

# LEIS INDIA A



Magazine on Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture



## *Securing Land Rights*





December 2011 Volume 13 no. 4

LEISA India is published quarterly by AME Foundation in collaboration with ILEIA

Address : AME Foundation  
No. 204, 100 Feet Ring Road, 3rd Phase,  
Banashankari 2nd Block, 3rd Stage,  
Bangalore - 560 085, India  
Tel: +91-080- 2669 9512, +91-080- 2669 9522  
Fax: +91-080- 2669 9410  
E-mail: amebang@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in

#### LEISA India

Chief Editor : K.V.S. Prasad  
Managing Editor : T.M. Radha

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

This issue has been compiled by T.M. Radha  
and K.V.S. Prasad

#### ADMINISTRATION

M. Shobha Maiya

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Contact: M. Shobha Maiya

#### DESIGN AND LAYOUT

S Jayaraj, Chennai

#### PRINTING

Nagaraj & Co. Pvt. Ltd., Chennai

#### COVER PHOTO

*Land, more than a resource to small farmers*

(Photo: S Jayaraj for AMEF)

Women lead the march for land rights

(Photo: Ekta Parishad)

#### The AgriCultures Network

LEISA India is a member of the global Agriculture Network. Eight organisations that provide information on small-scale, sustainable agriculture worldwide, and that publish:

Farming Matters (*in English*);

LEISA revista de agroecologia (*Latin America*);

LEISA India (*in English, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi,*

*Telugu and Oriya*);

Majalah Petani (*Indonesia*);

AGRIDAPE (*West Africa, in French*);

Agriculturas Experiências em Agroecologia (*Brazil*);

LEISA China (*China*), and

BAOBAB (*East Africa, in English*).

The editors have taken every care to ensure that the contents of this magazine are as accurate as possible. The authors have ultimate responsibility, however, for the content of individual articles.

The editors encourage readers to photocopy and circulate magazine articles.

# Dear Readers

Rural poverty and land ownership are strongly linked. Today there are multiple pressures on land. Farmers are losing out on their lands. Farming is being seen more of a commercial pursuit with many private and corporate players calling the shots. Farm livelihoods and food security is at stake. Farming communities are openly demonstrating their dissent in the form of campaigns and foot marches. It's time for the policy makers to wake up, listen and act suitably! In this issue, we have presented some of the people's initiatives which are helping the poor communities gain access to land.

We are able to reach only some of our readers through the print edition. Thanks to the support of MISEREOR, we are able to share a print copy with a few more readers who cannot afford to pay. We once again are grateful to all those who are voluntarily supporting the magazine and the movement. We would like to inform you that the contributions made to LEISA India are exempted under 80G of Income Tax regulations. Kindly avail this opportunity and donate generously. If you wish to receive an electronic copy, kindly confirm to be able to receive it.

*Wishing all our Readers a very Happy New Year!*

The Editors

**LEISA** is about Low-External-Input and Sustainable Agriculture. It is about the technical and social options open to farmers who seek to improve productivity and income in an ecologically sound way. LEISA is about the optimal use of local resources and natural processes and, if necessary, the safe and efficient use of external inputs. It is about the empowerment of male and female farmers and the communities who seek to build their future on the bases of their own knowledge, skills, values, culture and institutions. LEISA is also about participatory methodologies to strengthen the capacity of farmers and other actors, to improve agriculture and adapt it to changing needs and conditions. LEISA seeks to combine indigenous and scientific knowledge and to influence policy formulation to create a conducive environment for its further development. LEISA is a concept, an approach and a political message.

**MISEREOR** founded in 1958 is the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation. For over 50 years MISEREOR has been committed to fighting poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. MISEREOR's support is available to any human being in need – regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender. MISEREOR believes in supporting initiatives driven and owned by the poor and the disadvantaged. It prefers to work in partnership with its local partners. Together with the beneficiaries, the partners involved help shape local development processes and implement the projects. This is how MISEREOR, together with its partners, responds to constantly changing challenges. ([www.misereor.de](http://www.misereor.de); [www.misereor.org](http://www.misereor.org))

**AME Foundation** promotes sustainable livelihoods through combining indigenous knowledge and innovative technologies for Low-External-Input natural resource management. Towards this objective, AME Foundation works with small and marginal farmers in the Deccan Plateau region by generating farming alternatives, enriching the knowledge base, training, linking development agencies and sharing experience.

**AMEF** is working closely with interested groups of farmers in clusters of villages, to enable them to generate and adopt alternative farming practices. These locations with enhanced visibility are utilised as learning situations for practitioners and promoters of eco-farming systems, which includes NGOs and NGO networks. [www.amefound.org](http://www.amefound.org)

#### Board of Trustees

Dr. R. Dwarakinath, *Chairman*

Dr. Vithal Rajan, *Member*

Mr. S.L. Srinivas, *Treasurer*

Dr. M. Mahadevappa, *Member*

Dr. N.K. Sanghi, *Member*

Dr. N.G. Hegde, *Member*

Dr. T.M. Thiyagarajan, *Member*

Dr. Veerabhadraiah, *Member*

Sri. Chiranjiv Singh, *Member*

**ILEIA** - the Centre for learning on sustainable agriculture is a member of Agriculture, a global network of organizations that share knowledge and provide information on small scale, sustainable agriculture worldwide. ILEIA in The Netherlands functions as the secretariat of the network. Information is mainly exchanged through Farming Matters magazine. ([www.theagriculturesnetwork.org](http://www.theagriculturesnetwork.org)).

## A little land can make a big difference

T Haque and Gregory Rake

When distributed broadly, secure land tenure becomes a fundamental building block for the development of sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies. With more than two lakh poor landless families having become landowners in Andhra Pradesh, the innovative Community Resource Person model has become a model for land distribution programs in many Indian states.



## Allotment Gardens Towards food security and urban environmental management

Robert J Holmer and Axel W Drescher



Allotment gardens established in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, are providing the much needed food, nutrition and income to the farmers. Among the non-monetary benefits of the allotment gardens are the strengthening of social values since they have become places where people can meet, discuss issues and enjoy spending quality time with their families and friends in a clean and natural environment.

## Fighting for land rights: A case of Juang and Bhuyan adivasis in Orissa

Duskar Barik

Land and forest resources are the core of survival for many tribal communities. While fighting for their land rights, Juang and Bhuyan communities in Orissa, are also protecting the forests and the ecology on which their lives and livelihoods depend upon.



## Our 2P approach

Jagat Deuja and Bed Prasad Khatiwada



Land is more than a production resource. In the rural areas of countries like Nepal it determines an individual's socio-economic status, and is therefore strongly related to power issues. Landlessness and insecure land ownership are the major causes of poverty, social injustice and food insecurity. Tackling these issues therefore means influencing policies in favour of more land rights.

6

# CONTENTS

Vol. 13 no. 4, December 2011

*Including Selections from International Edition*

### 4 Editorial

6 *A little land can make a big difference*  
T Haque and Gregory Rake

10 *Allotment Gardens*  
*Towards food security and urban environmental management*  
Robert J Holmer and Axel W Drescher

13 *Tricked, trapped and grabbed*  
*Farmers experience with eucalyptus plantations*  
Debjeet Sarangi, Bichitra Biswal and Vlady Rivera

16 *Fighting for land rights*  
*A case of Juang and Bhuyan adivasis in Orissa*  
Duskar Barik

19 *Communities are smart enough to make the right choices*  
Interview by Laura Eggen

22 *Our 2P approach*  
Jagat Deuja and Bed Prasad Khatiwada

24 *Development versus Livelihoods*  
B Suresh Reddy and T Praveena

26 *Land is just not than an asset*  
The Narayana Reddy Column

### 27 New Books

### 29 Sources

31 *Land and Power*  
Bertram Zagema

33 *Jan Satyagraha*  
*The people's movement*  
P V Rajagopal

10

16

22



## Securing Land Rights

**A**griculture remains an important and the only source of livelihood to the majority in developing countries. However, poor people's access to land is limited and insecure; access by some groups – such as women and indigenous populations – is even more precarious. Along with its economic functions in the sectors of agriculture, industry, housing and infrastructure development, land also has a profound social function to perform. The distribution of land impacts the quality of the social fabric in a community and the dynamics of gender relations within that community.

The pressure on land is rising. The ecological balance between land used for agriculture, forestry and non-agriculture purpose is being disturbed. While population growth, increasing fragmentation and resource degradation are affecting agriculture, land use conversion and commercial interests are resulting in land being diverted to non-food use. This is the issue of great concern as national food security is at stake. With multiple demands on land, farmers are losing out on land. The poor farmers and those living on the fringes of forests are the most affected.

Many poor communities, particularly the tribals depend on forests for their livelihoods. Deforestation, use of land to commercial purposes and extensive mining is driving away the local tribal communities from their traditional livelihoods. Monoculture plantation of tree species, and in some cases the widespread plantation of water-consuming trees like eucalyptus, has resulted in the degradation of soils and a falling water table. (Sarangi, Biswal and Rivera, p. 13)

### Land and food security

The demand for food is rising. The land resource for food production is increasingly diminishing. Landlessness and land fragmentation are growing worldwide. For example, in India, average landholding size fell from 2.6 hectares in 1960 to 1.3 hectares in 2000-01 and is still falling.

The onset of globalisation and the opening up of the world markets has put more demands on the limited land resource. While on one hand this could be perceived as a growth opportunity, on the other, this may result in greater marginalisation of the poor. Private companies and corporate players are increasingly taking over the food production from farmers. It is estimated that just a dozen companies are about to gain hold of 50,000 hectares of land. A number of corporate players have entered into agreements with farmers with major investments to tap the potential of Indian agriculture. With new players, new technologies are also entering the food production market. Land is increasingly being perceived as a commodity. It is rigorously being exploited to generate immediate, short-term gains, at the expense of a long-term impacts

**“Too many investments have resulted in dispossession, deception, violation of human rights and destruction of livelihoods. Without national and international measures to defend rights of people living in poverty, this modern day land rush looks set to leave too many poor families worse off, often evicted from their land, with little or no recourse to justice.”**

*Oxfam, “Land and Power: The growing scandal surrounding the new wave investments in land”, 151 Oxfam Briefing Paper, September 2011.*

on the land resource and the environment. Big investments are being made resulting in land-use changes to the detriment of food security, bio-diversity and the environment. Farming is no longer being perceived as a way of life.

SEZs and land acquisition has been taking place in India in a very fast pace over the last few years. It is estimated that more than 10 lakh people who are dependent upon agricultural lands will be evicted from their lands, and the farming families will have to face loss of around Rs.212 crores each year in total income, putting the food security of India at risk. The signs are already evident in the peri urban areas.

High quality land is being diverted from local food production and livestock grazing, to non-agricultural purposes. A study in the peri-urban areas of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh has shown that with land prices shooting up for non-agricultural purposes, farmers have sold their lands. Farming has almost entirely been replaced with alternative non-farm livelihoods (Suresh Reddy and Praveena, p.24). There is already a growing dissent, uproar, and opposition from the farmers, for their livelihood has been put at stake.

### Partnerships with a difference

Various measures of land reforms undertaken by the government since independence did not yield the desired results. However some of the States have shown greater interest in taking up new initiatives to address the land issue through redistribution of land. In partnership with Landesa, national and state governments in India have developed another path toward the same goal: micro-plots. These plots allow families to produce most of the fruits and vegetables they need and to sell excess produce, providing a small income to supplement their earnings as wage laborers. In 2002, Indira Karanthi Patham Project (IKP) in Andhra Pradesh, Namma Bhoomi - Namma Thota (My Land - My Garden) in Karnataka,

Chash o Basebaser bhumi-dan Prakalpa (cultivation and dwelling plot allocation scheme) in West Bengal and Vasundhara scheme in Orissa are some of the examples.

In Philippines, a different type of partnership was tried out to improve the overall situation of migrated communities in the urban areas. The concept of “gardens of the poor” or “allotment gardens” promoted in Cagayan de Oro City are providing the much needed food, nutrition and income to the farmers. (Holmer and Drescher, p.10)

Partnership of development organisations in Nepal has led to the “Strategic Plan for the Land Rights Movement – 2009-13”. This strategic partnership has been moving ahead with significant success in terms of recognition by the State, trust and ownership by right holders and commitment by development partners. (Deuja and Khatiwada, p.22)

### People’s institutional efforts

There are a number of people’s organisations working on the ground helping and empowering the poor communities to secure their land rights. These Civil Society Organisations, around 300 of them, are actively supporting the cause by organizing, educating and empowering local communities. They are also serving as a mediator between the communities and the government.

The building of organizations of farmers and landless is a first step in enabling and strengthening collective action. Small farmers need to be well informed and organized to be able to negotiate. KIRDTI is one of the NGOs which has been organizing and building the capacities of adivasis in Keonjhar district. Today the tribals are an empowered lot who are able to address the issues affecting them on their own. For instance, around 2,500 of the adivasis, demonstrated a protest against compensatory commercial plantation species like Eucalyptus, Acacia, teak etc., promoted by the Department, which were neither edible nor environment friendly. (Duskar Barik, p.16)

Legal awareness is crucial while fighting for land rights. Civil Society Organisations are finding innovative ways of providing this much needed legal support to farmers. For instance, RDI-India, in partnership with Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society and Landesa is training paralegals to help landless woman gain

**“The current food crisis is the result of food supplies not matching the demand, but to a large extent, it is also an issue of inequality of access to the available food and, more generally, to the wealth created. Thus, there is a need to create an environment that is conducive to more equity, particularly in terms of access to land.”**

*Madiodio Niasse, Director, International Land Coalition.*



ownership title to the land on which they currently reside. With RDI’s initiative, as many as 280,000 formerly poor landless families have become landowners in Andhra Pradesh. (Haque and Gregory Rake, p.6). Similarly, KIRDTI started legal education camp to the adivasi communities as illegal land transfers from the adivasi families to the non-adivasis is very common in the area. (Duskar Barik, p.16)

More and more people are joining the struggle against the current land policies. Building up as a strong social force, they are able to pressurize the government into action. The Janadesh campaign, spearheaded by Ekta Parishad, brought together 25,000 people representing communities from all over India, also supported by around 250 Civil Society Organisations. The expression of people’s power resulted in the Minister of Rural Development agreeing to form a National Land Reforms Council and a National Land Reforms Committee. (Rajagopal, p.33)

### Conclusion

Rural poverty, landlessness and insecure land tenures are all linked. It is therefore important that land issues are seen with its link to people’s livelihoods and not devoid of them. Also, the issues of other resources like water and forests need to be considered. The issue of land needs to be addressed as a partnership approach with the government, civil society organisation and people’s organisations.

Secure access to land is critical for the millions of rural people relying on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. It is also key to sustainable use of natural resources, enabling food security. Secure land tenure becomes a fundamental building block for the development of sustainable and peaceful societies. Many examples of innovative approaches exist. Some of them are presented in this issue.

### References

- ANGOC 2009. *Securing the Right to Land, A CSO Overview on Access to Land in Asia.*
- Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), *Quezon City, Philippines.*



# A little land can make a big difference

**T Haque and Gregory Rake**

---

*When distributed broadly, secure land tenure becomes a fundamental building block for the development of sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies. With more than two lakh poor landless families having become landowners in Andhra Pradesh, the innovative Community Resource Person model has become a model for land distribution programs in many Indian states.*

---

While the post-liberal era has marked a clear shift in the nature of the economy, India remains primarily an agrarian country. About 58 percent of the nation's population still depends on agriculture and related services for their livelihood. Given the scenario, the issue of land access to the

poor is a key hurdle in the vision of a truly prosperous nation, and has been so since India gained independence.

Having inherited a feudal, agrarian system, India was quick to adopt wide ranging land reforms that primarily focused on abolition of intermediaries; land ceilings and redistribution of ceiling surplus land among landless and semi-landless families; and abolition or regulation of tenancy. But despite 60 years of land reforms, India



*Microplots after one year*

**Though women in India contribute most of the labour in agriculture, only a miniscule seven percent have any legal control on agricultural land. The lack of legal rights makes women more open to exploitation and limits their opportunities**

continues to be plagued by high rates of landlessness and marginalisation of landholdings. Nearly 63 percent of the agriculture-dependent population own small holdings of less than one hectare, with large parcels of 10 hectares of land or more in the hands of less than two percent. The absolute landless and the nearly landless (those owning up to 0.2 hectares of land) account for as much as 43 percent of total peasant households. Further research indicates that inequalities have only increased with the wealthiest 10 percent of the population monopolising more land now than they did in 1951. Women and the so-called backward castes are relegated even further to the fringes. Though women in India contribute most of the labour in agriculture, only a miniscule seven percent have any legal control on agricultural land. The lack of legal rights makes women more open to exploitation. It also limits their opportunities as they lack access to institutional credit facilities.

The Rural Development Institute (RDI) champions the cause of securing land rights to the poor communities. Its seminal work stems from the conviction that sustainable ownership of land is often the first and the most certain step out of debilitating poverty. Land ownership means giving a family access to reliable income and shelter, improved nutrition, and perhaps most importantly, a life of dignity which landlessness more often than not, denies to them.

RDI conducts field research to understand relevant policy and programme constraints to determine where the potential bottlenecks to the poor gaining land rights may be. These research findings form the basis of practical and detailed recommendations for policy, legislative, and programme changes to the government. Given the deep-seated nature of the challenges India faces, (RDI) believes that the state needs to lead all conversations and action on land reforms. Neither RDI nor any other agency can do so, at least at scale. Therefore, RDI works in close partnerships with the government. Currently, RDI is operational in four states, namely West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

**Micro-plots**

In rural India, an estimated 15 million families are both poor and landless. Scores of millions more lack secure legal rights to the

**RDI's current land rights work in India**

**Homestead Plots**

Research done by RDI has demonstrated that even one-tenth of an acre can provide significant benefits to landless families by providing them sufficient space to grow food, build a house, keep animals, etc. RDI advocates for government to allot homestead plots to the 17 million landless rural families in the country.

**Legal Awareness**

In addition to the 17 million rural landless families, there are at least another 40 million families in India that have been denied legal rights to the land they have been living on for generations. If the latter group were to become aware of their rights and were provided some know-how on how to claim these rights, land ownership among the poor could increase substantially. RDI helps train community organisers in land related legislation, who then help make poor families aware of their rights, equipping them with the tools necessary to secure legal rights to their land. This protects such families from eviction, and also allows them access to credit and government services, improves their incentives to invest and leverage land as a real resource. The scope for using such approaches in collaboration with the government is substantial. RDI is active with these approaches in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

**Farm Land Leasing**

Since the 1960's, farm land leasing has been largely banned in India, even though informal and unrecorded tenancy is quite widespread. Research clearly shows that tenancy restrictions negatively impact agricultural efficiency and equity. Adopting more reasonable regulations for farm land leasing could greatly improve farm land efficiency, while providing greater access to land for many poor families.

**Women's Right to Land**

Over the years, RDI has found that land ownership in the hand of women tends to have an extraordinary ripple effect on the overall economic and social health of a community. When family nutrition and health improve, children are more likely to get an education and stay in school longer, and women are less likely to be victims of domestic violence. Advancing women's land rights is an uphill struggle, but one that must be taken up in India and elsewhere.

land they currently occupy. Traditional poverty alleviation efforts will largely bypass these families – unless the families obtain legal rights to land. With land as a foundation, the rural poor are better able to use the building blocks of education, healthcare, clean water, nutrition and access to credit to bootstrap themselves out of extreme poverty.

Previous attempts to promote development through broadening land ownership using traditional sized farms produced mixed results in part because there wasn't enough land available or enough money in the government's budget.

In partnership with Landesa, national and state governments in India have developed another path towards the same goal: micro-

plots. These house and garden plots, which may be as small as tennis courts, can be effective anti-poverty tools. These plots allow families to produce most of the fruits and vegetables they need; also, sell excess produce, providing a small income to supplement their earnings as wage laborers. This extra income enables parents to pull their children out of the fields and place them in schools. Micro-plots also reduce malnutrition and boost health. Also, they are small enough.

Homestead plots or micro plots are being promoted in three States – Karnataka, West Bengal and Odisha in collaboration with the State governments. With this initiative more than 430,000 families are now landowners.

### Paralegals bring Legal Aid to women in Andhra Pradesh

Investing in a woman's land rights creates an extraordinary ripple effect that spreads to her family, village, and beyond. However, in much of the world, while women help shoulder the burden of food production—women produce nearly half of the food in the developing world—they often don't have secure rights to the land they farm. Although they till the fields, they are often barred from inheriting or owning those fields. This puts them at risk for losing that land if they lose their husband, father, or brother because of illness, violence, or migration. Losing the land often means losing their source of food, income, and shelter.

Known as the "rice bowl of India," Andhra Pradesh is one of India's poorest states. Almost half the population lives in poverty and almost half the children of Andhra Pradesh are malnourished. Fourteen percent of rural households in the state are completely without land. Often these families stay with relatives, live on their employer's land, or squat on government or other vacant land.

## Shakti's Story

### Strengthening rights for women and girls . . .

Shakti beams with pride as she holds her patta – the title to her land. Before she became a landowner, she was among the poorest of the poor, a landless laborer earning only \$1 a day and – struggling to provide even one meal a day for her family. In her rural village in the Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh, she had few options. She worked as a seasonal agricultural laborer, when work was available. When it wasn't, she worked as a stone crusher, a physically exhausting and dangerous job. She owned only one sari and could only afford to feed her children rice gruel. When Shakti attained secure land rights, all of that changed.

In partnership with the Andhra Pradesh government and the World Bank, RDI designed a land purchase program that works like micro-lending. Qualifying small self-help groups of the poorest villagers – mainly women – are eligible to receive government grants to finance purchases of land available on the market. Shakti and other landless women in her village applied collectively for a loan to buy a plot of land. With assistance from local paralegals, the women negotiated with sellers and split the land parcels among themselves.

Today, Shakti has new status in her village and in her home. She has control over the income from the land, and can now provide three meals a day with vital micro-nutrients for her children. Even better, Shakti can now afford to send her children to school and give them a brighter future of opportunity.

"Namma bhoomi," says Shakti, pointing to the fields behind her. Her daughter, now literate and studying English translates. "This is our land." For Shakti and her family, a little land went a very long way.

## Call for Articles

### Friends or foes? Our relationship with insects

*Vol. 14 No. 1, March 2012*

Insects pollinate crops, are a source of food and other products and work as natural predators in the field. Yet insects often have a negative reputation in agriculture, with the words "insects" and "pests" often used interchangeably. Billions of dollars are spent every year fighting them. Insect populations are affected, sometimes seriously, by many different factors. The decline in bee populations and in pollination, for example, is increasingly attracting media coverage, and is coming to be recognised as a serious problem. It is thought that about one third of all the food we eat is dependent on bee pollination. The use of pesticides, a loss of habitats, light and air pollution, the use of mobile phones, the cultivation of invasive exogenous species, the spread of disease; all provide potential threats for insect populations. What are

the implications of this for family farmers? Can they contribute to efforts to restore insect populations?

How do insects contribute to strengthening the functions, processes and resilience of ecosystems? How can farmers support their "successful integration"? Our March 2012 issue will look at these issues, focusing on the many ways in which small-scale farmers benefit from insects, and on the steps they take in order to increase these benefits.

*Please send your articles to the Editor at [leisaindia@yahoo.co.in](mailto:leisaindia@yahoo.co.in) before 31st January 2012*



*Woman, trained as paralegal, facilitates sangha meeting*

Many of these women live on government-owned land or land whose ownership is unclear. Often, their families have lived in such a precarious situation for generations. These women can't securely invest in their plots to improve their harvests because they don't own the land and can be evicted at any moment.

The Indian government is working hard to rectify this – creating channels through which these women can apply to gain ownership of the government land they currently farm. Unfortunately, many of these women lack the information or legal guidance to process their application.

An ambitious new campaign aims to bring land rights, stability, security, and opportunity to 43,000 poor and landless women and their families in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India. This new program, created through a partnership between Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society, RDI-India, and Landesa aims to bridge this gap.

The program, which began in November 2010, trains paralegals to identify and help poor landless women. In this new program, paralegals help landless woman through the application process to gain ownership title to the land on which they currently reside. The paralegals walk her through each step required to receive full ownership rights to their parcel. So far, 244 paralegals have completed their training and begun work in their villages. By March 2012, RDI's goal is to train 430 paralegals, who will work in 4300 villages to help identify and support 43,000 women through the patta (title) application process.

### Gains till now

Secure land rights has changed the situation fundamentally. Investment on land has increased the harvest, thus improving the family's nutrition and health. Also, these women can now afford to send their children to school. When distributed broadly, secure land tenure becomes a fundamental building block for the development of sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies. As many as 280,000 formerly poor landless families have become landowners in Andhra Pradesh.

The innovative Community Resource Person model, first developed in Andhra Pradesh, has provided quick and low-cost implementation of legal aid work and has become a model for land distribution programs in other Indian states.

#### T Haque

E-mail: [drt.haque@gmail.com](mailto:drt.haque@gmail.com)

#### Gregory Rake

Rural Development Institute (RDI)

2nd floor, #53 Lodhi Estate,

New Delhi, India, 110003

E-mail: [gregoryr@rdiland.org](mailto:gregoryr@rdiland.org)

Website: [www.rdi-india.org](http://www.rdi-india.org)

# Allotment Gardens

## *Towards food security and urban environmental management*

Robert J Holmer and Axel W Drescher

---

*Allotment gardens established in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, are providing the much needed food, nutrition and income to the farmers. Among the non-monetary benefits of the allotment gardens are the strengthening of social values since they have become places where people can meet, discuss issues and enjoy spending quality time with their families and friends in a clean and natural environment.*

---

### Historical background

The history of the allotment gardens in Germany is closely connected with the period of industrialization in Europe during the 19th century when a large number of people migrated from the rural areas to the cities to find employment and a better life. Very often, these families were living under extremely poor conditions suffering from inappropriate housing, malnutrition and other forms of social neglect. To improve their overall situation and to allow them to grow their own food, the city administrations, the churches or their employers provided open spaces for garden purposes. These were initially called the “gardens of the poor” and were later termed as “allotment gardens”.

Allotment gardens are characterized by a concentration in one place of a few or up to several hundreds of land parcels that are assigned to individual families. In allotment gardens, the parcels are cultivated individually, contrary to other community garden types where the entire area is tended collectively by a group of people. The individual size of a parcel ranges between 200 and 400 m<sup>2</sup>, and often the plots include a shed for tools and shelter. The individual gardeners are organized in an allotment association which leases the land from the owner, who may be a public, private or ecclesiastical entity, provided that it is only used for gardening (i.e. growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), but not for residential purposes. The gardeners have to pay a small membership fee to the association, and have to abide with the corresponding constitution and by-laws. On the other hand, the membership entitles them to certain democratic rights.

The importance of allotment gardening in Germany has shifted over the years. While in times of crisis and widespread poverty (from 1850 to 1950), allotment gardening was a part time job, and its main importance was to enhance food security and improve food supply, its present functions have to be seen under a different point of view. In times of busy working days and the hectic urban atmosphere, allotment gardens have turned into recreational areas and locations for social gatherings. As green oases within oceans of asphalt and cement, they are substantially contributing to the conservation of nature within cities. What was previously a part time job is nowadays considered as a hobby where the hectic schedule of the day becomes a distant memory, while digging the flowerbeds and getting a little soil under the fingernails. However, in situations of weak economy and high unemployment rates, gardens become increasingly important for food production again.

### Establishment of Allotment Gardens in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

In 2003, the first allotment garden of the Philippines was established in Cagayan de Oro as part of a European Union funded project. Meanwhile, with the assistance of the German Embassy in Manila and several private donors from Germany, this number has grown to six self-sustaining gardens located in different urban areas of the city, enabling a total of almost 70 urban poor families to legally access land for food production. Some of the gardeners belong to the socially most disadvantaged group in the city, the garbage pickers of the city’s controlled landfill site (GEROLD et al., 2005). Besides different vegetables, the gardeners grow also herbs and tropical fruits. In some gardens, small animals are kept and fish ponds are maintained for the gardeners to avail additional

protein sources for the daily dietary needs. Each allotment garden has a compost heap where biodegradable wastes from the garden as well as from the neighbouring households are converted into organic fertilizer, thus contributing to the integrated solid waste management program of the city. Further, all gardens are equipped with so-called urine-diverting ecological sanitation toilets. Ecological sanitation is a three-step process dealing with human excreta. Urine and faeces are contained, sanitized and recycled, thus protecting human health and the environment. The use of water is limited for hand-washing only and by using the sanitized urine and faeces for plant production, the need for artificial fertilizers is reduced. Unlike in Europe, where allotment gardens are usually located on public lands owned by different government entities, all allotment gardens of Cagayan de Oro are established on private land due to the lack of publicly owned open spaces. Prior to the establishment of the allotment gardens, the Chairman of the Barangay (= city district) approached private landowners and asked if poor residents of the Barangay could use their vacant land for food production only.

The conditions for the land use were then formalized into a memorandum of agreement jointly signed by all stakeholders: the landowner, the local government unit, the academe and the community members. The urban poor families committed themselves to use the land for food production only but will not construct residential structures except for a small shed for tools and other garden implements. The local government facilitated

the community organization while Xavier University in cooperation with the GTZ Water and Sanitation Program provided guidance on integrated crop management, composting and ecological sanitation through a series of workshops and hands-on trainings. The production practices for vegetables in allotment gardens are similar to those in rural areas, however, differ in the choice of suitable cultivars as well as in the reduced application of agrochemicals due to the proximity to populated areas.

### **Contribution to food security**

Prior to the establishment of the allotment gardens, a food security survey was conducted among 300 respondents in four of the pilot city districts to determine the food security status level of households and, thus, compile baseline data to evaluate the impact of the allotment gardens in a later stage. Since the full range of food insecurity and hunger cannot be captured by any single indicator, the so-called "CPS Food Security Supplement 1" was applied in the study to measure the food security scale. Specifically, the CPS core module finds out about household conditions, events, behaviours, and subjective reactions such as (1) anxiety that the household food budget or food supply may be insufficient to meet basic needs; (2) the experience of running out of food, without money to obtain more; (3) perceptions of the respondents that the food eaten by household members was inadequate in quality or quantity; (4) adjustments to normal food use, substituting fewer and cheaper foods than usual and (5) instances of reduced food

*Urban farmers in an allotment garden*



**Table 1: Food security status of urban poor in Cagayan de Oro on adult scale**

Categories	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
Food secure	88	29.33
Food insecure without hunger	94	31.33
Food insecure with hunger	118	39.33
Total	300	100.00

**Table 2: Food security status of urban poor in Cagayan de Oro on child scale**

Categories	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
Food secure	67	22.33
Food insecure without hunger	129	43.00
Food insecure with hunger	53	17.67
No child	51	17.00
Total	300	100.00

intake by adults and children in the household. The results showed that on the adult scale, only 29.3% of the respondents were considered food secure, while 31.3% were food insecure without hunger and a high 39.4% were food insecure with hunger (Table 1).

The levels on the child scale were somewhat different. Only 22.3% could be considered food secure, while 43% were food insecure without hunger and 17.7% food insecure with hunger. The latter number shows that adults are willing to share food with their children and rather suffer from hunger than their children. 17% of the respondents did not have children, thus explaining the remaining balance to 100% (Table 2).

Two years after the implementation of the allotment gardens (and one year after the outside funding had ended and the gardeners were able to sustain their activities without financial support), a survey was conducted to assess the socioeconomic effects of the project. The perceived benefits of the allotment gardens in Cagayan de Oro are multiple. 25% of the vegetables produced are consumed by the family, 7% are given away to friends and relatives while 68% are sold to walk-in clients, who come mostly from the direct neighbourhood. They appreciate the freshness of the produce, the convenience of proximity as well as the lower price compared to the public markets. The gardening activities, a secondary occupation for all the association members, have augmented the available income by about 20% while the vegetable consumption has doubled for 75% of its members. This is especially notable since the average vegetable consumption in Cagayan de Oro is only 36 kg per capita and year, which is one half of the recommended minimum intake as suggested by FAO. Besides of these benefits, the respondents particularly appreciate that the

allotment gardens have strengthened their community values since it is a place where they can meet, discuss issues and enjoy spending quality time with their families and friends in a clean and silent natural environment which they are deprived of in the densely populated areas where they live.

### Political Outreach

The project has been awarded with best practices award of the German Government in 2004. The German Government also signalled further support for up scaling the activities in future. The city government of Cagayan de Oro is presently mainstreaming the concept of allotment gardening into its overall city planning and development, which will also use participatory GIS-based approaches to identify suitable areas for further allotment garden sites. This will be supported by a city ordinance that will give tax holidays and other incentives to landowners who make their areas available for allotment gardens.

### Robert J Holmer

E-mail: Robert.holmer@worldveg.org

### Axel Drescher

E-mail: Axel.Drescher@sonne.uni-freiburg.de

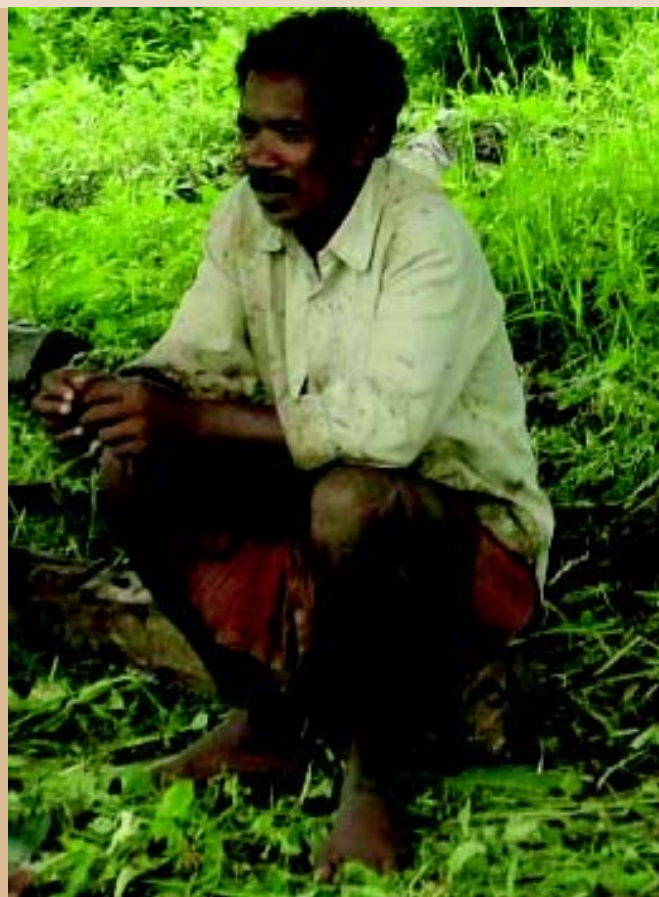
*Longer version of this article first appeared in Christine Knie (ed.) 2005: Urban and Peri-Urban Developments – Structures, Processes and Solutions. Southeast Asian-German Summer School Prog. 2005 in Cologne/Germany, 16-29 Oct, 2005: 149-155.*



# Tricked, trapped and grabbed

## *Farmers experience with eucalyptus plantations*

**Debjeet Sarangi, Bichitra Biswal and Vldy Rivera**



*Apparao Hikoka contemplates the future of his land*

---

*Land grabbing in India takes many forms including expansion of plantation monoculture for carbon sequestration. Private companies are contracting out farmers to grow eucalyptus trees, purportedly as raw materials for paper, with the usual promise of higher income. Hoping it could be a ticket out of poverty, many farmers join the ride with disastrous consequences.*

---

In Sanabrundabadi village, in the district of Rayagada in Odisha, Apparao Hikoka sits by the shade of a mango tree. He looks beaten and bowed trying to recount his unfortunate experience with growing eucalyptus. The 54 year old feels that he had been tricked by a paper company and trapped by its bank accomplice who he thinks are out simply to extract profits from farmers. Though he may still have his land today, he is not sure about its future as it's tied to his bank loan as collateral.

His sad story started in 2000 when people from JK Paper Ltd. (JKPL) and Utkal Gramya Bank came to his farm and approached him to plant eucalyptus. He would earn more from this, they promised. He was given a loan of Rs. 48,000 with 12% cumulative interest, for his two-acre land. But only half of the money was actually given. The other half was deducted against the cost of 8,000 saplings of eucalyptus from JKPL's nursery. He used up the loan amount to buy chemical pesticides and to pay for additional labour to plant the seedlings. He then waited for the first harvest. He got a good return from the first harvest in 2007 - Rs. 65,000.

### **Paddy and millets grown in fields near the eucalyptus plantation had problems with germination**

However, the company took the total returns adjusting it against his loan and interest.

Apparao was appalled. He waited that long but couldn't earn anything. What would he tell his family? How would he feed them? He felt very angry and helpless. Little did he know that it would be the same situation over again in the succeeding harvests. It has been 11 years now. The eucalyptus trees are still growing on his farm, and for Apparao Hikoka, they've been a constant source of heart break. His cycle of indebtedness has left him penniless.

## More farmers getting bankrupt

Four other farmers in Sanabrundabadi claimed to have experienced the same. For them, it was a bigger mistake: the amount they get from eucalyptus plantation is not even enough to repay the loan. The experience of farmers in Sanabrundabadi, is also shared by farmers in at least seven more villages in Rayagada district. JKPL's eucalyptus plantation project covers around 3,000 hectares of land in three districts each in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The districts are Rayagada, Kalahandi and Koraput in Orissa and Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

In the village of Bhatpur, around 20 km from Bissam Cuttack, another eucalyptus farmer, Gangaraj fell from the same promise. He used to plant various types of millets (finger, barnyard) as well as cow pea, pigeon pea, niger and sesame. By growing these crops in one acre, his family was able to meet five to six months of food requirement. This continued till JKPL along with Utkal Gramya Bank visited his village. They promised that with eucalyptus plantation, his income would increase after five years. Believing them, he took a loan of Rs. 12,000 per acre.

As luck would have it, the opposite happened. Out of four acres, he could earn only Rs.40,000 in five years. This translates to Rs. 2,000 per year per acre. With this money, he can buy food (bare essentials and not include animal protein) which would be sufficient for a maximum of one month. Not only did his income decrease but his family's food security also got compromised. Also, he got deeply indebted in five years. He has to now repay Rs. 65,000 towards his borrowed capital plus interest.

## Eucalyptus: the wrong choice

Though a potential industrial crop, many references in the literature point to eucalyptus as an inappropriate inter-crop species in agroforestry systems. This is because it releases inhibitory compounds that adversely affect the germination and growth of neighbouring plants by disrupting their energy metabolism, cell division, mineral uptake and biosynthetic processes.

In Ratatiki village, just a few kilometres from Bissam Cuttack, a couple of farmers reported that their farms have been affected by eucalyptus trees of the neighbouring farms. In one farm, the side closer to the 3-year old eucalyptus trees, germination of finger millets was affected, while the rest of his farm looked healthy. Somehow, his farm looked like a poorly-shaved chin. The farmer explained that this might have something to do with the eucalyptus leaves falling on that side of his farm, inhibiting the growth of the finger millet. In another patch of land where he planted sorghum, it's the same story again.

Down the slope of this rolling village, a neighbouring farmer has a similar story. In his case, not only were his crops affected, his source of irrigation was also disrupted. There used to be a natural spring in his land. It was strong enough to irrigate other neighbouring farms too. In fact, appreciating the volume of water that came out of the spring, the local government installed an electric-operated lift irrigation system. This was four years ago

## Carbon sequestration and the CDM market

In 2005, the Kyoto Protocol was enforced which promoted the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) allowing developing countries to "sequester" carbon, gain credits for it, and trade those carbon credits to developed countries, thereby "offsetting" the latter's green house gas (GHG) emissions. One such CDM is afforestation/reforestation, essentially to incorporate eucalyptus plantation in agroforestry.

Eucalyptus was first introduced in India before the turn of 20th century as a source of raw material for paper. But since 2000, paper mills started considering adding value to the pulpwood plantations as "carbon sinks". In 2004, Veda CDM Company, an affiliate of World Bank's Bio-carbon Fund approached JK Paper Ltd., to contract out eucalyptus plantation under the clean development mechanism. As of July 2011, Veda claims that about 600 hectares of eucalyptus plantations in Orissa are under CDM.

The size of the global Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) market is estimated to be around \$20 billion. India leads the developing countries in this field cornering up to 33% of the total CDM projects worldwide. It considers the eastern states like Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal to have the edge to benefit from it. The projected potential for carbon trading in these states is around ten billion rupees in 2012, with Orissa possibly cutting a share of 2.5 billion rupees.

*Source: "Huge potential in carbon trading for eastern states", Business Standard, 13 August 2007. <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/huge-potential-in-carbon-trading-for-eastern-states/294327/>*

## Though a potential industrial crop, many literatures point to eucalyptus as an inappropriate inter-crop species in agroforestry systems

when he could manage to grow crops 2-3 times a year. But now with water-guzzling eucalyptus plantation near his farm, he can grow only one crop – during rainy season. He survives the rest of the year on wage labour.

Apparao Hikoka had exactly the same experience with water depletion. In the course of 11 years, the natural spring dried up and crops like paddy and millet grown in fields near the eucalyptus trees had problems with germination. But another serious consequence that he realized was that the residual roots of the eucalyptus needed to be destroyed before the land could be used again for other purposes. If not, the eucalyptus roots would continue to grow. With a 4-acre farm, he would need additional labour to do it. But where would he get the money to pay for it, given his bankrupt condition?



Apparao, with Eucalyptus plantation on the background

### Compromising food security

In Majhialama village, farmer Nari Praska used to get eight hundred kilos of finger millet, four hundred kilos of sorghum and one hundred kilos of pigeon pea from his 4-acre (1.6 hectare) land every year. His six-member family could get sufficient nutritious food from this land. He even earned Rs. 2000 from selling surplus grain. Malnutrition or food crisis was never a problem. He owes it to the mixed cropping system that he follows. He never bought food from the market until he planted eucalyptus. Now his family faces four months of food shortage every year. Family members, especially the children, fall sick frequently.

Back in Sanabrundabadi, Apparao Hikoka says he was planting six varieties of millets and two varieties of pulses and oil seeds on his 4-acre land before planting eucalyptus. His harvest from these crops was sufficient to keep his family food secure (food grain and oil needs) for 4-5 months. But, just like Nari Praska, he now buys food for his family from the market.

### Green-washing: neither clean nor green

India promotes “green economy” to provide CDM - a much needed policy framework, as well as generate public acceptability of the carbon sink idea. In essence, it says, “go buy your gas-guzzling car but use our biofuel, go release your GHGs but make sure you buy our carbon credits.” But not only does this scheme create a false sense of sustainability, it also opens up a business opportunity for the companies at the expense of local communities.

Under the CDM, farmers are supposed to benefit from the carbon credits. In the JKPL-Veda-farmer contractual agreement, validated by World Bank, a certain percentage of the carbon credits are supposed to accrue to farmers as additional income. But farmers in at least seven villages in Rayagada district who were “tricked and trapped” (as they described it) to plant eucalyptus, were never even told about their role in carbon sequestration, the credits they could earn, and the income they could receive from it.

Also, under the scheme, it was agreed that the CDM Company receives carbon credit proceeds from World Bank’s Bio-Carbon Fund which will be transferred (at least 80% as in case of Farmer-JK-Veda agreement) to the farmers’ accounts. The revenue share for farmers is expected to range from Rs. 150-200 per ton or about Rs. 5,000-7000 per acre.

In these villages in Rayagada, farmers cannot help but suspect that JKPL might be deriving double profits from the eucalyptus that they are growing – from paper production to carbon credits – and keeping the villagers in the dark about it. CDM companies are supposed to provide relevant technologies and guidance. But farmers complain that they were never told about the negative effects of eucalyptus in agriculture or the environment in general.

### Landgrab of a different sort

When farmers are pushed into bankruptcy and left with seriously depleted soil and water resources that makes growing food difficult, it is no lesser than a land grab. As Apparao Hikoka argues, he may have the land, but it is nothing more than a dead earth. As these farmers’ accounts show, there is nothing which is either clean or developmental in the scheme - whether it’s to make paper or sequester carbon, and it hardly contributes to their economic well-being. As one farmer remarked, the situation they find themselves in by falling into this monoculture trap is a painful, unceasing mental violence that would take them a long time to forget.

### References

“Allelopathic Effects of Four Eucalyptus Species on Redgram (*Cajanus Cajan L.*)”, *Journal of Tropical Agriculture* 39 (2001): 134-138. <http://jtropag.in/index.php/ojs/article/viewFile/50/45>

“Validation of the CDM-Project: Improving rural livelihoods through carbon sequestration by adopting environment friendly technology based agroforestry practices”, *The World Bank, Validation Report*, 21

### Debjeet Sarangi, Bichitra Biswal

1181/2146, Ratnakar Bag-2,  
Bhubaneswar,  
Orissa, India.  
E-mail: living farms@gmail.com.

### Vlady Rivera

E-mail: rivera.vlady@gmail.com

# Fighting for land rights

## *A case of Juang and Bhuyan adivasis in Orissa*

**Duskar Barik**

---

*Land and forest resources are the core of survival for many tribal communities. While fighting for their land rights, Juang and Bhuyan communities in Orissa, are also protecting the forests and the ecology on which their lives and livelihoods depend upon.*

---

**K**eonjhar is one of the poorest districts in Orissa state. It is characterized by dense forests and hills with a difficult terrain. The primary education and health services are almost absent and the villages are not connected by a good road. Juang and Bhuyan are the indigenous communities living in this region. They mainly depend upon agriculture for their livelihoods and the forest for forest based food produce. They have been practicing shifting agriculture from ages, relying primarily on local traditional knowledge. But the introduction of modern agricultural practices has resulted in farmers abandoning local traditional practices, even in these remote areas.

Industrialization and implementation of development projects have had a strong negative impact on these tribal communities, denying their access to land and forest resources. They are losing land for various reasons - the region being rich in huge deposits of minerals like iron ore, quartz, pyrophyllite, limestone, manganese etc., extensive mining activities have made these people landless. The rich and powerful companies take over peoples land by giving fake assurances. Also, it has had a negative impact on the soil, water bodies and the forest, thus affecting the primary sources of livelihood to these communities.

The government has already dedicated entire Joda Block to 48 companies for the mining operation on 30,137,717 hectares of land. Presently, agriculture is not possible in more than 10% of the total land. Similarly, entire Gandhamardan Hill range which covers Banspal, Harichandanpur, Telkoi and Jhumpura Block of the district is under mining at the cost of the thousands of the adivasi families. So the life of the communities who are basically living on shifting cultivation and perennial stream on the hills is affected.



*A protest rally by Juang tribes*

Further, illegal land transfers, commercial plantation activities and extensive deforestation are resulting in landlessness, environmental pollution and community displacement. Farm land is being invested for many non-farm purposes like housing, industry, mining, commercial plantation etc. Besides, the government has allocated agricultural land to the big corporate for steel industry displacing 1600 families in 36 villages.

This has had great impact on various aspects of farm livelihoods. Having become landless, they are also not being able to be employed in industries for want of skills. The gap between rich and poor is increasing due to industrial development in the district. The cost of land is increasing. The huge number of industrial units operating in the district consume lot of surface as well as ground water and this has resulted in water scarcity in the area. The moisture level of the land is also reducing due to reduced green cover on the soil.

Keonjhar Integrated Rural Development and Training Institute (KIRDTI), a grass root level voluntary organization, has been working with the adivasi communities, addressing their livelihood concerns, since 1989. It has been working towards enabling and empowering the poorest of the poor to assert their rights, have better access to and control over natural resources and actively participate in the grass root democratic institutions. By promoting strong peoples organizations, KIRDTI presently reaches 40,000 people in 260 villages of Harichandanpur, Banspal and Telkoi blocks in Keonjhar district.

## Stopping illegal land transfers

Illegal land transfers from the adivasi families to the non-advasis is very common in the area. KIRDTI started legal education camp in the area with the support of district legal authority under district court and district bar association. Being sensitized on the laws related to tribal land transfer 1956 (2), law related to tribal atrocity, women atrocity, forest, revenue, excise etc, the adivasi people expressed their willingness during follow up visit to take steps to get back their recorded land transferred to the village elites. With the support of KIRDTI and the district legal authority, 36 families filed legal cases, and as a result around 24 acres of land were released.

By using land mapping technique, tribal communities were able to identify and claim their rights on land. Around 11581 farmers applied for land rights. Of them 566 farmers were successful in getting their land records in the name of both wife and husband of the family till date. Similarly, under Forest Land Right 2006/07 Act, 1096 families from the project area and 5054 families from the entire KIRDTI operational area have applied for land records. Around 48 village communities have applied for community ownership.

Similarly, 247 cases have been filed by 122 Juang and other Adivasi families of other project area whose land had been taken away by the local elites illegally. Out of the total, 180 cases have been cleared by the revenue court with verdict in favour of the Juang adivasi families. The Orissa state government was planning to amend the Orissa Schedule Area Tribal Immovable Land Transfer Law 1956, schedule (2) with the recommendation of local district level self government institutions of all scheduled districts inspite of the rampant transfer of the land of the Adivasis. However, it was halted by mobilizing the representative of local self government institutions in Keonjhar as well as in 11 other schedule districts of the state during 2006 with the support of other NGOs in the districts.

## Protecting forests, protecting ecology

Sensitization campaign for the forest protection which started since 1996 continues in 120 villages as a result of which the forest is being protected by local communities. The local communities also took the onus of protecting the forests from smugglers. They seized a number of vehicles with logs of wood cut from the forest. They caught the log smugglers in spite of threat from them. For example, the women collective of Sunapenth Panchayat seized logs worth two lakh rupees on 12 April 2008 and handed them over to the local police.

**Around 2,500 adivasis, both men and women, demonstrated a protest against compensatory commercial plantation species like Eucalyptus, Acacia, teak etc which were neither edible nor environment friendly**

## Fighting for their rights

Thirty four year old Fulmani Juanga is from primitive Adivasi community called "Juanga" from "Budhighara" village located on the top of Gonasika hill range. She lives with 8 family members including her 3 children. Her husband had no recorded land. Her father-in-law had mortgaged his only double cropped land for 5 kg rice and 60 Rupees to meet his food needs during lean period 20 years back. So her father in law was living along with his children on wage, forest produce as well as shifting cultivation.

Fulmani Juanga along with 8 other fellow farmers filed case in the revenue court at district headquarter with KIRDTI support during 2004. But owing to administrative callousness they could not succeed.

During 2007, Fulmani was elected as the ward member of the local self-government institution representing her village. During 2008, she along with 5 other farmers filed the land cases again in the district revenue court to get back their land.

On 24th January 2009, the court declared Fulmani and five others as the owners of the land they had claimed. The money lenders had to give a declaration not to occupy the same land again. The court also ordered the local revenue office to hand over the land to the victims. The victims felt very happy for the victory. But the local revenue officer delayed the process of releasing the land. So, Fulmani and five other villagers approached the local revenue officer and demanded their land to be demarcated soon.

The local revenue officers called both the parties and asked the landlord to vacate the land immediately. Although the land lords had sown the second crop they vacated the land to the Adivasi families. Fulmani took over the land with the crop and harvested her first crop during May 2009.

"I have got back my land after a long struggle. We are proud of our land and our life" says Fulmani.

Seeing the success, now some more Juang tribes are slowly revealing about their land they have lost to conspiracy and cheating by the money lenders and will be filing their cases, very soon.

Communities identified varieties of uncultivated food like 16 of roots, 33 of leaves, 46 of fruits, 18 of mushrooms, 5 of flowers and 11 of tubers which are available and harvested from the forest area for consumption purposes. Realizing the importance of the natural forest which contributes to the survival of the tribal population, the communities started protecting the huge diversity embedded in the forests.

## Campaign against mining and commercial plantations

Farmers have also started raising their voice against mining. A campaign against mining survey for lease was started in Budhipada village. Similarly, farmers in Ghugung village of Bareigoda Panchayat and Chutung village of Sunapenth Panchayat started resisting against mining survey. Farmers took a resolution and submitted it to the district administration, demanding the mining survey which was being carried out in different areas to stop. When

## People's campaign against land transfers

The tribal communities in Keonjhar have been opposing the state government's proposal to amend the Orissa Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Property Regulation, 1956 (OSATIP, 1956). OSATIP, 1956 is a provision to protect the interest of tribal people provided under the the Constitution of India, under Schedule V. This law which failed in checking the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals was amended in 2002 making it comparatively effective. Now the new proposal of the state government is to amend this amended law which would facilitate the easy selling of tribal land to non-tribals.

There is a widespread protest by the tribals and civil society organisations in the area. A State level meeting of NGO, Civil Societies and Panchayat Raj Institutions was organised in 2006. A plan of action was prepared in this meeting. A campaign called as "Adivasi Oh Dalit Jami Surakhya Abhijan" was initiated. District level Adivasi leaders Action Committees were formed in each district. Meetings were organized – 7 at the district level, 3 at the block level and 130 at village level. During the last Panchayat election, KIRDTI campaigned on this issue in around 256 villages of 35 Gram Panchayats in Harichandanpur and Banspal Blocks of Keonjhar district. Land transfer regulation policy amendment was included in the election manifesto of Panchayat election.

Future plans include strengthening the mass organisation of the adivasi communities at various levels, sensitization of newly elected PRI members, Resolution at the newly elected panchayat bodies opposing this land amendment and submitting a memorandum to the State Governor and the Revenue Commissioner.

the survey team entered their area, the farmers stopped them from doing the survey. This was followed by police complaints against 80 adivasi leaders and the arrest of three staff members, depicting them as maoist insurgents. The support of people from the surrounding villages forced this survey to stop.

The district forest department had planned to cover 4588 hectares of forest land in the Juanga dominated area under commercial plantation during 2007/08. Around 2,500 adivasis, both men and women, demonstrated a protest against compensatory commercial plantation species like Eucalyptus, Acacia, teak etc which were neither edible nor environment friendly. Farmers demanded that the commercial plantation be stopped, and that records for the land they have been cultivating since their ancestral period be issued. These campaigns were run and managed by the adivasi leaders. Owing to the pressure exerted by the communities, the high level district administrative officers decided to stop the plantation. The whole campaign caught the attention of a large number of people as it was highlighted in most of the daily newspapers.

### Promoting sustainable agriculture

Besides campaigns and protests, tribal communities were also empowered to make sustainable living on the lands they had access to. Opportunities for knowledge sharing and exchange on traditional farming system was provided at the village panchayat, block and district levels. Farmer to farmer learning exchange and

exposure was carried out within and outside project area. Workshops were organised for the farmers, at the block level and the district level, on the importance of organic farming, traditional seed, organic manure usage, and on leadership. The farmers also decided to revive the traditional way of farming to ensure the sustainability of farm practices and food security of the farmers.

With an enhanced conviction and commitment, a few farmers decided to revive the traditional way of farming which their forefathers were following in the past. They first started addressing the issue of soil fertility by increasing the application of organic manure. On the basis of their own experience, and without external support, these farmers also started sharing the benefits of organic farming and the harmful effects of chemical use- with other fellow farmers. Many of these discussions focused on the crucial and important role which the natural forest plays in traditional farming, and on how it helps farming by enabling the soil to hold moisture.

The adivasis have been successful in reviving their traditional agricultural practices. The success stories of local communities are being shared and have spread to neighbouring areas as well. Farmers in the neighbouring areas have shown interest to adopt the process of sustainable agriculture. They have been participating in seed fairs and district level events. The government, on the other hand, does not have any policies for the organic farming. However, the local officials have shown keen interest in this process.

### Conclusion

The Juang and Bhuyan communities today are an empowered lot, capable of addressing issues concerning them. They are taking the lead in organizing learning exchange programmes, rallies, seed festivals, meetings, press meets etc. and have been successful in many instances.

However, there are challenges that need to be addressed. It is still difficult to regain the land being lost by the adivasi farmers illegally since the elites are not ready to give back in spite of court verdict. Nexus between the government and the industry in promoting industrialization and mining is a great threat to the livelihoods of these adivasi tribal communities. Similarly, the protection of the local ecology has slowed down because of the threat from the local police. Another threat comes from the insurgents present in this area which restrict farmers from moving freely, meet or organize training activities.

#### Duskar Barik

KIRDTI, Baldevjew colony, Behind Kashipur School,  
Keonjhar – 758001, Orissa.

Ph: 06766 – 255147; 9777401550

E -mail: kirdti09@gmail.com

# Communities are smart enough to make the right choices

Interview: Laura Eggens



*Since the mid-1990s, the International Land Coalition (ILC) has been working to promote equitable and secure access to land for poor men and women in order to combat poverty and achieve food security. With more than 120 institutional members, the Coalition is committed to amplifying the voices of civil society organisations so that they can contribute to both the international debate on land and to national land processes. Born in Senegal, Dr Madiodio Niasse has been the Director of ILC since 2005.*

Promoting access to land rights has become increasingly important, because the growing global demand for land is increasing the risks of dispossession and the further marginalisation of the rural poor. As Mr Madiodio Niasse explained, “the current food crisis is the result of food supplies not matching the demand, but to a large extent, it is also an issue of inequality of access to the available food and, more generally, to the wealth created. Thus, there is a need to create an environment that is conducive to more equity, particularly in terms of access to land.” Land issues have gained recognition in the past few years, due to awareness-raising efforts by many organisations such as ILC, but more so because of what is now known as the “global rush for land in the South”. According to the ILC Director, “the recent surge of large-scale land acquisitions, or ‘land grabbing’, has served as an eye-opener to the importance of land governance. The phenomenon of large-scale transnational land acquisitions is in fact not new. However, since 2007, we are seeing it on a scale that was unknown in recent decades.”

## What exactly is happening?

There are both pull and push factors. We need to look at both to understand the phenomenon we are witnessing today. Let us start with the pull factors. Why are poor countries opening their doors to foreign investors and giving away their land? In many poor regions of the world the agricultural sector is in crisis. In Africa, for example, it has been weakened by market liberalisation and reduced state intervention. Many developing countries also have poor governance. On the push side, there are many dimensions, but I would like to mention just one, which I see as a key driver of the global rush for farmlands. Highly populated countries in Asia face the loss of arable land (increasingly converted to other industrial, transport and commercial uses) and, more importantly, severe water scarcity. These countries are paying the price of a water-intensive Green Revolution, and their food demand is increasing dramatically, pushing them to look for farmlands abroad as an alternative to depending on an increasingly unpredictable international food market. This adds to the increase in food demand by traditional food-importing countries. In addition, the expansion of agro-fuels and the climate crisis are other important drivers of the phenomenon. This is the context of large-scale land acquisitions, in a simplified manner. One notable aspect is that, for the first time, small-scale farmers and herders are directly competing with powerful international investors for their land.

## The Land Matrix

Since 2009, the different organisations behind the Land Matrix have been systematically collating information on large-scale land acquisitions worldwide. The dataset covers transactions that entail a transfer of rights to use, control or own land through concession, lease or sale, which generally imply a conversion from land used by smallholders or for ecosystem services to large-scale commercial use. It aims to shed light on the six drivers that are contributing to a global rush for land: demand for food, fuel, timber, carbon sequestration, tourism and mineral exploitation. It now includes just over 2,000 deals from 2000-2010. These are cross-checked with data derived from systematic national inventories of land deals based on in-country research carried out by different institutions, alongside the increasing number of postgraduate and commissioned field-based research projects. According to Mr Niasse, "The diversity of our membership means we can show credible data, and this can be used to inform the debates and policy processes at global, regional and national levels."

### Should governments mediate between small farmers and large investors?

I see different types of governments. Some genuinely want to develop the agricultural sector of their country, and believe that the scale of investment they need cannot be found at the national level. They are aware of the levels of poverty and unemployment they have to address, and the riots and instability triggered by food price hikes have made this an urgent issue. I think that where governments genuinely want to develop their own agricultural sector, they need to be supported and advised. They need to be provided with adequate information about the various options for developing their agriculture sector, including (but not limited to) attracting foreign investments. They need to understand that there are alternative investment models that do not necessarily involve them giving away their land. It is essential that governments develop their own rural development strategies to serve their national priorities and the interests of their people. The role of foreign investment should be defined within the framework of such national strategies, which should firmly specify the conditions under which it will be acceptable.

### And what to do in the case of weaker governments?

In these cases you need investor responsibility. Sometimes investors care about their reputation, and have good intentions, aiming to comply with high standards in their business practices and their engagement in developed countries. But these companies are exceptions; for the most investors the opposite is true. Civil society organisations and governments have a role to play to ensure that private companies from their countries behave responsibly abroad.

### If civil society mobilises, what should they focus on?

One of the biggest problems in these large-scale land acquisitions is the lack of transparency. Many deals take place behind closed doors. For an investment transaction to be responsive to the needs of a country, it is at least essential that the terms under which it is being decided are known; that relevant parties are involved; and

that relevant state organs and agencies play their roles openly. The second element is information sharing and evidence gathering. Information generation and sharing is crucial for an informed debate. Frequently, many of the heated debates about land grabbing are based on misunderstandings instead of a radical opposition on the substance of the problem. Often, protagonists simply do not speak the same language, or refer to the same evidence. In the search for appropriate responses, it is crucial to clarify the issues and to generate and share credible information. It is also important that civil society works directly with farmers, herders, and the owners and users of the land. It is very important to work towards securing land rights for the poor, especially for small farmers. This entails securing the commons; protecting the land that is used by pastoralists and indigenous people; ensuring that small farmers have enough land with secure tenure rights and preventing governments from allocating their land for foreign investment. These are all important areas which civil society and farmers' organisations should focus on in the future.

### What is the International Land Coalition doing?

Since its establishment 15 years ago, ILC has been focusing on raising awareness on the need for land reform and securing tenure rights, as well as supporting the advocacy efforts of our civil society members. A number of countries and regions have engaged in reform processes – formulation of land frameworks and laws – and ILC members, supported by the Secretariat, have often played an active role in this. We have supported multi-stakeholder consultations, or the formulation and implementation of laws and regulations in a number of countries. We will do this more systematically in the future.

We also invest a great deal in sharing information. Together with a number of partner organisations we are building a Land Portal, which we hope will become the leading source of information on land issues on the Internet over the next few years. Regarding large-scale land acquisitions, we are working on three levels. Firstly, we have helped a number of our members and partners to contribute information on what is happening, adding to the studies done elsewhere. The second area of work is the Land Matrix: we have recorded all the land deals reported in the press, and now have a database of more than 2,000 land deals (see box). Thirdly, we are supporting an open dialogue. This is because civil society, grassroots organisations, and in particular, farmers' organisations, and the owners and the users of the land, are not meaningfully involved in the current discussions, debates and policy processes related to the phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions and their alternatives. We have started a series of civil society-centred dialogues, working with farmers' organisations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with the aim of improving their understanding of what is happening. We hope that these dialogues will help them be better prepared to engage in the global debates that are currently taking place.

### Is there anything that farmers can do themselves?

Yes, they can do many things. The reason why governments and others are looking for investments elsewhere is because they believe



*Insecure land tenure- one of the constraints for farmers to invest on land*

the level of investment in the agriculture sector is not enough. Governments, like many of us, often forget that the main investors should be the farmers themselves. The obstacles preventing farmers from investing in their land need to be better understood and then removed. Insecure land tenure is one of these constraints. Climate change and the uncertainty and vulnerability it entails is another. Governments could provide water control infrastructure to help minimise climate risks. If the appropriate conditions are created, farmers are more likely to invest in their land.

### **What do you think the future holds?**

I think we are living in a very challenging period and that competition for land can be expected to intensify. China is no longer food self-sufficient and there are clear indications that it will increasingly rely on imports to fill its expanding food deficits. I think that in the coming years India is likely to lose its self-sufficiency and also resort to food imports. Because of the persistent energy crisis more and more land will be used to produce biofuels. Attempts to mitigate the climate crisis will continue to involve more investments in forests for carbon sequestration, sometimes at the expense of farmlands. While the global food demand will continue to grow dramatically, the amount of arable land will be shrinking. It will become more valuable and attract financial investors. In this context of intensified competition, poor countries will be under tremendous pressure to feed themselves, while their land will be targeted by domestic and foreign investors. Small-scale farmers will be at greater risk.

### **You worked before on water governance issues. What brought you to work for the International Land Coalition?**

Although I moved from water to land (and previously from land to water), I remain in the area of natural resource governance. What I think I have learned from many years of engagement in water issues is that what really matters in the end is to ensure that society, when confronted with difficult choices, engages in an open,

inclusive and informed deliberation on the available options before making a choice. My conviction is that any choice made on the basis of a transparent and democratic societal deliberation is legitimate and should be respected, whether it is for or against large or small dams, for foreign or domestic investment, for small or large-scale farms. We should recognise that societies are sometimes confronted with difficult decisions. Take a recent case, which is grabbing the media headlines in my own country, Senegal. A company received 20,000 hectares in a region struggling with poverty, drought and a high level of outmigration. The deal had to be validated by the elected local rural council, which was split into two camps: a camp supporting the venture and another one rejecting it. The dispute turned into violent confrontation within the council, with two deaths and many casualties. When the government decided to suspend the project, the opponents of the project rejoiced and the supporters of the investment (including hundreds of newly hired workers and their families) threatened to organise public demonstrations. The case is still pending as we talk. This example shows how complex and sensitive the situation can be. Decisions should not be taken lightly by any party. The complexity of the problem and the difficult decisions we face in responding to the challenges we are facing makes me modest. I think it is too simplistic to just say, “stop, ban the investment offers”, or “accept them all”. Each case is unique, and calls for unique responses that need to be made by societies through open, inclusive, informed and concerted processes. Communities are often smart enough to make the right choices. Our job is to promote information disclosure and more transparency in land transactions, generate and share evidence, amplify the voices of civil society and farmers’ organisations and support them in playing an active role in local and national land policy processes.



# Our 2P approach

**Jagat Deuja and Bed Prasad Khatiwada**

---

*Land is more than a production resource. In the rural areas of countries like Nepal it determines an individual's socio-economic status, and is therefore strongly related to power issues. Landlessness and insecure land ownership are the major causes of poverty, social injustice and food insecurity. Tackling these issues therefore means influencing policies in favour of more land rights.*

---

Agriculture is the main occupation of two-thirds of the population of Nepal (and 90% of the country's poor). Yet, according to the census of 2001, at least 25 percent of the 4.2 million households do not own land – not even a place to install a hut. Historically, land in Nepal belonged to the state and its rulers, who granted it to supporters, servants or those who pleased and prayed to them. These lands, however, were not empty: there were farmers and tillers living and working there. The new landlords would then give farmers the right to farm, in exchange for the “koot”, or rent paid in cash or kind. In many cases, farmers ended as bonded labourers (such as the “haliya” or the “kamaiya” in western Nepal), while in others they became sharecroppers, sharing at least half of their yields with those who officially owned the land.

## **Rooted at the community**

This overall picture continued, and although a Land Reform Act was passed in 1964, it was not until the 1990s that land became an “issue” in the country's political discussions and that various efforts were initiated. In 1995, the Community Self Reliance Centre (or CSRC) started an awareness programme in the district of Sindhupalchowk, working with landless tillers or farmers. Since 2003, the programme has expanded significantly with the support of ActionAid and other organisations, and now reaches 50 out of the country's 75 districts. Focusing on the strong link between access to land and the universally-accepted right to food, CSRC sees the right to land as the starting point for all its efforts. By empowering poor men and women, CSRC helps them to claim and exercise these basic rights. CSRC's programmes have included capacity building of rights holders (poor women and men); changing and/or enacting policies in favour of the land-poor; developing new and alternative models of land reform; and creating and mobilising agents of change at the community level.



*A protest rally*

**With intensive lobbying and advocacy, land has been included as a major agenda point in the Interim Constitution of Nepal.**

Most of these activities are now co-ordinated by community members in the National Land Rights Forum. This is an organisation run by the farmers themselves, with democratically-elected committees established throughout the country. With committees in 42 districts and in more than 2,000 villages, the forum had almost 100,000 members at the end of 2010. The National Land Rights Forum sees itself as the national organisation for all those working on the land, including the landless, squatters, tenants, farmers, bonded labourers, and all those deprived of land rights. They are the ones who are leading the land rights movement in Nepal.

## **Pressure and partnerships**

CSRC's support is based on a so-called “2P approach”: helping those in the field exert *pressure* and demand their rights, and at the same time working in *partnership* with different organisations and the national government (participating, for example, in the government-formed High Level Commission for Land Reform). CSRC supports the establishment of village-level committees and organisations, and helps them plan their annual programmes and activities on the basis of their specific context, problems and issues. These groups then organise mass demonstrations, exerting pressure at different levels. One of these demonstrations was the “March of 100,000 Landless People” in 2008, where more than 1,200 rural women participated in 14 days of protests in the capital city in 2010, together with the different local and regional programmes of protests. In March 2011, more than 1,000 farmers spent more

than one week in Kathmandu, hoping to capture the attention of the government and the political parties writing the new constitution, to ensure that it would enshrine women's right to land. In all cases, participants have been very motivated by the struggle for their rights. Perhaps the most interesting thing to see is that they not only raise the issues they want to address, but also suggest solutions to solve their problems, putting the rights of farmers and tillers at the centre of every discussion—and even managing the logistics of their efforts.

Simultaneous efforts focused on the development of partnerships have led to the “Strategic Plan for the Land Rights Movement 2009-2013”, in which different development organisations stated their commitment to providing long-term support to Nepal's land rights movement. Drawing on CSRC's “Organisational, Strategic and Operational Plan”, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on January 2009 between CSRC and five partners: ActionAid, CARE, CCO/CIDA, Danida/HUGOU, and Oxfam. The Lutheran World Federation also joined this strategic partnership from 2011. All these organisations agreed to pool the necessary resources (with a “basket funding approach”) in order to promote security of tenure for land-poor women and men through pro-poor land reform. This “Strategic Partnership” has been moving ahead with significant success in terms of recognition by the state, trust by right holders, commitment by development partners and ownership of right holders. The International Land Coalition (ILC) has also supported short-term initiatives.

### Recipe for success

Nepal's land rights movement has been relatively successful during the past few years. Thanks to intensive lobbying and advocacy, land has been included as a major agenda point in the Interim

Constitution of Nepal (which now has a provision to “pursue a policy of adopting scientific land reform programmes by gradually ending feudalistic land ownership”, while at the same time providing that “the State shall pursue a policy of providing a minimum required piece of land for settlement to the liberated bonded labourers...”). As part of its long-term objectives, the country's Three-year Interim Plan 2007-2010 aimed “to contribute to the national economy on the basis on just land ownership and a scientific land management system through implementation of scientific land reform.” The plan also outlined a strategy to materialise these objectives while asserting that the government would formulate appropriate laws and build institutional mechanisms to provide land to the families of landless people, tenants and squatters. One of these strategies was to constitute a High Level Commission, which is already operative. More specifically, the movement has also facilitated the direct transfer of land ownership. By the end of 2010, a total of 13,484 tenant families had obtained land titles to 3,034 hectares of land.

There is still a lot to do. This experience in Nepal, however, makes us confident that working together will lead to even greater results.

**Jagat Deuja** works as Programme Manager at the Community Self Reliance Centre, Dhapasi, Kathmandu.  
E-mail: deujaj@csrcnepal.org

**Bed Prasad Khatiwada** is Theme Leader, Right to Food and Land, for ActionAid International in Nepal.  
E-mail: bedprasad.khatiwada@actionaid.org

*People lead land rights movement in Nepal*



# Development versus Livelihoods

**B Suresh Reddy and T Praveena**

---

*The development of cities has a serious impact on farming, livestock and livelihoods of communities living in the peri-urban areas surrounding the city. To lessen the negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor living in the peri-urban areas, it is necessary that they be involved in the process of urban development.*

---

Urban expansion generally results in the conversion of agricultural lands in the fringe areas to non-agricultural purposes. Such expansion is often associated with positive and negative effects on the population in the fringe areas. In the absence of any regulation, land alienation from agriculture happens much before (with a lag of decade or more) real urban development takes place. The result is that the primary stakeholders (the original farmers and land owners) are ignored, lose their livelihoods and are pushed into menial jobs as they lack skills to get into white-or-blue collar jobs.

Recent years have seen conversion of large tracts of agricultural land for commercial and real estate purposes, particularly around the urban centers. These have a great impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people living in the peri-urban areas. To understand the impacts of development on agriculture and livelihoods of farmers, a study was undertaken in 2005-06 in peri-urban areas, Kondapur, Shameerpet and Maheshwaram of Ranga Reddy district surrounding Hyderabad. This article focuses on the issues in Maheshwaram.

Maheshwaram is a peri-urban area situated around 28 kms from Hyderabad. Consisting of around 3500 households, the livelihood of people in this place has been primarily dependent on agriculture and livestock. Around 500 acres is the net sown area. The main crops grown are paddy, vegetables, maize, jowar, castor and floriculture.

## Shifting land uses

With the rapid expansion of the Hyderabad city, its impact was seen on many facets of life, especially on the prime resource - land in Maheshwaram. The international airport, the proposed Fab city and the concept of Outer Ring Road (ORR) all led to enormous increase in land prices. With the increased demand for land for developmental activities and projects by the government, there was an increase in real estate business, resulting in boom in land

prices. From the year 2004 onwards, there was a steady increase in land prices. Within a span of two years from 2004 to 2006, the land prices per acre increased from 1 lakh per acre to 1.30 crores per acre.

With increased land prices, farmers started selling their lands. Lack of sufficient supply of electricity and lack of access to irrigation had instigated the farmers to sell the land early. Decline in agriculture area started from 2005. Now, almost all the patta (registered) lands with clear titles have been sold out by the villagers. "Vyvasayam koddigananna labamunte, intha thondaraga ammakuntimi" (had the farming been a bit profitable, we would not have sold our land so early), says Kishan of Maheshwaram.

However, not all those who sold could make a fortune out of this land sale. The lambada tribes in the hamlets of Maheshwaram, who own sufficient amount of lands did not sell the lands initially. They were dependent on livestock for their livelihood. So naturally, to meet the fodder needs, they retained the land without selling in the early boom period. This has become a good fetching point for these families which helped them to get the enormous price for their lands in 2006 when compared to what their peers had obtained in the early stages of real estate activity in 2005. Due to early sale, farmers who cared the lands for ages have become relatively poorer when compared to the people to whom they have sold their land.

In the whole process of land transactions, middle men have made huge profits. No wonder, real estate brokering has become a prominent livelihood activity in the area.

All these lands were purchased by the private people for the purpose of construction of offices and apartments. Already 25% of the land has been converted to housing plots.

However, Scheduled tribe (S.Ts) people living in the Nagulthanda, Kothvalcheruvu thanda and Dayalkunda thanda, hamlets surrounding Maheshwaram, still have some lands. These families were more keen on agriculture and did not rush to sell their lands. Also some of the dalit families who were given government lands were not entitled to sell the lands. Therefore agriculture still

## Real estate brokering business and masonry have become prominent livelihoods for many families in peri-urban areas

continues, though on a small scale. In the village, nearly 300 households still have 1-2 acres of land to sell. The remaining land is with the realtors.

### Impact on farming and farm livelihoods

Farming received a heavy blow in the process. Many farmers and agriculture labour were displaced from their livelihoods which they used to derive from agriculture. Now they have chosen new livelihoods. Some households have totally moved out of their previous livelihoods and the others have upgraded their livelihoods according to the demands of the area and opportunity. Hitherto, farming and agriculture labour used to be the main occupation of the villagers of these three study areas. Now farming takes a back seat. Real estate brokering business and masonry work have become prominent livelihoods for the substantial number of families.

The area under farming decreased drastically. Hitherto, Maheswaram village was internationally well known for the exemplary work done in the area of watershed development. This was a great model which inspired many villagers to take up such works in various villages across the state. Now all this has become history. Satyamma, an agriculture labourer says “*Appudu kastapadi bathikinam, ippudu paisa puttuvadi undhikani, bayatapoyi chesukovali*” (Hitherto we had a tough life, now there is more money in the market, but to earn it we need to go out of our village and work).

Peri-urban agriculture offers partial solutions to several problems created by rapid urban growth. Some villagers in all the study areas prefer to sell a portion of their land and construct houses for renting out. They find it as an easier option when compared to farming.

### Impact on agro-biodiversity

The agricultural lands of the study villages used to sport a variety of crops with enormous agro-biodiversity. In 1996, a variety of crops were being grown – Paddy, Jowar, Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), Pigeon pea, Black gram (*Phaseolus mungo*), Green gram, Aargulu (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), Foxtail millet (*Setaria italica*), Field bean (*Dolichus lablab*), Bajra (*Pennisetum americanum*), Little millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), Groundnut (*Arachis hypogea*), Castor (*Ricinus communis*), Finger millet and vegetables. With the changing land use patterns, this has now reduced to 3-4 crops.

In addition to cultivated diversity, there has been a huge loss of uncultivated biodiversity. As per the women of the study villages, these uncultivated greens which used to grow as companion crops

in the agriculture fields are inexpensive sources of many nutrients which are essential for growth and maintenance of human health. Hitherto, women and children of poorer households used to consume these freely available greens which they used to get home while returning from weeding operations in the agricultural fields.

### Impact on livestock

In Maheswaram, hitherto, each family used to have 20-50 animals. But now they are declining. One of the major reasons for the decline in the cattle population is the reduction in common grazing land, which always played a key role in livestock production. “*Meka meyadaniki jagaledhu*” (there is no place for a single goat to graze now) says Hamsamma of backward community in Maheswaram. Common grazing lands in study villages have decreased due to real estate activity, fencing of purchased lands, fallow lands, encroachment, and construction of companies. Coupled with the changing land use, the decline in the area and productivity of common grazing lands will have a widespread change in the composition of the livestock.

### Conclusion

There has been a significant increase in the land prices in the peri-urban areas of Hyderabad due to developmental projects of government. While some landowners benefitted with the steep rise in prices, agriculture and livestock have suffered affecting the livelihoods of agricultural labour and the landless. It is therefore necessary that the poor in the peri-urban areas be made partners in the decision making of developmental programmes aimed at them so that their real needs are met and their livelihoods are protected.

### Acknowledgements

*This paper is based on the larger study on “Sustainable Rural-Urban Linkages: Land Tenure and Rural Urban Water sharing” carried out by the first author while he was associated with Division of Resource Economics (RESS), Humboldt University, Berlin as free lance consultant. We are indebted to the farmers in the study villages, who contributed substantially to this effort.*

### B Suresh Reddy

Associate Professor  
Research Unit for Livelihoods and Natural Resources,  
Centre for Economic and Social Studies, N.O.Campus,  
Begumpet, Hyderabad-500 016.  
E-mail: Srihithasuresh@yahoo.com

### T Praveena

Advocacy Officer, Balasahayoga Project,  
Hyderabad, Care India.  
E-mail: Praveenatirumuru@gmail.com

# Land is more than an asset

*L*ands are those assets, not inherited by our ancestors, but borrowed from our children. This is the basis on which Indian farmers serve as custodians to lands striving to nurture them to be handed over to their children in good condition. After our parents the most affectionate thing for anybody in our country, particularly for farmers is land. It is land that produces food, holds rainwater underground, helps vegetation to grow and produce oxygen for the universe to survive. Land is the pride possession of a farmer, and it is his religion, asset and everything. The relationship and the bondage between the farmer and his land is special. Land is known as “Bhoomatha” (Mother-earth) and is considered the most sacred. This is the reason that the farmers cultivated their lands for food, fodder, fiber besides all the raw materials for industries, not by exploitation, but by nurturing its quality (rich in humus), to be handed over to their children and grandchildren.

I have been farming for the last 60 years, buying and improving my lands, even by sacrificing many of my family’s basic needs. I have grown 2000 trees on my 8 acres of land at Sorahunase, East taluk of Bengaluru. I was always living under a threat that the government at any time may acquire this most beautiful land which was nurtured using all my resources. This land is the source of livelihood for myself, my three sons and their 6 children. Fourteen of us have to earn our livelihoods only from this land, as none of us have other sources of income. In my opinion, land should be acquired by the government only to make roads. But it should not



acquire lands to give away to road builders, as a cost of making roads. Even the lands to be acquired for making only roads (not for industries, SEZ) should be offered at existing market prices, taking into consideration of the land condition and its assets like trees on lands. For no other reason the farmers lands are to be acquired. The industrial parks, SEZs, land banks, new towns should come up along the railway tracks and national and state highways.

The union government is introducing a new bill in the winter session for land acquisition act, which has many clauses to grab farmers land by baiting with economic gains, which do not really benefit the farmer. If the country’s 40% population who are small farmers have to be encouraged and if the administration has real intention of providing food security for this country, then family farming system needs to be encouraged and supported. Family farming will result in stopping urban migration, further preventing problems like urban housing, law and order, formation of more slums, creating unhealthy living conditions etc. Again, if small family farming systems are encouraged in the world over, agriculture production will be economical while bringing down the use of expensive machineries and use of fossil fuels, thereby reduce pollution.

Farmers are being evacuated from their lands which are not just mere assets. Farmers have a strong bondage and relationship with those lands. If the government is really interested in the development of the people, let it impose land ceiling act and acquire excess lands owned by politicians, businessmen, industrialists which are lying uncultivated and give them to farmers whose lands have been acquired for laying roads. The land ownership for farmers should be made their fundamental right and should not be acquired, except for road laying, by providing proper compensation based on market rates.

*Shri Narayana Reddy is a legendary organic farmer and is one of the most sought after resource persons on ecological agriculture.*

### **L Narayana Reddy**

Srinivasapura, (near) Marelanahalli,  
Hanabe Post-561 203, Doddaballapur Taluk,  
Bangalore Rural District, Karnataka, India.  
Mobile: 9242950017, 9620588974



## **Agroecology and Advocacy: Innovations in Asia**

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA); October 2011; available at [www.asianfarmers.org](http://www.asianfarmers.org) and [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

Rising food prices, climate change and food riots have put agriculture high on the international agenda. Too much of the current policy debate focuses narrowly on increasing the volume of food, and assumes that industrial agriculture and biotechnology are the only options for feeding a growing global population. Alternatives do exist. The Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Development and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy have produced a new report documenting successful approaches in three countries – Cambodia, Philippines and Indonesia.

These cases illustrate effective local and national actions. International advocacy is also needed, both to establish the norms that define sustainable agriculture and to influence funding priorities. The Rio+20 Summit in 2012, for example, focuses on how best to define the Green Economy, including sustainable agriculture. New initiatives at the UNFCCC, and by international financial institutions and donors, to address the impacts of climate change on agriculture will also serve to establish the kind of agriculture best suited to confront environmental challenges while feeding the planet. The Asian Farmers Association and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy hope that these studies will contribute to work with allies in the farm, faith and development communities to influence these processes and support agroecology around the world.

## **Facilitating Infrastructure Development in India: ADB's Experience and Best Practices in Project Implementation**

Asian Development Bank, October 2011, ISBN: 978-92-9092-455-5 (print), 978-92-9092-456-2 (web)

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been working in partnership with the Government of India, state governments, and executing agencies to facilitate infrastructure development towards meeting the nation's economic and human development goals. It has supported almost 160 projects across eight infrastructure sectors in over 20 states of the country. During the course of project implementation, ADB has encountered a number of challenges which have been addressed and resolved over time through consensus-based interventions and practices. This publication presents a compendium of such interventions and best practices conceived through joint portfolio reviews and consultations between ADB, GOI, and executing agencies. It is a valuable source of information and guidance for functionaries in infrastructure development and service provision.



## **Gender and Green Governance**

### **The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry**

Bina Agarwal; ISBN-978-0-19-956968-7, Oxford University Press; Hardback; 469 pages; July 2010

Economists studying environmental collective action and green governance have paid little attention to gender. Research on gender and green governance in other disciplines has focused mainly on women's near absence from forestry institutions. This interdisciplinary book turns that focus on its head to ask: what if women were present in these institutions? What difference would that make?

Would women's inclusion in forest governance - undeniably important for equity - also affect decisions on forest use and outcomes for conservation and subsistence? Are women's interests in forests different from men's? Would women's presence lead to better forests and more equitable access? Does it matter which class of women governs? And how large a presence of women would make an impact? Answers to these questions can prove foundational for effective environmental governance. Yet they have hardly been empirically investigated.

In an analysis that is conceptually sophisticated and statistically rigorous, using primary data on community forestry institutions in India and Nepal, this book is the first major study to



comprehensively address these wide-ranging issues. It traces women's history of exclusion from public institutions, the factors which constrain their effective participation, and how those constraints can be overcome. It outlines how strategic partnerships between forestry and other civil society institutions could strengthen rural women's bargaining power with community and government. And it examines the complexities of eliciting government accountability in addressing poor rural women's needs, such as for clean domestic fuel and access to the commons.

### India Development Report 2011

D.M. Nachane; ISBN: 978-0-19-807153-2; Oxford University Press; Paperback; June 2011; 304 pages.

The Indian economy continues to baffle and defy any facile analysis. On the one hand, we see a remarkable success story in India's growth record and macroeconomic stability. On the other, there are fault lines in the reforms strategy that have resulted in growing inequalities, low levels of employment, and agrarian distress. This *India Development Report (IDR)* takes on the ambitious task of a critical assessment of two decades of structural reforms, with some prognostication about the face of the future. This volume, the sixth in the IDR series, examines:

- Food security and agrarian crises
- Poverty and inequality
- Energy insecurity
- Disasters and environmental challenges
- Industrial performance and regional disparities in manufacturing growth
- Role of auditors in governance
- Performance of the telecommunications industry
- Trade liberalization and India's export sophistication
- Capital inflows and policy choices
- Outreach of banking services
- Employment and industrial relations



### Poverty and Social Exclusion in India

The World Bank; ISBN: 978-0-8213-8690-3; Paperback; 188 pages; April 2011  
contact [books@worldbank.org](mailto:books@worldbank.org).

Despite India's record of rapid economic growth and poverty reduction over recent decades, rising inequality in the country has been a subject of concern among policy makers, academics, and activists alike.

*Poverty and Social Exclusion in India* focuses on social exclusion, which has its roots in India's historical divisions along lines of caste, tribe, and the excluded sex, that is, women. These inequalities are more structural in nature and have kept entire groups trapped, unable to take advantage of opportunities that economic growth offers. Culturally rooted systems perpetuate inequality, and, rather than a culture of poverty that afflicts disadvantaged groups. It is, in fact, these inequality traps that prevent these groups from breaking out. Combining rigorous quantitative research with a discussion of these underlying processes, this book finds that exclusion can be explained by inequality in opportunities, inequality in access to markets, and inequality in voice and agency.

This report will be of interest to policy makers, development practitioners, social scientists, and academics working to foster equality in India.

### Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication

UNEP, 2011, ISBN: 978-92-807-3143-9

[www.unep.org/greeneconomy](http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy)

*Towards a Green Economy* is among UNEP's key contributions to the Rio+20 process and the overall goal of addressing poverty and delivering a sustainable 21st century. The report makes a compelling economic and social case for investing two per cent of global GDP in greening ten central sectors of the economy in order to shift development and unleash public and private capital flows onto a low-carbon, resource-efficient path.





## **Land for Life: Securing our common future**

A joint publication of GEF and UNCCD; 2011; 214 pages; can be downloaded from [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org)

The GEF and UNCCD Secretariats collaborated on this new book to convey how sustainable land management (SLM) practices are helping shape a sustainable future for people and the planet. The book is illustrated with high quality photos donated by the Good Planet Foundation and from other sources, to demonstrate how human ingenuity is largely driving innovations in soil, land, water, and vegetation management. It describes how harnessing natural, social, and cultural capital is addressing fundamental needs for livelihood and well-being—food, water, energy, and wealth—while delivering global environmental benefits.



## **Gendered Impacts of Commercial Pressures on Land**

Elizabeth Daley, International Land Coalition; ISBN: 978-92-95093-22-5; January 2011; can be downloaded from the ILC website.

This paper contains a careful and focused analysis of the gendered impacts of commercial pressures on land (CPL), and especially their impacts on women. It is based on a review of the literature on CPL to date and an analysis from a gender perspective of International Land Coalition country case studies carried out in India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda and Benin. Arguing that women are both likely to be affected differently from men by large-scale land deals and disproportionately more likely to be negatively affected than men because they are generally vulnerable as a group, the paper provides recommendations as to how tools and procedures envisaged by proposed regulatory frameworks must be locally appropriate and must specifically address all four aspects of women's vulnerability with respect to CPL: productive resources, participation in decision-making, relative income poverty and physical vulnerability.



## **Land rights are human rights**

Vidya Bhushan Rawat and D.Leena; Social Development Foundation, Delhi, March 2010; can be downloaded from [www.thesdf.org](http://www.thesdf.org)

India is passing through a challenging phase. The atrocities against Dalits, women and marginalized communities are on the rise in the villages. The hunger situation is worsening. Government's own data reveal that over 80% of our population is suffering in denial of basic amenities and earning less than half a dollar a day. While observers, economists may differ with the findings of Arjun Sengupta Committee report, the fact remains that the growing alienation of rural poor is emerging as a big challenge to India as a state.

The Indian parliament passed two historical bills related to rights of the marginalized. One was the forest act which recognized the rights of the tribal over forest produce and understood the need of protection of forest with the active involvement of the tribal and other forest dwelling communities. This was a historic need to bring tribals to national mainstream without offending their sensibilities and cultural autonomy.

The other issue and which is more discussed as a panacea for our anti poverty programme is National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which could be termed as government's flagship programme. However, this has lot of problems and cannot really replace the issue of ownership and land reforms in rural India as the oppression continues and gaps in the implementation of NREGS is wide spread.

## **India's Role in the New Global Farmland Grab: An examination of the role of the Indian government and Indian companies engaged in overseas agricultural land acquisitions in developing countries**

Rick Rowden; August 2011, New Delhi; Produced in collaboration with GRAIN and the Economics Research Foundation

This report explores the role of Indian agricultural companies that have been involved in the recent trend in large-scale overseas acquisitions of farmland. In addition to examining the various factors driving the "outsourcing" of domestic food production, the report also explores the negative consequences of such a trend. It looks at why critics have called the trend "land grabbing" and reviews the impacts on local people on the ground, who are often displaced in the process.



## Women's Right to Land: Voices from Grassroots Movement and Working Women's Alliance from Gujarat

Meera Velayudhan, AKRSP (India) Document, March 2008.

This document traces the journey of WGWLO, the work being done by NGOs and rural women federations in Gujarat at the village level; the struggles they have faced, the strategies adopted to highlight this issue and their efforts to influence state policy.

This document traces two journeys, both of which are separate but interlinked. The journey of an idea to its operationalisation at the field level by the many NGOs and CBOs, and the journey of a network of NGOs which seeks to serve as a supporter of the activities on the ground and an agency to improve policies at the government level.

## NETWORKING

### Land Portal - The gateway to land information

The International Land Coalition (ILC) and Landtenure.info are the originators of the Land Portal, an easy access, easy-to-use platform to share land related information, to monitor trends, and identify information gaps to promote effective and sustainable land governance. This partnership is open to other land-related organisations aimed to be actively engaged in the Land Portal development. The Land Portal will in the first instance, serve to aggregate existing information sources from around the web as well as facilitate the posting of information that is currently not online. The coordinators of the Portal will thereby act as editors to display information in a way that makes it more digestible, through tagging and aggregating it according to country or topic, and summarizing and synthesizing.

<http://landportal.info/>

### UN-Habitat Global Land Tenure Network

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN)'s main objective is to contribute to poverty alleviation and the Millennium Development Goals through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure. The GLTN originates from requests made by Member States and local communities world-wide to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), who initiated the network in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the World Bank, in 2006.

The GLTN has developed a global partnership on land issues, pulling together global partners, as well as many individual members. These partners include international networks of civil society, international finance institutions, international research

and training institutions, donors and professional bodies. It aims to take a more holistic approach to land issues by improving global coordination on land; through the establishment of a continuum of land rights, rather than simply a focus on individual land titling; through improving and developing pro-poor land management, as well as land tenure tools; by unblocking existing initiatives; assisting in strengthening existing land networks; assisting in the development of gendered land tools which are affordable and useful to the grassroots; and improving the general dissemination of knowledge about how to implement security of tenure.

<http://www.unhabitat.org>

### FAO Gender and Land Rights Database

This database, managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), contains country-level information on social, economic, political and cultural issues related to the gender inequalities embedded in land rights. Disparity on land access is one of the major causes for social and gender inequalities in rural areas, and it jeopardizes, as a consequence, rural food security as well as the well being of individuals and families. The database offers information in 6 categories: national legal frame, international treaties and conventions, customary law, land tenure and related institutions, civil society organizations, and selected land-related statistics.

<http://www.fao.org/gender/landrights>

## LEISA India in regional languages

With an increasing demand from our readers for local language editions, LEISA India is now being brought out in five language editions – Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Oriya. These regional editions include translations of selected articles and are published twice a year – June and December.



# Land and Power

Bertram Zagema

---

*The global food system is broken, according to Oxfam's GROW campaign. Land grabs are a horrific symptom of this broken system. This is clearly presented in "Land and power: The growing scandal surrounding the new wave of investments in land", the recently released Oxfam report.*

---

International investment plays a vital role in development and poverty reduction. Investment can improve livelihoods and bring jobs, services and infrastructure when it is managed responsibly within the context of an effective regulatory framework. The recent record of investment in land is very different. It tells a story of rapidly increasing pressure on land – a natural resource upon which the food security of millions of people living in poverty depends. Without national and international measures to defend the rights of people living on and off the land, too many investments have resulted in dispossession, deception, violation of human rights, and the destruction of livelihoods.

In developing countries, as many as 227 million hectares of land – an area the size of Western Europe – has been sold or leased since 2001, mostly to international investors. The bulk of these land acquisitions has taken place over the past two years, according to

on-going research. This recent rise can in part be explained by the 2007–08 food prices crisis, which led investors and governments to turn their attention towards agriculture after decades of neglect. But this interest in land is not something that will pass; it is a trend with strong drivers.

## Trends and drivers

Oxfam's "Land and Power" report discusses the trends and drivers behind large-scale land acquisitions, and looks in detail at five land grabs in Uganda, Indonesia, Guatemala, Honduras, and South Sudan. It aims to help understand the impact of land grabs on poor people and their communities; to identify the underlying factors between companies, local communities, and host governments; and to examine the roles played by international investors and home-country governments.

## Land in Uganda

Christine (not her real name) and her husband tell a story of how they used to grow enough food to feed their children on the land that they had farmed for over 20 years. Christine is one of the more than 20,000 people who say that they have been evicted from their homes and land in the Kiboga and Mubende districts, to make way for UK-based New Forests Company (NFC) plantations. The Ugandan National Forestry Authority (NFA) granted NFC licences for the plantation areas in 2005 and authorised the removal of the former residents. The NFA says that the people living there were illegal encroachers on forest land and that their evictions were justified. NFC maintains that locals left the land voluntarily and that, in any event, it would bear no responsibility for evictions from land licensed to it. The company told Oxfam that these "are solely in the hands of the government" and that, as a licensee, it has "very limited rights and certainly no rights to evict anyone".

NFC's operations highlight how the current system of international standards does not work. There are serious allegations of negative impacts on local villagers, which raise particular concerns given that NFC operations are supported by international investment from

institutions such as the International Finance Corporation and the European Investment Bank, all of which claim to uphold high social and environmental standards. NFC presents itself as a "sustainable and socially responsible forestry company". It has applied for carbon credits for carbon offsetting, and says it creates jobs in rural areas and builds schools and health facilities as part of its community development programme.

Over 20,000 local villagers believe that they have clear legal rights to the land they occupied, and both communities have brought a case before the Ugandan High Court to protect those rights. These claims are being resisted by NFC, and neither case has been finally decided. Further, their legal pleadings refer to an executive order prohibiting the evictions, which they say remains in effect. In two court cases, the High Court considered that the communities' concerns were sufficiently urgent and their arguments sufficiently strong to justify granting orders restraining evictions, pending disposal of the full hearings. However, local communities say that evictions have continued to take place despite these orders. They describe the evictions as anything but voluntary and peaceful.

Some cases tell the story of the alleged forced eviction of over 20,000 people from their lands. Others tell how affected communities have been undermined through exclusion from decisions affecting the land they rely on. In most cases, the legal rights of those affected by the land grabs were not respected. Where alleged evictions have already taken place, the picture is bleak: conflict and loss of food security, livelihoods, homes, and futures. Most of those affected say that they have received little or no compensation and have struggled to piece their lives back together, often facing higher rents, few job opportunities, and risks to their health. The evidence is sadly consistent with many other recent studies on land grabbing.

Home and host country governments, financiers and sourcing companies, the international community, and civil society groups all have a role to play. They must address the failure at all levels to respect human rights, to steer investment in the public interest, and to respond to one of the most alarming trends facing rural populations in developing countries today. Respect for free, prior and informed consent is crucial to good land governance, and essential for poverty reduction.

### Change needed

National governments have failed to protect the rights and interests of local communities and land-rights holders. Instead, they seem to have aligned themselves with investors, welcoming them with low land-prices and other incentives, and even helping clear the land of people. Standards and rules appear not to have guided investments and sourcing decisions. While local communities may find recourse in one or another complaint mechanism, these seem to be underused. Overall, the response of the international community to this devastating wave of land-grabbing has been weak.

The power balance has to shift in favour of those most affected by land deals. The right of communities to know and to decide must

be respected by all involved. Oxfam concludes that there is a clear imperative for action at a number of levels, both to ensure that this structural shift takes place and to remedy the conflicts that arise from the types of deals described here. Considering that members of the public can put pressure on governments and companies to grow justice, and that civil society, media and academia can help to protect rights and foster transparency, the report ends with these recommendations:

- Governments should adopt internationally applicable standards on good governance relating to land tenure and management of natural resources;
- Host country governments and local authorities should promote equitable access to land and protect people's rights;
- Investors operating agriculture projects should respect all existing land use rights, avoid the transfer of land rights away from small-scale food producers, and carry out and be guided by comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments;
- Financiers of agriculture ventures and buyers of agricultural products should take responsibility for what happens in their value chains; and
- Home country governments should take responsibility for acts of originating companies abroad.

**Bertram Zagma** works as Policy Advisor for Oxfam Novib, and is the author of the "Land and power" report. To access the report please go to <http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/land-and-power>), and for more on the GROW campaign, visit [www.oxfam.org/en/grow](http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow) E-mail: [bertram.zagma@oxfamnovib.nl](mailto:bertram.zagma@oxfamnovib.nl)

## Call for Articles

### Greening the economy

*Vol 14 No.2, June 2012*

The coming Rio+20 conference of June 2012 will focus on the importance of "greening the economy". According to UNEP, a "green economy" describes an economic system "that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive." Are these just pretty words to describe an impossible objective? Many civil society groups are sceptical, warning that unless fundamental changes occur, this will be no more than a type of "greenwashing". Others are more positive, thinking that with courage, will and a clear vision, we can change the economy.

As Rio+20 reflects on the developments of the past 20 years, so do we. What have been the changes since the first Rio conference in 1992? Are we moving in the right direction? Throughout all these years we have been reporting on and sharing many successful cases of sustainable agriculture practices and approaches. How successful have we been in scaling them up and broadening their impact? What have been the enabling factors in the larger context? And what are the disabling factors? Who will be the farmers of the future and how will they contribute to greening the world's economy?

Share your experiences reflecting the role of small-scale farmers, both men and women, today. Family farmers have a lot to show, and a lot to say. How to make their voices heard? What message will we bring to Rio?

*Please send your articles to the Editor at [leisaindia@yahoo.co.in](mailto:leisaindia@yahoo.co.in) before 1st April 2012.*



Women marching during a rally in Delhi, 2011

# Jan Satyagraha

## *The people's movement*

**P V Rajagopal**

*In the fight against hunger; we are together*

*It is our struggle; it is our leadership.*

*We are half of the world*

*We should get half of the land*

(voices of poor farmers, men and women, raising against the apathy of the government in providing them secure land rights).

Approximately 70% of India's population depends on land and its natural resources for their livelihood. Without any legal claim to these lands, thousands of people are forced to migrate to urban centers everyday where they are left with no choice but to become wage labourers without rights and life security. Thousands of people in India are uniting to free themselves from the oppressive hold that the land policies of this country have over their lives.

Supporting this struggle is Ekta Parishad, a non-violent social movement in India working on land and forest rights. For Ekta Parishad, land is the key issue, since it provides the possibility for the poor to live a life of dignity and well-being.

Tribals have been increasingly alienated from their lands because of constant displacement. They also lost access to adjacent forest areas owing to the 1980 Forest Conservation Act. This problem got aggravated with hijacking of water resources for the use of industries and large-scale agriculture. Without land, forest and

water, for people (and especially forest-dependent communities such as the adivasi groups) there is little hope to survive on the land. This was the impetus that brought the groups into a larger social formation. Thus, Ekta Parishad evolved as a people's organization in 1991.

Ekta Parishad which started as a loose grouping of NGO training institutes that had created a large base of community development work, today is a federation of approximately 11,000 community based organizations and has thousands of individual members, majority of them being tribals and adivasis. Currently, it operates in 10 states working with India's most marginalized communities (tribals, dalits, nomadic communities, agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers, etc.).

The two main activities of Ekta Parishad are to interact with the government at the state and national level and mobilize the villagers at the grassroots level. Ekta Parishad developed its capacity to mobilize communities to speak on their own behalf and strengthened its base for the larger struggles for land and livelihoods rights.

### **Padayatra, as an enabling tool**

In 1999-2000, the first *padyatra* (foot-march), which traversed from western to eastern Madhya Pradesh (before the partition of Chhattisgarh), was organized. During this *padyatra*, Ekta Parishad discovered that "walking" was an enabling tool, one that allowed the marginalized people to participate readily and with dignity, since it only demanded their physical prowess and not funds or political patronage. The foot-march, like Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha of 1931, was also a way for people to highlight their rights and become visible by attracting the attention of the media, policy-makers and the general public.

The six months march beginning in December 1999 mobilized more than 300,000 people from 10,000 villages. Despite the challenges posed by marching in remote areas, the spirit of the people carried them through 5 regions (Chambal, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, Mahakoshal and Chhattisgarh, which is a state since 2001) of Madhya Pradesh, covering 8,000 villages and more than 3,800 kilometers. Owing to this, around 24,000 grievances were submitted to the state government.

The state government announced the formation of a two-tiered task force; the state level task force was responsible for land redistribution policies and the district level task force dealt with the land redistribution process. It helped to increase the pressure from village to district to state levels, with task forces acting as a monitoring mechanism. The *padyatra* forced the state government to work with Ekta Parishad in 30 districts of Madhya Pradesh and this success brought the strength of other states into the organizational fold. People sought Ekta Parishad strength across the country, including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

For the next four years, Ekta Parishad worked to establish task forces in each district of the state, and saw the distribution of about

### **Understanding a farmer's relationship to the soil**

There are many ways to describe one's own soil. Almost every day I meet people who describe their soil differently. Often I am deeply impressed by people's affection and attachment to the soil to which they belong. Here are a few examples.

Farmers in Andhra Pradesh said - "it took many years to develop the soil as it is right now. Over years we have understood our soil and its behaviour. If you give us another soil, it will take years for us to understand the nature of the soil and adjust ourselves with that particular soil". I was suddenly waking up to a reality that it is not just soil but many years of relationship with the soil that makes someone a good farmer.

A group of landless women in Tamil Nadu have been growing crops by taking drylands on lease. When asked as to why they were wasting their time on dry land, the women said that the many varieties of millets they grow on that dry land serve as food for a period of 6 months in a year. For an outsider, this is just a piece of dry land but for the women this dry piece of mother earth is good enough to provide food, if it can be made available to them.

A group of people in Bastar in Chhattisgarh do not plough their land because they feel putting a piece of iron on the chest of mother earth is not a dignified behaviour. I have also seen many farmers who ask for apologies from mother earth before they put their foot on it in the morning.

It is only through interaction with people who work on soil one can understand the depth of attachment people have for their own soil. The modern world has lost its ability to relate with nature with respect and dignity. The corporate houses that are buying and selling land and builders who are grabbing the land understand only the market value of the land. For them, these are mere resources which can be used for making profit. This profit is used for seeking greater pleasure, again at the cost of nature. On one side, they continue to debate about climate change and sustainable development but on the other side they destroy the very globe on which they are living. Future of the world depends on our capacity to understand this contradiction and apply corrective measures.

350,000 land entitlements. 558,000 charges for forest-violations were dropped by the Forest Department against tribal people, significantly impacting the focus of the state's pro-poor agenda.

After the success of the first *padyatra*, other long *padyatras* were carried out in Bihar (September 2001), Chambal (April 2002), Chhattisgarh (February 2003 and 2005), Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand (September 2003), Orissa (February 2004 and 2005), and Kerala (2005).

### **The land rights campaign intensifies**

Following that first foot-march, about a dozen marches took place in different states of India on various issues. However, they did not have the desired societal impact. It was then decided to hold a national march in October 2007 in the Declared Year of Non-

## High levels of landlessness and deprivation need to be reduced for achieving positive national and global development

Violence. This land rights campaign called Janadesh, or the People's Verdict was aimed at helping the poor gain control over their livelihood resources, especially land, water and forest.

Janadesh brought together 25,000 people representing communities from all over India in an unprecedented social action. This amazing social experiment of the poorest people walking over 340 kilometers to the capital with unparalleled determination was historic. They walked with the knowledge that they had worked for a generation in building up this movement, and it was culminating in one of the biggest non-violent actions since Independence. Support came from all over, with 250 satyagrahis from international organizations showing their solidarity with each step that they took. More than 100 Members of Parliament supported Janadesh, including the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh who announced the establishment of a Land Commission and his plan to redistribute land to the landless communities in the region. The constant media coverage brought the voice of the satyagrahis to people all over the country and social activists pledged their solidarity with the satyagrahis of Janadesh.

In the final hours of the Janadesh, the Prime Minister agreed to complete the "Unfinished Land Reform Agenda", by having a policy formulated and setting up a high level implementation committee. The Government also provided the implementation rules for forest land distribution to tribal people and other forest dwellers.

On October 29th, 2007 the Government of India announced that it would move to get people land rights within the Framework of the Unfinished Land Reform Agenda that had been started after Independence. What was achieved was that the Prime Minister had agreed to chair the newly established National Land Reforms Council that would negotiate through a Land Reforms policy framework that land would be distributed. This policy framework was to be developed by a committee of experts. While it was possible that the government would renege on their promises, there was also recognition that after years of struggle, something new had been achieved at a high level. The mechanism for achieving land reform had the participation from civil society organizations.

### Marching ahead – the Jan Satyagraha movement

After the Janadesh campaign, the Government agreed to formulate a land reform policy and then implement it under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Also, on 9 January 2008, The Ministry of Rural Development instituted a 'Committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reform' which submitted its report to the Government in 2009. Since Janadesh 2007, there have been

### Present Demands

- Land reform policies of October 2009 to be implemented by Land Reforms Council
- Land reform recommendations for Bihar (D. Bandopadhyay) and Land reform recommendations in Orissa (Task Force) to be implemented
- To have guarantees that the Forests Rights Act will be implemented involving the gram sabha (local government or traditional councils) and providing their land entitlement
- All Government Acts and Policies meant to provide assets, entitlement and benefits to the rural and urban poor (including Adivasis, landless, homeless and small cultivators) are to be implemented
- Land Reform laws to be implemented in order that other acts such as Mining Act, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, and Land Acquisition Act, are not in violation with Land Reform laws

dozens of local padyatras that have kept the heat on the administration. Among these have been the Namuetha Urumaimannu ("This is our own land") yatra in Kerala 2010 and the Madhya Pradesh 2010 yatra. But there has been little movement on it so far. Indeed, after the decline of the event's media coverage in the following months, the Government's efforts to follow through on their promises became more and more scanty. Rather than work on the land issue, the government has spent more effort fighting against the legitimacy of social movements. This strengthened the resolve of Ekta Parishad to launch the 2012 Jan Satyagraha March.

The 2012 March builds on its experience of the Janadesh 2007. The Jan Satyagraha 2012 March is based on the Gandhian Salt Satyagraha of 1930. The 2012 March is a disciplined formation of people acting out non-violence in an effort to bring a large number of people together to show the strength of rural India, the importance of agriculture, of food production – as a base for urban India, and to build a common destiny of all people. The people will raise the issue about land, it being a key asset in development and poverty reduction, and that high levels of landlessness and deprivation need to be reduced for achieving positive national and global development.

The people are the main component of the Jan Satyagraha 2012 March. People are being mobilized across the country starting from October 2011. An army of 100000 people are expected to join this march. This march will last one year and will start in Orissa.

The coordination of the Jan Satyagraha 2012 March is being carried out by a management committee. It has already created the structure of the organizational team - 100,000 Padyatris (Foot-Marchers); 10,000 Village Leaders (Dustan Nayaks) – one village leader for every 10 padayatris or 1 village; 2000 Section Leaders (Jathan Nayaks) – one for every 5 villages; 200 Group Leaders (Dal Nayaks) – one for every 10 section leader; 20 Camp Leaders (Shivir Nayak) – one for every 20 group leaders and Senior Leaders.



*Janadesh, 2007 - an unprecedented social action*

Mr. Rajagopal who has been leading the land rights campaign over years, will walk from village to village in 12 states in order to mobilize and involve people in the March. He will gather grievances but also attract media attention for the issues of the marginalized poor. He will finish his walk in Gwalior, just in time for Jan Satyagraha 2012 March, after having covered more than 6,000 kilometers.

#### **Gains till now**

One of the successes of Ekta Parishad's history is that people have found a social space in which they could come together and demand their rights. In normal society, it is not easy or possible for a marginalized person, like a single impoverished woman, or a bonded labourer, to stand up for their rights. Ekta Parishad is guarding democratic space by bringing groups together in a mass organization. It is constantly reminding the government their role in providing people their basic human rights and freedom.

Through these campaigns, people have created a workable form of political action, which is a powerful tool to pressurise government into action. It is not something that has given instantaneous results, but it has shown that in a democratic state, governments always respond when the power is with the people. The success of this historical display of non-violent actions has

given Ekta Parishad a reason to celebrate, but it is very well aware that the struggle is not yet over but has just got strengthened.

#### **P V Rajagopal**

President- Ekta Parishad  
Member- National Council for Land Reforms,  
Government of India  
House No. A2/3, Second Floor,  
Block A, Jangpura,  
New Delhi-110014, India  
E-mail: [info@ektaparishad.com](mailto:info@ektaparishad.com)  
Website: [www.ektaparishad.com](http://www.ektaparishad.com); [www.jansatyagraha.org](http://www.jansatyagraha.org)