

Improving Land Governance for Development Opportunities and Challenges for the Survey Profession¹

Thank you Madam Chairperson Diane Dumashie
President CheeHai Teo: Thank you for inviting me to this great event.

I am honored to be here to have a conversation with my friends and fellow professionals. While this is a Working Week of the FIG, it is in order to use the opportunity to celebrate the successes of this great organization. It has stood the test of time since it was established in 1878. As indicated by President CheeHai Teo this week, FIG has grown from one country to 120 countries, and has achieved a great deal. A lot of credit should go to current and past leaders that have served it well.

Let us also use this opportunity to celebrate the successes of Africa, the host of this event. As we all know or have heard, Africa's economies are going through a period of unprecedented growth and development. Excluding South Africa which grew at 3 percent in 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa grew at nearly 6 percent per year (5.8%) consolidating more than a decade of growth at rates above 5 percent per year. Our projections at the World Bank show that Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to grow at about 6 percent per year for the next 3 years (except South Africa at 3%) while the global economy is expected to grow at only 2.4 percent. In other words, Africa is projected to grow twice as fast as the global economy. So, this is a big deal and worth celebrating.

While we are justified to celebrate Africa's successes, we should also recognize and engage challenges, as required by FIG's current 4-Year Work Plan. There are challenges all over and for us all. However, the greatest challenge to mankind today is that there are 1.2 billion people on this planet living in extreme poverty, on less than one American dollar and 25 cents equivalent (US\$1.25) a day. That is about 22 percent of the population in the developing world. One third of the people living in extreme poverty, 400 million, are in Sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly one out of 2 Africans living in extreme poverty.

If Africa has been going through unprecedented growth and development, how come many Africans are still living in extreme poverty? There is no doubt that the strong growth of the last decade has reduced poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, in fact by 10 percent from about 58 to 48 percent, but the growth impact on poverty has not been enough, and it has been substantially below what the same growth has done in other regions of the world. And this mainly for two reasons: first inequality, and second dependence on natural resources especially oil and minerals. These have dampened the poverty-reducing impacts of income growth. Growth has not produced jobs, and revenue from oil and minerals has not been spent on the poor. Agriculture and manufacturing, the labor-intensive sectors that normally produce jobs, have not participated in this growth except in a few countries. So, we have at least two challenges, to spend revenue from

¹ Plenary presentation made at FIG Working Week 2013, 6-10 May, Abuja, Nigeria, by Frank F. K. Byamugisha, Operations Adviser and Lead Land Specialist, Africa Region, The World Bank

oil and minerals on the poor, and to generate growth in sectors that generate jobs and incomes for the majority of the population. Given the comparative advantage of surveyors, I suggest that we focus on the challenge of generating jobs and incomes.

But what exactly is this challenge especially in agriculture? The challenge is to boost agricultural productivity on currently cultivated land, and to put into production the vast amount of land that is currently unused. Today, agricultural productivity in Africa is about 25 percent of its potential - with yields of maize, a staple food for many people, standing about 20 percent of what is achieved at research stations. So, there is still a lot of room for productivity growth in agriculture to become a key driver of agricultural income and job growth. There is even more room to boost agricultural incomes and jobs from uncultivated land. Of the remaining and usable uncultivated land world-wide, 202 million hectares representing 47 percent of total uncultivated land, is in Sub-Saharan Africa.

To cultivate the unused land, and narrow the productivity gap, Africa needs to invest a lot of money in agriculture. Investment in African agriculture has historically been low. But since around 2008, a combination of factors including the food crisis, the commodity boom and the financial crisis in America and Europe, there have been a lot of interest from investors to acquire land for large scale agriculture globally. Two thirds of the acquired land has been in Africa, prompting some critics to call it the “New Scramble for Africa”. But why has it become a bigger issue in Africa than in other regions of the world? It has become an issue because virtually all rural land in Africa is undocumented, about 90 percent of the rural land. And as you know, undocumented land is vulnerable to land grabbing and to expropriation with little or no compensation. Documentation of these lands is critical not only to protect local communities but also to provide security to investors. It is good for investment, and to increase the bargaining power of local communities to reach a win-win agreement with investors. Increased investment and local participation are good for agriculture, the economy, employment and incomes, and would have a much greater impact of reducing extreme poverty.

But the million dollar question is: If Africa has documented less than 10 percent of its rural land in the last 50 years of its independence and if the whole world has only documented about 25 percent of its total land, is it really feasible to document the remaining 90 percent of rural land in the next 10 to 20 years? In my view, it is feasible but a great challenge. And the challenge does not stop with rural land; we have urban slums to reckon with, and these are home to 60 percent of Africa’s urban population. We must ask ourselves whether we should continue serving the privileged few or change course to serve the larger society including the poor, the women, indigenous people, widows and orphans. We need to change the way we do business to ensure that we serve more people and accomplish more with less, and in a much shorter time than we have done in the last 135 years of FIG existence. Are we prepared to learn from contemporary history of land reform? Let us try.

Let us first start with China and Viet Nam. Both China in 1978, and Viet Nam in 1988, dismantled collective farms and used long-term leases to allocate land rights to farming households. This policy action launched an era of prolonged agricultural growth that transformed rural China and led to the largest reduction in poverty in history. The percentage of people living in extreme poverty declined from about 80 percent of the population in 1981, the highest in the

world at that time, to only 13 percent in 2008. Similar to China, the land reform in Viet Nam also engineered remarkable agricultural growth and economic transformation in the last 2 decades, reducing extreme poverty from 58 percent in the early 1990s to 14.5 percent in 2008.

It should be noted, and please note, that the land tenure reforms which introduced long term leases in China and Viet Nam were not accompanied by use of any spatial frameworks or cadastral mapping, to delineate household land. In fact, Viet Nam only started developing a spatial framework for rural land holdings about 5 years ago while China is only starting to do so now using satellite imagery. In other words, both China and Viet Nam allocated land rights to households without a spatial framework, and certainly not a spatial framework based on a detailed survey of boundaries. Similarly, when Thailand developed its Land Code in 1954, it provided for a recognition of a continuum of rights with 7 categories of land rights which were recorded using spatial frameworks of varying degrees of detail, from doing without a cadastral map, not even a sketch, to using orthophotos and ultimately to cadastral maps based on detailed survey of boundaries.

It is not just Asian countries that have exercised flexibility in allocating to their people a continuum of land rights and in surveying their land. England and Wales have long used the general boundaries rule to document their rural land using large scale base maps. In Africa, there has been significant progress in the last ten years in this direction. Ethiopia managed to issue land use certificates for 20 million land parcels in 3 years from 2003 to 2005, without even a sketch map. Last year in June 2012, Rwanda completed a country-wide program to adjudicate and demarcate 10.3 million land parcels using mainly orthophoto maps. These land reform programs, combined with other agricultural and economic interventions, have done wonders for the economies of Ethiopia and Rwanda. Both economies have been growing at 8-10 percent per year in the last half decade. As a result, Ethiopia has reduced extreme poverty from over 40 percent to 30 percent in the last 10 years while Rwanda has reduced it from 55 percent to 40 percent in the same period.

Some other African countries are following in the footsteps of Ethiopia and Rwanda in exercising flexibility to award and document land rights. Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, Namibia, Madagascar, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso have land legislations that permit flexibility in measuring boundaries of rural land. Piloting has been going on in these countries to take advantage of the favorable legislations. Kenya was a pioneer of the general boundary rule during the colonial period, but this was motivated by the politics of the time, and not the groundswell of development.

But much more is needed to meet the challenge. We need to act with a sense of urgency. We need to move away from surveying standards and technologies that are rigid to flexible ones to meet today's needs while anticipating those of tomorrow. Relevance, and not accuracy, has to be our guiding principle. We have to balance accuracy with speed and cost when designing spatial frameworks. And we have to take advantage of opportunities offered by modern technology.

These ideals are increasingly being advocated and carried forward by a growing number of people in various forms and shapes, with a variation of names and labels. For example, Stig Enemark calls it "Spatially Fit-for-Purpose". Robin McLaren calls it "Crowd Sourcing". Michael

Barry and his colleagues call it the “talking titler” while the Global Land Tool Network call theirs a “Social Tenure Domain Model”. What is common among all these high flying initiatives is the desire to get simple, affordable, fast and community-supported approaches to designing spatial frameworks and to recording land rights and related information. The initiators are not mere research academics, intellectual dreamers or knuckleheads. They are well-meaning good people some of whom are here. Let us work with them to test their initiatives, to scale up the successful ones and to learn from those which fail. We need to appraise these and other investments and technologies to ensure that they are technically, economically, socially and environmentally sound to meet the needs of society. The bottom line is that we need to come up with practical and bold solutions to address the challenge of documenting land rights of billions of people in rural areas and in urban slums to get them out of informality and extreme poverty.

We must double our efforts to tackle the challenge of inflexible surveying regulations. But we must go beyond regulations. We must also deal head on with educational and research institutions to ensure that education curricula for surveyors and other professionals move away from serving a few people with over-engineered and costly solutions to serving the masses, to recognize a continuum of land rights and to focus on fixing them, and not fixing land boundaries. When I was doing my Masters Degree in Surveying at the University of East London, there was a lot of emphasis on engineering but of course not as much as one would find at the ITC in the Netherlands and at the other prominent Surveying and Engineering Schools across the world. Of course, there is nothing wrong with engineering and technical excellence, and we should be very proud of it. But we also need to recognize that the real world does not depend on engineering solutions alone. A surveyor, trained to provide engineering solutions, has to work with and indeed take up leadership of multi-disciplinary teams, that include lawyers, social scientists, economists, anthropologists and environmental specialists whether working in the private or public sectors.

Working in teams requires skill sets beyond surveying to be an effective team leader or team player. It requires more flexibility; exposure to other disciplines; and most importantly, professional humility.

This demands change in training and curricula, and change in organization of work with implications for change in Educational and Research institutions; in Ministries of lands, Land Commissions and Survey and mapping agencies; among Suppliers and Service providers including consultancy companies; within Advocacy Groups; and within the Development Partners. It will require change in mindsets and a change in attitudes.

I have no doubt in my mind that we will get there because we are already on the way, with FIG’s 4-Year Work Plan, and with all the initiatives under way. Let us move forward with piloting and scaling up the pilots that are successful. For those that fail, we will learn from them to do better. We will also need to learn from the experiences of China, Viet Nam, Thailand, Ethiopia, Rwanda and many others. As professionals, we would be positioning ourselves to play a central role in fighting extreme poverty, which is today’s greatest challenge to mankind.

We at the World Bank are ready to work in partnership with all those who are committed to fighting poverty. We are not dealing only with documentation of land rights. We have prepared

ourselves to deal comprehensively with land governance. After 4 years of review, next month we will be launching a publication on improving land governance in Sub-Saharan Africa in a 10-point program which includes not only documentation of land rights but also increasing land access for the poor, increasing efficiency in land administration, developing land administration in post-conflict countries, developing capacity, resolving land disputes, improving land use planning, improving management of public land and strengthening property valuation and land tax policies. It is a multi-billion dollar program to be implemented over 10 years, and we are looking forward to your support to make it a reality.

This afternoon at 2:30 pm, we are going to have a special session on Africa; details of this program will be discussed using country case studies of a number of countries including Nigeria. This will be in Niger Hall.

To conclude, we are facing a formidable challenge of eradicating extreme poverty but surveyors should see this as an opportunity to rise to the challenge. But we have to act differently and with a lot of flexibility and urgency. We at the World Bank are seeking to strengthen partnerships at country level and with the FIG to improve land governance for development.

With support from all our partners, we are confident that extreme poverty will be eradicated by 2030, precisely when FIG will be 152 years old. At that time, we will organize a grand party, even bigger than the one we are having this week, to celebrate the end of extreme poverty.

Thank you. Thank you very much. And All the best.