Virtual Missions Possible in Benin

The land administration modernisation project for Benin was already fully running when COVID-19 struck. The impacts were immediate and profound. Nevertheless, a combination of significant effort, a dedicated local project team and lots of video conferencing has seen the project stay largely on track.

Adapting to COVID-19 circumstances
One of the main results of the project in 2019 was the definition of the Benin country profile, underpinned by the Land Administration Domain Model (LADM). Next up was the translation of the profile into a logical and physical system architecture. A mission utilising Dutch Kadaster IT expertise was planned for mid-March 2020, but was unable to proceed due to COVID-19. Although COVID-19 is not yet widespread in Benin, local people are hardly meeting or visiting office spaces. Instead, ‘virtual missions’ were organised, enabled via teleconferencing – the entire Beninese Cadastre IT staff around one laptop in Benin, Dutch Kadaster IT expertise on laptops in the Netherlands.

Online communication
These first experimental missions were not overly positive. Too many people were crowded around a single screen, crippling internet connections broke up the discussion and added to the already existing language barriers – neither English nor French was the language understood by all. However, we all learned fast. Internet connections were upgraded and people adapted to good principles of video conferencing.

Beninese and Dutch working from home
The PMAF Benin project (2018-2022) is a collaboration of MDF Consultancy, VNG International and Kadaster. The main beneficiary is the national cadastre organisation ANDF, while the Embassy of the Netherlands in Benin is the donor. Physical missions from the Netherlands to Benin will not be possible until at least January 2021, so virtual missions will need to continue. A big advantage of this project is that most project-team members are local Beninese. They can continue the project activities. A major challenge for September-November 2020 will be to start the development of the cadastral system with an Agile/Scrum team. This is composed of a mix of Beninese and Dutch staff. We are preparing daily virtual scrum meetings with everybody working at home. It’s certainly not ideal, but all are onboard to make it a success.

| Ernst Peter Oosterbroek
Mozambique: continuity of two projects during COVID-19

Beira Land Administration System & Capacity Building Project

In the Mozambican city of Beira we are in the final stage – evaluation – of the Beira Land Administration System & Capacity Building project. Here also, COVID-19 has had impact. We have been continually assessing the health risks of our local partners and adjusting the evaluation and feedback mechanisms within the project. This enables us to develop a strategy for project sustainability and guidelines for future activities.

We based our evaluation on the lessons learned from the Livelihood Restoration of Machambas (or small agricultural plots). Due to COVID-19 measures, the evaluation had to be done from a distance. Through the strong commitment and dedication of our local team members we could gather the feedback of around 150 people in just one month. Most of the feedback was collected through online questionnaires and phone calls. In addition, video calls enabled us to keep track of the personal well-being and overall concerns. Staying connected and nurturing these personal relationships make it possible to preserve project continuity.

| Eva-Maria Unger and Peter van Tongeren

Land Administration System Development

Whilst all lands are officially public in Mozambique, there are around six million individuals with land use rights that need to be mapped and registered. The Mozambican Government and the international development community are continuing efforts to complete the work. Kadaster has collaborated with the national land agency (DINAT) for nearly a decade. Since the COVID-19 outbreaks, we’ve been able to continue the job from a distance. Firstly, we are assisting in building capacity by developing a toolkit to support field work and community-led land parcel measurement and recording. Secondly, we are developing mechanisms to insert the collected field data into databases, using information technology skills and interoperability concepts. This is possible because there are good local teams, and good collaboration and supervision with the Kadaster team. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a good land administration system, considered a vital asset for the sustainable development of Mozambique.

| Bastiaan Reydon

Kadaster releases 3D file of the Netherlands

Kadaster has released an actual 3D file of the Netherlands as open data. This offers new opportunities for authorities, organisations and companies in the field of spatial planning. They now can obtain deeper insights into the spatial layout of a location or area. Users can make 3D visualisations themselves for analyses of -for instance- noise pollution, solar potential and water management. The 3D images also help to show citizens the impact of policies on their environment. The file is based on topographic data of the Key Register Large-Scale Topography, building data from the Key Register Addresses and Buildings, the height derived from aerial photography and the Actual Height File of the Netherlands. It was made in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Delft University of Technology. The data are updated annually and are free for download through PDOK, the Dutch webservice for open governmental geo-data.

| Karl Adams
The Indonesian Government has the ambitious plan to map all parcels in the country by 2025. In support, on August 5th 2020, in the presence of the Netherlands Embassy in Indonesia, Kadaster and the Indonesian Ministry of Spatial Land Planning / National Land Agency (ATR-BPN) signed a collaboration agreement for ‘Improving Modern Land Registration in Indonesia’. Due to COVID-19-enforced travel restrictions, the signing event took place completely online. Kadaster Director, Mr. Kees de Zeeuw, signed from his home in the Netherlands. Secretary General, Mr. Himawan Arief Sugoto, joined him online from ATR-BPN Jakarta offices: “We can realise our common goals for better land administration to support sustainable development.”

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The new agreement continues on from the previous ‘PaLaR’ project. PaLaR developed a more participatory and streamlined approach for land rights mapping. The new project focuses on supporting ATR-BPN’s transition to a fully digital data management organisation, with trusted authoritative data and e-services.

A Disrupted World

It is impossible to write a column in these times without mentioning the global COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of seeking inspiration from experiences and collaborators in different parts of the world, it seems it has to come from a laptop screen, or home office. Perhaps a little less inspiring. Since March this year there has been no international travel for me and the team. We are not even expected to come to our office in Apeldoorn. The uniqueness of this situation is that it is not only affecting me and the Kadaster International staff: it hits everybody, everywhere, worldwide. We all know the severity of the situation; many people are suffering from health and welfare issues. High levels of ‘uncertainty’ in all aspects of our lives appear to be the new standard. A side effect is the wake-up call we get on how we treat the globe and its people. This has a physical aspect, but also a social one, with regards to the agreements and the rules we follow. This goes beyond our personal choices and includes our professional land administration choices too. COVID-19 brings the impacts into focus: paradigms about poor or rich, healthy or ill, sustainable or non-durable, fair or criminal – all are affected by COVID-19. And we are in the middle of it.

Now, let’s think positive. Isn’t this a moment to turn the turmoil into the good? An extra boost to the Sustainable Development Goals, rather than the survival of the fittest? Both in what we do, and how we do it? ‘Land rights for all’ is needed more than ever and asks for guidance, country implementations and international cooperation. UN Frameworks, advisory projects, the development of teaching materials, scientific publications – they all contribute and we can work on it from our home offices. At the same time, we have to find new ways to reduce our ecological footprint. New ways to stay healthy, social and alive. New ways to deal with uncertainty and the new economic situations everywhere.

I am not sure who I am trying to convince of what: everybody is aware of the global impact of COVID-19. So, perhaps just consider this column as a ‘pep talk’. One we all regularly need during these times. And that includes you, me and all of my team. It is a disrupted world. Indeed.

| Mathilde Molendijk

Land titles in Colombia’s post-conflict areas

On August 10, 20 land titles were delivered to residents of the Colombian municipality of Cumaribo, a region hit hard by armed conflict. More land titles will follow: 290 families will receive their property title and legal certainty. Argenis Romero is one of the 14 women who received a title: “A title to your own house and plot is vital for the residents of our place. Hopefully this is the prelude to land titles for all our residents. God bless you!”

Due to COVID-19, all government agency officials now work from home. As a consequence, the new owners received their papers with the relevant authorities being present online including the office of the President. Also present, the Dutch ambassador, Jeroen Roodenburg states: “Land administration is the key to better rural development in Colombia. Farmers and ethnic communities need legal security of their properties to have easier access to credit, agricultural insurance or other tools.”

Going online with Indonesian collaboration

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| Rohan Bennett and Haico van der Vegt

| Kees de Zeeuw, Director Kadaster International
LAND partnership concludes, Land-at-Scale commences

In early 2020, the highly successful LAND partnership was finalised. It was a partnership between Kadaster and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs that had focused on igniting Fit-For-Purpose Land Administration. The wrap-up followed four years and 30 short-term engagements – or ‘LAND actions’ – completed across multiple country contexts. The aim was to improve legal certainty, stimulate economic development, fight poverty, contribute to post-conflict/post-disaster recovery, contribute to gender equality and help prevent (environmental) criminality. Attached to this issue of Abroad your will find the LAND-programme summary.

Building from the momentum and awareness surrounding the LAND partnership, the Land-at-Scale programme is now defined and initiated by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, executed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). The new programme has a focus on scaling-up land sector initiatives and networks. In 2019 Kadaster signed a framework contract with RVO in order to give a substantial contribution to this programme.

| Kees de Zeeuw

FIG Working Week 2021: the Netherlands welcomes you!

Even though our daily focus continues to centre on COVID-19, it is also important to look ahead, to plan for positive scenarios and prepare for the opportunity to meet in person again. In this spirit, FIG and the Dutch Local Organising Committee look forward to welcoming you in the Netherlands for the FIG Working Week 2021. This Working Week will be different. In planning the event, we face the challenge of taking into account the pandemic, the uncertainties and the impacts. Most important is that we meet, talk, network, share knowledge, create, have fruitful discussions and enjoy. In this way, we are inspired by our peers and the continuing developments in our profession. If you want to already learn more about the highlights, the ground breaking research and the hidden gems in the proceedings of FIG2020, check the FIG website.

| Paula Dijkstra

Changes to the team

- Ton van Helvert has taken up a new job within Kadaster related to NSDI.
- Simone Emens has joined the team for a period of eight months for her trainee assignment on FELA.
- Paula Dijkstra has temporarily taken over the operational management of Kadaster International from Kees de Zeeuw. Kees will stay connected at a strategic level, while managing a project for the Executive Board of Kadaster. It is expected that Kees will resume his tasks in Q1 of 2021.

Framework for Effective Land Administration

Since 2018 the ‘Expert Group on Land Administration and Management’ of UN GGIM has been developing FELA: the Framework for Effective Land Administration. FELA follows the nine strategic pathways of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) of UN GGIM. FELA is a guide to policy makers and land experts worldwide and has been presented to the member states for adoption in August 2020, during the virtual meeting of the Committee of Experts. The document can be found at UN GGIM’s website.

Massive open online courses

The COVID-19 pandemic is catalysing the development of innovative methods for knowledge transfer. Together with the University of Twente (ITC), Kadaster is investigating the usability of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). They are aimed at transferring experiences and knowledge on Fit-For-Purpose Land Administration with our project partners and the broader land administration community. Stay tuned.