

**LAND IS LIFE: LAND IS LIVELIHOOD**  
**A proxy to address extreme poverty and hunger**  
**Reflections from CSD-16**

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I had the opportunity to participate in the CSD-16 Review Session held at United Nations Head Quarter in New York from 5-16 May 2008, having been invited by IFAD as an ILC member for Asia.

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit. The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues.

The 16<sup>th</sup> session of the CSD for 2008 focused on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.

**THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS ON LAND: IFAD/ILC Panel**

The CSD has opened its sessions to broad participation from both governmental and non-governmental actors. In this connection IFAD has been asked by the Secretariat of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to present a panel on a thematic session “LAND” and organised a session in collaboration with other inter-governmental and civil society organisations and the support of the ILC Secretariat. IFAD and ILC presented a five members panel on 8<sup>th</sup> May on land chaired by Vice-Chair Tri Tharyat and panelists were Joan Kagwanja (ECA), Rowshan Jahan Moni (Association for Land Reform and Development-ALRD, ILC member- Asia), Laureano del Castillo (Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales- ILC member, Latin America), Klaus Deininger (Land tenure Adviser-World Bank), Dr.Christian Mersmann (Managing Director The Global Mechanism). The session was participated by Government delegates from CSD member States, IGO’s, CSO’s and nine Major Groups: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous people, NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Communities and Farmers.

**Address by the panelist:**

This session had particular focus on access to productive resources and poverty alleviation, land tenure and financing for integrated land management. The panelists focused on how to ensure access to land and natural resources for vulnerable populations in the face of global trends increasing the demand for land. Issues have been stressed by the panelists were need for decentralization at national and local level as ensuring access is more a governance issue, increased financing as well as technical support by the intergovernmental organizations and other development partners for ensuring good governance that can reduce conflict and enable access by the poor particularly women and indigenous to the productive natural resources and

security. For effective application of country level policies/laws, compliance and implementation of international instruments like- CEDAW, ILO, UN Declaration on Human Rights (HR), Indigenous people (IPs) etc. were further stressed. Emphasis were also given for appropriate land rights and recognition of customary land rights and divers pro poor secured tenure system so that small farmers can think of long term land use towards sustainable land management. Climate change, Agro fuel and consolidation of land for commercial purpose like shrimp culture, industrialization, unplanned urbanization due to increased demographic pressure to the urban area and Multinational Companies antagonistic role have also been stressed out which leads to sharpen food price rise, insecurity and livelihood change all over the world.

In the Concluding part each panelist made 3 minutes analytical annotations and highlighted the complexity of land issues; called for a focus on root causes, disparity between financial resource allocation and priority needs ; explore the tension between biofuel and food production, non-accessibility of electronic land governance systems by vulnerable groups; and need for long-term commitment in sustainable land management and research in emerging issues. Finally acknowledged ILCs role as an outstanding platform where IGOS and CSO's together continued to enabling scope for making integrated interventions to reduce gap between rich and poor towards achieving MDGs goal-1 in particular.

Discussions and debates from 8 May session at UN further explored in a side event workshop on “Growing insecurity: Land and Vulnerable People” on 9th May organized by IFAD and ILC.

A position paper from ILC was presented by Mike Taylor of ILC after the welcome address with explaining background and objectives by Cheryl Morden of IFAD while Augusta Molnar from Rights and Resource Groups made a presentation on “ Securing Tenure and Rights in the face of the last great land grab”.

After detail discussion at the end supplementary and complimentary role of the participating organisations have been identified and agreed upon to work in a coordinated way in the area of i) Policy and advocacy ii) Data, monitoring and indicators iii) Piloting and scaling-up implementation, finally iv) capacity and institution building both on a short term targeting CSD-17 next year as well as long-term and feed into international and global initiatives in accelerating the process of establishing land rights of the poor and disadvantaged.

### **Observation as well as learning:**

Land is the proxy to absolute poverty, one of the most important assets for the rural population. It provides a basis for livelihoods and socio-economic power relationship in a particular society. It also determines cultural identity particularly for the indigenous people wherever they are. Land provides important ecosystem services and is a crucial factor in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Land tenure security and equitable access to land and natural resources are contributory factor to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Finally Partnerships that include local ownership, a clear understanding of goals, active collaboration of all stakeholders and ability like ILC to keep partners involved in the long-term are the most essential for making significant achievement.