

# THE ROLE OF RURAL LAND REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM IN ENSURING TENURE SECURITY IN WEGERA DISTRICT, AMHARA REGIONAL STATE, ETHIOPIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Land registration and certification has been perceived as a precondition for secure property rights and agricultural development. As a country, Ethiopia implement rural land registration and certification program in different regions. Hence, the objective of this study was to examine the role of rural land registration and certification program in ensuring tenure security in Wegera District of three selected administrative kebeles, in Amhara regional State.*

*Data for this study were collected through questionnaire, interview of farmers and experts of the land administrator and focus group discussions. About 358 households were taken as sample population for the questionnaire. A total of 10 households were participated in the focus group discussions. The data collected through questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively; whereas data collected through focus group discussions and interviews were compiled, summarized and interpreted qualitatively by cross checking with responses of questionnaires.*

*The findings of this study, shows in Gunter, Senbetigie and Bira District even if most of the farmers were aware about the role of the program and the program plays positive roles for land tenure security, creating awareness about the main role of the program and land tenure security will still be vital*

**KEYWORDS:** *Rural Land Registration and Certification, Tenure Security, land administration, land right, certificate of holding*

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Rural land certification is the opportunities that it will enhance the security of farmers through the recording of their rights (Marquardt, 2006). Secured land rights can in turn promote investment, reduces land disputes, facilitate inheritance transferring, and encourages wise

use of land from environmental degradation as well as economics point of view. But, the international experience shows that land titling/certification is not a sufficient condition for the achievement of tenure security (Solomon, 2006).

Most African countries land is not registered and resource users obtain access to land through various

combinations of both customary and statutory principles, and on the basis of social status, monetary transactions, by allocation of the government and other means. The growing predominance of market mechanisms results insignificant problems for rural poor in securing tenure. There is an agreement that secure tenure is a good thing for economic, environmental and land management goals. In most countries in the world, numerous layers of interest in property are recognized to be legitimate, and tenure rules may recognize a bundle of multiple, overlapping rights over the same land. For example, an individual or group may have the right to farm the land or build houses, but not to arrange the land; or to give land not to sell it; to use pasture land at certain times of the year but not others, and so on (IIED, 2006)

In Ethiopia land tenure has been and is still an argumentative public policy issue. Despite the debate, the FDRE government is consistent in its firm stand of retaining the public policy of the *Derg*. But in response to various factors, the government has initiated new policy measures one of which is the establishment of the land administration system where land registration and certification program are the major components. Land certification yields net benefits in the form of high demand for certification, reduced unsettled disputes, and increased investments in the short term (Mueller, 2009).

Ethiopian national economy is mainly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and with millions of smallholders. The natural base of the country, including land, is huge but, it is not properly used. Land degradation, land fragmentation, and small holding size are serious problems which resulted in less production and productivity there by contributing to food insecurity and famine in the rural areas of the country. There are many causes for such intermixed problems, but the central cause is believed to be tenure insecurity, lack of confidence from farmer to the right land and low perception of farmers towards certification program (Zerfu, 2006).

According to (Kanji, Cotula, Hilhorst, Toulmin, & Witten, 2005) in Ethiopia land is a key asset for rural livelihood and economic development. Similarly, land is also the major source of assets for a majority of

Ethiopia's poor. And when the legal system provides the poor with assured access and long-term rights to land, it can make a huge to their households' income, food security, and general wellbeing. But in the country, since long time, there have not been appropriate policies, formally established systems, and practices dealing with proper allocations, utilization, and protection of land. As a result distribution of land, rights, administration and protection of those rights, establishment and regulation of land use function and other similar activities like land transfer have not been carried out properly (Adal, 2002).

In *Amhara* region, rural land registration and certification program was started to implement in two pilot districts; *Gozamn* and *Dessie Zuriadi* district. Even if the regional government progress report indicated that the program in the pilot districts achieved its target significantly and decided to implement it in all districts of the region since 2003 in two phases' registration and certification and cadastral survey (Berhanu and Fayera, 2005). Different researchers (Berhanu and, 2005 and Fayera, and Mamo, 2010) argue that the program could not make any significance improvement on the tenure security of the landholders. Contrary, some researchers (Deininger et al., 2011; Abate et al., 2012) agree the intervention play positive role in improving tenure security and agricultural development. Hence, these situations indicated further investigation was needed in different areas of the region in particular and the country in general. Because, the program is still in the implementation stage and in each phase there would be a change that is open for new investigation

*Wegera Wereda* is one of the districts where rural land registration and certification program has been implemented within the regional land administration laws. However, the role of rural land certification is not researched and less known about its role in ensuring and securing land holding rights and low attention perception of farmer's over land certification program. This creates more motivated to conduct a research so as to come up some evidence the narrow the existing knowledge gap about the issue under current debates. Thus, it is compelling to study the role of rural land registration and certification program in order to provide much information to the land holders.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the role of rural land registration and certification program ensuring on land tenure security.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Description of the study area

#### Location

Description of the study area the study was carried out in *Amhara* province, Ethiopia, within *Wegera* district. *Wegera* District is situated in the North western part of the *Amhara* Province the district is located in the East *Janamora*, Western Gondar *zuria* and *lay armachiho*, North *Dabatand* in the Southern part of *Belesa* district and also has 41 *kebele*. The district divided in to 41 *kebeles*, of which 38 *kebeles* and 3 *kebeles* are found rural and urban respectively (*Wegera woreda* Agricultural office, 2019).

The total area of the district is about 182103heactar and 42km far from Gondar town. The total population of the district is 249,297 from this urban dowlers of male is and female is25, 043 and from rural dowlers male and female is 224,254( *Wegera woreda* finance and economic development office 2019).

*Wegera woreda* receives a minimum annual rainfall between 400 mm to 700 mm per year per. *Wegera woreda* is one of the areas which receive a relatively high level of rainfall during July to September. According to the *woreda* agricultural experts, the rain pattern has become more irregular in recent times. In some years the rain starts and ends early, and in others it starts late and ends early (*Wegera woreda* Agricultural office, 2019).

With regard to landscape, the area is dominated by a flat type of landscape in area, and the remaining constitutes mountain, undulating and gorge landscapes respectively. The area is therefore well known and suitable for agricultural production, with good potential especially for crop production (*Wegera woreda* Agricultural office, 2019).

#### Method of data collection

The study mainly used primary data that were collected from sample farm households in the study

area. The research was conducted in three administrative *kebeles* of *Wegera* district from Central Gondar Zone. Three *Kebeles* were purposely selected to take sample respondents. Each *Kebeles* differ interims of its accessibility of transport, nearness to the infrastructure and the *kebele* has different governmental offices.

All of the *kebeles* should have road access and registration and certification carried out in all *kebeles*. These three *kebeles* were selected from a total of 41 *kebele* in the *Woreda* to get more information about the role of certification .Thus *Gunter*, *Bira* and *Senbetgie* *kebeles* were selected for this study . Accordingly all the three *kebeles* were selected and sample respondents were randomly employed using simple random sampling technique in collaboration with the respective Environmental protection and land use and administrative expert's *kebele* administrators, where every household heads in each *kebeles* had been given equal chance of selection. A visit was made to the selected *Kebeles* and household heads.

Finally, samples of 358 farm households were included in the survey using random sampling and probability proportional to size technique. As a result, 185 of sample farm households were female headed and the remaining 173 were male headed.

A pretested structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data at household level. The questionnaire contained information on a variety of topics including on household demographic characteristics, resource endowments, production, income, agricultural services etc.

Moreover, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were employed for each selected *Kebele* and *woreda* Environmental protection and land use and administrative experts *kebele* administrators and households in the three sampled rural *Kebeles*'.

#### Data analysis

A Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for questionnaire data analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed by using narration, whereas the quantitative data collected by questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive

statistical methods such as percentage and frequency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Farmers Perception and knowledge on land certification and registration program

Creating awareness on farmers about the role of rural land registration and certification program is one of the first necessary tasks before embarking on the implementation of the program (Marquardt, 2006).

**Table 1. Perception of farmers on the role of rural land registration and certification program**

Assessment tools	Sub districts	Gunter		Bira		Senbetigie	
	Responses	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Do you know the role of RLRCP?	Yes	110	96%	112	97%	127	98%
	No	4	3.5%	3	2.6%	2	1.5%

Sources household survey, 2019

Based on the above table understanding of farmers on the roles of rural land registration and certification program is a good situation to investigate the perceptions of farmers on the role of the intervention. table 1 shows 98, 97%, and 96% of the respondents in Gunter, Bira, and Senbetigie sub districts, respectively knew the role of the program. Therefore, the majority of district farmer households respondents knew the main role of rural land registration and certification. the finding of this study confirm the finding of Deininger ,Ayalew etal.(2008) in that 84% of the sample household they have the same level of understanding about the importance of rural land certification and registration program

*There was also FGD discussion with 5-10 farmers from three selected kebele according them, their perception and attitude as well as their knowledge was very good. But they believed that it is not enough for them, government experts or extension worker give them both training and education about how to use the farm lands. According to them said that only training and education is not enough, it should be increase additional information and knowledge about the land certification program.*

**Table 2. The role of rural land certification and registration program secured farmers land right**

No	Items	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentages
1	Do you believe that you're holding right is secured as results of certificate of holding?	Yes	330	92%
		No	28	7.8%
		Total	86	100%
		Total	86	100%
2	You believe women land right are secured after certification program?	Yes	280	78%
		No	78	22%

Sources household survey, 2019

In the above table2, shows that security of farmers and holding right of respondent. From the table 92% of respondents were believed that their holding right was secured as results of certificate of holding and about 7.8% of respondents were not believed on it. Therefore the majority of respondent according to the table shown above about 92% of respondents to this study were secured due to received land holding certification.

*There was also FGD discussion with in the participant based on them the rural land certificate confirmation papers play a positive and significant role to improve their level of confidence and the right to use their land. They describe that, the certificate paper rise the right and it also influence on them to protect the land from pollution, soil erosion, soil degradation and also influence on them to planting tree and other positive things were gets from rural land certification. It implied that rural land certificate were have positive role in to increase level of confidence.*

*There was discussion with in wereda land administration staff members the majority experts in the staff workers believed that land administration authority have a vital role to ensure tenure security, to protect the rights of the farmer and encourage the farmers to compete with any organization when their holding illegally taken without permeation. In general wereda land administration staff members said that the farmers perception and attitude towards rural land certification and registration better when it compare with past experience. But all of them believed that it is not enough they need extra training and education about land certificate and land related cases.*

*There was discussion with in each selected kebele administrator, the interviewer said that the perception of household classified two parts, according to this some farmers who get certificate believed that certificate confirmation paper is good and have positive role in the holding process and in opposite another grouper were not believed on this certification and registration. The administrator put the main reasons classification was, the first group who support certificate said that the certificate is improve the ownership, rise their level of confidence towards their right and they can get enough financial support from the government because the land was already registered and government also give recognition and confirm ownerships.*

*There was also discussion with in each selected Kebele administrator regarding to women land right, they suggested that in the kebele certificate is very important that ensure holding to women. Generally they said that at any levels of rural kebele there should be expand awareness land certification to rise women participate in land right trough; training, education, encourage women participate any level of decision making process and women themselves promote they can do any works and tell their mind I can do it with efficiency.*

In general, certificate confirmation paper is playing a significant role to ensure tenure security. It becomes bring confidence of farmer, because land tenure security refers to the degree of confidence held by people that they will not be arbitrarily deprived of the land rights enjoyed and/or of the benefits which get more confidence on their holding and land right, according to both *Gunter ,Bira and senbetgie* rural keble of respondent believed on it. This study also confirmed the study done by As Assefa (2010) and Deininger et al. (2008) stated that, in Ethiopia rural land registration and certification program play a positive role for farmers land tenure security.

**Table 3. The role rural land certification and certification program to solve land related dispute**

No	Items	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentages
1	Was there any conflict with someone during land registration?	Yes	295	82%
		No	63	18%
2	If you say yes, how do you manage the conflicts?	by church leaders	112	31.%

by elder people	60	17%
by traditional conflict resolve	56	16%
by rural land certification book	130	36%

Sources household survey, 2019

As indicated clearly in the table 3, 82% of the households were engaged in conflict with different land owner persons and also about 18% of respondent were not enter any conflict during land registration. Hence from total respondent about 82% of respondent was engaged conflict during land certification and registration process.

Shown in table 3 of the above show that the methods of resolve land related conflicts, 31% of respondents said that conflict was solved by church leaders, 17 of respondents said that conflict was solved by elder people, 16% of respondents said that conflict was solved by traditional conflict resolve methods and 36% of respondents said that conflict was solved by rural land certification book. Majority of respondent said that the conflict that related to land can be resolved by the land certification confirmation paper and church leaders also have role to solve land related disputes.

*There was also FGD discussion with participants in the study area was focused on the role of rural land certificate to solve land related disputes among the farmers and between individuals. According to them, the confirmation paper dramatically reduce different land related conflict in the kebeles, for example, types of conflict like boundary disputes, inheritance disputes, divorce dispute and similar disputes were decrease.*

The finding of this study revealed that land related disputes are declining after certification. Moreover, this finding similar with previous different studies like, the research conducted in *tigray and amhara* regional states of Ethiopia show that land related dispute was reduce during and after the land certification and registration. For instance, in *tigray* regional state 66% reported that land related dispute

decries after certification (*Holden, Deiniger et al,2007*), similarly in *amhara* region decline significantly from 20 to 2 per week (*Deiniger,Ayalew et, al, 2008*). This is showing that land certification and registration program is positive role in decline land related dispute.

## CONCLUSION

One of the key issues in the regional land administration system is certification and certification of land holding in order to increase security of land right and ensuring tenure security. To this end, land registration and certification program has been implemented in 2002-2003 with the objective to registered all land holding in the region and granting certificate of holding in order to increase farmer security of land right. Farmers were fear the future land redistribution was the main source of insecurity on certificate. However, the finding of this research revealed that change perception of farmer over certification program and create awareness about certificate holding is a legal document that ensure property holding right including right to gift, inherent and rents.

However, the finding of this research deviate with previous finding in that level of perception and awareness of landholder was so low in the previous studies and it is found very high in this finding. The reason is the confidence levels of household increase through time to time as results of certification and registration program. Therefore, it can be conclude as certification and registration has a positive role in securing land right and this shows one of the objective of certificate has been meet.

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