

**WCARRD 20/20:
Emerging Trends and Perspectives
of Agrarian Reform in Asia
06-07 October 1999 □ Tagaytay City, Philippines**

A FINAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of the agrarian reform conference entitled "*WCARRD 20/20: Emerging Trends and Perspectives of Agrarian Reform in Asia*" co-organized by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty at Tagaytay City, Philippines on 06-07 October 1999. The event provided the venue for an informative discourse of past to present agrarian reform approaches and issues facing full implementation that need to be reviewed or addressed. From an assessment of previous efforts at agrarian reform implementation through WCARRD, discussions focused on a review of the State-led, market-assisted and civil society initiated approaches to agrarian reform.

This document presents the highlights of discussions and agreements reached, the workshop design, outputs and follow-up actions. This two-day conference was participated by 53 representatives from 41 NGOs and people's organizations from 15 countries, including officials and staff of World Bank-Philippines, FAO-Philippines and Department of Agrarian Reform of the Philippine government.

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I. WCARRD 20 Years Later: Where are we now and where are we going?

A. Context/Background

For the latter half of the 20th century, there has been a resurgence in the view that agrarian reform was the imperative for rural development. Asian tigers like Japan, Taiwan and South Korea completed their agrarian reform programs before becoming the economic leaders in the region today. These countries have set the example that agrarian reform is the platform to social equity and development for other developing countries burdened with centuries of landlessness for their small farmers.

Such commitment and confidence in agrarian reform was shared and expressed formally by 145 governments in 1979 during the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development or WCARRD. It was here that the International Peasant's Charter was drafted and agreed upon by representatives of governments, NGOs and People's Organizations (POs) worldwide.

However, on its 10th year in 1989, WCARRD noted little or no reform in the area of access to land and changes in land tenure in Asia. According to the WCARRD 1989 report, ***“tenancy reforms as a whole have had only limited success and only where strong peasant movements made enough pressure for their implementation.”*** Government political will did not measure up to agreements they reached under WCARRD for policy reforms and implemented action plans, particularly on access to land. However, pressure from the ground by the peasant movements and other civil society alliances brought about desired results of access to land and other resources.

Twenty years later, the view that agrarian reform is the primary rural development strategy has shifted. Governments have opted to follow the path of industrialization and globalization toward development and poverty alleviation. Alternative approaches to agrarian reform have emerged. Some give particular emphasis on the demands of market forces on agricultural production that may conflict with the social equity goals of agrarian reform.

More proactive follow-up activities to these conferences, such as active lobbying campaigns by some civil society groups, were also conducted targeting concerned government and intergovernmental agencies. Hence, the strategy of proactive lobbying to secure resource rights has led to more direct results to the grassroots communities involved.

At the same time, a number of initiatives and case studies on grassroots experiences in agrarian reform and resource rights need to be documented and shared at the international, regional, national and local levels. These experiences cover a broad range of efforts in upscaling tenurial security technologies, mainstreaming tripartite approaches, strategic networking for people-led campaigns among others.

Thus, discussions are necessary to clearly grasp these new trends affecting land reform and what direction shall NGOs and POs take given current options and trends.

It is in this milieu that this agrarian reform conference is being co-organized by ANGOC, as the network celebrates its 20th year, and the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty.

B. Objectives of the Conference

The conference was organized with the aim of:

- ❑ providing a perspective of the status of WCARRD Agreements after 20 years and its prospects especially in Asia;
- ❑ reviewing the status of Agrarian Reform in the Asian region, and;
- ❑ broadening the discussion on existing and emerging modes, particularly on approaches shaped by the governments, market and the people's own experiences at securing their tenurial rights and how these approaches conflict or complement each other in realizing genuine agrarian reform.

II. Conference Process

A. Conference Organizers

1. Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)

ANGOC was formed in 1979 as a concrete response to ensuring the realization of WCARRD agreements, particularly in the Asian region. Its core members were in fact participants to the first WCARRD which adopted the dimensions of rural development highlighted by the first conference.

ANGOC sees a need to view the WCARRD agreements from the respective regional and country perspectives and against the global trends and developments that affected the implementation of WCARRD agreements for the past 20 years. ANGOC regards the issue of access to resources as key element to poverty alleviation and achieving sustainable food security as well.

2. **Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty**

After WCARRD, other summits and conferences on underdevelopment sprouted in the '90s that highlighted specific issues monitored by the WCARRD agreements. Among these was the Conference on Hunger and Poverty in Brussels in 1995, which gave birth to the **Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty**. It is a global consortium of intergovernmental, civil-society and bilateral organizations committed to the empowerment of the rural poor through improving their access to productive assets, especially land and water, and increasing their direct participation in decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.

To realize its mission, the Popular Coalition launched a Knowledge Network on Civil Society Initiatives in Land Reform that currently involves 23 countries grouped into 7 regional clusters. The Network aims to document and disseminate civil society experiences in land reform and strengthen their capacity for policy dialogue.

B. Conference Participants

There were three main groupings of participants who were present in the conference: a) members of the Knowledge Network, b) network members of ANGOC, and c) Philippine NGOs and People's Organizations involved in agrarian reform and rural development issues.

Fifty-three (53) representatives from 41 NGOs and people's organizations from 15 countries, including officials and staff from World Bank-Philippines, FAO-Philippines and the Department of Agrarian Reform of

the Philippine government. (*See Annex A for the directory of participants.*) These NGOs and farmers' organizations are national networks working on agrarian reform and rural development issues at the policy and program implementation levels. The countries represented were: Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Officials and staff from intergovernmental agencies such as World Bank-Manila and FAO-Manila likewise participated and acted as resource persons during the plenary sessions. The Philippine government, as represented by the Department of Agrarian Reform thru Undersecretary Conrado Navarro, highlighted issues and perspectives of the country's agrarian program in his *Opening Address*.

C. Conference Design

The conference provided an informative discourse of past and present agrarian reform approaches and issues facing its full implementation that need to be reviewed or addressed. An issue paper prepared by Prof. Dr. Hans Meliczek (University of Gottingen, Germany) triggered the discussion in reviewing the outcome of the WCARRD agreements after 20 years. The presentation was complemented by an overview of the status of agrarian reform in Asia (i.e., overview of agrarian reform, land policies, issues, etc.).

From an assessment of previous efforts at agrarian reform implementation through WCARRD, a panel presentation ensued focusing on the experiences of civil society organizations with agrarian reform in Asia, taking note of the different country contexts, to wit:

Country/Region	Policy Environment/Context
Cambodia	Emerging market economy
Indonesia	Emerging democracy
Philippines	Emerging partnership approaches among local government units, NGOs and people's organizations
Thailand	Participatory-village development approach as a response to WCARRD agreements
South Asia	Local initiatives and community-level actions

As such, country case studies have been produced and presented by respective country focal points of the Knowledge Network.

Linking the assessment of WCARRD with the initiatives of the civil society, the participants organized group discussions to further stimulate and synthesize the inputs and presentations. The plenary was divided into three groups and were tasked to answer the following guide questions:

- ① what is still relevant in WCARRD that can be carried forward
- ② has a positive role been taken by civil society in agrarian reform implementation at the national level vis-à-vis national governments
- ③ what is the role of civil society in agrarian reform advocacy at the international level; how can positive action at the national level be linked to international advocacy

Results of the group discussions were reported and discussed in the plenary. Notes were taken on the

emerging issues and consensus points. (These notes would be later used as inputs in the drafting of the Conference Proposal.) The first day ended with a video showing of illustrative cases in agrarian reform and other civil society initiatives in poverty alleviation.

The second day opened with a review of the previous day. (Reports of proceedings were circulated. Refer to *Annex E.*) This was followed by a panel presentation on land reform approaches, with the aim of examining the concept and practice of market-assisted and state-led programs, based on actual country experiences of Brazil and the Philippines, respectively. Henceforth, responses were generated from World Bank, NGO and farmer organization.

In order to capture the inputs and presentations, the organizers facilitated a general discussion on the two-day conference. A draft Conference Proposal highlighting the results was presented. Upon deliberations, the document was approved subject to the additional issues raised. The document was viewed by the conference participants as a statement of their commitment to agrarian reform implementation and advocacy. (Refer to *Annex C.*) Key institutions were then requested to make their responses regarding the results of the conference. ANGOC, for its part, also presented an institutional statement regarding its position on agrarian reform and rural development. (*See Annex D.*)

In the afternoon of Day 2, the regional and national focal points for Asia of the Popular Coalition had a business meeting to discuss operational matters regarding the second phase of the Knowledge Network Project.

For more details of the conference design, refer to *Annex B.*

D. Summary of Conference Outputs

The conference produced the following outputs:

- ❑ two papers reviewing WCARRD's 20 years of (non) performance and assessing agrarian reform situation in Asia
- ❑ six (6) country case studies illustrating civil society initiatives in agrarian reform
- ❑ document on civil society initiatives at the global level
- ❑ two papers on land reform approaches: market-assisted and state-led
- ❑ reports of the proceedings of the two-day conference
- ❑ Conference Recommendation/Proposal

III. Highlights of Presentation and Discussions

A. Conference Proper

On the Opening Address of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) of the Philippine Government:

DAR Undersecretary Conrado Navarro stressed that the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is a piece of social legislation that is meant to correct historical inequities and injustice. At the same time, he noted that CARP is not just about land acquisition and redistribution but with provision of support services.

DAR is trying out a number of innovations in agrarian reform implementation, to wit:

- ❑ Demand-driven as opposed to supply-driven strategy for land distribution
- ❑ Preparation of beneficiaries for land acquisition
- ❑ Partnership between the landowner and the farmers whereby the latter “contribute” the **use** of their land to the partnership while the former provides technical expertise and capital investment

However, DAR is constrained by a number of issues bedeviling the agrarian reform program: a) lack of funds, b) continuing resistance of landowners, and c) tedious process of settling disputes.

On the Review of WCARRD:

Mr. Hans Meliczek reviewed the last 20 years following WCARRD. 1979 was a landmark event since it marked a new era of development. FAO has recognized the importance of land tenure issues for the sound development of the agricultural sector and expressed concern about the negative implications of a skewed distribution of land ownership. WCARRD was summed up with “*growth with equity and people’s participation*”. As such, in the WCARRD Programme of Action, the following objectives were set:

- the rural poor should be enabled to have access to fixed factors of production in agriculture
- the rural poor should obtain access to variable cost of production
- priority should be accorded to the generation and extension of technology for small farmers
- importance should be attached to the creation of non-farm employment opportunities
- emphasis should be placed in human resource development

- women should be enabled to participate equally in development
- rural development should be promoted with the full participation of people
- macro-policies (e.g., fiscal, price, trade and investment policies) should support grassroots efforts in rural development

Dr. Meliczek noted that an important feature of WCARRD was the participation of NGOs. He recalled that ANGOC prepared a paper entitled “*The Case for Alternative Development: Of the People, For the People, By the People*” that formed the basis of much of the discussion in the NGO group.

There was interest in the initial years to follow-up on WCARRD; however, there were hardly any follow-up activities and events during the 1990s. He noted that redistributive land reform had not frequently succeeded to attain its goals in many parts of the world. He cited the most important reasons for the failures of land reform:

- strategic deceit of large landowners to outwit reform initiatives
- weakness or unwillingness of governments to break up large land holdings and distribute them to rural poor
- inefficiency of state bureaucracies as reflected in the slowness, costliness and weak enforcement capacities
- lack of supportive technical assistance
- weak managerial capacities of the beneficiaries

However, despite failings and the immense financial, administrative, political and social costs associated with these failures, there has been a renewed call for agrarian reform as indicated in recent international summits such as UNCED, International Conference on Hunger and Poverty and World Food Summit. But then again, the

question remains in the implementation as the powers of governments are eroding (amidst the globalization process) and with it their options to allocate funds for land acquisition.

Among the options or alternative solutions to agrarian reform, Dr. Meliczek enumerated the following: a) land tenure reform [reform of land tenure institutions, instruments], b) negotiated land reform [based on the willing buyer-willing seller principle], c) market-led land reform [which assumes that markets are the best regulators of supply and demand], and d) redistributive land reform.

On the Agrarian Reform in Asia:

ANGOC Board Member Antonio B. Quizon provided an overview of the current situation of agrarian reform in Asia. He started by analyzing the overall agrarian structure in Asia:

- Countries where collectivization of agriculture has been practiced, with equitable distribution of resources
- Countries that have undergone agricultural modernization and some levels of agrarian reforms
- Countries where traditional patterns exist with a feudal or semi-feudal character, with lands held by absentee owners or corporations

Quizon summed the land reform approaches in Asia as follows:

- Land ceilings
- Policies and regulations on land use
- Regulations on land sales, inheritance and

transfer

- Creation of agrarian settlements
- Reform of tenancy relations and land lease arrangements
- Redistribution of state and private lands
- Recognition of customary land and resource and rights
- Creation of land markets (still evolving)

Among the future agenda for agrarian reform in Asia are as follows:

- Addressing access to land and tenure security
- Responding to growing need for creating new opportunities for non-farm rural employment
- Addressing growing issues of resource tenure
- “Internationalizing” issues of land policy and agrarian reform
- Linking tenurial reforms with food security, poverty alleviation and environmental objectives
- Building local farmer/community capacities for self-help
- Examining and addressing market forces that impact on land markets
- Recognizing customary land rights and customary laws, within the legal state systems

On civil society initiatives in agrarian reform:

The national focal points of the Knowledge Network presented a number of case studies. Details are contained in *Annex E*. The case studies were also circulated during the conference proper. The moderator summarized the case presentations as follows:

Country	Description
Bangladesh	Explain how agrarian reform issues can be elevated from the community level to ministerial level up to the supreme court
Cambodia	Need for institutional capacity to handle administrative, technical and legal aspects of land registration; need for civil society to commit to a common comprehensive program on land reform
India	Depicts how the law can be circumvented by institutions that control land ownership and how the invisible hand of global institutions dictate decisions by the local elite
Indonesia	An example of how civil society can support agrarian reform ; however, need for capacity building within the context of an emerging democracy
Philippines	Describes the effectiveness of alliances, including but not exclusive to the government
Thailand	An approach to the implementation of agrarian reform that is participatory and engages government agencies

On Group Discussions:

In response to the guide questions, the results of the discussions can be summarized as follows:

★ Review of WCARRD:

- past development efforts have not reached the rural areas
- growth with equity and participation requires redistribution of economic and political power
- land is just one means of production
- certain changes in the definition and concepts of WCARRD
 - incorporate sustainability
 - trade, globalization and other emerging issues should be considered
 - emphasize on political will of governments

★ Positive Roles of Civil Society:

- Advocacy/pressure government to implement aspects of the Peasant's Charter
- Monitoring of implementation
- Action research leading to policy recommendations
- Education of farmers and consumers
- Information sharing
- Community organizing
- Prototyping agrarian reform models

★ Possible areas of collaboration:

Area of Work	Local	National	International
Policy Formulation			
1. advocacy on land struggle, GATT, WTO	x	x	x
2. sharing of experiences	x	x	x
3. consultation	x	x	x

Networking	x	x	x
Donor's conference	x	x	x
Proposal generation	x	x	x

On Brazil's experience on market-assisted land reform:

Mr. Sergio Sauer of the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil (MST) was invited by the Popular Coalition to share the farmers' experience in World Bank's project on market-assisted land reform. Mr. Sauer started by sharing his organization's perspective on land reform as it relates to the principles of justice, power, self-determination and dignity, employment and citizenship.

In 1992, the World Bank started a "pilot" 3-year program for market-led land reform covering five states. The program had a budget of US\$150 million and was designed to benefit some 15,000 poor families. The fund was allotted to infrastructure and not land purchase. Farmers borrowed directly from Brazilian banks to pay the landlord and used the land as loan guarantee. They had 20 years to pay back the loan, at six percent interest, with payments to start on the third year.

At the end of 1998, the National Forum for Agrarian Reform and Justice asked the World Bank to set up an inspection panel to evaluate the program. Among other things, the farmers complained that the program was driving up land prices in the region, beneficiaries are not being consulted and poverty remains prevalent.

In the end, Mr. Sauer stated the reasons for MST's objections to the program:

- ideological (market is not oriented towards justice)

- political (program benefits the non-organized peasants and penalizes the organized ones)
- economic (poverty situation is getting worse)
- social (lack of participation of the peasants)

On Philippines' experience on state-led land reform:

Former DAR Undersecretary Mr. Victor Gerardo Bulatao started by saying that although the land reform program in the Philippines is state-led, it is not led by the state in the sense as the programs in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. As such, the program was not pushed primarily by the ruling party nor was it a pro-active program. It was not a deliberate decision on the part of the government following careful scientific study. Instead, it was a compromise. On the one hand, it was the fruit of the efforts of hundreds of thousands of organized farmers and their allies who had been demanding it for many years.

And like other compromise legislation, its implementation is and has been problematic. It is subject to the push and pull of political forces. As such, in the past year, the administration of President Joseph Estrada had been able to transfer 130,000 hectares. On this basis, it would take 23 more years to distribute the rest of the privately held land due to be transferred under the CARP.

Mr. Bulatao projected that the implementation of the CARP will be hard-going in the next years. However, he expressed hope that civil society organizations and state reformists within the Department of Agrarian Reform will not give up. He is not too optimistic of big new breakthroughs but said that if small steps forward can be made, or if past gains can be protected, then it would be well worth the effort.

He summed up by saying that agrarian reform is something that happens at a historical juncture for countries. “We are not dealing with theoretical concepts but in the interaction of various players.”

On the Conference Recommendation/Proposal:

As earlier mentioned, notes on the emerging issues and coonsensus points during the presentation and plenary discussions were synthesized by ANGOC and the Popular Coalition into a draft statement or Conference Recommendation/Proposal. The draft statement was presented and discussed in plenary. Among the key features of the said document are:

- WCARRD is still relevant today and its principles had been carried in a number of international conferences in the 1990s
- WCARRD Programme of Action was built on principles that are still essential
- the need for renewed efforts to merge the efforts of civil society organizations, governments and the international community into common strategies to combat rural poverty
- recognized the important role of the Popular Coalition (as an international organization) and ANGOC (as a regional organization) to catalyze and make use of available mechanisms in pursuing on the following proposals:
 - ✓ review and strengthen the Peasant’s Charter for 2000 that incorporates the commitments in other international documents
 - ✓ intensify local, national, and international networking

- ✓ research and study on new innovations or trends in agrarian reform
- ✓ participate in upcoming international conferences to create space and inclusion of agrarian reform
- ✓ expansion of dialogue between governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society
- ✓ cooperation between civil society and financing institutions based on within the framework and principles espoused by civil society
- ✓ continue advocacy work
- ✓ identify, document and objectively evaluate experiences of civil society in agrarian reform
- ✓ prioritize indigenous peoples, women, lower caste in the struggle of agrarian reform
- ✓ work in solidarity with farmers and agricultural workers

For details of the Conference Recommendation/Proposal, refer to *Annex C*.

B. Business Meeting of Knowledge Network on Agrarian Reform

The agenda of the business meeting focused on the following items: a) current state of the Popular Coalition, b) expectations of regional and national focal points of the Knowledge Network, and c) review and follow-up on the recommendation/proposal of WCARRD 20/20 conference.

Status of the Popular Coalition:

Bruce Moore explained the limitation of the Popular Coalition since the Secretariat has just recently been

formed. Two (2) staff will be added in the Secretariat whose main job is to help develop, among others, the website of the Coalition.

The document from the Popular Coalition (distributed during the WCARRD 20/20 Conference) will serve as the guide for the working principles among members of the Knowledge Network.

In terms of the second phase of the Knowledge Network Project, Moore noted that there were delays in the processing of Contribution Agreements between the Coalition and the knowledge network members. However, Moore also recognized that a number of the initiatives had been implemented, and hence, the Coalition would be amenable that regional and national focal points can charge for the Project funds retroactively.

Expectations of Regional and National Focal Points:

Considering that the Coalition is a multi-stakeholder entity, transparency is needed at all levels of engagement. Information sharing thus is imperative among the members. However, there is need to share more information about the Coalition and the Knowledge Network. At the same time, there is also the need to translate materials into local languages. While it is recognized that translation work is difficult, the national nodes could facilitate this.

As an international entity, the Coalition should lend hand in promoting agrarian reform in funding agencies so that it will continue to support this concern apart from productivity related activities. On the one hand, efforts by the Secretariat should be made to popularize the Coalition among the intergovernmental members (i.e., FAO, WB, IFAD) at the regional and national levels.

It was also clarified that Coalition is not an IFAD instrumentality or program, but merely housed at present in IFAD. As such, there is a need to diversify funding source especially from more independent sources apart from the multilaterals.

Emerging follow-up actions on WCARRD 20/20:

The regional and national focal points agreed to follow-up on the recommendations that resulted from the conference. As such, they will review their existing plans, based on the Contribution Agreement, to take into consideration the action points of the Conference Recommendation/Proposal.

It was also noted that the South and South East Asia regional and national focal points should work closely to the extent possible in pushing agrarian reform in Asia.

For South Asia, efforts will be made to explore the possibility of including Sri Lanka and Pakistan in the Network. As such, ANGO network members in South Asia can be a starting point.

Indonesia expressed its need for learning from the Philippine experience of tripartism in implementing agrarian reform. On the other hand, the Coalition also expressed its support to Cambodia in lobbying for the passage of Land Law being drafted by civil society organizations.

The regional and national focal points also noted the need for a quick respond fund managed at the regional level to support field initiatives in facilitating agrarian reform. ANGO was tasked to draw-up a concept paper.

Possible source of funding is the Civil Society Empowerment Fund managed by the Popular Coalition.

For more details, refer to *Annex F*.