



MILLENNIUM
CHALLENGE CORPORATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



EVALUATION BRIEF | JUNE 2023

PROMOTING LAND TENURE SECURITY IN BURKINA FASO

Land certificates increased, but no impact detected on land investments

Program Overview

MCC's \$475 million [Burkina Faso Compact](#) (2009-2014) funded the \$58 million Rural Land Governance Project, which [aimed](#) to increase investment in land and rural productivity through improved land tenure security and land management. The project facilitated national-level legal reforms, strengthened newly decentralized land administration and land conflict resolution bodies, and conducted site-specific tenure activities to promote land registration. MCC theorized that these activities would lead to decreased land conflict and increased investment in rural areas.

MCC commissioned The Cloudburst Group to conduct an independent final impact evaluation of the Rural Land Governance Project. Full report results and learning: <https://mcc.icpsr.umich.edu/evaluations/index.php/catalog/104>.

Key Findings



Legal and Policy Changes

- › The project contributed to the Government of Burkina Faso's passage and implementation of the 2009 Rural Land Law and the 2012 Agrarian and Land Reorganization Law.
- › Select project-assisted legal reforms were sustained beyond the life of the project, while others were not.



Land Administration

- › 47 land offices were established, and 2,167 of a targeted 6,000 customary land certificates were issued during the project.
- › Additional land offices have been established post-project, although new and existing offices face challenges.
- › Customary land certificates have continued to be granted, although not at the anticipated level due to the expense, the difficult and time-consuming process, and lack of information.



Land Tenure, Investment, and Assets

- › The evaluation did not find evidence of an impact on household's perceptions of land tenure security, land conflict frequency or occurrence, farmers' investment decisions, or household assets.
- › The evaluation did not find evidence of a significant positive impact on women's property rights and empowerment outcomes.

Evaluation Questions

This final impact and performance evaluation was designed to answer whether the Rural Land Governance Project:

1. Successfully implemented targeted legal reforms, operationalized land institutions, and distributed customary land certificates?
2. Operationalized the reformed land laws and regulations?
3. Improved land governance and administration?
4. Increased land tenure security, land conflicts, investment decisions, and income?

Detailed Findings

These findings build upon the [interim evaluation report](#) results published in 2016.

Legal and Policy Changes

The Government of Burkina Faso's adoption of the 2009 Rural Land Law, which established land institutions at the commune and village levels, has led to operational changes in land governance that have been sustained in the project communes and expanded to additional areas of the country. The evaluation detected mixed evidence regarding the effects of the Government of Burkina Faso's Rural Land Law. While both project and non-project respondents stated the Law has been beneficial, others reported significant gaps in implementation or that the Law created new challenges in land administration. The Law contains a clause indicating that the law's implementation results should be assessed every five years. The first such review was conducted by the government in 2014, but the degree to which its conclusions were implemented is not clear.

Additional plans to reform the national land system, such as the introduction of a land information system to consolidate the operations of the large number of state entities working in the land sector, ultimately were not implemented. Geospatial infrastructure that was installed under the project to serve all mapping and surveying work nationally has not been broadly adopted at the commune level due to perceptions within the commune land offices that the system is technically burdensome and resource intensive. Due to the low demand for land certificates, tax assessment and fee collection through certificate processing is not a viable mechanism for achieving a sustainable revenue stream to support the decentralized, commune-level portion of Burkina Faso's land administration system.

In the nearly 15 years since the Rural Land Law's passage, evidence points to several unintended consequences, including delays in local infrastructure projects (which may be the result of stronger individual protections), land speculation, power vacuums and disruptions in local land governance, and continued



SFR officer accessing commune-level APFR records system

inequity in land rights for men and women. These types of consequences have been identified in other studies of land administration reform in Africa.

Land Administration

Decentralized land institutions were effectively established in the 47 communes targeted by the project and continue to operate, while additional decentralized land institutions have been opened by the Government of Burkina Faso—including in control areas—as part of its rollout of decentralization of land governance country-wide, following the MCC-funded pilot. There is some evidence that the project increased the administrative capacity of land institutions, with more active and better-functioning formal institutions in project areas. However, decentralized land institutions in both project and non-project areas struggle with recruitment of qualified staff, land use planning, and collaborating with customary authorities.

The number of households with land certificates remains low and well-short of project expectations. Factors may include demand-side reasons such as expense, a difficult and time-consuming process, insufficient information, or limited perception of need. Factors could also include sub-optimal operational performance of the local land offices where applications have been filed. However, there is evidence of an increase in certificate uptake in project communes. Between 2012 and 2015, land certificates applications rose in project areas by 120 percent. There is also a clear difference in demand for certificates from women, with 97 percent of the certificates delivered to women occurring in treatment areas.

Land certificates are more frequently used for conflict resolution (although conflicts themselves are relatively rare) and land investment in project areas than in treatment areas. Land transfers are also increasing in both project and non-project areas, although the absolute numbers are also small (272 transfers in a 10-year period in the study area). Most transfers have taken place where land speculation in peri-urban areas is occurring.

Land Tenure, Investment, and Assets

The evaluation did not find evidence that the project impacted households' perceptions of land tenure security, land conflicts, producers' investment decisions, and incomes and livelihoods. Additionally, respondents in project areas are more likely to express that their land rights are weaker than respondents from non-project areas. Respondents in project areas are also more likely to report concerns of future field conflict and land pressures facing their community.

The evaluation did not find evidence that the project impacted women's property rights or empowerment outcomes. Additionally, women respondents in project areas were more likely to perceive their land rights as limited than women in non-project areas. Finally, evidence suggests the project benefited large landholders (landholders in the top quintile of land plot size, holding 8.29 or more hectares of land). Large landholders in project areas were 32 percentage points less likely to be concerned that the government would expropriate their land than large landholders in non-project areas.







97% of certificates that were delivered to women were in treatment areas



120% increase in land certificates applications in project areas between 2012 and 2015

MCC Learning

-  When supporting implementation of a partner government's land sector reform, MCC should ensure that the government's implementation includes ongoing messaging and engagement with key stakeholders.
-  Evaluations should not hold the project accountable for outcomes that the project was not originally designed to address.
-  Land tenure insecurity does not necessarily imply widespread land conflict at the parcel level or dissatisfaction with existing conflict resolution processes.
-  When designing evaluations, MCC and evaluators should be thoughtful about the exposure period.

Evaluation Methods

This evaluation utilized a difference-in-differences with matching evaluation methodology to respond to the evaluation question, "What was the impact of the Rural Land Governance Project on increased land tenure security, land conflicts, investment decisions, and income?" All other evaluation questions were assessed by a performance evaluation using a pre-post methodology.

Primary quantitative data collection at endline included household surveys (4,143 households), including a module targeted towards female household members (2,536 respondents), village surveys (453 respondents), and commune surveys (79 respondents). Qualitative data collection included 56 focus group discussions with village leaders and beneficiary households and 72 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. This was supplemented by high-resolution satellite imagery, land administration data, and project documents.

Endline data collection occurred from November 2021-March 2022. Project implementation began in 2009 and ended in 2014, resulting in an exposure period of 7-8 years.

