

CSO Land Reform Monitoring

A User's Guide for Land Rights Advocates*

This user's guide is considered a work-in-progress. It is a modest contribution of ANGOC and Land Watch Asia to enhance the capacities of CSOs to monitor land policies and programs and advocate for land rights. We hope that as land reform monitoring for CSOs expands, enhancements will be made to this initial guide as prepared by Catherine Liamzon and reviewed by Nathaniel Don E. Marquez.

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Introducing the CSO Land Reform Monitoring Initiative

Without effective monitoring, advocacy efforts are impaired. Civil society organisations have learned from experience that to secure land rights for the rural poor, they must back their advocacy with solid, accurate and up-to-date data gathered from monitoring activities, in order to influence policies. Stories from the field enable people to deepen their understanding of the plight of the landless; when these are supplemented with numbers, they speak strongly and convincingly about the urgency of land reform in Asia.

Many CSOs work closely with people at the grassroots level. They have first-hand knowledge and experience, not to mention a deep understanding of people's issues and what really goes on in the countryside. CSOs have often helped the rural and landless poor find their voice amidst global trends and commercial pressures. Still, many of them admit lacking the necessary documentation and research to inform their advocacy. CSOs themselves acknowledge the need to strengthen their capacities in undertaking research, including monitoring.

But to organize all the monitoring data and to ensure that monitoring becomes continuous (rather than a one-off activity that ceases once the report has been written up and printed) and a regular part of advocacy – is an area that could be further improved. The fact remains: CSOs can bring so much value into land reform monitoring. Looking at things that tend to be glossed over by governments and multilateral institutions, CSOs show *what* need to be monitored. They highlight these often neglected yet salient and urgent features, for instance landlessness, land disputes and evictions. In the process, CSOs provide and push for alternative perspectives and indicators on land rights.

In this context, ANGOC and the Land Watch Asia network have launched a CSO Land Reform Monitoring Initiative. The first fruit this initiative has borne is a framework to guide Land Watch Asia partners in particular and CSOs in general as they assume the responsibility of monitoring land reforms in several Asian countries. This framework zooms in on land tenure and access to land and provides a systematic way for CSOs to embark on

monitoring, including collaborating in the process with other stakeholders such as the academe, research institutions, and media. It ultimately focuses on outcomes or results, but also examines the inputs and processes that go into land reform monitoring. Many questions persist: *Has the promise of agrarian reform and access to land been delivered? Is land reform moving in the right direction?* Do farmers enjoy more secure land tenure now than before? This CSO monitoring initiative strives to answer such questions, to eventually bear more fruit in the form of land reform development reports for various countries.

Overview of the User's Guide

Before you begin

This user's guide in your hands was crafted to guide civil society organizations as they embark on the uniquely challenging task of monitoring land reforms in their respective countries. Simply put, this guide is a way through which we can ensure a credible Land Reform Development Report – which ultimately depends on the quality of our data gathering. A common framework and a common methodology, when ably used by all focal points, should help us look at the same aspects on land reform and subject these to a thorough analysis. The conclusions we draw should inform our individual and collective (as an Asian regional network) land advocacies and actions for change.

This user's guide seeks to explain the context of the monitoring initiative, providing the conceptual framework, rationale, scope, limitations, assumptions, and glossary. This includes the establishment of definitions to be consistently used in monitoring. Also, it provides information on methodology, including possible data sources and references, as well as available tools and approaches.

Experiences and lessons from documenting the piloting process of the monitoring framework in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines have substantively contributed to the user's guide. Various individuals and groups have also enriched this guide, through consultations, regional workshops and peer reviews: the collective knowledge of the Land Watch Asia network; our experts Dr. Abul Barkat and Dr. Laksmi Savitri; Dean Roel Ravanera; Dr. Hans Meliczek; Dr. Marideth Bravo; Antonio Quizon; Annalisa Mauro; Dr. Praveen Tho; and lastly, members and partners of ANGOC and of ILC.

The lay of the land

This user's guide is divided into four main sections. The first chapter, *Getting Started*, gives a simple introduction to the monitoring framework, about the scope, indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring. CSOs are sure to encounter challenges to monitoring; a short discussion is given here on how to address these.

The second section on *Indicators for Monitoring* constitutes the heart of this guidebook. We have tried to deconstruct jargon or highly technical information on the indicators, into simpler and easier terms. Likewise, we suggest here a range of tools for data gathering, adding some tips and comments to help you along the way.

Getting Organized explains the administrative tasks involved in monitoring, particularly the establishment of a national monitoring team guided by and supported by, respectively, a steering committee and a secretariat to ensure the smooth flow of monitoring. Essentially, we offer suggestions in going about writing up the report. It also contains the proposed outline for writing the report and tips on presenting your results.

Given the importance of other initiatives, we devote the last section to *Additional Resources* to enhance and complement your research.

A list of *References* occupies the last section, to acknowledge the sources we drew from in preparing this guide. Those who would like to learn more about the topics covered can start here.

Getting Started

This section tells you what you need to know the CSO Land Reform Monitoring framework. It provides the monitoring roadmap, establishing the context, scope, indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring. At the end, we point out the various challenges CSOs face, and suggest ways to hurdle these and find motivation to pursue monitoring.

Why we are here: A Summary of the CSO Land Reform Monitoring Framework

As most Asian governments have legislations or existing programs on land and agrarian reforms, poverty and a highly skewed land ownership pattern within and across countries continue to mar the region. At the same time, new developments negatively affect the terrain of land ownership and tenure such as increasing and intensifying competition for land requires brought by investments on land, whether from governments and the corporate sector within or external to Asia.

It is thus important for CSOs to constantly engage national governments in policy discussions and monitoring developments in land tenure and access to land. By articulating the concerns and providing evidence-based data on the situation of farmers and other vulnerable groups, CSOs inform and influence policy. At the end of the day, any reform should lead to improved quality of life of the small food producers.

For some countries, essential land reform programs are non-existent, thereby raising the question: *How can you monitor land reform if it hasn't been implemented yet?* The policies may be in place, but they remain unimplemented. Our choice of indicators – as will be discussed in more detail in the next section – can still be monitored though no official land reform program may be really existent (as opposed to nominal existence) at this time.

In addition, though we recognize that “land reform” may only connote land distribution, while “agrarian reform” is broader to include fisheries and forestry, support services, and structural change in the access and ownership of land, in this monitoring initiative, we use “land” reform and “agrarian reform” indistinctly.

Finally, we have chosen to focus monitoring efforts on land tenure and access to land. The framework assumes that by strengthening land tenure and access, we will achieve food security and reduce poverty. Landlessness, in contrast, leads to conflicts and violence. We recognize how critical

land is to the livelihoods of farmers, indigenous peoples, and women, and other land-based sectors. Land tenure security involves various rights and entitlements.

To understand more about the context of land reform monitoring, kindly refer to the CSO Land Reform Monitoring Framework in the first part of this publication.

Scope

Civil society concerns tend to be broad that monitoring entails extensive processes. Land reform monitoring is no exception. However, CSOs are usually challenged with limited resources and unsuitable mechanisms for monitoring. We thus define and target the scope and identify appropriate ways for CSOs to undertake monitoring more strategically.

CSO monitoring encompasses other land-related issues, as well as broader social issues like food security, poverty, governance and the environment. These are the issues that deserve our urgent attention, and will figure in the results and analyses of the monitoring initiative. But in a nutshell, the focus is on tracking the implementation status of agrarian reform programs.

At what level do we monitor?

Focus on the national level

Land Watch Asia members work at the community, national and regional levels; some are also engaged at the global level. There are members who have already undertaken and even institutionalized land monitoring activities as part of their advocacy work.

Underlying this Asian CSO land reform monitoring initiative is the conviction that monitoring matters most at the *national level*. Monitoring has to be relevant to national processes and adaptable to national contexts.

Though India's case may be slightly different, given its enormous size and its federal system, with agrarian reforms legislated and implemented at the state level, there are processes for which it is necessary to look at the central government.

The reality in Asia is that contexts vary from country to country. They have different histories, land policies, tenure systems, land administration systems, and experiences relating to agrarian reform. As well, CSO capacities and their relationships with governments and other institutions, all differ across countries. In terms of data, availability and accessibility diverge from country to country.

... But still looking at the regional level

While national contexts vary, there is agreement in desired outcomes, or

what the Land Watch Asia campaign wants to achieve in their respective countries and in the region: stronger land tenure, and enhanced access to land for poor farmers, indigenous peoples, women, and other marginalized groups. We maintain that there is a premium in selecting regional indicators that will allow for regional comparisons.

Land is primarily a national concern. However, times are changing. The new wave of agricultural investments taking place in Asia transcends national boundaries. Land deals are occurring between governments, or between governments and private sector. Evidence exists that these large-scale land acquisitions are predominantly intra-regional (Anseeuw, Alden Wily, Cotula, and Taylor, 2011). These investments should be subjected to a regional analysis. Furthermore, by taking on a regional approach, CSO advocates can specifically target regional institutions, including the regional offices of intergovernmental organizations, such as:

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- World Bank

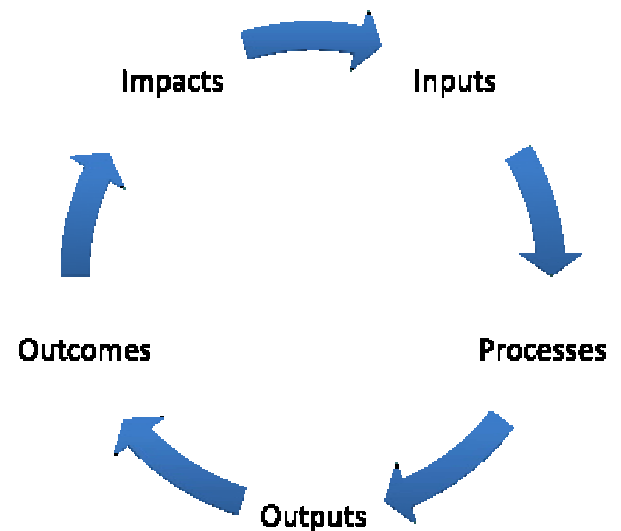
These institutions vary according to level of openness to the sensitive issue of land. Some are more “allergic” to discussing land issues, while others explicitly include land in their policy agenda. CSOs should take note of this in determining their advocacy strategies.

We emphasize that ultimately, *it is the national focal point who will decide on the focus of the monitoring, including the choice of indicators and data to be collected.*^a

Focusing on Outcomes

The monitoring framework follows certain logic of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Table 1 attempts to provide a simple guide on these types of monitoring data, giving examples on the kind of phenomena being assessed.

Figure 1 Conventional M&E Cycle



Indicators are needed to assess what we are monitoring. Simply put, an indicator is a sign that gives us an idea of the state or level of something (See Table 1). We select and use indicators to measure progress towards our goals, in this case on the implementation (or non-implementation) of land reform in Asia. We use proxy or substitute indicators.

We thus choose to focus on outcomes – land tenure and access to land – because among CSOs, they are more relevant. At the end of the day, after the laws have been passed, programs implemented and titles issued and distributed, the questions remain: *Are the farmers’ tenure on land more secure? Do they have greater access to their lands?*

Table 1: Types of indicator data related to land issues

Indicator types	Phenomena assessed
Inputs	Land laws, agrarian policies and budgets
Processes	Formulation and implementation of agrarian reform policies and programs; resolution of dated and current land disputes; and verification and formalization of claims over land areas
Outputs	Results and accomplishments, such as the number of land titles issued, property rights restored, and provision of support services
Outcomes	Consequences and positive effects of inputs, processes and outputs e.g., the prevalence of land conflicts
Impacts	Ultimate aims like poverty reduction, food security and sustainability

More importantly, tenure and access are also easily monitored by CSOs’ as they are able to work closely with the beneficiaries and other communities. They have established contacts, systems and networks that allow them to easily generate these data over time. Table 2 shows indicators that we believe can be used *more or less by CSOs*.

But aside from outcomes, we also suggest monitoring inputs, particularly laws and policies relating to marginalized groups and the budget for agrarian reform (See Table 3).

Table 2: Common Regional Indicators

Land Tenure
<p><i>Land Disputes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people killed (per 100,000 population) • Number of people detained (per 100,000 population) • Number of people harassed (per 100,000 population) • Number of cases received (per 100,000 population) • Number of cases investigated (per 100,000 population) • Number of cases adjudicated (per 100,000 population) • Number of cases of land grabbing • Percentage of area of land grabbed • Average time in years for dispute resolution <p><i>Additional indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual loss of time due to disputes • Monetary loss

Table 2 cont'd.

<i>Evictions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of households evicted/displaced from farms (per 100,000 population)• Number of households becoming totally homeless because of eviction
Access to Land
<i>Ownership</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land ownership distribution by size• Gini coefficient/bottom-to-top ratio (for analysis)
<i>Tenancy Rights</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of sharecroppers• Percentage of sharecroppers with legal documents
<i>Landlessness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number and percentage of landless persons among rural population

The next section deals entirely with the indicators above, establishing definitions and including tools and approaches for data gathering.

Table 3: Suggested Indicators for Monitoring at the National Level

Inputs: Budgets and Policies
<i>Budget</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agrarian reform budget
<i>Policies</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land use policies• Women's access to land• Policies for marginalized groups (IPs, fishers, etc)• Policies or guidelines on foreign investment in land

A National Mechanism for Land Monitoring

We developed this initiative with the Land Watch Asia campaign in mind. LWA members are expected to lead land reform monitoring in their own

Selecting Monitoring Indicators

Indicators for advocacy are popular because they convey a simple and unequivocal message to the public. The primary goal of creating indicators for advocacy is to bring other aspects of land into the agenda, such as land conflictivity and landlessness.

But these should be clear, and above all, resonant. The public has to get a quick grasp on why they are important. How do these indicators relate to CSOs' advocacy goals? CSOs should reflect on whether the data are truly relevant and useful for advocacy, or whether there is a lack of fit.

- *Tim Bending , ILC*

ANGOC. (2011). *Proceedings of the Regional Workshop on CSO Land Reform Monitoring in Asia. 16-17 September 2010. Bangkok, Thailand.*

countries. We propose national and regional mechanisms for land reform

monitoring, to help you manage land reform monitoring activities and ensure participation in the process. *Figure 2* shows the progression of steps in our national monitoring mechanism.

Note that this is only one possibility, and you are free to adapt as you see fit to your own needs and context: keep the steps you find relevant, skip those you don't need, and create new ones to suit you.

Adoption of the Monitoring Framework

Initiate a consultation process to adopt the monitoring framework. You may revise the framework according to your needs. But as much as possible, please try to be faithful to the agreed common regional indicators.

Figure 2. National Monitoring Mechanism



Source: ANGOC. (2011). *Proceedings of the CSO Land Reform Monitoring Regional Workshop, September 2010, Bangkok, Thailand.*

Establishing a National Steering Committee and a Secretariat

Members will establish their respective national steering committees to provide policy direction and guidance. Steering committees should be multi-stakeholder and include CSOs and academe; government could be considered depending on the political dynamics in your country. A secretariat responsible for seeing day-to-day management also backstops the steering committee.

The section on *Getting Organized* elaborates on considerations for setting up a steering committee as well as a secretariat.

Conduct of Land Reform Monitoring

The national secretariat under the guidance of the steering committee will proceed with land reform monitoring.

Data Validation

Collected information will be validated and triangulated; data sources are to be cross-checked.

Advocacy and Dissemination of Reports

Reports will be produced annually, and be shared with government, intergovernmental organizations and media. Forums and dialogues will be convened to discuss urgent issues and advocate policies and programs.

Dissemination strategies should include blogs and other information technology platforms, so that the reports can reach a wider audience.

Straight from the Pilots: an Approach to Land Reform Monitoring

The following table (See Table 4) was proposed during our regional workshop on CSO land reform monitoring in Bangkok last September 2010, and is rooted in the experiences of the countries that have piloted the monitoring framework. Note that it is a slightly adjusted and expanded version of the proposed national mechanism for monitoring, but remains the same in essentials. The details and the timeframe will prove handy as you begin monitoring.

Overcoming fears and getting motivated

In undertaking this monitoring initiative for the first time, you may be confronted with several challenges. Remember, you are not alone! Here is a smattering of challenges.

Table 4: Proposed Approach to Land Reform Monitoring at the Country Level

Step	Activity	Details	Timeframe
1	Identification of Steering Committee members	Set criteria: - Experience in land/agrarian reform monitoring, research, and/or advocacy - Presence of academe/research institution 10 members at the most – most manageable	1 week
2	Convene an inception meeting	Purpose: - Level off on indicators, definition of concepts, data source, methodology	1 week
3	Data gathering	- Identify 1 or 2 focal persons - Possible sources: (Secondary data) government, CSOs, internet research, academic journals, media (Primary data) surveys, interviews, focus group discussions - Use both quantitative and qualitative data	3 months (depending on data sources)
4	Report writing	Team effort (3 persons at the most) - Divide the report into sections - Assign 1 person as editor/consolidator - Undertake brainstorming as needed - Identify challenges/lessons learned	1 month
5	Presentation of draft report to Steering Committee	Gather feedback/comments	1 week
6	Revise report as needed	Refine report, include footnotes, list of references, etc.	1 week
7	Report Validation	Presentation of report to other stakeholders (farmers, other CSOs)	1 week
8	Dissemination and advocacy	Formal and informal mechanisms	

Source: ANGOC (2011). *Proceedings of the CSO Land Reform Monitoring Regional Workshop, September 2010, Bangkok, Thailand.*

Feelings of insecurity or inadequacy

Get over it! Feeling that you are not up to the task of monitoring land tenure and access to land in your country is the first obstacle to monitoring. Monitoring is not a terribly complicated endeavor. In fact, this is why we have launched the CSO land reform monitoring initiative in the first place. We have come together as one Land Watch Asia campaign, recognized the need for monitoring to inform and sharpen our advocacy, and begun to work towards developing a framework for monitoring. This monitoring initiative will develop our capacities and to focus on strategic areas – land tenure and access to land. Thus, you can undertake simple monitoring, where it matters. Join us as we do this together.

Overreliance on experts

An offshoot of this feeling of insecurity or inadequacy is heavy reliance on experts and consultants. We find that heavy dependence on experts can be disempowering. These experts are often too busy, stalling monitoring. Some feel that they cannot function without experts or consultants taking charge of monitoring.

What then should be the role of experts? In the absence of capable staff, it seems pragmatic to hire an expert to “get the job done.” But remember, we are monitoring with a purpose. The goal of the initiative is to build capacities and strengthen our advocacy, not to come up with impressive glossy reports per se.

We recommend *working together with experts*, in a complementation of expertise. Experts should facilitate learning in your organization and *empower* you – not emasculate you – to improve on your capacities. Monitoring should not be left to one person alone sitting on a desk writing the report; it is best done in teams.

Fear of “evidence-based advocacy”

Don’t be afraid! “Evidence-based advocacy” is much simpler than it sounds! It means supporting our claims and conclusions by hard facts that have undergone some rigor, using a generally acceptable methodology. For example, interviewing only ten people in a village of two thousand is not enough to make generalizations. If we survey, we have to have the appropriate sampling method that we can justify. We should not make sweeping claims about rural poverty or landlessness, using vague words like “much.” It is more convincing to be specific. Rather than say, “In the Philippines, many land-related cases are still pending,” it is more helpful to our advocacy to say, “In the Philippines, for agrarian law implementation judicial and quasi-judicial cases, there are 7,889 cases still pending, as of June 2009.”

This is certainly *not* to undervalue CSO strengths. Because we work on the ground, close to the communities, we have the advantage of being able to deeply understand field realities. Our strengths have been the qualitative data we produce, and the perspectives we bring into the debates. We provide case studies and rich narratives that allow others to see things through our perspectives. We would do well to continue doing this. At the same time, we need to go beyond the anecdotes and try to supplement our narratives with quantitative data, which is what many of our policy makers are looking for.

Failing to see the wood for the trees

Sometimes, we might get trapped in a compliance culture. We simply want to tick all the boxes and find whatever data can conveniently fit into the given indicators – even if the data are poor and insignificant, and the indicators are meaningless in your country context. Also, these indicators are largely for farmers and agrarian lands – you will find that they are not very useful in the context of fishers, indigenous peoples, and in other tenure systems. These would require their own set of indicators.

Indicators only indicate. If the data are simply unavailable, inaccessible, or irrelevant, do not gather data for data's sake. Your goals for monitoring should be clear. The indicators we have given are only suggestions based on what we as a network think are important in monitoring land reforms. We are providing the general direction for the Land Watch Asia campaign's monitoring; these indicators are not set in stone. At the end of the day, decisions should be made at the country level. Indicators should be appropriate.

Yes, we might have found the data but what are the realities behind the data? As CSOs, we add value by trying to go beyond the figures. We analyze the data, knowing that figures might be misleading, or are wrong.

Working with others

Working together is easier said than done. There are many benefits, especially if some organizations have data that are useful to us. Working with other CSOs, or the academe, or even with government can prove to be a significant learning exercise.

Working with CSOs

However, sometimes there is “turfig” among CSOs – where groups mark their territory, and are not willing to share data, even if they share the same advocacy. In some instances, CSOs do not share for fear that they will not be duly credited for their data. By involving other CSOs more actively – whether in the steering committee or consultative processes like roundtable discussions – we may be able to get their participation, and they may increase their ownership or stake in the process.

Government data are accessible

Some governments are unwilling to share information or even listen to CSOs whom they suspect will criticize them. Land is an especially sensitive issue. Other NGOs have found that having a “champion” in government – helps ease data collection. Still, for others, working with government is still not possible, and we must find either other data sources, or partner with groups that can access data.

Being too ambitious

Sometimes we may want to improve on the data set by wishing to undertake primary data gathering ourselves. We would like to conduct surveys on the ground, in all the villages and districts and communes. However, the persistent reality faced by CSOs is one of resource constraints. We normally do not have the luxury of time.

Comprehensive data gathering is normally done on a project basis, and is therefore difficult to sustain (nonetheless it allows for good baseline data). Set your limits before you begin; consult with your steering committee to see whether your plans for monitoring are practicable.

Data Complexities

If data are available...

... it may be difficult to gather and may require many resources in terms of time, money and energy.

... it simply might be too poor in quality or terribly outdated.

... it may be incredible – not believable. Take stock of the credibility of your data. What good is it to cite data that overstate government's performance in land reform implementation?

...it may be patchy, only available for certain parts of the country.

...it may be difficult to compile. What picture does the data paint?

Data difficulties are to be expected, but there are some ways to address or overcome them. Triangulation is a significant step in validating information. Get alternative sources.

Take note that there are also opportunities presenting themselves for land monitoring. For instance, the increasing attention on land grabbing placed by media can assist us in mining more data.

Scarcity of institutions directly advocating land rights

Whom do we talk with? There seem to be only a few – if at all – institutions that are directly engaged in land rights advocacy. If you seem to be alone in your country doing this, now is the time to explore other contacts. Try proactively looking for potential partners within the academe, for instance. Or you can also go seek partners within the region – many CSOs, especially within the Land Watch Asia network, are ready to offer their support.

Sustaining the Monitoring Initiative

We can keep this running if it is simple enough, does not demand too many resources, and is institutionalized within normal organizational activities within the Land Watch Asia campaign. National networks know which partners are responsible for monitoring which areas or themes.

In the end, monitoring enhances our advocacy. It also gives us that precious opportunity to learn from other CSOs' experiences: from the data generated as well as the methodologies used by other NGOs. We can also engage in joint analysis of monitoring results among NGOs.

Endnote

- ^a Based on pilot monitoring in the Land Watch Asia countries, Table 5 summarizes the levels of monitoring per country, and which part of the conventional monitoring and evaluation cycle was focused on.

Table 5: Level and Focus of Monitoring during Pilot Testing of CSO Land Reform Monitoring Framework

Country	Level	Monitoring Focus				
		Input	Process	Output	Outcome	Impact
Bangladesh	National
Cambodia	National with selected provinces	.	.			
India	National	.				.
	Bihar state	.	.	.		
Indonesia	National	.	.	.		
Nepal	National
Pakistan	National	.	.			
Philippines	National

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