



Land Watch Asia

Regional Campaign Update 2010-2011

Intensifying the Struggle for Land Rights¹

Asia: a geographically and culturally diverse region, characterized by stark contrasts. Many countries in the region are rapidly industrializing and enjoying unprecedented wealth, but many of their inhabitants are suffering from hunger and poverty. Of the world's 925 million hungry, 578 million are found in Asia.²

Poverty is concentrated in rural areas, where people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. In fact, three-fourths of the world's farming households – 80% of whom are small-scale farmers and producers – call Asia home. Their survival hinges on access to and control of land and natural resources.

Land ownership distribution in the region is highly concentrated: the few own many lands, while the many own few lands. Indeed, rural poverty is highly correlated with landlessness – the poorest are the landless, the small and marginal farmers, indigenous peoples, minority castes. Rural women, especially those who head households, tend to be poorer than their male counterparts. Also, the general trend is that the number of small and marginal landholdings

is increasing, while the average size of land per household shrinks.

Land within the Asian context transcends economics: It is a source of power, dignity and cultural identity. Access to land promotes sustainable management and utilization of resources. Unfortunately, governments lack the political will to uphold redistributive land and resource policies, and espouse a neoliberal economic framework.

As land and natural resources dwindle, Asia's burgeoning population finds it also has to compete for land and rights to it. Farmlands are being gobbled up by industrialization and urbanization, making way for special economic zones and corporate plantations. Deforestation and mining are destroying watersheds, undermining biodiversity and railroading indigenous cultures.

Those who will bear the brunt of a deteriorating natural resource base are the poor, of course. They stand to be the biggest losers in a game of big corporations and powerful governments. Unless something is done.

The Land Watch Asia campaign is convened in the region by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC).

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Enter the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign, which the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) initiated in 2007, to ensure that access to land, agrarian reform and sustainable development for the rural poor are addressed in national and regional development agenda. LWA takes stock of significant changes in the policy and legal environments; undertakes strategic national and regional advocacy activities on access to land; jointly develops approaches and tools; and encourages the sharing of experiences on coalition-building and actions on land rights issues. As a regional

platform, it seeks to promote consensus building and advocacy among an active constituency with a shared understanding on land issues.

The Land Watch Asia campaign spans eight countries in South and Southeast Asia, where its partners actively campaign for land rights (Table 1).

The overall objective of the LWA campaign is to intensify policy dialogues with national governments and regional institutions by strengthening and building consensus among its constituency.

Table 1. Land Watch Asia Partners

Country	LWA Partners	Description
Bangladesh	Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) www.alrd.org	ALRD is a single focused, rights-based policy advocacy and networking NGO that seeks to empower the poor, women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups and to ensure their land rights through comprehensive land and agrarian reform in Bangladesh. The ALRD network has 260 NGOs.
	Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) www.sehd.org	Founded in 1993, SEHD is a non-profit Bangladeshi organization promoting investigative reporting, engaging in action-oriented research, assisting people think and speak out. Its areas of work are mainly environment and human rights.
Cambodia	STAR Kampuchea www.starkampuchea.org.kh	STAR Kampuchea is an NGO working to build democracy by strengthening civil society in Cambodia. It deals with issues related to land, forestry and fisheries. It also provides funding support and advocacy capacity to its 11 Provincial Advocacy Networks (PANs) and cooperating organizations.
	NGO Forum on Cambodia www.ngoforum.org.kh	The NGO Forum on Cambodia is a membership organization for local and international NGOs working in the country. It exists for information sharing, debate and advocacy on priority issues (such as land) affecting Cambodia's development.
India	Association of Voluntary Agencies in Rural Development (AVARD) www.avard.in	AVARD is a network of some 700 voluntary organizations in India engaged in rural development, including advocacy on land. Its goals are to: promote cooperation and understanding among voluntary agencies to work for rural communities; strengthen capacities; and facilitate exchange of ideas and experiences within the network.
	Ekta Parishad www.ektaparishad.com	Ekta Parishad is a non-violent social movement in India actively working on land and forest rights at the national level. It is demanding for structural change: complete land redistribution for the landless and marginalized sectors of society to escape poverty.
	South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA)	Based in south India, SARRA develops knowledge on sustainable development; and designs strategies for participatory planning, implementation, monitoring, feedback and evaluation. Over the years, SARRA has promoted indigenous sustainable agriculture practices through trainings, farmer field schools and publications.

Country	LWA Partners	Description
Indonesia	Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA) www.kpa.or.id	KPA coordinates 104 people's organizations (landless, small peasants, fishers, women, indigenous peoples) and 83 NGOs from 23 provinces in Indonesia. It works towards the realization of a fair agrarian system and promote ownership, control and use of land and natural resources for the poor.
	Bina Desa www.binadesa.or.id	As a network of some 40 NGOs working together, Bina Desa facilitates the participation of community organizations and people's movements in the socio-cultural political fields. It prioritizes developing human resources at the local level.
Nepal	Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) www.csrcnepal.org	CSRC has facilitated the land rights movement in Nepal since 1995, growing into a national movement promoting pro-poor land reform and management as a means to secure the rights of the land-poor. It works with the landless and indigenous minorities.
	Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) www.fecofun.org	A formal network of forest user groups from all over Nepal, FECOFUN has grown into a social movement organization with about 8.5 million forest users. It promotes sustainable forest management and utilization of resources, building consensus and enhancing community participation.
	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) www.ngofederation.org	NFN emerged as an umbrella organization of NGOs in the aftermath of democratic political change and establishment of multiparty parliamentary system in 1990. Since its establishment, NFN has an outreach of 5,227 NGOs promoting human rights, social justice and pro-poor development.
Pakistan	Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE) www.scope.org.pk	SCOPE focuses on environmental protection and land rights, through advocacy, capacity building, networking and field projects. It has been instrumental in the the formation of the National Peasant Coalition of Pakistan.
Philippines	The People's Campaign for Agrarian Reform (AR Now!) www.landwatch.i.ph	AR Now! is a national coalition of 15 NGOs and people's organizations involved in agrarian reform advocacy.
	Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (CARRD) www.carrd.org.ph	CARRD is an active partner of farmer groups and cooperatives in the pursuit of land tenure improvement and agricultural sustainability. CARRD strengthens its advocacies through strategic partnerships, working in three provinces, with four partner-farmers' organizations.
	PhilDHRRA www.phildhrra.net	PhilDHRRA is a national network of 67 NGOs that enhances the capacity of its members to address agrarian reform and rural development issues.
	PAFID www.pafid.org.ph	PAFID is an NGO support organization with over 140 members engaged in the development of indigenous social organizations, ancestral domain management, community-based natural resources management planning, community mapping, agro-forestry, technical services and policy advocacy.
	SALIGAN www.saligan.org	The Center for Alternative Legal Assistance is a legal resource NGO doing developmental legal work with women, farmers, workers, the urban poor, the indigenous peoples and local communities. It seeks to effect societal change by working towards the empowerment of women, the basic sectors, and local communities through the creative use of the law and legal resources.
Sri Lanka	Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (SARVODAYA) www.sarvodaya.org	Sarvodaya was founded as a people's self-help organization inspired by Gandhian ideals of "truth, non-violence and service for all". It seeks to empower some 5,200 community-based organizations (Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies) in over 15,000 villages in Sri Lanka.
Regional	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) www.angoc.org	ANGOC is a regional association of 17 national and regional networks of Asian NGOs actively engaged in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance and rural development.



LWA has three major components: i) information sharing, ii) policy dialogue and campaign at the national level, and iii) regional campaign.

INFORMATION SHARING

In 2009, ANGOC published *Securing the Right to Land: A CSO Overview on Access to Land in Asia*, a compilation of country papers providing a concise introduction to the legal and policy environment, actors, challenges and opportunities in regard to access to land, in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The publication also includes a regional summary on access to land issues in Asia.

A second edition has been published in early 2012, featuring updates and two new country studies from Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

ANGOC also came out with issue briefs on land-related policies of bilateral aid agencies (i.e., China, Japan, Australia), regional institutions (i.e., SAARC and ASEAN), and intergovernmental institutions (i.e., IFAD, World Bank, EC). These issue briefs were drafted for the campaign to be able to effectively navigate the political landscape for land rights advocacy.

ANGOC shares these publications in national and international policy discussions.

In the digital sphere, ANGOC has a website, portal, and blog. ANGOC's home on the web (www.angoc.org) allows visitors to learn more about access to land, sustainable agriculture, food security and participatory governance in Asia. The ANGOC Portal, a separate section of the ANGOC website, is a digital repository of ANGOC's knowledge products – monographs, papers, conference proceedings, journals. Meanwhile, the Land Watch Asia blog (<http://landwatchasia.wordpress.com>) contains news articles and updates on campaign activities, land rights cases,

appeals of community-based organizations, and links to the network's knowledge products.

The Land Watch Asia electronic newsletters are another means by which ANGOC disseminates campaign updates. Its expanding mailing list presently includes around 400 individuals and organizations, including social movements, CSOs, IGOs, government agencies, academe, and media. Articles for the website, newsletter and blog are sourced mainly from contributions of Land Watch partners and the ANGOC network.

Media coverage is crucial in publicizing land issues. The LWA campaign continues to attract attention, with its members regarded as a source of information on land issues in Asia, from an audience that includes researchers and the media. For example, graduate researchers from Canada and the US, as well as *Der Spiegel*, the German news magazine, have approached ANGOC about the issue of land grabbing in the Philippines. Partners are interviewed by local media outfits, and campaign activities are featured in newspaper, television and online media.

IN-COUNTRY POLICY DIALOGUES

At the heart of Land Watch Asia are the country campaigns, which engage governments and intergovernmental organizations in constructive policy dialogue.³ The national-level campaigns follow a common regional framework provided by ANGOC, and are driven by policy issues relevant to the respective countries (Table 2).

The policy dialogue component of the LWA campaign seeks to promote discussions among different sectors for constituency building on a range of key issues, such as land grabbing, food security, and land use.

By involving policy makers, CSOs and social movements (i.e., farmers, fishers, indigenous

Table 2. Focus and gains of LWA country-level campaigns

Country	Campaign Issues	Gains of the Campaign
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord Reform of the Vested Property Return Act of 2011 Proposed land law for indigenous peoples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded networking and alliance building beyond CSOs and NGOs (IWGA, CHT commission) Interest to reactivate CHT Land Commission within government Resolution of contentious provisions/clauses in the Vested Property Act
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and economic land concessions Addressing land conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of communities on land rights Opening space for dialogue with government and international organizations
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Forest Rights Act of 2006 Implementation of the recommendations of the Bihar Land Reforms Commission Engaging the National Land Reforms Council and Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Land Reforms Council was created as a result of the Janadesh march organized by Ekta Parishad New impetus on implementation of unfinished land reforms in Bihar (from <i>Bhoodan</i> Land to homestead to sharecropping, and administrative reforms)
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land conflicts and land grabbing, particularly for plantations Piloting of agrarian reform in selected districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Karam Tanah (People's Coalition Anti Land Grabbing) Increased public and media awareness on land issues
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of land reform in the Constitution Passage of a national land law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use policy is being finalized Initiated the process for formulating a national land policy
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate agriculture farming Implementation of land reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed interest among advocates to pursue land reforms Initiated the formation of a National Peasant Coalition of Pakistan
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the implementation of the extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Passage of a national land use act Addressing land conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passage of CARP Extension with Reforms (CARPER) Law The national land use act is pending in Congress Establishment of a national platform for cooperation and policy dialogues on IP issues

peoples, women, agricultural laborers, landless, *dalits*), activities to spur policy dialogue have created synergy, solidarity, and greater impact.

BANGLADESH

ALRD regularly organizes seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions in Bangladesh to influence policy towards the poor and disadvantaged. Topics have included the commercialization of agricultural land and water bodies, women's land rights, reform of the Vested Properties Return Act of 2011, and the proposed land law for indigenous peoples.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord grants hill tribes limited autonomy and requires the





establishment of a land commission to settle land ownership issues. ALRD has worked to convince government regulators and persons in authority to implement the Peace Accord. ALRD compiled all the rights included in the CHT Regulation 1900 into a book, for dissemination and use of lawyers, human rights activities and professionals. ALRD launched the book and held a workshop of close to 200 participants to highlight the points of the regulation. Barrister Shafique Ahmed, Honorable Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs was chief guest during the said workshop, laying emphasis on accurate knowledge and effective use of the CHT Regulation 1900.

The Government of Bangladesh intends to draft a law to protect indigenous peoples' rights. ALRD, together with ANGO and PAFID, seized this opportunity and organized a study tour for two Members of Parliament as well as CSOs to learn firsthand about the Philippines' landmark law, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. The delegation comprised: Rashed Khan Menon and Hasanua Haque Inu (Members of Parliament), Dr. Sadeka Halim (Commissioner, Right to Information), Mangal Kumar Chakma (Member, Drafting Committee of IPs Constitutional Rights); Shamsul Huda and Rowshan Jahan (ALRD).

C A M B O D I A

To reverse the consolidation of land in the hands of a few landowners and foreign and local corporations in Cambodia, STAR Kampuchea has stepped up its various initiatives, like the Advocacy Capacity Building Program (ACP), which aims to develop CSOs' capacities to promote the rule of law and influence public decisions for the benefit of poor and disadvantaged people. As it were, many Cambodians lack understanding and familiarity with the law, while facing land and natural resource problems.

The ACP works by improving support and capacity of Provincial Advocacy Networks (PAN) and Cooperating



Organizations (CO), for vulnerable target groups to be able to claim and secure their rights to land and other natural resources. The ACP covers 11 of Cambodia's 24 provinces, including Phnom Penh, and partners with government ministries and local government and CSOs.

In 2010, STAR Kampuchea also conducted some focus group discussions with farmers, indigenous peoples, forest users and human rights advocates, on the subject of land grabbing and land conflicts. The discussions drew out policy recommendations, and provided a basis for designing training courses on the country's Land Law, land rights, land concessions and land registration, in order to raise awareness on land issues.

However, Cambodia's draft NGO bill has a number of controversial provisions threatening to hamper CSOs' community work and advocacy.

I N D I A

Campaign partners in India have focused on key land-related legislations: the effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act, the enactment of the land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement bill.

AVARD has lobbied with the state government of Bihar to implement the two major recommendations of the Bihar Land Reforms Commission: the time-bound distribution of *Bhoodan* (gift land), including

the computerization of records, mutation, restoration of possession of land awardees in cases of eviction; and the allotment of homestead lands to rural poor landless households under the Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Act.

Also, the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reforms submitted a draft national land reform policy for the National Land Reforms Council (NLRC) to review in 2009. But the NLRC has never even met to discuss the draft. To highlight the urgency of this policy, Ekta Parishad has engaged council members and the expert committee, CSOs, people's organizations, and members of Parliament to encourage the Prime Minister's Office to meet and craft an agrarian reform policy to guide the country. Jan Satyagraha 2012 is a major campaign strategy to pressure government to continue this "unfinished" task and at the same time ensure this issue does not get sidelined or suppressed.

Meanwhile, SARRA organized a five-day training program on access to land and food security in November 2010, bringing together 24 participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The training enabled participants to solidly establish and demonstrate the land and food security nexus; on a more practical level, it provided concrete opportunities for sharing simple, indigenous, and replicable organic farming models for small farmers.

INDONESIA

KPA seeks to increase its members' knowledge of complex land issues to reach a shared understanding of agrarian phenomena in Indonesia. KPA deemed it crucial to organize a national dialogue among like-minded organizations to discuss the potential impact of the Land Management and Policy Development Project (LMPDP), which would change the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960.

It also conducted a multi-stakeholder dialogue on land, food security and other issues affecting land rights, in a bid to renew the commitment of development organizations to help the poor secure access to land. KPA has also held press briefings and issued reports and analyses on land conflicts.

Given the alarming expansion of corporate plantations and the large-scale eviction of communities in the country, KPA also organized a timely roundtable discussion on land grabbing. Participants assessed the drivers of agricultural investments, analyzed present and potential impacts of such investments on farmers and the local economy, and put forward recommendations.

In March 2011, KPA received an invitation from the National Parliament to a public hearing on land acquisition issues. Coalition members forming Karam Tanah (People's Coalition Anti Land Grabbing) came to the public hearing, expressing the civil society position rejecting the proposed law on land acquisition.

NEPAL

Nepal is witnessing a new chapter in its history unfold, which presents diverse opportunities and challenges. The campaign in Nepal has gathered efforts to influence processes on land-related laws and policies, including land use and a national umbrella policy on land reform.

The drafting of the new Constitution, specifically on its incorporation of land reform and on safeguarding the poor's land rights, has been central to the campaign. CSRC is proud of the fact that three of its land rights movement leaders are actively pursuing the land rights discourse as members of the Constituent Assembly.



CSRC, in partnership with NFN, convened a roundtable discussion on land and food sovereignty, in response to the need to provide a venue for different stakeholders to discuss and understand the land grabbing phenomenon better. The activity opened debates on the importance of guaranteeing poor people's rights over natural resources, to change the unjust socio-political and economic structure of the country.

The campaign in Nepal is also strong in forging alliances and facilitating interaction among different social movements. For instance, the National Alliance for Land and Agrarian Reform (NALAR) was established, comprising media, human rights advocates, and CSO representatives. Its broad goal is to build tillers' and landless farmers' capacity to proactively assert and defend their land rights. So far, NALAR counts some 300,000 tenants and landless farmers among its membership.

A mechanism for land rights movements to interact with community forest users' movements was also set up, so that a more integrated position on implementing land reform and ensuring sustainable land use can be reached. Further, a People's Parliament, an alliance of individuals in the field of natural resource management, as well as Parliamentarians and human rights groups was founded.

PAKISTAN

Land grabbing forms one of the most pressing issues in Pakistan. The Corporate Agricultural Farming (CAF) scheme has only served to facilitate the conversion of state-owned lands into large corporate farms to be sold or leased to foreign investors. To enable various stakeholders to understand the diverse dimensions of land grabbing in the country, as well as its impacts on food security, SCOPE organized a roundtable discussion on land grabbing and food security.

Also, on 6 July 2011, SCOPE organized a national dialogue on the challenges and opportunities for land

reforms. The deliberations tackled several relevant topics, including: tensions between the land-owning elite versus urban (industrial/trader) elite on land issues (land distribution and land reforms); small farm efficiency in the context of development, climate change, and mechanization of agriculture; agricultural lands used for food, cash crops, or bio-fuels; the legitimacy of the land ownership process in Pakistan; and agriculture versus industrial and infrastructure development.

Finally, SCOPE, recognizes that farmers in Pakistan have been organizing themselves into movements for a long time, but without seeing actual improvements in their livelihoods. Civil society organizations have hitherto lacked a collective voice. It thus brought together all farmers' organizations and networks under a unified banner – that of the National Peasants Coalition of Pakistan – to revitalize land reforms in the country.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippine campaign centered on lobbying for the passage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program extension with major reforms (CARPER). Inside the halls of Congress, partners actively lobbied within the technical working group on the bill. Outside Congress, the people's movements took to the streets to raise public awareness to intensify support for CARPER's passage.

To disseminate the revised provisions of CARPER to peasant groups, CARRD spearheaded the production of the CARPER Primer and the CARPER Paralegal Manual in English, Filipino and Bisaya languages. AR Now!, SALIGAN, PhilDHRRA, ANGOC and KAISAHAN co-wrote these materials with CARRD.

LWA Philippines partners have made the enactment of the long-overdue national land use act a priority

advocacy, in order to address conflicting issues on land use and institutionalize sustainable resource management policies. Since early 2010, PhilDHRRA, ANGO and KAISAHAN, have led the Campaign for Land Use Policy Now (CLUP Now!).



As a run-up to the May 2010 national elections, a series of electoral forums were held in April 2010 jointly organized by ANGO, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the Catholic Media Network, and CLUP Now! partners. Senatorial, Vice Presidential and Presidential candidates articulated their positions on rural issues, almost unanimously acknowledging the need for a national land use policy.

Finally, the Consultative Group on Indigenous Peoples (CGIP) was established in August 2010 as a loose coalition of IP federations and NGOs. So far, two national conferences have taken place to craft the IP policy agenda and action plan.

REGIONAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

The LWA country campaigns address key policy issues critical to achieving land rights in their respective countries, providing impetus to the regional Land Watch Asia campaign. At the same time, the regional

LWA campaign, by engaging in select initiatives, serve to strengthen country campaigns. In particular, LWA has placed: research on land grabbing; women and land rights; and land monitoring at the center of its regional campaign.

Networking has also enhanced the regional campaign, building solidarity and sharing LWA in both regional and global campaigns and processes.

ON LAND GRABBING

The last few years have witnessed the increasing phenomenon of large agricultural investments in the Asian region. Propelled by the desire to attract agricultural investments, these deals usually involve the purchase or lease of lands for large-scale production of food and biofuels. In thinking about these land transactions, many questions present themselves. For instance, what is really fair? Whose food security should come first – that of the tillers or of rich investing countries and companies and host governments? Which lands are being offered for investment – idle lands that could have been allotted for land reform programs, lands of poor farmers or indigenous peoples' ancestral lands?

LWA launched a research initiative in order to understand the land grabbing phenomenon – as it is commonly known – more deeply. The Asian region is experiencing a surge in large-scale investments in land. Such land leases and acquisitions, made by multinational companies and foreign governments in the name of agriculture, mining, agrofuels, tourism, forestry and carbon sequestration, are in reality land grabs that often adversely affect marginalized and landless communities.

Cases were documented in the Land Watch Asia countries, focusing on the current and potential impacts of land grabbing on land rights,



development, and food security. As such, the cases critically assessed the factors facilitating and constraining the entry of agricultural investments in the community. They also pointed out the advocacy issues crucial to protecting farmers' and community rights.

Two additional studies complemented the cases. The China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), a national NGO network in China and ANGO member, prepared a scoping study on the country's agricultural investments in selected Asian countries. Similarly, ANGO has partnered with the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic of Yale University to study the possible involvement of international financial institutions on agricultural investments.

ANGO, LWA, and ILC, in partnership with the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) jointly organized a regional workshop in June 2011 on Private-Public Partnerships in Land Investments. Held in Bangkok (Thailand), the event gathered 40 CSO participants from the region, for presentations and discussions on the abovementioned cases, with additional studies done by some ILC Asia members as part of the global Commercial Pressures on Land (CPL) program. A representative from FAO Headquarters also gave an overview of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Tenure of Land, which is FAO's contribution to policy dialogue on land grabbing. Three major stakeholders: farmers, indigenous peoples and CSO sector shared their reflections.

The cases and the discussions shed light on the ill-effects of these transactions: creating tensions among communities due to intensifying land conflicts; displacement of farmers and indigenous peoples; deforestation and environmental degradation from commercial farming, to name some. Transparency in such land transactions are wanting. CSOs and social movements need to understand then the ins and outs of these contracts and be properly equipped

in negotiations. They need to apply pressure on governments to develop its capacity and exercise political muscle to monitor and regulate land transactions.

Finally, the workshop catalyzed the LWA network to actively include the land grabbing issue in its land rights campaign. Participants agreed on action areas for the campaign: i) empowering communities, ii) constructive policy dialogues with national governments, iii) critical engagement with the corporate sector and iv) fostering strategic alliances.

ANGO's journal, *Lok Niti*, has a special edition on land grabbing, summarizing the cases and providing a perspective paper highlighting the salient debates and discussions.

CSO LAND REFORM MONITORING INITIATIVE

The CSO Land Reform Monitoring Initiative seeks to strengthen CSO capacities in monitoring land tenure and access to land. This constitutes one of the LWA campaign's concrete responses to the shifting terrain for the land rights struggle, amid rising incidents of land disputes and land grabbing and increasing landlessness.

Monitoring is an important but often forgotten ingredient in policy advocacy, the missing systematic link between realities on the ground and effective changes in policies and programs. Through monitoring, CSOs can have a firmer handle on issues, enabling them to establish more credibility, engage with institutions, and even empower them to act on the results.

The main output of the monitoring initiative is a framework for a CSO land reform monitoring report, which will flesh out the details on scope, indicators, methodology and mechanisms.⁴ The framework



anchors to the belief that CSOs should focus their efforts where it is strategic: on outcome indicators, on access to land (i.e., ownership, landlessness) and land tenure (i.e., conflicts and evictions); and input indicators such as budgets and policies on land.

Governments should implement agrarian reform and enhance access to land, not impede it. The framework assumes that strengthening land tenure and access leads to food security and poverty reduction. Conversely, landlessness, leads to conflicts and violence. At the end of the day, farmers should be able to effectively own and control their lands – and the chosen indicators should help CSOs figure out whether this is indeed the case.

Moreover, the framework acknowledges the varying contexts from country to country, owing to a spectrum of differences: histories, tenure systems, land policies, agrarian reform experiences, CSO capacities, institutional relationships in ongoing land campaigns, and levels of access to government data to name a few. Although the proposed common regional indicators are useful for advocacy at the regional level, countries have free rein to pursue issues they deem strategically important.

The monitoring framework underwent an appreciable process. Since systematic land monitoring is relatively

new to LWA members, and many CSOs in general, a series of participatory broad-based consultations – via workshops, roundtable discussions, electronic bulletin board – was organized. A literature review of existing monitoring initiatives and the LWA country papers was conducted as a preliminary activity.

The framework was pilot tested at various stages in 2011 in seven countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. The experiences and results of the pilots are rich sources of information and data regarding the present status of agrarian reform implementation in Asia.⁵ After eight months of consultation and pilot testing, a framework has been finalized. Nonetheless, far from static, the CSO land reform monitoring framework is a work-in-progress.

A regional synthesis has been prepared, which draws attention to the alarming trends like landlessness and land grabbing, while providing solid data. A user's guide has likewise been developed to explain the concepts and outline the steps in land monitoring for campaign partners to follow.

In addition to piloting the monitoring framework, ANGOC solicited feedback at various stages from experts on land: Dr. Abul Barkat, Dr. Marideth Bravo, Dr. Praveeh Jha, Annalisa Mauro, Hans Meliczek, Antonio Quizon and Dr. Laksmi Savitri. Similarly, the secretaries of land or agrarian reform of Nepal and the Philippines, as well as the director of the National Land Agency of Indonesia shared their feedback of this CSO land monitoring initiative.

WOMEN AND LAND RIGHTS

The LWA campaign commits itself to advance women's land rights and reverse the prolonged neglect of women. Despite the work that they do in agriculture and in the home, women bear a



disproportionate burden of poverty. Their rights are limited because of the patriarchal structure in society and prevailing cultural and religious mindsets.

Women's ownership of land in Asia is often a farce, where women suffer from discrimination, even in the presence of laws that provide for joint ownership and equal inheritance. They may hold the titles to the land, but in reality they have little control over it. Women may have just titles in their names for men to circumvent land ceiling laws or evade taxes. They are expected to act as the "good mother" or "good daughter", relinquishing their land rights to their sons and brothers. In the end, women effectively own hardly any land.

ALRD, ANGOC and ILC organized the Asian Regional Workshop on Women and Land Rights last 25-26 October 2010 in Dhaka (Bangladesh) where some 37 participants from 7 Asian countries shared their struggles and lessons learned, and charted a roadmap for securing women's rights to land.⁶

As a starting point, the yawning gap in capacity must be bridged. The campaign thus seeks to strengthen capacity development for farmers, especially women farmers, on legal literacy, policy advocacy and leadership development. As it stands, few women occupy leadership and decision-making positions in land agencies and ministries, let alone government. Given that empowerment of women is an end in itself and one of the best means to sustain advocacy for land rights, campaign partners should build on their efforts to promote women – starting from within their organizations and movements.

Mainstreaming gender – or integrating gender perspectives in all land reform programs and land rights campaigns and movements – is critical in building more support for the cause of women. If every policy and program devoted time and space to reflecting on how they specifically affect women,

then this would create a political climate where legal reforms are made in their favor.

In view of this, **legal and policy reform** in favor of women – including indigenous women – and their land rights is needed. Moreover, campaign partners should push for and monitor the implementation of pro-women laws, including international conventions ratified by governments.

Also, more documentation and **research** on the status of women across the region, particularly in regard to land rights, is indispensable. This will enable more people to truly understand the situation, as well as inform policy advocacy. Positive stories and lessons should also be shared, to inspire women and groups helping them to continue their struggle.

GAINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

The Land Watch Asia campaign celebrates significant gains: for the landless and marginalized communities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. Because the campaigns are strong at the country level, LWA has become a veritable instrument for rural communities to raise their demands on land rights and food security to government. As well, these issues are elevated to the regional level, through regional policy dialogues.



Among its accomplishments, Land Watch Asia has provided its partners with the opportunity to reflect and strengthen its advocacy on land rights.

Campaign activities are guided by a multi-sectoral approach that takes into consideration different perspectives on land issues. Farmers fight for land ownership, coming into conflict with indigenous peoples defending their stewardship of ancestral lands, for example. By applying a cross-sectoral lens, agrarian reform advocates can better understand how to advance land rights.

Also, LWA has served as an arena for CSOs to **exchange lessons**, experiences and updates on advocacies and campaigns, and even information on other relevant and emerging issues related to land such as climate change.

ENLARGING THE SPACE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE ON LAND

CSOs have actively sought to influence national governments' policy and decision-making vis-à-vis processes affecting the access of the poor to land and other natural resources. At the country level, LWA has succeeded in **broadening the space for dialogue between governments and CSOs**. It has facilitated policy dialogues, conducting policy studies and organizing roundtable discussions, workshops and consultations.

For instance, STAR Kampuchea engages both government and donors through the Cambodian Donor Coordination Forum (CDCF), where the importance of a comprehensive land policy was raised.

Philippine NGO partners of Land Watch Asia successfully lobbied for the passage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program extension with reforms.

In India, Ekta Parishad's Janadesh march resulted in the establishment of the National Land Reforms Council and the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reforms. Notwithstanding the frequent leadership turnovers – of prime ministers and ministers of land reform and management – CSRC has managed to continually engage government in policy discussions on land issues in Nepal.

Bangladesh was under a caretaker government for a long period of time, stalling the dialogue process. The campaign has helped revive interest in land. As of now, the ruling party's electoral manifesto recognizes the importance of land distribution.

STRENGTHENING COUNTRY CAMPAIGNS

LWA partners have been involved in various campaigns on land, water and forest rights of the poor. The LWA process has enriched and inspired partners' campaigns in many ways.

For one, Land Watch Asia partners have expanded their learning on land rights advocacy and development issues through exchange of experiences as well as approaches and tools. In the course of campaigning, farmers and LWA partners alike have gained more confidence to voice their daily struggles. The campaign has empowered the Land Watch Asia network.

Furthermore, LWA consultations have developed analytical tools, fleshing out strategies and identifying challenges and opportunities for advocacy work in-country and beyond. In fact, LWA has opened the door for **cross-country learning** – that is, for good practices and exemplary policies in some countries to be replicated in others. To illustrate, the Philippines and India have rich and varied experiences in mobilizing people, creating and sustaining movements and also implementing land and agrarian reforms.



Those experiences have been shared with Cambodian and Bangladeshi NGOs on their learning visits to the Philippines. As a result of the high-level Bangladeshi delegation's visit, there are ongoing discussions on possible strategies to implement the CHT Accord and reactivate the CHT Land Commission; whereas Cambodian government and NGO and partner communities study tour participants are brainstorming on concrete ways to resolve land disputes in their communities.

In terms of **information networking**, the campaign has provided useful information to partners through its electronic newsletter. In expanding its public outreach, LWA has responded to inquiries from CSOs and researchers on specific land campaigns.

The development of **the CSO land monitoring framework** represents another important output. The CSO monitoring initiative, still in its incipient stages, has first of all called attention to the importance of systematic monitoring to inform land rights advocacy. The initiative is a serious attempt on the part of Land Watch Asia partners to conduct evidence-based research. Research and academic institutions (e.g., Human Development Resource Centre, Bangladesh; Sajogyo Institute, Indonesia; and Xavier University, Philippines) have been regularly tapped to enhance CSOs' capacities to monitor agrarian reform, considering that systematic land monitoring is fairly new to many CSOs and LWA members.

The CSO land monitoring processes have so far given CSOs the chance to obtain, discover, analyze, and publish pertinent data on land access and tenure, as well as strategically network with key groups and learn from one another. In addition, looking at common indicators has allowed for a consolidated, regional look at land issues in the region. ANGOCC hopes that monitoring can become a regular or institutionalized in the activities of its network. Governments have something to learn from the

monitoring initiative, too. Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippine Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), welcomed the CSO land reform monitoring initiative, as it attempts to provide quantifiable indicators for reporting the state of landlessness, something rarely captured by government statistics.

LEARNING FROM CAMPAIGN EXPERIENCES

LWA has facilitated discussion among various sectors to generate different perspectives on land, allowing them to brainstorm on land issues and collectively strategize their action. Applying a cross-sectoral lens on access to land issues has particularly broadened and deepened agrarian reform advocates' understanding. As farmers struggle for ownership of land, indigenous peoples defend their stewardship of ancestral domains.

With its distinctly strong country campaign element, LWA has become instrumental for people's organizations to raise their demands on land rights and food security. Also, LWA has supported and convened many actors land rights and land reform issues, which is crucial amidst the plethora of land-related issues in the region.

Information networking has aided the campaign. The electronic newsletter has served as venue for disseminating news and keeping partners abreast of campaign activities. Used strategically, it can serve as a mechanism for influencing decision-makers and communicating to the media and general public. Information networking can still be improved through more frequent updates on the political situation in the region as well as analyses on the array of interventions CSOs can do. Actively involving the media can also enhance the campaign. As a regional network organization, ANGOCC has continued to open and enhance political spaces for dialogue between Land Watch Asia partners

and international organizations. For instance, in the process of developing a CSO land monitoring framework, NGO partners were linked to the country portfolio managers of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). IFAD views the CSO land monitoring initiative as an alternative source of data that can help validate its Performance Based Allocation System.⁷

But more importantly, the CSO land monitoring initiative, even in its incipient stages, has allowed CSOs to share, validate and process land-related data collectively at the country level.

Further, land monitoring needs to be enhanced and attuned to LWA's overall campaign strategy. Likewise, initial efforts to document the land grabbing cases also revealed the need to enhance partners' capacities. Data generated should be used to bolster the policy research and advocacy efforts of CSOs in engaging governments and intergovernmental organizations. As well, solid documentation can support advocacy and provide inputs in the negotiation process of land deals, while the country reports can be used as inputs or as an "alternative" source of information and analysis to validate claims of governments and IGOs, whether in policy formulation or program development and review.

Even in countries where formal ownership of land is granted to women, its implementation should be closely monitored as cultural biases continue to impede such initiatives. In fact, a number of these biases emanate from civil and personal – rather than agrarian – laws.

Finally, the formulation and implementation of land use plans are important instruments to counter land deals as agricultural lands reserved for food security of the host countries are safeguarded and protected.

MOVING FORWARD

The backdrop for land rights advocacy is faced with other challenges such as the prolonged neglect of agriculture as well as the threat of climate change. The food and price crises have drawn global attention back to agriculture, in particular to its adverse impacts on exacerbating hunger and poverty in the region. Poor households are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks. At the same time, the crises expose an uncertain food supply and volatile food prices globally.

Climate change is yet another issue to contend with. Desertification, salinization and sea level rise are some of the effects of a changing climate, which will further diminish available arable land. As agriculture is location-specific and weather-sensitive, the types of crops and their productivity will greatly be affected. Biofuel production for climate change mitigation also threatens lands for growing food crops.

During the series of planning meetings of the LWA campaign, partners reconfirmed the strategy of maintaining the engagement process through policy dialogues with national governments and regional institutions involved in agriculture and land issues. LWA partners also duly recognized the need to continue with consensus-building among their constituencies.

Land Watch Asia's overall goal for its next phase (2012-2014) is to empower Asian rural communities in eight countries to gain better access and control of land through a platform that promotes consensus building and advocacy. To move towards this goal, LWA commits to initiate at least five concrete land policy changes favorable to the rural poor as a result of the sustained dialogue and advocacy of ANGO partners within the eight Asian countries.

LWA partners aim to further refine and sharpen their analysis and deepen understanding on land issues



affecting the rural poor in eight Asian countries, in particular on women, indigenous peoples and land grabbing. They also seek to strengthen their capacities in negotiation, knowledge capture, land use planning, and engaging institutions through the conduct of workshops and dissemination of knowledge products. Expect an even more vibrant and active Land Watch Asia campaign as it kicks into higher gear.

Endnotes

- 1 Condensed by Catherine C. Liamzon and Nathaniel Don E. Marquez, based on reports and updates prepared by ANGOC and LWA partners.
- 2 Food and Agriculture Organization. The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2010.
- 3 LWA country campaign updates have been published separately. They can be downloaded at www.angoc.org. Discussions with Sri Lanka are ongoing in terms of their campaign plans.
- 4 For more details, a separate publication features the framework, abridged country pilot reports, a regional summary and user's guide.
- 5 The following organizations have piloted the CSO land monitoring framework: ALRD (Bangladesh), STAR Kampuchea (Cambodia), AVARD (India), SAINS and KPA (Indonesia), CSRC (Nepal), SCOPE (Pakistan) and PhilDHRRA (Philippines).
- 6 The major papers/presentation and highlights of the discussions are published in "Asian Regional Workshop on Women and Land Rights: Workshop Proceedings" and can be downloaded at www.angoc.org.
- 7 PBAS is a tool used by IFAD to assess the rural development sector of a member country. It has about 14 indicators, which includes access to land and land tenure.

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Founded in 1979, ANGOC is a regional association of 17 national and regional networks on non-government organizations (NGOs) in Asia actively engaged in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance and rural development. ANGOC member networks and partners work in 14 Asian countries with an effective reach of some 3,000 NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). ANGOC actively engages in joint field programs and policy debates with national governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and international financial institutions (IFIs).

ANGOC is a founding member of the International Land Coalition (ILC) and regional convener of the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign.

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Land Watch Asia (LWA) is a regional campaign to ensure that access to land, agrarian reform and sustainable development for the rural poor are addressed in national and regional

development agenda. The campaign involves civil society organizations in eight (8) countries — Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. LWA aims to take stock of significant changes in the policy and legal environments: undertake strategic national and regional advocacy activities on access to land; jointly develop approaches and tools; and encourage the sharing of experiences on coalition-building and actions on land rights issues.



ILC is a global alliance of intergovernmental, governmental and civil society organizations working together with the rural poor to increase their secure access to natural resources, especially land.



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