

**A prime advantage of FIG conferences is the opportunity it gives for meeting old friends and making new contacts. Many useful leads arise from such casual and unexpected contacts and the networking that is possible with like minds from almost anywhere in the world. The FIG Regional Conference in Accra, Ghana in March was no exception.**



## Strong interest at FIG Ghana

– go beyond the technical level, says president

With over 650 people attending, strong media coverage and high level political interest this event attracted attendees from 20 African countries and from 30 further countries. The context was rapid urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa, and the resulting economic and social problems. The political challenge is to make the dual land tenure systems that operate between traditional lands governed by chiefs, and the elected governance of democracy to make them work successfully in parallel. There is also the challenge of rapid urbanisation with often consequential degradation of the environment, and the decreasing sustainability of communities in rural areas as people migrate to towns, generally settling in slums. The key is to make the interrelationship of urban and rural work, observed FIG President Holger Magel in his closing address.

Echoing Stig Enemark's paper on the changing paradigm in land administration (see page 20) Magel referred to the surveying profession's key role in land administration, management and spatial development in its widest sense as forming the bedrock of governance. 'Our role involves taking on responsibility that projects further than the technical level: we should, and need, to be involved in the solutions of social and political issues,' he said, adding that the profession needs to move away from the status quo toward new ways of thinking.

Education is another critical issue for many African countries. Stig Enemark, highlighted the ongoing challenges of making a sustained difference; capacity building needs to occur at societal, organisational and individual level, and that success

cannot be achieved overall if it is not achieved at all three levels. ISPRS President Ian Dowman spoke of the particular challenges in Africa, with some 30% of Africa's university trained professionals estimated to live beyond the continent's boundaries (an estimated 50,000 Africans with PhDs are working outside the continent). Although much is being done, there is a decided lack of joining up. This was complemented by Ken Allred (Canada) who spoke on practical ways of raising the profile of the profession among key stakeholder groups (not least politicians).

The conference saw real progress in the work of several commissions (the backbone of FIG's workings). On **C 4, Hydrography** it further consolidated the relationship with the International Hydrographic Organisation and a paper presented in Accra on charting Nigerian Waters for Safer Navigation was FIG Article of the Month in April. A new publication is expected at FIG Munich which is a joint effort with **C 7** on "Issues in the Administration of Marine and Coastal Spaces".

**C 5** (Positioning & Measurement) discussed AFREF II – an ambitious project to put in place a GNSS positioning infrastructure that will unify the various coordinate reference systems currently in use in Africa, whilst **C 8** (Spatial Planning & Development) saw progress on disaster risk management as well as collaboration with UN Habitat and CASLE.

**FIG** • The above is a very brief account of proceedings and is taken from the joint report of Iain Greenway (RICS) and Alan Wright (ICES) which is available from RICS Geomatics. A full listing of papers is on the FIG website: [www.fig.net](http://www.fig.net)

## Salary survey finds geomatics trailing

The average salary of chartered surveyors across all grades, disciplines and faculties in the UK is £44,839 according to the 2006 RICS and Macdonald & Company's salary and benefits survey. For principals, the survey found geomatics surveyors averaging £48,500 against an average score for all groups of £69,256. GW's snapshot survey carried out in May following a questionnaire in the last issue found that principal surveyors were even worse off. Even allowing for some difference in the two surveys' methodology (a better comparison might have been with Macdonald's

Associates/Managers) it still revealed a yawning gap with geomatics some 20% lower.

GW's survey found the following average salaries:

**Principal surveyor £31,776**

**Senior surveyor £26,869**

**Junior surveyor £22,021**

Drilling down into the detail of the survey which looked at other benefits, we found that two thirds of respondents were paid overtime (one was lucky enough to get double time!). An annual bonus was also enjoyed by 59%. Holiday benefits averaged at 25.5 days and with most (78%) this increased with service. On pension and

health benefits 79% were in contributory pension schemes and 37.5% were in health insurance schemes (for two thirds this was non-contributory).

On company vehicles and car allowances we should probably have couched our questions more carefully. No employer expects surveyors to go out into the field (unless for a building survey in central London) without transport. Some shared pool vehicles ('I share a work van used only for work' was one plaintive comment), others hired cars strictly for the job or received an allowance; fewer

had their own dedicated company vehicle (40%).

GW's survey was sponsored by a leading survey firm. However we expect to return to this topic soon as the TSA's bi-annual survey is expected to be published in a month or so. Watch this space.

• *Our thanks all readers who took part. They can be assured that their forms have now been shredded and have not been seen by anyone other than the Editor. The lucky winner of a prize drawer for a 2Gb iPod was Mr Michael Winchurch.*