

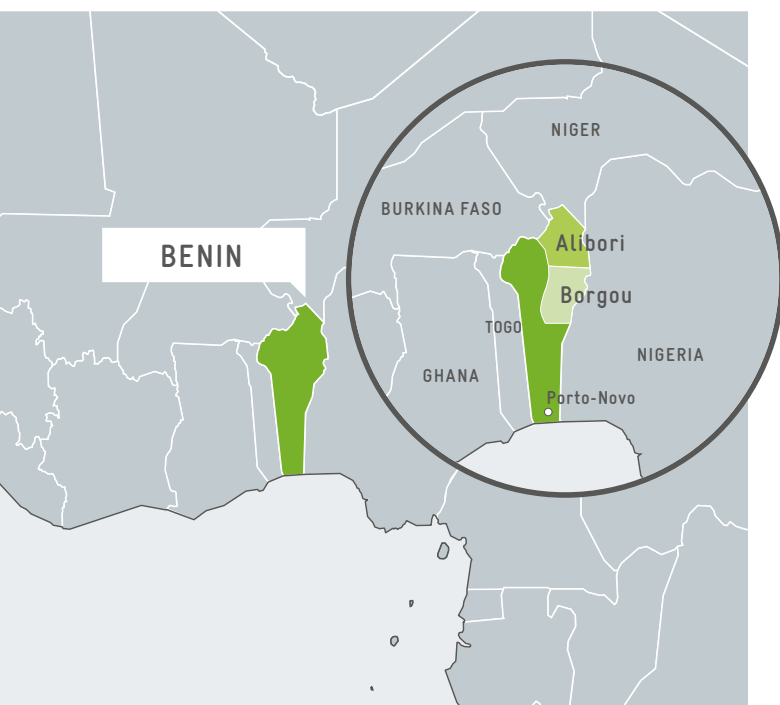


# Global Programme Responsible Land Policy Good Practice

BENIN: PARTICIPATORY VILLAGE MAPPING IN NORTHERN BENIN

# Programme

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME RESPONSIBLE LAND POLICY (GPRLP) IS PART OF THE SPECIAL INITIATIVE 'ONE WORLD, NO HUNGER' OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ), WHICH AIMS TO REDUCE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER.



The programme is implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)* in countries across Africa, Asia and South America. Its main objective is to secure access to land as a major prerequisite for poverty and hunger reduction in rural areas, especially for women, marginalized groups and indigenous peoples.

## THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED ALONG THREE FIELDS OF ACTION:

- Improving procedures to secure land ownership and user rights for the rural population
- Strengthening civil society
- Improving the framework conditions for responsible agricultural investments

In Benin, the country module “Promoting Responsible Land Policy” (*Promotion d’une Politique Foncière Responsable*; ProPFR) aims to improve access to land for the rural population in the departments of Borgou and Alibori in Northern Benin – specifically, for women and socially marginalized groups (young people, pastoralists and migrants). Customary rights are formalized, and the institutional framework is strengthened to improve the chances of a fair and responsible land policy implementation.

ProPFR initiated the participatory village mapping process as a basis for securing customary rights and promoting the identification and peaceful resolution of major disputes over territorial boundaries within and between villages.

# Starting point

**IN 2018, PROPFR STARTED TO SUPPORT COMMUNES** in the implementation of the Rural Cadastral Plan (*Plan Fonciers Ruraux*; PFR) in 27 villages. The PFR is a record detailing topo-geographic and rights holders' data to provide the legal (and digital) basis for land registration processes in Benin. However, the project was confronted with an absence of documentation on the geographical and administrative boundaries of villages, which is a major starting point for the registration of the land rights of individuals, families and groups.

In addition, the main forms of land use, such as housing infrastructure, roads, tracks, wells, water courses and forests, etc., which often reflect natural boundaries between plots, were not mapped either.

A digital recording of village boundaries therefore appeared to be an essential prerequisite for responsible, consensual and socioculturally acceptable land tenure security, as intended by the ProPFR. It further contributes to the prevention and resolution of land conflicts. Moreover, it serves as a building block for

further sustainable land use planning and spatial planning processes in the region.

The first phase of the participatory village mapping started in 2018 and covered 191 villages in four ProPFR project intervention communes: Bembéréké, Sinendé, Kalalé and Tchaourou. A second phase began in 2020 covering 64 villages in the commune of N'Dali. This constituted a total of 255 delimited villages in Borgou. In the second phase, the initiative was able to count on strong involvement on the part of the political partner, the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Governance (*Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Gouvernance Locale*; MDGL). The Ministry set up a system for analysing and monitoring field operations by committing all its technical and legal expertise.



*The working group (surveyors, NGOs and neighbouring villagers, etc.) receives the blessing of the village chief to start mapping the village domain.*

# Positive changes

**IN TOTAL, AROUND 540,000 RESIDENTS** of the 255 villages have benefitted from this initiative and have had their land completely mapped within their villages. During the participatory mapping feedback (in every village) everyone can recognize their boundaries and houses and even roughly locate their fields. This is an important step for the subsequent precise mapping and documentation of individual/group parcels supported by the project.

In addition, 100% of the border conflicts between villages (some of which were long-standing) have been resolved.

The participatory village mapping has provided each commune with a database that includes both digital maps and hard copies reflecting land use, as well as structural elements such as schools and health facilities, equipment and roads for their village.

Since 2008, the MDGL had been looking for practical solutions to map villages in order to support regional planning and municipal infrastructure investments through better knowledge and understanding of land use at the village level. The Ministry's analysis, following monitoring of the N'Dali operation, confirmed the viability of the initiative,

and this led to co-editing the Methodological Guide to Participatory Mapping (*Guide méthodologique de réalisation de la cartographie participative*). The Minister provide a preface for and signed this guide in May 2021, as shown in the screenshot below.

The impact of the digitized 255 participatory village maps goes beyond improved tenure security, as the maps may be used for a wide range of purposes, such as:

- Any GIS-type application in territorial governance
- Establishment of shea park areas for women and other income-generating projects
- Definition of transhumance zones
- Development of infrastructure (wells, water systems and irrigation, etc.)



*Participatory mapping feedback session with villagers.*



*Screenshot of the preface to the Methodological Guide to Participatory Mapping.*

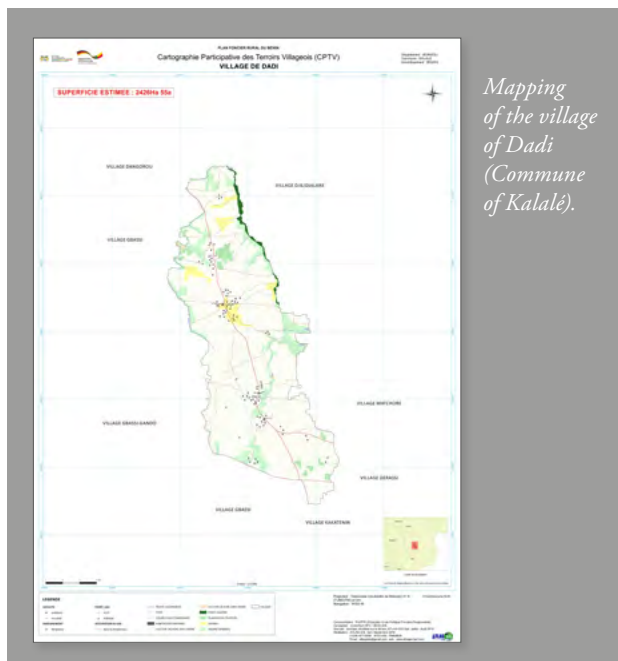
# Approach

## THE INNOVATIVE PARTICIPATORY VILLAGE MAPPING

is carried out under the technical and administrative leadership of the local land management bodies (*Instances Locales de Gestion Foncière*; ILGFs). This mapping process requires the presence of chiefs of neighbouring villages. They represent the customary authority that gives credibility to the exercise and structure to the social consensus, and, in some cases, are able to give (on the spot) a judgement in boundary disputes.

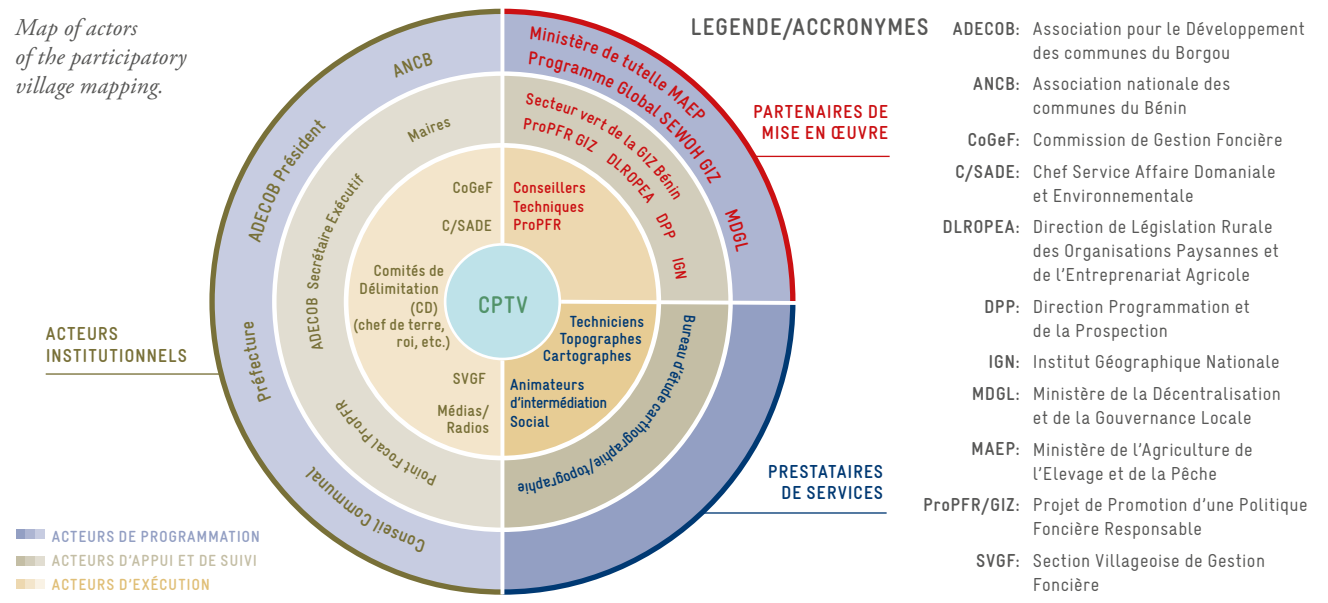
In addition, cartographic experts, land research offices (for the collection of GIS data), and social and anthropological NGOs (non-governmental organizations, for mediating conflicts), as well as the Borgou community radio association (for gathering people), and the customary authorities of all 255 villages are involved throughout the participatory mapping process.

On the political level, the whole exercise is supervised by the association of the eight Borgou mayors (*Association pour le Développement des Communes du Borgou*; ADECOB). The ADECOB mobilized the land services of the communes (the ILGFs) and gave full administrative credit to this initiative. At the end of the exercise, the ADECOB receives all the maps of the 255 villages in paper and digital versions. Hundreds of inhabitants were mobilized (full- or part-time) by the Ministries' departments during a period of six months – see the map of actors below.



## CARTE DES ACTEURS DE LA CPTV

Map of actors of the participatory village mapping.



# Method

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH CONTAINS FOUR PRINCIPAL STEPS

| STEPS                          | CONTENTS/TASKS  | ACTORS/STAKEHOLDERS  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| PREPARATION                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic development of the initiative</li> <li>Institutional scoping session</li> <li>Recruitment of consultancy companies + NGOs</li> <li>Training the investigators</li> <li>Dispatch of teams to the field</li> <li>Meeting with communal and local authorities and ADECOB</li> <li>Creation, installation and training of Village Committees (VCs)</li> <li>Organisation of General Assemblies (GA)</li> <li>Raising awareness among the population (radio, town crier)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ProPFR Project Officer</li> <li>Administrative and institutional authorities</li> <li>ProPFR</li> <li>Consultancy companies</li> <li>Investigators/Communal Supervisors</li> <li>VCs</li> <li>City Hall</li> <li>ADECOB</li> </ul>                                  |
| EXECUTION OF THE MAPPING WORK  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-identification session of village boundaries on maps</li> <li>Digitisation of pre-identified boundaries on a map base</li> <li>Technical operations to demarcate the villages</li> <li>Processing of field data</li> <li>Quality control</li> <li>Feedback and validation of draft documents</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical field teams + investigators + VCs + City Hall + populations</li> <li>Consultancy companies</li> <li>Technical digitisation team</li> <li>Investigators</li> <li>Technical teams and digitisation team + VCs + City Hall + ADECOB + populations</li> </ul> |
| PREPARATION OF FINAL DOCUMENTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of the final maps and printing in A0 format</li> <li>Elaboration of GIS projects</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communal Supervisors</li> <li>Technical teams and digitisation team</li> </ul>  |
| TRANSFER OF COMPETENCE         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training of CSADEs and the ProPFR Technical Advisor</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical teams and digitisation team</li> <li>Consultancy companies</li> </ul>   |

In practical terms, in each village a group of around 15 people (including the “Comité de Délimitation”, as well as the technicians and staff of NGOs) walk along the village boundaries, and these are marked by stakes at intersections and at points where the border significantly changes direction. These are then surveyed with GPS in waypoint and tracking modes. GPS Pathfinder software is used to correct the GPS points before they are transferred to the village GIS. The GIS layers are referenced to WGS 84 / UTM ZONE 31 N with EPSG code 32631.

The data are delivered in ESRI Shapefile (*shp*) GIS format. They are checked with an FME (*feature manipulation engine*) desktop, according to standardized topographic rules. The final maps (villages and municipalities) are produced with QGIS software in PDF and JPG format at a scale of 1:10,000 to 1:5,000 and are printed in large A0 size.

Awareness and communication campaigns are organized at each phase of the four steps. One of the first information and awareness-raising activities is to call

on community radio stations. Radio spots in local languages are recorded and transmitted on five radio stations for one month. The initiative also uses town criers to disseminate information and mobilize villagers.

The villagers gather one last time during the feedback and validation stage of the draft maps. This completes the sensitization process and allows the information to be disseminated in a transparent manner. The final maps are displayed in each village in the premises of the *Section Villageoise de Gestion Foncière* (SVGF).

# For replication

The replicability and sustainability of the participatory village mapping are considered in every stage in the development and implementation of the approach. The maps produced are used for multiple purposes, including planning for land use and organizing communal investments, as well as support for the geomatic/digital archiving of land data, etc.



The first two guides were published, co-signed and given a preface by the *Minister of Decentralization (MDGL)* in May 2021.

One key element in a potential replication of the approach is the *Methodological Guide to Participatory Mapping* (Guide méthodologique de réalisation de la cartographie participative), which is part of a series of four guides elaborated by the project. All of them contribute to the improved governance of land across the whole country.

The other three are:

- Guide du Maire: Maitriser le foncier pour développer son territoire  
*(Mayor's Guide: Managing Land to Develop Your Territory)*
- Guide de classement et archivage des documents administratifs relatifs au foncier communal  
*(Guide to the Filing and Archiving of Administrative Documents Relating to Municipal Land)*
- Guide pratique du contrôle de la légalité des actes fonciers  
*(Practical Guide to Land Law Enforcement)*



## TO REPLICATE THE PARTICIPATORY VILLAGE MAPPING, THE FOLLOWING PRECONDITIONS NEED TO BE IN PLACE:

1. Existence of aerial photos and/or orthonormal satellite images, which are used during the first step of the pre-identification of the village boundaries.
2. Expression of a need for mapping villages by the communes or, at the national level, a willingness to use this method throughout the country.
3. A guarantee, by local authorities, that relevant populations will be allowed to participate effectively at the time of the field campaigns. In total, more than 1,500 people were mobilized throughout the 255 villages.
4. Availability of funding. The mapping process developed by ProPFR costs EUR 600 per village, which led to a total budget of EUR 153,000 for the 255 villages mapped. In total, not counting the resource persons in the field (villagers), the whole exercise involved the equivalent of 1,200 workdays.

# Further information



ProPFR YouTube Channel

➤ [\(64\) Promotion d'une Politique Foncière Responsable - YouTube](#)

Land Portal

➤ [Guide méthodologique de réalisation de la cartographie participative au Bénin | Land Portal](#)





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