

Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration



The FIG/World Bank publication on 'Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration' is attracting a lot of attention on international podia. The new FIG publication was launched last month at the joint FIG/World Bank Forum on 'Spatial Innovations and Good Practice in Land Administration', which was held the day after the World Bank conference on land and poverty took place in Washington DC, USA.

This publication is the result of cooperation between the World Bank and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) over recent years on land administration. The aim has been to address the issue of building and sustaining land administration systems that are basically fit-for-purpose rather than blindly complying with top-end technological solutions and rigid regulations for accuracy.

As it turned out, the term 'fit for purpose' was very much in focus throughout the World Bank conference. It is obvious and very much recognised that there is an urgent need to build affordable, flexible systems that can be completed within a reasonable time frame and then be incrementally improved over time. The fact that this publication presents a set of guidelines recommended jointly by the World Bank and the International Federation of Surveyors makes it a strong piece of advice towards decision-makers at governmental and political levels.

There were very positive reactions by representatives from the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and from the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). The concept was also very well received by politicians, NGOs and land professionals during a presentation of the publication at the High-Level Conference on Property Rights in the European Parliament on 9 April 2014. The publication is timely and well in line with the report on 'The Role of Property Rights, Property Ownership and Wealth Creation in Eradicating Poverty and Fostering Sustainable Development in Developing Countries' that was recently adopted by the EU.

The fit-for-purpose approach includes the following four key principles:

- General boundaries rather than fixed boundaries: using general boundaries to delineate land areas will be sufficient for most land administration purposes, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. In the present context, the term 'general boundary' means one whose position has not been precisely determined, although usually the delineation will relate to physical features in the field.
- Aerial imageries rather than field surveys: the use of high-resolution satellite/ aerial imagery is sufficient for most land administration purposes. This approach is three to five times cheaper than field surveys.
- Accuracy relates to the purpose rather than technical standards: accuracy of the land information should be understood as a relative issue related to the use of this information.
- Opportunities for updating, upgrading and improvement: building the spatial framework should be seen in a perspective of opportunities for ongoing updating, sporadic upgrading and incremental improvement whenever relevant or necessary for fulfilling land policy aims and objectives.

The publication includes a foreword by CheeHai Teo (FIG president) and Klaus Deininger (lead economist at World Bank). The document has been prepared by Prof Stig Enemark (FIG honorary president and principal author), Keith Clifford Bell (World Bank), Christiaan Lemmen (Kadaster, The Netherlands) and Robin McLaren (Know Edge Ltd, UK).