

## New land mapping system to give people greater say

By Wandera Ojanji

Kenya will soon have an electronic land adjudication system if the Government adopts recommendations by an international conference.

Experts say this would expedite the process of land transfer and management, and eradicate controversy, corruption and political interference which have dogged the process for many years.

Dr Eric Nyadimo of the Institute of Geodesy and Land Management, Technische University Munchen, Germany, told the conference that Kenya should use maps and geographic information technologies in land adjudication. He said the present system of land adjudication had major weaknesses and was not economically sustainable: "It ignores land owners. The exercise is prone to controversy, corruption and confusion and political interference."

He challenged the Government to adopt Participatory Geographical Information System (PGIS).

Nyadimo cited Germany which used PGIS to streamline land adjudication.

"In Germany, land consolidation is under the Federal Land Consolidation Act. Land consolidation is a responsibility of landowners who form the body of participants that elects a board to oversee land adjudication matters," he said.


The conference, whose theme was *Mapping for Change*, was organised by the Netherlands-based Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development (CTA).

The CTA director, Hansjorg Neum, stressed the importance of spatial knowledge generated through mapping. He said such knowledge would help local communities in tackling issues related to land tenure, human rights, resource entitlement and health.

Neum said community mapping would enable marginalised groups assert their right to ancestral lands.

Nyadimo said PGIS would help people plan, design, engineer, build and maintain their environment.

The system, introduced in the late 1980s to enhance participatory planning and management, is successfully being applied in mobilising under-utilised local, physical, human, institutional and knowledge resources. Development agents are also applying it to strengthen

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their understanding of local diversity in natural and social resources.

Mr Julius Muchemi, executive director, Environmental Research, Mapping and Information Systems in Africa, said PGIS had great potential to empower individuals and communities for social change: "PGIS is a process of empowering communities to plan and manage their livelihoods. The community can then use the maps to plan on how to use their resources."

Through PGIS, communities in Keiyo and Marakwet have put in place a sustainable natural resource use management plan.

"Communities in the higher lands had running conflicts with those in low lands over sharing of certain resources like water and grazing fields. Using PGIS tools, the communities identified and mapped vulnerable groups, vulnerable environmental spots, available natural resources and opportunities for sharing resources. They then developed a plan on how to protect those vulnerable among them, how to sustainably and equitably manage, utilise and conserve their natural resources," Muchemi said.

Muchemi extolled the potentials of PGIS in supporting the plight of Ogiek, an ethnic minority living in the Mau Forest. Tinet Forest, which is part Mau, is the ancestral home of the Ogiek community.

The Ogiek apply PGIS in combination with information and communication technology (ICT) as advocacy tools to fight for their rights and interests.

"The Ogiek can use PGIS and ICT in assessing and addressing environmental issues, one of the major factors behind the Government's move to kick them out of the forest. They can bring out their traditional systems of natural resource management, utilisation and conservation and hence prove that their existence in the forest does not have any negative effects on the Mau ecosystem.

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I & M Building, Kenyatta Avenue,  
P.O Box 30080, 00100 GPO, Nairobi-Kenya.  
Tel: +254 20 3222111, Fax: +254 20 214467. News room Fax: +254 20 3222111,  
Email: [editorial@eastandard.net](mailto:editorial@eastandard.net), Advertising: [standard.ads@swiftkenya.com](mailto:standard.ads@swiftkenya.com)

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