

LAND ISSUES IN THE WEST BANK



Photo by Firas Jarrar - Palestinian Assembly for Photography and Exploration

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Main highlights of the project: Achieving Planning and Land Rights in Area C, West Bank – Palestine (2019-2023). This project (APLR) is implemented by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in partnership with the Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC) at the bequest of the European Union (EU).

Despite the global challenges and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, land settlement continues in the West Bank. Under the APLR project, five agreements with implementing partners to undertake participatory land settlement in 12 targeted communities were signed by UN-Habitat. Settlement orders were advertised, Land Settlement Offices established, equipped and staffed, 38 per cent of surveying works are complete, and right holders are submitting their claims.



©UN-Habitat 2021: UN-Habitat, LWSC and LGUs sign off on the basins to be included in the land settlement component of the APLR project. 13-14 January 2021. UN-Habitat Office, Ramallah – Palestine



6 January 2021 UN-Habitat in partnership with the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) conducted a virtual training day for the implementing partners contracted to survey the 12 targeted communities on good land governance, the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM), the Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC) tools,* and Sustainable Development Goals utilised under the APLR project. The training was attended by 52 participants including nine women.

12 January 2021 A Presidential Decree confirms the appointment of Mr. Mohammed Sharaka as the Head of the LWSC.

13 and 14 January 2021 UN-Habitat and LWSC met with 12 Local Government Units (LGUs) of the targeted communities to sign off on the basins to be included in the land settlement component of the APLR project. The basins were then approved by Mr. Mohammed Sharaka, the Head of LWSC.

22 – 24 February 2021 LWSC, the Palestinian Land Authority (PLA) and UN-Habitat participate in the Second Arab Land Conference held in Cairo to present the land settlement and registration progress in Palestine. The conference successfully brought together representatives from 22 Arab counties including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Comoros, Mauritania, Somalia and Djibouti. The conference aimed at discussing and presenting issues related to land, women's right to land, management of land in the time of crisis, and land reform and modernisation.



©LWSC 2021: A workstation in the Geographic Information System Department at LWSC. LWSC Office, Ramallah – Palestine

March 2021 The Geographic Information System Department at LWSC is fully furnished and equipped with the support of UN-Habitat through the APLR project. It was furnished for 18 workspaces, including the provision of equipment consisting of a server, UPS, printers, high performance desktops and monitors, laptops and tablets.

Awareness Raising under APRL

Over the last 12 months, 21 community awareness sessions were conducted in the 12 targeted communities, taking into consideration COVID-19 safety regulations. The sessions reached 372 beneficiaries, 153 of whom are women, to inform the communities of the commencement of land settlement and surveying and to answer their questions. The main messages are:

- Land settlement aims to resolve conflicts and strengthen rights to land;
- For the duration of the land settlement process, all transactions related to the buying and selling of land are to be directed through the local Land Settlement Office or else they are considered void;
- Beneficiaries should take the opportunity to divide the land fairly among right holders, in order to strengthen their individual land rights and avoid increased land division fees following the end of the land settlement project;
- Every right holder should get their rights in accordance with the law and Islamic (Sharia) Law, including women, young and disabled inheritors;
- Right holders should seek reliable information sources, attend awareness sessions, look out for basin announcements and reach out to the "community reference group" designated by the LGU mainly from elderly (men and women) to usher the work, as well as to introduce the surveying team to the community and provide advice to the technical crews, including information on 'informal rights' to land and resources to find out when to make themselves available in their lands for surveying and data collection purposes;
- Information on land, use, population, agriculture and socio-economic factors is collected by the surveying teams using the STDN questionnaire, which will contribute to better development interventions in the community;
- Right holders must visit the local Land Settlement Office to submit a claim supported with copies of documentation supporting their rights to the land;
- Right holders should look out for the publication of the Tables of Objections to find out if their claims were approved, and submit any objections within 30 days of their announcement (objections can be related to anything from mistakes in the spelling of their name, ID number, parcel area, etc.); and
- Once the Table of Rights is published, it can be used to receive the Certificate of Registration to their lands at the PLA.



©UN-Habitat 2021: Community awareness session in At Tuwani, Hebron

©UN-Habitat 2021: Community awareness session in As Samu', Hebron



Frequently Asked Questions during the awareness raising sessions

1. What are the benefits of land settlement?

Land settlement essentially resolves disputes related to land and clarifies right holders, and then provides them with documentation that allows them to prove their land right. This allows for easier access to the land and increases the opportunities for investment and making use of the land. The Certificate of Registration is the only viable document to prove right to land following the completion of land settlement.

2. What is the cost to the beneficiary?

Land surveying costs are significant and are usually covered by the communities through their representative LGU; however, for the 12 communities targeted by the project totalling around 100,000 dunums, the only cost to the beneficiary is the fee related to land registration after land settlement is completed, constituting 5.00 Jordanian Dinars. Any other service fees collected by the LGU are not related to land settlement and proof of payment is not required when submitting a claim.

3. Are there costs associated with division of land and property among right holders?

The cost of land division is high and constitutes a percentage of the land value in addition to other fees; however, in the targeted communities, during the period between the advertising of a basin and the submission of that basin surveying information to LWSC, the right holders can divide their lands and property among themselves and have them documented at no financial cost by the surveying team or LWSC.

4. Who decides where roads are located?

The Settlement Officer has the legal capacity to decide on the location of roads, based on the recommendations of the LGUs, feasibility and need for the road. As representatives of the community, LGUs are responsible for consulting with the community and reaching agreements on where roads should be placed. Additionally, planning activities and revision of Local Outline Plans in some of the targeted communities are ongoing in parallel to the land settlement process. It is noted that each parcel of land must have access to a road or at least the right to access the parcel through other parcels.

5. How do I ensure that my land is registered in my name?

By providing all the necessary documentation that support your claim to the settlement office, agreeing with other right holders and neighbours on the boundaries of your land and providing this information to the surveying team or LWSC.

6. What happens to a piece of land if no one claims it?

Lands that are not claimed are registered as State Lands.

7. How can women ensure their right to inherited land?

Women have the right to inherit and own land in accordance with Islamic (Sharia) Law and prevailing laws; they can ensure their right to land by approaching the Land Settlement Office in their respective community, submitting a claim, and providing any available documentation, such as identification and inheritance documents. It is important for women not to sign away their right to their land even if they are under community or familial pressure, given the economic, social and political benefits of land ownership and the inter-generational continuity of these benefits.

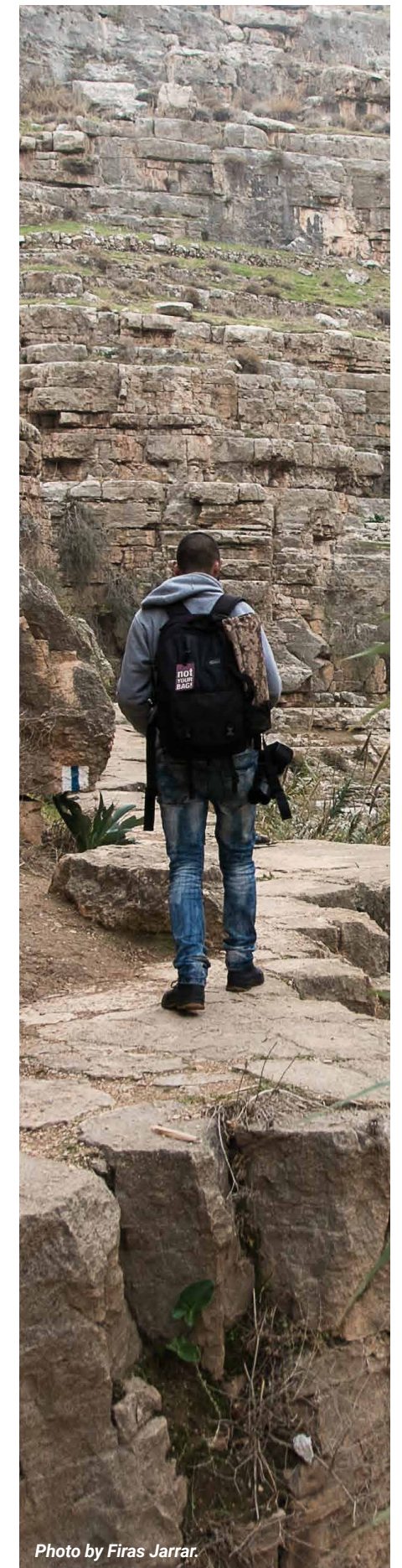


Photo by Firas Jarrar.

Advocacy under APLR

16 June 2021 A high-level field visit for representatives of the EU delegation in Palestine was conducted to Al Walaja community in Bethlehem Governorate. The visit highlighted the living conditions and challenges faced by the community, as well as the land settlement processes, the tools utilised, mainly the STDN and the GEC*, and the ongoing planning activities within the ambit of the project.

30 June 2021 In coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a high-level field visit to At Tuwani community in Hebron Governorate, was conducted. The visit was attended by diplomats from different countries and highlighted the living conditions and challenges faced by the community as well as the achievements and ongoing efforts that are supporting the community's resilience and safeguarding their rights.



©UN-Habitat 2021: Representatives of the EU delegation in Palestine visit the village of Al Walaja, Bethlehem

07 July 2021 The first meeting of the Land Management and Administration Sector Working Group (LMA SWG), established under the APLR project within the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS) framework supported by the Prime Minister's Office, took place to launch the coordination of efforts in the land sector. The LMA SWG has three core members, namely the Palestinian Land Authority (Chair), the World Bank (Deputy Chair) and UN-Habitat (Technical Advisor). Other members include the European Representative Office, the Netherlands Representative Office, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoF), Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA), The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem (ARIJ), among others.



©Palestinian Land Authority 2021: The first meeting of the Land Management and Administration Sector Working Group established under the APLR project. Palestinian Land Authority Office, Ramallah – Palestine

* Both the Social Tenure Domain Model and the Gender Evaluation Criteria are tools developed by the Global Land Tool Network, more information can be found on: www.gltn.net.

For more information on the project, you can contact UN-Habitat on: unhabitat-palestine@un.org or LWSC on: info@lwsc.ps

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