CADASTA FOUNDATION

An Open Platform for Documenting Property Rights

A functioning land administration sector is the foundation of a national economy, critical for economic growth. Unfortunately, effective land registry and cadastral systems with national coverage exist in only a fraction of the world's countries. Without accurate information regarding land rights, many development goals – food security, sustainable resource management, climate change mitigation and equal rights to property for women – remain impossible to achieve, not to mention the potential for conflict when rights are not recognised and enforced. Therefore, Cadasta Foundation is developing an open platform for documenting and sharing land information cost effectively.

Land tenure professionals and the larger development community have recognised that traditional approaches to recording property rights are not keeping pace with demand and remain inaccessible to the vast majority. The 2014 joint FIG and World Bank publication, *Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration*, identified the need to adapt solutions for the context, as opposed to adhering to rigid regulations for processes and accuracy. While the fit-for-purpose concept recognises the potential to collect data in a variety of ways, the challenge remains of how to document and share the resulting land information in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

Cadasta Foundation was launched in January 2015 as a non-profit organisation and, with support from from the Department for International Development (UK Aid) and the Omidyar Network, it has been working to tackle these challenges. Cadasta Foundation is developing an open platform, informed by the Social Tenure Domain Model, for documenting land and resource rights. Through the development of an ecosystem of partners, technology and data, the platform is designed to allow the direct capture and documenting of land rights through a global open platform that is secure, cost effective and transparent. The foundation's perspective is informed by years of experience working with formal land administration processes and national-level land information systems, as well as working with volunteered geographic information to develop robust and up-to-date datasets. At Cadasta, the focus is twofold – providing the repository and tools necessary to document the rights of those left out of the formal system, while also serving as a portal for open datasets in land and other resources, such as extractives, forestry and agricultural investment concessions, where they exist.

Over the past months, Cadasta has worked with partners to test and refine the initial release of its open-source platform – working with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in Kosovo, tablets in Kenya and paper-based approaches in South Asia – to identify what partners and beneficiaries require for data collection and management. The result is a secure cloud-based platform that features customisable privacy settings, allowing users to store and back-up their data, including history. Cadasta recognises that data belongs to communities, not to Cadasta. Therefore the partners establish privacy settings, electing which projects and datasets, if any, are made public – all at no cost for use of the platform.

It is evident that data collection remains a key obstacle for many partners. As a result, Cadasta has tested and integrated with a variety of tools, including applications like Field Papers and GeoOpenDataKit, while assessing future compatibility with OpenTenure from FAO and the Mobile Application to Secure Tenure (MAST) from USAID. Finally, users can access the global image repository Cadasta streams through its agreement with Digital Globe, free of third-party claims to rights against their derivative data, in order to digitise property boundaries.

Cadasta launched its initial pilot application in January 2016 and collected considerable feedback that has informed the July 2016 release. This feedback has been critical in ensuring a user-centric design that meets the varying needs of diverse partners, recognising the tremendous diversity in technological capacity, data collection approaches and data needs. The current release features a much more intuitive user interface, improved integration with applications and support for custom data schemas. Cadasta Foundation welcomes users to test out the platform, use it in the field and provide feedback.