

The Marriage of Anasewa: Exploring Local Farmers' Positions on Formalization of the Informality in Ghana.

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Anansewa is the beautiful daughter and most valuable asset of Ananse, the Spider. Ananse hopes that, should he be able to influence the richest man to marry her daughter, his poverty chains will be broken forever. This African story depicts the state of independent Africa giving in marriage to donor partners, regarding the legalization of local practices of land access and tenure. The question we ask, which ties in to the conference's theme is 'in whose interest is this marriage'-the richest man, Ananse or Anansewa or all. This is the story of the African land, which is fraught with greed and cunning. After several years of see-sawing with land tenure security issues, some African states, including Ghana, are embarking on a policies to fuse local practices of land acquisition with Western ideologies of formalization, through registration and titling of property rights, regarding land. Many developing partners are funding the process and Africa hopes to gain some benefits from the process. While the process is as touted as a way of ensuring security of land claims, that will attract higher land investments for increased productivity, sustainability and the reduction of poverty, endemic in our countries. The question about the plight and position of the land poor and vulnerable, whose livelihood totally depends on the scarce resource, land, is yet to be posed. This study employs empirical data from a recent PhD fieldwork in Ghana, to ascertain the perceptions of diverse local actors (based on gender, status, seniority, and ethnicity) and the extent to which the new reform will help empower the poor and vulnerable. This paper provides a historical account of land policies in Ghana, with a view of exploring the dynamics of reforms in Ghana. It concludes with analysis of the perceptions and prospects of the reforms in rural Ghana. Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study indicates that while the rules of land allocation are changing, it still has elements that can be employed to ensure equity and forestall conflicts over land. It argues that while reforms promise security of tenure, it risks compelling majority of smallholders to drift way from the agricultural sector into the unemployed sector. In a country where more than half of the population is into agriculture, I surmise that serious attention must be paid to inequalities in accessibility, wealth and power. The article contributes to debates on win-win land tenure reforms for all.