



MODERNIZATION OF CADASTRE AND LAND RIGHTS INFRASTRUCTURE IN HAITI

PROJECT PROPOSAL - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Project Proposal herein was conceived three months prior to the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12th, placing the resilience of its people at test. Having a modern cadastre in place would have significantly contributed to disaster prevention in that time of crisis. It was a priority to set Haitian progress on a solid foundation prior to the earthquake and now becomes a critical element to plan and undertake the subsequent reconstruction.

Public statements voicing the importance of a secure and transparent cadastre and land rights infrastructure to promote economic development in Haiti were heard from a variety of important public figures including President René Prével, Former President Clinton, the Secretary General of the OAS, expert Hernando de Soto and others. The fact that less than 5% of Haiti is cadastred, that the property rights office has no digital records but only paper documents of many property-related activities, that notaries operate in great part based on customs and local knowledge rather than clear rules and procedures, calls for urgent attention.

The immediate needs of Haiti, reconstruction planning and implementation, will require updated cadastral information. No population relocation, urban planning, transportation planning, infrastructure design, agricultural or tourism development, environmental recovery, or investment attraction will be possible without updated cadastral information and a transparent and efficient system that offers and generates trust and security for development. Having a clear identification of the properties and their respective owners will be essential to plan all aspects mentioned earlier and conduct the necessary expropriations.

Property taxes cannot be collected without clear cadastral information, and Greenfield investments (long-term FDIs) will not arrive without the security provided by a modern cadastre and land rights infrastructure. The estimated 1.7 million Haitians living abroad, the majority of them in the US and Canada which are countries with high income per capita, could channel a significant portion of their savings to real state in Haiti if they trusted the system, and if that system provided the necessary financial security to invite investment.

In terms of experience in Haiti, the OAS has empowered more than 4 million Haitians during the past 5 years by registering them and providing them with identification cards. It is difficult to know how many properties will have to be cadastred and registered in the country, but if the successful experience of the Civil Registry Program is an indicator, replicating this model for registering properties and covering the national territory will give good results in the proposed 7 years of implementation of the project. This effort will require the best expertise for which the OAS has assembled a team that guarantees both deep knowledge and understanding of the local culture. The team that has been working along with ONACA (National Office of Cadastre) to prepare this project includes the Government of Quebec (Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife), GéoQuébec, the École Nationale d'Administration Publique (ENAP) of the Government of Canada, Stewart Global Solutions, and the OAS network of cadastre experts.



Organization of American States

The project has been planned in two phases. Phase I will focus on servicing the priority projects defined by the Post-Earthquake Action Plan while advancing the assessment and discussions with the locals to design and plan a new cadastre and land rights infrastructure in Haiti. Phase II will implement the plan with special attention to the necessary modifications in the legal framework related to cadastre and land registry, and training for building capacities.

During the seven years of project implementation the 28 main activities planned will pay special attention to the elements that constitute the pillars of a solid cadastre and land rights infrastructure. The preparation of people will be done through intensive training, both locally and abroad. The review of the legal framework will be made with special attention to security, transparency, integration and conflict resolution. There will be a redesign of current procedures with the purpose of serving the Haitian people more efficiently. The modernization of the information and communications technology infrastructure is necessary to let Haiti's cadastre and land rights infrastructure play a multifunctional role. Equally vital is the communication of the importance and value of the cadastre to all relevant communities, and in particular to government leaders and citizens so as to gain their involvement and collaboration in the construction of a modern cadastre and land rights infrastructure.

The potential creation of an integrative entity (ANIGEF, Agence Nationale d'Information Géographique et Foncière) where all cadastre and land rights matters are managed is a suggestion that follows the guidelines set up by the Post-Earthquake Action Plan. The need for a more coordinated and interoperable structure is evident but it will be the best judgment of the Haitian government leaders that will define the model of their future cadastre and land rights infrastructure.

The revived, empowered, and prosperous Haiti that is in the minds and hearts of all Haitians and Haiti supporters will be impossible to materialize without the operating scenario created by a trusted and integrative cadastre and land rights infrastructure. All the local entrepreneurial activity that needs to be created will not occur without small owners being able to document their properties and mortgage them to receive the necessary financial support. The foreign companies looking at setting up shop in a Haiti that will offer numerous opportunities will look elsewhere in the region where their real estate transactions are secure.

Even without adding the property tax element to the equation, modernizing the cadastre and land rights infrastructure in Haiti is probably the investment with the highest rate of return considering its crosscutting positive effect on all socio-economic development aspects. Assuring the Haitians their right to property was long due and is an imperious need to improve democratic governance. The objective of fostering economic activity presents the perfect setting to undertake this challenge with the motivation of empowering Haitians and bringing Haiti to prosperity.