



# **Large-Scale Rural Land Certification and Administration in Ethiopia - The Challenges of a Decentralised Approach**

**Menberu Allebachew, John Leckie & Andrew Smith**

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## **Abstract:**

The UKaid-funded Ethiopia Land Investment for Transformation (LIFT) programme aims to improve the incomes of Ethiopia's rural poor and to enhance economic growth through the Second Level Land Certification of up to 14 million parcels and building capacity in the rural land administration. The programme is implemented by the Government of Ethiopia, through the Ministry of Agriculture's Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate, with comprehensive technical and delivery support provided by DAI Europe.

This paper will report on the LIFT Programme's progress to date and explore some of the challenges involved in replicating and scaling-up systematic land registration methodologies in the Ethiopian context. It examines how programmes can work through decentralised government systems, and comments on how the difficulties of deploying a programme with a large and diverse geographical coverage may be tackled. It will examine specific areas of programme delivery, including:

- Programme governance challenges
- Logistics and Human resources management
- Resolving technical issues arising, and communicating process changes to the field
- Trying to achieve value for money through innovation

The paper also describes how LIFT responded to the disruption to programme activities caused by recent civil unrest in Ethiopia, and the declaration of a National State of Emergency.

## Brief Terminology

DfID	Department for International Development. The United Kingdom government department responsible for administering overseas aid. DfID's programme portfolio is branded UKaid.
First Level Land Certification	in the Ethiopian context, this the process of recording occupancy and user rights on a parcel or parcels of land. Certification involves the recording of these rights in: i) a register maintained at woreda level; and ii) a 'holding book' held by the rightholder.
Second Level Land Certification (SLLC)	Second level certification adds an additional spatial component to first level certification. This is in the form of a parcel map, supplied to the rightholder in hard copy and maintained digitally at woreda level. The dimensions of the parcel are demarcated in the field and digitised into a GIS. This spatial information forms the cadastre.
iWORLAIS	An interim Land Information System (in place of NRLAIS, below) designed for the maintenance of the land register at woreda level only.
Kebele	Smallest formally defined administrative unit in Ethiopia
NRLAIS	National Rural Land Administration Information System. A Land Information System designed for maintenance of the land register, reporting of land information, and sporadic registration
RLAS	Rural Land Administration System. Procedures for the maintenance of the register and processing of land transactions. These follow a federal level regulation but are tailored to regional differences.
RLAUD	the Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture. Federal level agency institution with overall oversight for the delivery of land administration in rural Ethiopia.
Woreda	Third-level administrative division of Ethiopia. Comprises a number of Kebeles

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## Introduction

Large-scale Land Registration programmes such as the UKaid-funded Rwanda Land Tenure Regularisation Programme (LTRSP) have demonstrated that it is possible to roll out systematic land registration programmes quickly and cheaply on a national scale. The programme, implemented by DAI and the Government of Rwanda, recorded over 10 million parcels (covering the entire country) in 3.5 years. This was achieved at a cost of less than \$7 per parcel (2013a).

This success in Rwanda demonstrated a shift in the way that mass registration programmes can be carried out. The previously accepted approach - driven at a slower pace by professional surveyors and legal officers - has given way to new, nimbler and more easily scale-able approaches. New developments in GPS and computing technology, the availability of low cost satellite and aerial imagery, and a better understanding and acceptance that the land holding community itself can conduct and officiate the demarcation and adjudication of property have led to the emergence of innovative, low-cost approaches to systematic land registration.

Systematic registration projects in countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho and Namibia have also deployed these technologies and principles, and demonstrated that large-scale, low-cost, land registration is possible. Initiatives in systematic registration are now embracing the possibilities presented by mobile devices and applications, with some promising results emerging from Tanzania. However, Rwanda remains the first and only country to use this technology and these techniques to complete the systematic registration of the whole country. Rwanda as a country has some inherent qualities which make the delivery of such programmes more straightforward. It is a small country with a homogenous governance structure, had little previous formal land tenure, and weak customary tenure systems. Such conditions are uncommon in other countries. While the tools, techniques and processes for large-scale land registration are now tried and tested, and are clearly replicable and scalable, this paper considers the challenge of delivering the process, rather than the suitability of process itself.

From 2014 to 2020, the UKaid-funded Ethiopia Land Investment for Transformation programme, implemented by DAI and the Government of Ethiopia, aims to achieve similar results to the Rwanda LTRSP programme. New challenges to programme delivery have emerged during implementation, which have relevance to other large-scale programmes planned or underway. In this paper, veterans of both the Rwanda and Ethiopia programme delivery teams reflect on the technical, logistical and political challenges of implementing this large-scale programme in the Ethiopian context.

## DAI and Systematic Land Registration

DAI have been at the forefront of systematic land registration, undertaking successful projects in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Central Asia. DAI's in-house land expertise worked with the Government of Rwanda to develop a systematic road map for land reform. The team went on to support the Government of Rwanda in implementing the road map, registering all lands in Rwanda – some 10.4 million parcels – in just three and a half years. This same expertise, integrated with local experts with an extended experience of First Level Certification implementation and the piloting of Second Level Certification is now being deployed in Ethiopia through the Land Investment for Transformation programme.

Elsewhere, teams from DAI are currently engaged in large-scale systematic registration work in Cape Verde and Tanzania, technical advisory work on land policy in Malawi, and undertaking varied land sector assignments worldwide. The challenges described in this paper are not second-hand observations but draw instead upon the experience and reflections of active senior practitioners currently implementing an ambitious and complex programme.

## The Challenge in Ethiopia

The UKaid-funded Ethiopia Land Investment for Transformation (LIFT) programme aims to improve the incomes of Ethiopia's rural poor and to enhance economic growth through the Second Level Land Certification of up to 14 million parcels (approximately 6.1 million households, with women accounting, jointly or individually, for 70 percent of land holders), and building capacity in the rural land administration. The programme is implemented the Government of Ethiopia, through the Ministry of Agriculture's Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate (RLAUD), with comprehensive technical and delivery support provided by DAI Europe.

The LIFT programme has four outputs:

- Output 1:** Second-level certificates issued recognising rights of joint, polygamous and Female Headed Household land holders
- Output 2:** Land administration system implemented and operational in targeted woredas
- Output 3:** Improved supporting functions for the rural land market<sup>1</sup> for women and poor farmers
- Output 4:** Improved policies and institutions for the rural land market

LIFT will operate in approximately 140 woredas across four highland states: Amhara, Oromia, the Southern Nations, Nationalities People's Region (SNNPR) and Tigray.

The Programme was developed under the terms of reference for a consortium led by DAI Europe<sup>2</sup> of the UK, who were contracted in March 2013 to develop the Business Case for the programme, the Inception Report (2013b), and subsequently for the implementation of the programme.

The Second Level Land Certification methodology builds on the registration methodology developed in Rwanda. Orthophotos are used to produce high resolution maps on which land holders identify their parcel boundaries on-farm, and in the presence of their neighbours and local leaders.

The resulting boundaries and occupancy data are computerised locally by LIFT programme technical support teams. After verification, this data is further processed and approved for inclusion on a register of land rights. After approval, hard copy certificates demonstrating the parcel boundaries, occupancy and land rights are printed and made available to land holders.

Alongside the Second Level Land Certification Process, LIFT is also supporting the Government in the implementation of a rural land administration system in LIFT programme woredas (third-level administrative divisions) that will sustain the certification process and ensure farmers' long-term security of land holding. This includes clarifying and reinforcing the procedures for land administration, and training land administration personnel in the effective and transparent deployment of these procedures. The project is supporting the development and roll-out of a new Rural Land Administration Information System which will enable land transactions to be digitally recorded, monitored, and reported.

A unique aspect of the LIFT programme is the Economic Empowerment component, which deploys the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach for the first time on a large-scale land reform programme. LIFT's Economic Empowerment Unit will work toward improving the effectiveness of the land sector to maximise the productivity and incomes of farmers (particularly from vulnerable groups) who have obtained security of tenure through LIFT. The team will address the constraints that are present in the rural land markets<sup>2</sup> that prevent farmers from fully capturing the benefits of second level certification. The approach will allow the programme to develop complementary interventions in the rural land market and other closely related markets (e.g. finance) that will enable LIFT to maximise the benefits of its second level land certification activities and the accompanying improvements to the rural land administration system (DFID, 2013b).

Further reading and information on the scope of the LIFT project may be found in: Abegaz, G., Allebachew, M., Edwards, O., Leckie, J., (2016) Implementing the Land Investment for Transformation (LIFT) Programme in Ethiopia, 2016 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty.

While the technical approach to systematic registration being deployed is very similar to that tried and tested in Rwanda, the team faces new challenges, including:

- Working in a Federal system. The LIFT Programme will operate in approximately 140 woredas across four highland states: Amhara, Oromia, the Southern Nations, Nationalities People's Region (SNNPR) and Tigray.

<sup>1</sup> In this context the term "rural land market" refers to the market as constrained by constitutional provisions and in no way suggests rural land sales or other activities contrary to the constitution will be considered or advocated by the LIFT Programme

<sup>2</sup> The DAI consortium also includes NIRAS Consulting (Finland), Nathan Associates London Ltd (UK) and Generation Integrated Rural Development Consultants Ltd (Ethiopia).

- Wider and diverse geography – the LIFT project area alone is over 8 times larger than the total area of Rwanda, adding complexity to programme logistics
- Greater number of parcels – LIFT aims to register 14 million parcels
- Huge Number of people and logistics – over 1400 field and back office staff
- Roll out of land administration – alongside second level land certification activities, LIFT will roll out strengthened land administration systems, including a digital land administration information system to 140 woredas.
- Diverse socio-cultural context – LIFT works across dozens of languages (with currently four operational languages), landscapes and peoples with deep and complex cultural norms and customary practices around land tenure.

### Progress to Date:

LIFT is now into its third year of operation and is approaching its second year of Second Level Land Certification implementation. By the end of January 2017, the LIFT programme had met or exceeded its programme targets, despite a number of setbacks. Over 3.8 million parcels have been demarcated, with almost 2 million certificates issued to landholders.

Through LIFT's intervention and support, the Rural Land Administration and associated software (at present, a LIFT- developed LIS system: iWORLAIS) is operational in 19 woredas, with formal land transactions beginning to be processed in volume.

LIFT's Economic Empowerment Unit has established 75 land rental service providers across the country and supported 29 financial institution branches in offering financial products relating to the security of tenure. Land Holders are investing in conservation measures, with LIFT supporting the establishment of 11 compost hubs in the project area.

LIFT has also supported over 20 regulations, procedures, strategies and plans to improve the functioning of the land sector in Ethiopia and supported the government's decision making on land governance through research and evidence-based reporting.

### Challenges for Implementation:

The implementation of the LIFT programme has raised a number of challenges, largely related to the difficulties involved in delivering a large-scale programme within the context of a decentralised government system, and across large and diverse physical and cultural geographies. This section addresses the challenges to *Programme Governance, Logistics and Human Resources*, and *Resolving Technical Issues in the Field*. In addition, though not directly related to decentralisation, we examine some of the ways in which LIFT is achieving value-for-money through innovation.

### Programme Governance

While the lead government agency, responsible for LIFT co-ordination and policy setting is the Federal Rural Land Administration and Use Directorate (RLAUD), activities are being carried out at federal level and in four regional states under different regulatory, institutional and cultural settings.

Given these differences, the design of procedures, capacity development, communications strategy and market interventions need to be tailored to each regional state. This requires a decentralised and, over time, increasingly devolved programme governance structure. LIFT's engagement requires the involvement of stakeholders (state and non-state actors) that are operating at the federal, regional, woreda, and kebele and community levels.

LIFT has to work in line with a common vision in the land sector, with all relevant actors assuming collective responsibility. Co-ordination between projects and programmes, as well as mutual accountability will serve as the foundation for a functioning partnership that can bring tangible and lasting change in the sector.

In order to harmonise both the collective responsibility and programme strategic objectives, the following principles were followed to set up the programme governance structure and associated roles:

- Understand national and regional Government's ownership role and interest;



- High level political engagement at the various levels is key;
- Consideration of the contextual disparity between the intervention regional states;
- Engagement of wider stakeholders for operational synergies;

Based on these principles, the programme is governed through a number of bodies at each administrative level:

- Federal level Programme Steering Committee (co-chaired by the sectoral State minister and DFID, with members comprising land officials from each region, meets on a quarterly basis);
- Regional level Programme Co-ordination Committee chaired by the respective regional vice president;
- Woreda level Programme Implementation Committee- chaired by the respective woreda administrators;

In addition, there is also a federal level task force, Land Administration and Use Task Team (LAUTT) which is composed of government and partners supporting government in the land sector, and mainly focuses on coordination, synergy and alignment of interventions by different operating bodies in the land sector.

At each level the relevant bodies all have a say in the agreement of work plans, mobilisation of resources, co-ordination with other programmes and importantly – the monitoring of progress. This is vital in ensuring that the appropriate commitment and support from government is secured as well as enabling a clear understanding of the priorities and challenges ahead.

### ***Programme Governance Challenges***

Despite these strong and well thought out governance arrangements, working across so many tiers of government gave rise to a number of challenges, observed during the start-up and subsequent implementation of the programme:

### ***Regional Differences***

There are individual regional concerns and political sensitivities that need to be taken into account in securing and maintaining the necessary levels of support from government. It is unwise to make decisions on the basis of analysis of the statistics available or calculating the best approach based purely on value for money. If this was the case the programme would be better positioned to focus on only one or two regions where maximum outputs can be achieved with the minimum use of resources. This would almost certainly serve to widen the political divide and further isolate regional differences. The immediate development partner-driven (typically) demands to achieve significant volumes of output while minimising costs and maximising efficiency must be balanced against taking a more measured, holistic and sustainable approach to delivery.

It is vital that regional and cultural priorities are taken into account in decision making and that the necessary informing and guiding takes place to enable the completion of the “political jigsaw” while also working towards a situation where “the whole exceeds the sum of its parts”. A longer term strategic approach is required, and this highlights an essential facet of the programme - to have and maintain the appropriate depth of insight into the political economy together with a strong network of valuable relationships with government officials, other donors and key partners.

The value of these relationships with government was brought strongly into focus towards the end of 2016 when the Prime Minister announced that 27 of the previous 30 cabinet ministers had been replaced, with significant implications for the programme. The rebuilding of these valuable relationships would effectively have to start again, not only to build trust and commitment, but at a more basic level; to help leaders understand the programme’s importance to the Ethiopian economy, its aims and priorities, and their role in providing support so that a seamless transition is guaranteed.

### ***Failure to Understand the Time-Bound Programme Strategic Outcome.***

LIFT is a large programme that demands the engagement of a large group of stakeholders (government, non-government, farmers, technical assistants, etc.). Huge targets have been set and are a contribution is expected from each of the intervention regions. In some cases, programme leaders in different regions and woredas have delayed the achievement of project targets as their operating mentality has remained focused at the woreda, rather than considering the woreda’s contribution to the national target and the wider picture.

### ***Differences in Political Will***

This is not unique to the land sector. In regions and woredas where the high-level leadership has the political will, both the start-up and subsequent achievements show clear positive differences. Differences in the political will may result from i) misunderstanding of the demanding nature of land administration and certification ii) the influence of previous pilot interventions in land registration (which were not as large or demanding as LIFT), iii) misunderstanding of the non-technical perspectives of land certification.

### ***Turnover at the Leadership Level***

This has been particularly acute at the woreda level, demanding frequent awareness raising and engagement from LIFT following the changeover of individuals both at the political leadership as well as land office levels. In addition to the sporadic changes of personalities, the programme is also passing through a huge reshuffle of political appointees. This ranges from the federal through regional, zonal and woreda level leaders. This is unavoidable but places heavy demands on the programme in terms of engagement and iterative awareness interventions

### ***Getting the Balance Right***

After consideration of the above programme governance issues, it is important to get the balance right between allowing for political sensitivities, encouraging competition across the regions and achieving an outcome that represents the best use of the development partner's funding. This is encapsulated in a recent agreement by the Federal Programme Steering Committee to use efficiency and unit cost data to influence the selection of future registration woredas as opposed to following the regionally weighted distribution of woredas that had been agreed at the project inception phase. While this means that individual regions are unlikely to face complete exclusion from the programme purely on the basis of efficiency, the extent of the benefits and financial support received for certification purposes may be reduced in line with weak engagement or performance.

## **Logistics and Human Resources**

### ***Procurement***

LIFT's operational areas cover an area the size of England and Wales combined and are spread out over four regions covering the length and breadth of Ethiopia. This creates a massive logistical challenge, to ensure that each woreda has the necessary materials and logistical arrangements in place, at the right time, to allow the programme to operate efficiently and effectively. The geographic scope is one of the most significant challenges facing the programme, with any delays in the delivery of essential equipment or consumables having the potential to have a severe and critical impact on a programme that is processing over 200,000 certificates per month. The programme consumes large volumes of supplies such as ink cartridges for printing public display maps and land certificates, or tyres for the fleet of almost 100 vehicles, and any delay in the delivery of these items to regional and woreda offices can seriously impact the delivery of programme targets.

The programme has now moved to 18-month procurement planning to enable procurement agents the best opportunity to deliver on time and minimise delays. The plan comprises amongst other things; 1000 tyres, 5 million certificate templates and 33,000 pencils. Procurement is managed centrally, and items are then despatched to the various regions and woredas after been uniquely marked and recorded in the programme asset register. Regular spot checks form a key aspect of the checklist for any field visit to ensure that assets are accounted for and maintained in good order.

With so many items needing to be imported from abroad, it is important to make careful choices about products and suppliers, and to plan for delays in delivery. Where possible, the local market should be explored, and the ready availability of materials weighed against the cost of sourcing overseas. Our team learned in Rwanda that aesthetic choices over the type of paper used for land certificates can lead to painful delays in delivery if there is poor weather in Sumatra, from where the paper is manufactured and shipped.

### ***Centralisation vs Localised Operations***

The monitoring function for the programme is centrally-based in Addis Ababa but liaises on an almost daily basis with the regions to verify progress and statistics. This is backed up by regular field visits on a weekly basis to verify data quality, accuracy of reporting as well as identify any issues for prioritisation.

Most operational activities are completed at either regional woreda or kebele level, but consideration has been given to centralising some operations to improve efficiency. For example, the completion and printing of over 200,000 land certificates each month requires a coordinated effort to ensure that process timings and volume targets are achieved and while this was initially carried out at woreda level, it has been found that a centralised print operation at four regional print centres is a more efficient approach. This ensures greater efficiency through consistent practices, easier management of staff and coordination of priorities, as well as easier and faster maintenance of the equipment.

### ***Human Resources Management***

The geography of the operational area is spread across 4 regions – Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and SNNPR and will, by the end of the programme, comprise over 140 woredas. The challenge in managing HR within the programme is possibly best demonstrated by the scale of the resources to be managed. The programme engages approximately 1400 staff in total and around 400 of these staff are contracted and paid directly by the programme (fewer than 30 staff are employed at the head office in Addis Ababa). The remainder are engaged either directly by the GoE or contracted using Financial Aid direct government to government funding.

The HR function is managed centrally for the 400 directly employed staff and all recruitment, performance, training and development, disciplinary issues including terminations, are directed and authorised by the head office in Addis. This ensures that there is an element of control in terms of the directly employed workforce, but centralized management can only achieve so much, and a significant burden of responsibility is therefore placed on the “local” Regional Coordinators (RC). Their role includes management of the LIFT regional office, staff, equipment, vehicles and funds, as well as coordination of all aspects of LIFT Second Level Land Certification and improved rural land administration activities at regional and woreda level. This is a key role demanding highly motivated and competent individuals, otherwise the management of staff could become very problematic.

It was realised very soon after implementation had commenced that the role of the RCs was vital for successful implementation, but it was also extremely demanding, time critical and broad in scope. It was therefore agreed that in order to reduce the risk of failure through poor coordination and management, that additional support would have to be provided. This was achieved by recruiting a Deputy Regional Coordinator in each region, whose primary task was to give technical assistance and general support to the RCs. To date this has proved to be a successful approach, although much is dependent upon the skills, experience and commitment of the individual RCs and Deputy RCs.

The programme wide HR function still has a number of challenges that it continues to address, and these include:

- Implementation of a regular documented staff performance assessment process
- Maintenance of accurate personnel records at regional level
- Ensuring that new recruits participate in agreed induction procedures
- Engaging the central office in staff disciplinary issues early and with sufficient documentary evidence
- Communication between Regional Coordinators and Woreda Coordinators
- Resignations without appropriate notice period and asset return
- Issues around salary payments or compensation for overtime working

To address the first of these issues the programme is currently considering how to ensure that the existing performance evaluation system can be more widely and successfully implemented to assess more accurately, the performance of the workforce. This approach will help employees to better understand their responsibilities and to be clearer about the criteria against which their performance will be evaluated and importantly, the approach will also allow managers to advise employees on how their performance can be improved. It will also help in the selection process when vacancies and potential promotion opportunities arise.

On the other challenges it is now very clear that a greater degree of engagement from the centrally based HR Manager with additional support, will be required in order to conduct regular monitoring and advisory visits to each of the regions as well as regular meetings in Addis attended by the managers from the regional offices. The main priorities will include:

- Ensuring that the programme's induction process for new staff is well planned and conducted at the earliest stage of employment in order to create a better first impression of the programme for new staff. This will also enable the new member of staff to learn about the programme and the requirements of their new position more quickly and effectively and as a result allowing them to be more productive in the early stages of their employment.
- Providing further guidance and clarifying the procedures and timelines for regional and woreda managers when dealing with disciplinary issues and reporting these to the head office.
- Providing further guidance and clarifying the procedures for checking and authorising timesheets and overtime working as well as adhering strictly to the procedures and timelines for processing staff resignations and ensuring that programme assets have been returned.
- General guidance and improving communication between regional and woreda level.

The centralised approach that has been adopted by the programme does work in terms of maintaining central control and management of the agreed processes and procedures and this supports a consistent approach and reduces programme risk when applied as instructed. The challenge is to ensure that the centralised approach is supported by sufficient and regular field monitoring and good communication channels across all levels of implementation at central, regional and woreda level.

This cannot be achieved without careful planning and the best use of all available resources to ensure that field visits encompass a range of monitoring and advisory routines, as opposed to focusing only on one specialist aspect of the programme. Specific field missions will continue to be required and carried out to cover specialist or priority activities and HR Management is an area where this will require to happen. However, once in place it is feasible to use non- specialist HR staff to help with monitoring and reporting from the field on the implementation of new or revised HR practices.

It should also be highlighted that a significant challenge for the programme is the management of government contracted staff on programme activities. These staff form the majority of those engaged in LIFT activities, yet the programme has little or no authority to manage the performance of those individuals. The programme does monitor and report back on overall performance of these staff at woreda level and there are unit cost measurements to assess overall efficiency of the field work completed in each woreda. However, the responsibility for individual performance monitoring and other aspects of HR Management for these staff lies with the Government.

To date this has not been a major issue for the programme, but as the volumes of work continue to increase and pressures on the achievement of efficiency targets escalate, this is an area where the programme will seek to have more engagement and involvement of LIFT staff to ensure more immediate monitoring and reporting on performance. This would include performance assessments down to individual level and reported on a weekly basis, to allow more immediate and focused action to be taken, when performance drops below expected levels.

### **Resolving Technical Issues Arising, and Communicating Process Changes to the Field**

The procedures and approaches deployed by LIFT build on tried and tested methods developed in Rwanda (under the LTRSP) and piloted in Ethiopia by the Government of Ethiopia and by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded REILA programme (2013c). Despite this extensive user testing, unforeseen technical issues arise, new ideas and approaches evolve, and problems occur where the process has not been communicated well or has not been observed

for other reasons. This is of particular relevance to Second Level Land Certification activities, but also to the implementation of the rural land administration system.

LIFT's regional coordinators and their deputies are the first line of contact in this respect, and communicate any issues arising to LIFT senior management. LIFT management and technical advisors are both proactive and responsive in making field visits to assess the quality and performance of LIFT activities. Second Level Land Certification in particular requires careful 'hands-on' monitoring, both to ensure that the correct processes and checks and balances are being observed, but also to ensure that the process is being implemented fairly and equitably in the community.

While all staff involved in LIFT field activities are issued with manuals detailing standard operating procedures, it is not practical to issue a revised version of this manual each time there is a process improvement or revision (both in terms of the time taken to update the manual, and in terms of the bandwidth required to transmit the manual). Instead, the LIFT Management Team issue SLLC Implementation Guidance Notes (SIGNs). These short instructional documents may be issued quickly in order to address a particular issue arising, implement a new or improved procedure, or to clarify a procedure which has been misinterpreted. This approach allows the SLLC technical and senior management to respond rapidly to issues arising.

New versions of the SLLC manual are issued as new sets of programme wordas (administrative units) are opened up for demarcation. SLLC Manual documentation has a modular structure, so that entire sections may be updated without altering the pagination of subsequent sections or cross-references between sections.

An annual implementation monitoring workshop allows LIFT staff from all four project regions to convene and share experience with each other. The team are encouraged to provide feedback to the LIFT management team, and to validate any new proposed procedural changes.

Weak telephone and internet communications remain an obstacle for programme delivery, and in particular for the communication of field guidance and process changes. The decentralised structure of LIFT responsibilities, from Senior Management at the centre, through to regionally responsible staff and technicians and managers in each programme worda provides a mechanism for information to move upwards and downwards through the chain of command (subject to regular spot checks). The most reliable means of communication is through this chain of command by telephone, with subsequent follow up in writing. Email or internet communications cannot be relied upon to reach the recipient, and large all staff meetings are expensive and impractical given the traveling distances involved.

### **Achieving Value for Money through Innovation**

Often projects and programmes strive to achieve value for money by focusing on 'economies' and finding overhead or marginal costs to cut. This can potentially lead to a 'race to the bottom' and can sacrifice the quality of outputs and the safety and security of staff.

It is crucial that LIFT is managed and delivered with maximum efficiency, and DAI's back office support infrastructure is specifically designed to help support our project offices and minimise overhead and transaction costs. Ensuring that over 400 staff are paid correctly and on time requires an investment in systems, procedures and personnel not often mentioned in the literature about systematic land registration.

Similarly, it is essential to be adaptable and not trapped in one particular approach. While the decentralisation of the registration process under LIFT has generally been a success, certain aspects - such as certificate printing operations have had to be pulled back towards the centre in order to improve efficiency and save time and money.

LIFT understands that the biggest value for money is derived through exploiting opportunity and innovation. With this in mind, our approach is open and responsive to advances in information and communications technology, as well as opportunities that may present themselves through institutions or social movements. Being dynamic and nimble in our response to opportunities is key.

The project is currently investigating the use of alternative remote sensing data sources and their suitability for second level land certification. Data quality and price are the principal drivers in assessing suitability, but a project with the ambitious targets and scale of LIFT must also consider the availability / speed of delivery of data and consider what kind of flexibility is permitted under the license terms of the data.

The key message around innovation for VFM is that while a programme must be open to new ideas, these must come second to the delivery of the programme. While the idea of using tablet devices to allow land holders to inspect their properties during a public display of land parcels is very appealing, the practical reality is that posting paper maps and records is an approach more familiar to the average farmer and requires far fewer resources to support the processing of 200 interested land holders per day.

### **Open Source Software – Advantages in terms of Value for Money and Flexibility**

Devices and software for the collection and processing of geographic data are constantly improving. However, in the Ethiopian context, this has to be weighed against the backdrop of a weak power and communications



infrastructure in rural Ethiopia. A 'shiny-box' solution may promise to hasten data collection and allow management to track field outputs in real-time, but when faced with zero internet connectivity, such functionality quickly becomes redundant.

The use of Open Source software application has been a win-win initiative for LIFT. All LIFT project software is open source – from the operating systems up. This is the first time a large-scale registration process has been undertaken using entirely Open Source software. This approach has saved the programme in excess of £300,000<sup>3</sup>, while also creating a working environment which is largely virus and malware free and can be easily customised in order to restrict access to the internet and entertainment software.

One of the other benefits of this approach is flexibility. LIFT staff are encouraged to share and use the software outside of the office in order to become more familiar with its features and support the programme in getting the most out of it. Having no licence restrictions enables the team to quickly replicate our data processing operations in as many woredas as required, when required, without negotiating new agreements or physically transferring dongles and other security devices.

If a new open source product becomes available, offering superior performance in one or more aspects of LIFT's data processing requirements, it is easy to quickly test and scale-up the software, without being committed to an existing paid solution.

### Unexpected Challenges – The State of Emergency.

Following several months of civil unrest, on October 8th, 2016 the Government of Ethiopia declared a national 'State of Emergency'. This, combined with the civil unrest, caused some disruption to programme activities in the two largest programme regions of Amhara and Oromia.

DAI's first priority was to ensure the safety of staff working on the LIFT programme. Working with local authorities, LIFT staff and resources were quietly and efficiently pulled-out from locations considered to be potentially unstable. It is worth noting that no hostility was directed at the LIFT programme or programme staff.

Having a decentralised regional approach in some ways worked to the programmes advantage. Having removed resources from two regions, the Team were able to adapt and deploy these resources in the remaining regions in order to enhance output in those areas. This minimised 'downtime' for project technical staff, drivers, vehicles and equipment.

The development partner, DFID Ethiopia accepted that the situation was unpredictable, and that certain terms of the State of Emergency had the potential to make it difficult to deliver LIFT and meet the programme's ambitious targets. DFID Ethiopia were flexible and agreed to revise the programme targets in the short term based on an agreed methodology. While this reduced the pressure to some extent, the LIFT programme and Government of Ethiopia had already achieved some momentum, and eventually met or exceeded the original targets despite the interruptions.

The impact and influence of senior government land officials, regional high profile political leaders and ministers should not be underestimated for any programme of this scope and scale. It has been an essential element throughout the LIFT programme, no less so when navigating the challenges encountered in the lead up to the announcement of the state of emergency. An excellent relationship with government allowed the programme to have a clearer understanding of where and when it could work during the height of the disturbances, thereby allowing a level of progress to be maintained that otherwise would not have been possible, while also prioritising the safety and security of programme staff and assets.

### Next Steps and Challenges Ahead:

The LIFT programme is now well established in Ethiopia and is achieving its outputs and meeting ambitious targets for delivery. The challenge ahead is no longer about how LIFT can do more, but how LIFT can do better.

The programme must examine how resources can be deployed most efficiently across LIFT's operational regions, without compromising the sustainability and political acceptance of the programme. While LIFT is achieving value for money on a cost-per-parcel basis, and DFID will continue to be measure this, the programme

<sup>3</sup> Estimate given by LIFT Registration Advisor

should also focus on achieving the best quality for a reasonable price.

Additionally, LIFT must now begin to focus on programme outcomes and sustainability. The functions of the rural land administration must be strengthened in order to protect the investment in registration and must be embedded into everyday public life in all regions. LIFT will be focusing on the operational and financial sustainability of the land administration system, ways in which to obtain public buy-in, and associated revenue generating opportunities. LIFT and Government of Ethiopia will develop a business case for the future use of accurate and easily accessible land administration data that within 5 years could potentially generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of running the rural land administration system. It is also envisaged that the benefits of this data for the Government of Ethiopia alone will substantially increase tax revenue generation.

With LIFT fully operational, and with ambitious outputs being realised, there may be an opportunity to extend the range of development partners making a financial and political commitment to LIFT. Second Level Certification, and the rural land administration system is a process that will continue long after the lifespan of the LIFT programme.

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