



Policy Note on Socio-Economic Land Data Management in Ghana

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Abstract

The ISELDA project sought to assess the nature and availability of socio-economic land data in Ghana. The specific objectives of the study were to: identify key stakeholders in land and socio-economic land data, assess data availability and provide suggestions for improving socio-economic land data in Ghana. To achieve these objectives, we first conducted a desk review to identify what kind of data were available and their accessibility. We also identified and engaged with various stakeholders in land administration in Ghana. Seven (7) key stakeholders were identified. In terms of data availability, we found

that, Ghana's statistical service hosts a majority of the country's national level socio-economic data online and provides easy access to most of these datasets. The summary statistics presented focused mostly on agricultural land and showed some interesting variations across gender and location of the household in terms of land ownership and use. We recommend that government expand available socio-economic data to cover non-agricultural land ownership and use. Also, there is need to create a land help desk where socio-economic land data from all stakeholders can be managed for easy access. This will be helpful for policy decisions and implementations.

Introduction

The role of land in the growth and development of a country cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, economic theory identifies land as a crucial factor in production, in addition to capital and labour. Access and utilization of land plays an important role at the micro and macro levels. At the micro levels, land has the potential to create jobs and improve the wellbeing of families. At the macro levels, increased productivity increases economic growth. In developing countries, however, access to land and utilization remains complicated. Land governance and administration are usually poor with several lands unregistered (Arko-Adjei et al. 2010). The lack of appropriate land administration and related information has contributed to the challenges of economic growth.

AU Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to address land related challenges for human existence. Goal 7 of the AU Agenda 2060 looks at promoting environmental sustainability and climate resilient economies and communities (African Union, 2014). Specifically, this goal targets improving sustainable natural resource management and also ensures that there is sustainable consumption and production patterns. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goal on land look into how we can sustainably manage the forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. Achieving these goals requires that complete data on land be made available for research to inform policy decisions. Against this backdrop, the relevance of an improved land data inventory is central to the development of Ghana. This is likely to reduce the currently persistent land related conflicts. The study seeks to specifically take an inventory of which organizations have what kind of socio-economic data on land, assess the accessibility of socio-economic land data for research and policy formulation, evaluate the tools used to collect the data and provide suggestions for land data improvement strategy

Methodology

The approach to this study was largely based on a desk review of existing sources of information related to land. The process involved collecting secondary micro-level data available in Ghana. These are mostly household and individual level socio-economic data. The main data repositories reviewed include the World Bank micro data catalog and the Ghana statistical service. The questionnaires to the various datasets were also accessed. The questionnaires were then reviewed to identify datasets that collect relevant information on land. Following this, sample questions from the accessed datasets were then extracted and analysed using simple descriptive statistics. This focused on socio-economic dimensions of land ownership, access and utilization in Ghana. We explored these dimensions across gender and location. The study also used some qualitative techniques. This was done through stakeholder engagements. Different stakeholders who were directly or indirectly engaged in using land information were identified. Separate meetings were then scheduled for these stakeholders and their views were collected on various issues around socio-economic land data. These include their access to socio-economic land data, need for such data, general satisfaction with information from existing data and possible improvements necessary.

Summary of findings and improvement strategy:

Summary of findings

Seven (7) key stakeholders were identified in socio-economic land data in Ghana. These were Ghana Statistical Service, Ministry of Land and Natural Resources, Lands Commission of Ghana, Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority, Forestry Commission, Center for Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Service, and Geological Survey Authority. In terms of data availability, we found that Ghana's Statistical Service hosts a majority of the country's national level socio-economic data which are available online with easy access to most of these datasets. For all these datasets, questionnaires were used as data collection tools with national samples across all regions. However, we also found that socio-economic data on land ownership and use were limited. For instance, most of these datasets focused on agricultural land and how they were administered. There was little or no information on non-agricultural land in the socio-economic surveys. Similarly, the dataset available only provides information available at the household level, which makes it difficult to show the nuances that exist within the household in terms of land ownership and usage. A brief description of the data suggests that agricultural land is mostly owned in rural areas. Ownership of this land was also higher among female headed households compared to male headed households.

Improvement Strategy

Understanding land governance and administration requires complete datasets. It is important to mention that while all the reviewed surveys sought to collect data on land, they focus on agricultural land. However, land goes beyond just agricultural uses. Against this backdrop, a broader scale improvement of socio-economic land information in Ghana will be to include information on non-agricultural land in the various national level surveys. This is important as there are many other stakeholders who have interest in land data beyond the agricultural sector. For instance, information on other lands may be useful to the forestry and mines agencies. Questions that may be relevant in this case include; (i) who owns these lands? (ii) what are these lands being used for? Location of the land?

Secondly, the data available on agricultural land in the surveys do not capture several details. For instance, it is not clear which specific individuals in the household own the lands. This makes it difficult to go beyond the socio-economic characteristics of the household head to that of the specific household member that owns the land. This is also important for unearthing nuances that exist within the household about land governance and administration. Specific individual level questions will also highlight intra-household disparities that exist. For instance, question about the age structure of land ownership within the household, gender dynamics beyond the head, utilization of land within the household, among others, should be considered in improving socio-economic land data.

There is also the need to consider information on land acquisition, registration and permitting for development at the household level. Questions in this regard can include (i) how the land in question was acquired? (ii) Whether or not the land is developed? (iii) Whether the land is registered? (iv) challenges with the registration? (v) The size of the plot? (vi) the number of plots owned? (vii) whether or not there is conflict on the land? and (viii) the ease with which one can acquire land.

Policy implications

This project has some potential policy implications that could improve land related challenges in Ghana. First, there is the need to improve socio-economic land data in Ghana. As mentioned earlier, there are important aspects of socio-economic land data that are not currently captured in the national surveys. Going forward, national surveys should include these aspects. A broader, suggestion would be to commission a national survey on land. Unlike other surveys that have emphasis on agriculture or socio-economic outcomes, this land survey will collect information with particular emphasis on land across individuals and households.

Secondly, there is the need for proper stakeholder coordination in the collection and use of socio-economic data. An ideal situation would be for all stakeholders that use socio-economic land data to be involved in the development and implementation of these national surveys. This will help in appropriately capturing their opinions and data needs in the surveys. Also, our stakeholder engagements suggest that some of these stakeholders conduct surveys independently which are not made public. Ensuring that there are effective collaboration cross stakeholders will facilitate easy data sharing and usage. This will also save resources that would otherwise be used to simply replicate surveys that have already been conducted by other stakeholders.

Ultimately, the stakeholder engagements and data review support the establishment of a land help desk where socio-economic information from all stakeholders can be managed for easy access. Almost all the stakeholders confirmed that this would be an important step towards effective land governance and administration in Ghana. Both stakeholders and the public would find this help desk useful.

References

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