

Integrated Land Management – A Dream?



Land sectors in many countries are under-performing and creating significant risk that deters investment in land, restricts the land market and is slowing the transition to a viable modern economy. The initial remedy is to implement projects to increase security of tenure through land administration systems as a tool for fostering good governance and socio-economic development. However, security of tenure is not the end game in solving land issues.

(By Robin McLaren, KnowEdge, United Kingdom)

A much wider set of interventions in a national reform programme is required across the land sector to create stability in society, provide opportunities for citizens to participate in economic development, to promote better

environmental stewardship and to encourage responsible private investment in land. The other land administration components to determine valuation and taxation of land and to manage the use of land and land development are needed. Land management strategies are also required across the land sector in areas such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and infrastructure.

Too often, these interventions are performed in isolation. The lack of joined-up management of land leads to disjointed leadership in the land sector, fragmented institutional arrangements, inconsistent legal and regulatory frameworks, difficulties in sharing land information and conflicting sectoral land policies. Many donors and countries are guilty of contributing to fragmented land solutions. Even my home country of Scotland is about to implement a significant land reform programme without an overarching national land policy and without a comprehensive national spatial data infrastructure to support evidence-based decision-making.

A more holistic approach is required to achieve integrated and sustainable land management and to close the cadastral divide. Fundamental to this approach is the early formulation of a national land policy that goes beyond land administration into land management and land markets and delivers significant benefits. This policy framework provides a wider, longer-term vision of land, offers a cohesive framework for associated sectoral policies and allows all stakeholders to cooperate more effectively across the sector.

This holistic management of land will not be easy to achieve. We will have to rethink the roles and structures of land institutions and how they can engage more effectively with the increasing function of the citizen in administering and managing land. Our legacy legal frameworks are restricting new, innovative approaches and need to be refreshed to create the necessary flexibility. The current education systems are only enforcing the current fragmentation. Therefore, capacity building is required to create a new generation of land professionals who have such a wider understanding of the holistic and sustainable management of land. This journey of change towards more integrated and sustainable land management needs to start now.

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