



KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

THE PHILIPPINES' LAND REFORM EXPERIENCE

In his keynote address at the workshop, Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes of the Philippines' Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) presented several substantive points, drawn from the experience of the country's own agrarian reform program. Among these is the need to view agrarian reform as more than mere physical transfer of land to landless farmers, but as the redistribution of a "bundle of rights" over an asset—including the rights to use and derive income from the transferred lands. Similarly critical, in the Secretary's view, is the need (only recently addressed in the Philippine Development Program 2010-2011) to adopt an agricultural policy that acknowledges *smallholder agriculture* as the base of the country's rural development—to make sure that *smallholders*, better known as agrarian reform beneficiaries, are at the forefront of agriculture.

With only 9% of private lands remaining for redistribution under the Philippines' agrarian reform program, the DAR is now taking an objective look at several areas for improvement and rectification:

- 1) ensuring that the ongoing digitization effort does not only provide transparency and accountability of land records, but does not sacrifice accessibility by ordinary people in the process;
- 2) uncovering possible 'distortions' in implementation such as awarding collective titles over lands that were not actually alienable or disposable, or selecting beneficiaries out of convenience rather than genuine community-based consultation;
- 3) upholding the farmers' right to self-selection regarding how and in what form (business unit) they will be collectivized, if needed; and
- 4) addressing the 'demographic realities' of the program—recognizing that beneficiaries do age, have children, and may wish to pursue other options, hence the need for a 'second-generation land transfer' mechanism from a beneficiary to a landless farmer.

Today, following years of land transfer, the challenge is how to enable the country's smallholders to 'engage the market.' A daunting task indeed, as that market is now dominated by huge, mainly international, corporations who have taken on the role that the state economy used to play, imposing quotas and production targets. There is also the growing reality that, for today's smallholders, "Agriculture is just one of the pathways out of poverty. As such, we must realize that staying in agriculture...is essentially a choice of the smallholder himself."



WORKSHOP DESIGN

In terms of design, the workshop was divided into the following:

- seven country presentations of LWA partners;
- three Mekong country presentations (Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam);
- presentation and validation of GLTN scoping study on land tenure initiative in Asia-Pacific;
- inputs on global processes (Post-2015 SDGs, Voluntary Guidelines, Responsible Investments for Agriculture and Food Systems, Post-International Year on Family Farming, ILC's People-Centered Land Governance);
- inputs from three research/academic institutions in improving the monitoring framework (Bangladesh, Indonesia and Philippines); and
- parallel small group discussions (to discuss how to further improve the monitoring framework, how to link the monitoring initiative with post-2015 SDG processes and how to foster networking and exchange of information)

COUNTRY PAPERS¹

BANGLADESH

Land Reform Monitoring Report 2014

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Land Governance Issues/Updates

As early as its 2011 Land Reform Monitoring Report, Bangladesh had formulated a Land Reform Development Index (LRDI), which was acclaimed by the academia, practitioners, and the society at large as an innovative and practical endeavor to track the state of land reform of a country. However, in its Report for 2014, it was pointed out that the experiences of acceptance of the LRDI and its outcomes by the government are yet to be satisfactory. The expected positive results are acknowledged to be dependent on the government's commitment and seriousness in addressing land reform itself.

¹ ANGOC shall produce a separate publication containing the abridged country monitoring reports (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines), a regional summary and the updated land monitoring framework.