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**IFAD**

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**REPORT ON LESSONS LEARNED BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The IFAD Conference on Hunger and Poverty in 1995 put access to land on the agenda. It also led to the creation of the International Land Coalition. IFAD recognized the need for a convergence of efforts to address the land access barriers faced by the poor. The Coalition is effectively responding to this need by convening a wide range of stakeholders from civil-society, intergovernmental and governmental organizations to work together in this common cause.

2. IFAD also realized that building an alliance among multiple stakeholders would require broad ownership of the Coalition. Accordingly, the Coalition was established with an IFAD identity, but also with autonomy to ensure partners' commitment to and ownership of agreed activities.

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

4. This report begins with a brief overview of the Coalition's projects, partnerships and actions in order to make known not only the Coalition's global policy initiatives but also its practical country-level operations, which are the source of the lessons that have been learned. Sharing these lessons is the main purpose of this report.

## II. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMMES

5. The Coalition has six core areas of practical action:
- (i) **Knowledge Programme** helps civil-society, governmental and intergovernmental organizations learn from each other by identifying, documenting and sharing practical experiences, with an emphasis on filling knowledge gaps. The programme tests replicability to encourage governments to incorporate experiences with potential for national impact into public policies. Coalition grants are supporting 12 knowledge projects;
  - (ii) **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 Coalition and its intergovernmental partners help create opportunities for these networks to participate in decision-making with relevant authorities. The Coalition is currently supporting 10 network-building projects;
  - (iii) **Community Empowerment Facility (CEF)** strengthens the capacity of communities to gain and maintain access to land and related productive resources. It supports innovative projects that can provide lessons within and beyond the community and country of implementation. A project advisory committee – made up of the IFAD Technical Advisory Division (PT), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and three civil-society organizations (CSOs) – advises the Secretariat. Financed by the World Bank and IFAD, the CEF is currently supporting 30 projects selected from 173 proposals. PT involves the relevant country portfolio managers (CPMs) in the assessment process;
  - (iv) **Women's Resource Access Programme (WRAP)** raises national and international understanding of the need to improve women's access to land and related livelihood factors by documenting women's views and bringing them into decision-making. WRAPs were initially implemented in Cambodia, India, Indonesia and Nepal. This success prompted the Department for International Development (United Kingdom) to support replication in Africa. A WRAP in Kenya, the first of four African WRAPs, was launched in May 2003 and was incorporated into the IFAD project preparation process. Country partners have gone on to replicate WRAP at the district level. Reports on the Asian WRAPs have been published with the support of IFAD, the Coalition and the Japanese contribution to the IFAD Women in Development Trust Fund.
  - (v) **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, whose objective is to promote common assessments, shared vision and political will. Widely endorsed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and at the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Platform has contributed to the emerging role of the Coalition as an international convener of stakeholders on land issues;
  - (vi) **Land Alliances for National Development** (LAND partnerships) work with governments to develop or strengthen country-level mechanisms where those making decisions on access, use and management of land can work together with those affected by these decisions. LAND partnerships are a tool to advise on, debate and negotiate proposed policy reform and advocate changes to related productive services. Four pilot country programmes are under design – in Guatemala, Indonesia, The Philippines and South Africa. The Netherlands is funding the pilot stage.

6. In addition to these programmes, the Coalition is working with IFAD on the design of an action research programme aiming to incorporate land activities into projects funded by the IFAD/Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme in Niger and Uganda.

7. Shaping public policies and influencing the development agenda within countries and globally is an area where the Coalition's convening capacity has been recognized at both country and international levels. Most recently, the High-Level Segment of the United Nation's Economic and Social Council (June-July 2003) invited the Coalition to convene a ministerial round table on access to land. The Coalition's achievements at this round table have, in significant measure, resulted from IFAD capacity, including that of its Washington/New York office. There is unrealized scope for IFAD and the Coalition to work together to influence global and national policy agendas more effectively, as is under discussion with the Assistant President of the External Affairs Department and the new Policy Division.

### III. LESSONS LEARNED

8. The following are some of the lessons that the Coalition has learned over the years, from its involvement in the planning period of the Conference on Hunger and Poverty to its current country-level and international activities:

- **Alliances are needed.** The history of access to land and related productive resources has shown that when government-led policies and programmes lack the active support of civil society, and conversely when CSOs lack the institutional and enabling support of governments, they have all too often failed. Lessons learned over time point to the need for more effective alliances between governments and CSOs, with advocacy and financial support from the international community. The essence of the Coalition is partnership. The key principle is that ensuring secure land access for the rural poor requires the combined efforts of communities, civil society, governments, international organizations, financial institutions and bilateral agencies.
- **A preparatory stage helps determine common purpose.** Diversity in organizational mandates, policies, governance, philosophies and work styles makes it difficult to establish broad-based organizational alliances. However, it is possible to form alliances on particular objectives and needs where progress is seen to be beyond the scope, capacity and influence of any one organization. The idea of forming the Coalition emerged from an exploratory stage during which representatives of intergovernmental, governmental and civil-society organizations examined various subjects pertinent to rural development. It gradually became apparent to all involved that secure access to land and related assets was essential to addressing rural poverty and that the combined efforts of multiple stakeholders were needed to meet this challenge.
- **Coordination is difficult but can lead to coherence.** The distinctive mandates of international organizations make coordination of country-level activities difficult. However, the coherence of initiatives can be improved by consulting with country stakeholders and involving external providers of technical and financial support. The Coalition's experience indicates that it is becoming more feasible to develop frameworks to guide stakeholder interventions towards jointly agreed objectives.
- **Prescriptions prevent progress.** Secure access to land and productive natural resources currently can take forms that go beyond classical and historical prescriptions. These forms offer different options and opportunities, and also involve various approaches to ownership, user rights and leasing arrangements. These approaches are largely based on the goal of improving household assets, for which land is needed; and from land other

assets may be acquired that may be equally or more essential to the current and future well-being of poor families. For example, small plots in remote areas may be just as valuable under secure, long-term lease as under ownership since the land may have little collateral value. Moreover, a guaranteed long-term lease may lead to improved incomes, savings or acquisition of moveable household assets that can be leveraged into further income options. A benefit of having moveable assets as collateral may, for example, be to provide alternatives for children beyond dividing land into increasingly small and less productive plots. Furthermore, a lease may be achievable, whereas ownership may not be.

- **Opportunities for dialogue are essential.** Land is among the root causes of civil conflict in its many different forms – ranging from movements of landless peasants where desperately poor people perceive no other choice but to rise up against more powerful interests to conflicts involving extractive industries. It is essential to create the basic preconditions for a real dialogue based on the equal capacity and opportunity for participation by all stakeholders – governments, landless and near-landless people, agriculture workers, land owners, donors and other affected parties. Coalition activities involve creating opportunities, including through the LAND programme described earlier.
- **Effective representation must be built.** Although often invited to participate in rural development planning sessions, CSOs and community-based organizations frequently find the process does not effectively represent their interests. Support needs to be provided to help these groups become ‘literate’ vis-à-vis land legislation, regulations, judiciary provisions and other areas where changes are required to accommodate their needs. Effective representation also involves collective empowerment. Support, such as is provided by the Coalition’s Knowledge and Network Support Programmes, is needed so that CSOs and other community-based organizations can express their knowledge and collaborate with other like-minded groups to develop national or broad-based representation of their common interests.
- **Learning from others provides options.** The obstacles that civil society faces in gaining secure access to land or the options available to government for creating an enabling environment are issues that can benefit from the experience of others. Documenting and exchanging lessons learned from practical work elsewhere can widen choices and provide community leaders and public officials with new choices. The Knowledge Programme has seen the benefits of this approach.
- **Understanding non-technical factors.** Access to and use of land is essentially an issue of sustainable development. While it needs technical skills and attributes, it is a process of determining who has the right to use which land, for what purposes, for how long and under what conditions. Clearly, the matter is complex socially, culturally, economically, politically and technically; and vested interests are many and deeply rooted. Establishing a consensual process that can moderate interests and work towards negotiated ways to proceed, taking into consideration a longer-term perspective, is therefore essential.
- **Convening capacity is needed.** All stakeholders come with their own perceptions, needs, objectives, obligations, limitations and restrictions. Finding constructive ways forward depends on the convening organization not being tied to serving the individual interests of any given stakeholder. Impartiality is the Coalition’s essential feature and has led to wide acceptance of its achievements, both nationally and internationally. The Coalition is also seen as adding value: it assesses and tests various factors pertinent to land access with a view to adding new knowledge and/or insights to existing methodologies. CSOs regularly note the Coalition’s capacity to provide them with venues for constructive engagement with governments and intergovernmental organizations – opportunities not previously

available to them. Similarly, the Coalition has enabled governments and intergovernmental organizations to have more direct and constructive engagement with civil society.

- **Opportunity and legitimacy are essential.** The Coalition's mandate can only be advanced through access to organizations and persons of influence. Because it is hosted by IFAD, the Coalition is afforded high-level opportunities for access to others and for its legitimacy and credibility not to be questioned. This hosting role and the example it sets for a new way for inter-organizational collaboration are clearly evident from the work and outcomes achieved to date.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

9. The International Land Coalition has become a mechanism of its members as exemplified by the outcomes of its February 2003 Assembly of Members. Its comparative advantage is in adding value to its members and helping strengthen efforts to empower the rural poor through secure access to land and related productive assets. The Coalition's Strategic Plan 2004-06 is based on the lessons learned to date. It is hoped that others will give consideration to these lessons when deciding how they can take part in the Coalition, and when planning and implementing their own development work.