

## Land Partnerships on the Move

Land Alliances for National Development, or **LAND Partnerships**, while originally conceived as a global initiative, commenced as a four-country, pilot programme in The Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa and Guatemala. In addition to these four countries, the Government of the Netherlands has become a fifth partner offering not only financial assistance, but also in-country support and programme advice. The progress being achieved has brought forth requests for this Land Coalition programme from; among others, Bolivia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Nepal.

LAND Partnerships are an appropriate response to countries where the resource-poor are seeking fuller roles in decision-making and, simultaneously, the government, recognizing the benefits of robust stakeholder partnerships, is seeking support to bring

state and non-state actors together. LAND Partnerships help countries to create new ways and means, for both those effecting and those affected by decisions on land, to work together. The aim is to widen participation, foster open debate and facilitate negotiation at both national and community levels.

In each of the four countries, channels for dialogue and joint planning have been established. The interaction is becoming not only wider and deeper but also more inclusive of the various ministries of the state, communities (via non-governmental organizations, civil-society organizations and community groups), bilateral and international stakeholders.

National roundtables were organized in The Philippines that led to debates and increased understanding of the roles of different groups and joint actions between nongovernmental organizations, civil-society

organizations and governments. In Indonesia and South Africa, participatory consultations with affected communities on the impact of current land policies and reforms, will feed into district level roundtables to be attended by governments, NGOs, CSOs and donors. These district roundtables, planned to take place in September/November of this year are also expected to culminate into national land policy debates and action plans. And, in Guatemala, the dialogue with sub-groupings of stakeholders has resulted in the agreement among all parties, and supported by the Vice-President and Secretary of Agriculture, to convene an International Forum on Land, to be held tentatively in November 2005 in partnership with the International Land Coalition.

For more information on the LAND Partnership concept, *modus operandi* and information on each of the four pilot countries, visit the Land Partnerships in the Programme and Advocacy section of our website.

### The Strength of Communications for Global Communities

The strength of the International Land Coalition lies in the participation and collaboration of its members and partners. As a multi-stakeholder organization with over 90 partners from more than 40 countries, the Land Coalition acts as a network of networks – a conduit of knowledge – and a movement for collective action and influence. The success of global communities largely depends upon stakeholders' ability to access appropriate, timely information and communicate through efficient, effective information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Today's technology, when employed in conjunction with more traditional forms of media, provide a multi-faceted approach to bridging the knowledge gap between local and international communities, bringing local visibility and voice into global processes. It has become abundantly clear that individual organizations can be strengthened and empowered through access to appropriate information and state-of-the-art technology.

In May, the Club of Rome and UNESCO convened a conference in Paris where the critical success factors for employing ICT in sustainable development were expounded. Through a satellite hook-up, conference participants witnessed real-time case studies from Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia and were able

to share experiences and identify key success factors when applying state-of-the-art technology in developmental activities. Lively interaction took place across continents, between countries, through space, wires and screens and through simultaneous translation. Conference speakers shared the latest economic ICT solutions, including an innovatively powered \$100 laptop. This digital bridge illustrated that barriers to knowledge-sharing are being broken down and that the gap is closing; the only limiting factor being the human ability to absorb so much, from so far, in such a short space of time.

As a living example of a thriving global community, the Land Coalition is investigating the potential for using ICTs for the purpose of knowledge-sharing in the developing world. This new technology has revealed the power of public opinion and has dramatically changed the capacity of people and organizations to influence ways of thinking. It is now possible for people and institutions to organize their efforts based on being linked with others around the world as a "community of interest". Before ICTs, we were largely limited to working as geographical communities.

ICTs represent an important technological vehicle for the Land Coalition to reach out to its partners in achieving its goals and mission. Our members and partners will be able to pool resources and experiences using "knowledge" as a powerful advocacy tool to address common problems.

The new website and database are only the beginning. We need you, our partners and members, on board. As a first step we plan to survey your technological capacity. We also plan to conduct a communications session during the next meeting of the Council in October in order to explain our communication strategy and to analyse and determine the role and needs of our members and partners in communication strengthening. We want to be in the fast lane, and we want to help you join us.

### Community Empowerment

The Community Empowerment Facility, promoted by the International Land Coalition, is a vibrant hub of activity. Today there are 14 ongoing projects, of which three were approved at the December Project Advisory Committee meeting. There are 26 closed projects for which the lessons learned are being documented so that all partners can learn from the results achieved.