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A MASTER PLAN FOR THE SIMPLIFICATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT IN IVORY COAST

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Abstract

In April 2017, the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Urban Planning (MCLU) of the Republic of Ivory Coast created by decree the Steering Committee for Simplification and Digital Transformation (CP-STD). By setting up this committee, the Ministry was strengthening the coordination and leadership mechanisms for managing the tasks involved in modernizing its administrative functions in line with the vision of reforms recommended by the “Doing Business” program – improving the business environment by simplifying administrative procedures relating to land management, construction, housing, sanitation and urban planning.

In order to implement this transformation within the Administration, it has been decided to develop a master plan for the Simplification and Digital Transformation of urban land management. This study, led by the Permanent Secretariat to the Simplification and the Digital Transformation of the MCLU, and conducted by IGN FI with technical assistance from the BNETD, marks the willingness of the Government to implement reforms.

Key Words

Ivory Coast, Ministry of Construction Housing and Urbanism, Urban land management, Digital Transformation, Master plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

During first half of 2018, the authors have collaborated in the carrying out of a study contracted by the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Urban Planning, aiming to design a master plan for the simplification and digital transformation of urban land management in Ivory Coast.

The characteristics of the masterplan and the strategic design of the plan of actions will be described in this paper. The general form of the paper follows the structure of an executive summary.

2. CONTEXT

Ivory Coast has experienced difficulties in managing property rights for many years. The fact that requests are processed manually plus the complexity of procedures leads to delays and errors which undermine the efficiency of the administration and the safeguarding of citizens' property rights.

In order to tackle this issue, the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Urban Planning (MCLU) has engaged concrete actions designed to provide swift responses to a critical situation. A first step to paperless systems for registers of state-owned property and housing development property registers has been implemented for the Abidjan district, and an inventory of the Ministry's plans and maps is being compiled. An Inter-ministerial Committee for Regulation of Activities in the Land Administration Chain has been set up, bringing together all stakeholders in the land administration chain with a view to initiating reforms in the government Ministries.

In order to deliver this transformation within the administration, the Minister decided to draw up a Master Plan to Simplify and Digitally Transform Urban Land Management. This study, steered by the MCLU's Permanent Secretariat for Simplification and Digital Transformation, and carried out by IGN FI with technical assistance from the BNETD, demonstrates the commitment of the Ministry to delivering the reform measures.

It was carried out in three phases: an overview of how the land administration chain works ; an analysis of users' needs together with proposals for three development scenarios for the land administration chain; and finally, determining the best strategy for implementation.



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3. MAIN GOALS

The objectives of the proposed Master Plan are to set the land administration chain's modernization path over the next five years and to put forward short term actions to improve both the turnaround time to issue deeds and permits, and the security of property titles. The challenge is to succeed in setting up an integrated urban land administration information system that encourages data-sharing and offers an effective, high-quality service to users.

The primary objectives of the Master Plan correspond to the policy set out by the administration in the framework of its strategic planning and in line with the 2016-2020 PND (National Development Plan).

They are as follows:

- Serving users quickly and efficiently;
- Securing land rights and reducing fraud, disputes and litigation;
- Improving visibility and transparency;
- Increasing tax revenues;
- Having a common and standardized working framework;
- Improving the country's ranking in the Doing Business index.



Establishing these objectives and the analysis carried out

by IGN FI as part of the study for the Master Plan enabled targets to be defined for the land administration modernization initiative. They are:

- Rolling out a Land Information System in the MCLU which incorporates secure and automated processing of the procedures;
- Sharing a common foundation of information between all parties in the land administration chain (documentary and spatial information) in a centralized and secured database;
- Establish a unique land parcel identifier for all parties in the land administration chain to enhance transactions security;



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- Establishing a regulatory framework that enables fast and efficient issuing of administrative deeds and permits;
- Providing a dedicated virtual working space and toolset for professionals in the sector (notaries, bankers, surveyors, urban planners and architects);
- Providing access to a simple and comprehensive portal enabling citizens and professional users to consult information and manage administrative formalities.

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This Master Plan is based on a paradigm shift: both the path and the projects which derive from it are no longer geared towards meeting the needs of government Ministries but are oriented towards practical use cases and expectations of end users. The resulting transformation projects are thus focused primarily on satisfying users.

Stakeholders who are external to the government agencies (notaries, bankers, surveyors, urban planners and architects) have therefore been involved in the design process in order to ensure that their concerns are taken into account.

The scope of the Master Plan mainly concerns the executive departments of the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Urban Planning.

As they represent an important element in the land administration chain, the managements of the Tax Directorate – particularly the Estate, Land Conservation, Registration and Stamp Duty and Land Registry sections – have been involved via the Inter-ministerial Committee for Regulation of Activities in the Land Administration Chain.



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5. STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

In the framework of the study, three scenarios for the implementation of the Master Plan were proposed:

Scenario 1: Massive titling for new housing developments¹, focused principally on the timely issue of title deeds for new parcels thanks to the introduction of a procedure for pre-titling lots.

¹ *Massive titling means a title deed is issued on behalf of the State for each lot before its sale to the final owner. This requires close collaboration between the MCLU technical departments – especially the Cartography and Surveying Department – and those of the Land Registry departments of the Tax Directorate in order to carry out ground-truthing surveys of boundaries at the same time. Once adopted, this measure would speed up the issue of the title deed to the interested party because it would basically be considered as a straightforward transfer.*

Scenario 2: Regularizing current stock², which means clearing the stock of existing title deed requests and those yet to come in respect of developments which have already been approved. This is a proximity, zoned and focused activity, applied on specific geographical urban areas and achieved by means of large-scale land tenure regularization blitz operations.

² *In the course of these regularization operations, the land administration service will need to deploy multi-disciplinary teams tasked with obtaining the relevant information from owners and occupants, carrying out the necessary technical work and immediately starting to compile or complete title deed requests in order to be able to process and issue them with a short turnaround.*

Scenario 3: Bulk titling and regularizing the backlog, based on the first scenario and adding the second scenario's approach of regularization, but focused on specific sectors of the city.

The scenario selected by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Regulation of Activities in the Land Administration Chain is the one entitled "**Bulk titling and regularizing the backlog**". It represents an ambitious target which corresponds to the expectations of users and the challenges the administration needs to meet.

This scenario is structured around nine innovative operational projects, each one constituting a structural pillar of the global result, and based on international standards. The schemes are interdependent and the success of each will have a bearing on the overall success of the Master Plan.



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The implementation schedule is spread over five years, with an intermediate stage after two years. The proposed phases are as follows:

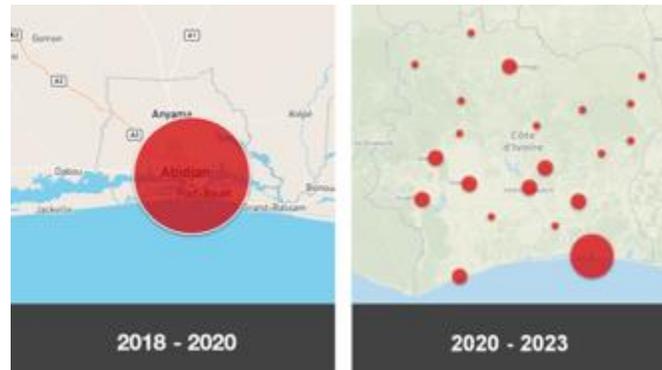


Figure 1: *Geographical phasing*

- 2018 – 2020: roll-out of the new land administration system across Greater Abidjan (from Jacqueville to Bonoua) plus the commune of Assinie;
- 2020 – 2023: extension of the system across the entire country.

After completing an analysis of the existing situation and thorough consideration, in which all players in the land administration chain took part, **the following strategic goals were defined:**

1. **Simplify** formalities and give users **visibility** as to the progress of their administrative transactions;
2. **Digitize** information, set up a system for end-to-end digital processing and ensure that multiple-use information is retained, **shared** and exchanged;
3. **Organize** departments and **automate** processing to improve the quality and efficiency of work and the **productivity** of the land administration chain;
4. Achieve a target number of title deeds (**deeds issued**);
5. Reduce the **turnaround time to process cases**;
6. Reduce the number of **land administration disputes**;
7. **Coordinate** processing with Government bodies (Tax Directorate, Prefects) and local authorities (Districts, local councils...);
8. **Increase** direct tax revenues and broaden the land administration tax base.



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6. ACTION PROGRAM 2018-2020

The implementation plan for actions in the Master Plan is structured around **nine main projects**. They address the issues identified in the course of the study and group them into **operational strands** in order to ensure effective and judicious accomplishment of those actions that will **deliver the Master Plan’s objectives**.

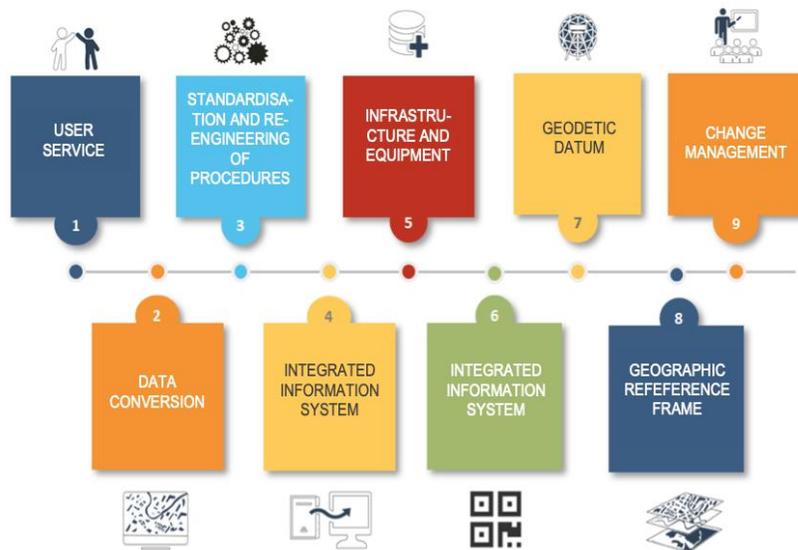


Figure 2: Backbone projects

User service

This will involve providing modern information centres as well as web and mobile applications to make it easier for users to initiate and track administrative formalities. Privileged access to the new system will be provided for professional organisations (bankers, surveyors and notaries) in order to enable smooth and secure interaction with the land administration services.

Conversion of existing data

This project is the continuation of the transition to a paperless system for state-owned property documentation, as well as for the restoration and digitization of mapping and topographic maps. It will result in existing information being incorporated into the land information system.

Standardization and re-engineering of procedures

A committee will be set up to propose appropriate changes to regulatory texts and technical standards in



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order to meet the objective of simplifying procedures and administrative formalities in general. This project will take over the mechanisms for devolving and decentralizing land management to local authorities.

Integrated information system

This project consists of integrating spatial and text data for urban land management into a single database. This common foundation will enable processes to be automated, thereby increasing productivity within agencies and ensuring delivery of a quality service to the user.

IT infrastructure and equipment

A new, state of the art technological infrastructure will be deployed to ensure reliable processing, complete integration and a high level of availability in support of the land administration chain services. This will enable all parties within the administration to exchange and share information according to their profile and permissions.

Unique land parcel identifier

This project will establish a unique identification standard for urban land parcels, independently of their legal nature. The purpose is to prevent confusion during processing and to avoid conflicting management of cases on the same parcels. This reference standard will enshrine the principle of “one deed, one parcel”.

Geodesic infrastructure

The new reference standards will be set up for Greater Abidjan in the framework of the first phase of the Master Plan.

Spatial information infrastructure

This project will enable a new, state of the art set of spatial data to be produced for Greater Abidjan, comprising Orthophotography, high resolution Digital Terrain Modelling and an urban spatial database. These data will be used for locating and rigorously checking the position of land parcels. The project also seeks to build a valuable base of information to be used for other land development projects of major significance for government agencies. In particular **Orthophotography work is an essential basis for the Greater Abidjan address system project.** The **Digital Terrain Model** enables areas at **risk of flooding** to be identified so that measures for the **prevention and reduction of flood impact** can be taken.



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Change management

Within the framework of this project, a range of training, support and communication initiatives will be organised in order to bring staff skills into line with the new tools. A land administration laboratory will be set up together with a Task Force dedicated to early implementation of the new land administration chain.

Finally, we wish to underline the **key points** of the Master Plan action program, which are as follows:

- Significant improvement of service to users through digital technologies
- 60 000 additional title deeds by 2020
- A land administration chain firmly based on end-to-end digital processing
- Standardization of land administration texts and procedures
- Interoperability of information systems
- Availability of tools for prevention and management of environmental risks and natural disasters in urban areas
- Massive titling of new housing developments and land registry regularization of existing constructions

7. CONCLUSION

The Ministry for Construction, Housing and Urban Planning has committed to **improving the quality of its public service for users** while at the same time modernizing its administrative practices and working tools. The aim is to set up **automated procedures which are more efficient, more transparent and less restrictive for users** (citizens and professionals) who would like to have smoother interactions with their government agency.

It has been decided to adopt an **innovative, structural Master Plan** for the next five years. The path put forward by this framework document contemplates that first results will already be perceived by the users from 2020 on. At this stage, the integrated urban land management system will be **implemented and operational** for Greater Abidjan. There will be a substantial increase in the number of title deeds issued and **turnaround times will be divided by 10**.



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In addition, land administration agencies will see their tools transformed and their working practices modernized. They will be given a shared platform which will make the following available to all departments:

- secured land administration information in real time;
- a monitoring dashboard for decision-makers ;
- layers of accurate, up to date spatial information which respond to various political challenges : urban planning, address systems, risk prevention - especially for risks in connection with torrential rainfall – identification of illegal constructions, large-scale infrastructure projects, etc.

In 2023 all regions will have started to benefit from the new system which will be able to meet the specific needs of deconcentrated agencies. All land administration documents will have become paperless and processing of deeds will be secured.

The Master Plan to Simplify and Digitally Transform Urban Land Administration will set a virtuous circle in motion which will benefit many stakeholders:

- More peaceful relations between citizens due to the rules for obtaining administrative deeds and permits being followed;
- Integrating external professional stakeholders : surveyors, notaries, architects, urban planners and bankers all become partners in the land administration chain thanks to specialized online services which will be provided for them;
- Better urban planning allowing development in the country to be organised in a balanced way with fewer problems;
- Increasing direct revenues resulting from the issue of title deeds and indirect revenues thanks to a widening tax base (increase in the number of identified parcels and better identification of owners);
- Stimulating the property market by reducing the mortgage rate due to the increased reliability of property deeds and the guarantees associated with them;
- Increasing housing construction in order to respond to strong demographic pressure;
- Improving the business climate by making property rights secure;
- Providing the image of a modern, transparent and efficient administration;
- Reducing the costs of processing deeds and pooling State expenditures by providing a shared, secure infrastructure.



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8. PERSPECTIVES

The Masterplan has been warmly welcomed by stakeholders and relayed in national medias mid 2018. It has been officialized by the MCLU as its guideline of reference for the implementation of the simplification and digital transformation plan of actions. Some actions have already been initiated, mostly in the field of standards definition. Start up of the main program of backbone projects is expected to take place in Q2 2019.

9. GLOSSARY

MCLU: Ministry of Construction, Housing and Urban Planning

CP-STD: Steering Committee for Simplification and Digital Transformation

IGN FI: IGN France International

IGN: French National Geographic Institute

BNETD: National Office of Technical Studies and Development

PND: National Development Plan (Ivory Coast)

DTC: Technical and Cartography Department

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11. LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Geographic phasing (p. 6)

Figure 2: Backbone projects (p. 7)