

Chiefs in Kumasi asked to engage professionals in land management.....

Good Governance Africa – West Africa (GGA-WA), an independent research and advocacy organization, has been engaging chiefs and other interest groups in land administration on security of property rights in Ghana.

Private enterprises in the country often need collateral to access finance to promote their operations and these businesses should be able to use their lands as collateral. But there are challenges with rights of property owners in the country.

According to GGA-West Africa, security of property rights, protected by the rule of law, provides the foundation for both economic freedom and the efficient operations of markets.

The organization has observed that “most individuals and corporations have fallen victims to the weak laws and institutions which are mandated to protect them and their properties”.

GGA-West Africa Centre organized a workshop to openly discuss the rights of a land owner, vis-à-vis the responsibilities of the custodians for the various stakeholders on the theme: ‘The rights of a property owner, challenges of owning a piece of land in Kumasi.’

Chief Executive Officer of GGA-West Africa, Tina Asante-Apeatu, has expressed satisfaction in outcomes of the Kumasi meeting.

“There is the perception that from tradition the chiefs know nitty-gritty of acquiring land, registration and all those things involved; but from the programme, we’ve realized that some of the complains the citizens have, the chiefs themselves don’t know. They so some of the things they do out of pure ignorance of the law,” she observed.

This workshop sought to outline the various laws that govern land administration; identify the challenges in enforcing the laws governing land administration; sensitize land owners and make recommendations to the mandated land administration institutions.

Land Economist with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Prof. Seth Opuni Asiana says Ghana can learn from other countries.

He cited Rwanda as an African country that have succeeded in registering every piece of land “so even if it’s a customary landholding, they’ve registered it” which gives the owner the confidence to deal in his lands.

In Ghana, however, a land owner seeking at give out a property on mortgage would need the consent of the chief, as custodian of the land, who in the process may demand money.

Prof. Asiama says traditional authorities would need to engage professional in the prudent management of lands.

“We should be more proactive in ensuring that we improve the security of title for our people because a lot of the problem we’re seeing in Kumasi today is because there are no professionals involved, who will be able to advise them on what to do with their lands,” he stated. “There is no reason why in this day and age there should be multiple sale of land simply because the chief does not have records; no it shouldn’t happen”.

GGA-West Africa hopes to develop policy briefs from the recommendations in the series of workshops to effect the necessary changes in land administration.