

A Quarter of a Century Experience in the Eritrean Cadastral Office

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Key words: Access to land; Affordable housing; Cadastre; Capacity building; Digital cadastre; History; Implementation of plans; Informal settlements; Land management; Legislation; Professional practice; Property taxes; Security of tenure; Standards; Valuation

SUMMARY

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Key words: cadastral/land registration, Eritrean Cadastre, security of ownership/right, achievements of the Cadastral Office, FIG's inspiring impacts,

ABSTRACT

The Eritrean Cadastre was initially established with the sole objective of guaranteeing security of property ownership. It existed for more than a century without any change of purpose and procedures. The focus of registration remained urban property and some rural commercial agriculture. It was voluntary, lacking national or definite geographical coverage. However, in 1997, a Registration Law was proclaimed introducing mandatory registration. But, so far it has not been enforced due various constraints.

The Notary Public, with the main purpose of contracting agreements of transactions of immovable property accompanied the Cadastral Office along its entire existence. The Cadastre Office and the Notary Public coexisted and worked in close collaboration, both of them experiencing difficult periods and attempts at their elimination during the 1970s. However, thanks to the intervention of enlightened elderly Eritreans that approached the colonial administration's Minister of Housing Development elaborating their importance and benefits, they narrowly survived as institutions.

In the post-independence (since 1991) journey, although with plenty of critical challenges, the Cadastral Office made tireless attempt to reform and develop the cadastral system. And despite the many constraints, it has undeniably registered modest

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developments.

This paper attempts to show the gradual transformative achievements the Office has undergone during the past quarter of a century towards becoming a modern multi-purpose institution in the country. The vital roles which the cadastre office played in securing ownership and rights over property are briefly discussed. The ongoing introduction of new technology and adoption of new systems, the tenets of the Eritrean Registration Law of property, and the pilot study conducted to assess the scope of coverage of property registration so far are presented. The enlightening immense contributions made by the FIG platforms in impacting changes in the Eritrean Cadastre through sharing of experiences are duly acknowledged.

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