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Enabling the rural poor  
to overcome poverty

## **Report on lessons learned by the International Land Coalition**

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For: **Information**

## **Note to Executive Board Directors**

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

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# Report on lessons learned by the International Land Coalition

## I. Introduction

1. The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organizations that works with development partners to empower rural poor households to gain and maintain secure access to natural resources, especially land.
2. Since its creation by the IFAD Conference on Hunger and Poverty in November 1995, the Coalition has worked to enhance the capacities of its members and partners and to create opportunities, at all political levels, for them to participate in the design of pro-poor land policies and to collaborate with government in the implementation and monitoring of transparent land regulations and practices.
3. In 2006, the Coalition focused on achieving practical results at the country, regional and global levels in terms of (i) opening and enhancing spaces for dialogue among stakeholders; (ii) expanding advocacy and policy work on land themes in need of greater attention; (iii) networking and building capacity at the national and regional levels; and (iv) strengthening the Land Coalition as an institution.
4. The following sections summarize some of the lessons the Coalition has learned in these key areas of its work – including lessons emerging from internal and external evaluation processes – over the past two years, with a special focus on 2006.

## II. Opening and enhancing spaces for dialogue

5. A major lesson learned is that consensus among various stakeholders is most likely to emerge on specific thematic issues, particularly in contexts with strong actors on land-related issues (e.g. social movements, government departments, donor agencies). Identifying common positions on specific issues, while respecting differences of opinion on broad agendas, encourages the participation of a variety of actors that may have otherwise declined out of a fear of compromising their position.
6. In the Collaborative Action on Land Issues (CALI) Programme in the Niger and Uganda, both government and civil society organizations (CSOs) have identified pastoralist access to land as a priority challenge. Although stakeholders may differ on the preferred solutions, their willingness to convene on this theme increases the likelihood of finding satisfactory solutions. Similarly, amid the wider tenure reform process in Madagascar, alternative methods of land titling have become an issue of interest to all stakeholders. The Coalition's partners have convened multistakeholder consultations on this issue, which have helped promote options that are more appropriate to poor land users.
7. As became apparent during the Land Alliances for National Development (LAND) Partnerships Programme in Indonesia and the Philippines, authority over land is often distributed across various government agencies (such as forestry, agriculture, mining) leading to both overlapping functions and a plethora of often conflicting land legislation. CSOs tend to follow the sectoral path of governmental institutions, which means that dialogue has to be promoted not only between government and civil society, but also within these two broad bodies.
8. In Indonesia, the level of open exchange and debate that took place at the national forum would not have been possible had international agencies also been involved. This process suggests that the Coalition needs to pursue multiple roles: (i) ensuring that civil society and people's voices are heard on a par with other national participants (e.g. government, commercial sectors); and (ii) "bridging" consensual processes with international actors in a way that builds support for outcomes but still safeguards the national character of such forums.

9. Dialogue should be promoted among CSOs so that they can make their specific claims to land understood and develop a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis the government. This would also help avoid the kind of conflicts that can emerge when one group's claim is recognized at the expense of another's – and that end up pitting the poor against the poor.
10. The Land Coalition's link to the United Nations family, by virtue of being hosted by IFAD, is an important factor in opening up spaces for dialogue, particularly at a national level. For example, government agencies in Indonesia and the Philippines have signed tripartite agreements with the Coalition and civil society partners, committing themselves to engage in national dialogue on land issues. The Coalition's identity was a factor in prompting these agencies to sign in the first place, and also heightened their sense of accountability for achieving outcomes. The Coalition's identity has also enabled it to remind partner governments that they are accountable for human rights abuses involving land, pointing in several instances to commitments assumed through international processes.

### **III. Expanding advocacy and policy work**

11. Through participation in various regional and global events, the Coalition has learned that providing opportunities to members, particularly smaller CSOs, strengthens these organizations' advocacy, and is also a form of institution-building. For instance, the participation of a woman leader of Asociación de Comités de Desarrollo Campesino in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) had a strong impact at the country level since it highlighted the fact that women can take the lead in advancing the land agenda at the international and national levels. She was, moreover, one of the few civil society representatives among the ECOSOC panellists, and her speaking as a direct representative of rural communities made for a more powerful statement at the meeting.
12. The participation of CSO members and partners in the World Bank Rural Week was another occasion for CSOs to improve their understanding of the work of intergovernmental organizations and present their position on specific issues. At the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, CSO members of the Land Coalition's official delegation had opportunities for direct contact with their respective country's delegates that may not have otherwise been available to CSOs. The Coalition has thus been able to play a key role in opening channels for civil society participation, as a way of creating a more participatory dialogue.
13. In its role as an advocate on specific thematic issues, the Coalition has begun developing focused initiatives on pastoralists, common-property rights, drylands and indigenous peoples. A working paper and discussion forum on pastoralists put in evidence the lack of systematized knowledge and the absence of linkages and interaction among various land-poor groups, while also highlighting a growing interest in addressing such problems. On the issue of common property, a joint paper by the Coalition and CAPRI (CGIAR systemwide programme on collective action and property rights), drawing on a discussion forum and a collection of case studies, including many from Coalition members, was awarded a prize at the July 2006 conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property. From these and other similar experiences, the Coalition recognized that it needed to deepen its understanding of specific land-related concerns indicated by its membership and develop clear positions and policy messages to be used for advocacy.
14. A review of donor agencies' land policies, and a subsequent survey of members and partners regarding the implementation of such policies, revealed that donor policies usually address land issues within different sectoral policies and that, even in cases where a specific land policy exists, policy and practice may still diverge. This review represented the Coalition's first work in an area that it intends to explore further in the future.

15. Effective pro-poor land reform can be hampered by a lack of harmonization among development partners working on land issues. In Madagascar, support to the NGO conveners of the Programme National Foncier has helped promote greater synergy among different initiatives. This approach is now being scaled up in the country and will inform the support of a similar mechanism in the Niger.

#### **IV. Networking and capacity-building**

16. The support provided to various network members of the Coalition has reaffirmed the important role of such networks in collective empowerment:
  - (a) for social monitoring, as in the case of Grupo ALLPA in Peru, which monitors a government community-titling project, and the Agrarian Reform Network (ARNow!) in the Philippines, which monitors implementation of the agrarian reform programme;
  - (b) for influencing agrarian legislation, as in the case of the Council of Peasant Organizations (COCOCH) in Honduras, whose proposed amendments were inserted into the new agrarian law;
  - (c) for building partnerships with government in ensuring broad civil society input into national land policy processes, as in the case of the Uganda Land Alliance, which has been requested by the Government to extend its convening role to organizing national consultations on the draft land policy; and
  - (d) for promoting a collective voice on regional processes affecting land, as in the case of the regional LandNets in Africa and their potential inputs, for example, in the African Union land policy development and in the Southern African Development Community's Land Tenure facility. Similarly, the Land Coalition's collaboration with IFAD on convening the Andean Forum contributed to the formulation of a regional vision on lessons learned and trends in land issues.
17. Networks, furthermore, have proved to be spaces for innovation and scaling up of experiences such as the community mapping for conflict resolution developed by Grupo Tierra, a network of international NGOs and local cooperatives in Nicaragua, many already part of the Coalition's constituency.
18. Acknowledging the importance of networks, the Coalition will not only continue to support existing and emerging networks, but it will also take steps to improve its understanding of their strengths and weaknesses so as to extract cross-cutting lessons that can enhance their functioning.
19. The Community Empowerment Facility (CEF) – with 50 projects in 25 countries – has clearly shown the close link between access to and control over land and empowerment processes for grass-roots organizations and rural people in general. Supporting collective action on land creates social capital, but the complexities of political dynamics and the slow pace of social change require both persistence and a long-term horizon. Moreover, the harmonization of the CEF and other Coalition programme areas is fundamental.
20. In a number of cases where the CEF triggered a shift in the balance of power at the local level, the Coalition has received requests for replication from nearby communities. The CEF also has a potentially catalytic role in creating new opportunities for collaboration between local actors and government or intergovernmental actors, as in the case of the Zambia Land Alliance, the HARDI initiative for harmonization of integrated development actions (Madagascar) and the National Association of Communal Forests and Pastures (Albania).

#### **V. Strengthening the Land Coalition as an institution**

21. Communication has emerged as a crucial tool for increasing the Coalition's visibility and, through this, the visibility of its members and partners. The Coalition's support

for knowledge exchange among member and partner organizations that face similar challenges and use comparable approaches (e.g. community mapping for conflict resolution in Nicaragua and the Philippines) has demonstrated the importance of strengthening horizontal communication on a thematic basis and, where regional similarities exist, on a geographic basis (e.g. CSO management of land funds). Such experiences underscore the importance of promoting knowledge exchanges and peer-to-peer training opportunities.

22. The external evaluation conducted of the Land Coalition in 2006 stressed its continuing relevance and the importance of its role in advocating a pro-poor land tenure agenda. The evaluation also highlighted a number of issues to be addressed. All parts of the Coalition – its secretariat, assembly and governing council – will give priority to reviewing and amending the constitution and governance framework, as a fundamental step to clarifying roles, responsibilities and procedures to sustain the growth the Coalition has experienced over the past few years. Moreover, the external evaluation and internal evaluation processes have pointed to the need for a transparent monitoring and evaluation system.
23. A new direction suggested during discussions among the Coalition's constituency is a reorganization along regional lines in order to address regional needs and trends more explicitly. This will include a partial reorganizing of staff responsibilities to allow for appropriate programming and greater flexibility in responding to the needs of countries in each region.

## **VI. Conclusion**

24. The benefits of promoting a multistakeholder approach to meeting the challenges of pro-poor land tenure reform remain evident. It has been reaffirmed over the past two years that the Coalition's strengths lie in adding value to local, national, regional and global processes that promote the access of poor people to land by acting as a catalyst for members' and partners' ongoing efforts. How the Land Coalition builds on its identity as a coalition of members will therefore continue to be a priority concern in its institutional transformation to fulfil its mandate more effectively.
25. Among the Land Coalition's many collaborating members and partners, IFAD has a prominent place. In its joint activities with IFAD, the Coalition has been able to show the value added that it can bring to wider initiatives in land tenure reform. The positive experiences in this regard in Uganda, for example, have encouraged the Coalition to choose IFAD as a primary partner in implementing similar initiatives in Madagascar and the Niger.
26. The lessons learned by the Coalition in these core areas of action over the past two years will be particularly valuable in informing the plan of action currently under preparation in consultation with IFAD and other members in response to the external evaluation.

