Managing Unintended Consequences of Democratizing Land Rights

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SUMMARY

A number of initiatives, e.g. Open Tenure and MapMyRights, are emerging that are based on the concept of democratizing land rights through citizen empowerment and crowdsourcing. This involves citizens and communities capturing their evidence of land rights on mobile devices and recording their evidence on a global platform that is accessible globally. These are trust rather than legal based systems and increase security of tenure through societal evidence and global publicity. Just as current land administration solutions are in many instances controlled and manipulated by the rich and the elite for their gain, any new land administration solution, such as crowdsourced land rights, will be open to similar abuse unless safeguards are in place to identify and mitigate the risks. It is therefore essential that these innovative and scalable solutions establish robust governance, processes and monitoring to minimize unintended consequences, to build trust with users and to ensure that these solutions do not empower the wrong people. This paper identifies some of the likely unintended consequences and describes possible measures to mitigate these risks.