

The Eastern African Land Administration Network and Covid 19: Effects and Implications

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SUMMARY

The Eastern African Land Administration Network (EALAN) is a platform for academic and knowledge exchange constituting of mainly academic institutions in the eastern Africa region. The network has had major strides in various aspects such as developing or reviewing and harmonizing land administration related curricula in the Eastern Africa region, executing collaborative researches across the region and providing short courses for land professionals. Annually, EALAN activities culminate at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) where members share experiences and build on next steps. Covid19, which stroke in early 2020, derailed the activities of the EALAN network just as it did in all other sectors globally. EALAN's daily operations of the network shut down, alternatives being the online services which is limited in most Eastern African Countries. Meanwhile, universities across the region shut down, and no education took place in many countries due to lack of online facilities. This means that the year 2020 did not exist academically. Activities under provision of short courses for land professional across the region or within the country levels halted, as well as community outreach activities such as the Land Clinic by INES-Ruhengeri in Rwanda, affecting local communities who benefit from free advise of how land administration services, institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms work.

At a broader level, the cancellation of the AGM was a big blow as it is the only platform where members come and share and exchange information and plan for future activities and direction of the network. International conferences like African Association of Remote Sensing for Environment 2020 (AARSE-2020) which was in pipeline to be organized and hosted by INES-Ruhengeri in October 2020 in Collaboration with EALAN members was postponed was halted. An online conference would be funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) but this was not favored by EALAN members mainly due to poor internet connections in most EALAN member institutions. Moreover, International partners who

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previously financially supported the EALAN international conferences withdrew their funding because of budget cuts, as funds were redirected towards Covid-19 by the funding countries. The cutting of funding by international development partners have serious implications on the future of EALAN AGMs, its activities and the cohesion of the network.

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