

Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste

Project Objectives

This 5-year, US\$10 million Project will support the Government of Timor-Leste and build on past USAID Land Law Programs. Its objectives include: 1) Strengthening land policy, law and regulations; 2) Assisting with survey, registration and titling of land; 3) Implementing land administration and information systems; 4) Developing dispute resolution mechanisms; and 5) Increasing public awareness of land issues.

Significance

Land titling is a key foundation of economic development and security for generations to come. An effective land administration system will contribute to the following development goals:

- o **Economic development:** Formalizing property rights contributes to poverty reduction by promoting economic growth and facilitating private sector investment. Registered properties can be used as collateral, improving access to credit for the poor.

- o **Conflict prevention:** A robust property rights system will promote security. Demarcation, access to legal assistance and open public participation in decisions regarding competing claims will improve stability. By mitigating tensions caused by uncertainty over ownership, property rights will help prevent future conflicts and set a formal basis for enforceable private agreements.

- o **Profitable investment and sustainable resource use:** Secure land tenure empowers men, women, families and communities to invest in their properties and plan for the long-term. In addition, the possibility of transmitting land to future generations encourages people to make sustainable use of natural resources.

Project Tasks

The Project comprises 5 tasks in the pursuit of the project objectives noted above:

- 1) Public Information and Awareness / Increased Transparency;
- 2) Land Policy Laws and Implementing Regulations;
- 3) Support to a National Land Commission (NLC);
- 4) Land Administration (Cadastral, Registration and Land Titling System); and,
- 5) Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Processes for Competing Claims to Land.



Land titling encourages productive economic investment in land and sustainable natural resource use.

Project Timetable

Year 1 – Support the passage of land laws and regulations; raise public awareness of land issues; develop dispute resolution mechanisms; and develop technological tools, procedures and systems for claims registration.

Year 2 – Selective claims recording; continue to provide public information; and develop support mechanisms for Government land administration bodies.

Years 3 & 4 – Nationwide claims processing and converting claims to registered titles according to law; and providing support to the administrative capacity of the government institutions responsible for property rights administration, namely the National Directorate for Land and Property (DNTP).

Year 5 – By the end of Year 5 all claims will have been recorded and at least 50,000 properties legally titled according to law, and the government institutions are able to continue independently.



By providing support and capacity development to national institutions, the project aims to have recorded all claims and have awarded at least 50,000 land titles by Year 5.

Local Brand

The constitution of Timor-Leste in Article 54 guarantees the right to private property for all Timorese citizens. In recognition of this, the project has created a local brand - “Ita Nia Rai” - which means “our land”.



Partners

In cooperation with **The Ministry of Justice** and the **The National Directorate for Land and Property (DNTP)**, the main implementing partners of this project are:

- **ARD Inc:** a USA company that is a world leader in addressing land tenure and property rights issues in developing countries;
- **ACDI/VOCA:** a leading international organization in enterprise and cooperatives development, as well as volunteer networks and civil society strengthening;
- **BELUN:** an East-Timorese NGO whose mission is to strengthen communities, develop capacities, reduce tensions and prevent conflicts in Timor-Leste;
- **Land Equity International (LEI):** an Australian company that is a world leader in the development of Land Administration Systems;
- Other Government of Timor-Leste institutions and civil society organisations.

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