% of respondents reported having paid a bribe to land services (Transparency International 2011). Indeed, according to the FEACC, the institutionalisation of informal fees is seen have become so commonplace in the land sector that the FEACC states it is “nearly impossible to get a plot of land without bribing city administration officials” (World Bank 2012a).

Moreover, another issue is the fraudulent activity of officials to allocate land to themselves. In fact, it is estimated that about 15,000 forged titles have been issued in Addis Ababa in the past five years (World Bank 2012a). In 2014, the Ethiopian Federal High Court handed down a three-year jail term to an offender of corruption who received 460 square meters of urban land through forged documents and in the name of a fake association, which didn't exist (FEACC 2014).

Corruption in auctioning processes

The auction processes for accessing urban land in particular are also argued to be highly susceptible to corruption. In urban areas, most allocation of public land for residential, manufacturing, commerce and construction purposes occurs through auctions. Land auctions can be lucrative, with 2014 seeing record bids from real estate development firms of ETB31,110 (USD\$1,590) per square meter for a plot of land in Addis Ababa (Addis Fortune 2014).

The efficacy of auctions in ensuring accurate pricing is argued to be questionable as there have been inexplicable fluctuations in auction prices in Addis Ababa (World Bank 2012a). Little information is publicly available about the allocation of public land, the amount allocated, the mode of allocation, the parties involved, or the conditions of allocations (World Bank 2012a). One method to illegally allocate municipal land is to allocate it to housing cooperatives controlled by developers who then sell off the land informally (World Bank 2012a).

In addition, there have been cases of collusion and illegal speculation in the bidding and auctioning of urban land. Tekle (2012) argues that the lack of transparency in the municipal authority and land administration system has created a group of wealth collectors and

land speculators that take advantage of public land resources. Under the lease system, land is allocated to private individuals and organisations with the obligation that land be developed according to the planned use within 18 months (World Bank 2012a). However, there are numerous cases of allocated land remaining idle for long periods of time (World Bank 2012a).

State capture

Experts agree that when land governance is weak, the powerful are able to dominate the competition for scarce land resources. In an extreme form, corruption can occur on a grand scale through “state capture”. State capture refers to “a situation where powerful individuals, institutions, companies or groups within or outside a country use corruption to shape a nation's policies, legal environment and economy to benefit their own private interests” (Transparency International 2009). In the land sector this means that those in power may illegally transfer lands to themselves or their allies (Palmer et al 2009). Or they may implement land distribution policies and laws in their favour (Palmer et al 2009).

Ethiopia's political institutions have been much criticised by experts, who argue that there is virtually no system of checks and balances between the different branches of government and that elections are neither free nor fair (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). The Bertelsmann Foundation also considers the judiciary to be highly influenced by the political elite and impaired by high levels of corruption (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). Indeed, land is allegedly often used as a political instrument by the elite and allocated based on political and private considerations (World Bank 2012a). For example, in 2005, following a post-election power vacuum, a substantial amount of land in Addis Ababa was allocated based on political allegiances (World Bank 2012a). In addition, there have been reports that officials from the ruling party tend to receive preferential access to land leases and credit (Freedom House 2013).

Drivers of corruption in land administration in Ethiopia

There are a number of elements in Ethiopia's current land administration system that can create potential entry points for corrupt activities to occur. These include: lack of clear policies, weak institutions, lack of transparency, and limited public participation, and capacity challenges. These points relate to both urban and rural land.

Lack of clear policies

The Ethiopian land administration system is troubled with a high degree of informality. One of the main causes of this is the absence of clear legislation as well as confusion about the applicability of legislation. Indeed, where there is legislation, implementation guidelines are oftentimes lacking, which creates confusion (World Bank 2012b).

No single document sets out Ethiopia's land policy. Instead, laws and policies must be inferred from federal laws, together with laws and directives set by regional and municipal governments (World Bank 2012b). In some cases, there is confusion on the applicability of laws. Moreover, some land administration issues are determined by unpublished administrative directives that often change quickly and without public notice (World Bank 2012b). For example, there is no clear system of land valuation. The multiple land valuations currently in place have also created opportunities for collusion in reducing tax liabilities and can lead to inequities in the compensation for expropriated property (World Bank 2012a).

Studies estimate informal settlements to be as high as 90% of housing units in urban sectors, both among affluent sections of the population (World Bank 2012a). The lack of an effective dispute resolution in the land administration system gives officials a lot of discretion in resolving disputes (World Bank 2012b).

Rules for access to land are not clear and some have better access than others, largely due to relationships or payment of bribes (World Bank 2012a). The private sector usually cannot rely on or wait for the lease or auction process, so it looks to other means (World Bank 2012a).

Weak institutions

As with legislation and policies, there is a lack of clarity regarding the roles, responsibilities and mandates of institutions. Indeed, experts note that there is an absence of a strong national institution that gives clear policy as well as technical and financial guidance for both rural and urban lands (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010).

For example, in Addis Ababa, there is a lack of clarity regarding the roles of the central administration and the 10 sub-cities in allocating land administering rights over land (World Bank 2012b). According to the FEACC this led to a case in which land allocated to successful winners of land auctions was already allocated to other individuals through negotiations for unknown reasons (World Bank 2012b).

Some institutions are responsible for both policymaking and implementation, which may lead to conflicts of interest. By assigning members of legislative councils to serve on land administration committees, there have been cases of issuances of directives that specifically target to influence the resolution of specific cases (World Bank 2012b).

Lastly, there are concerns regarding oversight and accountability. For example, there is no well-developed complaint mechanism. Presently, mechanisms to handle complaints on land registration in urban areas operate outside the registry so there is little monitoring of registry staff or proactive systems to discourage illegal activity by registry staff (World Bank 2012a). Without proper dispute resolution systems, people may be forced to consider alternative means of dispute resolution, including corruption (World Bank 2012a).

Lack of transparency and public participation

Another key issue and driver of corruption is the lack of transparency and access to information. Lack of transparency is seen to permeate almost all aspects of land administration (World Bank 2012a).

For example, some of the policies that govern land administration are determined on the basis of unpublished directives, as mentioned above. This creates a system of uncertainty and lack of clarity for those involved in land administration and may feed corruption.

Only about 25% of individually held urban properties have been recorded and the records are not reliable or conclusive (World Bank 2012a). About 70% of rural holdings have been registered, but the records are not being kept up to date, which reduces their usefulness (World Bank 2012a). Ethiopian land administration also lacks an inventory of public land systems (World Bank 2012a). Rural areas have no maps of registered holdings and urban areas have limited mapping of registered property (World Bank 2012a). This makes the issuing of forged documents easier.

There is also lack of transparency in the allocation of public land (World Bank 2012a). For example, due to the lack of transparency around tendering for land leaseholds, many people resort to corrupt means to gain land (World Bank 2012a).

Moreover, the lack of transparency heightens the insecurity of many land users who are unaware of their

rights. Experts agree that there is limited participation in the land administration process. This affects, for example, the preparation of land use plans (World Bank 2012b). Limited public consultation leads to very limited public awareness of policy and public engagement with policy implementation (World Bank 2012a)

Ethiopia's commercial leasing process to foreign investors has also been criticised for lacking transparency and public participation (USAID 2013). It is argued that the leasing process does not adequately consult with stakeholders (including current users of the land) and the terms of the leases are not transparent (USAID 2013). As such, there have been some cases large-scale agricultural projects that are not being used as intended (IFED 2009). Similarly, it is argued that Addis Ababa's master plan was developed with little public participation of Oromo people (Geeska Afrika Online 2014).

Resource challenges

Capacity limitations are also a driver of corruption. In this case, capacity is seen to mean both human resources as well as technical and financial resources.

One of the drivers of corruption has to do with staff funding. Underfunded staff with low motivation who operate in an environment of complicated procedures can have a direct impact on corrupt activities (Palmer et al 2009).

In addition, capacity constraints are seen as a major hindrance for the Ethiopian government to carry out its land administration and record land rights. While computerisation is being implemented in some level, it is challenged by the lack of other infrastructure, such as broadband telecom services (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010). Non-computerised systems have cumbersome procedures that take significantly more time (World Bank 2012b). In addition, there are issues of misplacement and loss of files (World Bank 2012b).

Lastly, financial unsustainability of the land registry is noted as an area of concern. For one, there continues to be limited investment in land administration (World Bank 2012a). In addition, the fees for registering land, both rural and urban are noted to be especially low and not conducive to financial sustainability (World Bank 2012b). Similarly, the lack of a clear land valuation system has led to very low rents that do not reflect economic values of properties, which results in local governments forgoing large amounts of potential

revenue, which could be used to provide services and infrastructure (World Bank 2012b).

While the rural registration process has been commended for positively impacting registration levels among women and the poor, it has also been criticised for allegedly creating an environment of corruption (World Bank 2012b). According to the World Bank study, low fees can provide scope for petty corruption as higher, informal fees become routine in some contexts (World Bank 2012a).

2 The role of donors in combatting corruption in land administration in Ethiopia

Comparative advantage of donors

Land reform has become an area of interest for the Ethiopian government, which, in recent years has been taking some positive legal and policy measures to improve the poor land administration (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010). However, there are still major gaps (Belachew and Aytenfisu 2010).

Donors can play an important role in addressing corruption in land administration. According to a U4 publication, donors have certain comparative advantages in tackling the problem of corruption in land administration, which puts them in a unique position. These advantages include (U4 2013):

- Donors can carry out a political economy analysis of the land system in the respective country, which enables them to a) figure out which parts of the government will be sympathetic to addressing land corruption and b) overcome issues of political will.
- Donors can mitigate the negative impacts of donor projects on land and corruption. Once donors understand the potential impact of any project (such as, market liberalisation, urban development, refugee resettlement, etc.) on land administration, it may be possible to design ways to reduce the potential negative effect.
- Donors can increase information and transparency by supporting the information gathering, data generation and dissemination process. This can be carried out in various ways, such as helping strengthen the country's media or carry out awareness campaigns.

- Donors can also exploit their international connections. For example, they have the comparative advantage of being able to investigate and influence large-scale international land deals. Donors can also share information on successes and failures in addressing land corruption across countries.

Land administration issues donors can focus on

Tackling corruption in administration requires improving governance. As such, efforts to combat corruption in land administration in Ethiopia are concerned with improving land governance. Where land governance is effective, benefits from natural resources can be felt throughout the population.

There are numerous entry points for improving Ethiopia's land administration. A variety of detailed recommendations have emerged through studies by the World Bank, such as through the [Land Governance Assessment Framework](#), which provide a diagnostic review of land governance at the country level, including a set of policy recommendations. Many of these are based on the FAO's "[Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#)". These guidelines – adopted in 2012 – promote secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests. They also provide a set of standards on land administration. For example, states should allocate tenure rights and govern tenure in a transparent and participatory way using simple procedures that are clearly accessible and understandable to all and record rights in a single and reliable recording system.

In the case of Ethiopia, some of the recommendations include (summarised from World Bank 2012a and World Bank 2012b):

- Provide clear guidelines on the implementation of federal laws.
- Define roles and responsibilities of different institutions, including standards for the separation of responsibility for policy formulation, implementation and handling of disputes as well as an agreement on appropriate oversight arrangements.
- Create systems of land records and management of records in both urban and rural areas, which is made public.
- Define rights, responsibilities and restrictions (and associated fees) of land tenure in both rural and urban areas.
- Carry out comprehensive public awareness campaigns, including systems to capture public feedback.
- Train land sector staff in ethical conduct and the development.
- Establish a regulatory body to address complaints and improve responsiveness to reduce corruption in Ethiopia's land sector.
- Create federal institution for land valuation that uses valuation process based on international standards.
- Establish a complete mapping of land types.
- Design federal policies of formalisation.

Donor approaches to improving land administration

Supporting government efforts

Experts argue that the first priority of a donor should be to support domestic governments in improving land administration processes (U4 2013). In recent years, many donors have implemented projects and programmes to address the issue in Ethiopia.

For example, the United States of America International Development (USAID) has had several programmes in the country that focus on improving land governance and land administration by providing support to the government. According to USAID's implementing partner, Tetra Tech, the Ethiopia Strengthening Land Tenure and Administration Programme (ELTAP) aimed at reforming the legal framework for land and property by harmonising regional land administration and use laws with federal legislation, improving awareness of land users and stakeholders, and strengthening the capacity of federal and regional governments to implement land registration (Tetra Tech 2014). The subsequent Ethiopia Land Administration Programme (ELAP) built on the remaining challenges by focusing on further strengthening rural land tenure security (Tetra Tech 2014). Their outputs included assisting some of the regions with drafting their land policies as well as providing technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Tetra Tech 2014). Under the ELAP and ELTAP projects, USAID, together with the government of Ethiopia, reportedly surveyed over one million parcels

of land and two hundred thousand of these parcels received certificates that officially recognised the landholder (USAID 2008).

In 2013, USAID launched a follow-up project, the Land Administration to Nurture Development (LAND). The LAND project focuses more on issues of economic growth and agricultural sector growth, as well as governance (USAID 2013). It aims to translate the lessons learned and successes from the Ethiopian highlands to the pastoral areas (USAID 2013).

Starting in 2002, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), together with a newly-established Ethiopian Bureau of Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use, carried out a land certification programme in the Amhara region in Ethiopia as part of its Sida-Amhara Rural Development Programme. According to Sida, within four years almost all of the rural land in the Amhara region was reportedly registered, with 98% of land using households having received a certificate (Sida 2010a). In addition, the programme designed a customised database software to computerise the land administration data (Sida 2010b). The programme also created maps of each land parcels, which had not existed before (Sida 2010b).

Exercising caution

As donors consider supporting government efforts on land governance, they are advised by human rights activists to be cautious about how their involvements can impact land grabbing and forced resettlements. Following reports of forced resettlements to make room for large-scale agricultural plantations in Gambella, Human Rights Watch called upon donors to ensure that they are not providing support for forced displacement or facilitating human rights violations (Human Rights Watch 2012).

Several [reports](#) from the Oakland Institute raised alarm about the scale, rate, and negative impacts of large-scale land acquisitions in Ethiopia that would result in the forced displacement of over 1.5 million people (Oakland Institute 2014). It included concern about the impact of USAID's land programmes. In 2014, in what was seen as a response to these reports, the United States Congress approved a bill that would prevent US assistance from being used to support activities that directly or indirectly involve forced displacement in the Lower Omo and Gambella regions (Oakland Institute 2014).

Engaging in international initiatives

There are also a variety of international efforts and initiatives to improve land administration, aimed at improving donor coordination and exchange of information.

For example, the [Global Donor Working Group on Land](#) aims at improving the exchange of information and lessons learned amongst donors on land governance issues. It also aims at improving donor coordination at the international level and agreeing on joint action where suitable. Another example is the [African Peer Review Mechanisms](#), an instrument established in 2003 by the African Union in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for African Development. The objective of the APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards, standards and practices on a variety of issues, including land governance. Another example is the [Global Land Tool Network](#) – facilitated by UN HABITAT –, an alliance of global, regional and national partners contributing to poverty alleviation through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure. The network has also developed a series of [tools](#) that can help solve problems in land administration and management.

Some donors have also become involved in multi-country partnerships in Ethiopia. In 2013, USAID announced a partnership between the governments of Ethiopia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany to improve rural land governance (USAID no date). The partnership aims to foster collaboration between Ethiopia and its development partners to strengthen rural land governance and realise the FAO guidelines (USAID no date). One of the programmes involved in this programme is the abovementioned LAND project.

A widely discussed international initiative is the so-called "Land Transparency Initiative". A [report](#) by the Overseas Development Institute presented for discussion at the 2013 G8 summit outlines a possible global initiative that would be similar to other multilateral transparency initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative. In June 2013 it was announced that the G8 and 15 developing countries would work together to ensure the poorest have access to their country's natural resources by improving the transparency of their extractive industries and land rights (Gov.uk 2013). However, some NGOs have expressed their concern that this initiative will not stop land grabbing and may, in fact, undermine the

implementation of the FAO guidelines (Transnational Institute 2013). Therefore, as with supporting domestic efforts, experts advise donors to be cautious and consider the full implications of their interventions.

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