

BOTSWANA

Free land in an organized manner that saves lives

In Botswana adults receive a free piece of land from the state, in theory, upon request. In practice, the management of land and property is in great need of modernization. However, through collaboration with the Swedish National Land Survey and a comprehensive land reform, major changes are underway which impedes corruption and allows people to use their properties as a security for loans.

The Lapcas project, where the Botswana National Land Survey and its Swedish counterpart collaborate, focuses on creating processes and systems for an efficient management of real estate information in Botswana.

One of Botswana's land councils is located in Mosopa, a few kilometers west of the capital Gaborone. Here, maps and folders have been transferred into a proper filing system while waiting to be scanned. As part of the Lapcas project, efforts to update land owner information are in full progress.

Until the 1970s land was divided by the chief of the village. The border went "from the tree to the anthill" or, in particularly favorable

cases, "from here until you are too tired to walk any longer". No mapping, no records.

"Now that we have taken the step forward from trees as outlining property borders, it has become important to move on to the next phase", says Frengelin Selemogwe who is in charge for the land council in Mosopo.

"We are one of the most efficient councils in the country as we contact people in the community directly instead of waiting for them to register."

Yet, stacks of papers and folders have piled up at the land councils. Many plots are not yet registered and old data is not updated. Property conflicts have escalated and the situation has also fostered corruption.



Botswana's Lapcas project manager Bareng Malatsi with Åke Finnström from Swedish National Survey.

PHOTO: ANNA PERSSON, ANNA P MEDIA

Far from all adults own a piece of land. This is because land councils have withdrawn ownership of land not being used. Furthermore, the waiting time to receive land can be long. Badirang Peotsile in Mosopa owns a piece of land.

"I am here to renew my land certificate. Otherwise, the council will retract my land since I have not been able to afford to build a house on it. I take care of five children so this is hard. But now you are able to help me!"

Botswana's project manager for Lapcas, Bareng Malatsi, emphasizes that women are disadvantaged in terms of traditional landowning. However, nowadays the councils consider more equal division of land.

Frengelin Selemogwe adds that law and tradition are in conflict with each other.

"Women are starting to become aware of their rights and are breaking the traditions. We have seen that women utilize their land better than men. Lapcas has been an eye opener in that sense."

The cooperation between Botswana and the Swedish Land Survey began initially with the mapping of Botswana in the 1980s. The Lapcas project enters its fifth and final year 2013. Åke Finnström leads the Swedish part of the project.

"We have established a long-term strategy for land ownership procedures. The Ministry has also adopted our proposal for a new IT strategy," he says.



Badirang Peotsile owns a piece of land in Mosopa. Women are disadvantaged in terms of traditional landowning, but now courts are also considering equality.

PHOTO: ANNA PERSSON, ANNA P MEDIA

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/FRENGELIN SELEMOGWE

According to Åke Finnström there's a strong political will to facilitate the work. The proposals are being prepared at the Ministry for further discussions in Parliament. They suggest mandatory registration of all land and the use of land as collateral for loans, which is not possible today.

He compares Botswana with Sweden, where about 80 percent of all loans are secured through real estate, which is the backbone of the economy.

"If successful, it will affect the whole economy in Botswana as ordinary people will be able to borrow against their land. It will increase employment and enhance the formal economy by billions."

THE FACTS

PARTNERS

The Swedish National Land Survey and Botswana National Land Survey.

COST

55,000,000 SEK

SIDA CONTRIBUTION

9,400,000 SEK

PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

45,600,000 SEK

TIMEFRAME

2011–2013

RESULTS

■ The local Land Register information system has streamlined the work of registration of land. A manual is in progress in order to facilitate the introduction of an electronic registration system.

■ Several plans have been made to carry out and capture land surveys and to map the land, train officers and to conduct a modification of the existing cadastral system.

■ A test pilot village has been initiated and several other areas are currently being surveyed and data is being collected. This is forming a Master Index for land in Botswana.

■ A strategy document on improved land administration has been adopted which started in 2011 and will run until 2016, meaning secure finances for such a task beyond PDC.

■ Three new courses in land administration and leadership have been implemented at the University of Botswana. From the Botswana side 750 people have completed the short or long courses in these subjects.