

# Action

It's one of the most sympathetic sides of land surveying: improvement in the economic situation of the poor. Approximately a billion people all over the globe are dwelling in slums. Having an official address, the right to live somewhere, is a human right, a lack of such the most common cause of poverty. Being able to help people gain an address, and with it a step up the economic ladder, is one of the best side-effects of the profession of surveyor. It will be on the agenda this month in Sydney, where FIG is gathering for its four-yearly congress, with this year's theme 'Facing the Challenges - Building the Capacity'. Stig Enemark, contributing as FIG president to our series on Capacity Building

, touches on the role of pro-poor land management tools and mentions how these issues are and will continue to be discussed within FIG, but also with World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

A call to all those in forums, organisations and institutions not to let poverty alleviation become something that is often, or even worse, only talked about in conference rooms, at meeting tables and other high-profile events. Professor Willi Zimmermann, policy consultant for FAO and the World Bank, also advocates in this month's *GIM International* interview

the important role of land management systems in fighting poverty, adding that there are currently a billion slum dwellers but, according to UN-Habitat, there will be two billion by 2025! Land surveyors are doing a good job, he says, but are only achieving 20% of what is needed to move people from informal to formal living situations. Thus, despite all best efforts, it's nothing like enough.

So I want to join Zimmermann in suggesting that we become more proactive: create forums where members of civil society are made aware of the benefits of land-administration systems and, although we can't always bypass governments, make them aware that they can't go on playing their own game. And, to pursue the point, let's make sure the term 'capacity building' is not meaningless, take practical steps and not leave it to languish neatly in the pages of policy papers. Act in such a way that people in the field are serviced to do their job in helping the poor to gain land rights. Market the job of land surveyor, because faculties all have too few incoming students.

And, important, set aside differences in viewpoint on solving the problem: there may be more than one road that leads to Rome. Above all, never lose sight of that touch of idealism that clings to the profession of surveyor; it will help to keep alive a sense of urgency and make people start taking action.