

Documenting land tenure of sharecroppers and contract farmers to improve sustainable utilization of land and environmental protection: A Case from Dang district in Nepal

Raja Ram Chhatkuli (Nepal), Shristee Singh Shrestha, Hellen Ndungu, John Gitau and Jagat Deuja

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SUMMARY

In Nepal, the National Land Policy is committed, among others, to ensure access to land for the citizens, security of tenure and land ownership of all and guarantee optimum use and management of land for environmental balance, food security and safer human settlements. While subsistence farming has been the mainstay for the majority of the rural and the peri-urban population, with the increasing urban sprawl and overseas migration, agricultural land is being rapidly converted or left vacant. Due to the mountainous topography of the country, per capita availability of cultivated agriculture land is limited, a situation aggravated by the abandonment of land, which makes optimizing use of land for food security for small scale subsistence farmers a significant challenge. Equally challenging is the protection of public and government land for environmental balance and safer human settlements. Preliminary findings from an ongoing project are that providing access to more land to the practicing subsistence farmers could be an answer to the sustainable management of land. In this backdrop the national policy has adopted a concept of land banking through willing lessor, willing lessee contracts and the protection of public and private land through optimal utilization of the land. □ □ This study explains the concept of documenting land tenure for landless sharecroppers and contract farmers operating vacant land under individual, institutional and appropriate government/ public land, through the application of fit-for-purpose land administration concept; the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) in the four municipalities of Dang district in Nepal. With the federal and the provincial policy in place for promoting sustainable utilization of unused and under-utilized land through recordation at the local level, a model was necessary where in the tenure of sharecropper and contract farmers is guaranteed and the ownership of individual, institutional and government/public owners is secured. The study provides the application of innovative pro-poor, gender responsive land tools for enumeration and recordation of all existing land to person(s) relationships. Such a recordation of all tenure types on a parcel is a win-win for all. The successful implementation of the model in the project is expected to provide learning and an incentive for scaling-up and the replication of the process to the rest of the country. □

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