

World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty 2013

The latest World Bank Annual Conference on Land and Poverty was held in Washington DC, USA, from 8 to 11 April 2013. Bringing together economists, social scientists, legal specialists and geospatial experts, the annual event seeks to reveal and robustly debate the latest developments within the international land sector. The forum encourages cross-pollination of ideas between governments, donors, advocacy groups, the private sector and academia.

Themes of agreement across this year's event included: the importance of alignment between local and national institutions; that land titling is not the only means; the need to further reduce the costs of land administration; ensuring fit-for-purpose solutions; and the requirement to adhere to good land governance principles. A workshop on the World Bank's Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF) revealed that it has already been applied in more than 30 countries.

Innovative land information acquisition approaches were highlighted, such as the use of UAVs to support the democratisation of data collection in a remote village in Ghana, crowdsourcing to improve the quality of cadastral information, and opening cadastral records to the public for feedback. Crowdsourcing techniques challenge the status quo and are being perceived as a particular threat to the current 'gatekeepers', namely national mapping and cadastral agencies, the surveying and



▲ The World Bank building during the conference.

legal professions, and land and property investors – all of whom at times take advantage of the current chaos.

In the arena of large-scale land acquisitions, a new database of concessions in Lao PDR was presented which has already had a significant impact on land policy there. The Observatory on Land Acquisitions Project aims to improve the quality and inclusiveness of policy dialogue and decision-making on land, both at national and global levels, by making spatial data – as well information on actors and their activities – more accessible and engaging. The interactive platform enables individuals and organisations to provide information. They can also explore commercial pressures on land. The tool will enable

international and national policy dialogues with greater insight into the real conditions at the grass roots level. It will provide affected people a more

sector and have exposed significant tensions. The progressive branch of the profession sees these radical changes as essential: if the

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direct voice in these processes. The aim is to create a Land Matrix 2.0.

Many other radical, innovative and exciting opportunities for positive change were also put forward. These included 'spatially fit-for-purpose' and the 'continuum of continuums'. These concepts pose particular challenges to land professionals in a very conservative land

profession is to seriously contribute to solutions to the 21st-century challenges, the opportunities need investigation. Meanwhile, those in a more conventionalist branch, currently holding more influence with regards to change, are not persuaded that a radical change programme is necessary. Herein lies the challenge for FIG: to engage all members and provide strong

▼ Sessions during the World Bank Conference.



▲ Panel during the closing session. Second from left: Michael Anderson, UK.

leadership on a comprehensive journey of change. If this is not successful, other professions will simply fill the vacuum. In parallel, as witnessed through recent G8 and G20 interest in land, the profession is being seriously challenged to solve land issues faster. It seems that land professionals are at a very significant juncture.

The highlight of the closing session was the appearance of Michael Anderson, the director general for Policy and Global Issues at the Department for International Development in the UK. Michael is on part-time secondment to the UK Prime Minister's office as a special envoy to support the Prime Minister's role as co-chair of the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda. Michael arrived at the World Bank having just been to the White House to discuss a new framework for international development after the expiry of the 2015 deadline of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the new framework will most

likely be called the 'Sustainable Development Goals'. Michael indicated that land, especially transparency on land ownership, was one of the key issues within the new framework. He argues that allocating 'polygons to people' should be straightforward, and that 20 years from now everybody will be surprised that this was ever a problem! He challenged the land sector to come forward with innovative ideas for accelerating solutions to the problem.

Following the conference, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon announced a report called 'A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development'. It sets out a clear roadmap for eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 that will form the basis for two years' negotiation on the agenda to replace the MDGs, and identifies 12 goals:

1. End poverty
2. Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning

4. Ensure healthy lives
5. Ensure food security and good nutrition
6. Achieve universal access to water and sanitation
7. Secure sustainable energy
8. Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth
9. Manage natural resource assets sustainably
10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions
11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies
12. Create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance.

Tenure security was originally included in the MDGs, but a lack of globally comparable data at the time led to its replacement. However under this new framework's first goal, End Poverty, one of the illustrative universal goals and national targets provided is to "increase by x% the share of women and men, communities and businesses with secure rights to land, property and other assets." This will require further technical work to find appropriate indicators.

The conference did start the discussion on improving monitoring and reporting of metrics on land at global, regional and national levels. An initial set of indicators were proposed for discussion, and included:

- Private land mapped
- Land registered to women
- Transfer statistics, e.g. mortgages
- Land tax revenue receipts
- Expropriation figures
- Land conflicts in court.

It is important that stakeholders take ownership of the processes to generate indicators and that they become institutionalised and therefore sustainable. ◀

By Robin McLaren, Know Edge, UK, and Rohan Bennett, Twente University/ITC, and Christiaan Lemmen, Kadaster & Twente University/ITC, The Netherlands

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