

Land Policy, Administration and Management

The course was given by Ms. Jacqueline daCosta who has held high positions in the Government of Jamaica and has served as an Advisor to the Prime Minister. Her lecture focused on the need for land policies that better manage finite land resources and correct indiscriminate use and poor development practices.

The key goals of a land policy and management were to ensure equitable use of natural resources, promote comprehensive and integrated development in both urban and rural areas and serve as guides for development of related policies and investment opportunities. Some of the major land issues that such a land policy should focus on were degradation of forests, unplanned urban and industrial development, squatting and illegal development, the occupation of hazard prone areas and environmental pollution.

The course identified critical areas where action was required, including, among others: establishment of a national spatial database as a foundation for decision-making; sustainable land resources planning; ownership access and tenure; valuation, taxation and subsidies; disaster preparedness; environmental issues; and legislation and institutional framework and other legal aspects. The need for, the structure of, and steps to establish national spatial data infrastructure was discussed in detail.

In an interactive discussion, it was argued that developing countries, when formulating their natural resource and land management, should first look to utilize their own resources and capacities—and decide for themselves—before taking external advices uncritically. The question of granting land titles and ownership to vulnerable or otherwise marginalized groups, such as women, disabled, AIDS-infected in African countries, was also raised.

In concluding remarks, the course offered recommendations on capacity building, in particular to SIDS on the needed steps to prepare a regional land management policy, improve institution involved in land management, and learn from each other how to deal with areas of common interest in a coordinated manner.