



THE POWER OF YSN!

THE FIG YOUNG SURVEYORS NETWORK HAS DEVELOPED A NEW INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS: THE YOUNG SURVEYORS VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SURVEYOR PROGRAMME. AFTER A SUCCESSFUL PILOT, THE FOCUS NOW IS ON SCALING UP THE PROGRAMME. **EVA-MARIA UNGER** REPORTS

Together with UN-Habitat Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), the FIG Young Surveyors Network (FIG YSN) established a volunteer programme for Young Surveyors – the volunteer community surveyor programme (VCSP). VCSP is an innovative volunteer programme combining societal impact with professional development. It leverages the skills, experience, talents and education of young surveyors, and matches this competence with the needs of GLTN, particularly in GLTN's country-level implementation plans and programmes with GLTN's partners.



Volunteer Community Surveyor Program

An initiative of UN-Habitat GLTN and FIG Young Surveyors Network



"It's been busy weeks here in Nepal, but an eye-opening and fascinating experience! Working with HURADEC, a local NGO, GLTN and Kadaster International (the Netherlands) facilitating the access to reconstruction grants using STDM after the 2015 earthquake."

Jordan Friis, New Zealand



"It was very important for me to be in DR Congo at the Christian Bilingual University of Congo as part of the VCSP. People there were very involved in the training and they gained a lot of knowledge."

One of the key impacts was to strengthen the application of GLTN tools in francophone countries, and improving the local capability."

Adamar Sarr, Senegal

GLTN was established in 2006 and is facilitated by UN-Habitat. FIG has been a member of GLTN since its inception and has been involved in the development of several land tools developed by GLTN. One of the tools is the social tenure domain model (STDM). This is a pro-poor land tool, and an information management system that can be used to support the development of a land administration for the poor and vulnerable in urban and rural areas. Today, GLTN and FIG YSN have trained more than 300 young surveyors from 65 countries worldwide in this concept, model and land administration tool.

Within this group of STDM ambassadors, there was a strong desire to initiate a volunteer programme to match the YS adventurous spirits, qualifications and skills with GLTN country level activities – all over the world. After positive discussions and preparations, it was clear that the GLTN country-level activities could be the foundation of such a match. This opportunity

had to be piloted in order to learn from it and to find a solid basis to develop the program. In mid-2017, the pilot VCSP project was initiated by Oumar Sylla, land and GLTN unit leader, and me.

Opportunities

The VCSP represents opportunities for young surveyors and GLTN partners to touch a particular cause or bring surveying skills and knowledge to contribute to and affect communities through their volunteered capacity. VCSP is about matching the right person with the right skills and knowledge, at the right time, to the right opportunity through GLTN, with the overriding aim to achieve greater impact. By leveraging all spheres of skills and knowledge, the volunteer community surveyor contributed to GLTN's country-level activities as well as enhanced and enriched one's professional development.

The VCSP is inspired through volunteerism as a powerful means to motivate and engage young professionals with the latest knowledge in tackling development challenges worldwide – by bringing them together with local professionals and decision makers. The young surveyor is challenged to transfer relevant knowledge and contribute at the community level while gaining a greater understanding of the issues affecting these communities.

The pilots demonstrate that young surveyors gain appreciation and experiences in this way in GLTN projects. They make a difference with a positive contribution to communities and people. They learn and understand the essentials of multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The process

A call for volunteers was published through FIG, and targeted those who have previously participated in an STDM workshop, trainings and awareness events, for their expression of interest. Every expression was appropriately evaluated and considered, matching opportunities with interest.

For the pilot project, 11 young surveyors from as different places as Senegal, Nigeria, Nepal, New Zealand, Uganda, Denmark, Namibia,

Philippines and Zimbabwe were offered the opportunity. They could volunteer on seven GLTN projects for between two and four weeks in DR Congo, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda, Philippines and Zambia between November 2017 until March 2018. GLTN resourced the pilot with additional support from the FIG Foundation. The resources supported travels and accommodation.

The 11 volunteers met the challenges admirably and in the process, contributed to these GLTN projects at the community level. They were also enriched by the cross-cultural work and living experiences, and developed as individuals.

Conclusion, outcome and learnings

For these volunteer community surveyors, the few weeks represent valuable lessons and experiences in life. For GLTN and its partners, the realisation of this new and innovative approach resulted in positive outcomes: there are many interested volunteers and short-term technical capability gaps can be managed. Awareness is raised on the contribution of sound technical and professional knowledge and experiences at the local level.

The pilot was done at a small-scale and over a short term that allowed GLTN/UN-Habitat and FIG YSN to assess impacts, evaluable viability and learn before considering scaling-up the initiative. Both the volunteers themselves and GLTN partners in their feedback found the initiative highly satisfactory and useful. Most of the volunteers are still in regular contact with the GLTN partners at the community level, and continue to assist and support from afar.

The pilot provided a platform for all stakeholders to test logistics, work cooperatively, and prove the value and benefits of such an initiative. It is the hope for FIG and the Young Surveyors Network that this pilot can be transformed into a larger scale project, and that many more qualified and interested young surveyors can have the opportunity to volunteer.

Eva-Maria Unger is chair of the FIG Young Surveyors Network (<http://www.fig.net/organisation/networks/ys/>)