

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Greenwich		
Unit of Assessment: 22 - Anthropology and Development Studies		
Title of case study: Informing and elevating recognition of the place of secure land tenure rights in development policy and practice, and inclusion of land indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2000 – December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Julian Quan	Professor (Land & Development Practice)	01/05/1996 - present
Ravinder Kumar	Associate Professor (Evaluation & Impact)	01/10/2013 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2014 - July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Since 2000, research by the University of Greenwich's Natural Resources Institute (NRI) has highlighted the importance of harmonising conflicting systems of authority over land rights, particularly in Africa, where insecure customary rights are at risk from competing claims, and harmonisation of conflicting systems of authority over land is required. Julian Quan's research has helped to shift global thinking, policy and practice to recognise the importance of secure land tenure rights and the design of tenure security programmes around the world. [5.1, 5.2] Under the framework of the SDGs NRI research and international engagement in 2014-15 supported development and inclusion in the monitoring framework for the UN SDGs of an indicator (1.4.2) to measure global progress in securing land rights under Goal 1 (Ending Poverty) [5.3]. The research demonstrated feasible methodologies for data-collection and reporting leading to uprating the indicator's priority status in 2017 and contributed to renewed monitoring efforts at country level including through the development and launch of an index which by end 2019, had enabled tracking of perceived tenure insecurity in 107 countries. [5.3, 5.4].</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Secure tenure refers to the ability to use and control the use of land without the fear of eviction or other restrictions. Secure and clearly defined rights to access, use and control land create incentives for people to invest in improving their homes and farming operations to improve welfare and productivity. Most people in Africa hold customary land rights, derived from historical land occupation by kin groups, informal rental markets or negotiated transfers. Generally undocumented, these rights are at risk of non-recognition or curtailment due to discriminatory cultural norms (in the case of women's rights) or action by the state or third parties, under weak governance systems [3.2, 3.3, 3.4.i & iii]. Land registers in Africa are estimated to capture only 3 to 10% of national populations; available data for 140 countries suggests that on average 20% of adults feel insecure, and around 1 billion people are living in fear of eviction.</p>		
<p>Since 2000, research led by Quan at NRI has engaged with African policy makers, practitioners and international agencies to argue successfully for the legal recognition of customary tenure rights in Africa alongside traditional land titling as a route to deliver tenure security for all. This is now reflected in policy and practice on customary and informal land rights by international agencies including the World Bank, FAO, and UN-Habitat (the United Nations Programme on Human Settlement), and the UK (DFID/FCDO), Germany, Netherlands and France as bilateral donors [5.1,5.2]. Quan's earlier and subsequent work has emphasised the significance of secure land tenure rights as one important condition for overcoming poverty and hunger, for women's empowerment, and for sustainable urban development and natural resource use. Thus, land has cross-cutting relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by UN Member States as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030 [3.1, 3.4.i & ii]. A specific workstream by Quan and Kumar on land indicators was undertaken in consultation with a wide range of global actors (World Bank, UN Agencies and Statistical Offices, the African Union's Land Policy Centre, international NGOs,</p>		

and bilateral donors), and assisted UN-Habitat directly in development of methodologies and provision of technical and capacity building support for countries to report on progress in strengthening land rights [3.4.i-iii, 3.5]. The outputs “supported the work of UN-Habitat and GLTN in leading global efforts towards the development of globally comparable and nationally applicable indicators for data measuring land tenure and governance issue” [5.3].

NRI research support to programmes in Ghana and Mozambique [5.1] found that land rights documentation issued to landowning groups, communities, extended families and household heads cannot itself deliver tenure security to individuals, especially women, and (for instance in Ghana) migrant tenant farmers [3.1, 3.2, 3.3]. Good management of customary rights is a necessary complement to strengthening centralised formal systems, but unresolved tensions amongst state agencies, customary authorities and citizens, imply a need for inclusive regulatory frameworks that provides checks and balances on customary authority to uphold the tenure rights of individual community members and vulnerable groups [3.2, 3.3; 5.1, 5.2]. Thus, documentation of land rights and measurement of tenure security needs to be extended to the household level and gender disaggregated, for all forms of tenure, and all social groups. Land users’ perceptions matter and should be addressed by land policies and monitoring efforts. Gender-disaggregated assessment of individual’s perceptions of security is needed, as official land records do not necessarily reflect real security, or provide incentives to invest in land and homes, or opportunities to access other benefits and services [3.2, 3.3, 3.4.i & iii].

NRI research found that stand-alone national land rights surveys are not cost-effective or practical; instead, land tenure modules can be incorporated into existing national census and survey instruments, and identified the importance of combining statistical and administrative datasets from multiple sources and adopting a spatially and socio-economically disaggregated perspective to enable measurement of progress in making land rights secure, and meaningful cross-country or sub-national comparisons [3.4.i & iii, 3.5].

A 2018 survey of 15 National Statistical Organisations [3.5], complemented by six face-to-face interviews and two country missions, analysed along the dimensions of data availability, institutional capacity, and coordination and collaboration concluded that while capacity building is needed, collaboration of government land and statistical agencies and civil society helps validate national land tenure datasets and change over time, and promotes joint action to document and improve the tenure conditions of poor, vulnerable and less powerful groups (for whom available quantitative data is likely to be limited and less reliable) [3.2, 3.4].

3. References to the research

1. Toulmin, Camilla and **Quan, Julian** (eds.) (2000) *Evolving land rights, policy and tenure in Africa*. DFID/IIED/NRI, London, UK. ISBN 1899825517.
2. Ubink, Janine M. and **Quan, Julian F.** (2008) How to combine tradition and modernity? Regulating customary land management in Ghana. *Land Use Policy*, 25 (2). pp. 198-213. ISSN 0264-8377. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2007.06.002>. *This article has been highly cited by scholars and practitioners of land governance in Ghana.*
3. **Quan, J.**, Ubink, J., and Antwi, A. (2008) Risks and opportunities of state intervention in customary land management: Emergent findings from the Land Administration Project Ghana. In: Ubink, Janine M. and Amanor, Kojo S., (eds.) *Contesting Land and Custom in Ghana: State, Chief and the Citizen*. Leiden University Press, Leiden, The Netherlands, pp. 183-208. ISBN 9087280475.
4. A body of NRI work with the Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII) published as Working Papers by UN-Habitat:
 - i) **Quan, J.** (2015) [Conceptual Framework for the Development of Global Land Indicators](#). GLII Working Paper No. 2, UN-Habitat. *Based on extensive review of academic and grey literature, this paper provides clarification of the meanings and scope of relevant land concepts and terminology.*
 - ii) An annex (2015), [Proposed Global Land Indicators: Status report on GLII indicator formulation, disaggregation, data sources and methodology](#). GLII Working Paper No. 3, UN-Habitat.

This sets out a framework and proposed formulations for a set of 15 indicators that capture: a) tenure security; b) incidence of land disputes and conflicts; c) effectiveness of land administration services; d) sustainable land use. It maps proposed indicators on to available data sources.

iii) Kumar, R. and Quan, J. (2016) [Sourcebook for Operationalisation of Global Land Indicators](#). GLII Working Paper No. 4, UN-Habitat.

Developed in consultation with a Data and Statistics Reference Group assembled with UN-Habitat, to compile operational guidance on methods and tools for use by national stakeholders in different settings and tenure contexts for measurement, data collection and reporting against agreed global indicators and partners.

5. Kumar, R. , Quan, J. and Mboup, G. (2018) [A Multi-Country Capacity Assessment of National Statistical Offices Preparedness to Report on SDG Indicator 1.4.2](#):

Global status on land tenure security data collection, analysis and on comparable indicators in the SDGs. GLII Working Paper No. 7, UN-Habitat.

4. Details of the impact

Research by UoG academics highlighted the need to recognise and protect all legitimate land rights and influenced global development policy thinking, and donor funded development programmes around the world. The high-quality research [3.1, 3.2, 3.3] produced by Quan on tenure rights and assessment of progress and outcomes of tenure security programmes in Africa, and on specific land projects in Mozambique, was disseminated in policy fora such as the World Bank annual Land Conferences (2013-14, 2016 and 2018), and the Land Policy Forum hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (2015-19), influencing land professionals and practitioners directly: *“Prof. Quan has played a significant role in linking up research, policy and practice on land tenure, influencing professional practice and policy thinking....and contributing to programme design and technical support”* [5.2].

Between 2015 and 2020 Quan further disseminated research via policy studies, presentations and UK/international policy-practice engagement at Food Security Week at FAO, and webinars with DFID, the OECD Centre for Responsible Business and agribusiness companies. These focused on recognition of land rights by private investors and development finance institutions [5.1], also facilitating dissemination in 2019 of eight key lessons from responsible private investment pilots and tools and approaches that companies can use (<https://landportal.org/land-and-investments/responsible-investments>). For instance, specific innovations in using accessible digital technologies to document informal land rights and multi-stakeholder platforms for conflict resolution in the context of private sector agricultural investment were discussed and promoted at workshops in Sierra Leone and Mozambique in 2019.

Within the current impact period, this ongoing high-level and long-term engagement with NRI research by key international agencies and organisations concerned with land has been reflected in: the consensus-based international soft-law instruments the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (Committee on World Food Security & FAO, 2015); the cross-cutting inclusion of secure rights to land in the UN SDG framework; the 2019 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land which foregrounds the importance of securing tenure rights for all at low cost, not necessarily through formal titling processes [5.10]; and in engagement with the private sector on guidelines for responsible agricultural investment and lessons from pilot work with agribusiness investors. In recent years *“Professor Quan’s role....provided a unique space for linking research to action....and interface with a range of global donor agencies, UN system, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, and private sector bodies and initiatives....NRI’s work in this area outlines a highly original approach to supporting research-to-policy transitions, which relies on (and can be measured in terms of) hands-on involvement with land policy and programming, and direct relations over the years with an extensive constituency of policy actors, land professionals, development practitioners and civil society in several countries, and internationally”* [5.1].

NRI research has “shaped how land is now monitored globally” [5.3] and contributed directly to the formulation and incorporation of a specific composite indicator for land

tenure security into the framework of the UN SDGs. In 2014-15, **Quan** shared findings on underpinning concepts, available data sources and methodologies at a series of multi-stakeholder meetings with UN agencies (UN-Habitat, FAO & IFAD), bilateral donors, the World Bank, international NGOs (Oxfam, Landesa), civil society networks, and UN and national statisticians, and facilitated consensus on a prioritised short list of potential land indicators to be taken up by UN agencies and commissions, CSOs, donors, the African Land Policy Centre, and private sector and other stakeholders to measure tenure security and quality of land governance [5.3, 5.6, 5.7].

The NRI researchers also provided technical support to UN-Habitat in its engagement with the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC, comprising national and UN statistical experts, responsible for global technical decisions and support to National Statistical Offices). This together with stakeholder advocacy, led to consideration of proposed formulations for land indicator 1.4.2 under Goal 1 (Ending Poverty) by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG), and subsequent adoption by its 3rd meeting 30 March – 1 April 2016, of the UNSC formulation: *the proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognised documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure.* This combines the top two indicators prioritised by stakeholders [as articulated by NRI in 3.4.ii] [5.3, 5.5, 5.6]. Its status in the SDG framework was later ratified by the UN General Assembly.

NRI research influenced the uprating of SDG Indicator 1.4.2's SDG framework status from Tier 3 (indicator defined but data collection methodology not yet developed) to Tier 2 (indicator and methodology defined). This occurred in November 2017 [5.3, 5.8] and was made possible via demonstration of available data sources and feasible methodologies to generate suitably disaggregated data for this indicator under SDG 1 (Ending Poverty), whilst simultaneously providing data relevant to tracking SDG 5 (Women's Equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities).

NRI research in 2016 to assess existing practice and available tools and methodologies, helped UN-Habitat develop and demonstrate feasible methodologies for data collection and analysis, including the combination of administrative and survey data, the use of specialised "land modules" for integration into planned household surveys. A sourcebook compiled by Kumar and Quan for UN-Habitat [3.4.iii] provided practical guidance resources for use at country level, and for UN-Habitat training initiatives with national statistical agencies [5.3]. The research assisted in design and field-testing (in Cameroon) of a survey methodology to meet the data needs of SDG Indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.i (under Goal 5, Women's Equality), and drafted UN-Habitat's contribution to a harmonised land rights questionnaire module with interviewer guidelines for incorporation into existing national household surveys, agreed between the indicator "custodian" agencies, World Bank, UN-Habitat and FAO in 2019 [5.7, 5.9].

In 2017, Quan and Kumar supported UN-Habitat in its capacity as a "custodian agency" for land indicators, to draft and reach agreement with World Bank on a meta-data statement for the SDG Land Indicator 1.4.2 [5.3, 5.7]. This detailed the various available data sources and demonstrated an agreed combination of methodologies for the indicator reporting, this being critical in uprating the indicator's priority status [5.3, 5.7]. Findings were taken up in advocacy for governments to prioritise reporting on Indicator 1.4.2 by the Global Donor Working Group on Land and by civil society and multilateral agencies active in the UN-Habitat Coordinated Global Land Indicators Initiative [5.3, 5.5]. The meta-data statement [5.7] was accepted by UN Statistical Commission leading directly to the uprating of the indicator's tier status by the UN SDG-IAEG in November 2017 [5.8]. The uprating of the indicator led, indirectly, to renewed action by donors and governments to strengthen and monitor tenure security globally, although countries ability to report on SDG indicators as a whole and UN-Habitat's ability to provide technical support and build capacity strength had been severely hampered by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Following identification of perceived tenure security as a critical dimension for monitoring, **UoG research assisted in early-stage development and launch of [PRIndex](#), a global index of perceived security of land and property rights [5.3, 5.4]. By end 2019 this had enabled estimation of perceived tenure insecurity in 107 countries around the world** (on average one in four people feel their land or property rights are insecure) helping to track progress against

indicator 1.4.2, and facilitate lessons learned, and promote remediation, in the absence of systematic country surveys and reporting on SDG indicators. The index is supported by standardised polling methodologies to capture globally comparable data on individual perceptions of tenure security based on random sampling of national populations and within respondent households. NRI's collaborative research and engagement contributed key innovations – to go beyond formal documentation and use individual citizens' perceptions as the focus of data collection, to ensure both men and women were covered with equal probability of inclusion, and to ensure coverage of all forms of tenure, including customary and indigenous collective rights [5.4]. PRIndex now enables systematic monitoring and cross-country comparisons by national governments, international organisations, municipal leaders, and land professionals. It continues to evolve and is poised to help drive a new set of decentralised monitoring alternatives [5.4].

An overarching recommendation of NRI's research, to go beyond centralised official systems and engage land rights holders and communities directly in the documentation, monitoring, and management of land tenure rights, underpins all of the impacts described above. The work has highlighted the need to capture all individual rights derived from customary, family-based and communal systems, as well as group-based rights, in formal land records and monitoring systems if they are to be useful to public policy. This full range of tenure types is now covered by the agreed SDG land indicators, the indicator methodologies that NRI researchers helped to develop, and by PRIndex. As such, they have promoted recognition and strengthening of informal rights and opportunities for women and other marginalised groups, frequently excluded from formal systems. *"This collaborative effort continues to have global influence directly helping to ensure that no one is left behind" [5.3]. "The [current] dynamism about a new era of evidence-driven land governance reforms owes a great deal to the seed-planting research and policy discussion of the UoG work...its already significant impact is only continuing to gain momentum" [5.4].*

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Testimonial: Recognised land policy expert (Lorenzo Cotula IIED).
2. Testimonial: Recognised international land administration professional expert (C.English, DAI)
3. Testimonial from UN-Habitat.
4. Testimonial: Malcolm Childress: PRIndex and Global Land Alliance Director, former WB official responsible for urban land programmes.
5. *Land Rights: An Essential Global Indicator for the Post-2015 SDGs* September 2nd, 2015 Advocacy statement for inclusion of the indicator in the SDG framework by a civil society coalition targeting the UNSC and the 2nd IAEG-SDG meeting.
6. [Documentation of decisions of the 3rd IAEG-SDG meeting](#) 30 March – 1 April 2016 (page 4, row 1) confirms adoption of indicator 1.4.2 in to the SDG framework, as drafted by NRI finalized by UNSC in consultation with custodian agencies UN-Habitat and the World Bank.
7. The [Meta-Data Document](#) developed by UN-Habitat and World Bank as custodian agencies for SDG indicator 1.4.2 demonstrates harmonization of institutional and methodological perspectives that was achieved by the indicator custodian agencies and the range of relevant data sources available (also supporting data requirements for Goal 5 and Goal 11 indicators) as the key condition for moving the indicator from Tier 3 to Tier 2 by demonstrating that data sources and methodological requirements are in place.
8. [Documentation of the decisions of the 6th IAEG-SDG meeting](#) 11-14 November 2017 (page 3, row 1) confirms the uprating of indicator 1.4.2 from Tier 3 to Tier 2 based on advancements in methodology that NRI supported.
9. [Measuring Individuals' Rights to Land; An Integrated Approach to Data Collection for SDG Indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.1](#) (UN-Habitat, World Bank & FAO, 2019) published after uprating of these indicators' tier status in the SDG framework, presents the sample survey methodology jointly agreed by UN-Habitat, World Bank and FAO to help meet indicator 1.4.2, and guidelines for coordinated data collection, as recommended by NRI's work.
10. Chapter 7, "[Risk Management and Decision-Making for Sustainable Development](#)" in the *IPCC 2019 Special Report on Climate Change and Land* (2019). Section 7.6.5, pp.749-753, covers land tenure and land policy in relation to climate change.