



FIG / World Bank Conference opens door for RICS

FIG with support from RICS has opened the door of the World Bank to raise the profile of Land Professionals and their significant contribution to global land issues.

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The FIG – World Bank (WB) Conference Land Governance in Support of the Millennium Development Goals: Responding to New Challenges took place at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC. The conference was organised by FIG and the Bank and the overall objective was to emphasise the important role of Land Governance in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to demonstrate how FIG and the Bank are working in parallel to achieve these global aims. Attended by around 200 invited international experts representing governments, UN agencies, development agencies, professionals, academia and the private sector, RICS was represented by Diane Dumashie, Iain Greenway, Rob Mahoney and Robin McLaren.

The conference was divided into six themes:

- Land governance for the 21st century;
- Building sustainable, well-governed land administration systems;
- Securing social tenure for the poorest;
- Making land markets work for all;
- Improving access to land and shelter; and
- Land governance for rapid urbanisation.

A total of around 80 papers were presented and proceedings are now available on both the FIG website [www.fig.net/pub/fig_wb_2009/] and the World Bank website [<http://go.worldbank.org/8HCMK22UU0>]. The main outcomes will be published shortly but here are a few highlights and outcomes from the conference.

Interest in Global Land Issues

The WB's interests in global land issues are changing and are currently focusing on climate change, e.g. deforestation, policy advice and conflict resolution. More people now live in urban rather than rural environments world-wide. This significant trend is recognised in the WB's World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography that sets priorities for policies at different stages in urbanisation.

Since the early 1990s, the WB has lent around \$1 billion to 37 projects across many countries to implement land administration systems and to support land markets. The resulting land markets now contribute between 15% - 25% of GDP in these countries. This initial phase of investment in Land Governance is now maturing and the WB have conducted an internal review of the lessons learned and this report has been released into the public domain [*'Experience from 10 years of improving land administration in ECA'*, G. Adlington] for further review and input – this is a must read.

Serious National Land Projects

The President of Liberia, live in a video-conference with the opening session, described the rebuilding of Land Administration institutions to provide access to land as essential to rekindle economic growth and social stability following the 25 years of war that tore her country apart. Her one request to the conference was to be “quick in solving our land issues”.

The WB has sponsored a project to develop and test a general framework for assessing Land Governance. This is based on the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability methodology and involves 5 themes, 24 indicators and 80 dimensions and is currently being tested in pilot projects in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Peru and Tanzania.

Changing land tenure research

Behavioural economic techniques are increasingly being applied to analyse the impact of land tenure interventions in randomised field experiments. In Ethiopia a pilot project provided equity in access to land through the efficiency of the land rental market. This was a very successful, low cost (US\$1 per parcel registration), transparent and participatory project where no elites were threatened.

Land fragmentation has become a serious problem in parts of Vietnam and market forces have not been able to generate land consolidation. A recent project has investigated and compared the impact of different approaches to triggering land consolidation: information campaign; capacity building of local officials; and a combination of both. This and similar projects reviewed have highlighted the benefits of embedding randomised field experiments into project designs.

Land Markets Behaviour

Several papers described how land markets mature and operate to generate significant wealth for the economy. Wallace proposed five steps that land markets migrate through as they mature from informal markets: land administration in system; opportunity for owners' decisions; property regime management; mature cognitive capacity (all stakeholders understand the land market that is transparent and supports inventiveness and trade in ideas); and ancillary functionalities (securitisation and secondary markets). It will be interesting to understand how the current economic crisis, precipitated by the property market in the USA, will change this view.

Conclusion

The main outcome from this conference was an agenda for future challenges in implementing effective Land Governance to better achieve the Millennium Development Goals. If Land Professionals are to have a key role in shaping our sustainable future then the profession must re-assess their skills and ensure that their contributions are appropriate to these new challenges.

The main winner here was the global surveying community. FIG opened the door of the World Bank and raise the profile of Land Professionals and their significant contribution to the global land issues – something that RICS would find very difficult to achieve on its own.

• *This is an abridged version of Robin McLaren's report. The full report and other information can be downloaded at <http://www.rics.org/RICSWEB/getpage.aspx?p=zXwkU7zIFkeYcw708UNLOA>*