

LANDNET WEST AFRICA

Progress, Achievements and Visions for the Future

Presentation to DFID Land Tenure Advisory Group 2nd May 2001

0. Introduction

This report outlines the progress and achievements for West Africa since the Landnet Africa planning meeting in Addis Ababa in January 2000. It then summarises the discussions held at a recent sub-regional workshop in Ouagadougou in February 2001. These discussions developed the vision of how the network wishes to be perceived, its principles of operation, the impacts which are expected and activities which will enable Landnet West Africa to achieve its goal.

1. Progress and impacts since Addis Ababa

National networks and coordinators have been established in Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria and Burkina (which already had an existing network, GRAF¹), Togo and Mali. Documents such as the Sunningdale workshop report (and book), and the report from the Addis Ababa planning meeting have been circulated within the region. National Landnet workshops or smaller meetings have been held in all countries except Nigeria, where other related events have taken place. The workshops have varied in size (44 participants in Ghana, 12 in Senegal) and in some cases, Burkina, Ghana and the sub-regional, have been supported by other donors – French Cooperation, GTZ and Ford Foundation. Spontaneous interest from two countries, Togo and Mali, which were not represented at Addis has been encouraged, and small donations given to support initial meetings. A core group meeting was held in Accra in January 2001 to prepare the sub-regional workshop. In February 2001, the sub-regional workshop was held in Ouagadougou to agree a work programme for the West Africa sub-regional network and to establish operational principles, structure and function. National networks are now developing their workplans and proposals for the year ahead.

The following impacts have been seen :

- The establishment of national networks in countries where none existed before.
- Interest shown by a range of individuals and institutions: government ministries and agencies including local government, ngos, academia, donors, private sector, traditional authorities and independent consultants. This interest was seen by participation at national and sub-regional workshops.
- Documentation and other exchange of information circulated within the region.
- Steering groups of a small number of committed individuals have been established in each country.
- Donor interest was shown by financial support given to national and sub-regional workshops.
- Strong interest indicated by CILSS² for future collaboration.

¹ Groupe de recherche et d'action sur le foncier

² Comité permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel

2. Vision of Landnet West Africa

Landnet West-Africa wants to be an authoritative forum of expertise and advocacy on land policy and land law. We want to be respected as a force to be reckoned with (*incontournable*) and to be a partner for :

- African sub-regional institutions (CILSS; ECOWAS; UEMOA ...³)
- international development institutions (IUCN; FAO; World Bank ...)
- governments and national projects (through national land networks)

Landnet West Africa also wants to give substantial input from an African point of view to the ongoing international debate and research about land issues.

Landnet wants to be a sustainable sub-regional institution, functioning through contributions of a diversity of donors and its members.

3. Principles of operation

The West Africa Landnet workshop identified the main principles that will promote the development and strengthening of the network:

- the network must be built from national level to sub-regional level;
- each national network is independent in the way it determines and develops its activities;
- the network's activities must be linked to ongoing programs at national and sub-regional level;
- as a network of networks, the sub-regional co-ordination must be very light;
- the fundraising strategy of the West Africa network must be to prioritise raising funds at national level from local donors and also from African sub-regional institutions (through the negotiation of working agreements – *protocols d'accord*)

4. Expected impacts

It is expected that through the networking process, civil society becomes more and more able to influence land policy, legislation and programs at national level.

In Burkina for example, the GRAF – Landnet Burkina is seen by many national programs and projects as the most powerful resource group on land issues. During a meeting on the World Bank proposal on land tenure security, the contribution of GRAF has been decisive in making the World Bank change its proposal. In Senegal, Landnet Senegal is working to support CNCR⁴ (the national farmers organisation) to influence the land law reform process. In Ghana, the start of the planning stage of a World Bank/Ministry of Lands project on land administration provides an important moment in policy implementation for Landnet Ghana to ensure dialogue with broader civil society.

³ ECOWAS – Economic community of West African States ; UEMOA – Union économique et monétaire ouest africaine

⁴ Conseil national de concertation de ruraux du Senegal

At sub-regional level, Landnet West Africa expects closer partnership with sub-regional African institutions to be able to influence the programs designed by those institutions. Particularly in the context of the ongoing process of West Africa sub-regional integration, Landnet West Africa expects to play a key role in the formulation of the land policy in ECOWAS and UEMOA.

Landnet West Africa expects to have an impact on improving the quality and quantity of research in the sub-region, including comparative research between anglophone, francophone and lusophone areas.

5. Activities at sub-regional level

Medium and long term activities (2002 and beyond)

- Preparing documentation on the existing research at sub-regional level
- Initiating research programs and comparative studies on themes that were not sufficiently treated
- Organising training sessions and promoting teaching and research on land issues
- Organising thematic workshops and seminars with publication of the proceedings
- Initiating inter-institutional internship and/ or technical support programmes
- Encouraging research and facilitating publication
- Developing strategies in order to benefit from the support of sub-regional and international institutions

Short term activities (2001-2002)

- Consolidating the existing national networks and helping to establish new ones
- Collecting and disseminating information between the different countries
- Identifying themes of common interest in the sub-region
- Developing collaborative partnerships with West Africa's sub-regional institutions and with the other sub-regional networks
- Develop a long term strategy and business plan
- Establish an institutional base for Landnet West Africa