



Socio-Economic Land Data Strategy in Namibia

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April 2020 / No.ISELDA009

Abstract

Namibia lacks a comprehensive and harmonised socio-economic land database. The aim of this policy note is to provide a briefing on the collation of the socio-economic land data in Namibia. Namibia's land size is 824 000km², and it is characterised by a three-tenure system of which 23%, 35% and 42% are owned by the government, communal and commercial (agricultural) land respectively. The 2018 statistics indicates that commercial land has a total of 12 382 farmers with a land size of 39.7 million hectares. Majority of commercial land is privately owned (86%), whereas government owns the remaining 14%. The privately-

owned commercial land consists of the previously disadvantaged group (16%) as well as the previous advantaged group¹ (70%). It is important to note that disparities still exist in terms of land ownership in Namibia.

To address land redistribution and equitable distribution of land, the Ministry of Land Reform facilitated the enactment of eight Acts of Parliament and developed two national policies i.e. the National Resettlement Policy and National Land Policy. The Land Reform Settlement Programme currently offers 99-year lease agreement. Beginning from 1990 up until 2018, the national resettlement programme facilitated the acquisition of 3 million hectares of land through the willing buyer willing seller policy. About 54% of the acquired commercial farms were financed through the National Affirmative Action Loan Scheme of the AgriBank. The remaining 46% were financed privately on commercial interest rate. With regards to gender orientation, 10 % of farmland were acquired by females while the male category obtained 60% through the affirmative loan scheme. This is despite the fact that prior to independence, women were virtually excluded from owning land. It is therefore evident that commercial land re-distribution remains highly skewed towards the male category.

With regards to the availability and accessibility of socio-economic land data, there is no one source-database primarily for socio-economic land data in Namibia. The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) reports only few variables mainly from national census and surveys whereas the Ministry of Land Reform manages the Land resettlement data and the N-class² database. Other socio-economic land statistics remains scattered around various ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry; Ministry of Urban and Rural Development; Ministry of Environment and Tourism; Ministry of Mines and Energy, etc), government agencies (AgriBank) and NGOs (NACSO). Of concern is the fact that there is no harmonised socio-economic land data between the various entities, particularly between those that store data for administrative use and those that keep for statistical use. In ensuring that there is easy access and dissemination of socio-economic land data in Namibia, there is need to develop a harmonised and centralised national socio-economic land database. Inherent attributes such as affirmative action and previously disadvantaged should be incorporated in such a database to enhance proper planning, policy design and statistical use. To address issues of socio-economic land data, there is a need for policy commitment towards an integrated or comprehensive approach. This policy note recommends an establishment of a Help Desk that will serve as a host for a comprehensive and harmonised socio-economic land database for Namibia

1 Namibian citizens who have been socially, economically or educationally *advantaged* by past discriminatory laws or practices.

2 N_class is a system used to register and store communal land data (communal land and leasehold rights)

Introduction

This policy note is based on the ISELDA-project socio-economic land data strategy report. The notion of land is often classified into various categories; environment, economic and society, etc. The environmental aspect revolves around hydrological, atmospheric and climatic system as it relates to soil, pollution issues, source for drinking water and wildlife. The economic aspect classifies land as a scarce commodity, a factor of production and a store of value. In terms of the social aspect, land ownership revolves around utility that is derived from owning land and the standard principle for socio-economic attributes. In this case, the socio-economic land aspect encompasses these three elements of land. Economic literature purports that equitable distribution of land/resources in imperfect markets has the great potential to stimulate human development indicators and ultimately broad-based economic development.

At the 13th Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government in July 2009, the African Union (AU) adopted the ‘Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa’, recognizing, amongst others, that land is central to the “sustainable socio-economic growth, development and the security of the social, economic and cultural livelihoods” in Africa. This declaration emphasized the importance of establishing institutional framework and guidelines to ‘support AU Member States in their efforts towards reviewing, developing and implementing land policies, including mechanisms for progress tracking and reporting’. Good Land Administration and Governance Systems have been identified as important policy agenda items for the African Continent.

In line with the AU declaration on land issues and challenges in Africa, socio-economic land issues in Namibia remains high on the agenda of Government. Namibia’s Vision 2030, National Development Plans (NDPs 1-5) and the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), are some of the targeted policy responses that are intended to accelerate development in priority areas such as land issues to eradicate poverty through enhancing the production and productivity of agriculture and non-agricultural sectors. Therefore, socio-economic land use information plays a pivotal role in policy decision-making processes that are geared towards addressing developmental agenda for any economy. However, in many African countries including in Namibia, the availability and accessibility of socio-economic land data remains a challenge. The availability and accessibility of socio-economic land data is important to Africa and to Namibia in particular for many reasons. Firstly, it allows researchers and policy makers to develop well-tailored policy responses to address land related issues, natural resources management and monitoring progress of government policies. Secondly Namibia is an interesting case to evaluate because of highly skewed distribution of commercial land inherited from the colonial-apartheid system. Thirdly, socio-economic land data provides statistics required for conducting empirical studies that are needed

towards guiding planning and policy intervention. In light of this, the main objective of this policy note is to provide a briefing on the collation socio-economic land data in Namibia.

Methodology

To address the objectives upon which this policy note is based, a qualitative research strategy using a case study design was employed. A desk review technique was used to identify the major stakeholders of socio-economic land data in Namibia. In addition, it was also used to ascertain the existing repositories of country data and whether or not the repositories have socio-economic land data. Data collection was done through interviews and from websites of identified stakeholders. Interviews were done during the country visits on face to face with the identified stakeholders to gain an in-depth exploration of their operations, views and understanding.

Namibia country visit on the NEPAD LGP country assessment and data collection took place on the 18th - 22nd November 2019. The delegation was made up of representatives of the following: NEPAD, AERC, RCMRD and the Ministry of Lands Reform (as a line Ministry). The following stakeholders of socio-economic land data were identified: Ministry of Land Reform, Namibia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Ministry of Mines and Energy, University of Namibia, and the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The delegation managed to visit most of the stakeholders, with the exception of the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry, Ministry of Mines and Energy and the Namibia University of Sciences and ` Technology. The collation of socio-economic data on land was done from data that was collected from all visited stakeholders.

Findings of the inventory and main components of the socio-economic land data improvement strategy

It was found that although socio-economic data exists in Namibia, however, there is a lack of a comprehensive and harmonised socio-economic land database. Statistics on land tenure show that the tenure systems in Namibia are held in the following patterns: 23% government land, 35% communal land and 42% freehold agricultural (commercial) land. This indicates that the current³ land tenure system is tripartite in nature. However, the land tenure system remains relatively unchanged when

3 Household Income and Expenditure Survey

compared to the year 2010, when the government, communal and commercial land constituted 20%, 36% and 44% respectively.

The findings reveal that the key custodian of socio-economic land data in Namibia are: Namibia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of agriculture water and forestry and the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Support Organisations. It is however, important to note that although socio-economic land data exists for Namibia, not all stakeholders collect data for statistical use. Most of the identified government ministries only collect data for administrative uses, whereas the NSA collects data for statistical purposes. In collaboration with the main stakeholder (Ministry of Land Reform), the study gathered enough socio-economic data on land to analyse methodological notes and assisted in the development of the land data improvement strategy. It was also found that there is no harmonisation between the institutions that collect data for administrative purposes and those that do so for statistical use. With regards to the institution (NSA) that collect socio-economic land data for statistical use, it was discovered that currently there are no specific data sets for socio-economic land data. The socio-economic land data remains scattered through various databases such as Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey, Namibia Agriculture Communal and Commercial Sector Census/surveys and Inter-Censal Demographic Surveys. Moreover, despite their importance for policy purposes, attributes that are inherent to Namibia such as previously disadvantaged or affirmative action are not adequately captured in scoring sheets for the land resettlement criteria. It was also established that although the NSA follows international methodological practices, some of the surveys suffers from the usual challenges of response errors and low response rate-problems. Again, the capturing of Namibia's inherent features, such as affirmative action and previously disadvantaged/advantaged are not adequately reflected. Overall, the study concludes that Namibia is characterised by a tri-tenure system of which the majority of land is under commercial classification. Although there are policies to address commercial land re-distribution, it remains highly skewed toward the male category. Furthermore, Namibia has no formal/harmonised national socio-economic land statistics database.

On the basis of the findings, the following improvement strategies were recommended. Firstly, there is a need to develop a Help Desk that will serve as a one stop socio-economic land database in Namibia. Secondly, harmonisation between institutions that collect data for administrative and statistical use should take place so that there is a feeder from administrative to statistical users. Thirdly, scoring of important socio-economic land attributes should be addressed, to capture the issues that are inherent to Namibia. This is particularly important for addressing Namibia's development agenda and decision making. Fourthly, the main limitations of the HIES's data is that Namibia's income distribution is highly skewed with the upper tail of the distribution often underrepresented in random samples. This limitation could be improved by

using stratified samples based on income tax returns. Finally, the study has registered that the response error is not reported in the current HIES reports. Issues of response error and non-response problems are among the major limitations of the HIES data. To address this weakness, the response error should be included.

Policy Implications

Policy implications emanating from the findings suggests that although the establishment of a Help Desk and implementation of the data improvement strategies are crucial for policy action, these pose various implications in terms of human and financial resources. The current fiscal constraints may delay the full operationalisation of the Help Desk. Additionally, most NSA statistics use regions as lowest domains for estimation to curtail costs. Widening the estimation domain to points lower than regions may worsen the financial burden. In addition to this, it is important to note that certain socio-economic land data sets such as wildlife species-census and surveys are restricted to the public for conservation and related poaching reasons. This may limit the application of the aforementioned improvement strategies on all socio-economic land data stakeholders. Furthermore, it is important to note that land matters are often flagged as 'sensitive issues' in many African countries including in Namibia. Such sensitivities may limit availability of certain socio-economic land data to the public. To address the aforementioned policy implications, there is need to engage the African Union and/or the African Development Bank to help with funding were necessary. The establishment of public-private partnership could be another alternative to address financial resources constraint. Similarly, the human resource constraint can be mitigated by close collaboration with the tertiary education institutions. In addition to these, Namibia needs a strong political will to link development policies to land reform/redistribution trajectory.



Mission

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