

## WORKING SESSION | 3

### People-Centered Land Governance: National Engagement Strategies and Commitment Based Initiatives

#### People-Centered Land Governance and the Ten Commitments of the International Land Coalition: CBIs and NESes in Asian Countries

**Saurlin Siagian**, *Asia Regional Coordinator, International Land Coalition (ILC)*

With Country Discussions from:

**Shankida Khan Ripa** and **AKM Bulbul Ahmed**, *ALRD (Bangladesh)*

**Te Sokkhoeun**, *Program Coordinator, STAR Kampuchea (Cambodia)*

**Dharm Raj Joshi**, *NES Coordinator, CSRC (Nepal)*

In the past ten years, global financial crises heavily impacted land in the Asian region. To cope with the growing need for capital, Asia became the factory of the world, supplying raw and assembled products for the consumption of the rest of the globe. Foreign-funded projects and industries are flocking to Asia, while the financial transactions are negotiated in developed countries. This has enabled the



continuation of the land rush, and hence allowed for massive land-grabbing in the resource-rich continent.

During the International Land Coalition's (ILC) Global Land Forum in September 2018 held in Bandung, Indonesia, ILC member-organizations came together to craft the Bandung Declaration. The Declaration

recognizes the existence of extreme socio-economic injustice because of unequal control over land by the wealthy, climate change, corruption, shrinking democratic space, and violations against land defenders' rights. The same document insists that land rights should remain at the center of development agendas and narratives, and that unequal and unjust systems ought to be transformed. ILC members put forward two main calls for global attention: (1) protect land and environmental defenders, and (2) bring agrarian reform back to national political agendas.

ILC acknowledges that achieving these would require unified action from global actors. For its part, ILC connects people and its members globally. Through its broad

membership of CSOs, intergovernmental organizations, and individuals, the coalition works on its 10 Commitments to achieve people-centered land governance. These commitments range from securing tenure rights, to enhancing small-scale farming, encouraging access to and transparency of information, to protection against land grabbing. All ten commitments are in line with the SDGs.

At the country level, ILC members work together to pursue common goals and activities under respective countries' National Engagement Strategies (NES). At present, there are eight operative NES platforms in Asia. Below are several examples of these national platforms.

In Bangladesh, the NES is composed of five ILC members and is coordinated by ALRD. Bangladesh's NES seeks to address issues related to IPs' land rights in the plains and CHT areas, land grabs, water rights, and women's land rights, among others. As with other CSO initiatives, the NES in Bangladesh is challenged by the drive to acquire more land, shrinking democratic space for CSOs, and the government's lack of political will to implement international treaties.



The NES in Nepal, on the other hand, is composed of six members, working in 17 to 18 districts in the country. Coordinated by CSRC, the Nepalese NES conducts evidence-based research studies, forms and strengthens people's organizations, supports land rights movements, and establishes multi-stakeholder platforms. One of its shared activities relates to lobbying for the passage of a Land Use Policy under the new federal government structure. Nepal is also one of the pilot countries for the ILC's Dashboard Initiative, which will allow for easier, accessible data-supported monitoring of the 10 commitments.

Finally, the NES in Cambodia, hosted by STAR Kampuchea, consists only of three organizations. Its activities are focused on land, forestry, fisheries, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation. Though small, the NES in Cambodia has been able to reach significant achievements, such as the approval of several indigenous land titles, community forestry agreements, and community protected areas. In addition, the NES has contributed to the resolution of 90 land disputes.

ILC members employ connect-influence-mobilize strategies at country, regional, and

global levels to change policies, practices, and agendas. Apart from the NES, ILC Asia members are also engaged in inter-country activities in pursuit of the 10 ILC commitments. Both activity spheres engage with the government, intergovernmental organizations, as well as other stakeholders within and outside of the particular countries. ILC presently has 20 interconnected national and regional platforms in Asia.

---

<sup>1</sup>*Detailed descriptions of the ten commitments may be viewed in the ILC website:  
<https://www.triennial.landcoalition.org/commitments-2>*