

Accidental Implementation of FIG Cadastre 2014 in a Developing Country Context: Land is Life – Solving Land Issues in Post–Conflict Cambodia (Documentary Film, 50 min)

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SUMMARY

For 30 years Cambodia was ravaged by civil war: The murderous Khmer Rouge era 1975-79 resulted in the deaths of around 1.7 million people, and continued unrest. The country was brought to its knees: Institutions were destroyed, the educated class decimated and all infrastructures ruined. Land title records and maps were also destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. Only less than ten government officials qualified to work in the land administration sector remained alive. After the Khmer Rouge, a Vietnamese-backed government came into power in 1979, and the next 10 years the state still continued to own all land, which was farmed collectively. Along moving towards market economy, also private land ownership was re-introduced in Cambodia in 1989, after which private landholders could apply for the registration of their possession rights and later, after the Land Law 2001, full land ownership rights. In early 1990s, 4.5 million registration applications were filed countrywide at the Cadastral Administration. The first system set up to manage the land registration process was complex, time consuming, costly and technically inaccurate. A more efficient and technologically modern system was needed to support the social stability, economic development and poverty reduction of then still very fragile post-conflict country. The new internationally-recognized Cambodian government took the initiative to tackle this process, resulting in the establishment of the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction in 1998. Insecurity of land tenure hindered short- and long-term investments in land and led to both the under-utilization and the over-exploitation of land, environment and natural resources. Eighty percent of Cambodians live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Therefore, security of land tenure and putting land to more productive use is a fundamental issue for the whole country. This 50-minute documentary film summarises the history of the land issues of post-conflict Cambodia, the achievements and results so far as well as the current and future challenges of the Cambodian land administration. The policy, legal and technical development of the long-term programme that has resulted in one of the most transparent, participatory, cost-effective and technically accurate systematic land registration systems in developing countries has been supported by Finland, Germany, Canada and the World Bank and is now being financed mostly by the Royal Government of Cambodia herself with full local leadership, ownership and commitment according to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Enhancing Aid Effectiveness. However, many challenges still remain and further technical assistance support is still needed in order to make the developed systems both technically and financially more effective, efficient and fully sustainable.

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