

Press Release
Urban LandMark Conference
Rethinking Emerging Land Markets in Rapidly Growing
Southern African Cities

On 1 and 2 November 2010, Urban LandMark, a Pretoria-based think tank on urban land issues and how they impact on the poor, is hosting a regional conference at The Forum, Turbine Hall in Newtown, Johannesburg.

The conference is underpinned by the fact that Africa's growth is unlike urbanisation in other parts of the world.

In just two decades, more than 50% of Africans will live in cities on the continent. In 2015, while London's population will increase by six people an hour and Berlin's not at all, Lagos will grow by 58 people every hour, Kinshasa by 39 and Nairobi by 15.

It is clear that the epicentre of what has been called 'the century of the city' is shifting from the global north to the global south.

But while, in developed countries, there is a strong correlation between urbanisation, economic development and improved quality of life, for contemporary (Southern) African cities, this correlation does not hold. This 'over-urbanisation', as some urbanists have called it, is characterised not by improved lifestyles but by the reproduction of poverty.

The conference will be attended by a range of stakeholders – government and municipal officials, NGOs, academics, developers and practitioners – both from the African continent and other global regions – to debate issues around the operation of land markets in the context of urban poverty and rapid urbanisation.

A platform for robust debate and knowledge-sharing, the conference aims to build stronger links amongst practitioners, researchers and key commentators on African urban land issues. Moreover, with a number of papers to be presented from other regions across the world, we aim to bring a comparative focus to the conference, and promote learning between countries and regions.

Speakers will focus on issues such as how land tenure can be improved to promote land access, holding and trading that supports livelihoods and asset creation for poor urban dwellers in Southern Africa; and how 'formal' access to land markets and 'alternative' ways of recognising land rights could be brought closer together in the African context.

Alain Durand-Lasserve, research director at the National Centre for Scientific Research in France and a specialist in urban land management and policies in developing countries, and Paul M. Syagga, Professor of Land Economics at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, will deliver the conference's keynote addresses, focussing on urban land issues in eastern, central and west Africa.

Other discussions will include issues ranging from urban poverty and squatter settlements in the Kathmandu Valley, through rebuilding land markets in post-conflict African countries, to country-

and city-specific case studies, such as the dynamics of housing land allocation in Bulawayo and its implications for low-cost housing, how unplanned urban settlements in Zambia could be upgraded in a sustainable manner, and the dynamics of urban land markets in peri-urban areas in Maputo.

Our focus on South Africa's urban land questions is centred on issues such as exploring the intrinsic value of property in low-cost housing settlements in Johannesburg, the size and structure of South Africa's affordable property market and looking at shack settlements as an entry point the labour market.

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The Urban Land Markets Programme, or "Urban LandMark" is a think tank dedicated to making urban land markets work better for poor people. We aim to influence policies and practice in southern Africa by investigating and promoting sustainable ways to access affordable urban land. Secure access to land and participation in the market are key building blocks for poverty alleviation and wealth creation. The state, civil society and the private sector need to each devote themselves to achieving urban inclusion and integration if sustainable cities and towns are to emerge in what is recognised as the fastest urbanising region in the world. Addressing land and property issues is at the heart of achieving a better urban future.

Urban LandMark was established in 2006 with core funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

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