



Millennium Challenge compact helps a Malagasy family live securely

In the district of Faratsiho, the Land Tenure Project component of Madagascar's \$110 million compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation is beginning to pay off. As part of its activities, the project works to secure land rights for smallholder farmers to encourage them to make investments in their land, which will contribute to an increase in household income and land productivity.

Justine Rasoamanahirana, like most of the rural population in Madagascar, inherited her land from her parents. This traditional method of transferring land ownership consists of simply a verbal agreement between family members. Because there is no legal documentation of this transfer of ownership, customary rights to land are not registered at the state-run land administration offices located in the regional capitals. Owners of non-titled land are vulnerable

to people encroaching on their property and outsiders purchasing the land through transactions at the regional land administration offices.



Justine's land title has helped her to invest in her farm, her family and her future.

For years, Justine has seen her four parcels of land get smaller and smaller as her neighbors slowly stretched the boundaries of their adjacent fields. Even though the parcels total only 0.33 hectares, this land represents her livelihood, which comes from potato and rice farming. After hearing about the project's local land management office operated in partnership with the government's land reform program, Justine decided to obtain land certificates—new land rights documents that local authorities are empowered to issue—to legalize her property claim. In August 2007, she and her family received certificates to all four parcels, securing her legal right to her land.

Having secured her land, Justine went to work leveraging her assets. She used two of her parcels as collateral for a \$500 loan from a microfinance institution, which she used to invest in her potato farm. The tenure security on another plot gave her the confidence to invest in the construction of a small house that she rents. The rental income from this house has been enough to pay for her children's school fees and to purchase oxen which the family uses to transport their crops to market. Justine, her husband, and her four children are now living a more secure life in Madagascar.

Through the Land Tenure Project, and its activities to decentralize land management services, formal property rights are being made accessible to rural farmers in Madagascar for the first time. The Land Tenure Project has opened 19 local land management offices and plans to open another 236 offices in 2008. The Land Tenure Project also supports other pillars of the government's land reform program, including modernizing regional land administration services and making legal and policy changes. In addition, the Madagascar compact increases farmer access to financial credit by supporting microfinance institutions and banks and encourages agricultural investment and profitable enterprises by providing business management and agricultural production training for farmers.