

# Review of the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty was held from 23-27 March 2015 at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington D.C., USA. The World Bank reports that over 1,200 participants attended from 123 countries. The participants represent many disciplines and included leaders and professionals from across governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and partners to interact and discuss innovative approaches to improving land governance. FIG president Chryssy Potsiou joined the event as did FIG representatives such as honorary president Prof Stig Enemark.



*World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty 2015 – Plenary session (image courtesy: World Bank).*

Land governance, land investment, land policies and food security, land reforms and land administration were all prominent on the agenda in relationship to sustainable growth and management of the environment. Well-defined land rights are needed to address global challenges including climate, urbanisation, social justice and so on.

Land administration and cadastre is one of the areas where the debate is focused on implementation at country level. Tenure regularisation is still relatively expensive and slow. Pro-poor land rights are the hardest and riskiest to implement. The high-level principles as included in the voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests from FAO, in the Continuum of Land Rights from UN Habitat and in FIG's Fit-For-Purpose Land Administration are all in support of cost-effective and achievable implementations. There is a growing understanding that complete coverage and readiness for use is relevant in order to provide tenure security for all. This can

be clearly seen in the requirements for monitoring. Reliable land indicators require further standardisation.

A lot of attention was paid to the matter of 'legitimate' land rights. Land rights are sometimes legitimate but extra-legal, such as informal land rights in slums. Conversely, land rights can be legal yet not legitimate, such as formalised land rights after land grabbing.

The issue of open data was also considered. However, that means by definition that some data must be available, which is often not yet the case. The question of which data should be open depends on the local situation (ethics, culture, etc).

The papers and discussions also included coverage of biometrically linked property data, with cases from India. Incidences of fraud and corruption cannot always be avoided, even in completely transparent environments. Crowdsourced land data requires verification

options in order to ensure high-quality and authoritative data. Mediation of data from different sources can be a possibility here. Implementation of crowdsourcing is a long journey since there are many stakeholders. If the institutional issues are not solved soon, crowdsourcing and fit-for-purpose approaches will be the game changer. As in other areas there is also a Continuum of Crowdsourcing when implementation variations are considered. In general, the 'technology' was no longer regarded as a problem. The combination of crowdsourced data and high-resolution and up-to-date satellite imagery looks promising. It is important to recognise that agencies want to be sure that systems and data belong to them, rather than 'to the cloud'. Once again, technical solutions are available. ◀

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