



USAID
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UKRAINE

SUCCESS STORY

Protecting and Promoting Property Rights

Helping villagers secure private property titles quickly and fairly



Photo: USAID/L. Chmyga

Kyiv Oblast Governor Y. Zhovtiak presents a couple with the title to their land in March 2006.

Ukraine's rural land reform is driven by the need to raise living standards by helping 7 million villagers gain ownership of former collective farm land that they and their families have been farming for years. USAID is supporting Ukraine's land titling efforts, helping local officials manage and implement this enormous undertaking.

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As Ukraine strives to further its transition to a free market economy, a top priority remains to privatize land so that ordinary people can become private property owners. USAID has supported land privatization since 2001, when it launched an initiative with the government of Ukraine to help streamline and speed up this process. After five years of hard work, the results are beginning to show.

Since October 2001, USAID has directly helped the government issue up to 1.8 million land titles to eligible villagers, approximately 20 percent of the total number slated to be issued in Ukraine. In addition to helping issue the titles, the initiative has supported nationwide public education and legal aid programs to help villagers understand how to protect their newly won land ownership rights. So when one of the initiative's goals — to ensure that land titles are issued cost-free — came under threat, USAID reacted quickly.

The problem arose in 2002 and 2003, when a new Land Code was introduced, followed by structural changes within government. This effectively led to the establishment of a state-run monopoly for land survey services. The monopoly was attempting to make money by charging villagers fees for registering their new land ownership rights. To resolve this conflict, USAID launched a public education campaign through national and regional radio and TV, national publications, and seminars for village and regional officials. The campaign convinced the public that collecting fees for registering land titles was inappropriate. Local, regional, and national institutions appealed to the central government to stop improper fee collection from villagers to register their right to land.

In March 2006, Ukraine's State Committee on Land Resources issued an order that clearly established that citizens should not pay fees for registration of land titles, paving the way for successful completion of Ukraine's land reform. The decision ostensibly ended a legal tug of war over whether charges can be applied to the issuance of land titles. With several million more titles to go, the campaign secured an important victory for USAID's efforts to help ordinary people become land owners.