

Editorial

Welcome to volume 6, issue 1 of the *Journal of African Real Estate Research* (JARER). The idea for the special issue *Women in African Real Estate and Urban Development Research* showcasing the work of female African authors arose from the editors' discussion at the 2019 AfRES meeting about the lack of female representation on the editorial board and in the journal's pages. The International Real Estate Society would recruit women worldwide to participate. A team of one African and one American female researcher took on the editorial task and a cadre of female researchers from sister societies volunteered to serve as mentors and reviewers to supplement the JARER editorial board.

Of the 15 manuscripts with lead female author submitted, seven were accepted and appear in this issue. They represent research from multiple African countries on property topics ranging across physical construction, urban policy, and legal issues. The scholarship focuses variously on gender-specific and general development concerns.

We express our gratitude to the reviewers for their constructive advice to the authors and the mentors: Ramya Aroul, Stephanie Butcher, Olga Filippova, Julia Freybote, Geci Karuri-Sebina, Peddy Lai, Kimberly Winson-Geideman, and Stephanie Yates. These women guided the authors through the submission and revision process, providing valuable advice. This special issue received support from Luke Boyle, JARER's managing editor, who has been an invaluable member of the team. And finally, kudos to Professors Abel Olaleye, editor-in-chief, and Aly Karam, associate editor, for recognizing the potential for this project.

Little did we know when we embarked upon this journey that the world would be engulfed in a pandemic. The staff, authors and supporters faced challenges that made the publication process more onerous than usual. In addition, we suffered a terrible loss. This issue is dedicated to Dr. Mary Adebola Ajayi whose manuscript was in the final revision stage when she fell ill. A memorial appears after this editorial, then her paper, a work interrupted by a life cut short.

Dr Ajayi's paper examines general impediments to land title registration as well as gender differences in government land allocations and title registration in the private land market in Akure, Nigeria. Land department officials believe lack of awareness and processing time are the main hinderances to land title registration. In addition, men are allocated significantly more government land and issued significantly more Certificates of Occupancy on private lands than women. Joint titles are rare.

In a related vein, Sophia Marcian Kongela and Florencia Bahati Didas explore urban property co-titling in a settlement in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The authors use data from a regularization programme and interviews with government officials, local political leaders, and 59 property owning couples to explore joint title awareness, preferences, and actions. Despite government officials' efforts at education and legal aid, most women interested in co-titling were overruled by their husbands, who placed the property in their name only. The authors suggest educational programs, especially for men, about women's land ownership rights.

Augustina Chiwuzie and her co-authors use content analysis to explore female residents' and community leaders' perceptions of women's access to rural farmland in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The women believe that purchasing or leasing land is more unaffordable for them than men. They also lack security in that they can be dispossessed at divorce, separation or death of the husband.

Customary laws and traditional practices are thought to hinder rural women's access to secure land rights despite governmental reforms.

The paper by Esther O. Thontteh and Modupe M. Omirin examines why housing is not being constructed on available land in the Lagos urban fringe despite a severe housing shortage and supportive national housing policies. Developers and Land Bureau officials believe weak institutional frameworks, inconsistent government regulations and policies, and high construction costs create barriers to construction. While developers prefer joint ventures and administrative reforms to address the problem, government land officials prefer contract construction deadlines. The authors suggest administrative and collaborative innovations.

Prisca Simbanegavi and her co-authors use in-depth interviews with 27 commercial real estate industry participants to identify the challenges faced by regeneration projects in the Johannesburg, South Africa inner city. They recommend several public policy changes: increased transparency in the tender system, creation of PPPs and City Improvement Districts to finance infrastructure services, and provision of social housing.

The role that construction plays in global concerns about water is considered by Thabelo Ramantswana and her co-authors. Interviews with 36 South African construction professionals underscore the importance of water throughout the construction process. Risk assessment, mitigation plans, and establishing contractual responsibilities for water provision are important considerations amid water scarcity.

In the final paper, Basirat Ashabi Oyalowo and her co-authors explore property tax systems in Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, Kigali and Lagos. They find that property tax reforms have increased participation and revenue, yet evasion continues. The role of local governments in facilitating more efficient and sustainable taxation systems is argued. The researchers also suggest that property tax revenue be invested in infrastructure for communities whose residents pay their taxes, rewarding their compliance and encouraging others to pay.

UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 expresses the imperative to achieve gender equality and, more specifically, the African Union's Agenda 2063 centres gender equality and participation of women as a key enabler for the continent's future. Goal 14 specifies an aspiration to 'Full gender equality in all spheres of life' including equal economic rights and access to productive assets (including land). This JARER special issue advances these aspirations by its means and its knowledge output. We invite you to read these papers and consider their research-based suggestions for reforms in public policies and practices towards Africa's more sustainable and inclusive development.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Gibler and Geci Karuri-Sebina

Co-editors: JARER Special Issue by Women in African Real Estate and Urban Development Research