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Enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty

Report on Lessons Learned by the International Land Coalition

PROGRESS REPORT

Executive Board
1-2 December 2004 - Rome

Action: **Information**

Advancing the Land Rights of the Rural Poor

Lessons learned by the International Land
Coalition in fostering a global alliance on
secure access to land

Note to the Executive Board Directors

This document is submitted for the information of the Executive Board.

To make the best use of time available at Executive Board meetings, the Secretariat invites Board Directors to contact the following focal points with any technical questions about this document before the Board's session.

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I. Introduction

1. The International Land Coalition (ILC) 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 the local, national, regional and international levels. The ILC is a global convening mechanism for the land agenda.

II. Objectives

2. In June 2004, the Coalition Council approved the ILC's strategic framework for the three-year period ending December 2006. The strategy is built on two primary objectives.
3. First, the ILC aims to enhance the capacities of its members and partners to assist poor men and women in gaining and maintaining secure access to land through, for example, access to the related support services.
4. Second, the ILC aims to create opportunities to influence public policy decisions, at the national and international level, through strategies that strengthen the capacity of communities, exchange knowledge, and open or expand spaces for dialogue.
5. In order to achieve these objectives, the ILC:
 - works together with its members and partners to help create enabling policies and programmes that can overcome the systemic constraints and practical obstacles preventing poor men and women from gaining secure access to land and related resources;
 - strives to build active partnerships, alliances and solidarity among civil-society organizations, intergovernmental organizations and governments in order to benefit from the potential synergy arising from their diverse characteristics, complementary resources and different spheres of social, political and economic influence; and
 - supports activities to strengthen the institutions of civil society to render them more capable and collectively influential in shaping policies and decision-making affecting their resource rights and access.
6. This report begins with a brief overview of the projects, partnerships and actions of the ILC since its strategic thrusts are based on the lessons drawn from these activities and relationships. The sharing of these lessons and the resulting strategic framework form the essence of this report.

III. An overview of the ILC in action

7. The ILC has evolved a variety of tools and methodologies to work in partnership with its members and associates. The following six areas of activity are some of the primary means, instruments or activities that the ILC has developed in order to support its partners:
 - a. First, the Knowledge Programme helps civil-society, governmental and intergovernmental organizations to learn from each other by identifying, documenting and sharing practical experiences, with an emphasis on filling knowledge gaps. The ILC is providing seven grants in support of knowledge projects.
 - b. Second, the Network Support Programme strengthens civil-society networks at the country level so that resource-poor households can negotiate their access to resources from a position of collective strength. The ILC has also helped to open spaces for these networks to take part in decision-making with relevant authorities. Twenty countries are participating in the Network Support Programme.
 - c. Third, the Community Empowerment Facility strengthens the capacity of communities to gain and maintain access to land and related productive resources. It supports innovative projects that can provide lessons both within and beyond the community and country of implementation. Thirty-seven such projects have been supported in 19 countries.
 - d. Fourth, the Women's Resource Access Programme (WRAP) raises national and international awareness of the need to improve women's access to land and related livelihood factors by documenting their views and opinions and incorporating them into decision-making. The results of the five WRAPs that have been undertaken in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Nepal are available from the secretariat.
 - e. Fifth, the programme Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land aims to build a global consensus on land issues. It is an interactive forum for dialogue, joint pilot activities and consultation to build common assessments, shared vision and political support. This platform is the basis of the advocacy and policy development work by the ILC in national and international arenas.
 - f. Sixth, Land Alliances for National Development (LAND) Partnerships work with governments to develop or strengthen country-level mechanisms where both those affecting and affected by decisions on land access, use and management can seek agreements on land policies and implementation modalities. Pilot LAND Partnerships are in progress in Guatemala, Indonesia, The Philippines and South Africa with support from The Netherlands. LAND is also under preparation for Bolivia, Benin and Burkina Faso in response to requests from these governments.

8. Further to these activities, the ILC is called upon to facilitate national and international events and debates on land policy. This year, for example, the ILC co-chaired with the President of Benin, the Ministerial Roundtable on “Turning Assets into Useable Capital in LDCs – Contributing to the Millennium Development Goals” at the High-Level Segment at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Session in New York, in June. Also in 2004, the ILC chaired the land seminar at the Global Conference on Scaling Up Poverty Reduction sponsored by the World Bank and the Government of China in Shanghai.

IV. An ILC strategy grounded in the lessons learned

9. Each of six action areas has separately or in combination been used with partners in over 25 countries. The outcomes of these country relationships have provided important lessons that have refined ILC objectives and highlighted the strategic thrusts that can best add value to the work of ILC partners.
10. These lessons and the resulting strategic framework include:
 - a. **Documenting and sharing knowledge**

Knowledge informs the poor and gives them choices. It also equips all stakeholders in the Coalition to learn from each other. The emphasis on sharing knowledge aims to make the lessons and experiences of all intergovernmental, civil-society and governmental partners known to one another. The knowledge programme places priority on capturing the ‘undocumented’ knowledge of civil-society and community-based organizations so that it can be effectively shared as part of the ILC network. The lessons learned in understanding the effects of government and intergovernmental policies and programmes also represent a form of knowledge from which all Coalition members and partners can benefit. With its global network of organizations and institutions across multiple sectors, the Coalition is well placed to play the important role of generating, documenting and facilitating the exchange of lessons from the field.
 - b. **Building networks for collective empowerment**

Collective action, in the form of strong networks, is an important tool for the rural poor in negotiating their access to resources. Working collectively can amplify the voice of the rural poor in policy formulation. Networks are mechanisms to help protect the interests of the poor from powerful outside forces. Networks can help the poor to access the goods and services they commonly require in such areas as technology, training, markets, finances and legal support. ILC members from civil society have also noted the need to develop more collaborative relationships with governments for sharing programme information, articulating policy recommendations and monitoring the implementation of government initiatives. As such, the ILC helps to develop networks across sectors, for example, among civil society, government and private actors.

c. **Creating spaces for dialogue**

The Coalition was founded on the vision that achieving secure access to natural resources, especially land, for the rural poor requires: (i) the active participation of civil society; (ii) the enabling policies, laws, regulations and programmes of governments; and (iii) coherence in the roles and support provided by bilateral and intergovernmental organizations. The ILC aims to create new and innovative spaces for dialogue and negotiation among diverse stakeholders. Lessons from the past underline the need for both an external and internal orientation. Externally, the ILC aims to open up spaces for dialogue with policy and decision-makers. Internally, the Coalition is fostering dialogue among its members. The ILC accords particular attention to providing opportunities for poor men and women to participate directly in dialogue and decision-making processes at the local, national and international level.

d. **Advocacy**

The Coalition was formed around the central goal of putting secure access to productive assets, especially land, on national and international agendas. The Coalition's advocacy aims to establish enabling policies and practical programmes, as well as international protocols that involve government commitment. Advocacy activities also emphasize adherence to international agreements and internationally accepted goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals. The ILC is also developing tools for monitoring and evaluating progress towards more equitable land access.

e. **Demonstration and integration**

At its founding, intergovernmental and governmental participants emphasized that the Coalition should give particular attention to the experiences of civil society, anticipating that such experiences could provide valuable input in the formulation of national strategies and public policies. All too often, these experiences remain localized, meaning that their potential for replication and scaling up is unrecognized. Accordingly, the ILC supports demonstration and testing to allow governments and intergovernmental organizations to consider a wider integration of civil-society experiences into their policies and programmes.

V. Conclusion

11. Access to land is increasingly understood to be a cross-cutting development issue. Its links to food security, peace-building, conflict prevention, desertification and democracy are being recognized with increased frequency in national and global debates, including in plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The underlying causes that obstruct progress on these issues are not technical but political. The issues are issues of power. These are challenges that go beyond the spheres of influence of individual organizations. The ILC is increasingly being called upon to act as a convening mechanism and forum where these challenges, obstacles and opportunities can be addressed.

