

# ILC Strategy 2022-30

## *Final draft for member validation*

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### **Our Vision:**

*A just, equitable and sustainable world.*

### **Our Mission:**

*Shifting power to the women, men and communities who live on and from the land.*

### **Our Goal:**

*People-centred land governance*

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## **Our common ground**

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Land. We live on it. We grow from it. We drink from it and build our futures upon it. But – increasingly and frighteningly so – we don't share it equally.

Equitable land rights are the key to progress on human rights, flourishing and healthy societies, and a sustainable planet. They are central to the most urgent challenge of our time: avoiding catastrophic climate breakdown. Equitable land rights also mean peaceful and democratic societies, sustainable and resilient local food systems, and overcoming growing inequality – particularly gender inequality.

Right now, too much land is controlled, managed and used by too few in ways which just don't work for the vast majority of people, or the planet. This situation is unjust and unsustainable.

This is particularly true for ***people living on and from the land***. By that we mean the women, youth, family and peasant farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, forest dwellers, hunter-gatherers, fisher folks, afro-descendants and local communities for whom we collectively work. These are the voices that must be heard in decision-making, particularly over their land. Yet, they are often marginalised, and in many countries they face narrowing civic space and even criminalisation.

The remaining biodiversity hotspots are in indigenous peoples' ancestral territories, yet they face massive encroachment, driven in part by extractive industries and corporate greed. Four fifths of the land claimed by indigenous peoples and local communities is not recognised legally as theirs. Yet 70% of

the world's agricultural land is under the control of a mere 1% of landowning corporations and individuals.

This is an affront to the human rights and dignity of millions of women, men and communities. It ignores the deep and multifaceted relationships between people and their land, and between land and its people. It is a driver of violent conflicts and dispossession of those who have been historically excluded. After decades of relative decline, violent conflict is again on the rise and it's often because of land.

How land is distributed is a powerful expression of what societies and economies stand for and has long defined the gap between rich and poor. Dispossession is often a deliberate political choice. ILC challenges the unequal power relations that too often allow land to be concentrated in the hands of the wealthy few, at the cost of those most vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. We launch into this strategy as the world reels from the COVID19 pandemic, authoritarianism is on the rise, and the true scope of the climate emergency is becoming tangible for all of us.

In 2015, 193 world leaders pledged to 'leave no one behind', ensuring a better world in 2030 and setting targets for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future for people and the planet. It's an inspiring vision that promises voices will be heard and full participation and genuine democracy guaranteed. Land rights are fundamental to 13 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 59 targets and 65 indicators. Unfortunately, the reality is we have not yet made progress on these promises.

**We are in a climate emergency. Land rights is a pathway out of it.**

*Forests managed by indigenous peoples and local communities store 3.7 billion tons of carbon and have deforestation rates equivalent to - or even lower - than national parks and nature reserves.*

The Paris agreement recognised the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities and their traditional knowledge in averting climate breakdown. Without secure land rights, especially to collectively held land and territories, women, men and communities are unable to adapt to and mitigate the impact of the climate emergency and left in a situation of vulnerability. Legal recognition of customary land rights provides security and increases resilience by incentivising investment in sustainable management of natural resources. Securing land rights and taking action to mitigate the impact of global heating need to go hand in hand.

ILC is a partner in the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. Secure rights to land and territories are crucial to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of the ecosystems that regulate the climate and sustain all life on earth. We are committed to giving a platform to community-led restoration initiatives, including agro-ecology and community-led forest and rangelands management.

## **An opportunity for change**

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This strategy coincides with a decisive moment in our history. Scientists also warn of the narrow window we have in this decade to avoid climate breakdown. We urgently need progress on the Sustainable

Development Goals. We can seize the opportunity to build new systems that work for people and the planet as we emerge from the COVID19 pandemic.

ILC's goal of securing land rights for and with people, who live on and from the land - what we call people-centred land governance - lays the foundation for community-led sustainable development, and is the first step in moving away from destructive and unsustainable approaches to land, water and natural resources. Land connects everything.

ILC's strategy 2022-30 presents how we will use the power of the coalition, led by members that are *people's organisations*,<sup>1</sup> to demand recognition of the land rights that these organisations represent; women, youth, family and peasant farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, forest dwellers, fisher folk, afro-descendants and local communities. This means legal recognition and protection of land rights and territorial rights for indigenous peoples, or - in highly unequal contexts - land redistribution. Secure land and territorial rights are the basis for people to build the future they want. It's also good for the whole planet.

This is our contribution to building a more just, equitable and sustainable world.

## Building on our achievements

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*"ILC... has recorded changes at the policy and practice level that exceeds the targets it set itself. It did so by working as a global network while largely organising its work through transformative member-led platforms nationally, regionally and globally".* Final report of Independent Impact Assessment of ILC strategy 2016-21

Our ambitious - but achievable - strategy to 2030 will be built on what we have accomplished together over the first 25 years.

When ILC was founded in 1996, land rights were almost invisible on international agendas. By the effort of many – including the ILC – this has now changed, and a growing body of regional and global commitments recognise the centrality of land rights.

In order to find lasting solutions, it's clear that we cannot work in isolation. Land governance is a complex issue and the systems we seek to change are deeply rooted in unequal power relations. That is why building and strengthening partnerships based on trust is critical to solving land governance challenges and is at the apex of ILC's approach.

The ILC has worked hard to help **translate global commitments into change on the ground, with tangible results**. In 2016-21, successful partnerships led by ILC members influenced the adoption of 83 'people-centred' policies and laws on land rights in 29 countries. Over the same period, ILC contributed 125 times to improving policy implementation in 32 countries. ILC has developed a monitoring tool,

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<sup>1</sup> ILC recognizes the collective rights of indigenous peoples. However, in order to include all constituencies of the ILC, people is written without the s, except for when referring explicitly to indigenous peoples.

LANDex, that enables members to gather *people's data*<sup>2</sup> on land rights to hold governments accountable - and is even starting to gain traction with governments.

Over 50 national coalitions, led by ILC members, have worked with allies beyond our network to build bridges between governments and local communities to find lasting solutions for land governance, where everyone has a seat at the table. These partnerships are a space for innovation and learning, from global to local, and are complemented by regional and global thematic partnerships. Together, they have successfully influenced global and national policies.

The ILC **network has become a powerful force for change**. Over the last six years, ILC doubled its membership to become one of the foremost land rights networks, with over 300 members covering 84 countries. From its outset, ILC has been unique in its diversity, bringing together civil society and intergovernmental organisations in a member-led Coalition under a shared vision and goal.

Continuing to evolve as a global network with strong regional platforms, ILC is now putting the people's organisations that belong to women, youth, family and peasant farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, forest dwellers, hunter-gatherers, fisherfolks, afro-descendants and local communities at its centre. These members directly represent more than 56 thousand communities and more than 71 million people.

They are the reason we exist.

## Working towards systems change

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While we are proud of our achievements, this is not yet enough. We have been successful in changing policies and practices, but not yet in changing the systems and power structures that govern land. Inequality and dispossession persist because they serve the interests of the powerful. For real systems change, the power to set the rules needs to be in the hands of people whose lives depend on land.

Systems change is about shifting power. This strategy aims to do so by **challenging the perpetuation of inequality through ILC's ten commitments to people-centred land governance**. People-centred land governance builds democracy from below. Without it, it will not be possible to achieve inclusive and sustainable development that "leaves no one behind".

We believe that only **collective action** can bring about meaningful change. That's why we bring together diverse groups to find solutions that work for those historically excluded from decision-making. We do this by working for **systems change at all levels**, through the diverse membership uniquely placed to act locally, nationally, regionally and globally. ILC is a network with global and regional platforms, and National Land Coalitions in over 30 countries.

Above all, we work to build on our early successes in overcoming the greatest inequality of them all - gender inequality. Gender justice is a cross-cutting pledge of this strategy and why we committed to be part of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term "people's data" to refer to all land-related information collected and used by individuals, communities and their organisations to promote people-centred land governance. It seeks to highlight and disaggregate how our members experience land governance, which is often missing in official numbers.

Looking inwards, this strategy also represents an internal power shift to put different kinds of **people's organisations** at the forefront of ILC initiatives across our member-led platforms - national and international.

## **Our network commitments**

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ILC members come together to work for people-centred land governance. This is defined by ten commitments, which all members adhere to:

1. Secure tenure rights
2. Strong small- scale farming systems
3. Diverse tenure systems
4. Equal land rights for women
5. Secure territorial rights for indigenous peoples
6. Locally managed ecosystems
7. Inclusive decision- making
8. Transparent and accountable information
9. Effective actions against land grabbing
10. Protected land rights defenders

These commitments define the change we seek. They structure our collective efforts.

In addition, all ILC members sign on to a pledge of:

### **Gender Justice**

Gender justice is fundamental to achieve people-centred land governance. We are committed to breaking cycles of gender injustice in our own coalition and our partnerships. We actively build a gender sensitive work-culture, safe spaces for all, and support women's full participation and leadership, within our network and beyond.

### **Defending the defenders**

We stand behind our members who are on the frontlines of securing the land rights of their communities. We commit to support them in the best ways that we can, and for our coalition to be a platform for their voices. In today's world, being a land and environmental defender is a choice that can be dangerous, even fatal. We commit to do what we can to protect our members and their communities who are criminalised, intimidated and marginalised for advocating change.

## **Our Goal**

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### **People-centred land governance**

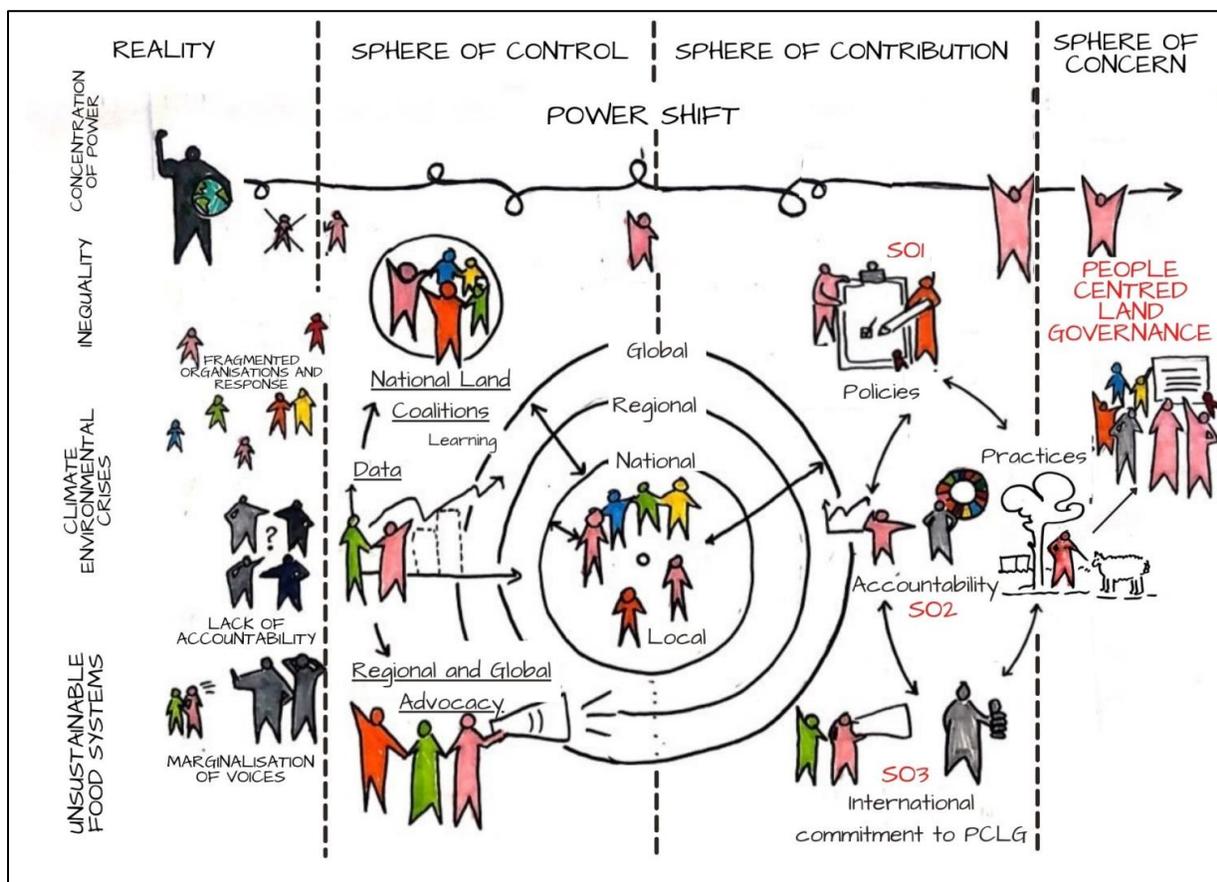
Our goal is simple yet ambitious. Secure land rights<sup>3</sup>, responding to the needs and protecting the rights of those who live on and from the land, and more progress will follow. Prioritise women, whose leadership brings the greatest change.

We measure our impact by tracking progress in securing collective and individual tenure rights to land, narrowing the gap to the globally agreed targets of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 targets cover poverty to peace, hunger to health, education to equality, while emphasising the necessity to work in partnership. Land is the key to ensuring these goals are met.

Our aim is that 30% of all countries report on land-related SDG targets, that 50% of countries with National Land Coalitions recognise women's land rights in practice, and that perceived land tenure insecurity in these countries falls by 20%.

## How we get there: our Theory of Change

This is our theory of change - how we envision we will achieve our collective goal through the power of our network. This can only be done with people's organisations leading our efforts at levels.



<sup>3</sup> When referring to *land rights* throughout the document, we understand it as "secure tenure rights to land" (including legitimate tenure rights that are not currently protected by law), as elaborated in the VGGTs

To start, the change we work for is at the **local and national** level. ILC members, with people's organisations at the helm, build broad and diverse partnerships through National Land Coalitions to find solutions to defend, secure or regain land rights. We invest in coalitions that work for local level change that addresses the needs of the women, men and communities living on and from the land. We prioritise peer learning, leadership development - especially for people's organisations and women - and support to fundraising (SO1).

National Land Coalitions are then equipped to collect and use people's data to complement official government data, to track progress against national and international commitments and to hold governments and corporations **accountable**. (SO2).

Locally-generated people's data provides a powerful basis for evidence-based dialogue and subsequent action between democratic governments and civil society. While long-term and inclusive partnerships at the country level not only provoke people-centred policies and laws, agendas, and practices, they also shift power to the women, men and communities we serve.

At the same time, advocacy by **regional and global platforms and partnerships of ILC** amplifies the voices of people's organisations and builds political will across countries for people-centred land governance. This in turn creates an enabling environment for our members' work in their own countries on the themes laid out by our Ten commitments (SO3).

By working within broad partnerships, ILC's impact is considerably wider than the confines of its network or budget. It contributes to changing agendas, policies and practices of governments, traditional authorities and corporations to secure land rights for and with people.

### ***STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: National Land Coalitions advance people-centred land governance***

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ILC has successfully supported National Land Coalitions in thirty countries. These are at the centre of accelerating the recognition, defence, protection and redistribution of land rights in their countries.

Because land issues vary from country to country, every National Land Coalition is different. There is no one-size-fits all solution. Nonetheless, they all bring allies together to contribute to improving policy and practice, and securing land rights, protecting civic space, shifting power imbalances and strengthening accountability.

National Land Coalitions draw on the diverse strengths of ILC's membership. ILC supports people's organisations to take the lead in national coalitions so their voices define the strategic vision and focus, and ensure they are responsive to local level priorities, including, importantly, those of women and youth. By doing so, they challenge power asymmetries, foster collective action and enable inclusive decision-making. They provoke action from local authorities, governments, their development partners, and corporations.

ILC's role is to equip national coalitions to be as strategic, impactful and sustainable as possible but not only – we also work with our members to ensure that coalitions have a gender balance and represent the full spectrum of people's organisations in a given country. ILC will not be a **funder** of National Land Coalitions but rather an **enabler** (in partnership-building and peer-learning) and **champion** (spreading the concept, advocating for their recognition, and assisting in securing funding from donors).

ILC will widen the impact of National Land Coalitions by joining efforts with and learning from members supporting similar platforms. Regional and global member-led platforms complement these efforts through peer-learning, advocacy and partnership-building.

*What we hope to achieve under Strategic Objective 1:*

**ER1.1 People's organisations are the driving force in National Land Coalitions**

**ER1.2. National Land Coalitions are sustainable, innovative and influential**

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***STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: People's data is produced and used to hold governments and corporations accountable***

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ILC facilitates local and national members of ILC to collect, use and manage their own data on land rights. Data is used to raise awareness of structural inequalities and to build local collective action. Members support each other to use gender-disaggregated data to advocate for transparency, demand accountability, inform evidence-based action and track progress towards sustainable development at local, national, regional and global levels.

LANDex and other ILC-supported tools overcome data fragmentation, often by working closely with national statistics offices. Data collected by members - especially in National Land Coalitions - are used to complement official datasets.

This also opens space for dialogue and collaboration between national coalitions and government, enabling national coalitions to hold their governments accountable for progress towards people-centred land governance, including on SDG indicators related to land.

ILC also collaborates in establishing regional and global land observatories and in reporting on progress in securing land rights. These reports support the change agendas of regional and global thematic platforms led by ILC members.

*What we hope to achieve under Strategic Objective 2:*

**ER 2.1. Key actors produce and use people's data**

**ER 2.2. Countries use people's data to report on progress**

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***STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Regional and global advocacy builds political commitment to people-centred land governance***

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We amplify the voices of our members - especially women and youth - in global and regional advocacy spaces, uniting across borders. We support people's organisations to lead strong regional and global

partnerships of members, including where there are no National Land Coalitions, to facilitate peer learning, shape the narrative, and move towards the recognition of land as a human right.

Together with partners beyond our coalition, ILC works to build visibility and political will to achieve the Ten commitments as priority areas of action for people-centred land governance as key to addressing the climate emergency and other global challenges, including overcoming inequality, building peaceful and democratic societies, and strengthening sustainable and resilient local food systems.

As a network, we also invest in building capacities in support of people’s organisation leadership, and our network pledges of gender justice and defending land defenders.

*What we hope to achieve under Strategic Objective 3:*

**ER.3.1. Global and regional processes recognise the right to land as key to addressing the climate emergency and other global challenges.**

**ER 3.2. ILC network members, especially people’s organisations, have stronger capacity to provoke inclusive change**

## **The land rights context in ILC’s regions**

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With strong regional identities at the core of ILC’s mandate, regional contexts and their political climates shape regional priorities and political engagement. Where situations evolve quickly, so can we, as we monitor and adapt to push forward our shared agenda.

## **AFRICA**

In Africa, there is a direct relationship between the lack of control over land by local communities, including women and indigenous peoples, with critical issues facing the continent; hunger and poverty, extreme inequalities, the climate and environmental emergencies, recurrent conflicts, and forced displacement.

International land policy frameworks such as the African Union's Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa have encouraged countries to embark on land reforms and more progressive land policies and laws that recognise women's, indigenous and local communities' rights to land. However, there remains an immense gap between land policies and laws and their effective implementation. 63% of large-scale land acquisitions are on collectively owned lands.

This strategy contributes towards a better Africa, the #AfricaWeWant as expressed in the African Union's Agenda 2063, by working for the accelerated implementation of progressive land policies and laws in order to make local communities' land rights, especially of women, a reality.

## **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Latin America concentrates the greatest biodiversity on the planet and absorbs millions of tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere thanks to its immense forests. It is also the most dangerous region for land and environmental defenders, and the one with the greatest land inequality. The top 10% of landowners own 75% of agricultural land, and the bottom 50% less than 2%. Reinforced by policies promoting extractive industries and agribusiness, and aggravated by corruption, this inequality triggers social and environmental conflicts, and leads to migration away from the rural areas.

Social movements that defend territories and promote a healthy relationship with the environment such as agro-ecology have achieved progressive laws in many countries. They have influenced international treaties that recognise the rights of indigenous peoples and peasants. However, a huge gap persists in compliance and implementation, and efforts to reduce the large gap in women's equal land rights are still insufficient.

Promoting dialogue and permanent advocacy with governments, building strategic alliances to ensure greater political weight, monitoring the status of land rights are the strategies that ILC LAC will use to push for a real transformation.

ASIA	EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
<p>Asia has endured an increasing demand for large-scale land acquisitions pushed by corporations and extractive industries, leaving the most marginalised communities vulnerable to land conflicts, forced evictions, and criminalisation for protecting their rights.</p> <p>In Asia there has been a significant increase in the inequality of farm and land distribution as a result of the Asian Green Revolution, with a growing landless population.</p> <p>In Central Asia the pressure on rangelands by mining is putting at risk delicate ecosystems. As corporate and financial investments grow, ownership and control of land become more concentrated and increasingly opaque. Although some governments in Asia have made progress in issuing progressive land policies, implementation remains weak, and the shrinking democratic space has made it increasingly difficult to advocate for justice.</p> <p>Securing collective land rights is an important pathway to reducing inequality and protecting the rights of those who live on and from the land, as is sustainable use of land and natural resources. Both will be crucial elements of ILC Asia’s next strategy.</p>	<p>Covering three continents with diverse geographical, climate, cultural, social and political dynamics, common challenges include the climate emergency and depopulation in rural areas, forced displacement due to wars, occupation, and migration for a better life.. Landscapes are becoming “social deserts”, as young people lack opportunities to stay.</p> <p>Palestinians face the occupation of their land, and are subject to human rights violations and systematic dispossession.</p> <p>The role of local communities as custodians of the commons has been largely unrecognised and are threatened by commercial pressures.</p> <p>Across the region, women face similar challenges: lack of access to land and social recognition, limited social and economic rights and opportunities, limited participation in decision-making processes, and under-representation in leadership.</p> <p>As land becomes privatised and pressure for urban expansion and investment increases, the role of civil society organisations in holding corporations and governments accountable is critical.</p>

## Our values

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Our strategy guides our work: our values inspire it.

We are **rights based and people-centred**. We uphold the inherent dignity, identity, and social inclusion of all women and men, as captured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We affirm the international recognition of the collective land and territorial rights of indigenous peoples. We work for land governance that recognises the legitimate rights of women, men and communities to be at the centre of decision-making about their land, and respects that land is more than an asset for production. Land is a source of life, wellbeing, dignity and identity.

We are a **coalition of members of equal value**. We work together on the basis of trust, mutual respect and shared leadership. We give equal space to each member in our coalition, and equal space to women and men. We recognise the diversity and asymmetries in our network and with a special focus on people's organisations in the membership, we will work to shift the power balance so that regardless of size, capacity, or position, we all have an equal voice in decisions about our direction as a network.

We are **autonomous**. As a coalition, we are non-partisan and independent of governments, donors, political parties, and corporations.

## Acknowledgements

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In our coalition, the members set the agenda. This strategy is the product of over one year of consultations with members on how ILC can best support their change agendas. It was complemented by recommendations from the external impact assessment of the previous strategy, with inputs from specialists on systems change. Under the oversight of a working group of the ILC Council, drafts were presented to members in regional meetings and other dedicated forums.

The strategy will be implemented through three triennial work plans and budgets, each approved by the Council and assessed independently, with recommendations for the next triennium. The Assembly of Members approves triennial reports, and adjustments to ILC's operating model. All these documents are publicly available on ILC's website [www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org).

We would like to thank our strategic partners, who fund ILC flexibly enough to allow prioritisation and decision-making to be member-led.

*(strategic partner and donor logos)*

For news, updates and profiles of our members and our collective achievements, visit [www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org).

Our social media: