

What is Land Administration? Exploring an inclusive definition.

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SUMMARY

Land is a finite resource. For humans and other land-based organisms, it forms the basis for sustenance and shelter. As global populations continue to grow and under the threats of climate change and sea level rise, the amount of habitable and productive land is decreasing. This threat is felt worldwide but particularly in the Global South, where poverty levels are high, resilience is low, and new forms of economic colonialism (leading to deforestation, land grabs, and exploitation of natural resources by international corporates) abound. Extending our understanding of 'land' to include all the solid, liquid and air-based aspects of Earth and its resources leads us to include the high seas, coastal waters, estuaries, and even space-based resources which are part of the system of life on Earth. Equally, these need recordation and management along with in-land resources. Our global Earth-based resources require effective stewardship for sustainable human development and natural resource management. This is the role of land administration – it has local, regional, national and even international expressions and must include the full range of contexts of application.

There are several definitions of land administration that have evolved over the past decades. In this publication, we draw on established literature, a series of workshops on land administration conducted in 2019, and inputs from members of the FIG Land Administration Working Group to examine these definitions of land administration for their applicability in a broad range of contexts and forms of tenures. We suggest possible modifications based on recent developments, particularly in the post-colonial world, and to respond to increasing pressure on resources.

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