

Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste

Project Objectives

This 5-year, US\$10 million Project will build on past USAID Land Law Programs. Additional funding from the Government of Timor-Leste and other donors will accelerate the project's timetable. Its objectives include: 1) Strengthening Policy, Law and Regulations; 2) Developing Land Administration and Information Systems; 3) Resolving Disputes; and 4) Increasing Public Awareness.

Significance

Land titling is a key foundation for economic development and security for generations to come. An effective land administration system will contribute to the following development goals:

- o **Economic development:** Formalising property rights contributes to poverty reduction by promoting economic growth and facilitating private sector investment. Registered properties can be used as collateral, improving access to credit for the poor.

- o **Conflict prevention:** A robust property rights system will promote security and contribute to stability. Adjudication, access to legal assistance and open public participation in decisions regarding competing claims will improve stability. By mitigating tensions caused by uncertainty over ownership, property rights will help prevent future conflicts and set a formal basis for enforceable private agreements.

- o **Profitable investment and sustainable resource use:** Secure land tenure empowers individuals and families to invest in their properties and plan for the long-term. In addition, the possibility of transmitting land to future generations encourages people to make sustainable use of natural resources.

Project Tasks

The Project comprises 5 tasks in the pursuit of Project Objectives noted above:

- 1) Public Information Awareness / Increased Transparency;
- 2) Land Policy Laws and Implementing Regulations;
- 3) Support to a National Land Commission (NLC);
- 4) Land Administration (Cadastral, Registration and Land Titling System); and,
- 5) Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Processes for Competing Claims to Land.



Land titling is likely to encourage productive economic investment and sustainable use of natural resources.

Project Timetable

Year 1 – Support the passage of Land Laws and Regulations; raise public awareness; develop dispute resolution mechanisms; develop technological tools, procedures and systems for claims registration.

Year 2 – Selective claims recording, emphasizing transparency and consistency with the law; continue to provide public information; develop support mechanisms for Government land administration bodies.

Years 3&4 – Nationwide claims processing and converting claims to registered titles according to law; support the administrative capacity of the GOTL institutions responsible for property rights administration, namely the National Directorate for Land and Property (DNTP).

Year 5 – Continue activities such that by the end of Year 5 all claims will have been recorded and at least 50,000 properties legally titled according to law, and the GOTL institutions are able to continue independently.



By providing support and capacity development to national institutions, the project aims to have recorded all claims and have awarded at least 50,000 land titles by Year 5.

Partners

In cooperation with

• **The Ministry of Justice** and the **The National Directorate for Land and Property (DNTP)**; as well as other government and civil society partners in Timor-Leste, the main implementing partners of this project are:

- **ARD Inc:** a US-based company that is a world leader in addressing land tenure and property rights issues in developing countries
- **ACDI/VOCA:** a leading international organization in enterprise and cooperatives development, as well as volunteer networks and civil society strengthening;
- **BELUN:** an East-Timorese NGO whose mission is to strengthen communities, develop capacities, reduce tensions and prevent conflicts in Timor-Leste;
- **Land Equity International (LEI):** an Australian-based company that is a world-leader in the development of Land Administration Systems.

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