

INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION

EMPOWERING THE RURAL POOR  
THROUGH  
SECURE ACCESS TO LAND

A Presentation to the GTZ – IFAD Forum

*Institutions – The Key to Development:  
Building Alliances to Empower the Rural Poor*

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## PREFACE

In many countries, the issue of improving secure access by the poor to land touches on fundamental inequalities in rural communities. However, as difficult as it may be, there is a growing body of knowledge, international opinion and global agreements that secure access to land by the rural poor is fundamental to reducing rural poverty, stimulating rural economic growth and protecting the natural resource base on which current and future generations depend.

Where there have been improvements in the levels of secure access to land and related productive factors there have been:

- Reduced levels of food insecurity;
- Income gains;
- Safety net effects;
- Investment effects;
- Income distribution effects stimulating wider economic growth;
- Reduced levels of conflict;
- Physical quality of life effects measurable by nutrition levels, access to sanitation, educational participation of children; and,
- Adoption of more sustainable resource practices.

Where resource rights and security of access have been addressed there has also been a break with feudal systems or reduction in the exploitive working conditions of agricultural workers. Furthermore, secure access provides essential non-economic benefits that are essential to long term well-being including a sense of identity and hope for the future.

Studies, most recently reported in the World Bank's Policy Research Report "Land Policy for Growth and Poverty Reduction", cite that:

- democracy has usually occurred much later in countries dominated by large landlords compared to those that relied on smallholder production;
- high land concentrations reduce the incentives for the provision of public goods and services;

- the total surplus production to be derived from land and associated public goods tends to increase with greater equality in the asset distribution;
- communities with more egalitarian land access are characterised by higher levels of collective action;
- public provision of property rights prevent resource dissipation by providing both security (less resources required to protect rights) and incentives to invest in its productive potential;
- women's control over assets affects households spending patterns; and,
- attention to women's land rights is particularly warranted where women are the main cultivators and where adult mortality is high, especially due to HIV/AIDS.

Secure access to natural resources, especially land, is central and cross-cutting to overcoming rural poverty. Land is an necessary but not sufficient condition for empowering the rural poor. Land issues must be linked to related access issues (water, financial services, technology, capacity building, markets) and addressed within the local territorial realities and relationships wherein decisions and changes must occur.

## WHY LAND?

More than one fifth of the world's population lives in extreme poverty. Seventy-five per cent of these people – some 900 million – live in rural areas. The majority of them are dependent on land for their subsistence. In most cases, their access to land and related resources is greatly limited and very insecure. With few, if any, assets, the rural poor frequently suffer food shortages, have little command over their livelihoods and are among the first to suffer the effects of low rainfall, declines in food production resulting from environmental degradation, and increases in prices for agricultural inputs and basic household commodities. For most of the rural poor, secure access to land is fundamental to overcoming poverty.

Historically, rural people have been neglected. Vast numbers are landless or near-landless, and the numbers are continuing to rise. They are being joined by groups displaced from more fertile areas as a consequence of land degradation, the unwanted loss of their land through expropriation or privatization, demographic pressures, conflicts, natural disasters and the expansion of large-scale commercial farming, corporate logging and mining. The marginal areas left available to the poor are rapidly becoming ghettos where degraded soils and the erosion of the natural resources are making subsistence a daily challenge and future opportunities to improve family well-being increasingly impossible. More and more farmers, woman-headed households, pastoralists and indigenous peoples are being deprived of land: their main source of household food production and the basis of their livelihoods, future and well-being. It is ironic that those who are the food producers are among those most vulnerable to food insecurity. They have no assurance that they will have the right to use the land in the future, nor that they will work under fair conditions as agricultural labourers. For rural people who rely on agriculture, secure access to natural resources, especially land, holds the most promise for the accumulation of family assets: assets with which they can produce food to feed their families, earn income from the sale of surpluses, produce fodder for livestock and use as collateral to obtain credit.

Within the sub-groupings of the rural poor, women and their right to own and inherit land are of great importance, considering the roles of women as the guardians of household food security, as a growing majority among smallholder farmers and as the heads of rural households due to various circumstances, including male migration to the cities or losses among the economically active work force because of HIV/AIDS.

The reasons for improving the access by poor people to land are compelling: poverty reduction, better natural resource and environmental management, reduced conflict over resources, the effort to slow rural migration and urban growth, and increased aggregate food production. Without secure access to land and the complementary means of production, the rural poor are obliged to adopt survival strategies with short-time horizons. Often due to circumstances beyond their control or influence, these strategies frequently end up degrading resources and fuelling a downward spiral of poverty. Understandably, when property rights are lacking or insecure, the poor cannot be sure they will receive the benefits, and they thereby lack the incentives to make investments for the longer term. After all, why would anyone, especially a poor person, take the risk to invest in land, such as by planting trees to preserve the soil from erosion, if there is no guarantee that he or she will be able to use that same piece of land in the future?

In the rural areas in most developing countries, land is not only the primary means for the generation of a livelihood, but also the main vehicle for the accumulation of capital and the transfer of capital between generations. What's more, the issue of land cuts across the issue of development, and the manner by which land is regulated, rights assigned and conflicts resolved has a profound effect on the daily lives and future prospects of the rural poor, including through:

- the ability of households to produce for their subsistence and to generate income by producing marketable surpluses;
- the social and economic status of rural families, including their collective identity;
- the incentives for the rural poor to exert their own effort, to make investments and to sustain the natural resource base;
- the opportunity for the poor to access financial services; and
- the capacity of families to build reserves to protect their assets during periods of agricultural stress.

Despite these convincing reasons, few countries have undertaken major agrarian reform measures. In many countries, the political and economic difficulties associated with land reform have been formidable since land tenure and property rights touch on the fundamental inequities in rural societies.

## **COMMITMENTS TO RESOURCE RIGHTS ARE NOT NEW**

The potential for resource rights to break the cycle of poverty and contribute to sustainable livelihood strategies has resurfaced regularly over the past 30 years.

The 145 government delegations to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development declared in 1979 that developed and developing countries as well as the international community must contribute to the immense effort required to eliminate rural poverty. In the forward to the WCARRD programme of action, commonly called *The Peasants' Charter*, it is clearly stated that “the rural poor must be given access to land and water resources, agricultural inputs and services, extension and research facilities; they must be permitted to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of rural development programmes; the structure and pattern of international trade and external investment must be adjusted to facilitate the implementation of poverty-oriented rural development strategies. Growth is necessary but not sufficient; it must be buttressed by equity and, above all, by people’s participation ...”<sup>1</sup>

More recently the direct link between resource rights, particularly access to land, overcoming hunger and poverty was emphasised by the IFAD sponsored Conference on Hunger and Poverty in 1995, the 1996 World Food Summit, the 2002 World Food Summit: five years later and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Summits since 1990 have examined pending crises - the environment, development, energy, and food. Of the many conclusions, the one of most significance is that there are no separate crises. They are all one and the same. The single most

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<sup>1</sup> The Peasants' Charter 1981: iii

important and common cause and effect is poverty resulting from unequal access and use of resources. If the protocols were blended into one international plan, the call would be for action on the inequitable distribution of wealth, the lack of access by the poor to productive resources, insufficient participation by the poor in decisions which affect their daily lives and the need for reforms in macro-economic policies that adversely affect the rights of the poor.

The Summit protocols highlight the re-occurring description of the poor as lacking assets, being vulnerable to agriculture and economic shocks, lacking the capacity (training, knowledge and opportunity) to participate in decision-making affecting their livelihoods, and suffering from an inter-generational sense of being powerless to change their condition.

## **COMPELLING ARGUMENTS ARE NOT ENOUGH**

In spite of the social, economic, environmental and political arguments, efforts to implement pro-poor policies are often met with substantive obstacles. Even in countries committed to improving access to land and security of tenure, implementation is often slow, delayed or manipulated by the power of vested interests and landed classes. The culture of exclusion, exposed in the *Peasant's Charter*, has been reinforced in each of the post-1979 Summits.

This continuing situation casts grave doubts on the political commitments behind the *Right to Development*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Earth Summit* and the *World Food Summit* with its emphasis on the right to resources and the right to food. For the rural poor these commitments are of growing importance.

Since the early 1990s, summits and conventions have renewed the emphasis and policy commitments to reduce rural poverty. Greater emphasis is now placed on access to productive resources, devolution and local management of natural resources and the extension and strengthening of partnerships with civil societies to nurture and develop human assets. These new approaches emphasize local participation, supporting the construction of social capital and linking the rural poor to dynamic

sectors of the economy. Participation allows the poor a voice, and through a transfer of responsibility gives them the power to discover and determine ways to improve their lives. Empowering the poor through secure access to resources is the foundation of rural poverty alleviation.

This policy shift envisions a new emphasis on resource rights and institutions: on the organizations (community-based organisations, rural workers, women's groups, indigenous peoples, fisher folk, producer associations) that mediate the access of the poor to assets, financial services, technologies and markets and on the rules (laws, customs and administrative practices) that determine whether the poor benefit from such access. The poor's chance to influence rules, and to help control organizations, depends on their power and solidarity. These, in turn, depend on their knowledge, access and, perhaps above all, whether alternative courses of action are open to them.

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 resource 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.

## **PRO-POOR INSTITUTIONS ARE CENTRAL**

The paradox is that, while the goal is to foster institutional change to help the poor acquire land and other assets, institutions, including the state, tend to be controlled by the powerful non-poor. Often, those who control one institution also control others. For instance, even after land redistribution, the large farmer may continue to have better access than the ex-landless labourer to production, credit, information and marketing networks, and the capacity to diffuse and insure against risk. Can the poor and weak use, transform and benefit from those institutions, which were initially controlled by the rich and powerful and run mainly in their

interest? What alternative or countervailing institutions need to be established or strengthened to advance and protect the access needs of the poor to productive resources and related upstream and downstream services.

The poor need to be empowered to represent and protect their interests. They must be able to restrain the non-poor and rural elites from arranging things to their own advantage. For this purpose, the poor must have a direct role in setting policies affecting access to natural resources and related factor markets. In some cases, the rural poor may benefit by uniting with the urban poor since out-migration from rural communities often has negative effects on the rural economy while simultaneously aggravating urban poverty.

In most cases, progress depends on whether the poor use their resources and power jointly, or are fragmented by distance, economic groupings, caste, ethnicity or gender. It also matters whether the poor can afford the time, costs and risks of political activism. They need support and solidarity of various forms along with the moral authority of credible partners, both nationally and internationally.

Institutions may often persist, but they are not immutable. Channelling appropriate resources such as land, education, and technology to raise the productivity of assets, and markets to improve sales and purchases for and from asset use, improve the options that over time may also help the rural poor to alter institutions for their sustained benefit. For instance, by changing the political structure in the village, resource redistribution gives more voice to the poor and induces them to get involved in local institutions and management of the local commons. It helps in overcoming the inter-generational sense of helplessness, which is itself a problem that needs specific attention. Communities need to be awakened to the realistic possibilities for change; aware of the systemic obstacles to be overcome; organised into viable people's organisations; educated to ways and means to achieve change; and, supported in their actions with the confidence of being in solidarity with others.

## **NEW UNDERSTANDING CAN CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Fortunately, new opportunities are emerging that can create more favourable enabling conditions. These include the efforts of civil society, the rise of democratic institutions and increased political awareness of the consequences of continuing to neglect rural populations.

From the standpoint of the poor, the past failures of trickle down economics must give rise to bottom up participation. Empowering the poor means supporting them to achieve secure resource rights and fostering their direct participation in the integrated planning and management of land, water and common property. Resource management strategies in the past tended to neglect social, economic and institutional factors and concentrated almost exclusively on the technical aspects of production.

Today, enlightened decision-makers are beginning to understand the interactions between poverty, land rights, the sustainable use of natural resources and economic development. The multiplier effect of investments in agriculture and the rural sector on the wider economy are slowly becoming understood. And, the productivity and livelihood potential of smallholder agriculture, over larger scale and commercial agriculture, is a contributing factor in the efforts to revive agrarian reform.

Ensuring secure access to land and related resources is most often considered to define property relationships since it involves a wide range of technical elements. However, first and foremost resource reform is about sustainable development. Sustainable development is essentially about people and the way they organise their social, economic and political systems to make the critical decisions on who has the right to use which resources, in which ways, for how long and for which purposes.

Resource reform is primarily about changing relationships. First, it aims to change access and tenure relationships. Second, it aims to change the current culture of exclusion so that the poor gain access to credit, technology, markets and other productive services. Third, it aims for the poor to be active participants in the development of government policies and programmes affecting their communities and livelihoods.

While social relationships are complex and therefore do not lend themselves to formulas, the use of a mathematical analogy can illustrate the interactive elements of any strategy for resource reform.

Resource Reform = Secure Access and Tenure + Support Services + Participation  
Resistance from Vested Interests and the Landed Class

## **OPENING SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND JOINT ACTION**

For some time, there has been a recognised need to foster new forms of partnership and more open spaces for dialogue between civil society, governments and international organisations. The need is for information sharing, to promote dialogue among affected groups and to contribute to consensus building. There is also the need for joint pilot projects that can build new ways of work. The goal of opening more space for dialogue among stakeholders is greater coherence in targeting resources to the location specific obstacles confronting the poor.

At the 1995 Conference on Hunger and Poverty, sponsored by the International Fund for Agriculture Development, a diverse group of stakeholders, including inter-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, NGOs, government officials, bilateral agencies and international financial institutions produced a consolidated analysis on the constraints to sustainable agriculture and rural development. They called for the revival of agrarian reform on national and international agendas. They committed themselves to form a Coalition that would unite their common concerns into one agenda to empower the rural poor through improved access to productive assets.

The International Land Coalition aims to build strategic and innovative alliances between diverse development organisations giving particular emphasis to the role of civil society in gaining access to land and water and related productive assets and by increasing their direct participation in decision-making from the local to the international level.

The International Land Coalition's programme of action is informed by three key lessons from the past:

- the need for a broad based and comprehensive approach to agrarian reform involving consensus building and policy dialogue;
- the political sensitivities involved in agrarian reform will require that the viability of the proposed approaches have been well demonstrated before policy makers will consider adopting reform on a large scale; and,
- the need to strengthen the capacity of community organisations so that they can become effective interlocutors with their government for policy development and to execute programme delivery.

Taking these lessons into account, the Coalition's programmes respond to different aspects of the process of institutional change needed to create the enabling conditions and heightened capacity for all Coalition partners.

## **ELEMENTS OF A PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

Within both civil-society organisations and intergovernmental and international financial institutions there is a growing number of influential persons who share a common interest in building broad-based political and economic support for land tenure reform, access to factor inputs and protecting the natural resources base. These are the key actors who need to be engaged in ongoing dialogue in order to influence the internal policies and practises of these institutions and governments. This is an important group of stakeholders to engage in evaluating classical and emerging experiences and concepts for improving land access by the rural poor, particularly the landless. This should include examining models postulated on land markets as well as methods arising from civil society experiences in land reform. This is a group that

can have an influence on the incorporation of civil society experiences into government land policies and practises.

It is not at all uncommon to find that advocacy campaigns for land reform confront a long entrenched view that large-scale, commercial agriculture is more productive and that reform will only fragment land into unproductive, small units. There is a need to educate decision makers to the benefits that can accrue from smallholder agriculture. The benefits, among others, can include increased aggregate food production; higher levels of employment for farm and family labour; improved practices of soil, water and resource management and multiplier effects in both the rural and urban economy.

The environment, global warming, global conflicts and civil wars, migrants and refugees are among those issues that are increasingly common preoccupations of citizens of every country. Access to land and tenure security has a direct bearing on each of these issues. These issues increasingly touch on the self-interests of all countries and thereby form a basis for building a global citizens movement for resource rights.

The common ground that unites stakeholders to the cause of resource rights all too quickly fades as the modalities for implementation are debated. There is the need to strengthen multi-stakeholder coalitions and systems to collect, analyse and share knowledge of the new and innovative approaches to land reform in order to demonstrate the capacity to overcome the constraints experienced in earlier reform models. It is important to test the viability of scaling up the experiences of civil society into national initiatives. There is also need to test emerging land tenure markets; inter-alia negotiated/market assisted, sharecropping, leasing, and corporate farming. The important question is can land markets help the rural poor, especially the landless, to gain and maintain access to land and related assets? If so, under what conditions and how?

## **WHAT CAN CIVIL SOCIETY DO?**

Throughout the world, civil-society organisations are actively and successfully undertaking activities that are helping to increase the rural poor's access to natural resources. Civil-society work on land

issues spans a broad range of areas, from advocacy and human rights to training on the post-land-reform processes needed so that newly obtained resources become productive. Examples of CSO work include:

- supporting the education, organization and capacity-building of landless and near-landless people on their rights and on ways to achieve related legal provisions;
- involving local communities in the demarcation of lands;
- protecting traditional forms of land and territorial tenure, including indigenous territories, common property and pastoralist areas;
- ensuring direct roles for beneficiaries in land-valuation processes and in determining terms of repayment;
- strengthening rural, agriculture and peasant organizations and ensuring they include woman-headed households, widows, indigenous peoples, lower castes and other marginalized population groups;
- replicating, up-scaling and mainstreaming of innovative civil-society initiatives;
- organizing communities so they can collectively access credit, technology and marketing services;
- protecting the knowledge systems of indigenous and nomadic peoples, while strengthening the access of these peoples to complementary resource management technologies;
- joining with governments to design land laws and regulations;
- assisting communities wanting to purchase land negotiate fair prices and gain access to land funds;
- reducing leakage and improve service delivery by using rural peoples' organisations to deliver government support services;
- leveraging the moral persuasion and financial conditionality of international organisations in order to place land and resource rights on national agendas;
- educating and enhancing the capacity of communities to defend their interests with respect to commercial and transnational corporations; and,
- undertaking comparative regional analyses of land access issues so that learning among countries and communities is improved.

## **The Community Empowerment Facility in Malawi: Empowering Women Through Land Literacy**

The Community Empowerment Facility (CEF) is one of the Coalition's primary means to strengthen the capacity of the poor to gain and maintain access to land and other productive resources. CEF is a catalytic cofinancing grant fund that assists in the capacity-building and institutional strengthening of CSOs and promotes and supports the innovative approaches and initiatives of these organizations. CEF is available exclusively to CSOs, which includes organizations of farmers, producers, women, indigenous people, agricultural workers, landless people, pastoralists, forest users and fisherfolk, as well as community-based organizations and NGOs and their representative bodies, networks and movements.

One example of CEF's innovative work is the current project in Malawi. In this country women constitute 52% of the population, yet they typically cannot expect to own land or to be involved in decisions in land use.

In 1994, the new Constitution and Bill of Rights incorporated the right of women to own land. However, claiming the new right requires that women be educated about the new legislation and empowered to undertake the processes involved. It also requires support to address the low levels of literacy among women. This means that English documents must be transcribed into local languages and that the capacity of women's groups must be strengthened so that they can protect their rights against those who are more powerful and may abuse the new laws.

With a contribution of USD 48 000 from CEF, a local NGO, the Nkhomano Centre for Development, is strengthening the capacity of the ten community groups that comprise Karonga District Women's Group in northern Malawi so that its members can gain clear title to their land and to the knowledge and skills needed to improve agricultural production and the management of the land. The 12 members of each women's group will be taught about the negotiating skills involved in acquiring land, including land which may be theirs by de facto right.

In addition to the women, traditional and clan leaders and other members of the community will participate in one of the 16

workshops that will be conducted so that the benefits to the wider community are understood and supported. The workshops will also serve to encourage other communities throughout the district to replicate the process.

However, information on these activities is often not documented. As a result, opportunities for replicating successes are lost and critical information is not put before policy-makers. Civil society's direct experience generates knowledge that can validate or challenge traditional assumptions about land issues. The constraints experienced by communities and the lessons they learn are fundamental in the discovery of practical ways forward and in avoiding unnecessary ideological debates. The replication and up-scaling of civil-society experiences must demonstrate the national value and viability before politicians will confront the powerful vested interests that stand in the way of land reform.

### **The Community Empowerment Facility in Nicaragua: Improving Land Management through a Municipality-Community Partnership**

In the municipality of San Francisco Libro, near Managua, over 86% of the farmers are unable to obtain credit for inputs and agricultural services because they cannot provide legal evidence of their property rights. This constraint has led local government leaders to join with the locally affiliated partner of an Italian NGO, Movimondo, as well as community members in assisting smallholders to gain legal access to land and to ensure an influential role for the community in municipal land-use planning.

With the support of CEF, the municipal local government of San Francisco Libro is taking an important step forward, in collaboration with civil society leaders to create clarify land titles and reduce conflicts by creating a framework to assist local authorities to identify and manage land resources. This framework will include an overall participatory management plan involving farmers and other community representatives. The project is striving to create a viable resource management partnership between municipal authorities and local communities. The project, supported with a contribution of USD 80 000 from CEF, was designed and is being implemented in collaboration with FAO and Movimondo. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder philosophy of

the Coalition, the project is based on the recognized need for partnerships among civil society, governments (national and municipal) and intergovernmental organizations to bring their combined knowledge, resources and influences to bear in the improvement of land systems. It is envisioned that this project could be replicated elsewhere in Nicaragua where weak or non-existent land rights systems prevent land conflicts from being mediated and their outcomes enforced.

## **WHAT CAN GOVERNMENTS DO?**

Governments that have risen to the challenges of agrarian reform often need assistance from the international community. Reluctant governments, on the other hand, need to receive strong encouragement to act on the same subjects. Among others, these include:

- establishing appropriate legal, regulatory and judicial frameworks that can register and protect people's resource rights;
- implementing land literacy programmes to inform the population of their rights and how they can be exercised;
- ratifying and implementing international conventions on people's rights to resources;
- establishing independent and accountable Land Commissions with adequate participation by potential beneficiaries;
- ensuring women's rights through land records, communal property systems, inheritance rights of widows and daughters, and representation in local decision-making bodies and land commissions;
- reforming macro-economic policies that privilege large-scale farmers;
- developing methods to increase financing for land reform and post-land acquisition services including land banks, land for debt schemes and land for taxes; and,
- developing human capital by investing in rural schools, health facilities and extension services;

While commitments to the resource rights of the rural poor are not new, there is an emerging consensus on the underlying contribution of resource right to durable solutions to poverty, food

security, conflict resolution and the environmentally sustainable management of the world's eco-systems. This understanding of the importance of secure access to land and legally enforceable tenure is new. It provides the basis to forge a global movement that crosses sectoral interests in ways that were previously not envisioned.

## **BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH GERMAN PARTNERS**

The strategic objectives of the International Land Coalition and partners from the Government of Germany and German NGOs are closely related and their respective programmes and expertise are indeed complementary in the arena of improving secure access to land. GTZ is recognised worldwide as a leader in this field and its services, knowledge and publications are used extensively. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, a Coalition founding partner, has a wide base of knowledge and expertise in this field which has been manifest in its programmes, policy leadership and global advocacy. These agencies may gain further outreach and on-the-ground effectiveness by linking to the Coalition's many civil society partners, and likewise, the Coalition's civil society partners could gain greater access to much needed knowledge, capacity and technical support. Collaboration with the International Land Coalition can also provides German partners with an important opportunity to support the implementation of the commitments made at international conferences to improve land access by the rural poor, most recently the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Specifically, German organisations and the government can help revitalize alliances by affiliating to the Land Coalition's programme "Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land", which was widely endorsed when it was launched at the WSSD in 2002. Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land is a dynamic tool for strengthening global consensus on land issues. It is a living process that is updated on a regular basis in order to reflect the evolving experience, lessons, progress and expanding collaborative work being undertaken to foster improved property rights for the rural poor.

Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land provides a range of practical ways and means to facilitate alliances among sectors, assist governments in establishing land policies and services,

strengthen rural people's organizations and work in partnership with civil-society and international organizations.

The Government of Germany and German organizations can also play an additional catalytic within countries by joining in the Coalition's Land Alliances for National Development, or 'LAND Partnerships', which was launched by the Coalition at the WSSD. More than 70 representatives of governments and national and international CSOs and NGOs took part. LAND Partnerships constitute a worldwide initiative led by the Coalition to further country-level collaboration among state, civil-society, bilateral and international actors. This collaboration is needed to achieve participatory dialogue, improve policy formulation, establish joint action to achieve secure resource tenure for households with user rights, and increase the access to land by the landless and near-landless.

The first step in this collaborative process will involve the establishment of a neutral forum in each participating country. In guiding this process, the Coalition is hoping to use its experience in convening stakeholders across institutional borders to address a range of complex and often difficult land-management issues. LAND Partnerships are not prescriptive, they nurture arenas, fora, events, committees, land alliances, or other structures that can provide a framework and mechanism for those with diverse, vested interests in land to find a common basis for progress. Through the establishment of LAND Partnerships within countries, the Coalition believes it is possible to find common ground, build alliances and resolve conflicts. LAND Partnerships can then move to the next stage in the development of country and community-specific solutions historic, social, economic and political challenges involved in the improvement in the land access by the poor.

After its launching at WSSD, several governments approached the Coalition on establishing LAND Partnerships in their countries. Currently the Coalition is facilitating LAND Partnerships dialogues in the Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Guatemala and Brazil.

This conference has centred its attention on Building Alliances to Empower the Poor. At this conference, the International Land Coalition is pleased to have the active participation of Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, a founding member of the Coalition and a member of the governing Coalition Council. The Land Coalition is

an expanding alliance. We hope that others from Germany will join so that the potential synergy from working together can be realized.

### ***Mission***

The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of intergovernmental, governmental and civil-society organizations. The Coalition works together with the rural poor to increase their secure access to natural resources, especially land, and enable them to participate directly in policy and decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods at local, national, regional and international levels.

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