



MILLENNIUM  
CHALLENGE CORPORATION  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## Fact Sheet

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# MCC's Commitment to Property Rights, Access to Land, and Resource Management

The Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) principle of country ownership empowers MCC partner countries, once eligible for an MCC compact, to prioritize investments that address their most binding constraints to economic growth and poverty reduction.

Many partner country governments, in consultation with citizens, civil society and the private sector, have sought MCC investments in property rights and land policy (PRLP) due to the central role of land, natural resources and other real property assets in economic development.

Access to a small plot of land for farming can be vital to day-to-day survival of a rural family, providing family members with food, household income and potential for lifting themselves out of poverty. Access to well-managed grazing areas can support livestock for a large rural community. In urban or peri-urban areas, ownership of a small building or other real property asset can provide a poor family with shelter or a space for entrepreneurial activities essential to survival and economic growth. A well-functioning PRLP system not only helps the poor, but helps investors and companies obtain the land they need to start and expand businesses.

Access to land, natural resources and real property assets, however, is not itself sufficient to spur economic development. If rights to these assets are not clear, secure and transferable, people and firms may be less likely to make long-term investments in their property.

Successful PRLP projects can have game-changing effects on economic growth and poverty reduction. MCC's partner countries have used MCC funding to develop and implement new land legislation; form new land administration institutions or strengthen the operations of existing institutions; establish new, decentralized land tenure services; launch new instruments for recording land rights and land registry systems; transform geodetic infrastructure; formalize land rights for thousands of landholders; and pilot improved dispute resolution processes. These interventions have been innovative and, in some cases, unprecedented in MCC's partner countries.

### Results to Date in Property Rights and Land Policy

- The portfolio includes investments in 13 of MCC's 26 signed compacts and two Threshold Programs, for a total of over \$285 million
- 207,623 people educated about their property rights
- 1,480,005 rural hectares formalized
- 19,377 urban parcels formalized<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data accurate as of March 31, 2012.

## Ensuring access to secure land rights

Legal, regulatory and policy reforms are included in most PRLP projects, allowing for more equitable access to secure rights.

The following five examples are among more than 50 land-related policy reforms that have been adopted to date in MCC compacts. Further reforms are expected in coming years in countries with ongoing legal, regulatory and policy reform activities, such as Namibia and Mozambique.

In **Benin**, passage of a rural landholding law in 2007 enacted the principle of recognition of customary rights in land as equal to civil law property rights. It established written documents, like a rural landholding plan and rural landholding certificate, as recognized instruments for assertion and protection of these rights.

In **Burkina Faso**, a new rural land tenure law includes measures to enhance access to land tenure services by decentralizing aspects of land management to local communities, and provides tools for legal recognition of legitimate but previously unrecorded and undocumented rights to land that are rooted in traditional tenure systems.

In **Lesotho**, a new land act passed in 2010 establishes greater land tenure security for all land occupants, helps protect against arbitrary land seizure, enhances gender equity in land ownership and land transactions, and establishes a simplified framework for systematic land registration. In addition, new legislation establishes a new professional land administration authority that is autonomous in operations, self-sustaining, and provides efficient and cost-effective land administration services to public and private users.

In **Mongolia**, the MCC compact is promoting changes to laws and regulations that will facilitate linkages between land mapping and property registration systems and simplify the process by which urban residents can become land owners.

In **Nicaragua**, passage of a public registry general law created the necessary legal framework to establish an Integrated Cadastre and Registry System, allowing for electronic registration of real estate and reduced processing time.

## Public outreach campaigns are critical to PRLP investments

Public outreach campaigns inform citizens of their legal property rights and strengthen the capacity of local authorities to respect and enforce these rights.

In **Liberia**, the MCC Threshold Program is designed to increase clarity and public understanding of property rights issues, clarifying harmonization of customary land tenure systems with statutory law. A multi-media public outreach program will inform the public of the importance of registering deeds and

methods to avoid fraud and other abuses. The program seeks to rebuild public confidence in the system of land administration.

In **Namibia** and **Mongolia**, outreach activities support community-based rangeland and livestock management programs, helping mitigate problems of over-grazing, degradation of resources, and land disputes.

In **Burkina Faso**, extensive outreach to project beneficiaries and stakeholders supports enhanced understanding of new land legislation, and increases awareness of the project's rural land governance activities and benefits.

In **Mali** and **Ghana**, the compact's gender integration efforts led to high levels of involvement of women in property registration activities. Mali achieved high rates of joint titling of five-hectare farms in the names of both husbands and wives.<sup>2</sup> In Ghana, over 25 percent of land titles were issued to women, consistent with the level of women's ownership reported in recent studies. These results did not require legal action, but rather were achieved through public outreach campaigns that emphasized gender equity. These campaigns were reinforced by gender specialists included in community outreach teams.

In **Indonesia**, lack of clarity regarding licensing of land use rights and other natural resources, as well as disputed village boundaries, contribute to uncertainty that significantly hinders government land use planners and service agencies from effectively managing critical natural resources. This, in turn, deters sustainable investments. The Indonesia Compact involves a participatory land use planning activity that will invest in administrative boundary setting, updating and integration of land use inventories, and enhancing spatial plans at the district and provincial levels.

## Improving capacity and efficiency

Local and national land administration agencies have benefited from upgrading records management systems, geodetic infrastructure development, and training agency officials in efficient registration processes.

In **Madagascar**, new decentralized land offices were opened in municipalities in targeted areas of the country. These offices gave municipal governments the tools and human resources to issue land certificates providing legal recognition of traditionally-held rights, in a manner more accessible to the population than traditional land titles. At the same time, regional land administration offices were rehabilitated or constructed and a major document conservation and archiving initiative was undertaken, improving the ability of the existing regional land administration institutions to perform land titling-related functions.<sup>3</sup>

In **Mozambique**, the compact supports capacity building for cadastral services in four northern provinces and a reconfiguration of the national Land Information Management System. MCC funds provide equipment and technology for cadastral offices; training of provincial, district and municipal cadastral employees; and technical assistance to cadastral offices to implement new technology and streamlined procedures.

<sup>2</sup> The MCC Board of Directors voted in May 2012 to terminate the Mali Compact due to an undemocratic change in government.

<sup>3</sup> The Madagascar Compact was terminated in May 2009 due to an undemocratic change in government.

In **Mali**, the MCC compact funded establishment of a new branch of the local property registration office near the Alatona Irrigation Project site to prepare and issue titles to the newly irrigated land.

In **Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Lesotho** and **Mongolia**, newly installed continuously operating reference stations collect and record GPS data in an automated manner, allowing for data to be easily accessible and for surveyors to work more quickly and precisely.

In **Senegal**, the Land Tenure Security Activity will strengthen capacity of the local institutions responsible for land administration in the zone targeted by the compact's Irrigation and Water Resource Management Project. Reinforced local capacity will improve land administration and mitigate risk of conflict arising from increased demand for irrigated land. At the same time, the activity will lay the foundation for transparent, fair and effective procedures for allocation of land rights in the Senegal River Valley.

In **Zambia**, the MCC Threshold Program enacted a series of measures that streamlined and improved the transparency of the land registration process, reducing the median length of time to process a sale-transfer of commercial property from 70 days to less than 30 days. To achieve this increased efficiency, the project reorganized the Lands and Deeds office, installed modern scanning and indexing equipment, and computerized portions of the cadastral index mapping.

In **Cape Verde**, the second compact will digitize and index core documents at the Ministry of Justice registry to enable faster search of property records, and will link these files to municipal-level information about properties. In addition, the project will develop computerized information systems to link tasks and information across separate institutions, prioritizing functions fundamental to increasing clarity and reducing time and cost of procedures.

## Land mapping and registration

Large-scale land mapping and registration campaigns allow citizens to formalize their property rights, often for the first time.

In **Benin**, the MCC compact funded mapping and surveying of citizens' agricultural fields, and written descriptions of customary rights. This work resulted in village landholding plans that formalize land rights and give each citizen the right to receive an official certificate, so that customary rights may be recognized and protected in courts of law and used in contractual dealings with third parties.

In **Ghana**, the compact included a pilot project to map and survey more than 2,500 hectares of land on which inhabitants did not have formal land rights. Neighboring communities observed the success of the project and have requested similar formalization of their land parcels, jump-starting work in an area that was at a standstill for years. The government is now better trained and equipped to carry out new formalization efforts.

In **Lesotho**, rapid growth and uncontrolled expansion of informal housing in urban areas have caused large numbers of residents to lack defined property rights. The MCC project is providing legal title to the

occupants of these parcels at minimal or no cost and bringing them into the formal sector. The occupants will become the proprietors of an asset whose value is expected to appreciate substantially with formalization, and will have new incentives to invest in their homes.

## Summary of MCC's land portfolio, in USD millions

Stand-Alone PRLP Projects		PRLP Activities that Support Larger Projects		PRLP Projects in Threshold Programs	
Benin	\$32.2	Ghana	\$4	Liberia	\$7.1
Burkina Faso	\$59.9	Indonesia	\$25	Zambia	\$3.6
Cape Verde II	\$17.3	Lesotho	\$20.1		
Madagascar	\$29.5	Mali	\$1.5		
Mongolia	\$27.2	Namibia	\$8.1		
Mozambique	\$39.1	Senegal	\$3.8		
Nicaragua	\$7.2				
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$212.4</b>		<b>\$62.5</b>		<b>\$10.7</b>

### For More Information

Please visit [www.mcc.gov/land](http://www.mcc.gov/land).