

# Linking secure community land rights to local economic development

In Mozambique, land is state property. However, land use rights are eagerly sought for not only by the vast majority of the population relying on agriculture for a living, but increasingly also by investors. The Community Land initiative (iTC) was established with a view to sustainable community development to enhance secure conditions for land users. Its activities range from securing land-user rights to supporting inclusive community-investor partnerships.

Land is probably the most valuable asset that rural communities possess in the developing world, especially in Africa. Mozambique is no exception, since at least 80 percent of the population in rural Mozambique rely on agriculture to make a living. Debates about land in Mozambique revolve around questions of tenure rather than ownership, since land is deemed by law to be state property. The state recognises and grants land use rights which cannot be subject to any type of transaction between third parties. Many consider that such unlawful land transactions do in fact occur, and there is some debate about circumstances in which they should be allowed. Nevertheless one of the government's main concerns is to protect community interests in land, and there is widespread agreement that improving land users' security of tenure

is important in ensuring sustainable development.

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## ■ Seeking the balance between community needs and development requirements

Mozambique has registered significant rates of economic growth for more than a decade. The growth of cities and economic infrastructure, reducing poverty and increasing purchasing power, and Mozambique's growing integration into the world economy have also stimulated a high demand for land and other natural resources to supply expanding global, regional and local markets. A number

of ongoing trends additionally create immediate concerns for rural communities. These include widespread deforestation due to logging, and increasing but unregulated demand for charcoal from growing urban centres – although these activities also contribute to rural incomes. At the same time, large private-sector agricultural investments which are also adding to economic growth and employment further increase pressure on land and resources already used by local communities. Achieving a fair and sustainable balance between small-scale farm production, large-scale commercial land development and conservation and use of essential natural resources is a huge challenge.

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*Land is an important asset – a wheat farm in Manica.*

Mozambique's land law recognises and protects customary land user rights, and enables their formal registration. These rights are not necessarily exclusive, and the law also provides for consultation with rural communities before the state grants temporary use rights to private investors within areas where communities have established legitimate customary use rights. The land law has now been under implementation for more than a decade, and over the years, pressure on land and other natural resources has grown because of increasing demand from investors. On the one hand, these investments are seen as a threat to community user rights over existing land and other natural resources; on the other hand they provide opportunities to support local economic activities in ways that ensure long-term and sustainable benefits. The Community Land initiative (iTC – see Box) was established in precisely this context. It seeks to link secure community land tenure rights to local economic development opportunities.

## ■ Supporting the government

Despite the legal recognition of customary rights, the limited capacity of the government institutions charged with management of land and natural resources does not allow rural communities and producer groups to get their rights properly recognised and protected. In particular, the land information management system, or cadastre,

## The Community Land initiative (iTC)

iTC is the Portuguese acronym for Land Community initiative. Built on a DFID pilot project on land delimitation in Zambézia province (central coastal region), iTC was established in 2006, with support from a group of donors (Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) for three provinces (Cabo Delgado, Gaza and Manica). Later, in 2009, additional support from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) expanded activities to Nampula, Niassa and Zambézia provinces. During its pilot phase the initiative benefited 188 communities in 25 districts of Manica, Cabo Delgado and Gaza provinces. With iTC support, community groups including both men and women, local leaders and government authorities are engaged in processes of social preparation for development projects, community planning, and education about the value and potential uses of natural resources within community land areas.

The Community Land initiative is managed by KPMG International Development Services (IDAS) Mozambique and gets technical support from the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich in the United Kingdom. Recently, Centro Terra Viva, a Mozambican national NGO, joined the consortium partnership. iTC service delivery included 32 official community land certificates and 66 official land titles covering an estimated area of 280,000 hectares of land; establishment and legal registration and capacity building of 92 farmers associations and 36 community based natural resources management committees; training for 768 people (21 % of whom are women) on land and sustainable natural resources management.

is unable to provide the required information to ascertain land availability for different uses. As a result, accurate mapping of existing land-user rights becomes critical. Land registration processes are cumbersome, and in most cases out of reach for rural communities without external assistance, leaving them exposed to the risks of land grabbing.

The Community Land initiative supports communities to secure their user rights through processes of land delimitation and/or demarcation. Demarcation provides exclusive rights over relatively small parcels of land for community producer associations for a limited period, in a similar way as it does for private land users; delimitations secure the boundaries of larger areas within which rural communities have non-exclusive use rights and must

be consulted before the state can grant land rights to other users. The aim is to ensure legal recognition of land rights and, wherever possible, facilitation of negotiated partnerships with external investors and land users and state development programmes.

## ■ Strengthening community-investor partnerships

In addition to the challenge of securing community rights at greater scale, one of the biggest challenges of iTC has been promoting models of co-operation between communities and the private sector and to overcome the risks of conflict that arise when investments are not properly planned. These partnerships can take a variety of forms depending on the nature and value of resources available to rural communities and the interests of private investors. Classic examples include contract farming or payment of a revenue tax by enterprises holding a concession for forest exploitation to the adjacent communities. Although it is not easy to find business models which are compatible



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*Honey production is one of the community business partnerships supported by iTC.*

with investors' business models and community needs, they do represent a great opportunity, and iTC is now engaging with land investment proposals for large-scale production of food, cash crops, wood products and biofuels. Here, we provide a few examples.

**Community based ecotourism: Ndzou camp.** The *Ndzou camp* is an eco-tourism investment partnership between the Mpunga community in the district of Sussundenga, Manica province (Western Mozambique), and EcoMicaia, a private organisation that works towards sustainable development of local communities. iTC has supported the community through a grant that financed the legal establishment of an association, representing the Mpunga community; the delimitation process to establish secure community rights to a conservation area; and the design of a business plan which helped to secure World Bank funds for a community Joint Venture with Eco-Micaia to establish the Ndzou Camp Eco-tourism lodge, which was inaugurated in December 2010. The community, which has around 2,000 inhabitants, is entitled to 60 per cent of revenues generated. The aim is to create 30 full or part-time jobs most of which are filled by local people. EcoMicaia has trained people as guards, guides and domestic workers. Local farmers see to food supplies.

**Inclusive business: Mozambique Honey Company.** iTC supported the establishment of twelve honey producers' associations in Manica province, linked to a honey trading company established by a private trader who recognised the huge potential of community business partnerships. In addition, iTC secured the rights to community business premises and key natural resources for honey production, and funded training and capacity building for apiculture activities and business management by association members. The associations then became members of a honey producers union, which is a shareholder of the Mozam-

*60 per cent of the income from the Ndzou camp is earmarked for the community.*

bique Honey Company. This joint venture is an example of how trained community associations can tap into new development opportunities and enable their members to escape poverty.

**Environmental protection: Securing a community stake in carbon sequestration.** In Cabo Delgado province in Northern Mozambique, efforts to promote sustainable management of forest resources led to iTC financial support for a carbon sequestration project. The iTC support consisted of delimitation of community land areas, establishment and training of a Natural Resources Management Committee (CGRN), and a participatory forest inventory. As result of the project, the communities engaged will be paid for planting and preserving the forest, to enable greater carbon storage, and securing alternative sources of income for the future. The project was implemented by Envirotrade, a private sector company implementing carbon sequestration in Mozambique to provide carbon offset opportunities for investors (see [www.envirotrade.co.uk](http://www.envirotrade.co.uk)).

## ■ Remaining challenges

Lessons learnt from iTC's implementation have shown that securing community land rights is an important step towards enabling sustainable investments in rural areas. This must be linked to dialogue and capacity building among different stakeholders, so as to tap on synergies for the development of local opportunities. The partnerships illustrated have opened up new prospects in marketing natural resource products, ecotourism and car-



Photo: J. Monteiro

bon storage. Many other opportunities to expand community production and marketing of foodstuffs and other natural products are now emerging.

At present, the success of iTC's approach to securing land and natural resources rights depends on the presence and capacity of good local service providers to work with rural communities. One challenge is to put in place greater capacity in government, private sector and civil society to respond effectively to increasing community demands for support in dealing with land and natural resources planning and management. Another challenge in addressing land tenure issues is to achieve better co-ordination and synergy amongst different government institutions, programmes that deal with land and natural resources development.

Formal recognition of community land rights enables communities to benefit from natural resources development. For the huge growth in rural investment in Mozambique to contribute to sustainable economic and social development, inclusive community-investor partnerships are needed which pay proper attention to secure community land and natural resource rights and building local institutional capacity. The iTC programme offers a way forward to do this.