

World Bank Approves Grant to Strengthen Land Administration in Sierra Leone



The World Bank has approved a US\$41.1 million International Development Association (IDA) grant to support the establishment of an efficient and accessible land administration system in Sierra Leone. The project will help strengthen the country's legal and institutional framework in the sector by financing the implementation of the core aspects of the 2015 National Land Policy,

including the registration of customary and freehold land tenure.

The Sierra Leone Land Administration Project is aligned with the government's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020), which identifies lack of access and ownership of land for women as a key issue.

The Impact of an Efficient Land Administration System

"We believe that the project's support for an efficient and accessible land administration system will have a transformative impact on the economy and society as a whole as well as positive impacts on agriculture productivity, urban development, own source revenue generation and gender equality," said Abdu Muwonge, World Bank country manager for Sierra Leone. "The World Bank is therefore pleased to support the Sierra Leone Land Administration Project because effective and efficient land management systems reduce the risk of conflicts and offer opportunities for investments, which is critical for Sierra Leone's economic development and poverty reduction."

Sierra Leone operates a dual land tenure system where land in the Western Area is administered under freehold tenure while customary land in the provinces is covered by customary tenure systems. World Bank assessments revealed that only a tiny percentage of land in the rural and urban areas is mapped and recorded while institutional arrangements are opaque. The country's legal framework for the land sector is not aligned with new technologies or principles of modern land administration and does not adequately address women's land ownership or land use rights. The project seeks to ensure equal tenure rights and access to land for women and girls by addressing the outdated legal framework, thereby closing identified legal gaps and updating and harmonizing the legal framework for the land administration sector.

"As the first major investment in Sierra Leone's land administration system since independence, we are particularly excited that the project was prepared in close collaboration with the government and civil society, based on the globally agreed upon principles of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT)," said Linus Pott, land administration specialist and task team leader.

Capacity Building for Land Administration Functions

The project will support legal reforms, awareness raising on land sector reforms, and significant capacity building for land administration functions. Also, it will support the establishment of appropriate ICT infrastructure, business processes re-engineering, development of a modern Land Information System (LIS) for automation of land administration processes, digitization of paper archives containing deeds and cadastral maps, and providing base maps and a geodetic network. This support to the land administration system will enable the registration of customary and freehold land to strengthen tenure security.

The project was prepared in close coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations which has supported the implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone.



Sierra Leone's 530km coastline is predominantly low-lying, dotted with beaches and islands.