BRIEFING NOTES

to improve our understanding and ability to ask the right questions and take effective action on land matters in West Africa

"Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee

Land Allocation Information Systems: Making Land Registration Accessible to Local Actors

by Patrick d'Aquino[1], Sidy Mohamed Seck[2] and Mathias Koffi[3], December 2014

In many parts of rural West Africa natural resource management and economic development are hampered by recurrent land conflicts and lack of local control over land. In countries where land management has been decentralised, these constraints can be addressed by establishing information systems about land rights that are recognised by the State. Land allocation information systems (LAIS) enable local governments to manage individually allocated land rights that are recognised by the State in a more effective and transparent manner. In Senegal, the LAISs put in place by seven local governments have greatly reduced abuses of the system and considerably improved security of tenure for all the occupants concerned.

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What Are Land Allocation Information Systems?

Land allocation information systems (LAIS) are a tool that decentralised local governments can use to secure and manage land rights that are recognised by the State. The process for putting them into place can also be used to transfer certain capacities to local actors, enabling them to:

- produce and update parcel maps, using GPS to locate and demarcate parcels;
- systematically produce and organise information about each parcel, and store and update all the documents needed to identify and secure rural producers' land rights in accordance with land legislation. A specific manual on land procedures is available to guide users through the process;
- put in place the necessary local organisations and frameworks for fair and effective local land management.

At a time when support for decentralisation policies increasingly involves transferring the management of land and natural resources to local governments, LAISs can be used to put in place functional and (because they are autonomous) sustainable decentralised systems for registering and managing land rights that are recognised by the State.

LAISs Are Quick and Inexpensive to Put in Place

This system does not have to be computerised, and if it is, the electronic format is designed to be accessible to local actors. On average it costs around 5 million francs CFA to set up a functional and autonomous LAIS in a rural community, including training and allowing about 6 months to transfer the system to local actors. An electronic LAIS costs an average of 15 million francs CFA (for equipment, software, training and data collection), with an initial 6-month training period and up to 2 years of periodic support (monitoring, control, maintenance and assistance) to enable local managers to appropriate the system.

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A technical support team will be needed to help set up the LAIS and lead the training and learning processes that enable local actors to appropriate the system. The support team should endeavour to transfer the skills needed to map parcels and register land rights as quickly and cheaply as possible, so that all the data can be incorporated into the information system.

Setting up a Land Allocation Information System

● PHASE 1: Design, Information and Training

Design. The technical team is responsible for explaining the different stages of the process, organising and circulating information, and producing a manual on land procedures. See document "LAIS Figures 1, 2 & 3" for figures.

Information. Local actors are then given more detailed information about the current legislation, especially land registration procedures. Although legal texts now take increasing account of local practices, many rural communities and their elected local officials do not understand the current legislation or conditions for productive land use. Therefore, it is very important to ensure that they have a sound understanding of the provisions that are in place so that they can appropriate the land management tools. To do this, the procedure for putting an LAIS in place includes two information campaigns to raise awareness and share information about rural land management. They are separated by a 6-month gap, when the Land Procedures manual should be distributed.

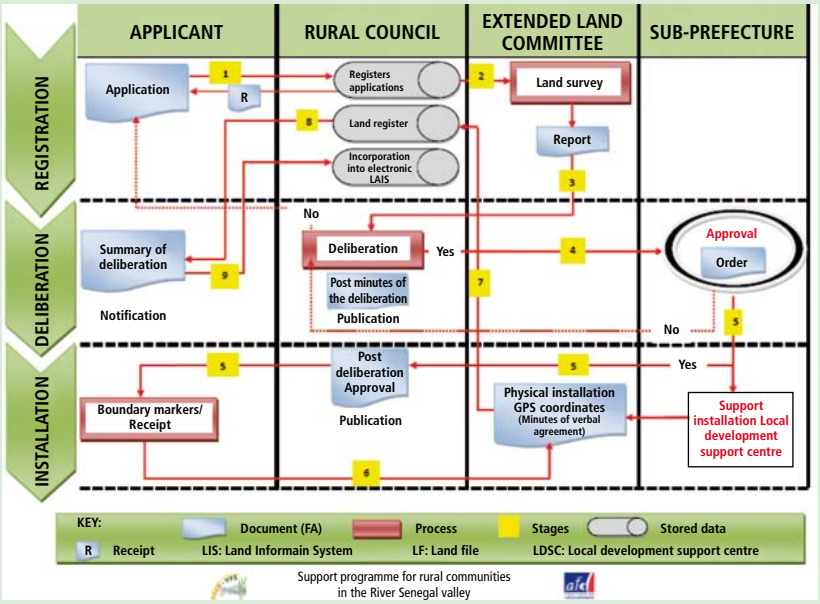
Training. For the future LAIS to be effective, the local bodies that support land management will need to be strengthened (depending on the context, these will include local government committees, inter-village committees, local development support centres), and specific training (over four weeks, plus regular assistance over several months) will need to be delivered to two types of local actor: technical agents (local government administrative assistants, agents from the state services and/or territorial administration, etc.) and the local authorities (local government and/or territorial administration). This training should cover current land legislation, how to use mapping materials (satellite images, maps, simple GPS), understanding documents and procedures to secure and manage land, and basic computer skills (for electronic LAIS).

● PHASE 2: Collecting, Processing and Storing Land Information

In the next stage, local actors can start collecting, processing and archiving land information. The technical team should not intervene directly in these processes as its role is to enable local actors to work autonomously on these different registration tasks, not to do it for them. A supervisory committee composed of members of the local government and the authorities, technical services, land registration services and other resource persons should follow and support the whole procedure.

Data collection starts with socio-land and mapping surveys (some using

Figure 1: **Process for Setting Up a Land Allocation Information System in Senegal** (Memoris 2011)



GPS) that will be used to set up the land files. These participatory surveys provide information about any informal local rights associated with parcels for which land rights recognised by the State will be allocated. They also gather qualitative and quantitative data about:

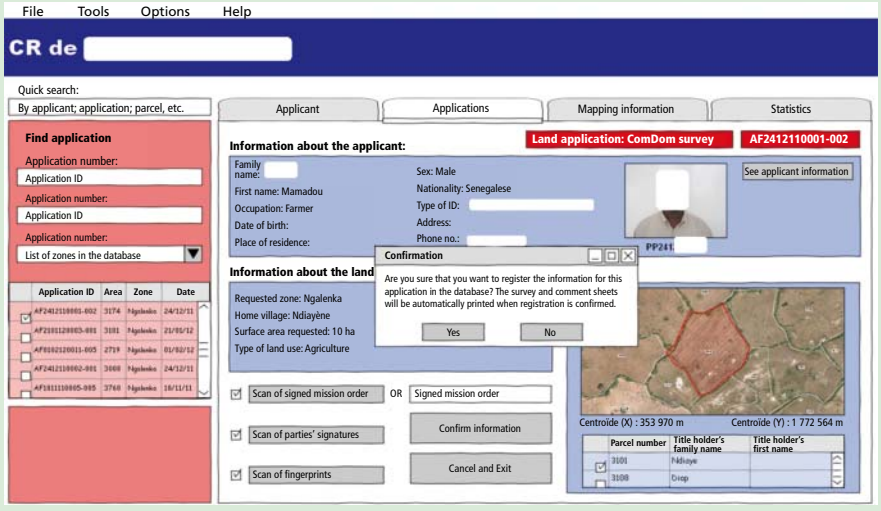
- the parcel (demarcation, surface area, types of limitation and forms of occupancy and land use);
- holders of land rights (identity and, if this is deemed necessary, customary or local modes of appropriation – including those not recognised by the State – and any related conflicts);
- and, if possible and necessary, more generic information on current land practices in the territory concerned (types of land transaction, local management practices, means of securing tenure, level of tenure security, etc.).

These socio-land surveys are known as 'adversarial' because they are conducted in the presence of neighbours and other stakeholders. Depending on the context, the survey findings are published in various ways, such as being posted in public notices, read out at public meetings or broadcast on local radio stations.

This information is then incorporated into the LAIS, which consists of a database and a synthetic mapping document showing the location and numbers of the parcels. This system contains all the information required for the land administration forms, and is managed by certain local actors (usually local technical agents). If necessary, the competent administrative authority will check the legality of the documents at the end of the registration phase. Duplicate copies of

Figure 2: **Type of Cartographic Information Shown on Synthetic Documents (including parcel numbers)**

Figure 3: **Information to Be Entered by Applicants**



the land register are held by the local government and the administrative authority.

● PHASE 3 (optional): Computerisation

The database and mapping document can be generated as hard copy, and the LAIS can also be computerised at the local level. To ensure that local governments have the requisite competences and equipment in place, a specific six-week training course for local government staff is delivered over a period of six months to a year. Data from each computerised local LAIS can then be collated and consolidated in a regional or national land information system that centralises and processes all information on land rights.

Conditions for Effectiveness

- Local governments need the requisite demarcation and mapping tools (simple GPS, compass, surveyor's chain, camera), forms (which differ greatly from one country to the next) and small items of office equipment.
- Local technical and administrative staff should have the capacity to work on different LAIS management tasks.
- The technical team needs a sound understanding of the methodological procedure.
- The Information System should be officially recognised by the State and included in the relevant legal provisions. ●

FURTHER INFORMATION

>> "Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee, 2013. *Amélioration de la gouvernance foncière au Sénégal. Enjeux actuels et défis à venir:* *http://www.hubrural.org/Publication-Amelioration-de-la.html?lang=fr*

>> Koffi M., 2013. "Conflits fonciers, la prévention par la régularisation", *Revue Nouvel Horizon/Sénégal* nº 879: *http://www.hubrural.org/Publication-La-regularisation.html?lang=fr*

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>> Koffi M., Galpin C., 2011. "Quelles places pour les outils dans le processus de sécurisation du foncier au Sénégal", *Revue Nouvel Horizon/Sénégal* nº 781: *http://hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/Place_des_outils_dans_le_processus_de_securisation_fonciere_Vfinale.pdf*

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