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Working for a fairer world

Following his recent address to the SCS conference in Dublin, **Stig Enemark** highlights the key role surveyors can play in contributing to the global development agenda

IN THE context of the Irish Society of Chartered Surveyors' recent conference theme, Ireland's Future in a Global Economy, the major question was: is the role of the surveyor changing? From a global perspective, the answer is yes.

Surveyors will contribute to the global agenda in an important way through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Simply, no development will take place without having a spatial dimension and no development will happen without the footprint of surveyors – the land professionals.

There is a big swing that could be summed up in the phrase “from measurement to management”. This does not imply that measurement is no longer a relevant discipline of surveying. The change is mainly in response to technology development. Collection of data is now easier, while the assessment, interpretation and management of data still require highly skilled professionals. The role is changing into managing the measurements. There is wisdom in the saying “all good co-ordination begins with good co-ordinates” and the surveyors are the key providers.

The move from measurement to management includes an increased focus on the social science issues of the surveying disciplines, such as land tenure, land policies and land management.

Surveyors play a key role in supporting an effi-

cient land market and also effective land-use management. These functions underpin development and innovation for social justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

The eight MDGs form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and the world's leading development institutions. The first seven goals are directed at reducing poverty in all its forms. The last goal – global partnership for development – is about the means to achieve the first seven. The MDGs represent a wider concept or a vision for the future, where the contribution of the global surveying community is vital in providing the relevant geographic information in terms of mapping and databases of the built and natural environment, and also in providing secure tenure systems, systems for land valuation, land-use management and land development. The work of surveyors forms a kind of backbone in a society that supports social justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability. These aspects are all key components within the MDGs.

In a global perspective the areas of surveying and land administration are basically about people, politics and places. It is about people in terms of human rights, engagement and dignity; it is about politics in terms of land policies and good government; and it is about places in terms of shelter, land and natural resources.

In facing the global agenda the role of the

Masters of all they survey: children in Malawi try their hand at boundary surveying

“The work of surveyors forms a kind of backbone in society that supports social justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability”

International Federation of Surveyors (Fig) – the global surveying community – is threefold. It should explain the role of the surveying profession and the surveying disciplines in terms of their contribution to the MDGs. Such statements should also make the importance of the surveying profession disciplines better understood in a wider political context. It should also develop and disseminate knowledge, policies and methods towards achieving and implementing the MDGs – a number of FIG publications have already made significant contributions in this regard. Finally, the federation should work closely with the UN agencies and the World Bank in contributing to the implementation of the MDGs. An outcome of these efforts relates to co-operation with UN-Habitat in developing a model for providing secure social tenure for the poorest.

Surveyors – nationally and globally – will have a key role as providers of the relevant spatial information and also as builders of efficient land tenure systems and effective measures for urban and rural land-use management. This should support economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability.

■ Prof Stig Enemark is president of the International Federation of Surveyors (Fig) and professor in land management at Aalborg University, Denmark; fig.net