



Examining the impact of customary land secretariats on decentralised land governance in Ghana: Evidence from stakeholders in Northern Ghana

Charity Bazaabadire Lankono^{a,b,*}, David Forkuor^b, Festus Atribawuni Asaaga^c

^a Centre of Development Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB3 9DP, United Kingdom

^b Department of Geography and Rural Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, P.M.B, Kumasi, Ghana

^c UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford OX10 8BB, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Customary land tenure
Tenure security
Customary land secretariat
Land governance
Ghana

ABSTRACT

The complexities of customary land tenure continue to dominate academic and policy debates on sustainable land management particularly in the sub-Saharan African context. Central to the raging debate is the idea of harmonizing the disparate customary and statutory tenure systems to afford clarity, certainty and safeguard tenure security of landholders. Towards this end, proponents have endorsed Customary Land Secretariats (CLSs) as an interface between traditional authorities and statutory land agencies. Yet there is relatively limited empirical evidence on the dynamics of customary land governance in the contemporary context. Drawing on mixture of household survey ($n = 115$) and key-informant interviews with landowners and CLS officials ($n = 6$), this paper explores the role of customary land secretariats as operational vehicles for improved customary land governance in the Upper East and West regions of Ghana. The findings demonstrate that whereas CLSs' presented a good window of opportunity for strengthening decentralized land governance in the study areas, there were important gender-based differences in the knowledge of the core functions of the CLSs as well as women's involvement in land related discourse in the study areas. The study found no female as a landowner (Tendamba) or land overlord and few women were land users in the study areas. This is suggestive of the limited participation of women in the existing customary land governance framework in the study areas. Although CLSs are expected to work as interface between traditional authorities and statutory land agencies, the level of involvement of landowners in the activities of CLSs was very minimal, suggestive of a disconnect between the Tendambas and the CLSs. These findings have far reaching implications in terms of ongoing policy attempts at re-engineering customary land governance arrangements and to strengthen the CLSs framework to act as an interface for equitable land governance within the context of customary land management and tenure security in Ghana. As a way forward, the paper argues that context-specific strategies to gender mainstreaming and capacity building remains vital in strengthening the CLSs to deliver a 'win-win' equitable customary land management.

1. Introduction

The complexities of customary land tenure continue to dominate academic and policy debates, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa context (SSA), including Ghana (Asaaga, 2021; Byamugisha, 2013; World Bank, 2010; Knight, 2010). Successive governments in SSA are grappling with feasible pathways to resolve the myriad of challenges, including tenure insecurity, inequalities in land access and conflicts that plague local land administration (Asaaga, 2021; Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Kalabamu, 2019; Biitir and Ameyaw, 2017). Synonymous to other SSA countries, Ghana's land sector has overtime witnessed series of land

policy reforms intended to improve land administration system but has yet to fully achieve the desired results (Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Asaaga, 2017; Bugri, 2012; Bob, 2010). Several scholars have critiqued the customary land tenure arrangements on the basis that they have largely favoured the enterprise of the elites to the detriment of the poor and vulnerable segment of the society (Amanor, 2012; Schoneveld and German, 2014; Ubink, 2008; Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003). Similarly, the statutory tenure system has faced several criticisms. In fact, some observers have indicated that the statutory tenure framework is also fraught with several weaknesses including elite capture, corruption and inefficiencies of the state agencies (see Asaaga, 2017; Yaro, 2010;

* Correspondence to: PostBox CT8870, Cantonment, Accra, Ghana.

E-mail address: charity.lankono@cantab.net (C.B. Lankono).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2023.106665>

Received 21 July 2022; Received in revised form 16 March 2023; Accepted 25 March 2023

Available online 8 April 2023

0264-8377/© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Kasanga and Kotey, 2001). Boone and Duku (2012), for instance, have opined that statutory institutions work to reproduce features of the local political economy instead of working to clip away predatory ethnic hierarchy and chiefly authority that characterize customary land governance.

Against this backdrop, the harmonisation of the disparate customary and statutory tenure systems continues to gain currency in the burgeoning literature as plausible avenue to engender tenure security and equitable land management (Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Asaaga, 2021, 2017; Owusu-Ansah and Braimah, 2013; Arko-Adjei, 2011). Proponents of the adaptation paradigm (e.g. Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Asaaga, 2021, 2017; Nkwae, 2006) argue that this affords a unique window of opportunity for the strengths of one tenurial system to address the weaknesses of the other. They argue that, in the face of changing tenurial dynamics exemplified by widespread individualization and monetization of customary land, a better understanding of the current and potential role of customary tenure arrangements is needed for better land management (Asaaga, 2021; Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Lambrecht, 2016; Yaro, 2010). Whilst this conceptual approach appears promising, there is relative dearth of empirical studies in terms of the functioning of customary land tenure arrangements in the contemporary context (Asaaga, 2017, 2021; Paaga and Dandeebo, 2014). Except for a few studies (Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Biitir et al., 2017; Paaga and Dandeebo, 2014; Bugri, 2012; Arko-Adjei et al., 2011), the role of the Customary Land Secretariats (CLSs) in addressing the land problems have had relatively little attention particularly in the northern Ghana context (see Nara et al., 2014; Bugri, 2012 as notable exceptions). The present study, therefore, explores the functioning of CLSs and perception of local stakeholders of the effects of their operations on decentralised land administration in northern Ghana drawing on the Paga, Navrongo, Sandema, Bolgatanga, Wa Central and Tabiase CLSs in the Upper East and West regions. The importance of this study is underscored by the fact that it provides valuable insights for strengthening CLSs as vehicles for promoting equitable customary land governance in the face of increasing individualisation and commodification of communal land in Ghana (cf. Biitir and Ameyaw, 2017; Yaro, 2010) and may be applicable in other customary dominant contexts in sub-Saharan Africa (Kalabamu, 2019; Adoko et al., 2011).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents an overview of customary land governance in Ghana, which provides a contextual background to situate the ensuing empirical analysis. Section 3 describes the methodology used for the paper, followed by Section 4 which provides the empirical analysis on stakeholders' perceptions and experiences about the role of CLSs in decentralised customary land governance in Wa Tabiase, Bolgatanga, Navrongo, Sandema and Paga in the Upper East and West regions of Ghana. The concluding aspect of the paper reflects on the implications of the findings and presents some suggestions towards strengthening CLSs as vehicles for contemporary customary land governance in Ghana.

2. Contemporary customary land governance in Ghana – A critical overview

To contextualise issues and provide a theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis, it is important to provide an overview of the architecture of customary land governance in Ghana. Against this backdrop, Ghana's land sector is characterised by a dualised tenurial regime – customary and statutory tenure systems – which are poorly articulated and appears to be on a collision course (Asaaga and Hiron, 2019; Obeng-Odoom, 2014; Kasanga and Kotey, 2001). Over time, several scholars (e.g. Paaga, 2013; Mahama and Baffour, 2009; Kasanga and Kotey, 2001) in their assessment of Ghana's land tenure system have identified a number of challenges, including tenure insecurity, indeterminate land boundaries, multiple sales of land, protracted chieftaincy and land disputes among others that impinge the effectiveness of customary and statutory land management structures alike (Kasanga

and Kotey, 2001; National Land Policy, 1999). A study of land tenure dynamics in the Nangoli and Pelungu areas of the Bolgatanga municipality in Ghana's Upper East region, inter alia, found that the encroachment of mineral-rich lands (with gold-bearing rocks) was largely due to the lack of proper land boundary demarcations (Agyemang, 2010). The customary land sector is faced with peculiar problems including the lack of consistency and coordination on practices and procedures, limited knowledge on government land policy, poor records keeping and weak administrative machinery for customary land governance (Nara et al., 2014; Asiamah, 2011).

To address these challenges the Ghanaian government embarked on a major land reform known as the Land Administration Project (henceforth referred to as LAP) in 2003. As the operationalization framework of the National Land Policy in 1999, the overarching objective of the programme, inter alia, was to develop a sustainable and well-functioning land administration system that is fair, efficient, cost-effective, decentralized, and enhances land tenure security (Biitir and Nara, 2017; World Bank Report, 2012; LAP, 2010). Of the several objectives of the LAP, two key objectives are central to improving decentralised customary land governance viz. (1) the harmonisation of the customary and statutory land laws, and (2) strengthening community-level land dispute resolution mechanisms (Asaaga, 2017; World Bank, 2003; Government of Ghana, 2003). The project which ended in 2018 had three phases. The first phase addressed the challenges in customary land sector by establishing and strengthening customary institutions to harmonise and coordinate their activities with those of the state land agencies (Ubink and Quan, 2008). The recent attention given to the strengthening and establishing local institutions and structures to harmonise various land practices may be occasioned by the failure of formalisation approaches to address the challenges in the land sectors in countries within the sub-Saharan Africa (Quan et al., 2008).

In Ghana, a key objective of the LAP therefore paid attention to equity and accountability under the customary land management. Since previous land policies focused on state land agencies and had little transformation in the customary land sector, some academics argued for the change in policy target (Ubink and Quan, 2008). Institutionalised community-level participatory and accountable customary land management system was advocated (Ubink and Quan, 2008). Also, the CLS initiative was instituted to address the existing incoordination between statutory and traditional land agencies (Nara et al., 2014; Paaga and Dandeebo, 2014). In effect, a target of fifty (50) CLSs were to be set under the LAP in pilot areas. After the first phase of the LAP, thirty-eighty (38) CLSs were established and others strengthened with four in the Upper East and three in the Upper West regions (Nara et al., 2014).

2.1. Customary land secretariat as a model of decentralised land governance

CLSs are conceptualised to function as the link between customary and public land sector agencies through active involvement of traditional authorities. Within this purview, the CLSs are to promote land tenure security for all landholders particularly, at the customary level and disadvantaged groups, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of customary land administration systems in the country (Kugbega, 2020; Biitir and Nara, 2016). To achieve these goals, good records keeping, awareness creation, and dispute resolution are paramount (Government of Ghana, 2020; Asiamah, 2006).

The CLSs concept have since been under a debate, on the one hand are the supporters and the other the opposers. Proponents of the CLS model argue that CLSs are effective and accountable local structures for the administration of land and addressing the needs of a diverse population within their communities (Kugbega, 2020; Government of Ghana, 2003). While this may seem so, many have criticised the CLS model as an opportunity for traditional authorities to concentrate more political and economic power to the detriment of the community (Kuusaana and

Gerber, 2015; Quan et al., 2008). In peri-urban areas of Ghana for instance, Kasanga and Woodman (2004) found that some chiefs sold farmlands for residential purposes and used the monies for their personal interest leaving farmers displaced.

Another argument is that customary land rights are outcomes of negotiations, struggles, disputes and implicit agreement embedded in social relations which are inherently unequal involving many power dynamics (Amanor et al., 2008), therefore, CLS will further give power to local authorities. In addition, there is the observation that advancing the CLS may operate to favour elite capture to the detriment of poor and vulnerable groups (Asaaga, 2017; Kuusaana and Gerber, 2015; Chauveau et al., 2006). Within this context, Whitehead and Tsikata (2003) have argued that CLSs should, therefore, be replaced with a more democratic land administrative system under the control of district assemblies. While their argument may be valid considering the level of rent seeking among traditional authorities, it cannot be clearly established that officials in district assemblies will not also seek personal interest when they are made custodians to the land (Akaateba, 2019). Besides, there is also the tendency that the concentration of power in the district assemblies may further compound the existing challenges in the land sector. Therefore, the issue on who manages land more efficiently moves beyond corruptions among chiefs and elite entrusted with management of land to the framework and structure within which the chiefs and elites operate.

Regardless of the raging debate about the CLSs concept, they are noted for performing functions that include, developing mechanisms which improve tenure security especially among women, very poor and landless families, improving quality of records and accessibility of land use information, development of more effective dispute resolution procedures and developing forms of certificates which precisely reflect the nature of rights over the property awarded and the terms and conditions (Akwensivie and Abedi-Lartey, 2017; LAP, 2010; Government of Ghana, 2003). Obviously, the functions of the CLSs are diverse and many, which makes their effective operationalization questionable considering the

structure, available resources, and their capacity. It is noteworthy that the new Land Act 2020 (Act 1036) re-emphasizes the aforementioned functions but goes ahead to add the preparation of periodic accounts of all revenues received. This takes into consideration the financial functioning of the CLSs unlike previously when they are made to work and manage their finances without any guidance from the statutory land agencies. To ascertain whether the activities of the CLSs are consistent with their functions is an empirical question. How the functions and duties of these secretariats contribute to improved customary land management and administration can be tested through empirical evidence. In practice, CLSs face difficulties in performing their functions such as transparency and accountability in land management, resistance of state land agencies and efficiency problem in the delivery of the project (Ubink and Quan, 2008). Considering these challenges and the argument by supporters of the CLS model, warrants an investigation into how they are beneficial to contemporary and decentralized customary land management.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study sites

The study was conducted in the Upper East and West regions of Ghana. Together these two regions cover a land area of 27,318 square kilometres (10,548 square miles) representing 15.4% of the total land area of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The Upper East region has a total land area of 8842 square kilometres and the Upper West region, a total land area of 18,476 square kilometres (Fig. 1). The study area is bordered by Burkina Faso at the north, Northern region of Ghana at the south, Togo at the east and Cote d'Ivoire at the west. This region forms the northernmost part of Ghana. These two regions were purposively selected on account of the predominance of customary land tenure system and the existence of CLS, serving as an interface between statutory and customary land management systems. Moreover, the study

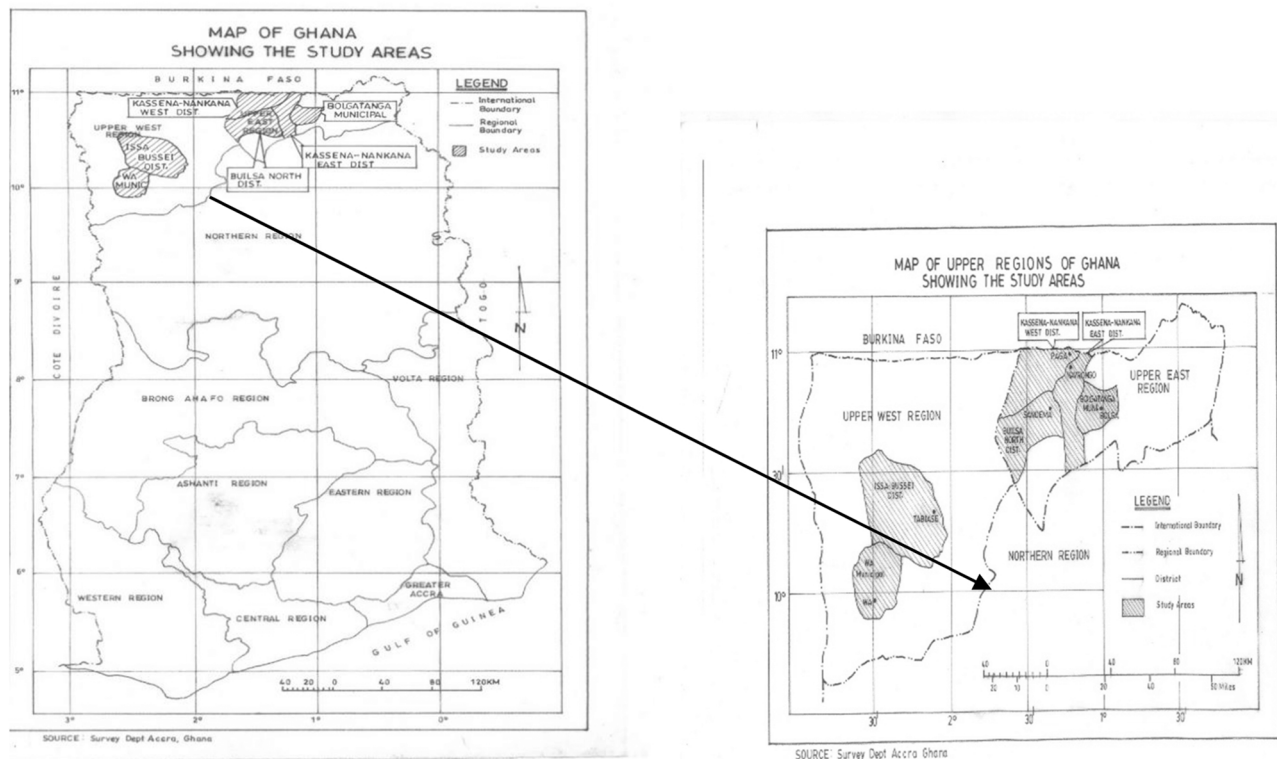


Fig. 1. An illustrative map of Ghana showing the study areas in regional and national context.

regions are characterised by high level of poverty relative to other regions of Ghana (Ghana Living Standard Survey Round 6, 2012). Within the Upper West and East regions, Wa Central, Tabiase, Sandema, Paaga, Bolgatanga, and Navrongo communities were purposively selected based on the presence of CLSs. Aside that tenurial issues in the study contexts, land is a central asset contributing to poverty alleviation given the widespread dependence on land resources for livelihood sustenance in the focal districts.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The study adopted a mixed method approach comprising a household survey and a series of key informant interviews. First, one hundred and fifteen (115) household surveys were conducted among landowners (Tendambas) and land users in Wa Central, Tabiase, Sandema, Paaga, Bolgatanga, and Navrongo. Overall, thirty-five (35) Tendambas and eighty (80) land users making 115 respondents were randomly selected. Out of the thirty-five (35) Tendambas, eighteen (18) were in Wa Central and Tabiase in the Upper West region and seventeen (17) in Bolgatanga, Sandema, Paaga and Navrongo in the Upper East region. The study considered only thirty-five Tendambas because lands are communally owned in the study regions and theoretically, only the Tendana from each landowning community has the right to allocate lands, hence their in-depth knowledge on customary land governance. Again, using the lottery method under the simple random sampling, eighty (80) land users were selected for the household survey. Only land users within Wa Central, Tabiase, Bolgatanga, Sandema, Paaga and Navrongo communities were selected because of their likely understanding of the operations of CLSs operating in their communities.

The survey was administered using a questionnaire. Respondents were asked about their understanding of land related issues and their knowledge of the CLSs and operations relating to land in their communities. Although the survey questionnaire was written in English, enumerators interpreted the questions in the local dialect particularly for non-literate respondents, who could not read or write. The positionality of the first author and field enumerators as natives of the Upper East region and the capacity to read and write in the local language (i.e. Frafra) proved useful in negotiating access and receptivity of study respondents. For the key-informant interviews, we purposively selected six (6) focal CLSs, including Wa Central, Tabiase, Navrongo, Bolgatanga, Paaga and Sandema CLSs based on the first author's original knowledge of the study areas and their active functioning at the time of the research. The selected CLSs were given the opportunity to nominate an official or two for the key-informant interviews. Six (6) interviewees with one from each CLSs were nominated for the interview. The rationale for the selection of officials of these CLSs was because they have the requisite expertise and are privy to information on customary land governance. In all, six (6) interviews were conducted at the offices of focal CLSs. Interviews were conducted in English language using a semi-structured interview guide. Key-informants were asked of questions about their operations, engagement with Tendambas and other state agencies and their challenges. Interviews lasted for two hours on average and were audio-recorded following participant prior-informed consent.

It noteworthy that the study sample is disproportionately skewed in favour of men. First, in the case of the Tendambas, all of them are male reflective of the patriarchal nature of the social organisation in the study regions vis-à-vis the historical dynamics around land ownership arrangements. Second, regarding land users, although women tended to manage or cultivate land, the socio-cultural sensitivities around land issues has meant female participants were quite reticent to share their perspectives related to land as such matters are often considered the preserve of their male relatives or husbands (see [Asaaga and Hiron, 2019](#)). Nevertheless, the first author leveraged her nativity and knowledge of the local traditions of the focal regions to negotiate access and target otherwise under-represented groups.

3.3. Data analysis

The survey data was analysed descriptively and inferentially using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16) and outputs reported in tables and graphs. The collated qualitative data (from the key-informant interviews) were transcribed, anonymised and analysed using thematic and content analysis approach (Braun and Clark, 2006). The results of the survey data and qualitative findings were triangulated based on which conclusions were drawn ([Asaaga, 2021](#)). This was done comparing both qualitative and quantitative data to support or refute arguments in the study.

4. Results and discussion

This section presents the results based on stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of the operations of CLSs in the study contexts and discusses it within the context of the existing literature. First, the summary socio-demographic characteristics of respondents is presented, followed by the pattern of customary land governance, landholders' experiences and perceptions regarding focal CLSs activities, role in dispute resolution, gendered participation, acceptability of the CLS concept (by Tendambas) and associated challenges. Drawing on these findings, we reflect on the role of the CLSs in contemporary customary land governance, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for achieving equitable customary land management.

4.1. Contemporary customary land governance in the study areas – the state of the art

Reflecting the land governance architecture in other parts of Ghana, the landholding arrangements in the study areas is customary dominant with different actors involved in the land delivery process. Within the customary land ownership sphere, the Tendambas (earth priest) are the principal actors (by virtue of their first settlement in the focal areas) responsible for land allocation and management. The Tendambas and their clan/lineage heads are traditionally regarded as the allodial title holders vested with the power to grant derivative land rights (particularly customary usufruct and licenses) to other lineage members and strangers (i.e. non-members of the landowning groups). Synonymous to other parts of northern Ghana, the increasing commodification of customary land has meant that some individuals (other than Tendambas) have acquired allodial titles to land, with the absolute right to own and alienate land without recourse to the Tendambas (see [Yaro, 2010](#)). During the interviews, a number of interviewees observed a marked shift from the hitherto common 'traditional' modes of land access (i.e. gifts and customary licenses) to market modes (e.g. purchase and rental) largely to the detriment of poor non-landowning indigenes. Within the statutory sphere, the state land sector agencies, particularly the Lands Commission and the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority are the focal government institutions vested with the authority to administer vested and state lands in the study regions, Given the historical antecedents of land management in Ghana and the ongoing changes in tenurial relations in the study regions, chiefs who hitherto had a minimal role in customary land governance are playing an increasingly prominent role in land allocation and land dispute adjudication, which presents far-reaching implications for equitable customary land governance. The advent of the CLSs in the focal regions are envisioned as affording the platform for improving customary land management to safeguard equitable land access and tenure security, particularly for the vulnerable segment of society.

4.2. Demographic information and gendered participation in customary land management

To afford a better understanding of the CLS and customary land governance nexus in the study areas, it was pertinent to assess

respondents' perceptions and experiences about gendered participation in the customary land delivery process. As shown in Fig. 2, over three-quarters of the sampled respondents interviewed (85.2% or xx) were male largely, reflecting the patriarchal nature of the social and occupational context of the study regions and northern Ghana generally.

All the female study participants were land users implying that limited control rights over the landholdings they managed. The gender disproportionate sample was mainly attributable to the hitherto underlying socio-cultural perception that women are not to own property and for that matter play very minimal role in land matters. While this historical narrative of gendered participation in customary land governance is changing (given sustained gender and feminist advocacy), it has overtime significantly constrained the enterprise of women in respect of land ownership and access. This observation corroborates earlier findings by Bugri (2008) and Yaro (2010) that women still play minimal role in land related concerns in northern Ghana. Whereas the plethora of Ghana's land laws explicitly highlight gender considerations (Sewornu, 2010; Duncan and Brant, 2004), it noteworthy that limited concrete efforts have been operationalised to mainstream gender-related concerns in customary land management and ownership, at least in the context of the study regions. The gender-question in customary land governance also finds strong expression in the current CLS framework and its operationalisation. A case in point is the records of land registrants with the Wa central CLS, which suggests a rather skewed pattern in favour of men (n = 438), compared to a meagre 14.57% (n = 76) of registrants reported as female (Fig. 2). While this finding is not surprising, it lends empirical credence to the clarion call for greater gender-focused sensitization of traditional authorities and overall gendered mainstreaming within the CLS set-up in order to create window of opportunity for women to access and enforce their land rights within these formal structures (Asaaga, 2017; Paaga, 2013; Bugri, 2012).

4.3. Local perceptions about customary land secretariats and customary land governance

Under the first phase of the LAP framework, seven (7) customary land secretariats were established to serve as an interface between traditional authorities and statutory land sector agencies in the study regions. Four of the focal CLSs are respectively situated in Navrongo, Bolgatanga, Sandema and Paga in the Upper East region. The remaining two CLSs in the Upper West region are located in the Wa Central and Tabiase districts respectively (Table 1).

Consistent with observations in the literature (Akwensivie and Abedi-Lartey, 2017; Biitir and Nara, 2016; Nara and Biitir, 2014; Paaga, 2013), an overwhelming majority of survey respondents were aware of the existence of the focal CLSs when asked whether they heard of their

Table 1 Focal customary land secretariats established in the study regions.

Upper East region			Upper West region		
Focal CLS	Date established	District	Focal CLS	Date established	District
Bolgatanga CLS	2014	Bolgatanga Municipal	Wa Central	2008	Wa Municipal
Navrongo CLS	2008	Kassena-Nankana West	Tabiase	2005	Issa-Bussie
Sandema CLS	2006	Builsa North			
Paga CLS	2008	Kassena-Nankana West			

establishment prior to the survey, with 36% of land users reporting they had patronised the services of the focal CLS. Nearly three-quarters of the land users (n = 84) and landowners (n = 26) interviewed confirmed their awareness of the focal CLSs' established in the study regions (see Fig. 3). Given the high awareness of the focal CLS existence in the study regions, it was instructive to further assess stakeholders' comprehension of the CLS functions (as stipulated under section 15 of the Land Act 2020 (Act 1036)) the results of which is discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

4.3.1. Dynamics of awareness and perceptions relating to CLS functions

Almost three-quarters of survey respondents (84 or 73%) reported that the focal CLSs are vitally important for customary land management in the study regions, however, there were marked differences in terms of perceived functions and roles in terms of land dispute resolution and participation of allodial titleholders in the overall CLS administrative machinery (Table 2). In this regard, land users perceived inter alia the CLS functions as land registration, confirmation of land ownership, sensitization of land matters and land dispute resolution. Conversely, CLS officials interviewed identified their core functions to included day-to-day records keeping, land dispute resolution (through Alternative Dispute Resolution), public sensitization on land tenure security, pilot land boundary demarcation, sensitization workshops for Tendambas, land leasing and issuance of indenture. Juxtaposing the field observations with the stipulated functions of the CLS as identified in the Land Act 2020 (Act 1036) and scientific literature highlight some marked differences in perceived and mandated functions. During the interviews, officials of the focal CLSs for instance, admitted they were not performing a number of the legally mandated functions as prescribed under the Land Act 2020 (Act 1036). These functions included: (1) liaising with other statutory land agencies to ensure development conforms to layouts, (2) keeping records of all fees and charges associated with land grants, and (3) preparation of accounts of all income and expenditure. At

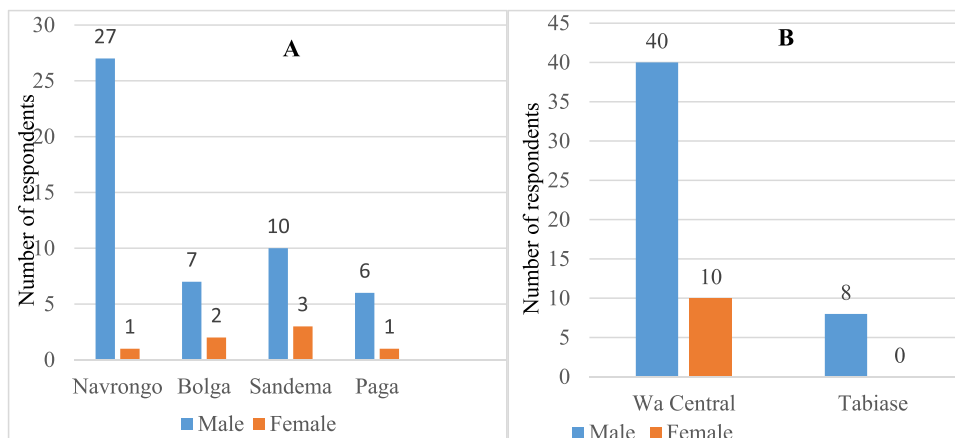


Fig. 2. Gendered representation of survey respondents by study region. (A)=Upper East and (B)=Upper West respectively.

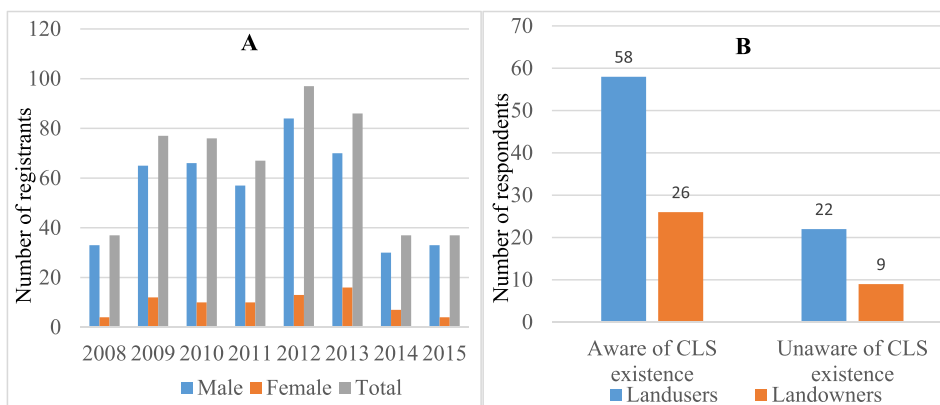


Fig. 3. Local perceptions about CLS and customary land management: (A) records of registrants with Wa Central CLS; (B) awareness of CLS existence in focal regions.

the same time, it also emerged that the focal CLSs in the study regions performed additional functions particularly land leasing (without the concurrence of the Tendambas), which falls outside of their core remit as specified in Act 1036 and the wider literature. It therefore follows that focal CLS officials have arrogated themselves additional powers to make and grant new leases without the concurrence of the actual Tendambas, which somewhat infringed on the latter's status as allodial titleholders. The foregoing observation also buttresses the earlier findings of Nara et al. (2014) study that customary land stakeholders in the Upper West region misunderstood land registration to be the function of the CLSs. Indeed, further interactions with some officials of the focal CLSs revealed that clients often misconstrued an allocation note (evidencing a said land transaction between a grantor and grantee witnessed by officials of the focal CLSs) as land title. Several informants lamented that this situation often served as a conduit for some unscrupulous persons to purportedly sell lands to unsuspecting individuals and visit CLSs for the so-called lease. The said officials further argued that the misrepresentation of allocation notes as lease documents contributed to the low level of trust in focal CLSs and the several cases of multiple land sales, which often culminated in land disputes and tenure insecurity in the study areas. To the extent that the LAP framework failed to clearly delineate the roles and functions of the CLSs in the customary land delivery process could have contributed to the confusion. This assertion finds expression in the changes effected in the newly promulgated Land Act 2020 (see section 15 on CLS roles and responsibilities) in a bid to clarify the functions of the CLSs. Given that the focal CLSs are intended as an interface between the Tendambas and statutory land agencies, the foregoing observations brings to the fore questions about the legitimacy of the CLSs in the customary land delivery process in the study regions.

Respondents generally perceived the focal CLSs to have had a positive impact on customary land management in the study regions, particularly in the area of land tenure security, land dispute resolution and orderly spatial development. Within this purview, all interviewees concurred that the collation of land records (a core function of the CLSs) has meant greater clarity on the land ownership and land rights in the study regions, thereby safeguarding legal tenure security of land users. For instance, it was gathered that the focal secretariats kept up-to-date records of landowning communities, land transactions and other vital land information. Interviewees highlighted that there has been a marked reduction in the incidence of multiple sale of land and land disputes as clients accrued all information regarding a said land parcel at the focal CLSs. Of the 35 landowners interviewed, only 8 (22.9%) of them had experienced multiple sales of land. Moreover, focal CLS officials claimed the sensitization of the general public on land acquisition and registration has contributed positively in motivating landowners and users alike to register their landholdings to ensure legal tenure security. Of the 80 land users who participated in the survey, 56 (70%) reported they had registered their landholdings with the focal CLSs. The remaining 25 land

users cited financial challenges as the principal reason for the non-registration of their landholdings. From the field interviews, informants disclosed that the focal CLSs charged GHS1500 for registration of a 100 by 100 plot of land (inclusive of site plan preparation).

4.3.2. Focal CLSs role in land dispute resolution

Considering that land-related issues if unresolved could escalate into full blown large-scale land conflicts and the fact that land dispute resolution is one of the CLS establishment, it was instructive to further examine the focal CLSs' contribution to land dispute resolution in the study regions. As shown in Fig. 4, the overall results suggest low incidence of land disputes in the study areas with only 28% of survey respondents (i.e. 28 land users) reporting that they had experienced land-related disputes prior to the survey. Multiple land sales and land encroachment constituted the commonest forms of land disputes reported across the study areas. It was gathered from the key-informant interviews that the patronage of the focal CLSs services could have contributed to the low incidence of land disputes in the study areas. Indeed, further statistical test showed a statistically significant positive association (coefficient of 0.332) between patronage of focal CLSs services and experience of land disputes by land users. This conveys the understanding that people who experienced land disputes tended to patronise the services of the focal CLSs in the study areas.

Regarding land dispute resolution, key officials of Wa CLS claimed that a total of 147 land disputes (with 8 pending) had been successfully resolved as the time of the field survey (January 2017). Navrongo CLS had resolved 57 land disputes with 17 pending and Sandema resolved one dispute respectively. The other focal CLSs in the Upper East region did not have report any land disputes. Suffice to say that all the focal secretariats had Alternative Dispute Resolution Committees tasked with the responsibility of land dispute resolution. The General Secretary of the Wa Central CLS this to say on the secretariat's role with respect to land dispute resolution:

"The Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee consisting of seven (7) members is in-charge of land disputes resolution. This committee resolves disputes using the traditions and customs of the Wa Traditional Area." (Wa Central CLS Interview, 6th January 2017)

Juxtaposing the foregoing with Section 4.3 further lends support to the assertion that the patronage of the focal CLSs services and their close proximity has had a significant positive impact on customary land delivery (as evidenced by the low incidence of land disputes) in the study areas. Nevertheless, a number of focal CLS officials noted that the role of the CLSs in respect of land dispute resolution is still contested in many ways. A typical view in this regard by a key official at the Wa Central is illustrative:

"Because we do not have any legal backing, when we give judgement on land disputes, clients are still allowed to go to courts. On some occasions

Table 2
Stipulated and perceived functions of CLS in the study regions.

Stipulated functions under Section 15 of Land Act 2020	Functions identified from literature	Functions perceived by respondents	Functions identified CLS officials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record the interests and rights in land, and keep and maintain accurate and up-to-date records of land transactions in the area of operation of the Customary Land Secretariat Provide a list of existing customary interests and rights in land in the area of operation of the Customary Land Secretariat including indication of persons with the capacity to make grants of the interests and rights in that area Provide relevant records on land, information on hierarchy of interests and rights in land, and laid down processes for effective dispute resolution Facilitate the settlement of land disputes through alternative dispute resolution Prepare periodic accounts of all revenue received at the Customary Land Secretariats in accordance with clause (8) of article 36 of the Constitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of information on land owing group Keeping of accurate and up to date land records Serving as the link between an owning group and the private sector land agencies Promotes Alternative Dispute Resolution Liaise with other agencies to ensure development conforms to layouts Keep records on all fees and charges associated with land grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land registration Confirmation of land owner by giving information on land owning group Education on land matters Resolution of land disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day to day records keeping Land disputes resolution using the Alternative Dispute Resolution Public sensitization for land security and its benefits Sensitization of land stakeholders on land management practices Contribute to pilot boundary demarcation Land leasing with consent of landowners and issuance of indenture Organize sensitization workshops for land owners Promote land tenure security

some went to court after we resolved the dispute using the ADR. The fortunate thing is that the court ruling was in line with our ruling”

Although the recently promulgated Act 1036 affords legal

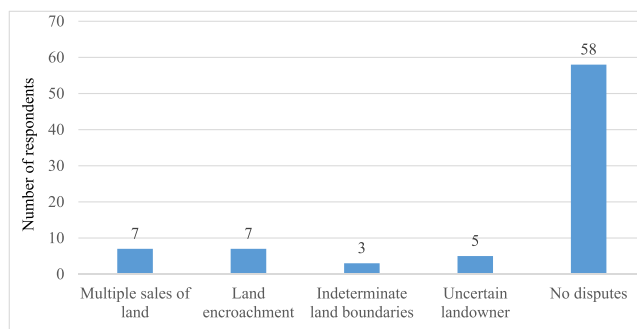


Fig. 4. Categories of land disputes as reported by landowners.

recognition of the CLSs and their operations, the legal backing is oriented towards the establishment and operations rather the specifics of the enforcement of their judgements pertaining to land disputes as it were. The enforcement of judgements procured through the ADR mechanism falls within the purview of the formal court system.

4.3.3. Landowners (Tendambas) involvement in the activities of CLS

On the question of landowners’ involvement with the activities of the focal CLSs, the overall results indicate a rather limited involvement in the CLS operations. Although an overwhelming majority of landowners in the study areas acknowledged the importance of CLS in improving customary land delivery, a significant proportion reported that they seldom attended meetings organised by the focal secretariats (Table 3). In the Upper East for instance, whereas 94% of landowners rated the focal secretariats (i.e. Paga, Sandema, Bolgatanga and Navrongo) as good despite their low attendance of meetings. Interestingly, 16 out of the 17 Tendambas (landowners) interviewed had never attended any meeting organised by the focal CLSs prior to the survey. The low attendance of meetings can be partly attributed to the sporadic organisation of meetings by the focal secretariats in the region. By contrast, landowners attendance of meetings organised by the focal CLSs in the Upper West region (Wa Central and Tabiase) was very high and the secretariats were rated as a good initiative overall. Despite demonstrating high level of awareness of the CLS existence and its operations, the majority of survey respondents preferred the resolution of land disputes at home as opposed to recourse to the focal secretariats. It therefore follows that traditional authorities still preferred traditional modes of land dispute resolution even within the evolving contemporary land management system.

Regarding forums for land dispute resolution, the overall results show that only 28.6% of landowners in the study areas reported they preferred to resolve their land disputes at the focal CLSs in the surveyed districts. Meanwhile, majority of landowners (37.1%) preferred to resolve their land disputes at home despite being well aware of the CLS existence in the study regions. The foregoing result highlights the view that landowners still highly regarded informal mechanisms as the preferred fora for land dispute resolution in the face of the changing contemporary land management system in the study regions. A further regional comparative analysis show that only one (1) landowner in the Upper East indicated preference of focal CLSs as forum for land dispute

Table 3
Attendance of CLS meetings by landowners.

Frequency of attendance	Study region		Total (N = 35)
	Upper East (n = 17)	Upper West (n = 18)	
Very often		11 (61.1%)	11 (31.4%)
Often		1 (5.6%)	1 (2.9%)
Sometimes	1 (5.9%)	3 (16.7%)	4 (11.4%)
Never	16 (94.1%)	3 (16.7%)	19 (54.3%)

resolution relative to nine (9) (representing 50%) of their counterparts in Upper West (i.e. Wa Central and Tabiase CLSs) who reported same (Table 4). Thus, participation of landowners in activities of the focal CLSs in the Upper West region was higher relative to those in the Upper East region. Although landowners expressed knowledge of the focal CLS existence in their districts, they had yet to actively participate in the activities of the secretariats.

A number of reasons can be adduced for the low participation in CLS-related activities. First, respondents expressed some scepticism about the focal CLS operations underscored by the seeming perception that the CLSs may work in the interest of the state and a few local elites, rendering the landowning communities landless. Given that CLSs operate through the land management committees (Bugri, 2012) which are mostly governed by chiefs, family and clan heads, some landowning groups are losing trust in CLSs. Indeed, it is noteworthy that chiefs, heads of clans and families are not necessarily landowners, particularly in the context of northern Ghana (Kasanga and Kotey, 2001), thus for the fear of losing their lands to other powerful traditional authorities (particularly chiefs), some Tendambas are reluctant to patronise the services of focal CLSs. It therefore follows that the limited involvement of the Tendambas, the recognised custodians of customary land in the focal regions has far-reaching implications for the sustainability of CLSs as a machinery for decentralised land governance.

4.3.4. Challenges faced by the focal CLSs

Although the focal CLSs in the study areas have achieved considerable success, particularly in area of land dispute resolution, they are still grappling with some challenges. As evidenced in Table 9, delays in service delivery, allegation of bias and lack of direct interaction with CLS constituted the foremost challenges of the CLSs in the focal regions. Several interviewees partly attributed to the said operational challenges to the wider institutional-level problems such as the lack of office space, inadequate funds and logistics, staff constraints, limited coordination with other statutory land agencies and lack of legal mandate. Although survey participants generally responded in the negative regarding challenges (n = 75), the few landholders (n = 5) who encountered challenges reported delays in service delivery as the foremost problem in dealing with the secretariats. Corroborating this observation, several informants explained that the delays in service delivery was largely due to the limited staff strength and logistics to undertake mandated duties. Further analysis of staff strength and average educational attainment revealed that majority of CLSs did not have the required number of officials, and the few who did, had limited or no education, making it difficult to discharge their duties effectively (see Fig. 5B). None of the focal CLSs had the required staff strength of ten (10) officials, with Paaga and Tabiase CLSs having a lone worker. In Paaga CLS for example, the coordinator was the only staff manning the secretariat and in the case of Tabiase, it was a secretary. While the inadequate staffing contributes to the long queues at the secretariats, it is noteworthy that the average educational level of the secretariats' workers somewhat contributed to the protracted delays in service delivery and their achievements. The study revealed that the education levels of workers had an immense impact on the performance of the secretariats. This is evidenced in the achievements of the Bolgatanga, Sandema and Wa Central secretariats compared with the achievements of the Tabiase secretariat. Moreover,

Table 4
Preferred fora for land dispute resolution by study region.

Land dispute resolution fora	Study region		Total (N = 35)
	Upper East (n = 17)	Upper West (n = 18)	
Court	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.1%)	3 (8.6%)
CLS	1 (5.9%)	9 (50.0%)	10 (28.6%)
Chief's palace	9 (52.9%)	-	9 (25.7%)
Home	6 (35.3%)	7 (38.9%)	13 (37.1%)

in the Tabiase CLS, it was gathered that the lone secretary manning the secretariat had moved on resulting in the closure of the secretariat at certain times.

It was gathered that the lack of funds and logistics significantly hampered service delivery by the focal CLSs. In all the focal secretariats, key-informants complained that aside from the initial supply of logistics by the Land Administration Project, the focal CLSs in the study regions they have received little or no funding support from government since their inauguration. Interviewees disclosed that they have had to solely rely on the meagre proceeds from client service delivery to run the focal secretariats. Table 5 illustrates the average annual revenues of CLSs in the study regions.

The Wa CLS for instance received the highest average revenue of 7000 Ghana cedis (approximately \$1273) and the Tabiase secretariat received the lowest revenue of 500 Ghana cedis (approximately \$90.91) (see Table 5). A worker of the Sandema CLS elaborated on the salary situation:

"We depend solely on the internally generated funds to run the secretariat and to provide some allowance for the workers" (Sandema CLS Interview, 8th January 2017)

The field interviews revealed that workers of the focal secretariats did not receive salaries but allowances and in some cases nothing. From an accountability perspective, the field interviews revealed that the focal secretariats lacked proper book keeping in terms of non-issuance of receipts for services rendered and the fees and charges associated with land grants. Informants from the focal secretariats conceded that they seldom furnished the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands (OASL) with reports of their activities as legally required. The said informants argued that the lack of regular reporting (an integral aspect of the accountability process) was largely due to the limited staff strength and logistical constraints. Reflecting on how the lack of funding impacted on staff motivation and overall operations of the focal secretariats, an official of the Wa Central CLS had this to say:

"An employed woman has to stop coming to work after working for three months without salary. Most of us working here have other businesses to make a living since we are not paid by the secretariat." (Wa Central CLS Interview, 6th January 2017)

Some interviewees disclosed that they have had to make recourse to other means including self-volunteering to sustain the operations of the focal secretariats. A worker of the Bolgatanga CLS disclosed:

"This secretariat has no workers but voluntary individuals who help in the running of the secretariat." (Bolgatanga CLS Interview, 12th January 2017)

Also, the administrator of one of the CLSs revealed this:

"I do not receive any salary but only receive an allowance of 100 Ghana Cedis per month." (Interview, 8th January 2017)

Aside the personnel and infrastructural challenges, some landowners (Tendambas) alluded to allegations of bias of some focal CLS official, clandestine dealings and tribalism as hampering the operations of the CLSs. One respondent had this to say:

"Some of the workers of the secretariats were becoming bias and wanted to support the landowners since they paid heed to only what the landowners said because they are of the same tribe" (Field Survey, 2017)

Highlighting the need for targeted technical support from the state land sector agencies, some landowners also observed that the allegations of bias and clientelism requires investigation so as to instil confidence in the operations of the focal secretariats in the study regions. Some landowners alleged that some local elites connived with some focal CLS officials to 'illicitly' allocate land at the expense of vulnerable groups, thereby creating avenues of exclusion in the customary land delivery process. The foregoing assertions seem to lend some empirical credence

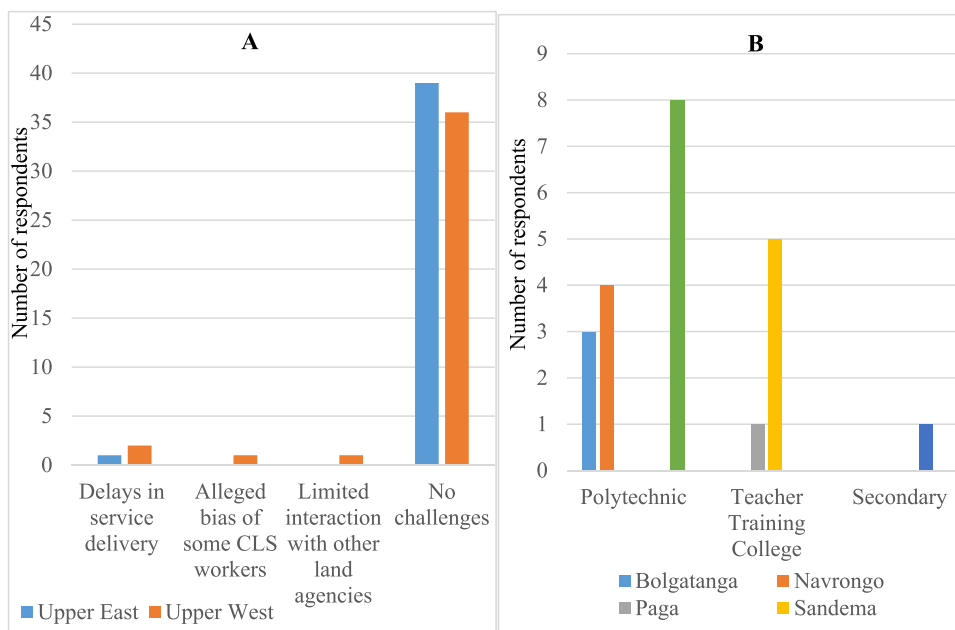


Fig. 5. Challenges faced by the focal CLSs. (A)=Challenges encountered by survey respondents patronising CLS services by study region, and (B)=Average educational attainment of focal CLSs staff by study district.

Table 5
Average annual revenues of the focal CLSs in the study regions.

Customary Land Secretariat	Average Annual Revenues (in Ghana cedis)
Bolgatanga	1000
Navrongo	6000
Paga	1200
Sandema	4800
Tabiase	500
Wa	7000

to the argument of critics that CLS model could be hijacked by chiefs and other powerful local elites to advance their parochial interests further entrenching inequities and marginalisation plaguing the customary land delivery process (Ubink, 2008, Amanor, 2012).

5. Conclusions and policy implications

The study investigated the functioning of CLSs as vehicles for strengthening customary land management and perceptions of local stakeholders of their effectiveness in the Upper East and West regions of Ghana. The findings of the study suggest high level of awareness of the existence of the focal CLSs in the study regions. Yet, the widespread awareness was tempered by misconceptions about the functions/operations of the focal secretariats (particularly in terms of land registration), which operated to constrain patronage of the secretariats activities by landowners in the study regions. Corroborating the findings of other studies (e.g. Biitir and Nara, 2016; Bugri, 2012) the findings demonstrate highly gendered participation in customary land delivery reflecting the entrenched patriarchal organisation in the wider socio-political and tenurial relations in the study regions.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the focal CLSs have played a profound role in land dispute resolution through alternative dispute resolution pathway, as it afforded an inclusive and equitable approach to participation to customary land governance, particularly for the poor and vulnerable segment of the society. As evidenced in the foregoing, although the CLSs have had considerable impact on customary land governance thus far, the level of acceptability of the CLS concept among landowning groups remain limited largely due to the fear of some

powerful local elites capitalizing on focal CLS operations to usurp their land rights and that of future generations. CLSs are still grappling with several challenges including the inadequate staffing and logistics, delays in service delivery, perceived bias of some staff, proximity issues, and limited direct contact with the secretariat by clients. While we appreciate that the findings of this study are not generalizable for Ghana as a whole, we are still able to make some inferences on the current state of play regarding contemporary customary land governance, particularly in northern Ghana’s context. In this regard, whereas the findings generally support those of Biitir and Nara (2016) and Bugri (2012) on the profound role of the CLSs in customary land management, our findings also highlighted some peculiar challenges that threaten to dampen the overall impact of the CLSs, at least in the study areas. In a unifying sense, while the observed challenges of the focal CLSs is not surprising, it highlights the view that more nuanced and contextualized assessments are required to better evaluate the effectiveness of the CLSs. Going forward, we recognize that both short and long-term measures may be required to alleviate the above enumerated challenges. We therefore put forward the following suggestions towards enhancing the continuing impact of the CLSs in the study areas and beyond:

1. Gender mainstreaming in the operational model of the CLSs remain paramount to maximise their impact at the grass-root level. As evidenced in the foregoing, participation in customary land governance in the study areas is still gendered. This is exemplified by the limited role of women in land allocation and management. It is therefore recommended that CLSs establish a gender desk to tackle all gender-based issues that affect the effectiveness of their functioning in the study areas. As Asaaga (2017) and Bugri (2012) respectively suggest, training of female community paralegals – who could serve as an interface between otherwise marginalized groups and the CLSs in terms of raising awareness on general land governance – could be instrumental in gender mainstreaming in the study areas. Achieving this could help augment the gender imbalance in the land delivery process and long-term poverty reduction in the focal regions.
2. Enforcement of the recently promulgated Land Act 2020 (Act 1036). As Act 1036 provides a legal basis and operational framework for the CLSs and integration of customary land administration into the statutory framework, its enforcement affords a legal mandate for the

CLSs. Additionally, the Land Act affords clarity as to the roles and financing arrangements of the CLSs. Recognising that the disparate land institutions need to collaborate for effective land management, an integration of decentralised land administration with customary land systems (CLSs) is advocated. As Biitir and Nara (2017) observed, customary land secretariats may have a key role to play in the decentralized land administration system. The enforcement of the Land Act also requires a series of consultative meetings to communicate its provisions to all stakeholders involved.

3. Intensification of education and awareness campaigns on the operations of the CLSs in the study areas by District Assemblies. While a significant number of respondents are aware of the existence of CLSs, only 37 out of 115 respondents have patronise their services. This thus calls for more sensitization on the functions and roles of secretariats in the study areas. Besides, the misconception of CLSs role in land leasing has meant that stakeholder sensitization remain paramount. Achieving this end could bolster citizens' trust and confidence in the operations of CLSs, thereby increasing their patronage. Academic conferences and media sensitization particularly in local languages of respective communities is also recommended (cf. Asaaga, 2017).
4. Improvement of the technical and infrastructural resourcing of the CLSs to shore up their existing capacities. Government through the district assemblies should provide targeted technical and infrastructural support to the CLSs to enhance service delivery. In this regard, the supply model of the LAP should be sustained (through public-private partnership arrangement) as an avenue to provide critical infrastructure (e.g. computers, offices, vehicles). Such targeted and need-based support could enhance proper records keeping, land inspections, monitoring and evaluations of activities and mitigate delays in service delivery. In addition, the Lands Commission has one of its core functions is mandated by law to advise and interface with traditional authorities in all matters relating stool land administration and information sharing (see Section 5 of Land Commission Act, 2008). Likewise the Land Act 2020 clear stipulates that the state agencies should provide technical supports to CLSs. It therefore follows that mandated land institutions could offer in-service training workshops for targeted CLSs on land management. Moreover, revenue generation capacities of the CLSs need to be enhanced to allow direct recruitment and education of staff in secretariats. To this end, the Office of the Stool Lands could lead the way by providing financial oversight of the CLSs operations as mandated under the Land Act 2020.
5. Proper monitoring and evaluation of CLSs is critical considering the majority of focal CLSs have yet to be effectively monitored/ audited since their establishment.

Funding

This research did not receive any external funding.

Declaration of Competing Interest

We declare that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication and there has not been any significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome. We confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved by all named authors and that there are no other persons who satisfied the criteria for authorship but are not listed. We further confirm that the order of authors listed in the manuscript has been approved by all of us. We confirm that we have given due consideration to the protection of intellectual property associated with this work and that there are no impediments to publication, including the timing of publication, with respect to intellectual property

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgements

We appreciate Moses Adoa Afirah for his contribution to the gathering of data. Special thanks to officials of Customary Land Secretariats and community members within the study area who participated in this study.

References

- Agyemang, I., 2010. Population dynamics and health hazards of small-scale mining activity in the Bolgatanga and Talensi-Nabdam districts of the upper east region of Ghana. *Indian J. Sci. Technol.* 3 (10), 1113–1120.
- Akaateba, M.A., 2019. The politics of customary land rights transformation in peri-urban Ghana: Powers of exclusion in the era of land commodification. *Land Use Policy* 88.
- Akwensivie, G.A., Abedi-Lartey, A.M., 2017. Customary Land Secretariats in Ghana—Building on tradition and modernity. *Afr. Real Estate Soc.*
- Amanor, K., Ubink, J., Berry, S., 2008. *Contesting Land and Custom in Ghana: State, Chief and the Citizen*. Leiden University Press, p. 230.
- Amanor, K.S. (2012). *Land Governance in Africa. How historical context has shaped key contemporary*.
- Arko-Adjei, A. (2011). *Adapting land administration to the institutional framework of customary tenure*. Delft University of Technology, Delft.
- Asaaga, F.A., 2021. Building on “traditional” land dispute resolution mechanisms in rural Ghana: Adaptive or anachronistic? *Land* 10 (2), 143.
- Asaaga, F.A., Hirons, M.A., 2019. Windows of opportunity or windows of exclusion? Changing dynamics of tenurial relations in rural Ghana. *Land Use Policy* 87, 104042.
- Asaaga, F.A. (2017). *Land rights, tenure security and sustainable land use in rural Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford).
- Asiamah, S.O. (2011) *Land Administration in Ghana: Customary Land Secretariats*.
- Biitir, S.B., Nara, B.B., 2016. The role of customary land secretariats in promoting good local land governance in Ghana. *Land Use Policy* 50, 528–536.
- Biitir, S.B., Nara, B.B., Ameyaw, S., 2017. Integrating decentralised land administration systems with traditional land governance institutions in Ghana: Policy and praxis. *Land Use Policy* 68, 402–414.
- Bob, U., 2010. Land related conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. *Afr. J. Confl. Resolut.* 10 (2).
- Boone, C., Duku, D.K., 2012. Ethnic land rights in Western Ghana: landlord-stranger relation in the democratic era. *Dev. Change* 43 (3), 671–693.
- Bugri, J. (2012). *Sustaining Customary Land Secretariats for improved interactive land governance in Ghana*. In *presentation at the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty* (Vol. 23, No. 26.04, p. 2012).
- Bugri, J.T., 2008. *The Dynamics of Tenure Security, Agricultural Production and Environmental Degradation in Africa: Evidence from Stakeholders in North-east Ghana*. *Land Use Policy* 25 (2), 271–285.
- Chauveau, J.-P., Jacob, J.-P., Lavigne Delville, P., Le Meur, P.-Y., Colin, J.-P., 2006. *Changes in Land Access and Governance in West Africa: Markets, Social Mediations and Public Policies*. IIED, London.
- Government of Ghana (2020). *The Land Act (Act 1036)*.
- Kalabamu, F.T., 2019. Land tenure reforms and persistence fo land conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa- the case of Bostwana. *Land Use Policy* 81, 337–345.
- Kasanga, K., Woodman, G.R., 2004. Ghana: local law making and land conversion in Kumasi, Ashanti. In: Woodman, G.R., Wanitzek, U., Sippel, H. (Eds.), *Local Land Law and Globalization: A Comparative Study of Peri-Urban Areas in Benin, Ghana and Tanzania*. Lit Verlag, pp. 153–332 (Mü nster).
- Kasanga, R.K., & Kotey, N.A. (2001). *Land management in Ghana: Building on tradition and modernity*.
- Kugbega, S.K., 2020. State-customary interactions and agrarian change in Ghana. the case of Nkoranza traditional area. *Land* 9 (11), 458. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land9110458>.
- Kuusaana, E.D., Gerber, N., 2015. Institutional synergies in customary land markets—selected case studies of large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) in Ghana. *Land* 4, 842–868.
- Mahama, C.A., Baffour, O.A., 2009. Management of stool land revenue in Ghana: a study of the Nkawie and Toase stools of the Atwima Nwabiagya district of the Ashanti region. *J. Sci. Technol.* 29 (1).
- Nara, B.B., Mwingyine, D.T., Boamah, N.A., Biitir, S.B., 2014. Enhancing efficiency in land management through the customary land secretariats (CLSs) in Upper West region, Ghana. *Dev. Ctry. Stud.* 4 (1), 24–31.
- Nara, B.B., Mwingyine, Biitir, S.B., 2014. *Analysis of the Role of Customary Land Secretariat in Effective Land Administration in Ghana: The case of Wa Central Customary Land Secretariat*. Geo-spatial Forum, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Nkwae, B. (2006) *Conceptual framework for modelling and analysing peri-urban land problems in southern Africa*. (Technical Report). Doctoral dissertation, University of New Brunswick.
- Owusu-Ansah, J.K., Braimah, I., 2013. The dual land management systems as an influence on physical development outcomes around Kumasi, Ghana. *J. Hous. Built Environ.* 28 (4), 689–703.

- Paaga, D.T., 2013. 'Customary Land Tenure and its Implications for Land Disputes in Ghana: cases from Wa, Wechau and Lambussie'. *Int. J. Humanit. Soc. Sci.* vol.3 (18), 265–268.
- Paaga, D.T., Dandeebo, G., 2014. Assessing the appeal of traditional dispute resolution methods in land dispute management: cases from the Upper West Region. *Dev. Ctry. Stud.* 4 (11), 1–9.
- Quan, J., Ubink, J., Antwi, A., 2008. Risks and opportunities of state intervention in customary land management: emergent findings from the Land Administration Project Ghana. *Land Cust. GHANA* 183.
- Sewornu, R.E. (2010). The role of good governance in improving women's access right to land. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development.* 1, 5(37–53).
- Ubink, J.M., Quan, J.F., 2008. How to combine tradition and modernity? Regulating customary land management in Ghana. *Land Use Policy* 25 (2), 198–213.
- Whitehead, A., Tsikata, D., 2003. Policy discourses on women's land rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: the implications of the re-turn to the Customary. *J. Agrar. Change* 3 (1–2), 67–112.
- World Bank (2003) Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit of US\$20.5 Million to the Republic of Ghana for a Land Administration Project||. Report no. 25913. Washington, DC. July 8.
- Yaro, J.A., 2010. Customary tenure systems under siege: contemporary access to land in Northern Ghana. *GeoJournal* 75 (2), 199–214.