What is MAST?

USAID’s Mobile Applications to Secure Tenure (MAST) is a collaborative, participatory approach that builds sustainable local capacity to efficiently map resource rights and secure land tenure. The approach is inclusive and promotes participation and leadership of women and other marginalized groups in project activities. It is technology-agnostic; the approach can be combined with many types of mobile tools, including USAID’s open-source MAST application.
The nine steps of the MAST approach:

1. **LEVERAGE AN ASSESSMENT TO UNDERSTAND CONTEXT.** An initial assessment provides the foundation of the MAST approach, giving important local context and highlighting key project challenges. This assessment combines desk research for basic understanding of the host country context with field work, interviewing stakeholders and implementing partners working in the land sector. The results of the assessment highlight factors that may inhibit or facilitate success of a potential land intervention.

2. **DEFINE WORK PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS.** Based on the data gathered during the assessment, a high-level project framework is developed. The project framework acts as the lens that shapes project activities and the metrics used to track project activity. The framework outlines specific problems, potential solutions, and ultimate goals of the project in addition to providing a work plan and associated budget.

3. **ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS.** National, regional, and local stakeholders will be engaged at every phase of a land tenure project, especially one that utilizes innovative Land technologies. Meaningful stakeholder involvement in project planning can increase participation and a sense of responsibility for the project and reduce conflicts. Engagement begins immediately when the project is introduced to community leaders and takes place through iterative group meetings to encourage community participation, especially among vulnerable or historically underserved groups.

4. **BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITIES AND STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES.** Under the MAST approach, capacity building is more than just a “one-off” training session. It involves building a range of skills in a systematic way throughout the project process. This process includes technical training focused on developing local and regional-level capacity, supporting local governance capabilities, and boosting community participation.

5. **MAINSTREAM PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS.** The MAST approach has embraced mechanisms that seek to give women a voice in project processes and enable their participation in decision-making to ensure that both male and female target groups benefit from the project. Implementers work with community leaders to ensure gender balance within community land institutions, although it may be necessary to counteract customary norms to do so. Incorporating themes and discussions that raise awareness of women’s land rights throughout project activities can help promote better attendance of women in village-level trainings, workshops, and mapping activities.

6. **PREPARE THE COMMUNITY FOR LAND AND RESOURCES MAPPING.** Before mapping takes place, the implementer holds community-level discussions to better understand the concerns of the community in relationship to their resources. This process generally includes a participatory mapping exercise to identify what resources are considered important, where they are located, and how land is held (e.g., communally, informally, individually). The process that will be used to document lands is discussed and community members are selected and trained to carry out the mapping process.

7. **VALIDATE LAND DATA.** Mapped land data is verified through community data verification workshops, which include facilitator-led presentations and explanations of the land and resource maps. These workshops give an opportunity for feedback, as well as outline a process to help resolve any disputes that arise based on the newly created maps. In cases where the project involves validating rights and formal claims on land, the review process will also involve land authorities and community leaders.

8. **CREATE LINKAGES FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT.** Land tenure projects using the MAST approach strive to incorporate sustainability and long-term planning by building in-country capacity to carry out the MAST approach and by linking institutions to technical and financial assistance. Beginning at project start up, implementers build linkages with other development programs that can support and complement MAST outcomes. Capacity building focuses on strengthening management, reporting, and other technical skills at the regional and district levels. At the local-level, it concentrates on building leadership skills to coordinate, execute, and monitor land services.

9. **PROMOTE LEARNING THROUGH CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT.** Sharing project progress and achievements with local, regional and national stakeholders is an important step in engaging partners and creating project buy-in. To share progress and learnings, the implementer must develop indicators and collect data that is relevant to specific project context and objectives. Appropriate resources must be devoted to collecting these indicators, which should monitor progress towards the project goals.

USAID’s MAST approach utilizes a suite of innovative tools such as mobile and web-based applications that are designed to capture land and resource rights information. This innovative approach engages and trains citizens to effectively capture, document land and rights information. The MAST approach is flexible and utilizes mobile applications to capture a variety of information about land occupancy and uses, while data management tools are used to provide the facility to ingest and manage data that is captured in the field. The MAST approach is citizen-centric and flexible and helps users visualize, analyse, process, manage and make better decisions concerning their land and resources. This makes USAID’s MAST approach a powerful framework that can be adapted to a variety of contexts to empower citizens in the process of understanding, mapping, and documenting their land and resource information.