

Reflections on the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty 2013

The annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty was held at the Bank's headquarters in Washington DC, USA, in April 2013. From the presentations during the closing sessions, one got the impression that the land issue really is on the political agenda now. High-level politicians and decision-makers have come to understand that sustainable and transparent land administration does support poverty alleviation, access to food and sustainable development.

End poverty



The profession can make a valuable contribution

to ending poverty.

FIG president CheeHai Teo clearly stated that while the role of the surveyor is of a technical nature, it is also highly people-centric. Land administration is all about the relationship between people and land, and the key challenge for the profession is to continue contributing towards betterment in the land sector with appropriate, applicable and affordable approaches and technologies.

As a federation of national professional organisations with a network of academic and research institutions, government agencies and commercial entities, FIG fosters an environment in which the 'global' can cascade down to the 'local', and likewise the 'local' can reach out to the 'global'.

FAO's comprehensive Voluntary Guidelines have now reached the implementation stage. Surveying professionals will have to support the implementation, especially at country level, to improve land administration. FIG and its members have to put in place, along with sister organisations and partners, a programme for capacity development in survey, mapping and land information management, land administration and the continuum of land rights with an initial focus on Africa. These efforts will be critical in the quest to improve land governance.

FIG knows that these collaborative efforts to improve land governance require that the profession does not complicate further that which is already complex. Rather, the profession has to bring forth solutions, and this requires a change in attitude. Complex, over-subscribed survey and measurement and collection of legal/administrative data has yet to bring about widespread improvement in cadastral coverage in many countries. In this regard, and looking ahead, we have to continue to sustain efforts to improve land governance through the development of fit-for-purpose tools, approaches and solutions and contribute to the development of appropriate tools such as GLTN's STDM or Gender Evaluation Criteria, for instance – tools and approaches with incremental technological sophistication, robustness and accuracies.

There were a number of references to survey and mapping during the conference in Washington. The advances in number, types and capacities of platforms and sensors together with volunteered information provide a spectrum of possibilities and opportunities. Survey and mapping professionals can offer a broad range of solutions and approaches depending on the purposes – which may vary from region to region.