

## Declaration for Collective Action

We have gathered in Santa Cruz this week to expand our knowledge and understanding of the relationship between land and poverty reduction, and renew our collective commitment to finding ways to increase secure land access by poor men and women and marginalized groups. Based on our exchange over the past four days, and on our interaction with representatives of the Bolivian government, civil society groups including farmers and indigenous peoples' associations, private sector and social movements, several priority themes have emerged.

First, land is a point around which there are many complex social, economic, cultural and political relations. The same territorial space can have very different meanings to different people and groups. Indeed, the theme of this assembly - *La Tierra Es Vida* (Land is Life) - reflects the idea that land is more than simply a productive asset or locus for investment, just as there is more to life than economic production.

Second, access to land and control over natural resources by itself cannot eradicate poverty. From just an economic perspective, we generally acknowledged that land is only one of many assets needed for production, and must be accompanied by access to credit, fairly priced inputs, training and extension services, and markets. These are prerequisites for land reforms to yield results and for land resources to be used equitably, efficiently and sustainably.

Poverty, however, is the manifestation of more than just a lack of economic assets. It is also linked closely to exclusion from political processes, basic services such as health and education, and the marginalization of one's culture and own identity. Land reform must therefore go hand-in-hand with improvements in these other basic sectors, as well as changes to power structures within societies and between nations.

Third, eradicating rural poverty must account for the relationships that rural people have with urban areas. Where land access does not exist, migration to cities increases urban poverty and can even exacerbate urban violence. This flow of "landless refugees" now extends across national borders. Stronger links between rural areas, on the other hand, can contribute to regional development and complement improved access to land by rural households.

Fourth, while land access and control is important for rural peoples to affirm their local institutions and identity, this should not be interpreted as a lack of desire for change. Secure land rights may take a variety of different forms and, when accompanied by other basic services and citizenship rights, can unleash the creative capacity of poor men and women to transform their own lives. Culture is both a right and a force for change. The resistance to change that contributes to poverty and hunger is often found within decision-making institutions.

Securing women's land rights must be part of any land reform. While women are primary agricultural producers and users of natural resources in many parts of the world, they are regularly denied land rights and access to basic services through discriminatory laws, social and cultural practices, and political and administrative processes. Where HIV/AIDS is prevalent, distress sales and a lack of inheritance rights can cause women to lose their land, just when they and their families need it most. Intergenerational equality is also a concern for both girls and boys.

There is a need for the Land Coalition to ensure that diversity of viewpoints on land and its role in development are not only voiced, but also listened to. At the country level, civil-society members and partners are called on to find creative ways to involve rural people directly in decision-making, strengthen peoples' organizations, and generate the analysis needed for sound policies. Our intergovernmental members and partners are called upon to leverage their relationships with governments and other donors to ensure that land access is a priority on national development agendas, and that democratic mechanisms are in place to determine their contents.

International agreements concerning land access provide a starting point from which actions by governments – in both the South and the North – could be assessed. The Land Coalition calls upon governments to concretize their international commitments through national laws and policies, so that the land rights provided for in global conventions are promoted, protected and fulfilled. To support this, it is necessary for the Land Coalition to develop means for making fair and accurate evaluations of how or whether governments are meeting their international commitments.

In order to foster links between local, national and international processes, the Land Coalition needs to broaden as well as deepen its network. In broadening, the Land Coalition should find ways to better include farmers and peasant organizations, other rural peoples' associations such as those of fishers, women, indigenous peoples and pastoralists, and institutions that work with the urban poor. In deepening, the Land Coalition's relations should be enhanced with the country and regional offices of intergovernmental members, and with civil-society groups by working through regional and national networks that are already partners with the Land Coalition.

Finally, we must remember that the strength of the Land Coalition lies in its members and partners. Organizations in the Land Coalition's network each have different expertise, skills, and spheres of influence - resources that allow us all to make valuable contributions to our mission. Active communication and exchange of ideas and information between members and partners, with facilitation by the Land Coalition secretariat as needed, should be the cornerstone on which our collective action is based.

*Declaration by participants to the Land Coalition's 2005 global assembly, representing civil-society and intergovernmental organizations from 30 countries around the world.*

*Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 23 March 2005*

