



Land Alliances for National Development

Programme description and guidelines
for establishing
LAND Partnerships

A Partnership Programme
of the
International Land Coalition

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TABLE OF CONTENT

BACKGROUND	2
INTRODUCTION	4
LAND PARTNERSHIPS	5
The context for establishing LAND Partnerships	
Steps and guidelines in establishing LAND Partnerships	
Capacity of the International Land Coalition	
Resource mobilization and links to other Coalition initiatives	
Pilot countries	
Sequencing activities	

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BACKGROUND

1. The International Land Coalition¹ grew out of an international conference convened in Brussels in 1995 by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The conference brought together a broad cross-section of civil society organizations (CSOs) and official development agencies, who joined hands to eradicate poverty. The Coalition was founded on the basis of a common vision by diverse stakeholders, namely that secure access to land, water and related productive resources is basic to achieving lasting solutions to hunger and poverty. The founding vision was that secure access to land results in improved household food security, increased family income and sustainable land use.

2. Poverty is the root cause of hunger and, paradoxically, hunger is most widespread where food is produced: in rural areas, the home of the vast majority of the world's poor. The negligible natural and capital assets of the rural poor compel them to adopt survival strategies with short time horizons. The rural poor become excluded from productive opportunities by ill-defined or non-existent property rights; limited access to financial services and markets; inadequate security against natural disasters; lack of education and training; and lack of participation in decision-making. Understandably, when property rights are lacking or insecure, poor rural people cannot be sure they will receive the benefits if they invest in restoring or preserving the long-term productivity of the land.

3. While commitments to the resource rights of the rural poor are not new, there is a growing consensus on the cross-cutting contribution of resource rights in eradicating poverty, achieving food security, resolving resource conflicts and implementing environmentally sustainable practices for natural resource management. The importance of secure access to land was affirmed in many of the clauses agreed to by governments in the Plan of Implementation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002.² The understanding that rural poverty is directly linked to secure access to land and enforceable resource tenure provides new incentives. It opens the potential to resolve land issues involving diverse public and private interests, and between powerful vested interests and the hitherto weaker institutions of the poor.

4. When countries negotiate in favour of the resource needs of the rural poor (especially the landless, near landless and smallholders), economic, social and political benefits inevitably result. However, such negotiation requires innovation and courage, since, in many situations, the systemic obstacles, the complex transaction processes and opposing self-interests are firmly entrenched. It was in response to these challenges and the diverse nature of land issues that the *International Land Coalition* was formed. The Coalition has evolved into a leading global convening mechanism to address land issues. Land issues are central to the development activities of many organizations, from CSOs to international institutions, including governments. The challenges and the political sensitivities involved in land issues make the convening, networking, knowledge, mediation and negotiation roles of

¹ The change of name from “Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty” to “International Land Coalition” took effect on 17 February 2003.

² Referring to paragraphs 7c, 7d, 7h, 11a, 40d and 40i and 65b of the Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August – 4 September 2002, Document A/CONF.199/20, website: www.johannesburgsummit.org

the Coalition a valued mechanism for its members – including, among others, IFAD, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Food Programme, World Bank and the European Commission.

5. Poverty, the environment, conflicts and civil wars, migrants and refugees are increasingly affecting all countries. Access to land and land tenure security are known to be among the prime factors in the identification of sustainable solutions to these global challenges. However, it is also known that unless land policies and programmes target the constraints particular to women, indigenous peoples and pastoralists, these already vulnerable populations will be further disenfranchised.

INTRODUCTION

6. Through its programmes, actions and alliances, the International Land Coalition is extending the understanding of the significant contribution that secure access to land can make in overcoming hunger and poverty. Natural resources issues, particularly land issues, are appearing more frequently on national and international agendas, most recently in the WSSD. The International Land Coalition was an active partner in the WSSD preparatory process and deliberations, and is credited with making an important contribution to the WSSD outcomes. The WSSD Plan of Implementation is an expression of the renewed interest in land, and provides a strong foundation for moving forward.

7. WSSD provided an important opportunity to merge past international agreements and elevate commitments on the cross-cutting relevance of access to land in poverty reduction and the sustainable use of natural resources.

8. The WSSD outcomes contain very progressive commitments to address the need for the rural poor to gain secure access to natural resources, especially land. The challenge of achieving the WSSD's goals, especially the need to establish pro-poor land policies, points to the need to build robust partnerships among citizen, governmental and international organizations. The complexities and challenges represent a call for all stakeholders to become allies with landless and near-landless households by strengthening the opportunities for these resource-poor people to develop sustainable livelihoods.

9. In response to these dynamics, the International Land Coalition launched **Land Alliances for National Development**, or '**LAND Partnerships**' at WSSD. WSSD provided renewed impetus for forging partnerships for action. LAND Partnerships provide a practical way to implement the WSSD outcomes and to contribute to realizing the Millennium Development Goals. More than 70 representatives of intergovernmental organizations, governments, national and international CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part at the launching event.

10. LAND Partnerships are an outgrowth of work by the International Land Coalition at the Eighth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-8). At that time, the International Land Coalition launched a two-year consultative process to elevate the scale and scope of global commitments to the land rights of the rural poor. With inputs and suggestions from its diverse constituencies (intergovernmental, civil society, academic and governmental), the Coalition launched and widely distributed the results of the process in a document titled **Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land**³ during the WSSD Preparatory Committee Meeting in Bali. The platform is an iterative process. It will be re-

³ A copy may be found at: <http://www.landcoalition.org> - Resources - *Information about International Land Coalition.*

issued on a regular basis in order to reflect the evolving experience, lessons learnt, progress achieved and expanded collaborative work being undertaken by partners. It is a living document that provides practical ways and means to: a) facilitate alliances among sectors, b) assist governments in establishing land policies and services, c) strengthen rural people's organizations; and d) work in partnership with CSOs and international organizations.

11. Throughout the two-year consultative process (1998-2000), stakeholders called upon the Coalition to develop a plan for national partnerships, so that concerned countries might establish practical, country-level initiatives that could benefit from the experience of the Coalition in building alliances at regional and global levels. LAND Partnerships reflect the history of land access, which shows that civil society movements lacking institutional and public support, and government-led initiatives undertaken without the support of civil society, rarely succeed. In many cases, civil society, governmental and intergovernmental organizations are pursuing what seem to be parallel paths and objectives, but, due to historical events, there are differences that are difficult to bridge. The experience developed by the International Land Coalition in convening such diverse stakeholders and interest groups has been documented in a paper entitled *From Parallel Actions to a Common Agenda*⁴. The Coalition's experience also points to the need for greater in-country coherence among the bilateral and multilateral community in their policies and programmes.

12. For the Coalition, the processes that led to the framework for **Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land** provide the contextual analysis and policy considerations for launching LAND Partnerships at the country level. LAND Partnerships are a tool to assist governments to establish participatory processes to convert the commitments agreed to in various summits and conventions into practical action programmes.

LAND PARTNERSHIPS

13. **Land Alliances for National Development, or LAND Partnerships**, constitute a global initiative to alleviate rural poverty by strengthening country-level collaboration between state, civil society, bilateral and international stakeholders. This collaboration is needed to: a) achieve participatory dialogue; b) improve policy formulation; c) establish joint action to secure resource tenure for households with user rights; and d) increase access to land by the landless and near-landless.

14. While the resource poor seek a more active role in decision-making, many governments are also recognizing the benefits of robust, stakeholder discussion and, in some cases, collective decision-making. In many countries, this requires new arenas and mechanisms for dialogue. LAND Partnerships respond to this challenge by helping countries to create new ways and means for both those affecting and those affected by decisions about land to work together. LAND Partnerships will help to widen participation, foster open debate and facilitate negotiation at both the national and the community levels.

15. Furthermore, LAND Partnerships are a means to replicate the best practices learned in one community to other communities for wider benefit. Also, where scaling-up is accomplished, it may be more likely that this experience can be validated as a basis for national policy consideration. More importantly, LAND Partnerships are an opportunity for all parties to move from individual to collective roles, and thereby capture potential synergy.

16. Since the launch in 2002, the Coalition has been actively promoting LAND in the over 35 countries where it has programmes. The initial goal is to establish LAND Partnerships in

⁴ A copy may be found at : <http://www.landcoalition.org> - Resources - *Statements and Speeches 2001*

a geographically balanced range of pilot countries. These pilot LAND Partnerships are envisioned as focal points to stimulate extension of the concept into surrounding countries.

17. LAND Partnerships will be developed in response to invitations from governments together with an expressed interest by civil society. The Coalition will support local implementation capacity for all stakeholders involved – civil society, governments and intergovernmental partners. LAND Partnerships will build upon existing and emerging initiatives and activities.

19. In addition, the Coalition's role will be to foster collaboration and the sharing of lessons with other countries in order to either launch LAND Partnerships in these countries, or to help create the conditions conducive to the subsequent establishment of LAND.

20. The overall objectives of LAND Partnerships have direct relevance to implementing the WSSD plan. The objectives are to:

- develop or strengthen existing country-level, multi-stakeholder alliances, coalitions, commissions or such other convening mechanisms suited to country requirements that can provide a forum where those affecting and those affected by decisions on land access, use and management can convene to examine pertinent issues;
- provide a mechanism to advise, debate and negotiate the implications, effects and benefits of proposed policy or programme changes or needs for change; and
- identify, within or through exchanges with other countries, the policy, programming and service-delivery systems that have successfully created enabling conditions to improve access to land by the rural poor.

21. While successful LAND Partnerships will depend on country-specific solutions, it is likely that a number of common areas of focus and activity will emerge, *inter alia*:

- assessing and adjusting (as appropriate) legislative, regulatory and judicial frameworks to overcome constraints affecting access by the rural poor to land, by identifying gaps in policies, implementation actions or actual practice;
- reviving support for prior commitments and stimulating a renewal of the enabling conditions that previously may have been limited due to political or other circumstances;
- strengthening technical expertise and building capacity at all levels – from government ministries through local authorities to communities;
- reviewing, advising, monitoring and recommending improvements to policies in a manner that is equitable, transparent and accountable; and
- determining appropriate mechanisms for, *inter alia*, demarcating land boundaries and territories, resolving conflicts, managing common property, financing land distribution and access, and meeting post-land-reform requirements for productivity, including access to credit, technology, training and markets.

The context for establishing LAND Partnerships

21. LAND Partnerships are a tool in search of ways to "break through" the constraints impeding improvement in the resource rights of poor rural households. As such, LAND Partnerships will be country specific, reflecting prevailing national and local realities and cognizant of the situation-specific gaps between stakeholders.

22. The process will be tailored to the national and local context and can be best described as iterative. While the common aim is to help create an enabling space for dialogue by all stakeholders, the path will vary.

23. As an overarching framework and to build overall momentum and encourage participating countries, the Coalition will ensure that LAND Partnerships maintain an active link into the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), including its annual meeting and partnership events. The Coalition will showcase experiences and progress, as well as the obstacles encountered when implementing country LAND Partnerships. This will serve to further the partnership commitments undertaken at WSSD and contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

24. The International Land Coalition is working closely with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), as well as supportive governments, in order to ensure that the issue of access to land is recognized in a distinctive manner in relevant high level ministerial meetings and regional and international negotiations.

25. The International Land Coalition is working closely with the UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security, a coordinating mechanism at the country level for bringing together key national stakeholders, to help governments translate the World Food Summit Plan of Action into concerted and practical action. Managed by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the Network has been mandated to support the work of the International Land Coalition. In strengthening the international political commitment to meet the goals of the WSSD, WFS (f/y) and the Millennium Development Goals, the Coalition is working closely with the Rome-based agencies, as well as other relevant agencies and the functional commissions of the United Nations, to provide support for coordinated efforts at the country level on the practical realization of increased access to land by the rural poor to achieve food security, sustainable use of land and poverty reduction. LAND Partnerships can provide a framework – both at international and at country-levels – to assist governments in utilizing new approaches in finding ways to make progress and in opening spaces for dialogues to hear the voices of the rural poor to increase their secure access to land and resolve related challenges.

26. In most countries where LAND Partnerships may be established, there will be pre-existing mechanisms for collaboration, if not on land issues then on other developmental and sectoral topics. However, from consultations with an initial sample of countries, the interest in LAND Partnerships arises from either a need for a more neutral forum (as the record of the Coalition reveals it can provide) or a need to replace or improve existing mechanisms – mechanisms that may be limited due to the events of the past or are unable to transform to work to meet the needs of the present day. Furthermore, LAND Partnerships are seen to help countries – both the government and civil society – to establish more balance between all partners, whether within the country or outside supporters.

27. LAND Partnerships build upon the accumulated experience of the Coalition as a convenor of stakeholders across institutional borders, addressing a range of complex and often difficult land management issues. LAND Partnerships aim either to create a neutral mechanism for inter-organizational alliances or to strengthen existing mechanisms that may host LAND. The Coalition links the partnerships to other countries so that experiences can be exchanged. The partnerships are not prescriptive, but nurture arenas, forums, events, committees, alliances or other structures as frameworks within which diverse, vested interests in land can find a common basis for progress. The Coalition's experience is that it is possible to find common ground, build alliances and resolve conflicts within countries through LAND Partnerships. These partnerships can then move to the next stage, that of developing both country and community-specific solutions to resolve historical social, economic and political challenges in improving the poor's access to land.

Steps and guidelines in establishing LAND Partnerships

28. The steps involved in establishing LAND Partnerships cannot follow a standardized evolutionary path, in view of different national contexts. However, the elements of a launching and operating strategy for LAND Partnerships involve many similar elements.

29. The inaugural activities are expected to be diverse. In some cases, the key actors will be ready and willing to come together to work toward a common vision. In other cases, there will be need for alternative ways and means to bring actors together. In all cases, the goal will be to establish a representative working group composed of all key actors, who will then share roles and responsibilities for developing the LAND Partnership.

30. The minimum convening or founding partner group will need to comprise government, one or more lead CSOs, and the Coalition, who will take responsibility to identify the key actors who should be invited to participate in the establishment of the LAND Partnership. These actors should, *inter alia*, include: a) appropriate authorities and sectors of government; b) representative NGOs and CSOs (including landless people's organizations, small-scale farmers, women, and indigenous people); c) large landowners; and d) inter-governmental institutions and bilateral donors.

31. The Coalition, as a neutral convenor, would establish a small group of initiating partners (government, one or more CSOs and other essential interests and sectors as may be appropriate to the local context) to assess the interests and strategies of the key actors and the tensions among and between the actors. This information will provide the baseline spectrum of interests, concerns, linkages and interactions that pre-determine the opportunity for or challenges to establishing a LAND Partnership. The outcome will be to identify whether it is possible to convene a founding meeting of actors for the specific purpose of testing and launching a LAND Partnership, or whether other pre-LAND activities will be needed. For example, where the distance between actors is significant, other seminars or workshops may be convened on topics known to be of interest to all actors. In this way, seminar presenters from other countries will share experiences that may also demonstrate how, in their countries, they have built new ways of bridging institutional boundaries and differences. Such workshops can be structured to foster the preconditions for a LAND Partnership.

32. The convening partners would identify and assess pre-existing multi-stakeholder mechanisms for policy dialogue, consensus building and other spaces for sharing of experiences that have the potential to contribute to the establishment of an independent mechanism for a LAND Partnership, or to host a LAND Partnership under its umbrella. This assessment will be prepared for consideration when the formal founding meeting is convened.

33. Key actors will be convened to test the principal of establishing a LAND Partnership. The meeting will aim to: a) understand the range of diverse perspectives; b) forecast the scope and substance where initial progress is agreed to be most possible; and c) establish the modalities, roles and responsibilities for initial tasks.

34. The initial aim of the LAND Partnership will be to: a) develop common knowledge of national and local land issues; b) nurture a shared vision of the desired future; and c) elaborate the various scenarios by which the vision may be manifest. Building this common knowledge, analysis and agreements will, *inter alia*, entail:

- establishing agreements on how to properly circumscribe topics for debate;
- identifying gaps in policies, implementation methods and outcomes achieved;
- understanding the legal frameworks, current land policies and programmes being implemented by governments, donors and NGOs/CSOs;
- undertaking a literature review and developing an inventory of country studies, research, case studies and analysis to serve as background information;
- documenting who is doing what on land policies and programmes;
- developing a historical account of the settlement, occupation and use of land so as to allow groups who have prior territorial claim to be identified and to enable land tenure dependencies among various groups to be determined, along with their current implications; and
- developing a draft rural land tenure plan as a tool to inventory the influences in the rural milieu, which involves functions such as:
 - identifying the interplay and dependencies between various sectors, and between sectors and factors of production;
 - understanding the nature and role of individual and collective land holdings and related tenure rights and land arrangements;
 - documenting delegated rights (renting, sharecropping) and derived rights (access is granted to grow crops on agricultural lands or plots controlled by third parties);
 - identifying and recognizing the existence of rights and institutions working at the local level; and
 - determining areas of current or potential conflict or litigation.

35. The convening meeting will determine the specific steps for action, which might include the above, but will be a reflection of the areas where agreement to act can be established and a structure for participation determined. The next steps can only be identified at this stage. As such, LAND Partnerships will develop through an organic, iterative process.

36. The key to launching LAND Partnerships will be to move the actors from dialogue to action at the earliest reasonable moment. It is recognized that the issues to be engaged are often burdened by entrenched histories and involve complex land management systems that cannot be quickly overcome. Bearing this in mind, it is also important for LAND Partnerships to search for early opportunities for joint action, even though minor. The adage that "*nothing builds success like success*" should be the guiding factor in determining first actions. Small but successful actions will be the building blocks of LAND Partnerships. The process is oriented to having LAND Partnerships reach agreements and act where it is possible, while deferring (not being unnecessarily held back) those aspects where more time and understanding is required before actions can be agreed. By achieving progress where agreement can be established, it is expected that the barriers to approaching other, more difficult, aspects will be reduced.

Capacity of the International Land Coalition

37. The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of intergovernmental, governmental and civil society organizations. The mission of the Coalition is to work together with the rural poor to increase their secure access to natural resources, especially land, and

enable them to participate directly in policy-making and decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods at local, national, regional and international levels.

38. The strength of the Coalition lies precisely in the different spheres of influence of its partners. The Coalition's founding members are IFAD, the European Commission, FAO, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as numerous CSOs and governmental institutions, together with relevant regional organizations or bodies. This composition reflects the Coalition's aim to foster a convergence of efforts by intergovernmental, governmental, multilateral and civil society organizations.

39. The number of members of the Coalition – now in its seventh year – has grown to include a much wider set of civil society partners, including organizations of farmers, women, landless peoples, indigenous peoples, NGOs and other community-based organizations in over 35 countries, as well as other international organizations and regional development banks, most recently, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Ensuring that each member does not lose its own identity, the diverse membership provides the Coalition with significant capacity to make a difference by bringing the existing policies and resources of its partners into coherent and well-targeted country programmes.

40. In February 2003, the Coalition convened a historic meeting, with over 60 partners from 35 countries, to continue advancing its collective momentum. The vibrant participation of intergovernmental, governmental, academic and civil society partners affirmed a growing demand for the Coalition to open new spaces for dialogue on land issues and to foster improved relations among stakeholders at all levels.

Resource mobilization and links to other Coalition initiatives

41. The Coalition will assist in mobilizing resources for LAND Partnerships, but will expect resources to also be generated by the country-level members of each LAND Partnership. The Government of the Netherlands has become the first donor partner, and, in addition to the mobilization of financial resources, it will use its existing programmes to further the activation of LAND Partnerships.

42. As well as continuing support to the three existing Coalition programmes – the Knowledge Programme, the Network Support Programme; and the Community Empowerment Facility – the Coalition may be supportive in such ways as:

- strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations to be effective partners inside a LAND Partnership;
- supporting the logistic requirements for community participation in dialogue and in land policy formulation;
- ensuring that LAND Partnerships benefit from and take into consideration the lessons learnt and the implications of changes for traditional organizations and special populations, including women and indigenous peoples;
- supporting government land institutions in partnership with target communities;
- facilitating conflict-resolution processes;
- replicating and scaling up best practices;
- establishing the ways and means to learn from other countries; and
- linking with other associated programmes, such as:
 - the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
 - FAO's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Initiative;
 - The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD);

- regional initiatives such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC); or,
- the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) process of the World Bank.

Pilot Countries and Expressions of Interest

43. The pilot countries will be determined in response to demand. This may result in a combination of countries – some of which may be a priority for particular supporters or donor countries, and others that may not. However, the pilot countries and their success will provide a basis for other countries to better understand the potential for LAND Partnerships.

44. The demand for LAND Partnerships has initially come from Brazil, Guatemala, Indonesia, the Philippines and South Africa. Requests are forthcoming from a number of other countries.

Partners

45. The Government of the Netherlands is contributing to LAND Partnership pilot activities in the hope that other donors will join this partnership. However, partners are more than donors. The Netherlands will also bring their experience into the partnership, as well as disseminate the lessons arising from LAND Partnerships within other international activities of their government. It is hoped that other donors will choose to become partners so that the Coalition will have the resources needed to realise the wider potential of LAND Partnerships.

For further information or to explore the possibility of establishing a LAND Partnership in your country please contact:

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With the Support of the Government of the Netherlands.