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ILRG MALAWI FINAL REPORT

REFLECTIONS FROM CUSTOMARY LAND DOCUMENTATION SCALING PROJECT

INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

JULY 2023

INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE TASK ORDER UNDER THE STRENGTHENING TENURE AND RESOURCE RIGHTS II (STARR II) IDIQ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHOTO: ILRG

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CLC	Customary Land Committee
CLT	Customary Land Tribunal
DLT	District Land Tribunal
DSA	Daily subsistence allowance
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GoM	Government of Malawi
GVH	Group Village Headperson
Ha	Hectare
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity
ILRG	Integrated Land and Resource Governance
IT	Information technology
LIMS	Land information management system
LRIU	Land Reform Implementation Unit
MAST	Mapping approaches for securing tenure
ODK	Open Data Kit
PA	Public address system
RCMRD	Regional Center for Mapping Resources for Development
STARR II	Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II
TLMA	Traditional Land Management Area
TA	Traditional Authority
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

PHOTO: ILRG

1. INTRODUCTION

Approximately 1 billion people around the world are tenure insecure and fear losing access to their land and property. A lack of documentation contributes to tenure insecurity, leaves people vulnerable to land grabs by neighbors or relatives and contributes to underinvestment for fear of losing access to land in the future. Many governments, especially those with colonial legacies of state-owned land and absence of registered rights for smallholder farmers, have attempted to carry out large-scale, systematic documentation of land rights in recent years, through legislation that facilitates first time registration of rights and subsequent rollout.

Developing a comprehensive land cadaster is a massive undertaking, particularly where there is a legacy of registered rights to consider, for example colonial land allocations or sporadic leaseholds issued within a broader community managed landscape. Reviewing and updating historical or latent rights alongside efforts to carry out first time registration for rural smallholders within the same landscape and integrating these in a land information system presents a series of challenges. This task is complicated by varying laws governing different types of land, such as public, private, customary, etc., and the conflicts and ambiguities that emerge from registering boundaries and rights. Despite these challenges in reconciling historical rights, in recent years, systematic customary land documentation has well-established processes that include community consultation, parcel boundary mapping, dispute resolution, and a public period for viewing maps and making corrections, which is designed to ensure communities collectively agree on current land rights. Donor funding often supports pilots to demonstrate proof of concept of documentation methodologies, while government leadership and ownership of the process is required to achieve broad coverage.

The ultimate goal of most systematic documentation processes is full jurisdictional coverage (and in many cases national coverage) in order to achieve appropriate economies of scale, gain anticipated economic benefits that come with secure land and property rights, and reduce the potential for conflict and grievances between those who were eligible and not eligible for the documentation scheme. Such efforts require coordination with national land information systems, early planning, and a cost-effective, digitized, replicable and coordinated process. The advancement of digital mapping and data collection tools has created opportunities for cost-effective, large-scale land documentation efforts. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported mapping approaches for securing tenure (MAST), an inclusive fit-for-purpose approach that has been used in five countries to document land rights for nearly one million people. While low-cost, digital tools create efficiencies in data collection, they also risk reinforcing existing power dynamics if not undertaken with an intentional gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens. These steps take time and can raise costs, yet if not undertaken, risk producing a land information system that does not reflect on-the-ground realities and exacerbates inter- and intra-community disputes.

Following the passage of the Customary Land Act of 2016, the Government of Malawi (GoM) piloted customary land documentation procedures across different areas of the country, including through the EU-supported pilot on: "Technical cooperation to strengthen national capacity in implementing land policies and laws efficiently and effectively" as well as through the World Bank-funded Shire Valley Transformation Project, and the Agricultural Commercialization Project. These pilots were facilitated through the Land Reform Implementation Unit (LRIU),

which has been instrumental in advocating for a structured approach to scaling customary land documentation. In 2020, USAID partnered with the GoM on a gender-responsive customary land documentation project under the Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) program. This activity aimed to achieve scale by documenting customary land across an entire Traditional Land Management Area (TLMA) – TLMA Mwansambo in Nkhotakota District. Seventy percent of the population in Malawi lives on customary land, held by communities and administered by community leaders, most of whom are smallholder farmers, and less than 10 percent of whom have some form of land documentation. ILRG aimed to document 10,000 parcels in a year as a proof of concept to help inform the government's national roll out of a customary land documentation process across other jurisdictions.

Malawi's land laws provided a strong foundation for the work. In 2016, the government enacted a series of new land laws, including the Customary Land Act of 2016, which allowed customary land holders to formalize their ownership rights by registering their parcels (Kamoto et al., 2021). The law laid out a clear process for systematic documentation (see Figure 1), including the establishment of locally led, gender-balanced customary land committees to help facilitate the work. The government invested in a mobile technology platform developed through a contract with the Regional Center for Mapping Resources for Development (RCMRD) in Kenya to digitize parcel demarcation. It also began work to establish an updated land information management system (LIMS) to house land administration data. Building on the momentum from earlier pilots, the ILRG project had strong government buy-in from the beginning and a commitment to utilize lessons learned to inform scaling efforts.

This report reflects on experiences from the scaling project. It focuses on overall process lessons and recommendations.[1] Section two highlights key project results. Section three outlines key elements needed to achieve scale (low-cost, digital tools, clarity of steps, efficient oversight structures), including successes and challenges implementing each element under the ILRG project. Section four lays out conclusions and recommendations for the full government rollout of the land documentation process.

1 For reflections on integrating gender equality and social inclusion component of the work, see lessons learned brief - www.land-links.org/document/lessons-learned-integrating-gender-equality-and-social-inclusion-into-customary-land-documentation-in-malawi/

PHOTO: ILRG

FIGURE 1. STEPS IN THE CUSTOMARY LAND DOCUMENTATION PROCESS IN MALAWI

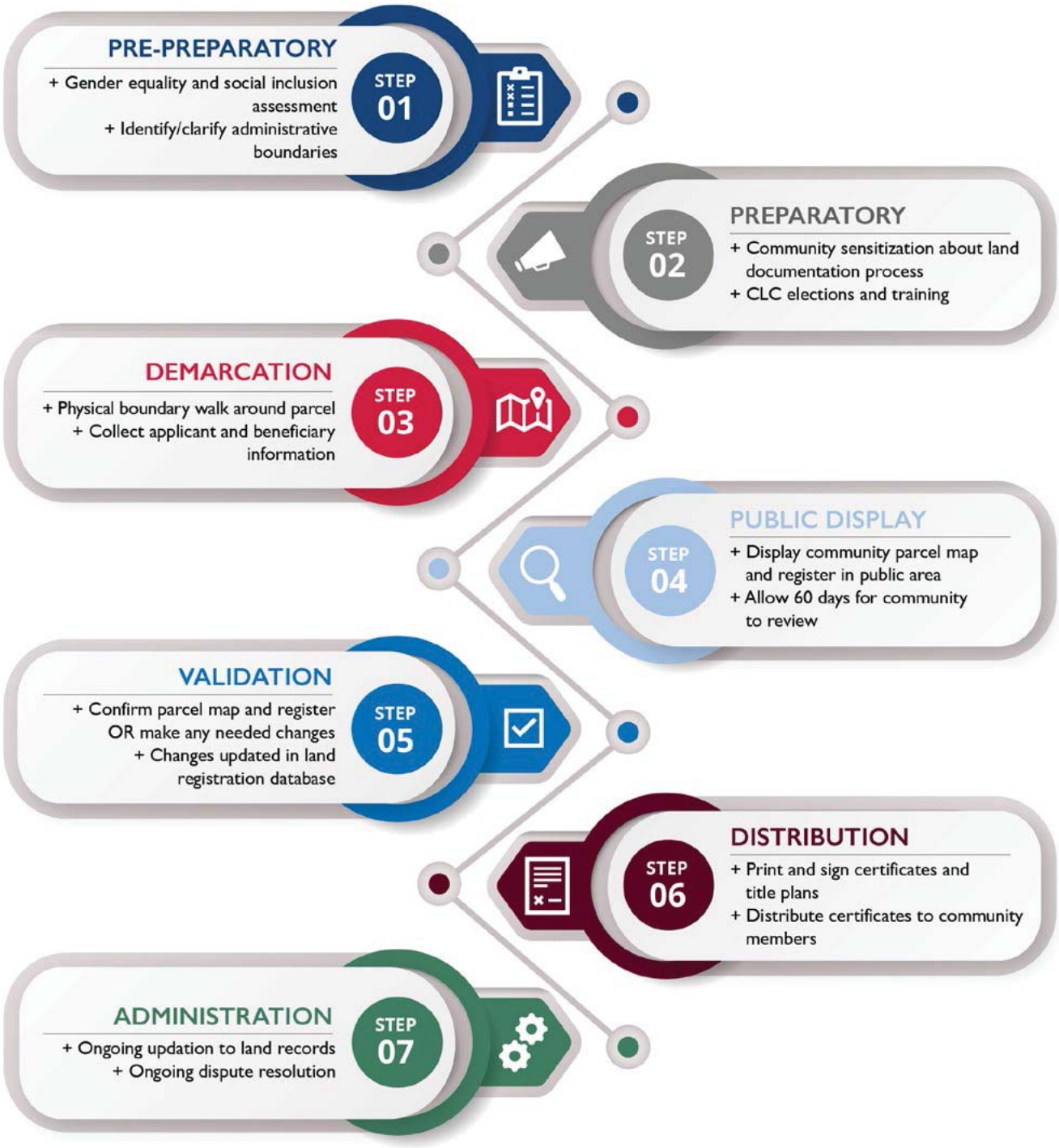
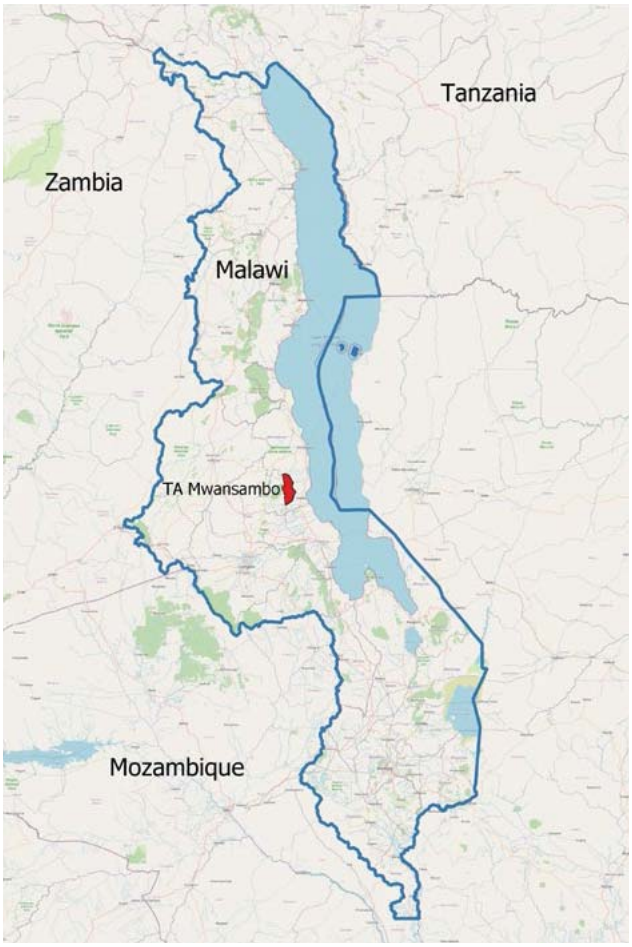


PHOTO: Gavelet Mzembe/ILRG

2. KEY RESULTS



BOX 1. TLMA MWANSAMBO

Location: Nkhotakota District, Central Region, Malawi

Population: 45,000 people

Size: ~24,000 hectares

Land tenure system: mainly customary land, some leaseholds, and a government gazetted game reserve

Land inheritance: Both matrilineal and patrilineal areas, with some patrilocal traditions (wife moves to husband's village) even among matrilineal areas.

To measure results, the ILRG pilot conducted baseline and endline data collection which was both quantitative and qualitative. The ILRG project successfully documented 9,272 parcels (8,392 household parcels and 880 community parcels for schools, churches, grazing areas, etc.) in TLMA Mwansambo. While the project initially targeted 18 group village headperson (GVHs) areas in the TLMA, the team scaled up work in the final months to reach all 23 GVHs.[2] Among household parcels, 44 percent were jointly titled, 24 percent titled to women only, and 32 percent titled to men only. Overall, women's names were listed on 68 percent of titles, compared with 38 percent in an earlier World Bank pilot in GVH Denje within the same TLMA. These results speak to the impact of a concerted gender-responsive land documentation approach (further detailed in Bessa et al., 2023) to counteract strong gender norms against registering land in women's names.

2 Documentation in two communities, GVH Mgombe and Thanga, remain incomplete due to ongoing boundary disputes between community leaders, which the government adjudication team was unable to resolve during the project time frame. The government committed to coming back to complete this area during the national roll out

Already, there have been tangible outcomes to this joint registration. For example, Rosemary Bango lives in her husband's village of GVH Kajaliza. Per inheritance traditions she would not have access to land in the community. During the ILRG project, her husband registered his plot jointly in both of their names and listed their nine children as beneficiaries. A week before certificate distribution, Rosemary's husband fell suddenly ill and passed away. Rosemary noted that receiving her certificate documented in her and her children's name amid this tragedy was empowering, for she now feels secure to stay on the land and continue to cultivate crops without fear of being chased away by her husband's relatives.

42,620 people had their customary land rights documented under the project, including 17,536 landowners (47 percent women) and 25,084 beneficiaries (50 percent women/girls). This has contributed to an increase in tenure security among community members. The share of men worried they might lose the right to use their land in the next five years fell from 31 percent at baseline to 16 percent at endline, and the share for women fell from 28 percent to 14 percent. This increased security is beginning to translate into reports of increased investment on plots, with several community members noting that they are now planning on planting higher value crops because they know their relatives or neighbors will not try to claim their land.

"I am planning on investing more in my current plot by planting more bananas on the edges, knowing my neighbors won't encroach, steal or destroy the crops after we have demarcated and agreed on the boundaries."

Isaac Kamtsokwe, Man, GVH Chaola

"As a woman in this community, I never thought I would stand before men to share my opinions. Following the training, I realized that I have a role and the right to do that. Now I freely exercise my right to participate. I have evidence of the fruits of my leadership. I made sure that widowed women were not left behind in land registration."

Women CLC member

The project supported the election of 138 customary land committee (CLC) members (50 percent women). This included sensitizing communities about the upcoming election process and the role of CLCs in land documentation work, helping candidates prepare for elections, and facilitating orientation for elected members on roles and responsibilities, and providing women CLC members with additional socio-emotional and leadership training to help them meaningfully participate in their new role. Members were elected to three-year terms, so these structures remain in place after the end of the project to help adjudicate land conflicts, alongside community leaders and customary land tribunals (CLTs). During a follow up visit to the TLMA three months after the project closed, CLC members reported that they still occasionally meet to address ongoing disputes with the CLT and report issues with missing or incorrect land certificates to the land clerk.

ILRG integrated a concerted GESI lens in each step of the customary land documentation process to ensure women, men, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups were able to participate. This included training on GESI for project data collectors/processors, community leaders, CLCs, and CLTs, as well as dialogues on gender norms with community leaders, CLCs, and community members. During these trainings, the project identified 41 engaged participants as gender champions, who were charged with going door-to-door to help sensitize community members about the importance of inclusive land rights, encouraging others to register land with their wives and children. These groups acted as role models in their communities, encouraging others to register their land and include women and children on certificate titles. As of July 2023, the local land clerk had distributed certificates in 14 out of 21 GVHs, approximately 60 percent of all household certificates produced. The distribution process has been slow due to delays in certificate signing and the land clerk's enrollment in school, meaning he has only been available for certificate distribution on the weekends. The government is committed to completing distribution in the coming months.

"I was motivated to give some of my customary land to women. The training acted as an eye opener for me to see the struggle of women to own, access, and control land. I want to set an example to all community leaders under my jurisdiction to follow what I have done."

Lamesi Sandram, Headperson, GVH Liwera

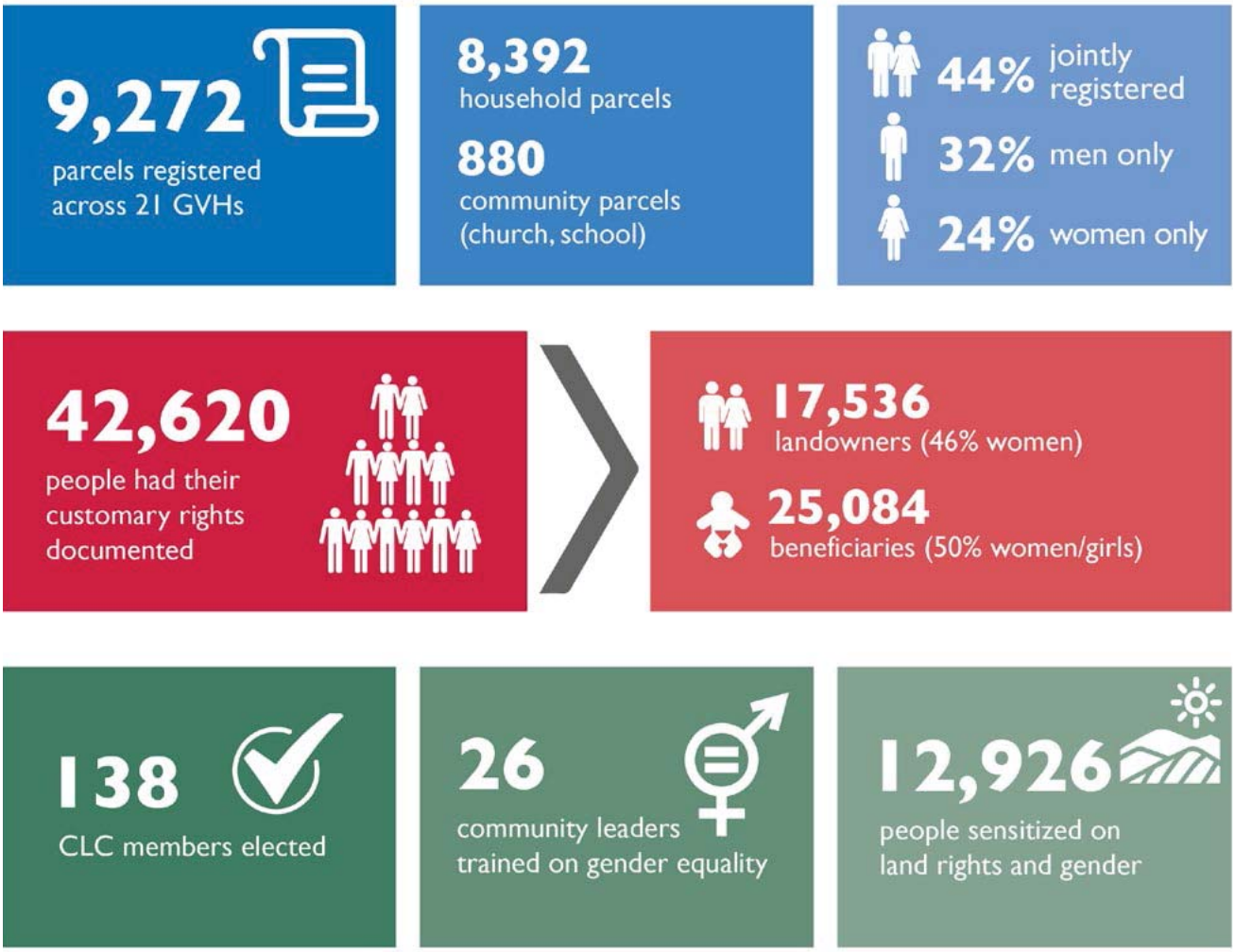

9,272
parcels registered across 21 GVHs
8,392
household parcels
880
community parcels (church, school)
44% jointly registered
32% men only
24% women only
42,620
people had their customary rights documented
17,536
landowners (46% women)
25,084
beneficiaries (50% women/girls)
138
CLC members elected
26
community leaders trained on gender equality
12,926
people sensitized on land rights and gender

PHOTO: ILRG

PHOTO: Gavelet Mzembe/ILRG

3. GETTING TO SCALE

The ILRG project tested the scaling efficacy of the government's current customary land documentation approach by documenting an entire TMLA in 13 months. The government felt confident in the land documentation process laid out in the 2016 land laws and had piloted a digital platform for data collection in earlier pilots. TLMA Mwansambo was selected because an earlier World Bank pilot had documented one GVH in the area, so there was some level of awareness about the customary land documentation process, which partners assumed would lead to faster uptake of community sensitization messages. After over a year of planning, prolonged due to COVID-19, work began in February 2022. Sixteen data collectors and eight data processors – recent university graduates – led the land documentation work in the TLMA. Work was overseen by two government supervisors from the LRIU, an official from the Department of Physical Planning (whose daily role with the rest of the team was often unclear), and the ILRG field coordinator. The ILRG country coordinator, administration & finance specialist, administrative assistant and LRIU counterparts supported the work from Lilongwe and made trips to the TLMA on an as-needed basis.

Based on its experience in Malawi and other countries, ILRG identified four key elements required to support national scalability: i) low cost per parcel (and gradually decreasing costs for initial documentation) ; ii) effective digital tools to automate and accelerate stages of the work, including standard procedures and workflows to use digital tools; iii) clear steps that allow for easy replicability and; iv) efficient monitoring and feedback structures to keep processes moving and adaptable. The customary land documentation approach applied in Malawi achieves some of these goals, but more work is needed to hone the approach to ensure it is efficient, predictable, and scalable. Below, ILRG reflects on successes and challenges in achieving each of the four scaling requirements in TMLA Mwansambo.

3.1 LOW COST

A national land documentation process must manage costs for it to be sustainable and scalable. Costs are typically presented as the price per parcel for the initial documentation. Although there is no standard methodology for calculating costs per parcel over time, Ethiopia and Rwanda are often held up as a gold standard in terms of achieving a low/affordable price per parcel to document and register land; Ethiopia registered most rural land in two to three years for about $1 per parcel (Deininger et al., 2008), and Rwanda mapped 10.4 million parcels in four years for about $7 parcel (Gillingham and Bucket, 2014). However, these figures do come with some caveats. Both had little community engagement and limited gender-responsive components to ensure inclusion, which reduced cost and time. Estimates for Rwanda account for only the demarcation and adjudication phases of the work, not the entire land documentation process. Estimates from other first time systematic land documentation processes are much higher: a 2019 Millennium Challenge Corporation study found that donor funded first-time registration projects cost an average of $20 to $60 per parcel, and sometimes greater than $100 per parcel (MCC, 2019). USAID estimates the cost of utilizing MAST processes across countries, ranging from $5.89 per parcel in Rwanda, $16.30 per parcel in Indonesia, $40 in Tanzania for pilot efforts, and $88.78 in Mozambique (USAID/MAST, 2020).

Based on pilot efforts, the GoM estimated that the customary land documentation process laid out in the 2016 land laws would cost $10-$15 per parcel, or $20-30 per hectare (ha) (National Planning Commission, 2021). The GoM assumed these costs would decrease over time as the process was refined to be more efficient and more tasks were devolved to local district offices, reducing human resource needs. These estimates were in line with similar large-scale land documentation rollouts using mobile technology approaches, such as those in Ethiopia and Rwanda, that were able to certify or title at less than $10 per parcel (Harris and Chilonga, 2020).

In looking at final cost breakdowns post-project, ILRG found that the per parcel cost on the TLMA Mwansambo project was substantially higher for initial land documentation – $178 per parcel. While costs would likely decrease for subsequent TLMAs given economies of scale and application of learnings from this initial experience, these costs are still well above government estimates. Table 1 below shows the cost breakdown by actor. ILRG tested the approach in TLMA Mwansambo through a USAID contractor. About half of the costs incurred were through the global contractor; 20 percent toward local in-country staff providing operational and technical support, 12 percent toward global staff providing oversight and backstopping, and 20 percent toward USAID administration. This in and of itself is an important learning; though donor/implementer led efforts take some of the planning, coordination, and logistical burden off government, this additional layer of oversight comes with substantial cost. Given some of the challenges detailed below, this intermediary role proved essential for driving progress when roadblocks emerged to achieve project results. However, this level of additional cost is not sustainable. Under a government-led national scaling effort, these USAID contractor costs would be taken out, leaving a cost of $88 per parcel – still well above the government estimate of $10-$15. The remainder of this section looks at each of these budget line items in turn, suggesting where additional efficiencies might be found to further reduce costs.

TABLE 1. CONTRIBUTION BY ACTOR TO PROJECT COST

EXPENSE	COSTS	PERCENT	PER PARCEL
Government	$160,261	10%	$17.28
Field Staff and Costs	$374,950	23%	$40.44
Community Members (CLC)	$39,716	2%	$4.28
Contractor Local Admin and Oversight	$304,052	18%	$32.79
Equipment and Printing	$108,188	7%	$11.67
Gender and Learning	$138,701	8%	$14.96
Contractor Global Support Design, Admin, Oversight	$193,584	12%	$20.88
USAID Contract Administration	$336,185	20%	$36.26
TOTAL	$1,655,637	100%	$178.56
TOTAL without Contractor	$821,816	50%	$88.63

GOVERNMENT: Government costs account for $17.28 per parcel. The bulk of this comes from daily subsistence allowance (DSA) for field-based government staff ($9.43 per parcel), followed by government travel for supervisory visits ($4.15 per parcel), and DSA for visiting government staff from Lilongwe ($3.46 per parcel). The

program did not pay government salaries, so the real cost to government is substantially more than this amount. Having three government staff permanently based in each TA during the national rollout is likely unsustainable, though having locally based staff does reduce transport and fuel costs due to frequent travel to and from the capital. As discussed below, due to ongoing district and TA boundaries disputes which were not resolved before work began, there were many more government supervisory visits to the TLMA than originally planned. These trips/costs could have been minimized if preparatory boundary demarcation work took place and was fully confirmed before the documentation began. During a national scale roll out, more decision-making power will be devolved to the district level, which could minimize some of the government supervisory visits and DSA costs. However, even with this suggested savings, the current level of government involvement seems unsustainable for the national rollout from a cost, time, and human resources perspective. This level of government oversight would require significant staffing in order to base people in each district. In addition, the current timeline for implementation needs to be substantially accelerated. Given that TLMA Mwansambo took over a year to document, by the time all TLMAs in the country have been documented, the base map in many areas could be outdated.

FIELD STAFF AND COSTS: $40.44 per parcel came from field staff wages and fieldwork costs. This total includes data collector and data processor wages ($16.71 per parcel). This group is made up of relatively low-cost recent university graduates who were based in the TLMA during the project. While the team found it helpful for the data collectors and processors to be in the same location for ground truthing during data cleaning, for a national level rollout, a central data processing facility could be considered to help minimize data processing staff and equipment needs at the district/TLMA level. Similarly, the government wanted data collectors to have a university degree in land management or a related field for the ILRG project. Another approach would be to utilize local community members as data collectors, an approach that has been tested elsewhere under ILRG and in other regional land documentation efforts. While there might be a steeper learning curve at the beginning due to varying levels of data literacy and comfort with the mobile mapping technology, using locally based staff as data collectors would reduce wage and transport costs and eliminate lodging needs. Another benefit of a locally led approach is that data collectors would understand the local culture and inter-community power dynamics, useful for both mobilizing community members and resolving disputes. Vehicle hire, fuel, and driver costs for transportation around the TLMA to carry out the land documentation work accounted for $15.59 per parcel. The project looked at purchasing lower cost motorbikes instead of car hires but were advised that it was not culturally appropriate for women data collectors to travel by motorbike, and all were reluctant to travel by motorbike in the rainy season. Given the cost involved in local vehicle rental though, this decision should be revisited for the national rollout to find more cost-efficient ways of moving the team around the demarcation area.

PHOTO: Nico Parkinson/ILRG

Data collectors, recent university graduates, were based in TLMA Mwansambo for the ILRG project.

$6.07 per parcel came from other material field needs, including Mwansambo office rent, generator fuel, public address (PA) system hires for community sensitization efforts, meeting/training costs, airtime and internet, and office supplies. It took months for the Mwansambo office to get electricity, significantly

increasing generator fuel costs. Though there are frequent blackouts in Malawi, necessitating a backup generator for office use, ensuring field offices have electricity before work begins could reduce these costs. Additionally, moving data processors and their information technology equipment to a central processing center would reduce some of the daily demand for power. $2.07 per parcel came from training and motivation for staff. Maintaining staff motivation and the pace of work over the 13-month project proved challenging at times, leading the project to allocate funds for team outings as a quarterly incentive. This is partly a reflection on supervisor management and leadership approaches, but also reflects the toll 13 months away from friends and family takes on staff. During previous government pilots, the data collector/processor teams were swapped out halfway through the work. Though this comes with additional training time and costs, a rotational schedule could be considered to maintain progress and motivation during the national roll out. Additionally, using data collectors from the local community would reduce motivational challenges associated with time away from friends and family, for these individuals could return to their own homes each evening and weekend. This cost could also be reduced substantially through greater monitoring of progress by field coordinators. During the middle few months of the program, many data collectors were only collecting a few parcels per day, and a lack of urgency from field managers or planning exactly where collectors could achieve a large number of parcels completed, resulted in inefficiencies.

COMMUNITY PAYMENTS: $4.28 per parcel came from lunch allowances for CLC members for supporting parcel adjudication and public display. CLC positions are unpaid, voluntary roles to support community development, but the government agreed that CLC members should receive a lunch allowance for a set number of days during parcel demarcation and during public display to compensate for time away from farming or other tasks. This approach created some confusion among CLC members. When public display took longer than the agreed number of days, some CLC members demanded additional lunch stipends, and refused to work until they were paid. This created delays in the work and frustration among CLC members who felt the project was shortchanging them. These costs should be reconsidered during the national rollout. Paying for some, but not all, days worked seemed to create unnecessary confusion. The government should consider either making the CLCs a full voluntary role with no lunch stipend (communicated clearly up front) or finding more effective ways to communicate the lunch stipend policy with members. Unfortunately, because the processes have been donor funded, these costs differ dramatically between projects and tend to be based on what the donor budget will allow, rather than a cost efficient and replicable approach.

PHOTO: Meagan Dooley/ILRG

CLC members from GVH Mtawa 3 in TLMA Mwansambo during the land documentation work.

CONTRACTOR LOCAL ADMIN AND OVERSIGHT: $32.79 per parcel came from local administration and oversight costs incurred by the USAID contractor. While contractor global oversight and administration costs are not required for the national rollout, these local oversight administration

tasks will need to be performed by GoM or a contracted entity. This cost includes $17.31 per parcel for technical coordination. Assessment costs, staff salaries for the country coordinator and field coordinator that provide technical support, lodging and per diem costs for staff travel to the TLMA for oversight visits make up this portion of the budget. This technical coordination and oversight work was important to program success. As noted below, there was a lack of urgency and push on behalf of the government field supervisors, which required constant monitoring and problem solving by the local contractor team to drive the work forward. These oversight tasks will need to be absorbed by government staff or project consultants in a national rollout. This included $6.93 per parcel for equipment and office rental for the Lilongwe-based team, which could be cut as work moves to existing government offices. $6.30 per parcel came from local administration costs, including office supplies, utilities, staff salaries for administrative and finance positions, health insurance, and taxes. This category also includes $2.24 for travel for local oversight visits by administrative and finance staff. Regardless of whether it is government or a contractor, there is undoubtedly a dedicated team required to oversee field staff, support procurement needs, and manage project budgets and keep work on time and within budget.

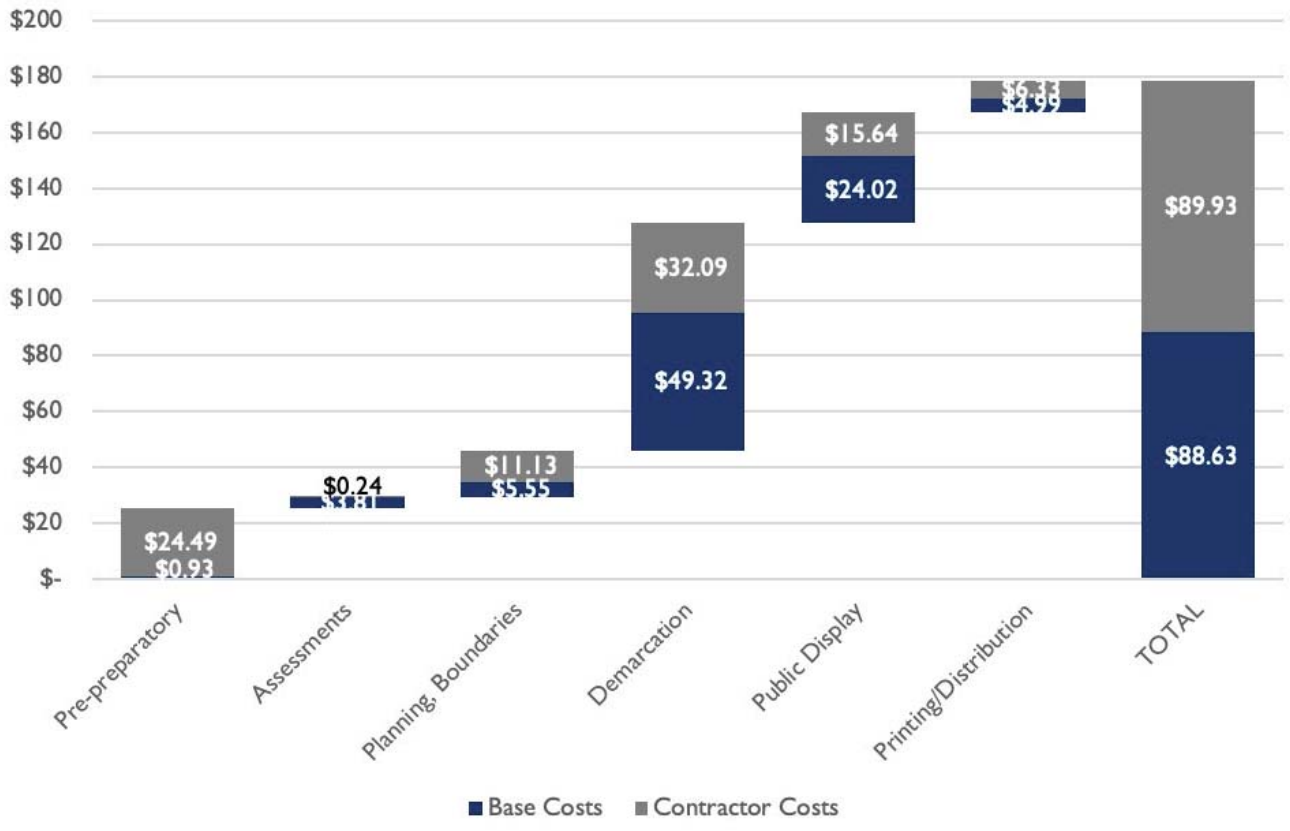
EQUIPMENT AND PRINTING: $11.67 per parcel came from equipment and printing needs. $7.30 per parcel came from equipment cost, including tablets, desktop computers, laptops, a plotter, and printers. Most of these purchases were one-time, upfront capital investments and ILRG left field information technology (IT) equipment with the Ministry of Lands at project close to be used in future land documentation projects. While it represents a small portion of the overall cost, printing is another area for cost savings. Printing alone contributed $4.36 per parcel. Final certificate printing costs, not including staff time, were $20,000, more than $2 per certificate produced. This cost is not scalable at the national level. People value receiving a physical certificate, so this portion of the workflow should not be cut. However, in addition to the physical certificate, the printing stage involved printing back up certificate copies and physical copies of the land register, title offer and acceptance letter. Some portions of this process could remain digital, as opposed to analog, to save time and resource costs. Special certificate paper, legal seals, and stamps made up approximately $6,000 of this price, suggesting potential savings of $14,000 by relying on digital copies of other documents.

GENDER AND LEARNING: GESI and learning represents a relatively small portion of the overall budget ($12.08 per parcel for gender, $2.88 per parcel for learning). ILRG found that the gender-responsive approach enabled a broad, inclusive process and helped achieve notable successes documenting land for widows, orphans, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Cost savings can certainly be found here – for example, ILRG conducted an intensive gender training with CLC members in the original 18 GVHs and a simplified approach due to time constraints in the additional five GVHs added at mid-project. However, eliminating the gender component all together would not achieve the same results. Malawian gender consultants led the GESI work under ILRG, conducting the baseline gender assessment, developing community sensitization materials, conducting CLC trainings, and facilitating community leader and household gender norms dialogues. GESI training for project staff, including data collectors, processors, government supervisors, the land clerk, CLCs and CLTs is essential, as is women's empowerment training for women CLC members to ensure they are able to meaningfully participate in their new roles. Low-cost sensitization tools, such as community radio, comic books, posters, and door-to-door campaigns by community gender champions, allowed the program to reach a large group of people in a short period of time, though these efforts should have begun earlier in the process with more time to carry out sensitization before demarcation work began. Finalized materials, including facilitation guides and training curriculum (available here) can be reused and adapted, reducing some of the upfront costs needed for further GESI efforts, which are reflected in these costs.

COST BREAKDOWN BY STEP: Another way to look at areas for cost-savings is by step in the documentation process (Figure 1). The bulk of the cost comes from the parcel demarcation and adjudication phase (46 percent), followed by public display and validation phase (22 percent). This makes sense as these are the main stages of the land documentation process where community members, government staff, and field staff are mobilized. As these areas represent the bulk of the costs, they are the most likely areas for finding greater efficiencies for cost savings. Field teams were achieving relatively low productivity during the middle of the exercise, enumerating an average of just a few parcels a day. Field staff as well as community CLC members may not feel an urgency in their work at times, as they may hope that their contracts may be extended, or they may receive additional days of per diem. A large portion of the contractor costs come from the planning stages of the work, which makes sense given the upfront design and preparatory work required. This also suggests potential cost savings from developing standard procedures to be used in other TMLAs, reducing upfront planning needs. The rest comes from technical oversight and logistical support during the demarcation and public display phase. Given the ILRG program's timeframe, distribution of certificates occurred after the main program closed down and exclusively through government support. As a result, the costs of distribution are not included fully within this analysis.

Cost-effectiveness is one of the main barriers to scale at the moment in Malawi. While achieving a $10-15 per parcel price seems unlikely for initial land documentation, additional cost savings could come from using a centrally based data processing team, local data collection officers, reduced government supervisory visits, more cost-effective transport options, reduced generator fuel costs, and limited printing. Based on ILRG analysis, a realistic goal might be to get to approximately $50-$65 per parcel, based on the suggested cost savings above.

FIGURE 2. CONTRIBUTION BY STAGE TO PRICE PER PARCEL



3.2 DIGITAL TOOLS

Digital tools have the potential to substantially reduce costs and increase the speed of land documentation compared to traditional analog methods. The advent of cheap mobile phones with GPS capabilities accelerated the pace of land documentation efforts in a number of countries, as documented on USAID's MAST Learning Platform. In Malawi, the government contracted RCMRD to develop a land documentation platform to support the customary land documentation process. Data collectors went to each community and physically walked parcel boundaries with landholders and neighbors using a GPS-enabled tablet device, recording the geographic coordinates for each parcel along with demographic information on the household. Supervisors then manually downloaded this data from the tablets to a central database each evening and assigned it to a data processor for cleaning using open source QGIS software. This process relied on physically connecting each tablet to a supervisor's computer each evening rather than uploading data to a web-based platform.

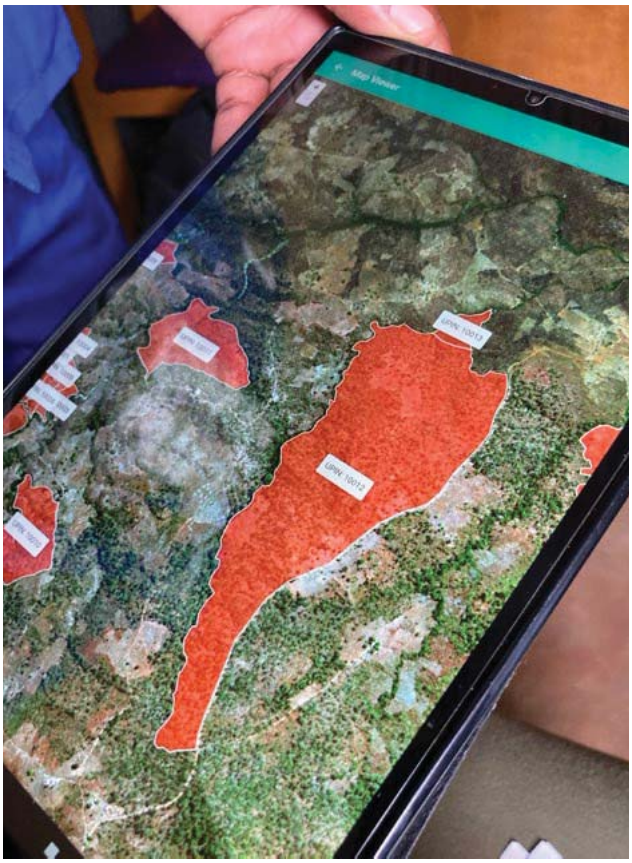
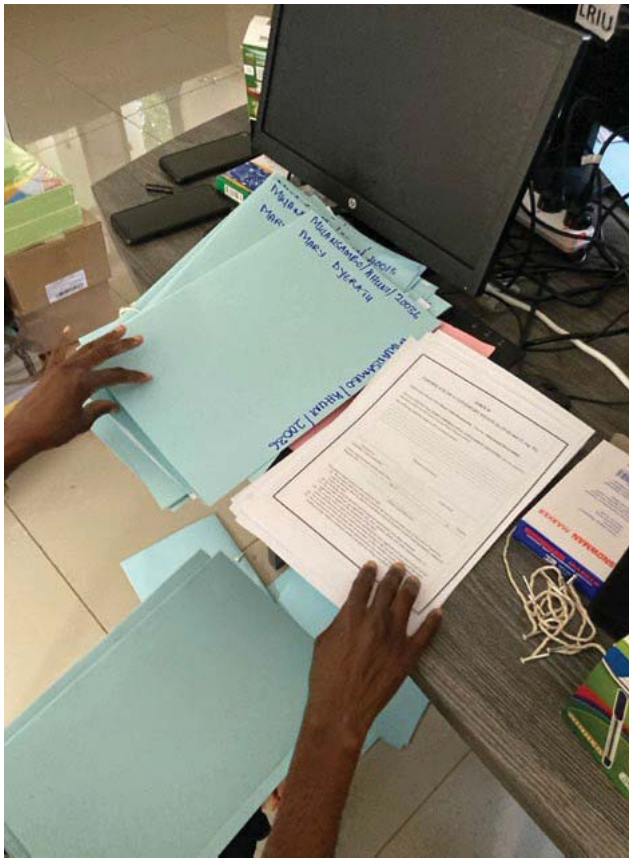


PHOTO: Meagan Dooley/ILRG

Malawi customary land documentation digital platform, developed in Kenya.

PHOTO: Meagan Dooley/ILRG



Copies of customary land registration folders, hand prepared by government team in Lilongwe.

While the government heavily invested in digital tools at the demarcation stage of the land documentation process, they spent less time finding additional efficiencies through digital or web-based tools at other stages of work. For instance, during the public display and validation phase, data processors and CLC members wrote down any changes and corrections needed within a paper booklet and passed them onto the data processing team to input into the database. The team noted it would have saved time if the data collectors were able to make changes directly into the database via a mobile application while talking with community members. Additionally, many steps in the certificate preparation and printing steps could have been automated. For example, rather than having a data processor manually type certificate and title plan details into a template and merge them into one document for printing, a script could have automated the process that pulled the data from the database. During the printing stage, a separate, Lilongwe-based government team prepared physical copies of the offer letter, acceptance letter, certificate copy and land register and assembled them into handwritten

folders for storage at the district land registrar, rather than relying on the digital database as proof of record. This process took months of time, negotiation, space, and resources to mobilize Lilongwe-based Ministry staff to carry out this work, many of whom had not previously been involved in the Mwansambo area. For future efforts, the GoM should consider reducing the mobilization of Lilongwe-based staff, as this is not cost effective or sustainable for mass documentation. Unfortunately, a recent fire at the Ministry of Lands destroyed many of these folders, illustrating the danger of relying on physical records. ILRG found that printed copies of materials were important for the community to allow community members with varying digital literacy levels to interact with public maps and registers. Community members likewise appreciated having a physical copy of their land certificate as proof of documentation. However, there is less need for paper at intermediate, government-managed steps. The government did note that they plan to work with RCMRD to digitize additional steps in the process ahead of the national rollout. USAID ILRG offered support to the LRIU throughout the partnership to analyze the existing digital tools and workflow processes, as well as opportunities for linking them to project management processes. Despite initial interest, the LRIU did not have the bandwidth to devote their Information Technology supervisor to engage in this undertaking. Allocation of IT staff time to developing standard procedures for the digital workflows will be critical if the GoM wants to further reduce costs.

3.3 CLARITY OF STEPS

Another key element needed to reach scale is a clear, well-documented, predictable process that stakeholders can replicate across districts. A smallholder farmer in northern Malawi should have the same experience documenting her customary land as a farmer in the south. A strong land law alone is not enough – there must be clear operational guidelines to help actors practically implement the land documentation process. This includes timing, sequential steps, inputs, and human resource needs.

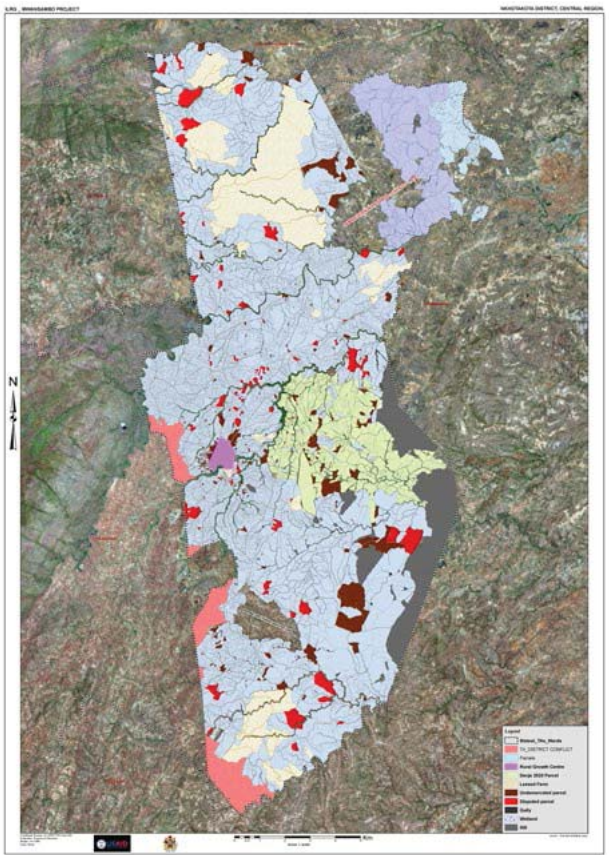
TIMING: While the land law presents clear stages in the land documentation process, the government team did not complete all preparatory stages before implementation began. This slowed down the work and created confusion and duplication of efforts. For instance, TLMA, GVH, and district boundary agreement were not completed in the pre-preparatory stage; instead, the government conducted these steps in parallel with parcel delimitation. This slowed down the work considerably and added to costs. In areas where there were active boundary disputes, the data collection team had to halt work. Some days the data collection team ran out of work by midday. They could not complete the GVH they were assigned to due to boundary disputes, but they did not have additional data loaded on their tablets to move to another area. This led to inefficient use of human resources and low parcel per day production for several weeks, slowing down the overall project timeline and increasing costs. It also led to confusion at the community level, as people who had lived in the same location for 50 years were now told that they actually belonged to a neighboring district and thus were not eligible for land documentation under the current project.

PHOTO: Vincent Moses/ILRG

Malawi Deputy Surveyer General Alice Gwedeza pointing out the official TLMA boundary during one of many boundary dispute resolution meetings.

A similar issue arose with leaseholds. TLMA Mwansambo includes a large number of private leaseholds for tobacco cultivation, many of which were issued over 20 years ago. Some of these leases had expired,

which meant that under the land law, the land reverted to public land, rather than customary land. However, in many cases, families had been farming and living on this land as if it were customary land and were not aware they were living on formerly leased, but now public, land. ILRG identified the need to document and map these leaseholds ahead of implementation so that these plots would not be mapped during the demarcation phase, leading to confusion down the line. The government was unable to produce a complete list of leaseholds for the area, and when it did provide a partial list after demarcation had started, it contained both expired and unexpired leases. As a result, some farmers mapped their parcels, only to find out they were located on expired leaseholds and thus could not be documented during the public display phase. Though government officials noted that people could petition for expired leaseholds to revert back to customary land and then document their plot in subsequent documentation exercises, people were understandably wary of this promise, and many were unsure how to go about this process. Government counterparts noted that a key lesson from the ILRG work is that these pre-preparatory steps must be resolved before work begins. Responsibility for these two steps of leasehold verification and district/TLMA boundary harmonization lie with government departments and supervisors. Each of these processes would benefit from having clear procedural manuals on how the process should be undertaken, including case studies of common problems/challenges. For future work, the government should prioritize leasehold and boundary mapping as an important step ahead of land documentation.



MAP: LRIU/Malawi Ministry of Lands

Map of parcel demarcation in TA Mwansambo from December 2022. Red areas indicate TA or District boundary disputes and yellow areas indicate leaseholds.

SEQUENTIAL STEPS: While the main stages of the land documentation process were clear, the intermediary steps at each stage often lacked specificity. For example, after the data processing team sent the first batch of digital certificates and title plans to the government printing team in Lilongwe, the printing team told them that they needed to merge the certificate and title plan into a single document before sending. In a previous pilot, the government printing team had merged the documents on their end, so the data processor supervisor assumed that the process would be the same for TLMA Mwansambo. After clarifying that this was now the field's team's job, the data processor supervisor noted that the team did not have PDF software on their computers, and most computers in the office were not connected to internet to access a free online version, so the data processor supervisor had to manually merge all certificates and title plans himself. Basic logistical steps like this should have been clarified before the team began preparing certificates, along with any software and human resources needs to accelerate and automate the process and help reduce costs. Throughout the process these connections between steps, data and information needs often led to delays and downtime for staff. Staff realized that they would continue to be paid while their managers or offices dealt with these needs, so there was a substantial slowdown in work as well as a tendency to make last-minute requests or not communicate challenges proactively.

INPUTS: Another challenge during the ILRG project was a lack of clarity around input needs. For instance, the project team engaged in multiple conversations with government staff to produce a complete list of materials

needed for certificate printing. This included a list of documents (and number of copies) that needed to be printed for each parcel, as well as specifications on the type, size, color, and quality of paper required. Printing materials cost almost US $20,000, so the team wanted to be certain that they purchased correct amounts the first time so as not to slow down the work. It did not seem like these requirements were documented anywhere, for the ILRG team received different guidelines from different government stakeholders, especially regarding which documents needed to be physically printed versus those that could exist digitally. These needs appeared to require consultation between government departments, but consolidation of this information is a necessary next step.

HUMAN RESOURCES: Identifying human resource needs and clarifying roles and responsibilities of different positions is a central part of having a clearly documented process. One challenge of a donor-implemented project is that there are often duplicate reporting structures. For instance, at the TLMA level, the two government supervisors reported directly to the activity manager at the LRIU. The ILRG field coordinator, also based in the TLMA, reported directly to the USAID contractor team. While the goal was that the government supervisors and the field coordinator would work together to lead and plan the work, in reality, the government supervisors did not always consult with the field coordinator and the field coordinator was not proactive in communicating challenges and helping the LRIU team problem solve. As a result, these parallel reporting structures sometimes meant that different stakeholders had different pieces of information about the work. To address this challenge, ILRG asked the government supervisors to send a weekly status report outlining key achievements that week and planned activities for next week to LRIU and USAID contractor teams on Fridays. These reports complemented the digital reporting from ILRG field staff but were not proactively used together by government supervisors and ILRG. Rather ILRG's global team tended to use the monitoring tools to push for coordination among national and field level teams.

PHOTO: Charles Kayenda/ILRG

Land clerk explaining customary land documentation process during community sensitization meeting

Another key lesson is the importance of having the right person with the right skill set in the right role. Per the land law, the local level land clerk leads the initial community sensitization sessions for the customary land documentation work. The clerk's job is to explain the land documentation process, clarify the steps, and answer questions. However, community members commented that in these initial sessions, the land clerk largely read the land law out loud, rather than interpreting and explaining it. The land clerk is hired for their topical knowledge, not their facilitation or public speaking skills, yet these soft skills are essential in getting their message across. The data collection team and CLCs helped to fill these gaps under the ILRG work, re-explaining the process in clear, simple language for community members during the adjudication and demarcation phase. More work is needed to think through not only what is communicated during the community sensitization phase of the work, but also how it is communicated, and who the best messenger might be to reach the widest number of people. ILRG and previous pilots have developed a comprehensive set of communications materials to support the land documentation process and these resources should continue to be promoted within the LRIU, and potentially contracting communication specialists and teams to lead in this outreach effort.

3.4 EFFICIENT OVERSIGHT STRUCTURES

A final step needed to reach scale is efficient oversight structures. As work scales up, strong coordination across stakeholders helps drive progress, reduce costs, avoid duplication, and solve problems as issues arise. This requires both efficient structures that provide support and oversight, as well as key individuals who are empowered to make decisions and address roadblocks.

Under the ILRG project, the activity lead for the LRIU largely served in this coordination role. He oversaw the ILRG work in addition to the other land documentation pilots and was able to pull together learnings and best practice across activities. When issues arose during implementation, he has enough authority to make decisions to resolve the issues, redirecting personnel and resources as needed. This central focal point was an asset to the project. However, given his bandwidth overseeing multiple pilot projects in addition to his day-to-day work, it was at times challenging to resolve issues quickly. Field-level government supervisors were not empowered to make decisions without consulting with him and were not always able to elevate priority concerns. The project could have benefited from an empowered decision maker at the TLMA level who had the overall vision for the work, could problem solve as issues arose, and elevate issues to higher ups as needed for rapid resolution.
This tension emerged at a few key points during implementation. First, as noted, it took a good deal of time to resolve district, TLMA, and GVH level boundaries with key stakeholders. After multiple visits from the government surveying and planning team, there was still disagreement between local leaders about where the district boundary lay. There did not seem to be one key decision maker who had the authority to make both sides comply with the demarcated border; rather, the team continued to hold dialogue and boundary walk meetings with leaders on both sides. This led to large and costly delays, as well as confusion at the local level. One piece of this challenge, as discussed above, was that these issues were not resolved before work began. However, the larger challenge was that when disagreement emerged, there was no one deputized to make a decision to move the work forward. As a result of ongoing boundary disputes, two GVHs, Mgombe and Thanga, could not be completed during the project timeframe, as the leaders could not reach an agreement on where the boundary between their jurisdictions lay.

Beyond resolving large-scale implementation challenges, efficient oversight structures are also important for addressing day-to-day logistical considerations in the course of a project. For instance, in the middle of ILRG, there was a fuel crisis in Malawi due to a foreign exchange shortage. The project team heard that other donor projects were buying fuel in bulk and storing it to avoid work slowdowns. This required a waiver from the government to procure fuel in larger quantities and a safe place for storage. The ILRG team raised the idea with government counterparts who advised that it was a good approach, but the process of getting the waiver stalled for weeks, leading the project to find other workarounds, which were more expensive and time consuming, to meet the field team's fuel needs.

While government supervisors in the field office led the daily work, their planning horizon was short. They planned field activities one to two weeks out but did not seem to have a longer timetable of the sequential steps that needed to be completed, by a future date, in order to move to the next stage of work. They relied on their activity lead at the LRIU to advise on next steps. This lack of field-level long-term planning manifested in a few different ways. As noted earlier, staff and resources were not always allocated in the most efficient way. In addition, this lack of forward planning sometimes meant that the team did not have the materials they needed when they needed them. Neither donor nor government procurement processes are quick, which requires project leads to anticipate their future needs in advance to ensure materials arrive in time. The field office often submitted procurement requests for materials – such as printer ink, office supplies, generator fuel – only after they ran out. Given donor procurement rules, which require putting competitive bids out to market, these supplies could not be turned around in a day or two. This slowed the work and led to frustration on the part of the field team. These planning issues at the local level led the global contractor team to get more involved in the day-to-day field operations, scheduling weekly check-ins and monitoring visits to help the government supervisors map out intermediate targets and due dates to achieve project outcomes, and increasing costs.

A final coordination challenge that emerged was aligning donor and government monitoring and evaluation needs. In some land documentation projects, parcel data is fed directly into the government land administration system, while in others, it lives in a parallel database administered by the project implementer, with varying levels of integration into the state system. As the ILRG project was co-led by the GoM, it owned and housed all the data collected in their Postgres database. Government data ownership is important for sustainable land administration and ensuring data from various projects eventually feed into the new LIMS system. However, it also meant that USAID and implementing partners lacked visibility into project progress for monitoring and reporting purposes. The government was wary of sharing detailed parcel level data with ILRG/USAID staff due to data privacy concerns, and instead produced periodic summary tables on the number of parcels mapped. When ILRG asked for more detailed data, the LRIU activity manager agreed, but the government supervisors at the field level did not have the data skills to query the Postgres database to produce the desired tables on their own.

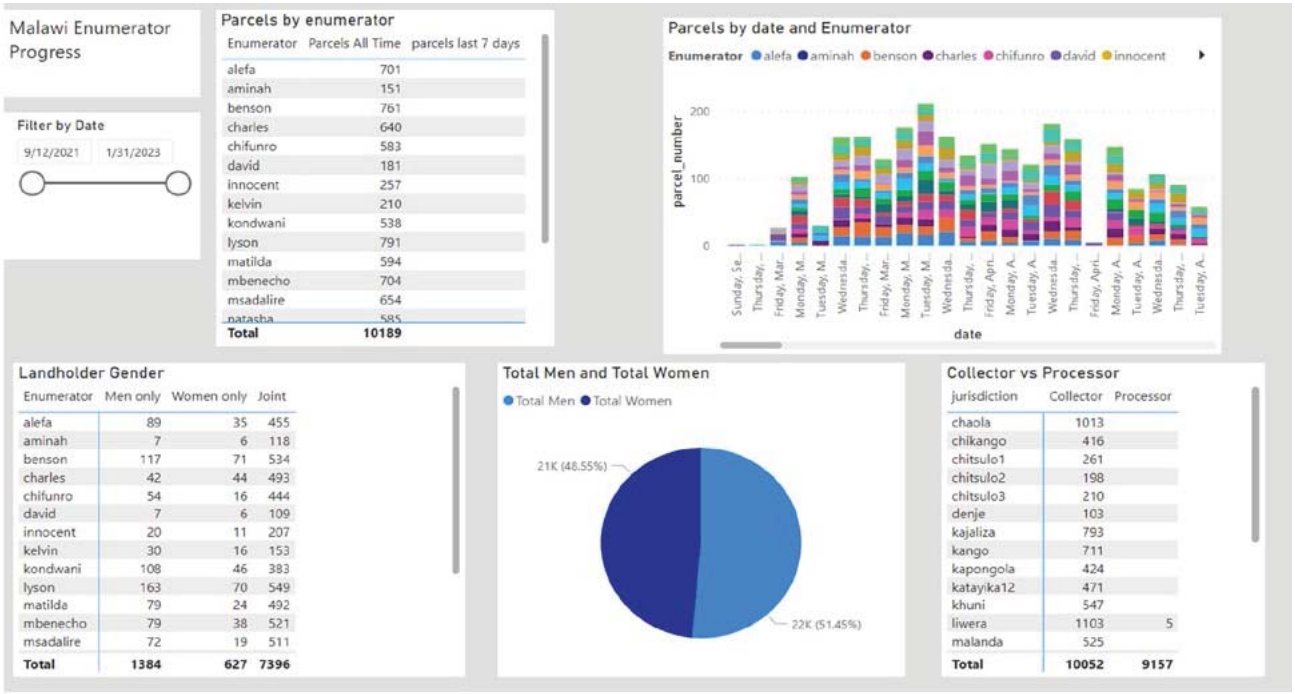
The crux of this challenge is that different stakeholders on ILRG had different data needs. The government was interested in compiling a final, complete version of the database to feed into the land administration system. They were less interested in data collection and monitoring at intermediate stages of the process. USAID was interested in data on the number of people/parcels/ha documented, broken down by gender, age, and other categories as feasible. The ILRG implementation team was interested in step-by-step monitoring data to gauge progress and manage field teams – for instance daily reports by data collector on number of parcels documented, data from the public display phase on the number of corrections and updates made, daily reports from the land clerk on number of certificates distributed and the gender of the person who came to pick up the certificate. ILRG in the end created parallel data reporting structures to meet its monitoring needs using a mobile application (Open Data Kit, or ODK) and asked data collectors, processors, and the land clerk to report on daily progress.

The project team also designed excel templates for the data processors to summarize changes made during the public display phase. ILRG shared this interim data with the government to illustrate how digitization could support project monitoring efforts in future activities. While the government was supportive of ILRG's use of these mobile reporting platforms and parallel data collection structures (as noted above), to date they have not adopted similar structures for future work. Ultimately, ILRG was able to convince the field team to report on progress but had less success in encouraging government staff to either report or use the modules that were developed. This duplication of structures did create more work for the field team and led to some challenges in

PHOTO: ILRG

reporting, as the data received through ILRG structures did not perfectly align with the summary data provided by the government. In the end, ILRG used its own data for monitoring purposes, but used the government's data for final reporting to USAID.

PHOTO: Meagan Dooley/ILRG



ILRG's parallel reporting structure for data collectors and processors. Data on daily work was submitted via ODK and then visualized on a dashboard using PowerBI for monitoring purposes by the global contractor team.

Coordination and efficient oversight will only grow in importance during the national rollout. For future efforts, allowing more power to be devolved to local level staff overseeing the work, who are best placed to solve day-to-day problems, would help improve outcomes. This requires not only empowering staff as decision-makers, but hiring people who have operational and technical skills to lead the work. Logistical planning is an important skill and should be a key part of the onboarding and training process. Appointing a central point person is also critical. When issues arise that the field teams are not able to solve, someone needs to be able to make a decision and drive the work forward. This person needs to be sufficiently senior that their decision carries weight. Finally, while future efforts may not involve donors, the government should consider adopting a more robust system to monitor progress. Especially as work begins to roll out in multiple jurisdictions at once, identifying areas where work output is low, individual staff may be performing poorly, where the gender balance of parcels is weak, and where certificate distribution is slow will be important for government coordination and oversight efforts and to meet public sector performance goals. There are multiple free, open source, low-cost mobile applications that can fill this need, which would also support the above goal of greater digitization of the customary land documentation workflow.

PHOTO: ILRG

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The partnership between USAID and the Government of Malawi presented a unique opportunity to move beyond pilots and address how to reach sustainable scale in a customary land documentation project. Mapping an entire TLMA in 13 months proved an important test case for Malawi's customary land law, illustrating both successes and areas for further improvement before a national roll out.

The project achieved notable successes, especially fully integrating a GESI lens into the work, with women named on 68 percent of parcels (compared to 38 percent under an earlier pilot). CLC orientation and women's empowerment training helped women CLC members gain confidence to meaningfully participate in the land documentation process, advocating for the rights of women, youth, widows, orphans, and other vulnerable populations. Community leaders took the initiative to sensitize community members on the land documentation process and drafted by-laws to enshrine women's land rights into customary practice. Community gender champions conducted door-to-door outreach to encourage people to register their land with their spouses and children, discussions which changed minds and led to greater inclusion. These structures remain in the community and can be utilized by future projects for faster mobilization and awareness raising.

Despite boundary disputes and leasehold challenges, the project successfully documented 21 out of 23 GVHs in the TLMA in a year, securing customary land rights for over 40,000 people. This took government commitment and buy-in to drive progress and resolve obstacles as they arose. The government field team, data collectors and processors, and Malawi contractor team collaborated well together, and mid-stream adjustments helped create strong lines of communication. Despite varying data needs, the government responded positively to most USAID and contractor requests and eventually got the team the data they needed to proceed. The project held a public ceremony with GoM and USAID/Malawi to hand out the first certificates in the TLMA, where community members shared about the importance of the land documentation to their household well-being and tenure security, creating momentum and community support ahead of the wider rollout.

PHOTO: USAID Malawi

Minister of Lands Deus Gumba and Acting USAID Malawi Deputy Mission Director Anna Toness hand out land certificates in GVH Chaola.

However, it is not clear that this approach to scaling is sustainable, particularly given the project's high per parcel costs, which were tied in part to a lack of clarity over some process steps, and problems related to

project planning and management. As the government team begins to roll out the national customary land documentation process, four key elements will be required to reach scale: i) low-cost per parcel and decreasing costs with scale; ii) digitization of the land documentation process; iii) clearly articulated steps that allow for easy replication; and iv) efficient oversight for problem solving and logistical planning. Reflecting on lessons learned from the ILRG project and addressing some of the challenges faced could help the government achieve greater scale and cost-efficiency moving forward.

Some challenges are not unique to Malawi – physical planning issues around jurisdictional boundaries happen everywhere and stall land documentation work in many countries. Similarly, conflicts between neighbors, leaders, and government departments over boundary demarcation and land use are common. The goal is not to eliminate these challenges, but to implement efficient structures and processes to resolve these issues as they arise. Other challenges could be solved quite easily, including documenting implementation guidelines for the customary land law, creating clear operating procedures and lines of decision making for logistical planning and oversight, and addressing boundary demarcation and leasehold issues well in advance of project rollout.

The following recommendations are based on lessons learned from the ILRG project in TLMA Mwansambo and are designed to help GoM streamline processes, reduce costs, and clarify roles and responsibilities ahead of the national rollout.

1. Complete pre-preparatory stages before implementation begins

District, TLMA, GVH and other administrative boundaries should be agreed upon before community level delimitation begins. Leasehold verification should also take place before parcel delimitation. Indeed, this work should be prioritized now ahead of future land documentation work, and should be a prerequisite for beginning delimitation in additional TLMAs. This process requires a discrete set of methodologies that do not seem to exist at present, as well as workflows to resolve common challenges encountered, particularly in leasehold verification. Government teams should clearly communicate with impacted households who no longer live in the same jurisdiction or who live on leasehold land what the process for land documentation will be for them, with follow up visits as needed. When local stakeholders do not agree on boundary delimitation, a central decision maker needs to be able to enforce existing boundaries to drive the work forward.

2. Reconsider best use of project offices vs. centrally based teams

The use of project offices and/or a centrally based data processing center must be considered. A central data processing center based in Lilongwe would allow a central team of data processors to clean and digitize parcels across the country. This would both reduce human resource needs at the local level, as well as reduce needs in more remote rural locations. One or more individuals is still needed within the TLMA to help resolve parcel boundary questions from a digitization perspective, and stronger modalities are required for data collectors and processors to operate independently. Utilizing local youth as data collectors should reduce costs and increase the data collection team's familiarity with local customs and power dynamics. It could also help mitigate motivational challenges experienced when the data collection team is based in the field away from home for extended periods of time.

3. Pursue more cost-efficient transportation options for the field team

Local car hire and fuel costs made up a large portion of the budget. For future efforts, the government should consider alternatives, including buying motorbikes or hiring local motorbike taxis, to transport data collection teams around the demarcation area.

4. Be judicious with government supervisory visits

Government fuel and DSA costs represented a large portion of the overall budget. While oversight visits can help drive progress and resolve problems, they also come with a high cost. Visits should be planned at periodic intervals and maximize efficiency by combining needed supply deliveries with government oversight trips to reduce the number of vehicles going back and forth from Lilongwe.

5. Find ways to further digitize the land documentation process

Government should focus on digitizing the public display and the certificate printing stages of the work to avoid duplication of efforts and automate processes where possible to increase speed and reduce human error. They should focus on paper for community facing steps and find ways to reduce reliance on printed documents for intermediate government stages of the work. Greater utilization of digital tools at intermediate stages also allows for better real-time monitoring of project progress.

6. Draft implementation guidelines for the customary land documentation process

Intermediate logistical steps in the land documentation process should be documented for easier replicability. This includes step-by-step workflows, human resource needs at each stage of the process, and input/material requirements. Roles and responsibilities between positions at the field level and between the field and central government level should be clearly defined. Identifying skill sets needed for various roles, including technical, operational, and soft skills can help ensure the right people are put in the right roles to maximize success.

7. Proactively use monitoring tools for local level decision-making

Local staff should be empowered as decision makers to help drive day-to-day operations and resolve local level problems. This requires that local managers have an overarching vision for the work and can effectively drive & progress. It also requires building a common monitoring and evaluation framework that allows for progress & monitoring and staff management, as well as reporting to donors and government.

8. Appoint central point person to oversee work and resolve high level issues

ile more decision-making should be devolved to the local level, a central project manager can help ensure accountability, resolve concerns, share best practices across jurisdictions, and elevate high level problems to the right person for resolution. This person should be high enough ranking that their decisions carry weight.

9. Reduce per parcel cost of documentation

There is a dramatic gap between global expectations of costs of systematic land documentation and the real costs based on experience. Cost savings can be achieved, though unlikely to $15 per parcel, through workflow improvements, performance monitoring, reduced expenditures on oversight travel and more efficient use of human resources.

Finally, while first time land documentation is an important achievement in setting up a functioning land administration system, it is but the first step in the process. Without structures for administration and updation, it represents a static snapshot in time of the land tenure situation in a country. People need to understand the purpose of land documentation and how to update their records in the future in the case of birth, death, or sale. They need to know where to bring disputes and grievances if tenure issues arise. This requires staffing, office space, information technology capacity, and outreach. In Malawi these structures are largely not in place to date, though there are plans to roll out the national LIMS system and devolve administration to district level land registries. The roles of the Land Clerk in this process, as well as District Land Registrar, are crucial to build local ownership and long-term administration and use of land data. Establishing systems for ongoing land administration should be the focus of work moving forward, in parallel with systematic first-time documentation efforts.

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