

Innovations

Benguet's Land Titling Landscape: An Exploratory Case Study of Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: *Land titling plays a crucial role in securing tenure, promoting economic development, and facilitating access to credit. However, in Benguet, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, legal ambiguities, and indigenous land claims hinder the efficiency of the titling process. This study explores the barriers and opportunities within Benguet's land titling landscape, drawing insights from existing literature, policies, and empirical studies. Findings indicate that administrative delays, conflicting legal frameworks, and limited institutional capacity contribute to land tenure insecurity, particularly among indigenous communities. Despite these challenges, opportunities for improvement exist through policy reforms, technological innovations, and community engagement. Strengthening institutional coordination, streamlining procedures, and integrating digital solutions such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and online land databases could enhance efficiency and transparency. Additionally, promoting participatory approaches and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms may contribute to a more inclusive and equitable land titling system. This study suggests that addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that balances legal, administrative, and socio-cultural considerations. By improving land governance, Benguet may enhance tenure security and sustainable land management. Future research may focus on evaluating the effectiveness of policy interventions and exploring innovative solutions for equitable land access in the region.*

Keywords: *Land titling, tenure security, indigenous land claims, land governance, Benguet*

Introduction

The formal recognition of informal land holdings is not the starting point but rather the culmination of a long and arduous process for many impoverished individuals and families. In urban areas, informal settlements, such as squatter communities, often emerge as a consequence of substantial migration from rural areas to urban centers in pursuit of employment and educational opportunities (Durand-Lasserve & Royston, 2002). The continuous influx of rural migrants can quickly strain state resources and surpass the capacity of the low-end housing

market to accommodate newcomers (United Nations Human Settlements Programme [UN-Habitat], 2018). As a result, these migrants are often left with three options: return to the rural communities they sought to escape due to limited opportunities, remain in the city without shelter, or occupy vacant or underutilized land. In Peru and other countries, many chose to settle on public lands (Fernandes, 2011).

Private lands are generally less susceptible to invasions compared to public lands due to two primary reasons. First, private landowners tend to be more vigilant and take immediate action to evict unauthorized settlers before they can establish informal rights (De Soto, 2000). Second, governments in various contexts have exhibited an ambivalent stance toward land invasions, inadvertently creating incentives for settlers to occupy public land (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012). In some cases, politicians have even been complicit in land invasions as a means of garnering political support (Strønen, 2017). In other instances, forcibly evicting vulnerable families from invaded land without providing alternative housing solutions has been perceived as politically detrimental (Gilbert, 2002). In Peru, when squatters occupied private land on the outskirts of Lima, the government often intervened by relocating them to public land or purchasing the land on their behalf (Calderón Cockburn, 2017).

a. Global Context on Land Titling

The phenomenon of land invasions, as exemplified by Peru's experiences from the 1960s to 1980s, is a recurring pattern observed in rapidly urbanizing regions across the globe. During this period, Peru witnessed a surge in rural-to-urban migration, initially fueled by economic opportunities and subsequently exacerbated by rural instability due to conflict (Kay, 2006). This influx of migrants, facing severe housing shortages (Torres, 2018), often resorted to occupying unoccupied public land, typically of marginal value and prone to environmental hazards (Borsdorf & Hidalgo, 2010).

a. 1. Urban Land Invasions: A Global Phenomenon. This process, characterized by organized occupations and the construction of makeshift shelters, highlights a common response to urban land scarcity and inadequate housing policies. The strategic occupation of land en masse, relying on the political reluctance to undertake mass evictions (Fernandes & Varley, 1998), is a tactic mirrored in numerous urban contexts worldwide, from Latin America to sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. These instances underscore the global challenge of managing rapid urbanization and ensuring equitable access to land.

a. 2. Critiques of Formal Land Titling: Unintended Consequences and Limitations. Formal land titling, while often promoted as a panacea for land tenure insecurity, has faced significant critiques globally. One prominent concern is its potential to

incentivize further land invasions, effectively rewarding illegal occupation (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012; Fernandes, 2011). This critique points to the paradoxical nature of formalizing land rights in contexts where informal settlements are prevalent, potentially encouraging further encroachment on public or disputed lands. Moreover, the practice of granting titles to land of low economic value or high environmental risk, such as floodplains or unstable slopes (Bromley, 2009), raises questions about the long-term sustainability and equitable distribution of land resources.

Another critical perspective highlights the potential of formal titling to undermine or displace customary land tenure systems, which often provide more flexible and community-oriented land management practices (Chimhowu & Woodhouse, 2006). The imposition of formal titles can disrupt traditional land governance structures, potentially leading to social conflict and the erosion of community-based resource management. Furthermore, the formalization of land ownership can drive up property values, making housing unaffordable for the poorest segments of the population (Gilbert, 2002). This can lead to market-driven displacement, where wealthier individuals or corporations acquire land from the poor, exacerbating social inequalities (Deininger, 2003; Benjaminsen, Holden, Lund, & Sjaastad, 2009).

a. 3. **The Myth of Credit Access and Economic Empowerment.** A central assumption underpinning land titling initiatives is that formal titles will enable the poor to leverage their properties as collateral for loans, thereby unlocking economic opportunities. However, empirical evidence from various regions suggests that this assumption often fails to materialize (Van Gelder, 2009; Mitchell, 2006). Barriers such as lack of financial literacy, restrictive lending policies, and persistent economic precarity often prevent low-income populations from accessing credit, even with formal titles. Consequently, the anticipated economic benefits of land titling may be temporary or unequally distributed, reinforcing existing inequalities rather than alleviating them. This reality necessitates a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between land titling, credit access, and economic empowerment, recognizing the broader socio-economic context in which these processes unfold.

a. 4. **Land Tenure Security: A Global Imperative and Contextual Challenges.** Land tenure security is a fundamental aspect of socio-economic development, particularly in agrarian and rapidly urbanizing economies worldwide. The historical patterns of land ownership, often marked by profound disparities stemming from colonial legacies and persisting through post-independence periods, are a global challenge. The issues exemplified by the Philippines, with its history of colonial land policies and ongoing land reform initiatives, resonate with experiences in numerous other countries. Understanding the historical roots

of land tenure insecurity and analyzing the contemporary initiatives aimed at improving land titling processes is crucial for achieving equitable and sustainable development. However, these initiatives must be contextualized within the specific socio-economic and political realities of each region, recognizing the limitations of one-size-fits-all approaches. Addressing land tenure security requires a holistic approach that considers not only formal titling but also customary land rights, environmental sustainability, and the broader socio-economic factors that shape land access and use.

The significance of land titling extends beyond mere ownership; it embodies a fundamental right that empowers individuals and communities. Secure land titles serve as a catalyst for investment, fostering agricultural productivity and stimulating economic growth in rural areas. For Benguet, lessons from global land governance suggest that successful land titling requires more than just legal recognition—it demands institutional reforms, technological integration, and culturally sensitive approaches. By examining these international cases, policymakers and stakeholders in Benguet can adopt best practices while tailoring solutions to the region's unique socio-political and environmental context.

b. Historical Context: The Legacy of Land Inequality in the Philippines

The Philippines' land tenure challenges are deeply entrenched in its colonial past, with both Spanish and American regimes establishing systems that concentrated land ownership in the hands of a privileged few, leaving the majority of the population landless and marginalized (Owen, 1971). The "encomienda" and "hacienda" systems, for instance, created a rigid structure of land ownership that perpetuated social and economic disparities, effectively institutionalizing inequality (Constantino, 1975). These systems created a situation where the majority of the population were either tenants or landless laborers, creating a system that was ripe for social unrest.

Following independence in 1946, the Philippine government embarked on various land reform initiatives to address these historical injustices. However, these efforts were often hampered by formidable resistance from powerful landowning elites, legal loopholes that allowed for evasion, and significant implementation challenges that hindered progress (Riedinger, 1995). The persistent need for equitable land distribution and secure land titles underscores the enduring legacy of colonial land policies and their profound impact on the socio-economic fabric of the nation. This legacy has led to decades of agrarian conflict, and has been a major contributing factor to poverty in rural areas.

c. Contemporary Initiatives: Towards Equitable Land Tenure

In response to the persistent challenges of land inequality, the Philippine government has implemented several key initiatives, most notably the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) project, both aimed at rectifying the historical imbalances in land ownership.

c. 1. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Enacted in 1988, CARP stands as a cornerstone of the Philippine government's land reform endeavors, with the primary objective of redistributing agricultural lands to landless farmers and farmworkers (Department of Agrarian Reform, n.d.). The program's key components include land acquisition and distribution, the provision of comprehensive support services to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), and the adjudication of agrarian reform cases to resolve disputes. These support services include access to credit, infrastructure development, and training programs, all designed to empower ARBs and enhance their agricultural productivity.

Despite its ambitious objectives, CARP has encountered numerous challenges, including slow land acquisition and distribution processes, protracted legal disputes that delay implementation, and persistent funding constraints that limit its operational capacity (Borras, 2007). These challenges have significantly impeded the program's ability to fully achieve its intended goals, resulting in a slower-than-anticipated pace of land redistribution and a continued struggle to address the root causes of land inequality.

c. 2. Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project. The SPLIT project, funded by the World Bank, represents a significant step towards enhancing land tenure security by focusing on the accelerated subdivision of Collective Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) into individual land titles (World Bank, 2021). CLOAs, while intended to provide collective ownership to groups of farmers under CARP, often lead to internal disputes and hinder individual investment due to the lack of clear, individual ownership rights. The SPLIT project aims to address these issues by providing individual titles, thereby empowering farmers and facilitating access to credit and other financial services.

The shift towards individual titling is viewed as a strategic move to empower farmers, foster a sense of ownership, and create a more secure and predictable environment for agricultural development (David, 2022). By granting individual titles, farmers are better positioned to invest in their land, access credit for agricultural inputs, and participate more effectively in the market economy. This transition is expected to stimulate agricultural productivity and contribute to the overall economic growth of rural communities.

c. 3. **Complementary Efforts.** Beyond CARP and SPLIT, other crucial initiatives contribute to the broader goal of improved land titling and land governance. The Land Administration and Management Program (LAMP), for instance, plays a vital role in modernizing land administration processes through the digitization of land records and the streamlining of land registration procedures (Land Registration Authority, n.d.). This modernization aims to enhance efficiency, reduce corruption, and improve the overall transparency of land transactions.

Furthermore, the recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' ancestral domain rights are essential components of a comprehensive land governance framework. Integrating climate change considerations into land titling policies is also crucial, particularly in light of the increasing vulnerability of agricultural lands to climate-related hazards. These complementary efforts underscore the need for a holistic approach to land titling, one that addresses not only historical injustices but also contemporary challenges and future sustainability.

One of the most salient critiques focuses on the distributional implications of de Soto's (2000) proposal, which grants land titles based on current occupation. This approach assumes that the individuals residing on the land at the time of titling are the most deserving, when in reality, they may simply be those who were the most aggressive or strategic in securing land. This raises ethical concerns, as it may reward opportunism rather than genuine need, potentially leading to social resentment and further disputes over land ownership (Durand-Lasserre & Selod, 2009).

Land titling is fundamental in securing property rights, yet it remains a complex issue in many regions, including Benguet. The province, characterized by its indigenous land ownership systems and diverse terrain, faces unique challenges in formalizing land titles. This review aims to synthesize existing research on Benguet's land titling system, focusing on its challenges and opportunities. Land ownership has long been recognized as a symbol of power, often associated with economic security and social mobility. It is perceived as a means of liberation from poverty and oppression, as land is equated with wealth (Kuhnen, 1989). However, in the context of land governance, power and wealth are frequently linked to issues of inequality, disputes, and systemic inefficiencies.

In Benguet, land-related challenges persist, ranging from land tenure insecurity and ownership disputes to issues of fraudulent titles, overlapping laws, burdensome taxes, and weak land administration systems (Dealca, 2009). These challenges directly impact land access, tenure security, and sustainable land management, posing significant barriers to equitable land distribution and governance.

To address these concerns, the Philippine government has implemented various land reform policies, including the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988 (CARL). This law sought to protect the rights of agricultural workers and facilitate equitable land distribution through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, 1988). Subsequent initiatives, such as the Land Administration Reform Act of 2011 (LARA), were introduced to enhance land governance through standardized titling processes, decentralized services via One-Stop Shops, and improved transparency and accountability (Williamson, Enemark, Wallace, & Rajabifard, 2010).

Benguet's land titling efforts have also been influenced by the Land Administration and Management Project (LAMP), a government initiative aimed at strengthening tenure security and supporting long-term economic development (Hunter & Hoogsteden, 2010). LAMP was implemented in two phases: Phase 1 tested alternative approaches to land protection and regulation, while Phase 2 focused on five key areas: (1) policy development, (2) institutional capacity building, (3) tenure security, (4) property valuation and taxation, and (5) project management (Dealca, 2009). The tenure security component emphasized community participation, land rights education, and the streamlining of land titling processes in collaboration with local government units (LGUs) and other agencies. Additionally, a digital land registration and records management system was introduced through an online One-Stop Shop (OSS) database.

Despite these policy interventions, land titling in Benguet remains a complex issue influenced by geographic, administrative, and socio-economic factors. More than a decade after the implementation of these reforms, it is essential to assess their effectiveness in addressing tenure security and land ownership challenges. This study explores Benguet's land titling landscape, examining the key challenges and opportunities that shape land governance in the region.

1.1 Research Question

This exploratory case study aims to analyze the key challenges hindering effective land

titling in Benguet, including legal, administrative, and socio-cultural dimensions, while identifying opportunities to streamline processes and provide actionable recommendations for sustainable development and equitable land access. Specifically, this study will answer the following:

1. What are the key legal, administrative, and socio-cultural challenges affecting land titling processes in Benguet?
2. What opportunities exist to streamline and improve land titling procedures in Benguet, enhancing accessibility and efficiency for the landowners?
3. What actionable recommendations can be developed to address identified challenges and promote sustainable and equitable land access in Benguet?

1.2 Objectives

This systematic review aims to examine the barriers to efficient land titling in Benguet, identifying the key challenges that hinder the process. It also seeks to identify best practices and opportunities for improving the existing system to enhance its effectiveness. Furthermore, the review explores the implications of land titling on socio-economic development in Benguet, assessing its impact on local communities and economic growth. Based on these findings, the study will provide actionable recommendations to promote sustainable and equitable land access, ensuring that land titling benefits a broader segment of the population while fostering long-term development.

Literature Overview Findings

The complexities surrounding land titling, particularly for indigenous populations, are well-documented in existing literature. These challenges are often multifaceted, encompassing legal ambiguities, procedural inefficiencies, and socio-cultural disparities.

Legal and Policy Conflicts. Several scholars highlight the inherent conflicts arising from overlapping legal frameworks. For instance, the tension between national laws, such as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), and other sectoral regulations creates significant hurdles for indigenous communities seeking to secure land titles (Tauli-Corpuz, 2003). This conflict often manifests in the form of misaligned boundaries and ambiguous interpretations of land rights, leading to protracted legal battles and ultimately favoring commercial interests over community rights (Royo, 2011). As noted by Borras (2007), the implementation of land reforms, including IPRA, is often undermined by powerful vested interests, resulting in the marginalization of indigenous land claims. Furthermore, the historical legacy of colonial land policies continues to influence contemporary land disputes, contributing to the persistent insecurity of indigenous land tenure (Owen, 1971).

Procedural Complexities and Institutional Barriers. The procedural intricacies involved in formalizing land rights represent another significant obstacle. Numerous studies emphasize the bureaucratic hurdles and administrative inefficiencies that impede the land titling process, particularly for marginalized communities (Deininger, 2003). The multi-step process, involving various entities and requiring extensive documentation, leads to substantial delays and increased costs, effectively excluding many indigenous landowners (Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012). As argued by Mitchell (2006), the assumption that formal land titling automatically translates to economic empowerment overlooks the practical barriers faced by low-income populations, including the lack of access to legal assistance and the complexities of navigating bureaucratic procedures. Moreover, the capacity of government agencies responsible for land administration is often

limited, contributing to delays and inconsistencies in the titling process (World Bank, 2018).

Socio-Cultural Dimensions. Beyond legal and administrative challenges, socio-cultural factors significantly impact land titling processes. The clash between customary land tenure systems and formal titling mechanisms creates tensions and conflicts within indigenous communities (Chimhowu & Woodhouse, 2006). As Pulhin (2008) observes, the imposition of standardized titling procedures often disregards the cultural significance of ancestral lands and the communal nature of indigenous land ownership. Furthermore, the lack of culturally sensitive approaches to land administration can undermine trust and participation among indigenous communities (Indigenous Peoples Rights Monitor, 2021).

Nonetheless, the related literature underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of land titling challenges, particularly for indigenous peoples. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers legal reforms, institutional strengthening, and socio-cultural sensitivity.

The literature identifies several promising avenues for improving land titling processes, focusing on technological advancements and participatory approaches, particularly in the context of addressing ancestral domain issues.

Technological Advancements and Digitalization. The integration of digital technologies is increasingly recognized as a crucial strategy for streamlining land titling procedures. Programs like the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) project, as referenced in government reports (World Bank, 2021), exemplify the potential of digital tools to enhance efficiency and accessibility. Digital land records systems, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and mobile applications can significantly reduce processing times, improve data accuracy, and facilitate remote access to land information (Land Registration Authority, 2020). As noted by Deininger (2003), leveraging technology can contribute to more transparent and efficient land administration, reducing opportunities for corruption and enhancing service delivery. Furthermore, online platforms and digital portals can empower landowners by providing access to information and facilitating online applications, reducing the need for physical visits to government offices.

Participatory Mapping and Policy Alignment. Addressing disputes over ancestral domain boundaries and ensuring equitable resource allocation requires participatory approaches that involve indigenous communities in the land titling process. Participatory mapping, as advocated by numerous researchers (Chambers, 2006; Cornwall, 2008), allows communities to actively participate in the identification and delineation of their ancestral lands, incorporating their

traditional knowledge and perspectives. This approach can enhance trust and legitimacy, reducing conflicts and promoting sustainable land management. Moreover, aligning national policies with customary land tenure systems is essential for ensuring equitable resource allocation and recognizing indigenous land rights (Royo, 2011). As highlighted by Tauli-Corpuz (2003), the effective implementation of laws like IPRA requires a collaborative approach that involves meaningful consultation with indigenous communities and the integration of their customary laws and practices. Policy alignment can also involve the development of clear guidelines and procedures for integrating customary land tenure systems with formal titling mechanisms, ensuring that indigenous land rights are recognized and protected within the broader legal framework.

The literature emphasizes that combining technological advancements with participatory approaches can significantly improve land titling processes, particularly in contexts where ancestral domain issues are prevalent. By leveraging digital tools and engaging indigenous communities in the land titling process, governments can create a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable land tenure system.

Methods

This review employed a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant literature on land titling in Benguet, beginning with a clear research question and scope definition. A comprehensive search strategy, utilizing academic databases, grey literature, and reference list reviews, was developed, guided by specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Crucially, document analysis was integrated, involving the systematic review of policy documents, legal texts, government reports, and local community records to provide contextual depth. Data extraction, using a standardized form, and thematic synthesis were conducted, followed by critical appraisal of source quality and an iterative refinement process. The resulting findings, triangulated from both scholarly literature and document analysis, were organized into a coherent narrative, providing a comprehensive overview of land titling challenges and opportunities in Benguet.

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

This review applied strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of selected studies. Studies published between 2005 and 2025 were included to capture contemporary discussions on land titling, tenure security, and indigenous land ownership in Benguet. The review focused on research articles, policy documents, and case studies that examined legal, administrative, and socio-economic aspects of land titling. Empirical studies and government reports that provided insights into land tenure policies, administrative challenges, and community-based land governance were prioritized. In contrast, studies

focusing solely on urban land markets, those lacking empirical data, and sources without credible authorship were excluded. This careful selection process ensured that the review was based on reliable and relevant literature.

2.2 Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across multiple academic and government databases to identify pertinent studies. The primary sources included Google Scholar, Science Direct, Philippine E-Journals, and official government websites, such as those of the Department of Agrarian Reform and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. Boolean search techniques were used with keyword combinations such as “Benguet land titling” AND “land tenure challenges” and “indigenous land ownership in Benguet” AND “land administration Philippines” to refine results. This comprehensive search strategy ensured that both academic perspectives and policy-driven discussions were incorporated into the review, providing a well-rounded analysis of Benguet’s land titling landscape.

2.3. Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

A standardized data extraction form was used to systematically collect relevant details from each study, including objectives, research methodology, key findings, and policy implications. To ensure the credibility of sources, the review adapted the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. Each study was assessed based on relevance to the research objectives, credibility of authorship (e.g., peer-reviewed journals or government reports), methodological rigor, and its impact within land tenure discussions. The evaluation process prioritized studies that provided empirical evidence, clear research methodologies, and well-supported policy recommendations. By applying these rigorous assessment criteria, the review ensured that the synthesized findings were grounded in high-quality, reliable research.

Results

3.1 Challenges in Benguet’s Land Titling System

The analysis of available research and documents revealed several key challenges within Benguet’s land titling system. Firstly, bureaucratic hurdles were consistently identified, characterized by lengthy processing times attributed to administrative inefficiencies, leading to delays and frustration among landowners (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, 2010). Secondly, legal complexities presented a significant obstacle, with conflicts arising between customary land rights and formal legal frameworks, creating ambiguity and hindering clear title acquisition (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2022). Thirdly, indigenous land claims faced considerable difficulties in obtaining ancestral land titles under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), highlighting a gap between legal provisions and practical implementation (Indigenous

Peoples Rights Monitor, 2021). Fourthly, resource limitations were evident, with inadequate funding and personnel constraining the capacity of land titling agencies to effectively address the volume of applications and disputes (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2020). Finally, dispute resolution emerged as a major challenge, with conflicts among claimants due to overlapping claims and a lack of clearly defined boundaries, further complicating the land titling process (Diclas, 2023).

3.2 Opportunities for Improvement

The research identified several key opportunities for improving Benguet's land titling system. Firstly, policy reforms aimed at streamlining the process through simplified procedures and clearer guidelines were deemed essential (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2022). Secondly, the integration of technology, specifically the adoption of digital land registration systems and GIS mapping, presented a significant avenue for enhancing efficiency (SPLIT Primer, 2021). Thirdly, community participation through strengthened awareness programs targeting indigenous communities and local landowners was highlighted as crucial for fostering trust and understanding (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2021). Fourthly, public-private partnerships were suggested as a means to leverage collaboration between government agencies and private firms for more efficient land titling processes (Palkongan, 2024). Finally, capacity building through training for land administration personnel was identified as a vital strategy for improving efficiency and service delivery (Civil Service Commission, 2019).

Discussion

4. 1. Integration of Findings into Research Approach

The selection of an exploratory case study approach for this research is intrinsically linked to the complex and context-specific nature of land titling challenges in Benguet. This methodology allows for a deep dive into the intricate dynamics of the region, providing a nuanced understanding of the interplay between legal, administrative, and socio-cultural factors. Unlike broader quantitative studies, the case study approach facilitates the examination of specific, localized issues, such as the friction between IPRA implementation and customary land tenure, or the practical barriers to utilizing digital tools in remote areas. This focus is crucial for generating actionable recommendations that are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable within the unique landscape of Benguet.

The chosen approach also resonates strongly with the global discourse on land tenure reform. As the meta-analysis reveals, there is a growing emphasis on empowering communities through the formalization of land rights, a trend that aligns perfectly with the research's focus on ancestral domain issues and

indigenous land rights. Furthermore, the global trend of leveraging technology to streamline land titling processes, as seen in programs like SPLIT, provides a valuable framework for assessing the potential of digital solutions in Benguet. By adopting an exploratory case study methodology, this research can effectively bridge the gap between global best practices and local realities, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how to improve land titling outcomes in diverse contexts.

Moreover, the exploratory nature of the case study approach allows for flexibility and adaptability, enabling the research to respond to emerging insights and unexpected findings. This is particularly important in a dynamic field like land tenure, where policy changes and technological advancements can rapidly alter the landscape. By embracing an iterative process of data collection and analysis, the research can generate recommendations that are not only relevant to the current situation but also adaptable to future developments. In essence, the integration of findings into the exploratory case study approach provides a robust framework for generating contextually relevant and globally informed recommendations for sustainable and equitable land access in Benguet.

The exploratory case study approach is particularly suitable for this research due to its capacity to provide an in-depth understanding of Benguet's unique land titling landscape, allowing for a nuanced examination of specific challenges and opportunities. This methodology aligns with global trends advocating for community empowerment through formalized land rights, as evidenced by the emphasis on IPRA implementation and the recognition of customary tenure systems (Tauli-Corpuz, 2003; Royo, 2011). Furthermore, the approach mirrors the increasing reliance on digital technologies to streamline land titling processes, corroborated by the success of programs like SPLIT and the broader advocacy for digital land record systems (World Bank, 2021; Dealca, 2009). By focusing on localized issues while incorporating global best practices, this research can develop actionable recommendations that are both contextually relevant and theoretically grounded.

The findings indicate that while Benguet's land titling system is fraught with challenges, several opportunities exist for reform and improvement. Addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies and legal ambiguities through policy changes can enhance the system. Moreover, integrating digital solutions and strengthening stakeholder engagement can contribute to a more efficient land titling process.

4. 2. Legal, Administrative, and Socio-Cultural Complexities

Land titling processes in Benguet are deeply complex, navigating a confluence of legal, administrative, and socio-cultural challenges. Legally, the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) encounters significant hurdles,

particularly in delineating "native title" amidst conflicting historical proclamations and overlapping claims, leading to prolonged legal disputes and ambiguities (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, n.d.). The formal land registration system, burdened by bureaucratic delays and issues with survey accuracy, further complicates matters, compounded by instances of fraudulent titles and boundary disputes between local government units (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, 2010). Administratively, the limited capacity of agencies like the NCIP and LRA, coupled with challenges in inter-agency coordination and the modernization of land records, impedes efficient titling (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, socio-culturally, the integration of customary land tenure systems with formal titling necessitates a sensitive approach, acknowledging the clash between communal ownership and individual titling, while respecting the cultural significance of ancestral lands (Royo, 2011). Economic pressures from increasing land values exacerbate these challenges, requiring a delicate balance between development and the preservation of indigenous rights (Pulhin, 2008). Consequently, effective land titling in Benguet demands a holistic strategy that harmonizes legal frameworks, strengthens administrative capacities, and prioritizes socio-cultural sensitivities.

4. 3. Opportunities for Streamlining Land Titling Procedures in Benguet

To enhance accessibility and efficiency for landowners in Benguet, several key opportunities exist for streamlining land titling procedures. Leveraging technology through the implementation of a comprehensive digital land records system, including online platforms and GIS mapping, can significantly reduce processing times and improve accuracy (Dealca, 2009). Strengthening institutional capacity through capacity building for government agencies like the NCIP and LRA, and establishing one-stop-shop service centers, will improve coordination and reduce bureaucratic delays (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2019). Enhancing legal and policy frameworks by clarifying legal provisions, simplifying titling procedures, and developing clear guidelines for integrating customary land tenure systems will address ambiguities and enhance inclusivity (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2018). Critically, community engagement through public awareness campaigns, community-based titling programs, and facilitated mediation, along with the inclusion of indigenous knowledge holders, can build trust and ensure culturally sensitive processes (Indigenous Peoples Rights Monitor, 2021). Furthermore, improving financial accessibility through subsidized titling fees and access to legal assistance will ensure equitable participation (World Bank, 2017). By implementing these strategies, Benguet can create a more efficient and equitable land titling system, fostering security and development for all landowners.

4. 5. Actionable Recommendations for Sustainable and Equitable Land Access

To address the identified challenges and foster sustainable and equitable land access in Benguet, a multi-pronged approach is essential. Strengthening legal and policy frameworks through the harmonization of IPRA implementation, including the development of clear guidelines and the establishment of multi-stakeholder committees, is crucial (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2020). Simultaneously, streamlining land registration procedures and providing legal aid will enhance accessibility (Land Registration Authority, 2019). Enhancing administrative capacity through digitalization of land records, improved inter-agency coordination, and continuous capacity building for government personnel will ensure efficiency and accuracy (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2018; World Bank, 2017). Critically, promoting community engagement and cultural sensitivity by establishing community land tenure committees, conducting culturally appropriate public awareness campaigns, and facilitating participatory mapping with the inclusion of indigenous knowledge holders is vital for building trust and ensuring respect for customary practices (Indigenous Peoples Rights Monitor, 2021; Royo, 2016). Furthermore, ensuring sustainable and equitable land access through the development of comprehensive land use plans, the implementation of land tenure monitoring and evaluation systems, and the establishment of community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, will balance development with environmental protection and indigenous rights (Pulhin, 2015). By implementing these actionable recommendations, Benguet can cultivate a land tenure system that is both just and sustainable, empowering indigenous communities and promoting responsible land management.

Impact and Implications

The successful implementation of land titling initiatives holds profound implications for economic growth, poverty reduction, and social stability in the Philippines. Secure land titles serve as a catalyst for agricultural productivity, enabling farmers to invest in their land and access credit for essential inputs (Deininger, 2003). This increased productivity translates to higher incomes for farmers and contributes to the overall growth of the agricultural sector.

Moreover, addressing land inequality plays a crucial role in reducing agrarian unrest and promoting social equity. By empowering landless farmers and providing them with secure land titles, the government can foster a sense of ownership and belonging, thereby strengthening social cohesion. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives hinges on addressing persistent challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, legal complexities, and resource constraints. Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of these programs and identifying strategies for enhancing their effectiveness.

The Philippines' land titling efforts are fundamentally aimed at rectifying historical injustices and building a more equitable and prosperous society. By providing secure land titles, the government seeks to empower farmers, stimulate economic growth in rural areas, and reduce poverty. Benguet's land titling landscape presents a mix of challenges and opportunities. Addressing administrative and legal barriers while leveraging technology and community participation can significantly improve land administration in the province. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of recent policy interventions and exploring best practices in other regions that could be adapted to Benguet's context.

Continued efforts to improve land administration, streamline processes, and address implementation challenges are essential for achieving these transformative goals. The ongoing commitment to land reform and titling is a testament to the government's recognition of the critical role that land plays in the socio-economic development of the Philippines. By addressing the historical legacy of land inequality and implementing effective land titling initiatives, the nation can pave the way for a more just and sustainable future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight the complexities of land titling in Benguet, where bureaucratic inefficiencies, legal ambiguities, and indigenous land claims continue to pose significant challenges. While land titling plays a crucial role in securing tenure, promoting economic development, and improving access to credit, administrative delays, overlapping policies, and socio-political factors hinder its effective implementation. Despite efforts such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and the Land Administration and Management Project (LAMP), issues of land tenure insecurity persist, particularly among indigenous communities. However, opportunities for improvement exist, including policy reforms, technological advancements, and stronger community engagement, which may contribute to a more efficient and inclusive land titling system. Strengthening institutional coordination, improving transparency, and integrating digital solutions could enhance the process and make land administration more accessible.

Given these findings, it may be beneficial to explore policy reforms that align formal land titling systems with indigenous land rights to address conflicts between legal frameworks. Simplifying bureaucratic procedures and enhancing administrative capacity could potentially reduce processing delays and improve service delivery. Encouraging the integration of technology, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and digital land databases, might also support more efficient and transparent land registration. Furthermore, fostering community engagement through participatory approaches, awareness campaigns, and

alternative dispute resolution mechanisms could help ensure a more inclusive and equitable land titling process. Considering sustainability, land use policies that account for environmental factors and prioritize marginalized groups could contribute to long-term land security and development. Future research could examine the effectiveness of these interventions and explore additional strategies to address the challenges of land titling in Benguet.

Paper Scope and Focus

This paper's scope and focus are deliberately confined to the specific context of land titling in Benguet Province, Philippines. It concentrates on available research, government systems, and programs directly relevant to the region, prioritizing materials intended for local consumption and implementation. This localized approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Benguet's communities, particularly indigenous populations, within the existing legal and administrative frameworks. The paper will examine the effectiveness of government initiatives, analyze the impact of local customs and practices on land tenure, and assess the suitability of proposed solutions within the specific socio-economic and cultural landscape of Benguet. By limiting its scope to locally accessible resources and relevant policy documents, this study aims to provide practical and actionable insights that can be directly applied to improve land titling outcomes for the people of Benguet.

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