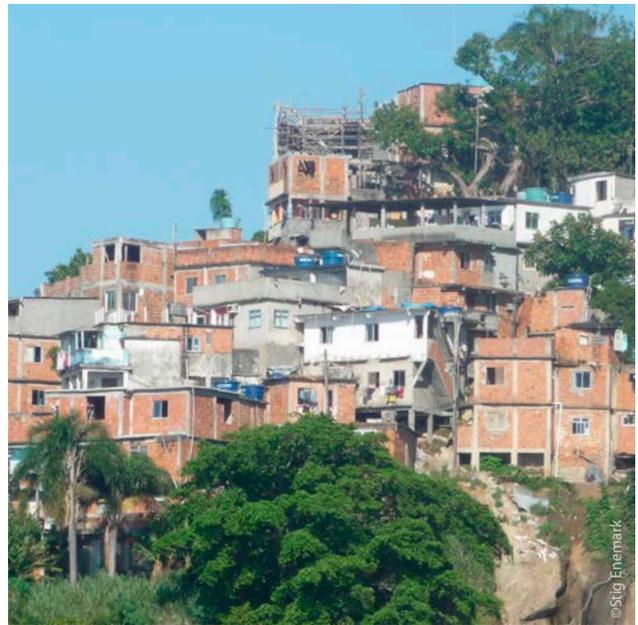
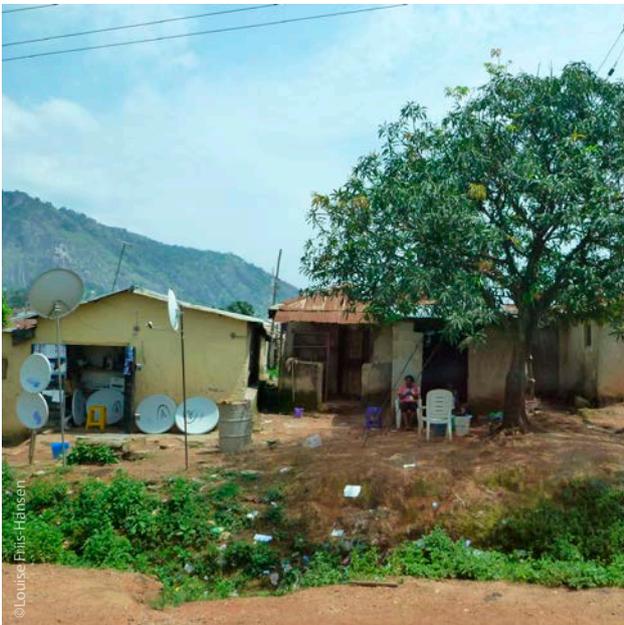


A Review of the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) Phase II Summary Report



Preamble

Many land rights and land claims are based on social tenures and cannot be described in terms of conventional, parcel-based concepts. New forms of spatial units have therefore been needed for some time, and the Global Land Tools Network (GLTN) developed a model to accommodate these social tenures. It is called the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM). Since its inception, the STDM has been developed and piloted, and it is now being implemented to cater for the range of land rights that exist, including rights that are documented or undocumented, rights for individuals and groups, for pastoralists and slums dwellers; rights that are formal and informal, and those that are legal as well as extra-legal.

Within the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), the STDM is seen, and is thus reviewed as, a pro-poor, participatory and affordable land tool. It is an alternative and/or another option to “doing business” in the land sector and has the potential to provide security of tenure at scale due to its innovative approach, which is embodied in:

- Its affordability (it uses free and open software packages);
- Its flexibility in its use and application (can be applied in various contexts and complements other tools);
- Its simplicity (so that non-technical people can use it);
- Its inclusivity, having a pro-poor focus (targets the poorest of the poor, such as slum dwellers, small landholders, etc.); and
- Its good governance principles (participation, responsiveness and transparency).

Process

FIG undertook a peer review of the STDM and commissioned key, internationally recognized academics, researchers and practitioners who are regarded as experts in the land sector and who are from FIG’s membership base. Reviewers were given guidance on expectations and deliverables of the review and they were provided with the STDM package, including documents: one set for a technical review and another for a review of the concept and focus.

Peer Reviews

It is heartening that the reviewers, with their diverse backgrounds and work experience in different parts on the globe, were impressed with the STDM, both as a concept and in its current development. They described it as “one of the most innovative and timely land administration tools of this century”, and regarded it as “a valuable initiative and an important tool for communities that are not adequately supported by formal land administration” processes.

Technical Review

Reviewers saw the adoption and use of open source software packages as an advantage in this model. The intended release of the package’s source code will be a milestone and will be generally welcomed. However, reviewers raised some concerns that were primarily related to safeguarding the founding ideals of the STDM: its pro-poor focus, its participatory nature and its affordability. These concerns include the safeguarding the growing recognition STDM has as an innovative, flexible and relevant land tool. They thought that some elements of oversight or governance mechanism might be desirable. These concerns also highlight a need to ensure that the STDM as a tool remains faithful to its ideals. There is little doubt that by releasing the source code, the STDM package will have additional customization, variations and imitations, and the move to make the source code public is expected to further and enhance the STDM’s functionalities, effectiveness and implementation.

According to the reviewers, one of the STDM’s key strengths is the flexibility and “many-to-one” capability of the package. They observed that “rights or relationships of a father, mother and spouse, and those of children, to the house they live in, can be disaggregated”, reflecting youth and gender considerations, as well as acknowledging their rights. Some reviewers had concerns about the installation of the STDM tool because it is highly dependent on the capacity of the installer and user, and their level of computer literacy and intuition. However, other reviewers regarded the STDM as being simple enough for people with some computer literacy. It may be that the package needs to be



more “modularized” to simplify it, especially for users who have only basic computer literacy. The inclusion of sufficient trial or test data sets is desirable.

Reviewers said that the level and clarity of documentation has definitely supported and assisted the installation of the STDM package, its use and its application. However, the reviewers opined that STDM will be better served by having a process to continually improve the documentation. There is also a need for the regular and periodic review and revision of all the guides and manuals to ensure that they remain user-friendly and easy to understand, even for people with basic computer literacy and little computing intuition. Incremental improvements that will lead to a set of documents (guides and manuals) that allows a wider range of communities with differing contexts, cultures and circumstances to record their own relationships with land, will significantly enhance the STDM tool. This addressed a comment on STDM tool that “a community member would be overwhelmed when presented with the STDM to install or use and would require extensive coaching before becoming proficient”.

An important guiding principle is that these guides and manuals must be prepared with “user’s perspective and needs” in mind rather than “developer’s instructions and perceptions”. Users’ needs should not be sacrificed and replaced by technological sophistications.

Conceptual Review

The founding concept of STDM was that of a standard for flexible “people-to-land” relationships. It was also intended to address a technical gap; conventional land administration systems were found to have inadequately managed customary and informal tenure situations and, hence, an unconventional approach was needed.

There is a growing realization that informal land holdings are varied and context-specific, and the STDM tool is seen as a response to this diversity. It has the potential to create a critical mass of information about the relationship between people and land, and is an important step towards security of land and property rights for everyone. However, it is not a panacea for all land management challenges. The STDM is not a land administration

system and, when implemented, must connect and integrate with existing, more formal land administration systems. The STDM was conceptualized to record and represent all “people-to-land” relationships that can be observed in a community. It can begin as a community based land information system and eventually can be incorporated into a formal system. It is important to accept that “to fully leverage the potential of STDM will require a connection with these systems”. Thus, the STDM should synergize with formal land administration systems since it adopts universally exchangeable data formats. Data sharing is possible because the STDM is a specialization of the ISO-approved Land Administration Domain Model (LADM).

Reviewers recognized that the STDM provides cost-effective records of people’s relationships with land. In situations where there is no land administration system or any semblance of one, the STDM has the potential (and opportunity) to address this. It was also observed that the STDM can provide information to supplement and improve existing land administration systems, even where there is a developed property rights infrastructure. The process then provides that information infrastructure, and contributes to building a fit-for-purpose land administration system relative to the context and capacity.

The reviewers remarked that the STDM should look into developing its use beyond community level into citywide and regional contexts. The information recorded within the STDM must be capable of multiple uses in an era of diminishing resources and must avoid the duplication of efforts. The STDM should also be able to accept data from a variety of sources and at different scales. This will ensure that the STDM adheres to the good practice principle of “collecting or mapping once, using many times”.

In future, the STDM will need to adapt to the communication revolution and the increasing use of smart phones, even in vulnerable communities, as well as the increasing potential of volunteered or crowd-sourced data.

Reviewers further suggested the need for an assessment framework, not on the STDM’s conceptual utility, but on its applicability and impacts in the diverse situations the STDM is used, as part of a broader “learning framework” to support its greater use, relevance and contribution in future.



Challenges

There are challenges that need to be addressed.

Reviewers said that STDM use can be increased by paying attention to users on the “demand side” – the governments, development partners and implementing agencies that require better datasets and data that can be aggregated and integrated to provide more informed and holistic planning, decisions and action. This “push” towards wider use, though desirable, needs to be balanced with the fact that STDM’s effectiveness until now, has been as a pro-poor land tool for the grassroots. The STDM must be, at least for now, a pro-poor, participatory and affordable land tool for communities and not a possible solution for all segments of society.

“The key is to give people the power to create their own records and administration system that can then link into the national cadastral system.” This dichotomy between the informal and the formal must be addressed in order for the STDM tool to be accepted more widely and to be more useful in securing land and property rights. The reviewers believe that GLTN and its partners should focus on the STDM’s institutional and legal aspects, which could provide for the incremental recognition of informal rights on the continuum of land rights by relevant authorities.

With the prospect of releasing the source code to the open-source community, the development of the STDM and context specific customization will be accelerated because, reviewers believe, “commercial software providers can have complimentary tasks, especially if the data volumes are growing and continuity and data protection gets more relevant”.

Conclusion

Reviewers affirmed the five crucial elements of the STDM – its flexibility, simplicity, affordability, inclusivity and its advocacy for good governance. They believe the STDM can help to improve the wellbeing of societies through better administration of land and its resources; this administration can be made more effective by improving the processes, collection and aggregation of associated land information.

The focus of the STDM has been and will continue to be “about relationships between people and land, independently from the level of formalization, or legality of those relationships”.

The STDM is focused on people – all people and all types of “people-to-land” relationships. It began as an initiative to support pro-poor land administration, specifically in countries with very little cadastral coverage, in urban areas with informal settlements or in rural areas with customary tenures. It is also meant for post-conflict areas. The STDM is also relevant in situations where a land

rights infrastructure already exists; it supports and supplements existing approaches to enhance existing land administration and management.

The STDM has both critics and supporters, and this is healthy. Being resolute in adhering to its founding ideals and vision will allow the STDM to gain strength. A vision provides focus, alignment and energy, particularly with regard to the release of the source code to the open-source community. The vision must also link the STDM to the betterment of society through improved processes and information on people to land relationships. This will ensure an effective contribution to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and monitoring its impacts.

The reviewers found the STDM to be a commendable and successful GLTN initiative and investment and that there is growing recognition of this. However, the accolades generate greater expectations. One of these is to facilitate the necessary engagement with governments and their institutions to integrate the STDM into formal land administration systems, thus maximising the use and relevance of STDM. Implementers, too, have a role to ensure that this integration happens and hence the capacity of implementers needs to be developed to achieve this integration.

Recommendations

The individual reviews and subsequent clarifications by all six reviewers provide an agenda for action. Their remarks/comments are constructive and will strengthen the conceptual, technical and application aspects of the STDM tool. The reviewers have been thorough and specific remarks/comments require the attention and action of the GLTN partners.

Postscript

FIG remains a committed partner of the STDM and, together with the GLTN and other partners, has a responsibility to ensure the STDM remains true to its founding concept and ideals. FIG should contribute to its continuing development, enhancement and use as an effective pro-poor, participatory and affordable land tool. The Federation, appropriately supported by the FIG Foundation, also has a responsibility to actively create awareness and promote the usefulness and use of the STDM as a tool among its membership and its sphere of influence. Thus, there is a need to facilitate, support and contribute to efforts that will improve the robustness, acceptance, usefulness and implementation of the STDM, including capacity development and training, periodic evaluation and critique, and peer learning and networking.

International Federation of Surveyors

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Phrases in quotation marks are verbatim quotes from individual reviewer’s report, 2013.



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