

Asia Regional Meeting: October 2006

Across rural Asia, land is a vital source of livelihood and employment. A large portion of the population is involved in agriculture, and many livelihoods remain dependent on subsistence farming. The most common feature of Asia's rural poor, however, is the increasing landlessness and denial of access to natural resources, creating the irony that small-scale producers are amongst those most vulnerable to food insecurity. In some parts of Asia, land reforms have been developed in recent decades to address this situation, but the implementation has generally been wanting because of corruption, changing leadership and shifting priorities and a lack of political will.

In October 2006, more than 25 Asian civil-society organizations participated in a regional ILC activity to identify key issues now facing land rights and agrarian reform movements in Asia, and how networking via regional and global platforms, including ILC, may contribute to making people's land rights more secure. The meeting was hosted by ANGO, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and drew participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

During the meeting, participants shared updates on local and national contexts concerning land rights and agrarian reform, and worked in groups to prioritize key issues for national and regional action. These included:

- Support to growing grassroots movements of poor men and women to secure land and natural resource access;
- Linking land rights campaigns to broader social empowerment efforts, to ensure benefit by marginalized groups, e.g., women, Dalits and indigenous peoples;
- Addressing trends that have increased the vulnerability of small-scale producers in the marketplace, including expansion of neo-liberal economic policies;
- Developing sustainable agriculture and NRM practices that communities can use after gaining access to land and resources; and;
- Positioning more equitable land redistribution in the context of efforts to democratize institutions and power relations, particularly in rural areas.



Drawing upon this contextual analysis, the participants recommended that ILC's work in Asia should have two key focuses:

1. Capacity-building via community empowerment, strengthening knowledge and action networks, and bridging grassroots lessons learned with policy impact.

2. Policy, advocacy and monitoring, to influence both policy and legislation and the terms of debate around land rights.

These objectives reflected the perception of roles that ILC can play as a “*glocal*” network (i.e., both global and local) in linking local actors and national processes into regional and global forums, and as a network that bridges both rights-based and livelihoods approaches and can identify how the two are complementary.

Based on the regional meeting’s outcomes, ILC is working with its Asian members and partners to develop a work plan for activities in the region over the next two years. The key issues raised, based on analysis of the Asian context, are also being incorporated into the revision of ILC’s global strategic framework, which will be considered by Land Coalition members at the next ILC Global Assembly to be held in Uganda in April 2007. (See page 20).

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