

## Assessing the Certification Process of Ethiopia's rural Lands

## Etablissement de la procédure de certification de terres rurales en Éthiopie

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### ABSTRACT

Many African countries have recently changed their land legislation or institutional setup with the goal of being able to recognize land rights and provide security of tenure to occupants in new and innovative ways. One key objective of doing so has been to establish systems of land administration that can provide country-wide coverage at an affordable cost, and that can be upgraded in a flexible way as and when the need to do so arises. While a systematic assessment of the performance of such systems would be of great importance to inform the policy debate, it is made difficult by a huge and widening gap between legal initiatives and actual implementation. The case of Ethiopia, where -within a rather short time frame- about 6 Million land use certificates were distributed, even though during the “first phase” no map or spatial reference is included, is thus of potentially large interest for policy makers.

In this paper, we use the example of Ethiopia to (i) describe how certification of land use rights was undertaken in different regions of the country; (ii) compute the costs of use right certification as well as maintenance of the registry and compare it to more traditional approaches; (iii) provide a descriptive assessment of the impact of certifying use rights on the number and incidence of land conflicts, gender, and land-related investment; and (iv) outline possible trajectories for the evolution development of the system in different circumstances. To do so, we draw on a survey of about 300 communities, complemented by case studies from all of the country's four main regions.

We find that, the scope for sharing of experience across regions and improvements in a number of procedural issues notwithstanding, the process to certify land use rights in Ethiopia has been very participatory and cost-effective (about US \$ 3.5 per household or less than US \$ 1 per plot). While investment- and productivity-impacts may take longer to materialize (and may be affected by a rather unfavorable policy regime), land right certification reduced conflict, helped to empower women, and improved governance at the local level. We assess advantages and disadvantages of rapidly rolling out a low-cost process (as compared to a higher-cost one) and use an analysis of unresolved issues that emerged in different contexts to illustrate the potential for (and cost of) improving on the basic system in a way that responds to local need, including the use of low-cost mapping techniques to add a spatial component to the information.

## RÉSUMÉ

Beaucoup de pays africains ont changé récemment leurs lois foncières ou leurs institutions pour reconnaître les droits fonciers, et assurer la sûreté légale aux occupants avec des méthodes nouvelles et innovatives. Un objectif très important est l'établissement d'un système d'administration de terres pour le pays entier à un coût abordable, amélioré par une méthode flexible, si nécessaire. Bien qu'une amélioration systématique des résultats de ces systèmes soit importante pour le débat et la décision politique, il est rendu difficile dû à un écart de plus en plus grand, entre l'initiative légale et l'adaptation pratique. L'Éthiopie est un bon exemple. Pendant une période brève, on a distribué six millions de certificats (sans carte ou référence spatiale).

Dans cet article, nous citons l'exemple de l'Éthiopie pour (i) décrire les méthodes de certification des droits fonciers entre les différentes régions, (ii) calculer les coûts de certification ainsi que d'entretien du registre et les comparer aux approches plus traditionnelles, (iii) évaluer l'effet de certification sur l'occurrence des conflits, l'égalité des femmes, l'investissement sur les terres; et (iv) faire un exposé des développements possibles de l'évolution du système dans des circonstances différentes. Nous utilisons les résultats d'un questionnaire dans 300 communautés, complété d'études de cas des quatre régions principales.

Malgré un nombre de problèmes mineurs, la procédure de certification de terres rurales en Ethiopie a eu une influence forte sur la communauté et a été bon marché (près de trois euros par ménage). L'effet sur l'investissement et la productivité a besoin de plus de temps, mais la certification a eu un résultat positif sur les conflits, et a aidé les femmes et le gouvernement local. Nous évaluons les avantages et les inconvénients de lancer rapidement une procédure bon marché pour tout le pays. Nous analysons les problèmes irrésolus, y compris les techniques bon marché pour créer les cartes et ajouter la référence spatiale.

## INTRODUCTION

Many African countries have recently changed their land legislation or institutional setup with the goal of being able to recognize land rights and provide security of tenure to occupants in new and innovative ways. Ethiopia is one of those countries that made such changes which includes locally administered rights in land, improved position of women related to land rights and (local) dispute resolution mechanisms. For the rural areas several Ethiopian states have introduced land administration systems that aim at issuing land use certificates for all (sedentary) farmers in that state at an affordable cost. Unlike many of such initiatives in other countries, the implementation of this has really caught on in Ethiopia and data has been collected on about six Million households, of which about half have actually received their ‘first phase’ certificates. This first phase is weak on the description of the land plots, which neither include a map, nor any kind of spatial reference (save a list of neighboring landholders), and only give a roughly measured or estimated indication of the acreage. Nevertheless the fact that it is covering large areas (and soon all rural landholdings in several states) makes it possible to have a real effect on the way land is administered and managed in those states. This differs from the ‘advanced’ cadastral and registry approaches that even after many years often only extend to certain pockets of a territory.

In this paper we give a description of the certification process, its participatory approach, as well as some strengths and weaknesses, based on a comparison of four Ethiopian regions (Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup>. Based on some figures on time and money involved with the process in Amhara an estimation of the costs of the certification project is presented. Some qualitative information on the impact of certification is presented, but the results from the household survey will only be available later.

## CERTIFICATION PROCESS IN ETHIOPIA

The Ethiopian Constitution states that all land belongs to the state and peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or to other means of exchange (article 40.2 Proclamation No. 1/1995). With regard to rural land, legislation regarding land administration and land use has been (re)enacted during the last ten years, both at the federal and at the regional level. The federal Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation No. 456/2005 (which recently replaced 89/1997) provides among others that

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1 short for Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region

2 the data for this comparison, as well as the costing exercise, was collected during a World Bank mission to Ethiopia that included the authors, from August 29 - September 9, 2005 during which four regions were visited, also see Deininger e.a., 2005.

farmers have a perpetual use right on their agricultural holdings, and that this right will be strengthened by issuing certificates and keeping registers.

The main actor in data collection for the registration and issuance of the certificates is a committee at the lowest level of local government (kebele or sub-kebele to use the Amharic term). The members of these so-called Land Administration Committees get training to undertake this endeavor, but do not get paid for their time. The level of support the committee gets during the process from (paid) officials (mainly from the intermediate level of government; woreda in Amharic) varies greatly between regions. In one region there is no support for data collection (but help with filling in the registers and certificates), and in another region both a surveying team and a land administration team will assist the committee in their work.

Although the numbers on progress are not always complete and fully consistent, the sheer size of them is very impressive. In Tigray 88% of the rural households received a certificate during 1998 and 1999. This amounted to 663.000 certificates. Of the remainder more than half was tackled in 2004.

Amhara aimed at certification of the whole region in 3 years. At the end of year 2 a completion rate of 79% was reported. Mention was also made of 4.5 Million holders expected, 3.5 Million certificates printed; 2.4 Million holders registered and 1.3 Million (first phase) certificates issued.

Oromia reports data collected for 2.5 Million households out of an expected 4.1 Million. Of the about 5000 kebeles, 3000 have been reported as fully collected. Issuing of certificates is, however, lagging much behind due to lack of capacity (both human and financial) at the woredas.

SNNPR aimed at doing the whole region in two years, expecting about 1.8 Million households. After one year 40% of the data was collected, but similar delays with issuing of certificates occur as in Oromia.

In none of the regions a (cadastral) map is being prepared, not even a sketch. Plots are, however, demarcated in the terrain, although not always with very durable materials. With traditional methods the size of the plot is determined (either using ropes or relying on knowledge of the number of ‘timads’<sup>3</sup> of a plot). In addition the plot is described by naming the neighbors on the N, E, S and W. Pilots with cadastral mapping have been undertaken mainly in Amhara, including a donor (SIDA) assisted project with use of advanced GPS-equipment and GIS-supported mapping functionalities. Costs of this seem to be too high for up-scaling this approach, and pilots in all four regions are under foreseen in a USAID assisted project.

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<sup>3</sup> one timad is the amount of land that can be ploughed with one pair of oxen in one day (about \_ ha)

The federal land law only provides a framework. Each region arranges rural land matters within the framework of this in its own regional Proclamation. The remainder of this paragraph contains an overview of the ongoing land administration activities for Tigray and for Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR, with an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. In Tigray the work started earlier than in the other regions.

## **Tigray**

Rural land and land administration is covered by the Tigray National Regional State Proclamation on Land Use 23/1998 (amended by Proclamation 55/2002). Immediately after the proclamation a process of certification was started under the Bureau of Agriculture. There is a need for better coordination between land related laws, and work is done to tackle gaps and unclear interpretations that the laws leave.

Land can not be subjected to sale, exchange, mortgage or perpetual lease. The holder can, however, transfer the land on inheritance to his children (or parents). The holder can rent out land. For traditional technology a maximum of 2 years is given. For modern technology it is now 20 years. The holder can use, sell, exchange or transfer any land related investments on their holding ('improvements'), but not the land itself. The land use right can be lost if the holder leaves the kebele for more than 2 years. For married couples only the name of the household head (man) is recorded on the certificate, but spouses and children are mentioned in data collection forms. After divorce each gets half the land.

### *certification procedure*

Neither the law, nor the regulations specify much about how certification (first registration) should be undertaken. Certification in Tigray took place relatively soon after the redistribution, and those who undertook that process are among the key actors in certification. Therefore the procedure is not very elaborate. Orientation of the community and training of ad hoc committee members were not a major issue (as we saw in the other regions). This came down to the kebele officials (esp. the chairman) and specially trained students sent to assist.

Boundaries of (sub) kebele and communal lands were not demarcated and measured, since this information (and markers in the terrain) were still relatively well known. The process was limited to the individual farming land. The landholder and his neighbors are supposed to be present on the plot when it is being identified and measured (or estimated). If one is not there, the plot will not be registered (some households did not participate due to fear or lack of information about the advantages). Measurement was done with ropes (locally made from leather) mainly by the students. Members of the ad hoc committee, and in general members of the community, would also be present.

In Tigray the process heavily relied on the outcomes of the last land distribution, and not all land was measured again if the records from that were available. Any disputes are usually solved by the kebele officials or elders. Reportedly the social courts (lay courts at the kebele level) did not play a role in solving these. A general meeting to present the results seems not to have taken place as a standard procedure. Reportedly the kebele council (local parliament) discussed the outcomes.

Forms and books of register are all prepared at the kebele (partly by the students). One copy of the book of register is sent to the woreda. At present the certificate issued in Tigray are not booklets as in the other regions, but thick papered A4's (which sometimes are in short supply). The chairman of kebele signs the certificate which is handed over to the landholder for a fee of 3 Birr (about US \$ 0.35).

#### *updating*

Transfers of rights to land can take two forms: transferring the perpetual right of holding, and (temporary) transferring the right of use. The former can only be through inheritance (to children or parents; and grandchildren in some areas) or in case of defaulting the right or losing it to a public authority. The latter concerns all forms of agreements like leasing, renting out and sharecropping. Such agreements are often oral, although in front of witnesses (elders) if outside of close family ties. Registration of these, if needed at all, does not relate to the certification based land administration system.

It is unclear whether a proper procedure exists and is implemented for updating based on inheritances. Reportedly there are cases where the heir just takes hold of the certificate from the deceased. In other cases the old certificate is handed in to the kebele officials, and a new certificate is issued. A new entry is also made in the kebele book of register. The old entry, however, was not closed in some way. It is unclear if the woreda is informed to update their book of register as well.

#### *strengths and weaknesses of certification in Tigray*

##### Strengths

- process was setup and performed very quickly in the late 1990s
- the relative short period after the land distribution from the early 1990s was exploited by relying much on the previous committee, records and knowledge
- bulk of work is at kebele level, but they were supported by (regionally) contracted students
- percentage of holders reached is already large enough to make a real impact on the way certain land administration activities can be executed
- although the law is not very gender balanced, the position of females on the ground appears much better than in other regions

- realization that mapping is needed, and that different approach should be looked into, before a decision on how to do it is made

#### Weaknesses

- reliance on ‘existing’ boundaries of (sub) kebele and communal land was risky, some work on the latter is now being piloted
- procedure was not well spelt out, and the level of community participation seems to rely on local implementation (the presentation meeting was clearly not standard)
- certificates were issued, even when certain households or plots were not registered; it is better to have the whole kebele covered (except extended court cases) before to do so, so no discussion can later emerge on already certified land
- regardless of rather positive gender practice, the law should be improved in this respect and certificates of married couples should be in both names
- the lack of even the most simple (topological) sketch of plots limits the impact of the processes
- updating of the registered information needs serious attention; better procedures and awareness need to be created and implemented

#### *conclusions and main recommendations Tigray*

It is clear that Tigray has almost reached increased (rural) tenure security in an innovative way. The certification process was quick (due to external circumstances final completion can only be reached the coming year). It has already changed the land administration scenery in the region, although the late establishing of an EPLAUA only in 2004 has limited the impact related to land degradation and land use planning so far. The registers are clearly there to stay, but more comprehensive attention should be given to updating procedures and awareness, although data from a nationally representative survey conducted in 2004 by the Ethiopian Economic Association’s Economic Policy Research Institute (EEA/EEPRI) shows that in Tigray only 27% was not aware of the advantages of certification, as compared to 63% nationwide.

The results of the certification process in Tigray are well accepted. This is due to the high acceptance of the last land redistribution in Tigray as being fair, as well as general faith in the local authorities. The IIED-study stresses that this makes it quite different from Amhara where all of this is much less the case (Haile e.a., 2005).

There is an urgent need to look into an implementable and affordable solution for the cadastral index map. The present system limits itself totally to administrative records and does not even give the first start to make a simple land information system (where these sketches can be mosaiced onto aerial photos or satellite images to give a combination of natural features and landholding patterns and level of fragmentation). Conventional (‘modern’) cadastral surveying and mapping would be too expensive.

Depending on locally available knowledge, price of equipment, salaries and dominating terrain types, handheld GPS and/or orthophotos appear to be worth considering.

### **Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR**

Rural land and land administration is covered by the regional Land Use and Administration Proclamation (Amhara No. 46/2000, Oromia No. 56/2002 (amended 70/2003) and SNNPR No. 53/2003). Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authorities (EPLAUA) have been established in the regions, although restructuring within the Bureau of Agriculture is taking place. In Amhara a draft for a new proclamation was prepared in 2004, but was not approved at the time of our field visit. In general there is a lack of coordination between different laws (see e.g. ORGUT 2005).

Land can not be subjected to sale or exchange. The holder can, however, transfer the land on inheritance to any one who supports him. This is widened in the Amhara draft-proclamation to any rural resident involved in agriculture or poor town dweller (not effecting rights of direct family). He can also give his land as a gift to certain family members or persons who support him. The holder can also rent out land (exact terms differ). For married couples the names of both the head of household and the spouse are recorded on the certificate (in practice two photos are also attached). After divorce each gets half the land.

The EPLAUAs have, in addition to their regional office, so called EPLAUA-desks at the woreda level. The number of positions foreseen at these desks differs a lot from what is actually filled, and finding the money to pay for them is a constant struggle. This is especially of importance in Amhara, where the woreda plays an important role throughout the certification process. In Oromia and SNNPR this is less an issue, although lack of woreda staff is one of the reasons why there is a growing delay in when a household for which the data has been collected receives the certificate. In all regions the woreda is involved in issuing the certificate.

#### *certification procedure*

There is little prescribed on how certification (first registration) should be undertaken. The following procedure was explained to us:

- information is given to the woreda and kebele administration and the farmers at large (direct from the region or through earlier trained woreda staff)
- establishment of kebele and sub-kebele land administration (and use) committees (LAC)
- training of (some of) the LAC members either by regional or woreda staff or at special training centers; those trained then train the rest of the LAC
- demarcation (and simple surveying) of the (sub)kebele boundary and common/communal lands in Amhara

- demarcation (and partly surveying) of individual plots (boundaries fixed in terrain) and filling in all plots on the first form
- in Oromia and SNNPR a second form with combined household results is then prepared
- discussion of results with the community (of landholders), not always based on results that have been previously posted for inspection; in Amhara the discussion is usually in the form of a meeting
- legal procedures of complaints are dealt with (first at social court, then at woreda court, although not in all cases land issues are in the jurisdiction of the social court (in SNNPR they have been taken out of them))
- books of register (and certificates) are prepared; in Amhara both woreda and kebele get a copy of the book, in Oromia only woreda gets a book, and kebele retains the forms, whereas in SNNPR the kebele book is not standardized
- certificates are signed by LAC and woreda and handed over to landholders for free in Amhara, for 5 Birr (US \$ 0.60) in Oromia and 2 Birr (\$ 0.25) in SNNPR, in all cases the photos of the landholder(s) have to be attached, costing about 2 to 4 Birr (\$ 0.25-0.50) each.

Whereas in Amhara the LAC is constantly supported by woreda staff, in Oromia all the work has to be done by the LAC on their own. In SNNPR some help is supplied through the (paid) development agent at kebele level. The workload for the LACs is considerable, and it is not clear if or how they get rewarded for this. The work is also hard, esp. when no experts assist. In some areas LACs have stopped the work (at least for the season). On the other hand the strong involvement of woreda (and even regional) staff in Amhara makes it much less of a local activity, with all risks involved in that. LACs also have barely any women on them ('the work is too heavy for them'), which is likely to enhance the gender bias that is still prevalent in many communities. In all three states both spouses' names (and photos) appear on the certificate, but problems are still present with polygamous marriages and the practice after divorce.

When the (last) land (re)distribution has not taken place too long ago, it might be that there are some records from it around, and otherwise certain people have knowledge of how it was done (unless they have died (as in parts of SNNPR)). In Amhara the results of the last land redistribution are in general much less accepted than in Tigray, which also influences the acceptance of the certification process (Adenew e.a., 2005).

One of the problems relates to the encroachment of communal land, esp. by landholders neighboring this land. Quite a number of boundary discussions that come up during data collection are related to this. In Oromia this is leading to a lot of suspended cases, which fall outside of the jurisdiction of the social courts. Fixed boundary marks in the field and reliable enough surveying results can help to prevent and/or detect such actions in the future.

Another problem relates to sales of land, esp. in peri-urban areas. These are officially illegal, and government staff emphasizes this. When a sale took place before certification and the seller claims that it is his land, he will receive the certificate. The buyer loses out on all fronts, due to his illegality he is not even entitled to compensation for his improvements, although the social courts seem to handle it in a less strict way. In Oromia also the officials are preparing rules to try to balance buyer's and seller's position, instead of taking the above mentioned strict legal interpretation.

#### *updating*

Procedures for updating after inheritance, renting etceteras are not spelt out well, neither are the legal consequences of not doing it. The only reference is that it is an offence to hold land without possessing the certificate. For leases the certificate remains with the holder, and does not go to the one using the land.

Reportedly the landholder has to bring the transfer to the attention of the kebele, who has to update its book of register and enter it in the certificate. They then have to pass the certificate to the woreda, who update their copy of the book of register and sign off the change in the certificate. In some cases the transfer needs approval (from kebele and/or woreda) as well, and thus it is possible that that is not granted, and the transfer not effectuated.

Since the certification (and esp. the issuing of certificates (books of holding)) is still very young, it is unclear if and how this is implemented in practice. It is however of the greatest importance that the collected data is kept up-to-date, otherwise the exercise will soon lose much of its value.

#### *strengths and weaknesses of certification in Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR*

##### Strengths

- process has been set up relatively quickly, esp. in Amhara with great enthusiasm on the top, which also seems to infect others involved
- in Amhara balance has been found by local participation in the process, combined with expert support from woreda officials
- in Oromia the strong reliance on community work, makes the process very participatory, combined with well set up and supported training program (incl. materials)
- in SNNPR a balance has also been found between the (unpaid) LACs and the (paid) development agent at kebele level
- percentage of holders reached is already large enough to make a real impact on the way certain land administration activities can be executed

## Weaknesses

- workload for some local people who do not get compensated is rather heavy, there is a risk that they will ‘compensate’ themselves or ‘suspend’ the work for extensive times
- in Oromia there is not enough support from the woreda during data collection, and lack of capacity to follow up the collected data with the actual issuing of certificates
- in Oromia and SNNPR the book is too small and condensed with only one line per household, not leaving any room for updating
- in Oromia no copy of the book of register is kept at the kebele
- position of those who are away at the wrong times (during data collection in the field and/or during the presentation meeting) is not well secured; a more elaborate system of publicizing the work should be applied
- outcomes of data collection should be posted for public inspection during at least 2 weeks before the presentation meeting; objections should also be possible outside the meeting (otherwise there is a risk of peer pressure)
- the clear and gender balanced provisions in the law are not yet very visible on the ground; ways to enhance this should be applied
- the lack of even the most simple (topological) sketch of plots during 1<sup>st</sup> phase limits the impact of the processes
- the Amhara 2<sup>nd</sup> phase pilot seems to be too expensive to upscale to large areas
- it is not certain that there is enough attention given to updating of the registered information; a limited amount of bureaucracy and enough awareness in the kebeles is needed (the same goes for the subdivision procedures in areas where a map has been compiled)

## *conclusions and main recommendations Amhara Oromia and SNNPR*

It is clear that these regions are working towards increased (rural) tenure security in an innovative way. The first phase is progressing so quickly, that it has already changed the land administration scenery in the region. And although some more attention should be given to updating, the registers are there to stay.

Training and awareness building have gotten attention in the regions, although especially Oromia uses a two-staged approach. The focus has been too much only on those directly involved in the process (mainly LAC-members) and should be widened to kebele and other government staff, as well as civil society. It should also be repeated more than once. Lack of awareness in the communities was found to be large in SNNPR (73%), Oromia (71%) and even Amhara (54%) based on the EEA/EEPRI’s 2004 survey.

There is an urgent need to look into an intermediate solution for the cadastral index map. The present 1<sup>st</sup> phase limits itself totally to administrative records, whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase as piloted in Amhara falls

back in the trap of the ‘geodetic responsible, very precise mapping’ that is too expensive in relation to its added value, certainly for tenure security. An intermediate solution has to be found, of which a first idea would mean the use of handheld GPS. This is likely to deliver good enough relative precision for plots in each others vicinity to deliver a very usable cadastral index map, as well as title plans. Of course this should be verified, by experience from elsewhere and/or by local testing.

In woredas where there is electricity available (1/3) and where there is a lot of land related activity, computerization of the records should be explored. This can, but must not, be combined to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. In case it is, GIS can be introduced, which can contribute to more local land use planning.

In any case the outcome of certification should be used as a base for land use planning and sustainable land management.

#### *costing for Amhara<sup>4</sup>*

For Amhara during the mission data was collected at the EPLAUA regional office in Bahir Dar, mainly through interviews and some documents. Data for salaries, per diems, team composition, price of vehicles, price of fuel, costs of printing of books, and the number of plots, households and kebeles were collected and combined. It was assumed the average kebele (1554 households, 5527 plots) takes one month for two surveying teams and two months in the field and one in the office for one land administration team. Leaving out overheads etc, the costs of a (first phase) certificate is in the order of magnitude of 30 Birr (\$ 3.50). This does not include the time invested by the local people, the holders and more specifically the members of LAC (and social court in case many disputes arise).

A similar exercise was done for the second phase, based on the reported norms and the project expenditure on cars, GPS-receivers and total stations, and taking other data (as costs for a survey team and its transport) as above. The costs of adding title plans for each plot to a certificate is in the order of magnitude of 250 Birr (\$ 30). The depreciation of the surveying equipment has been set at 50 months, and no costs for maintenance are included. This number can clearly be lowered when much cheaper equipment (even handheld GPS) would be used. In a similar way it was estimated that the same team using only 3 handheld GPS (of about \$ 1000), being less terrain dependent (use better norm) and work in parallel, even with adding some IT-equipment (only during project) would be in the order of 30 Birr (almost \$ 4).

## **IMPACT OF CERTIFICATION**

Since increasing parts of the rural areas of the four regions are being covered, it is important (and possible) to get insight in the impact certification is making. And although the quantitative information from the household surveys is not yet available, field evidence suggests that, despite the low cost, the process led to a number of tangible benefits:

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<sup>4</sup> for more details see Annex 3 of Deininger e.a., 2005 and Zevenbergen, 2005.

- *Reduction of conflict:* Representatives of social courts in virtually all the communities pointed towards a marked reduction in land-related conflicts due to clarification of boundaries and field-based adjudication that were undertaken in the context of the certification program. While some indicated that this reduction was universal across types of conflict, only specific types were affected in others, suggesting that the way in which certification is conducted will have an impact on the eventual outcome observed.
- *Women's empowerment:* Women in most of the communities visited indicated that inclusion of their name on the land use certificate (as practiced in all of the regions except in Tigray) helped to improve their status and bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands and the community at large. However, women's participation in public meetings, their awareness of the law and the process of certification, and their representation in the LAC (which was uniformly lower than what is stipulated in the law) varied widely across communities.
- *Increased individual or communal investment:* Increased incentives for investment on individual plots were mentioned repeatedly in the group discussions. Households also frequently mentioned that secured land "ownership" considerably increased their incentives to supply labor to initiatives aiming at communal investment, as illustrated by the increase in the amount of communal labor provided free of charge from 20 to 25 days in Tigray. Of course, the format of these discussions made it difficult to verify and/or quantify such investment, something which the household survey aims at.
- *Security against expropriation:* Respondents were more ambiguous as to whether certification would protect them against future land redistribution or land takings by local government or in the course of urban expansion -two issues to which responses varied widely across regions. In one case of pending land taking, respondents were eager to get their certificates quickly so as to be able to use them in court and thus bolster the case for getting compensation.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The process to certify land use rights in Ethiopia has been very participatory and cost-effective (about US \$ 3.5 per household or less than US \$ 1 per plot). The process reached Millions of households in just a few years, even though final issuing of completed certificates is lagging seriously behind. Land right certification has reduced conflict, helped to empower women, and improved governance at the local level, although investment- and productivity-impacts may take longer to materialize (and may be affected by the present policy regime that is not favoring land markets).

The fact that certification is implemented at a regional level implies that there is ample scope for regions to learn from experiences by others. Also, a number of areas where the process of certification

in individual regions could be improved, were identified. These include insistence on field measurement of plots and public display of results before certificates are issued, inclusion of husband and wife on the certificate in all regions, arrangements for systematic updating to keep the data generated in the registration and certification process up to date, adoption of computers to do so at the busier woredas, and addition of low-cost GPS equipment that would allow to produce maps and coordinates with a level of accuracy of about 1 m in areas where land values and expected frequency of transactions warrant doing so.

The indications of the impact of the certification process experienced during the field visits have been used as the base for designing household surveys tailored at the process of certification in general, data collection and dispute resolution in particular, the (perceived) improvement in tenure security by the households, as well as the impact on land development and investments. Unfortunately this information was not available yet at the closing date of this paper. However, we expect to present some of the results during the presentation of this paper.

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