

# **Appropriate Tenure Model for Sub-Saharan Africa**

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**Key words:** Sub-Saharan Africa, Land Tenure, Tenure Unification, Entitlement, Registry.

## **ABSTRACT**

Land privatisation or nationalisation programmes have not had widespread success in sub-Saharan Africa. Although well known, the basic reason for failure, that private and state tenure concepts are foreign to the region, has largely been ignored in the design and implementation of such programmes. Being foreign, they have lacked a firm basis upon which to thrive. In a way, it has been like building on sand. At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that change to customary tenures is inevitable, due to different pressures, such as increasing population and changing ideologies.

The question, therefore, is not whether or not customary tenures should change, but rather how to successfully manage the change process and sustain the changes. To answer this, two rarely raised issues must be addressed. Given the failures, the need for efficient, equitable land markets and sustainable resource use, what is appropriate land tenure in the context of sub-Saharan Africa where multiple tenures persist, and the required structure and content of the supporting land registry? In this paper, it is argued that the alternative tenure model most likely to succeed is one that builds on existing customary tenures, rather than creates separate, multiple tenures or eliminates the customary ones. Tenure unification is proposed as a process for building on existing tenures. A unified, generalised land tenure model is first elaborated. From this model, the required land registry is then derived.

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