



MANAGING URBAN LAND INFORMATION: *LEARNING FROM EMERGENT PRACTICES*

SECURING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR ALL

MANAGING URBAN LAND INFORMATION: *LEARNING FROM EMERGENT PRACTICES*

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FOREWORD



Land in cities is a critical component of urban development, particularly when dealing with land use, urban planning, taxation and protection of fundamental rights. Unfortunately, insecurity of land tenure is a major bottleneck for urban development and severely affects the lives of poor urban people.

To address this challenge many urban projects have been implemented to develop comprehensive spatial databases on land that are intended to improve urban and environmental planning, raise revenues through property taxation and improve land tenure security.

New technologies, such as very-high resolution satellite images, geographical information systems, the processing capacity of computers and the internet, have developed rapidly over the last 10 years and are a driving force behind the development of urban digital databases.

Unfortunately, many urban land information projects have partially or completely failed, mainly because they have ignored or underestimated the fact that land information needs constant updating and, above all, has to be anchored in stable and capable land institutions.

This publication and the collection of pertinent case studies show that where there are no good land governance practices, such as in many post-conflict countries, land information can only be used to a limited extent. Projects should be designed with these limitations in mind but should also be seen as building blocks and experiences for the development of more comprehensive and integrated land information systems.

I am convinced it is useful to examine UN-Habitat's experiences in countries that have developed and use land information, for example Libya, Somalia and Afghanistan, which demonstrate how to create land databases that have information that can be fully used.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Dr. Joan Clos,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Executive Director UN-Habitat.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Information about land – its use, ownership, value and development potential - creates possibilities to develop and implement specific projects and programmes and is a pre-requisite for urban land administration and management. For example, without spatial referenced data on land, spatial planning would be based on urban planners' scattered, incomplete and inaccurate knowledge or on estimations, while programmes to raise property taxes or improve tenure security would be impossible to implement. The more accurate and complete the data and the better the capacity and capability of land institutions, the more support can be given to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of land administration and urban land management.

The rapid evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing imagery with its high spatial resolution has created an opportunity for the fast development and use of land information. Technology is no longer a bottleneck in land administration and urban development projects. The undeniably positive impact of ICT development on the quality of, and access to, land information in developed countries is, however, not a guarantee that technology has had a similar impact in (post)conflict and developing countries.

Land information requires spatially-related data that is structured in such a way that data can be processed to get relevant land information. There are many websites (www.fig.net; www.gsdi.org; www.gltm.net) with information explaining why land information is important, and how to develop land information. The need for standards, metadata, procedures,

development of inter-institutional relations for data exchange and data sharing are emphasized. However, for many (post)conflict countries and other developing countries, these recommendations are of limited value due to underdeveloped and unstable land institutions and weak governance.

This study evaluates how land information is developed, how it is used in a number of developing and (post)conflict countries, and what can be learned from these emergent practices. Based on these countries' experiences, guides have been formed on how to develop land information that is realistic, cost effective and that can be applied, maintained and gradually improved and expanded to support urban development projects in developing and (post) conflict countries to get tangible and required results.

The *challenges* in developing sustainable land information for urban land management in developing and (post)conflict countries are:

1. How to "implement urban land management and land administration" at scale that is relevant and sustained by capable and stable local/national land institutions that are supported by land information;
2. How to get support from politicians, decision makers and broader society to develop an urban land policy that is pro-poor, promotes gender equality, supports environmentally sustainable development and improves living conditions for people;
3. How to evaluate the level of governance at local and national levels;

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Continued

4. How to analyse the capacity and effectiveness of land administration institutions and spatial planning agencies and determine if they are able to integrate datasets (incremental development of Spatial Data Infrastructures);
5. How to improve (or develop, restructure) land administration institutions;
6. How to determine appropriate, realistic and essential land data sets with feasible accuracies based on user demand and selection of a coverage approach (area based, sporadic or systematic);
7. How to convert land management projects into processes, and combine short-term results with long-term vision;
8. How to make realistic use of GIS / ICT and internet sources and create systems with easy access to land information for all stakeholders;
9. How to develop human capacity in land information;
10. How to identify a lead agency and a national/local champion to drive the development and use of

CASE STUDIES

The case studies for this report were selected using the following criteria:

- Urban projects with a land information component in developing, transitioning or (post) conflict countries;
- Use of digital data (for example GIS);
- Availability of documented information;
- Local project staff who are willing to give feedback on the study.

A final selection was made from the potential list of case studies to ensure that all regions (Africa, Asia, Arab States and Europe) were included and that a variety of applications of land information (spatial planning, land administration and urban environment) was featured. UN-Habitat was associated with 12 out of the 17 case studies. More information and direct communication was available from some projects (Somaliland, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Colombia, Mozambique, Indonesia and Kosovo) compared to other projects. Other case studies were analysed mainly on the basis of project documents, websites, evaluation reports and interviews with staff directly involved in the projects.

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