

LAND IS LIFE: LAND IS LIVELYHOOD
A proxy to address extreme poverty and hunger
Reflection from CSD-16

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Introduction:

Being invited by IFAD as ILC Asia member I had the opportunity to participate in CSD-16 Review Session held at United Nations Head Quarter in New York from 5-16 May 2008. The whole program designed by IFAD for a collaborative initiative for the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was divided into two parts.

- a. Facilitating a panel at UN Head Quarter as one of the Official Session of CSD-16 on 8 May 2008 focusing on access to productive resources and poverty alleviation, land tenure and financing for integrated land management.
- b. Facilitating a day-long workshop targeting participating organisations at CSD-16, to engage major groups and UN system organizations on the implications on land tenure security for the rural poor and vulnerable populations of new, rapidly developing global trends. The workshop would consider the findings of the scoping study and possible next steps for IFAD/ILC and members.

Background:

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit. The Commission is responsible for reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; as well as providing policy guidance to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JOPI) at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues.

The 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development was held in New York from 5 May 2008 to 16th May 2008 focusing on the thematic issues of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, Desertification and Africa.

A. 8 May 2008, CSD-16 Official morning Session

Conference Room # 4, UN HQ

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS ON LAND

Panel Presented/organized by -IFAD & ILC

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

Major Groups : Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous people , NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Communities and Farmers.

Address by the panelist:

This session had particular focus on access to productive resources and poverty alleviation, land tenure and financing for integrated land management. The panelists focused on how to ensure access to land and natural resources for vulnerable populations in the face of global trends increasing the demand for land. Issues have been stressed by the panelists were need for decentralization at national and local levels as ensuring access is more a governance issue, increased financing as well as technical support by the intergovernmental organizations and other development partners for ensuring good governance that can reduce conflict and enable access by the poor particularly women and indigenous to the productive natural resources and security. For effective application of country level policies/laws, compliance and implementation of international instruments like- CEDAW, ILO, UN Declaration on Human Rights (HR), Indigenous people (IPs) etc. were further stressed. Emphasis were also given for appropriate land rights and recognition of customary land rights and divers pro poor secured tenure system so that small farmers can think of long term land use towards sustainable land management. Climate change, Agro fuel and consolidation of land for commercial purpose like shrimp culture, industrialization, unplanned urbanization due to increased demographic pressure to the urban area and Multinational Companies antagonistic role have also been stressed out which leads to sharpen food price rise, insecurity and livelihood change all over the world.

Response from the floor including CSD member Country/Government Delegates, IGOs & Major Groups :

Delegates: FRANCE said loss of soil fertility is a global threat. NGOs called for agrarian reform, including land redistribution and the delivery of basic support services. JAPAN said detailed analysis is required to explore the tension between biofuel and food production. TANZANIA described its policies that protect forest and woodland areas. ZAMBIA appealed for assistance to enhance implementation of its land policy framework. ZIMBABWE said empowerment requires increasing women's security of tenure, planning that recognizes multiple land uses, and monitoring land use and rehabilitation. FARMERS emphasized recognizing agro-ecological and ecosystem principles. SWITZERLAND said good governance, ecological principles, and retention of working practices are essential in tenure systems. The CZECH REPUBLIC said using information technologies in its land-tenure system has increased transparency and improved data quality. SOUTH AFRICA said capital investment is indispensable, even with strategic partnerships and regional cooperation. COTE D'IVOIRE urged the GEF to invest in sustainable land management.

Major Groups: FARMERS group emphasized recognizing agro-ecological and ecosystem principles. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS group called for grievance mechanisms, social dialogue, and empowerment of stakeholders to deal with land-degrading big business activities. NGOs called for agrarian reform, including land redistribution and the delivery of basic support services. WOMEN group explained that, without title to land, women have no access to credit.

IGOs : The European Union (EU) noted it promotes consensual land practices and focuses on pro-poor land governance. To better address all those concerns FAO agreed with the UNCCD's suggestion to coordinate efforts on land, and suggested building on the International Land Coalition.

Concluding part:

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

B. 9th May 2008

777 UN Church Centre

Workshop on “Growing insecurity: Land and Vulnerable People”, Towards an Action Agenda to strengthen Poor People’s Secure Access to Land, Tenure, and Resources

Discussions and debates from 7th & 8th May session at UN further explored in a side event workshop on “Growing insecurity: Land and Vulnerable People” on 9th May with the objectives of a) identify and build consensus on priority collective actions to respond to the current threats and opportunities related to land and vulnerable people; b) Foster collaboration by providing an opportunity for those involved in these issues to meet and interact; and c) Determine the level of interest and preferred means for fostering continued collaboration .

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

Second part of the workshop was 2 steps small group work and plenary presentation designed to take stock of current knowledge and experiences. Building consensus and looking for forward strategy how to strengthen collaboration among organizations working on land issues.

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

Observation as well as learning:

Following are some of my observations have been shared during my presentation as a panelist and reaffirmed through further responses at CSD 16 meeting and reflected in the Chairman’s summary report. I just carved up some of those below as my learning from CSD-16 review sessions.

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

Learning that already been sharpen up in Chairman's Summary report:

- The lack of access to land and the lack of transparent land policies prohibits access to other productive resources, thus not allowing poor people to get out of the poverty trap.
- Insecurity about land tenure also serves as an important obstacle for small scale land users to invest in their land, thereby limiting their possibilities to contribute to economic growth, sound land management practices and social inclusion. The important role women play in land management and food production is in many countries not reflected in land titles, posing obstacles for women to keep their land and gain access to other productive resources.
- Traditional knowledge can inform new approaches and technologies for sustainable land management. Relocating traditional land owners for new commercial interests can have serious negative consequences for food security, economic and social development.
- Implementing international instruments like CEDAW, ILO and other UN declaration can strengthen the rights of the most vulnerable section like indigenous and women.
- Decentralization of land administration to the local level may help in promoting good governance and management of natural resources, and transparent administration may also reduce corruption.
- Many land users such as indigenous peoples live on common property lands, and do not have clear tenure rights, leaving them particularly vulnerable to dispossession.
- Limited access to land rights, credit, technology, markets and extension services severely constrains agricultural productivity and sustainable livelihoods, especially of women farmers in developing countries.
- Knowledge-sharing systems should be strengthened, results should be documented and shared, and successful efforts should be replicated.

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