

Creating a Neo-Customary Land Administration System for Sustainable Land Management

Sean Johnson (Eswatini), Jan van Bennekom-Minnema (Netherlands) and Sydney Simelane (Eswatini)

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SUMMARY

Poverty in the less developed world is largely a rural phenomenon, and in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty traps are most often found where there is subsistence agriculture taking place on land held either communally or on customary tenure terms. In the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) 54% of land is held by the King in trust for the Nation with powers delegated to Chiefs to allocate this land to family groups who hold it on customary tenure terms and use it for their livelihood needs. Improving the use and productivity of this land received support from the EU's global land governance programme for a project of Sustainable Land Administration and Management, which provides chiefdoms with tools to collect and maintain land information and capacities to use this information for managing land use. Implementation in four pilot areas has proved project feasibility but sustainability remains a question. Scale-up to the remaining 300+ chiefdoms depend on the generosity of donors. Early indications of the potential for sustainability are promising: open source software solutions adopted for data collection and processing appear robust; chiefdoms are adding unclaimed landholdings and new allocations to their registers; other chiefdoms are coming forward to request that the project covers their area. Institutional issues remain the principal doubt.

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