




Tech and Transparency: Democratizing data and empowering communities with cutting-edge technologies

A Webinar Report



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A lack of transparency in the land and property sector prevents individuals, communities and governments from unlocking the value of the property as an asset, and undermines policies and legal frameworks that aim to provide land tenure security, potentially leading to a misallocation of rights. In fact, land governance is ranked among the sectors in which people are most likely to pay bribes for access to services, according to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer.

This webinar took place on 25 July, 2019, and introduced a new tool produced by New America and Esri: a series of **PropRightsTech Primers** aimed at explaining, in simple, accessible terms, six new and emerging technologies in the land tenure and property rights space. The webinar also featured experts on these emerging technologies and land governance and will explore their implications for increasing transparency and eliminating corruption from this afflicted sector.

The webinar was co-hosted by ESRI, the Land Portal Foundation and New America.

Moderator: Yuliya Panfil, Senior Fellow and Director, Future of Property Rights, New America

Panelists:

- Tim Fella, Global Business Development Manager for Land Administration, Esri
- Shreya Deb, Director, Omidyar Network India
- Mustapha Issa , Field Program Director for the USAID Feed the Future Tanzania Land Tenure Assistance (LTA) program, DAI Tanzania
- Milton Saunders, Manager of Mapping Services, Jamaican National Land Agency
- Rene Latore, Senior GIS Specialist for the Jamaican National Land Agency

A complete recording of the webinar is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Sra7TzLbpXY>



Key Takeaways

- Technology makes land administration more efficient, accessible and accurate, and this in turn enhances trust and transparency, which increases satisfaction within land administration agencies themselves.
- It is important that communities be informed of the objectives, process and use of the data collected. They should also participate in the data collection efforts themselves.
- Political will, cost effectiveness of the technologies, user friendliness of the technologies, security of the collected data, accessibility and transparency of the data and restriction from fraud and corruption in land administration systems are all enabling conditions.
- One of the most common mistakes is lack of vision and a long-term plan to sustain the technology. This includes budgeting for continuous training as well as software and hardware maintenance and support.

Webinar Summary

1) COULD YOU LET US KNOW HOW TECHNOLOGIES LEAD TO INCREASED TRANSPARENCY IN LAND GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS IN YOUR VIEW?

- Using simple technology such as smart phones with simple apps, open source software and good procedures has now paved the way for large-scale low-cost registration of land.
- Technology makes land administration more efficient, accessible and accurate and this in turn enhances trust and transparency, and even increases satisfaction within land administration agencies themselves.
- If there is transparency through the application of technology there can be positive implications such as security of legitimate tenure, elimination of fraud, enhancing trust

2) HOW CAN IT BE ASSURED THAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE NOT USED TO TURN AGAINST COMMUNITIES AND FURTHER MARGINALIZE THEM? WHAT SAFEGUARDS, IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR, CAN BE PUT INTO PLACE TO ENSURE THAT THESE TECHNOLOGIES ARE NOT EMPLOYED TO FURTHER DISADVANTAGE VULNERABLE PEOPLE?

- Technology doesn't disadvantage and marginalize people. People with wrong intentions do and more often than not, tech is a leveler. What is required is the right set of people who understand the requirements of communities.
- To safeguard users' interests, there must be full involvement by users (i.e. the government officials, private sector, academia, residents and other institutions involved in the land sector).

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3) CAN YOU SHARE EXAMPLES BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES HOW TECHNOLOGIES HAVE BENEFITED MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES?

- The Forest Rights Act in India is an example. The Gujarat High Court allowed the use of satellite images to prove occupancy of forest land as of 31 December, 2005. Prior to that, people had to submit old proof such as a receipt from the forest department to prove they occupied the land and farmed it.
- The Amazon Conservation Trust, for example, teaches indigenous people from eleven nations how to use GIS technologies to protect their land and ways of life in the Amazon. This includes recording the tribal boundaries and the resources within them and supporting participatory planning.

4) WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH ALL THE DATA THAT IS COLLECTED? HOW CAN YOU ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENT DATA IS OPEN AND THAT COMMUNITY DATA IS PROTECTED AND MADE OPEN AT THEIR DISCRETION?

- The data that is collected should be protected and maintained as a system of record.
- The cost savings from eliminating the workload associated with redundant requests from multiple government agencies, fulfilling data orders, and collecting and accounting for related fees is substantial.
- Governments also stand to gain from increased land market activity, tax collection and the broader economic development that can be spurred by making cadastral data more readily accessible.

5) WHAT ARE THE ENABLING CONDITIONS THAT WOULD ALLOW GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES TO EFFECTIVELY USE TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE TENURE SECURITY?

- Tech is only 20% of the solution. 80% of the solution is people and process. Tech can help collect and view data, increase transparency, reduce cost. But tenure security will come into force when the formal government system absorbs this data into their regular processes.
- Political will, cost effectiveness of the technologies, user friendliness of the technologies, security of the collected data, accessibility and transparency of the data, restriction for fraud and corruption in land administration systems are all enabling conditions.

6) WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES YOU SEE FROM GOVERNMENTS AND OTHERS IN TRYING TO ADOPT NEW TECHNOLOGIES?

- One of the most common mistakes is lack of vision and a long-term plan to sustain the technology. This includes budgeting for continuous training as well as software and hardware maintenance and support.
- Not having the required legal framework in place to support new technologies is one mistake, as well as fear for the security of the collected data prior to testing and implementation. Lack of proper piloting of the technologies, lack of community engagement in obtaining support for implementation of the technology are others.

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“THE BENEFIT OF MACHINE LEARNING IS SCALE - BY AUTOMATING MULTIPLE COMPONENTS OF THE PROPERTY MAPPING, DOCUMENTATION, AND TRANSACTION PROCESS, MACHINE LEARNING CAN VASTLY INCREASE THE SCALE.”
- YULIYA PANFIL, SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR, FUTURE OF PROPERTY RIGHTS, NEW AMERICA



“TECHNOLOGY DOES NOT DISADVANTAGE OR MARGINALIZE PEOPLE. PEOPLE WITH WRONG INTENTIONS DO IT. TECH MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IS A LEVELER.”
- SHREYA DEB, DIRECTOR, OMIKYAR NETWORK INDIA



“NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO MORE EASILY SHARE DATA AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND WITH CITIZENS WHO WANT MORE TIMELY ACCESS TO AUTHORITATIVE CONTENT AND SERVICES.”
- TIM FELLA, GLOBAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER FOR LAND ADMINISTRATION, ESRI



“THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY ENABLES OBJECTIVITY IN IDENTIFYING GAPS IN LAND REGISTRATION AND TECHNOLOGY CAN BE USED TO FILL THESE GAPS IN A TRANSPARENT WAY. IT HELPS TO HIGHLIGHT PATTERNS SO THAT INTERVENTIONS, SUCH AS LAND REFORM PROGRAMS, CAN BE MORE TARGETED AND TRANSPARENT.”
- MILTON SAUNDERS, MANAGER OF MAPPING SERVICES, JAMAICAN NATIONAL LAND AGENCY



“IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT ALL CAN HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THE SAME LAND DATA AS, IF ACCESS IS DISTORTED, IT CAN LEAD ITSELF TO THE CREATION OF ISSUES OF INEQUITY. TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP TO SOLVE THIS.”
- RENE LATORE, SENIOR GIS SPECIALIST FOR THE JAMAICAN NATIONAL LAND AGENCY



“USING SIMPLE TECHNOLOGY SUCH AS SMART PHONES WITH SIMPLE APP SUCH MAST, OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE AND GOOD PROCEDURES AS NOW PAVED THE WAY FOR LARGE SCALE LOW COST REGISTRATION OF LAND.”
- MUSTAPHA ISSA , FIELD PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE USAID FEED THE FUTURE TANZANIA LAND TENURE ASSISTANCE (LTA) PROGRAM, DAI TANZANIA



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