

Lessons Learned in Irrigated Agriculture, Property Rights and Land Policy

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FINE: Let me start by welcoming everybody here and say let me thank you for joining us this morning for what I'm sure is going to be an interesting conversation.

It's great to see so many people here. I understand that we've got colleagues from our partner countries here. How many people are here from MCAs that are working on these issues? That's great. It's great to see you all here.

I'm very excited that we're able to host this even because it represents one of the steps that we're taking at MCC to share, to capture and share the experience that we have as we implement programs across the world.

We talk internally at MCC about being a learning organization. We talk a lot about knowledge management. I'm sure if you grappled with the issue of how you turn information into knowledge, you know that it's not easy to do.

And one of the instruments that we have is the principles to into practice series and we call the P into P. That, I don't know, that doesn't sound so good does it? Principles into practice is our effort to distill into technical papers the experience that we have—to make that public and to share it with a broad community of practitioners. And today, we're going to talk about our two most recent papers, one on land practice and one on irrigated agriculture.

To give a little bit of perspective on this, both of these topics touch on the issue of food security and this year, the U.S. is hosting the G8 and one of the topics that will be discussed at the G8 is food security in Africa. And we see both of these topics and the practice that we have and the experience that MCC has gained in working with countries across the world and particularly partners in Africa on property rights and on irrigated agriculture as being a specific contribution that MCCs experience can make into that broader discussion about food security in Africa.

I'm one of those people who's been intensely interested in property rights and land tenure systems since I served in Swaziland in 1980, so what, 32 years ago, where land tenure constituted a fundamental factor in being able to help communities tackle a variety of issues not just agriculture and—and food security issues but other types of economic growth issues.

And I was one of those people who, after a while, grew discouraged because I didn't see donor efforts and external financing as producing much in the way of real results in terms of modernizing land systems. And I went into a period when I felt like that wasn't really a very good investment for donors to make, that for the most part the kind of political, not commitment, but the political momentum and ability to take the decisions necessary to modernize land systems really wasn't there and putting in external resources wasn't going to do it.

And so I went into a period of, I don't know, of the cold, went out into the cold in terms of land tenure systems and property rights.

What has fascinated me and really excited me since coming to MCC is to see the—amount of work that MCC has financed in the property rights area and in agriculture as well. And this map provides a visual representation of where there's irrigated agriculture and where there are land programs.

Half, actually more than half of our—of our compacts include some sort of land program. Now the first thing that I think is notable about this is MCC as you probably know is a nontraditional approach to foreign assistance and in that nontraditional approach, we put a real heavy emphasis on country ownership and on working with countries where they identify their priorities and they direct resources. We don't have earmarked resources, the resources go to address identified constraints to economic growth that the countries get behind.

And I think it is very indicative that a large portion of our resources and more than half of our programs, when you say to the countries, what's the real constraint to economic growth you come up with land tenure and with irrigated agriculture. That says a lot.

And one of the things it tells me is that there has been a shift over those 32 years from, you know, from the time I got so discouraged in what countries view as necessary and possible themselves.

So I think that just, if you look at—how countries are choosing to use the resources MCC brings to the table and that they're choosing to put them into these kinds of programs is itself a very important message.

Secondly, I've visited some of these programs and I've seen the way they working to reconcile and harmonize traditional and modern systems of property rights and have seen very exciting activities, very exciting policies that are backed up by countries taking legislative action, putting in place the institutional structures and then drilling it down to the regulations and the procedures to make it all workable in a way that I hadn't seen before. And I

take that not only as a sign of the times that countries are in a place where they can take those actions, where societies are ready to take those actions, but that it now is, I think, a very productive place to put some external resources to help countries to move these really fundamental kinds of change along.

So that is what I hope the panel will be discussing today with input from all of you. Thanks again.

We've got a distinguished panel here who is going to talk about our experience and I hope you all find this a very, very useful morning.

Thank you.

LUCAS: Thanks, Patrick.

(APPLAUSE)

Hi everyone, I'm Sarah Lucas, I'm part of MCC's Department of Policy and Evaluation.

I'd like to start with an apology, we failed to print an agenda, so I'm going to tell you our agenda and then we'll go from there.

Let me start by introducing the panel. I've give some overview remarks and then we'll dive right in.

So I have with me today, Bob Fishbein, immediately to my right. He is a Director in our Infrastructure group here at the Millennium Challenge Corporation and he's one of the lead authors on the Irrigated Agriculture Principles into Practice paper.

Ms. Altantsentseg from Mongolia. She is with us here from MSA Mongolia. She's the Director for their Peri-Urban Property Rights project and she helped compile with her MCA colleagues a book about lessons learned in implementing their property rights projects so she has a lot to share with us today and if you're interested—if you read Mongolian, this is a good read.

And then Rick Gaynor is our Practice Lead from the Property Rights and Land Policy group at MCC. He's one of the lead authors on the Land Principles and Their Practice paper along with his entire land team, many of whom is here today. Right? So thank you all for joining us.

So the way we're going to manage today is first I'd like to get a sense of who's in the room. So can you give me a sense—raise your hand if you are an irrigation or agricultural specialist. Okay. Thank you, okay.

Raise your hand if you are a land specialist. Excellent, we're weighted in that direction. You'll hold your own, Bob.

Raise your hand if you're just generally interested in MCC's lessons learned. Okay, good, good, thank you. Lots of MCC staff in that category.

(LAUGHTER)

So let me say that the spirit of the principles into practice paper as Patrick said is to share some of our lessons but to do it in a really frank and open way. So all of the papers so far in this series have captured lots of country examples where we've learned lessons the hard way and we're trying to be pretty honest about that and where we've had some successes and building in our lessons to change our practice going forward.

I want to emphasize something about these papers that's important and that is that they are capturing lessons about implementation. They're not yet capturing lessons about impact.

So MCC has a large portfolio of impact evaluations, lots in land and irrigated agriculture especially that will help us understand the economic impacts of our programs and how the interventions we're talking about today translate into those economic impacts. So it's an important distinction to keep in mind as we have the conversation today.

So the two papers that we're discussing today, I think find some common themes, not by accident because we're working in the MCC model. One of them is what it's like to implement pretty complex projects in the context of a country ownership model. So as you know, MCC countries prioritize their investment areas and also have full responsibility for implementing programs.

So what has that meant for implementation for how we define our investments and how we implement them? These papers both focus a lot on some tradeoffs between being an ambitious project and being manageable and how—your project is only successful if you can achieve in the five year timeline what you set out to achieve and if it gets too complicated and gets in the way of that, there is some challenges. So there's some good lessons today about some of those tradeoffs.

Part of the MCC model is working with within a fixed timeline, five year compacts and fixed budgets that are set from the outset what opportunities that create and what constraints does that create for operating.

And then finally, both of these papers and our panelists today are going to talk a bit about the challenges of sustainability and sustaining the economic impacts that we hope to have through these investments.

So the game plan is as follows. There are no prepared presentations, mercifully. I am going to go directly to asking questions of the panelists. After our first round of questions, we will have video reprieve to get us a little bit more grounded in what our work looks like in Mongolia and then we'll do some more questions here and then we'll open it up to questions for the floor.

We're going to stop at 11:30 and so there should be plenty of time, I'm hoping, for questions from the audience.

So I think we're going to just go ahead and dive in and I'm going to start with a question for Rick. And, you know, a lot of our projects both in irrigated ag and in land, but particularly the land portfolio is marked by policy and institutional reform. And these things in our country and every country take time.

And so I'm wondering, Rick, how in the context of MCC's five year fixed timeline—how are we achieving policy and institutional reforms that in the land sector are inherently politically challenging and what are some of the lessons we're learning about how to manage that better?

GAYNOR: Thank you, Sarah and I'd like to also take the opportunity to that all of you for coming and to welcome you, and particularly a lot of my colleagues who are working on land projects around the world. It's great to see, I think over half of our land projects are represented here by people from the countries in which we're working.

And I, in advance, invite all of you to fill in the gaps that I may leave and also to—to make comments and participate in the discussion because I think that that will enrich everybody's experience this morning.

What was the question again? No.

All right, policy and institutional change and the challenges around that, yes.

LUCAS: Yes.

GAYNOR: So you know, at the heart of land and property rights is good governance—and so policy and institutional change is always part of what we do on our land projects and I think we have aspects of policy, legal, procedural, institutional change in just about all of our land projects.

So, you know, to cite a few examples, in Benin, we supported adoption of a rural land hold law that recognized customary rights for the first time where we helped develop a white policy paper and then adoption of a new land code.

In Burkina we're helping support decentralization of land services. In Lesotho, we helped create or we're supporting the creation of a new land administration agency. Madagascar, we funded decentralization of land services opening of land offices in—at the municipal level across the country. Mali, we're supporting the opening of a new land registration office in the Alatona region.

And so the list sort of goes on and we're doing these kinds of activates just about everywhere.

And Sarah said, issues around policy and institutional change in the area of land are often extremely contentious and politically sensitive. You know, they touch on questions of who owns land? How should land rights be acknowledged? Should land rights be transferrable or not? Who should control the allocation of land rights? These are questions that are very sensitive in a lot of the countries in which we work.

And then there's an added layer of complexity around colonial histories, around customary versus statutory systems, around decentralization should these issues be decided at the central level or more at the local level.

So these things are inherently complicated and difficult to achieve. And then, you know, there's often quite a bit of resistance on the part of groups who benefit from the status quo, various institutions that depend on certain policies or procedures for their livelihoods.

So that's all by way of saying, you know that maybe what a lot of you already know, these are challenging issues to try and work on.

Let me mention a few brief, you know, briefly some of the things that we're—some of tools we've used to try and manage some of this complexity.

Patrick talked about country ownership and I think country ownership is really at the heart of trying to achieve change in the policy and institutional areas. You know, we try very much during the due diligence process when we assess proposed projects to assure that there is a serious level of commitment at the national level. And sometimes that's really evident in the proposal itself. You can see that the government is really interested in a broad range of reforms.

And I think one of the things we've learned is really to try and build on reforms that have already been the subject of a lot of debate in a country that have already been adopted and hopefully even tested or piloted in some areas and then we build on those.

So that was, for example, how we worked a little bit in Burkina Faso and Madagascar where we tried to build on policy debates that have been ongoing for a long time on some decision that had been made and then we come in and try and implement.

But I would note that sometimes even if there is country ownership at the central level or at the highest level, one can still encounter resistance at different levels. And so country ownership is a little bit of a tricky thing

to nail down and so trying to make sure that incentives align at the lower levels—at the operational levels, let's say—is a really important lesson that we've learned and I would say it's been challenging sometimes.

You know, an example of that was in Benin where we really depended a lot on the mapping and surveying agency, and they weren't really necessarily on board with some of the things we needed for them to do. And we really had to go back and look at how we could create the right incentives for them to do what needed to be done to implement the program.

Another thing that I think has been really important—and by the way, we talk about these things as lessons. Some of them are things that are obvious and have been obvious and have been obvious to anyone who works in the development field for a long time, but still one is constantly reminded and we hope that highlighting some of these in this paper will serve to deepen the discussion around some of these issues and serve as a reminder of the importance of some of the things that we're seeing again or learning for the first time.

But consultation and participation are really key to getting buy-in on policy and institutional reform. So we've tried to be very supportive of participatory processes, and it's a two-way exchange. Right? You—it's important to learn from people what the problems are, what they needed and therefore, to craft the policy and institutional change correct and it's also a process of providing information to people to make sure they understand what's happening, can participate effectively.

So consultation and participation have been really key to accomplish policy and institutional change.

In some cases, we're had to have a heavier hand, let's say. In some cases, we've used conditions precedent as a way of kind of forcing what we felt were critical changes in order to allow to accomplish the impacts that we wanted to accomplish or even to be able to implement the next phase of—of an activity.

So we've had some success with conditions precedent in Lesotho. We required the adoption of a new law prior to the signing of our compact that would give women much broader powers and rights with respect to property rights. In Namibia, we require the government to provide budgetary support for communal land boards before we agreed to undertake an activity where we would be providing additional support. So we wanted to see that level of commitment from the government before we were willing to move forward.

And I think the use of conditions precedent, it's been a good tool for us. It hasn't worked every time and one has to be very careful about crafting conditions that are clear and are doable.

And in the case of, you know, policy and institutional change, sometimes describing exactly what you expect can be difficult—and countries can't always deliver. Right? I mean look at our own policy and legislative process—the healthcare debate comes to mind. Right? Trying to get a legislature to behave the way one might expect is difficult.

So I think in, for example in the case of Mozambique, we had a little bit of a vague condition precedent, let's say where we felt that increasing the transferability of land rights was really key to realizing the benefits and the impacts of the investments that MCC would be making but we didn't articulate perhaps clearly enough what the expectation was with respect to satisfying that C.P.

So we've been working with the government of Mozambique and we think it's turned into now a positive experience but we've learned that one has to use that mechanism, you know, very carefully and be very clear.

And then one last thing I'll mention, I think we've also learned that sometimes we just have to be prepared to step our support and our engagement. In some of the compacts, we've expected things to happen more quickly.

They haven't always happened on the schedules that we planned and in some cases, we've just found, okay, we have to really get in with our partner countries in a supportive, you know, sort of team effort.

And so we've done that, I think, successfully in a number of countries where—Benin comes to mind again—where we as MCC realized we needed to get more involved in order to make the policy and institutional change that we wanted happen.

So I think I'll conclude there.

Thank you.

LUCAS: Thank you, Rick.

Let me just before I move on, for those of you that are standing, there are six seats here, there's one in the back. Do you guys want to come and sit or you just want to escape quickly? So you're not, okay, that's fine. That's legitimate. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to sit down if you wanted to.

So one thing I forgot to mention about the agenda is that I'm going to try and keep the speakers to just a few minutes in their responses. So if you see my little card go up like this, it means I think we're ready to move on to the next thing.

I'm going to turn now to Alta for a moment and ask, you know, Alta, we've already spent some time talking about country ownership, but so far just from MCC's perspective. And so obviously as a country counterpart of ours, I'd much rather hear from you what the country ownership model means in the context of the Mongolia compact and specifically in the peri-urban project that you manage.

ALTANTSETSEG: First of all, thank you to the organizers—it's my honor to be participating in this event. I'd like to share my experiences with you.

And then let me thank to my counterpart, Leonard [Rolfes], and he actually pushed me to participate in this event! So I am happy to participate.

So let me share my idea in terms of the country ownership. The country ownership itself is really tricky, you know, just the task. It's tricky. In terms of the MCC core principles, country ownership is the core, the main.

Firstly, you know, I am a Mongolian. I can freely talk about my project, the MCA Mongolia, the Peri-Urban Rangeland project as well as the property rights project.

The reason I'm managing this project because, you know, I'm from the Mongolia side, and we are managing this project because MCC says the country ownership goes to the Mongolians.

The second point is MCA Mongolia, the MCA itself, everybody is local—local people handling, local people are working on it. Even in our case—in our project's case—all contractors are Mongolian so it's really easy to talk with them in terms of the Mongolian context and conditions.

So in this case, the ownership means that all the Mongolians people are working together and on different levels: in national levels and then local levels and then ground level, and then we are talking and then we are working with the people. So it's easy to handle the project as a success.

The last part, it's the hard part. So countries can work with MCC—MCC operational policies and the guidelines, to work with the country ownership, is not easy. Because if we are looking at the economic sides, who gives

money? So who has money, that side has rights, the power. So in that sense, it's really hard to working with—just owning the country ownership.

So we are actually—we have a lot of experience in—in the Mongolian context. We were talking many times with many different MCC specialists, dealing with, you know, how to really get the country ownership.

So that's really, you know, the hard task—but we actually achieved the result. Working with and then dealing with MCC's different consultants and their different units, and then we successfully just showed enough the country ownership. We actually achieved the result.

So in that sense, you know, the country ownership is really critical for policy and then institutional levels, it's really key.

So policy levels, let me give the policy levels. We have, you know, just in Mongolia, we have our own policy and own legislation, everything is set up. And if we really follow the MCC operational policies and then guidelines, sometimes it's—we've broken the law. The law is only one and then we cannot step on the law and then we need to, just—everything should go to the under law.

So I can give one example for how we deal with this. Our project is actually introducing leased land to the other groups. The others actually (inaudible) 15 years, you know the customary and user rights. For this project we give 15 years lease contract with other groups.

So the one issue came out—we didn't have clear documentation. So most of the other compact projects have a clear project document; the project document usually should have what's inside the project, and it should be very clear. We have a work plan, but it's, you know, "just follow the work plan."

Because of some circumstances, procurement and then others, issues come out. So we had the one work plan, and social issues came out in the leased areas.

We need to go to every single group to review boundaries of leased areas to get no objection, because in Mongolia, we have had just free access, in terms of pasture land. So our project is actually introducing the land lease—the other groups lease their land in 15 years, and then they have to remap it.

So why I start to talking about this, you know, we actually break the law because every unit—(inaudible) has to have its own; but in terms of the law, they cannot just override the neighboring administration unit.

The MCC project doesn't want to hurt others—it's actually a social issue, cannot hurt others, you know, people's rights. It's sometimes difficult to implement. So we need to visit each unit's other neighboring administrative units to get no objection. That was the really hard part.

So we talked with the local administration people and then, make sure there are not objections because it's required from MCC.

So in terms of you know, the Mongolian side, if you follow the law, we cannot do that—but we did it. And then so, you know, because we need to—the timeframe is very small. You know, there's we have only five years, we need to move on. In order to move on, we need to talk with the local people and then local officials and then so on.

In that sense, you know, because the Mongolians implemented the project, we did it. And all our contractors are also Mongolians, so it's easy to just understand the context of the situation and easy to, you know, just kind of be flexible.

So I would say that country ownership is really great, and then we're dealing with really good things.

LUCAS: Thank you. So we're building some momentum here on a discussion about country ownership. So I'm going to follow it a little bit with Bob and the rest of you that are here representing MCAs, I'd invite you when we turn to questions to also share some of your experiences with this element of our mode.

But Bob, I want to ask you something that comes up very clearly in the irrigated agriculture paper. You know, with the notion of country ownership, partner countries make submissions to MCC for proposed investments. And what we have found according to the irrigated ag practice is that many cases, the investment proposals that come from partner countries are primarily driven with an infrastructure investment.

But we've seen in the portfolio that we have around irrigated agriculture, that it is much more than just infrastructure.

So I'd like you to tell us a little bit about the storyline between getting from a country proposal that may be focused primarily on infrastructure to an actual compact program that has more to it than that. What are the dynamics about country ownership and the relationship with MCC in moving from proposal to project?

FISHBEIN: Thank you, Sarah.

As you said, we are a demand-driven organization. The proposal comes to us from the country. We go through what we call the due diligence process to discuss this program, to develop an agreed upon compact. And it is normal, I think, that particularly—when we're talking about projects that involve infrastructure—that it's the major part of the budget. So it tends to take on a larger aspect of the program.

But we have introduced a series, a kind of checklist, of issues associated with sustainability: with environmental sustainability, environmental impact, social issues. We have found that in many proposals, resettlement is something which is going to have to be accommodated. And in the country contexts, often times how resettlement is done is not consistent with our guidelines, which are based on the World Bank's operational directive 4.12.

We have also been looking at issues of water availability and sustainability which may not have been fully assessed in the proposal itself.

Several examples are in Mali, where the proposal involved expanding the area under cultivation under irrigation in the (inaudible) Niger which is a large complex of gravity fed water supply from the Niger River. Some of the initial indications we had during due diligence suggested that the main system needed to be expanded in order to accommodate this additional area. There was a bit of reticence by the Malian government, at first, to this idea. But during due diligence, we did carry out these hydrological assessments, which suggested that this needed to be done.

So that actually expanded the scope of the infrastructure work but at the same time, there was significant resettlement. There were families living in this area, this sort of greenfield area, and so the resettlement program itself took on a larger measure, if you will, from what the country had originally proposed.

That took us to issues associated with land allocation. We worked together with the land group for allocating plots of land during the rainy and dry seasons for these resettled families.

So that in itself witnessed a kind of expansion of the scope from an original notion that was originally proposed. I think that one could say that, yes, we expanded the country's proposal, but I don't think that that necessarily infringes on the concept of country ownership.

The main approach that we would like to take in that way is engagement with the country such that if we have a different perspective on what the infrastructure investment ought to be, that we engage, we work with the country to come to a common agreement as to how that it—that is defined.

Another example in Morocco, for example, is where we started to look at water availabilities, calculating water balances associated with irrigated tree crop production—in that sense, we expanded the work to involve research organizations, extension organizations and the like.

Perhaps another example of how we sort of expand the scope from an initially proposed infrastructure program is in Armenia, where the focus was on rehabilitating a lot of the systems—the old systems from the Soviet era, but at the same time, the more we looked at this problem, the more we came to, I think a joint realization with our counterparts that what also needed to be rehabilitated or renewed was the former organizations that would manage these systems.

So that lead to, again another component, we called it the water to market component which involved working with building up water user associations for sustainable management of these irrigation systems.

Those are maybe a couple examples of how we're looking at those aspects of the program. Again, I think that dealing with the country ownership issue is one in which I think we need to continue to learn on how to engage the country early to set expectations as to what we're looking for in these projects.

LUCAS: Thanks, Bob.

So we're going to take a moment to watch a video from Mongolia and we're going to need to move over to the side a little bit. The—your understanding of this video hinges on your ability to see the subtitles.

So if when this video comes up, if you're standing in the back and you can't see the subtitles, raise your hand because we don't want to spend this six minutes if in fact you're not going to get anything out of it. So, let's give it a try. You can slide over here, Bob.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

LUCAS: I'd like to turn it back to Alta, actually. The papers that we're writing for the principles and the practice areas are really primarily an MCC perspective on learning lessons from our implementation, but I'd love to ask Alta: If you and your colleagues were writing this paper about lessons learned an implementing the land projects or more broadly, what would the lessons be? And likewise, if you had an opportunity today to meet with a new MCA that is starting a land project, what advice would you give for successful implementation of the project?

ALTANTSETSEG: Firstly, I would like to say the main thing is the project description or project document—it's very crucial. Because you have a timeline, the five years, and you actually need the proper project description or project document, as due diligence.

For us, once we got the project description, it was, you know, just a clearer picture. So that was a big lesson learned in our case.

So another—giving a reason in a (inaudible) society, in other words, just giving the land by lotteries, we cannot accept it. It's really, you know, just cast off for us.

And how can we give the lands through the lottery processes? That was the hardest part. And even, it was the demand of project on all levels, the institution levels, the policy making level, it was really hard task to understand how come, you know. And then it's also a really hard discussion with our entity partners.

So I am the implementer, you know, I didn't write the project description. I need to just implement the project and by looking at the paper see what this project will achieve.

So then lottery was the really hard task for us. So we were, you know, just discussing many times, and then you know, with the many peoples, just even in a conceptual model, it was really hard. And then later on, once our project was expanded in two different areas, that task was so easy. So we didn't expect it to be so easy.

Because why it was easy—well as I was saying, at first, it was such a hard task. Right? From the beginning of the project, we introduced a lot of new processes, and designed them so that they should be able to expand, it should be a good model.

And so everyone could apply to this, and then everyone could come to the lottery event and then we could show to the public how the process works—and then it worked very well.

So I just would like to emphasize that if there is any new project for the MCA countries, then the first thing is to complete the project document.

Second thing is, you know, the public outreach process is really important. In order to then make it clear, and it should be publically announced.

And, in our cases, it's actually lessons learned. The government was really supported their rangeland project, and especially in institutional change, the policy and institutional change. We're working on the pasture (ph) draft—the pasture (ph) laws, and then keep going and going.

That's the moment, you know—the parliament said, it doesn't want to pass this law. That was really, you know, hurting, hard for us. And because we still don't have the law.

So working with, you know, the government people is really also crucial, from the beginning and then through public outreach, it's really important.

Another is communication. The project comes from the country to MCC—MCC makes the decision to fund the project, and then there is lots of paperwork.

Another thing is MCC itself, you know just MCC has different units, and MCC's different units do not communicate properly with each other. So I think, you know, that MCC needs to discuss the projects especially with their different units because—we've actually found this as a lesson learned. What we found is when MCC's teams are going to come into a country, they have different, you know, priorities and each with a different purpose. They don't talk in Washington and then they come to Mongolia and say to each other, "Oh, hello!" And that's when they discuss the project.

So you know, being here, I found that MCC has a very nice office, and then there are so many people, and why don't they talk to each other?

(LAUGHTER)

So that is the main message: make sure you have a good project development stage, and then it's really crucial to communicate with MCC and in the country.

LUCAS: So I want to thank Alta for embracing the spirit of honesty in those principles and the practice areas.

(LAUGHTER)

And actually, I just want to draw out something that she said about the lottery in the beginning. I think this is something where the MCC's principle of country ownership and principle of results focus begins to overlap and intertwine because the lottery that she's describing, if I understand it properly, was to randomly assign the individuals or the communities that would benefit from the property project and the peri-urban project.

And in order to conduct an impact evaluation that would compare impacts with those who had benefited from the project and those who hadn't—that's something that we were interested in, in order to do the learning associated with it—but it bumped up against some of the traditional approaches in Mongolia and I think it sounds like it was a good ending there and how we managed it.

So I think we have a video, is that right? Okay. So we're going to turn to this and then after the video, we'll turn to right to some questions from the audience starting with some MCA folks. So get your thinking caps on about how you'd like to engage in the discussion.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

(APPLAUSE)

LUCAS: Thank you. We were so pleased that Alta brought this because it's a nice example of the intersection of the land and the agricultural aspects of the projects there.

So we are going to turn it over to questions and comments from the audience. I would invite first—if any of our MCA colleagues from any of the other countries would like to either add a comment about their own experience and the topics we've been discussing or pose a question and then if not, we'll turn to the other folks.

So Erica's got a mike so just raise your hand if you would like to contribute to the discussion.

Be bold. Okay, so if none of—oh go ahead. You're not an MCA! But come on out. Go for it.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Kent Elor (ph) and part of the MCC land team. This is (inaudible) who is the director of the MCA land team, (inaudible) and Madam (inaudible) who—in fact the entire MCA land team from Senegal.

And I was only go actually draw a little bit of attention to Senegal as an example. The very first question was about the challenges of policy and legislative reform in a five year time frame, which is a huge challenge.

We're not doing that in every country. I mean there are countries where, like Senegal, where land legislation has been in place since 1964 and there have been some kind of false starts in trying to reform that legislation but it hasn't really—it's been a tough go.

But what the approach that's been adopted, it's a regional project in the Senegal River Valley and the emphasis has been much more—because there is strong decentralization of land management authority in Senegal, there's been much of an emphasis on the development of local policy, local governments and we—and new tools that are put in use in terms of registration of land, in terms of tracking of land, in terms of tracking of land, in terms of land use planning.

And that—these are the things in the case of Senegal that have worked very well in the five year time frame.

So I did want to point out that example.

Rick already mentioned in Burkina also kind of jumping on a train that had already left the station years ago before really helped in terms of brining the legislation over the finish line to support the national government to do so. And so that—I think that in the five year timeframe, also Burkina is a success.

But I think one thing also to consider is that when you're talking about national legislative reform, there's a lot of complimentary pieces of legislation that also have to kind of trail that major reform, some anticipated and some not because there are so many details that come along.

And those are the things I think that really those are the challenges in some countries like Burkina Faso in the five year time frame to try to really complete that national reform with all of the annex legislation that you need to implement the other parts of your land project.

Okay. Thank you.

LUCAS: Do any of you want to respond?

Go ahead. Thank you.

TRANSLATOR: This is the director of MCA Burkina Faso (inaudible). He would like to add a contribution to the first question to—a complement to (inaudible).

He's underscoring the importance of legislation—legislative reform in Burkina, a process that started in 2005 and that MCC's stepped in to support as it was nearing its final stages. I'm also involved in the Burkina project (inaudible). (inaudible) is next to the director (inaudible), who is the lead on the Burkina land project.

So the real challenge, we've got the legislation in place but how do you apply the legislation? You've got the big principles but you still need the nuts and bolts of actually making it happen on the ground.

Five years that's a very (inaudible).

The biggest and best example are the decentralized land sources. In 2009, the national legislation decentralized land management authority. But it took another year in 2010 to have the annex legislation to be able to implement the change. And then it took another eight months to have the actual tools that follow even the annex legislation to the new registry forms and so forth.

So you have an example of national legislation passed in 2009, but you have to wait until 2011 to actually be able to implement the (inaudible) legislation. So your challenge is not only at the national level in having the—all the tools that you need to implement the legislation but you're working with local partners and the local partners have often resources (inaudible).

So we have a strong program of MCA supporting local governments to implement the legislation but nevertheless, the local governments have severe financial constraints.

So we have—it's a five year project, we're about half way through and we're still trying to put in place the mechanisms to pay our local partners—two and a half years (inaudible).

LUCAS: Thank you very much. So anybody else would like to comment or question from the audience?

Sure, in the back here.

QUESTION: My name is Filomina (ph) (inaudible). I am from Liberia. I work at the national archives as director general and I also serve as a major land registry there. And I was listening to Mr. Gaynor talking about institutional change and that's what we are going through right now. We are trying to address it. It is a challenge.

We started first by having a baseline study done and then to proceed with the necessary steps we had to take. We started taking them in regards (inaudible), in regards of training people to be about the change into the

new systems and which we are trying to put in. the Millennium Challenge is coming in with a new registration, digitization system. We—we are rehabilitating our own national archives there and with emphasis on the land program for the MCA program.

And we have started the digitization of land deeds, but we still have the problem within the institution, they're constantly build capacity in order to change that institution is one of our major problems we have.

Because we are a post-war country, we have a shortage in manpower, trained manpower that is and our focus is on that at this point and it continues to be a challenge for us.

Thank you.

LUCAS: I saw a hand over here. Sir, please?

QUESTION: Hi, James Imkee (ph) from USAID. There was a nice little bit of bait at the introduction about food security in the G8 and so I'm find myself more than willing to jump on that bait. So please tell us your lessons about food security and what you're finding out there. How are smallholder [farmers] reacting? Are they—are you seeing greater resilience in traditional systems? Are you seeing small holders invest in land or modern inputs? Are you seeing them leasing land to commercial farms or consolidators and particularly in peri-urban areas earning some money from non-farm income? Please?

LUCAS: (OFF MIKE).

FISHBEIN: Okay, I'll just mention that the comment—I'll jump on the word resilience because I think in—in irrigation, that's one of the things that we're trying to help farmers become more resilient in the face of an increasingly scarce water supplies either from changing patterns of rainfall, less snow melt which is providing new surface water flows, for example, in Morocco.

So, I, you know, I'm not sure we are sort of explicitly, you know, addressing food security as a goal, but I think that we are dealing with a variety of systems in which we're trying to help build up that resilience.

I'll just give a couple of examples, of the diversity that we're dealing with in Morocco. We're rehabilitating traditionally managed surface and gravity fed irrigation systems in which the whole management and distribution of water, the allocation of rules have been develop over centuries and in that case, we're not touching at all those rules. We're just sort of staying back and helping to provide more efficient water deliver and help farmers with cultivation practices which could improve their yields through soil and water conservation and the like.

In Mali, for example were we have a new area, we did deal with a kind of a new framework for managing that and allocating water which is tied to the revised or the new concept—the groundbreaking concept, pioneering concept, whatever we want to call it—in terms of land ownership in the Office du Niger.

So those are a couple of examples of how we're addressing those.

LUCAS: Rick, do you want to weigh in?

GAYNOR: Sure. Since there are some of our economists in the room, I don't think I'm going to make bold claims about our impacts and the results we've had. And in fact, I mean some of our land programs, you know I think we're just going to start to see some of the impacts.

But I think, you know, one can accept that businesses and investors like a certain level of clarity and I think all of our—or most of our land programs and our irrigation investments are helping to bring a level of clarity to the

investment environment that will promote investment and hopefully we'll be able to see that that in our impact evaluations once those start coming in.

I think, you know we have seen some anecdotal results that are worth talking about and you there are a lot of practitioners in the room who can cite their examples from specific countries and Benin is a place I think we've seen planting of trees on sort of a small scale once people have documented rights to land.

I think in Guana, the formalization of land rights has led to different kinds of investment, small out grower type schemes that may not have been possible when there wasn't that level of clarity.

Namibia is a place where we're seeing communities take a much more active role in managing their common areas and, you know, again there's anecdotal evidence that that's leading to some improved management of pasture land.

But I think time will tell, you know we'll see what the real impact are.

And then I just want to if you'll allow me, you know, Mr. Zongo (ph) gave us a little lesson in MCC math about certain—a law being passed in 2009 and then, you know, taking a couple of years and then you have to add to that the fact that it also takes a year often to—for the MCC project—for the MCA to get staffed up. It takes us six months or so to wind down, so five years quickly becomes four years.

LUCAS: Two minutes.

GAYNOR: Yeah, and so and I think—and this is branching out of the question here, but you know one response to that can be, well, you know, we shouldn't embark on projects that are as complex as the ones that we've embraced before.

And I think in the context of land, it's hard for me to accept that because I think there are so many different elements that we see are really critical to having a successful project.

And again, we don't have the impact evaluations to prove this, but you know, you have you have to have a certain level of institutional reform, a certain level of training, procedural reform, you—all of those things, a public outreach, I mean to get people to participate in these programs, it's all key.

So I think what we're learning with our later land programs is maybe not so much as to cut back on the complexity, although we're being more targeted about what's really necessary, but also to be maybe more realistic about how much area we can cover so being geographically targeted and really maybe a little more thoughtful about the range—the scope and the pure size. Right? Some of our earlier programs were just very large in dollar amounts and that makes a big difference in some of these countries.

Maybe we bit off a little bit more that we can—we could chew in terms of just trying to disburse that much money.

But I think to be successful, we're still going to have to embrace a certain level of complexity and not be scared away from being bold even though we have this five year—three and a half year, whatever you want to call it constraint.

Thank you.

LUCAS: I don't—I was going to turn to Kathy, do you want to say anything in response to the question or you think it's covered?

Okay. Thanks.

So any other questions from the audience? Let me grab one from over here and then I'll be back to that side of the room. Sir?

QUESTION: My name is Jacob Bennetson (ph) from Impaq International. We're one of the impact evaluators for MCC and we're doing the impact evaluation in Burkina Faso and Senegal.

And I know this is a conversation about implementation, not about impact evaluation but impact evaluations were raised a couple times and I just want to point out the interrelationship. I mean these are not sort of independent and the impact evaluations—they can't wag the dog but—but the thing with all of these movement in the implementation, with all the changes, with all the delays, with all—we often times and we heard from Liberia they did the baseline study. Now the baseline may not have much to do with who is going to be effected by eventually because as the program goes through lots of maturations and lots of changes.

So we also need to sort of figure out how to work more closely with the implementers and the impact evaluators in order to make the impact evaluations and effective tool for MCC to recognize the impacts of the programs.

LUCAS: Thank you for saying that. I think it's one of the main lessons that we are learning around impact evaluation is the just absolute essential step of integrating and program planning with the evaluation planning up from and then also making sure there's a lot of communication along the way through the course of implementation so as implementation changes, you're checking in about the implications for your impact evaluation and that you're being guided somewhat by that.

So we are learning a huge set of lessons around that, so thank you for raising it.

Does anybody on the panel want to comment on—on the point about impact evaluations?

GAYNOR: I would just again, yeah, thank you for the comment because coordinating the impact evaluation with the project design I think in our very earliest land projects we probably didn't do as good a job at that as we should have, and so it may affect the quality of some of our early impact evaluations. And we've been working with our M&E group and our economists to really to try and be more proactive about that.

And you know the issue of random sampling, for example, and how to try and accomplish a certain level of randomization but still, keep focused on our programmatic needs and—and balancing those things can be a bit of a challenge. But we've learned that we just need to be more thoughtful about that at the outset.

LUCAS: Well, Alta gave us a nice example of how if you do it right with the outreach and communications you can get it right.

So I saw one question over here. I think we have time for about one more question, so please, sir?

QUESTION: It's not actually a question, it's more of a comment. My name is Devon Solomon (ph) and I am—I manage the threshold program in Liberia and I just wanted to say that I really appreciate that people are sharing their experiences, their concerns about the impacts, the effectiveness, sustainability and these other areas in the five year programs because I run a three year program and I really do appreciate the—what we've been able to achieve so far in Liberia and I feel confident in what we will be able to achieve and I'm glad to know that these concerns are not just mine alone.

Thank you.

LUCAS: So what I'd like to do is take our last five minutes, turn it back to the panel and to get exactly to this question that you've just put on the table which is that of sustainability.

You know we often think about country ownership being an essential ingredient of sustainability. But despite having those elements in place, we're hearing a lot about how hard it can be to plan for sustained impact in our investments and beyond the life of the MCC and the MCAs.

So I might just run down the table and ask each of you to share a closing minute or two of lessons that we are learning around sustainability, any recommendations that you have or any challenges that you've experienced. Bob, do you mind being first? I think I'll go Bob, Rick and then Alta—give you the last word, if that's okay.

So go for it, Bob.

FISHBEIN: Okay. I think if I had to sum up one major sort of lesson and recommendation, it is to engage early and very intensely on post compact management arrangement, particularly for infrastructure, it's very important to have operations and maintenance systems as well as how those operations and maintenance systems are going to be financed through farmer fees and other sources of financing.

And we have learned on a couple compacts that we talk about it in vague terms in the compact, but we have not—we did not specify it, I think specifically enough and when, you know, you get down to the third and fourth year of the compact, it makes it very difficult, there's a lot of pressure to bring to closure the program whereas what you're really wanting to do is, yes, bring the program to closure but setting the stage for continued sustainable management.

LUCAS: Okay.

GAYNOR: A few quick thoughts.

I think one is a perverse kind of incentive that donors can sometimes bring with respect to sustainability. Sometimes the donor deep pocket can cause or allow host governments to make decisions that may not necessarily be in the—in the interest of longer term sustainability.

Simple procedural or questions about the level of precision that's necessary on a survey. You know, when you have an MCC like entity funding that activity might lead a government to make a certain kind of decision whereas if that weren't there, they might make a different decision.

As Bob said, focusing on turnover of the project activities early on is key. I think trying to institutionalize some of the activities from the very beginning so training and procedural and particular procedural change, getting that institutionalize, use of new forms, that sort of thing early, that in and of itself sort of leads to a certain level of sustainability.

And then, I mean it sort of all boils down to demands for the services that we're providing and that's something that, you know, is going to be a longer term, I think question.

Are there real benefits to what we're doing and how—and will the people understand those benefits, be able to access them, to be willing to invest in those services and pay for them at a certain amount so that the services become sustainable. Or working on all of those things. Right? We have them firmly in mind—but time will tell.

LUCAS: Okay, Alta?

ALTANTSETSEG: Sustainability is really important issue. So far, our project—on our side, we actually build up at a local level. I cannot say that the national level—I can't say it would be a spendable way in dealing all this

because we are piloting these new rights. But it's really good for the local level because the local level one cannot just act by oneself, they are uniting as a group to deal with their land.

And then it's just our local administration side and then they made a contract. It's really good.

For the national level and—the government of Mongolia needs to pass their pastoral laws. So you know, it's still not there.

But it's still good from the local levels, it shows, you know, the power to the local level. So it's, you know, just it's going very well at the local levels.

I wouldn't say it's as such at the national level. We are not sure whether it could be sustainable and even, you know, just this—the project is achieving results, and then we are making progress with the government taking the lead to introduce this concept to other ideas, but—I'm not sure.

And so—and then for the human side, the project implementers are also, you know, it's not the most sustainable way for doing because they're here for these five years and working with the MCA project, and we are actually at the center of capacity building, but it's really sad that after the five years everything goes away. So that's for our project side.

For the property project sides, at the national levels it works very well because the state registration system introduces and then capacity building continues for those, you know, the staff and then human resources, it's really well operating.

So in that way, at the national level the estate registration system will work very well because we are supportive.

So the sustainability issue is really important. In every donor project, everyone is talking about sustainability, but it's really hard task. Whether it's going to be sustained or not—it's usually that the project finishes, and then it finishes.

So we—I'm not sure.

LUCAS: Well thank you all to all three of you. And also to many of you in the audience, you've helped us keep this conversation very practical and very honest.

This is how we learn and this is how we improve the way we work and so it's important to us to have that level of honest, so thank you.

I want to say that the papers today, the Irrigated Agriculture and Property Rights and Land Policy papers are online along with the other principals into practice papers. Read those, share your thoughts, let us know if you'd like to write one for the series.

And then let me also just say that very unprecedented in MCC's life, we have pastries and coffee over there, so feel free to linger and exchange more stories and experiences with each other over some nourishment and for those of you that are in town from—from away, welcome and have a fabulous week.

Thank you.

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