

Final Statement of the workshop on Land Tenure Networking in Sub-Saharan Africa, Imperial Hotel, Addis Ababa, 24-26 January 2000

1. The Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was “*to develop a practical framework for a programme of African driven network activities on land tenure and land policy for continued learning information exchange, collaborative research and capacity building for policy debate and practical implementation involving governments and civil society.*”

The workshop, which was organised and hosted by OSSREA, was attended by participants from eighteen African countries; namely Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. The following donor and international support organisations: DFID, GTZ, French Co-operation, SIDA, UN-FAO, IUCN, World Bank, the IFAD Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, NRI, OXFAM, UN-ECA, CILSS and IIED also participated. The workshop was sponsored by DFID.

2. Broad Areas of Assessment

After two days of deliberation both in plenary and in sub-regional caucuses, the workshop agreed as follows:

a) Assessment of Need

Note was taken of the fact that over the past decade, the vast majority of African countries have initiated programmes of policy development, legislative reform, administrative restructuring and conflict management on issues relating to land, land rights, and land use. Despite differences in colonial experience, language, culture and environment, it was observed that these programmes are directed at remarkably similar issues and problems as are the preliminary prescriptions emerging from specific country-level processes. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that individual African countries and regions are drawing on each others' experiences. Need exists, therefore, for the establishment of mechanisms which would facilitate active networking by both governments and civil society, including practitioners, scholars and policy makers at national, sub-regional and regional (i.e. continent wide) levels.

b) Mission and Objectives

It was agreed, therefore, that interactive networks be established at each of these levels. The mission of such networks would be:

to build an enabling environment for the formulation and implementation of people-centred land policies, laws and structures necessary for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in Africa.

The primary objectives arising from that mission which networks must strive to achieve are to:

- develop capacity for reciprocal learning, exchange of expertise and comparative research and analysis
- build information systems at all levels for use by governments, NGOs, community based organisation and researchers
- provide support services to these stakeholders in their efforts to influence and improve-decision-making about and implementation of land policies and laws.
- facilitate regional (i.e. including sub-regional and national) co-operation in all issues relating to land policy development

c) **Thematic Approach and Activities**

Note was taken of the fact that land issues in Africa arise in complex political economic, cultural and environmental contexts and that these are dynamic and vary from country to country and from one sub-region to the next. It was agreed, therefore, that the thematic approaches and specific activities that can be undertaken by networks can only be identified in terms of broad categories.

It was agreed that, as a starting points, focus be dissected at the following broad themes;

- land policy and legislative development strategies
- improving tenure systems and protecting land rights (whether customary, statutory, common property based, or individual),
- environmental security and conflict management, and
- gender dimensions of land rights protection

Consistent with these themes, the specific activities which networks should strive to undertake would include:

- the establishment, maintenance and periodic update of information systems on each of these themes
- the facilitation of regular exchange of information and materials through workshops, consultations, exchange visits and electronic interaction, drawing on local, national, sub-regional and regional developments.
- the publication of newsletters, fact sheets and bulletins (including the development and management of web-sites) reporting on land issues at all levels
- encouragement of collaborative research within and between sub-regions, and
- carefully targeted advocacy on issues of topical interest

d) **Structure, Membership and Management**

Having recognised the need for networking at all levels, the workshop agreed that the structural framework and membership of networks be guided by the following principles:

- the need to engage governments and civil society organisations in the networking process,
- the need to work towards structures and processes independent of but drawing legitimacy from the stakeholders which support and constitute the membership of any given network
- the desirability and feasibility of initiating networking activities first at the sub-regional level, supported by strong national networking arrangements

- the need to identify a co-ordinating framework (whether an individual, institution or committee) at each of those levels, and
- the development of vertical and horizontal linkages, amongst stakeholders (including governments) at all three levels.

It was further agreed that details relating to the components of networking structures, management dynamics and logistical arrangements at all levels should grow on the basis of need, circumstance, resources and infrastructure.

In this regard it was agreed that at the regional level (i.e. Africa -wide) the priorities in the short term would be the management of information and exchange of expertise.

e) Immediate Next Steps

It was agreed that immediate next steps should consist of the following activities:

- identification and/or refinement of sub-regional needs and priorities
- the development of projects for initial networking activities and further sub-regional consultations and
- the development of comprehensive inventories of national, sub-regional and regional stakeholders, resources and expertise
- the progressive launch of network activities on the basis of subsidiarity. (i.e. from national to sub-regional and regional levels; beginning at the lowest level appropriate for specific activities)

f) Forward Planning

- The need to designate an organisation to perform residual functions involving information, monitoring and interim co-ordination was recognised. In particular there is a need to reconvene a similar regional workshop in the next twelve months. It was resolved that until more permanent arrangements are agreed upon OSSREA should continue to perform those functions.

3. The Question of Corporate Name

The workshop agreed on the need for a corporate or working name for networking at the regional (continental) and sub-regional levels, encompassing a board range of lands issues (including tenure, land rights, land use and land policy).

It was proposed therefore that the network be called simply LANDNET AFRICA.

Each sub-regional component could then be referred to by its geographic position such as LANDNET AFRICA-East (or Southern, North, West, Horn etc.)

However, it was recognised that the sub-regional networks would need to agree on their own specific designations and exact geographical scope.

*Done in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
January 26th 2000*