



MILLENNIUM
CHALLENGE CORPORATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Success Story

www.mcc.gov

In Namibia, Mapping and Land Registration are Improving Sustainable Use of Communal Lands



In Namibia, community members participate in land mapping and registration activities.

The misallocation and overuse of common grazing land (also called “commonage”) and other communal natural resources is causing severe land degradation and threatening the livelihoods of people in Namibia’s Northern Communal Areas (NCAs). The Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Government of Namibia are helping address these problems with the Namibia Compact’s Communal Land Support Activity and Community Based Rangeland and Livestock Management Activity.

Most of the land in the NCAs is classified as communal land, which cannot be privately owned and is managed jointly by the government and traditional leaders to ensure that all Namibians living in these areas have access to this land. Instead of

ownership rights, people are granted customary rights over individual parcels through a land-registration process or leaseholds; the remaining land, much of it rangeland, is regarded as commonage for community use. This common rangeland is particularly important to poor and vulnerable people as it designed to provide access to land for crops and grazing.

Since Namibia’s independence in 1990, land administration authorities at the local and central level have struggled to protect these common areas against encroachment stemming from intensifying demand for land. In some cases, influential citizens have appropriated large areas of commonage—sometimes with authorization and sometimes without—and erected fences that prevent the community from accessing grazing areas and other vital resources like water. Most communities have historically lacked the tools to effectively control misallocations of commonage or to manage its use on a sustainable basis, which often results in overuse and degradation.

In 2002, the Government of Namibia adopted the Communal Land Reform Act to address these problems. The law established Communal Land Boards (CLB), created new rules for land allocation and required authorization for most existing fences and new fences. Millennium Challenge Account-Namibia (MCA-Namibia), the independent entity responsible for implementing and managing the compact, supports the CLBs and local communities to implement the law through the Communal Land Support Activity.

The Communal Land Support Activity is helping individuals and communities map and register their land rights, providing increased security that will put them in a better position to invest in their individual lands and to manage and protect their common resources. The activity is also supporting development and refinement of policies and procedures necessary to implement the Communal Land Reform Act. It also provides extensive training to village headmen and women, traditional authorities and CLB members on provisions of the law, land registration procedures, dispute resolution techniques, and management of communal resources. Training is being complemented with television, radio, printed media, and grass-roots outreach at the village level.

Though the \$8.1 million Communal Land Support Activity is relatively large in monetary terms, the resources are not enough to cover the full geographic area of the NCAs or all needs related to implementation of the Communal Land Reform Act. Therefore, the Communal Land Support Activity is targeting its activities to areas where there is remaining commonage that can be preserved and can contribute significantly to the economic development of the community. In these areas, maps of individual parcels and village maps showing unallocated commonage are being developed with community input and provided to village leaders, traditional authorities and CLBs to help promote the sustainable use of land resources for the benefit of the community.

Training and awareness-raising activities are also being provided in these areas to assure authorities and community members are prepared to assume their responsibilities. The Communal Land Support Activity also supports the pilot registrations of commonage areas to communities in the form of rural land management associations to ensure a community's land tenure rights will be secure. The production of village maps and registration of rural land management associations are first of their kind activities in Namibia.

In an effort to further empower communities, MCA-Namibia has selected 10 villages for the piloting of village land registers that will strengthen documentation and administration of land at the local level. Village headmen and women and their secretariats are being trained on how to use and manage the data in the registers.

For more information, visit www.mcc.gov/land.

**Accomplishments to date
of the CLS Activity include:**

734 senior traditional councilors and village headmen/women have been trained, including 225 women

57 public outreach events have been held

2,072 customary land parcels have been mapped and verified

303 applicants received customary land rights certificates (this number is expected to increase dramatically with new CLB members assuming their positions and receiving training)

25 village maps have been completed and will be presented to CLBs for endorsement

Village land registers being piloted in 10 villages