

Facing the Global Agenda

Is the role of the surveyors changing?

In a global perspective the answer will be “Yes”! There is a big swing that could be entitled “From Measurement to Management”. This does not, however, imply that measurement is no longer a relevant discipline to surveying. But it does imply that the focus of the surveying profession is changing from being very much related to doing the measurements to now being increasingly related to management of the measurement processes, the geospatial data, and the property and land-use regimes.

Do surveyors have a role to play in the global agenda?

Again, from a FIG point of view, the answer to this question is clearly “Yes”! The surveyors throughout the world play a key role in attaining the MDGs through their professional functions in support of an efficient land market and effective land-use management. These functions underpin development and innovation for social justice, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

The eight MDGs form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and the world's leading development institutions. The first seven goals are mutually reinforcing and are directed at reducing poverty in all its forms. The last goal - global partnership for development - is about the means to achieve the first seven. The MDGs represent a wider concept or a vision for the future, where the contribution of the surveying community is central and vital. This relates to the areas of providing the relevant geographic information in terms of mapping and databases of the built and natural environment, providing secure tenure systems, and systems for land valuation, land use management and land development. The work of the surveyors forms a kind of “backbone” in society that supports social justice, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. These aspects are all key components within the MDGs.

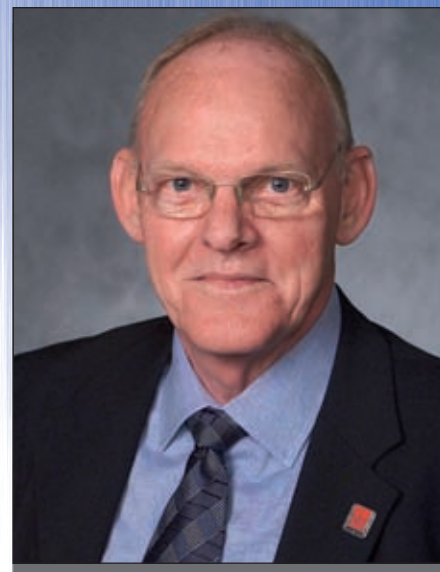
In a global perspective the areas of surveying and land administration are basically about people, politics, and places. It is about people in terms human rights, engagement and dignity; it is about politics in terms of land policies and good government; and it is about places in terms of shelter, land and natural

resources. To complete the picture I should add another “P” namely power in terms of providing equity and legal empowerment of the poor.

In facing the global agenda the role of FIG is threefold:

- To explain the role of the surveying profession and the surveying disciplines in terms of their contribution to the MDGs. Such statements should also make the importance of the surveying profession disciplines more understandable in a wider political context.
- To develop and disseminate knowledge, policies and methods towards achieving and implementing the MDGs. A number of FIG publications have already made significant contributions in this regard. All publications are available on-line at the FIG website: www.fig.net/publications
- To work closely with the UN agencies and the World Bank in merging our efforts of contributing to the implementation of the MDGs. An outcome of these efforts relates to cooperation with UN-HABITAT on developing a model for providing secure social tenure for the poorest. This will be presented at the World Urban Forum in Nanjing, P.R. China, October 2008. Another outcome will be in the area of capacity building and good governance in land administration in support of the MDGs. This will be presented at a joint FIG/WB conference in Washington DC in November 2008.

As stated in the introduction: Yes, the role of the surveyors has changed over the recent decades. This is mainly in response to technology development. Collection of data is now



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easier, but the assessment, interpretation and management require highly skilled professionals. There is wisdom in the saying that “All good coordination begins with good coordinates”. And the surveyors are the key providers.

The move from measurement to management also includes an increased focus on the social science issues such as land tenure, land policies and land management. These are all fields placed in the heart of the global agenda. No development will take place without having a spatial dimension, and no development will happen without the footprint of surveyors – the land professionals.

Yes, the surveyors do have a key role to play in attaining the MDGs. And FIG will act as a proud icon for the worldwide surveying community in facing this agenda.