

SUCCESS STORY

Burkina Faso's National Land Observatory: Moving From Program Development to Program Implementation



NLO staff and Board members at a program development workshop.

Telling Our Story

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The National Land Tenure Observatory (NLO) in Burkina Faso is a product of the same wave of land tenure reform that has been ongoing in Burkina Faso since the early-2000s and culminated in a national rural land policy (2007) and rural land tenure law (2009). The principal driver of rural land tenure reform is growing awareness of the government (GoBF) that the land tenure situation in rural areas presents a significant risk to social peace and a constraint to economic development. The general principles that have emerged and been adopted by the GOBF to guide development of a new rural land tenure policy include: recognition of customary land property rights; fair and secure access to land for all categories of legitimate rights holders; increased authority and responsibilities of local governments to manage key aspects of land tenure; improved land administration by the government; and participatory processes for policy development.

The NLO is a unique hybrid organization whose membership includes the official policy-making establishment (the central government), the policy-implementing establishment (local governments), the policy-lobbying establishment (the NGO community), and policy consumers (representatives of civil society including customary and religious leaders, women and youth organizations, agricultural and livestock producers and others). Given its heterogeneous composition one might expect a fairly long gestation in achieving consensus around a program—and one would be right. The targeted 5-year NLO Observation Program was officially launched on June 16, 2015 in the course of a meeting of the NLO General Assembly, just under a year from the date on which the NLO received its legal charter on July 3, 2014.

The NLO is currently collecting information based on 2-5 indicators identified for each of 14 land tenure issue areas, most of which apply to both the rural and urban domains. The first systematic data analyses and report are anticipated by late-October 2015, thus initiating biannual reporting on consistent sets of indicators that will enable identification and tracking of land tenure and land use trends over time. In addition the NLO is finalizing plans to conduct 3-4 studies each year on specific land tenure themes of interest. Stakeholders and observers interested in following land tenure in Burkina Faso are advised to stay tuned for coming developments and products from the country's new National Land Tenure Observatory.