

GIM INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEWS CLARISSA AUGUSTINUS AND TEO CHEEHAI

A Paradigm Shift

The 5th Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) Partners' Meeting held in The Hague, The Netherlands, in November 2013 was the ideal occasion to interview Dr Clarissa Augustinus – the key driver behind GLTN – and Teo CheeHai, president of FIG. Here, they discuss what GLTN means for surveyors.



Clarissa, the Global Land Tool Network is already recognised throughout the world. Do you agree that it has achieved a lot?

Yes, there have been many achievements. When we started, we needed a more affordable alternative to the current land administration system which was also interoperable with the current systems. We developed the social tenure domain model (STDM). In one country, we have piloted STDM at municipal level and now the national government wants to scale it up. We started with a very small team; now, it has been popularised and is also being used by slum dweller federations as well as by people working in customary areas. They know that this tool can give them information which allows them to plan, to form a constituency around their rights and to manage the land better.

Teo, why is the GLTN partnership important for surveyors?

The GLTN partnership allows us to actively engage in issues and challenges, particularly in the development, demonstration and

deployment of appropriate practices and land tools that leverage on our sciences, technologies and knowledge we have acquired over the years. The partnership is also important in alerting, informing and educating the profession, particularly about the scale of the matter and the fact that billions of people are still in need of secure land and property rights.

Clarissa, I have noticed that all partners are equal but the surveyors seem to be particularly prominent.

Yes, when we identified the gap in terms of land tools we found that many of them related to land administration and surveying. So when setting up the agenda of GLTN tools, which we are still working on, many of them are in the domain of surveyors. The development of pro-poor land tools for surveyors and barefoot surveyors is a natural linkage with GLTN. Having land administration organisations as key supporters of GLTN has been absolutely critical to the success of GLTN. And it has drawn other partners who want to engage with surveyors towards the multi-sided GLTN platform.

The continuum of land rights has brought about a paradigm shift. Clarissa, is it ready for implementation?

Essentially we can talk about 20 countries that have already moved away from freehold, individual parcels as the only solution for tenure security. The most robust continuum of land rights has been set up by the Namibian government; in 2012, it passed the Flexible Land Tenure Act which is now being implemented. This is the most robust version of the continuum because entails three tenure types – a starter title, a landhold and then a freehold – as a form of property ladder. This entails three tenure types with three subsystems within the same legal framework and institutional system, linking a local property office with the national deeds registry.

Teo, during the last World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty you organised a session on the continuum of land rights. There is also a continuum in approaches, in accuracy, in spatial units, and so on. Is the profession ready for this?

The profession must be ready for the continuum, because it provides a range of tenure types and with it a range of approaches and options that is so urgently needed to address issues in providing security of tenure for all. Within the continuum we are articulating and recognising a range of techniques, of technologies and with it a range of accuracies and

Teo CheeHai - Dr Clarissa Augustinus



Dr Clarissa Augustinus is chief of the Land, Tenure and Property Administration Section, Shelter Branch, Global Division, in UN-HABITAT. She is the key driver behind GLTN, focusing on innovative pro-poor land tools. The Network has over 60 international partners. Previously she was a senior lecturer at the School of Civil Engineering, Surveying and Construction, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She has a PhD in social anthropology on customary and informal land tenure in an informal settlement in Africa.



Teo CheeHai is president of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG). He is a licensed/chartered surveyor in Malaysia. He gained a bachelor's degree in surveying in Australia in 1980, and a master's degree in Malaysia in 2004. He is a past secretary-general of the ASEAN Federation of Land Surveying and Geomatics and a past president of the Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia as well as having held a number of positions in the Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia.

spatial units. The profession is ready but there will be jurisdictions that still need to rise to the occasion, since we are aware that it cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach.

There are developments within FIG on fit-for-purpose cadastres. We could also see that as a paradigm shift. There is an urgent need for cadastres to avoid loss of land rights in relation to land grabbing and forced eviction. Teo, could you expand on these developments?

To explain 'fit for purpose' we could, in a simplistic manner, say the following: it has to be applicable, it has to be appropriate – relevant to the contexts we are working with – and it has to be affordable. Therefore, when designing our intervention, we need to carefully consider the context and culture, the capacities and scale, the opportunities and options, the ability to innovatively and incrementally enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention at that point in time. And all of that with an eye on achieving maximum benefits. At FIG, we are attempting to collate our collective knowledge of this topic via a publication that we hope will further help to not only articulate but also promote the need to be fit for purpose.

Clarissa, are there ideas about how to monitor the implementation?

Yes, we had an Expert Group Meeting of the Global Land Indicators Initiative on Fitness for Purpose Land Indicators. The international land industry – in which surveyors were also represented – managed to reach consensus on four indicators, which need to be proposed to the post-2015 Development Agenda process. These indicators are on firstly perceived tenure security, secondly secure land rights, thirdly the equal rights of women, and fourthly the legal recognition of a continuum of land rights. It was proposed that sub-indicators be developed to report data disaggregation also, and where appropriate, with regard to women and men, the community, businesses, rural, urban, etc.

We have the Voluntary Guidelines from FAO, we have the Land Governance Assessment Framework from the World Bank, we have flexible standards for land administration and fit-for-purpose approaches. Teo, how can FIG support capacity development?

We are a Federation of national-level organisations. One of our strategic focuses during our current work plan is to engage the membership, recognising that global agreements, initiatives and progress must be cascaded down to the national and operating levels. Our vision statement includes the phrase, "Next door to everywhere" which outlines the challenge we set ourselves as a global organisation to impact on the local practitioners. We do this through our publication series and our website as part of our communication strategy. We organise global and regional forums and participate in regional and national activities. FIG Commissions and FIG Networks also have their thematic and regional activities. Through all these activities, we continue to advocate and communicate, inform and at times instruct, disseminate relevant information and messages and promote such agreements and initiatives. We include all segments of our membership that may come from scientific, research and academic institutions; technologies, technological products and services providers; national and regional public agencies as well as sole or private practitioners.

During the Partners' Meeting in The Hague, there was an introduction by Ms Gerda Verburg, chair of the Committee on World Food Security. She talked about multinational companies who do not want their business to have land acquisition-related problems. Maybe we could think about the development of a 'Fair Land Transaction Label'. Clarissa, up to which level could GLTN support such an approach?

GLTN is currently working on this issue, for instance to support

IFAD in regard to what are called 'inclusive business models'. We are also working on it with the African Union, UNECA and African Development Bank-led initiative; they have asked us to design and action learning and training around this issue. As far as the creation of solutions goes, I think we have to talk about land professionals being in the critical path but not being involved in the whole path. Lots of governance and political will is needed here. But what the land profession has to supply are the tools that are needed for fair trade, such as pro-poor land records that protect the rights of occupiers when investors come in, such as the valuation of unregistered land which is needed for compensation purposes and for cutting deals, and such as the STDM itself which would be used to manage the records over time in such a way that they remain fair deals. The land profession is key to putting a 'fair deal' in place, and it plays a critical role in a country-wide land administration system which includes these different approaches. Land professionals should be involved in the overarching management of the systems, in the creation, development and monitoring of the application, and in the implementation of the systems. It's not about the individual parcels or spatial units. It's about managing the whole process, and the ethics associated with the process.

Given all those developments, there will be an enormous impact on the surveying profession. Teo, what is your message to the industry?

There is an opportunity for the profession, and that opportunity must not be missed: to contribute to efforts that make a difference, that will end up enhancing our relevance as a profession. For instance, as Clarissa has just outlined, so that we can ensure that the knowledge about people-to-land relationships is used properly to make fair deals. ◀