

A BRIEFING ON CURRENT CADASTRAL ACTIVITIES IN ERITREA

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By

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1. Introduction

- Despite Eritrea's cadastral system existence for more than 130 years and proclamation of mandatory Registration Law over 20 years, the registration system remained largely unchanged and mandatory registration not enforced;
- Accomplishments are below expectation due to complex challenges; but the efforts underway to transform it to a modern cadastral system are immense, five-year strategic plan has also been revised;
- The paper provides a picture of the country's cadastral context, benefits of cadastral registration, recent developments, challenges and concluding remarks.

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2. Context of Cadastre in Eritrea

- The main purpose of establishing the cadastral system was to guarantee security of property ownership for Italian settlers, but remained voluntary and sporadic unable to support proper management of land and its resources;
- The cadastral system was based on the division of land into parcels, having maps and records, it registered buildings that have physical plan and building license and surveyed land parcels allotted for commercial agriculture;
- In 1997, the Eritrean Registration Law was issued, declaring mandatory cadastral registration , but in practice remained largely voluntary and sporadic;
- Cadastre as defined by FIG (1995) is ‘a parcel based and up-to-date LIS containing a record of interest in land (e.g. rights, restrictions and responsibilities)’;

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- The cadastral registration system has a unique parcel identifier, geometric and textual data and title registration of land use right and ownership of immovable property;
- The cadastral concept is rooted in the Cadastral Office's mission, 'to protect and guarantee security of immovable property ownership and use-rights over land' and vision 'make registration of immovable property speedy and easier for all clients'.
- The Cadastral Office strives to inculcate a culture of team-working, rationalism, transparency, integrity and professionalism as guiding work principles;
- The cadastral Office registers land, rights over land and duties that emanate from such rights, other immovable property erected over land, provides information of rights - ownership, usufruct , lease and related processes.

3. The Benefits of Cadastral Registration

- The main purpose of the Eritrean Cadastre system is guaranteeing security of immovable property ownership and use rights over land;
- Secure ownership of immovable property and secure use-right over land encourages development investment;
- Reduce conflicts over land use rights and other immovable property ownership issues;
- Supports proper management of land and its resources contributing to sustainable development, although its benefits in Eritrea are currently limited;
- Registered immovable property (other than land) enables to get loan from banks through mortgaging;
- Provide clients information on status of immovable property whenever demanded;
- A priority registered immovable property supports fast transactions;
- Provides statistical data, although incomprehensive for policy-makers and senior management that could be used at national and regional levels.

4. Current Cadastral Developments

- The Cadastral Office has embarked upon the transformation of the manual registration system into digital system (except the spatial part), the traditional record keeping into modern record keeping system and the traditional arbitrary service charge fee into a value-based service charge system;
- Standardized registration forms, work guidelines and job descriptions have been revised, cadastral literatures translated into Tigrigna (local language) to enhance staff development and research papers on cadastre and notary systems and in collaboration with the Department of Land, Cadastral Template 2.0 for Eritrea produced;
- A study has been initiated on what and how to scan, digitize and integrate old cadastral records with the database;

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- A survey study on the number of houses built since the country's independence has been completed in five out of the six administrative regions.
- The strategic plan (SP), which was developed eight years ago has been revised to reflect a new reality of different and regional peace context, together with that of the MLWE for the period 2020-2024;
- In addition, to the previously set goals and objectives, in a newly arising era of optimism of peace and cooperation with Ethiopia and regional integration it has become necessary to identify new opportunities and strategies and thus the SP needs to be aligned with the SDGs which were crafted after our previous plan.

5. Challenges

Human and institutional capacity development is fundamental to a modern cadastre system; however, the challenges of developing and running our cadastral system are complex:

- Inadequate skilled personnel, technology and institutional capacity;
- Mandatory registration has not been enforced, modern cadastre not developed and tens of thousands of immovable property not registered;
- Absence of notary public outside Maekel Region makes transfer of immovable property elsewhere insecure and government revenues not collected on time;
- Inadequate budget for training and procurement of equipment and the employment system is not demand-based;
- Development of cadastral institution has been constrained by the absence of local learning institutions that provide relevant education;
- Public awareness on cadastral benefits has not been sufficiently raised due to resource constraints.

6. Concluding Remarks

- Development of a modern cadastre is not a choice, but a must for countries whose desire is to ensure sustainable development of their land and built environment;
- Success of any cadastral system heavily depends on human and institutional capacity development, utilization of latest cadastral technology, protection of land and other immovable property rights, facilitation of fast and efficient transfer of rights and ownership;
- Modern cadastre supports proper management of land and its resources, contributing to sustainable environmental development; hence to overcome the challenges of the Cadastral Office serious commitment at senior government levels becomes essential.

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