

Land Policy Series 1

# The FAO and its work on land policy and agrarian reform

Sofia Monsalve Suárez



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# The FAO and its work on land policy and agrarian reform

By Sofia Monsalve Suárez

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## 1. Historical introduction

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was founded on 16 October 1945 in Québec (Canada), based on an agreement initially reached by the governments of the 44 countries. The central objective of the founding governments was to eradicate hunger; this is still the aim of the 190 countries that currently make up the organisation. To meet this goal, the FAO offers services to developed and developing countries. It also plays a role as a neutral forum in which agreements are negotiated, and the policies of the various governments are debated. The FAO member countries meet periodically, once every two years, to discuss the organisation's activities, the budget, and other issues. For the years 2006 and 2007, the members of the FAO assigned \$767.5 million to cover the organisation's costs at a global level.

An analysis of the evolution of the FAO's activities as a global organisation over the years reveals how contextual changes have, as is to be expected, influenced the work done by the FAO. If we begin with the founding of the organisation and its first years of operation, immediately following the Second World War, its work was primarily focussed on providing food to the undernourished in Europe and Japan, and on reconstruction in those regions of Europe directly affected by the Second World War.

The 1960s presented new challenges for the FAO, as those countries still subject to colonial rule gained independence. The FAO supported the fledgling states, offering financial and technical assistance to facilitate the creation of the necessary institutions and infrastructures. With the birth of these diverse new states, the FAO and the UN system in general experienced rapid growth throughout the decade. This quantitative development can be clearly perceived in the creation of new entities within the UN framework. Several of these are of considerable interest to a study of the progress of the FAO, including the World Food Programme (WFP) founded in 1963, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) founded in 1965 and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 1977, among others.

Viewed from an historical perspective, FAO activities around land policy and agrarian reform can be divided into the following periods, as defined by Akram-Lodhi, Borras and Kay (2007): the post-war period until the end of the 1970s; the transition period of the 1980s; and the period beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present day.

The first period, from 1945 to the end of the 1970s was the most intense, in terms of the scale and variety of activity related to land policy and agrarian reform, in the world in general, and in the FAO in particular. The 1945 FAO Conference<sup>1</sup> highlighted the need for agrarian reform as a means to economic and social progress, and bringing an end to land tenancy systems characterised by inadequate distribution of land, large terrains being put to little agricultural use, exploitation of labourers and extensive rural poverty. Issues such as the study of land tenancy systems, development and conservation of soil fertility, and statistics about land tenancy were identified as relevant to the work of the FAO (FAO, 1945). In 1947, there was a branch within the Agriculture Division dedicated to land use. This branch later became the Water and Land Development Division of the Agriculture Department. The first years of this Division's work were focussed on collecting data, exchanging information and advising governments. Later, its operative fieldwork capacity increased. By 1968, it was responsible for a third of the FAO's field programmes (Phillips, 1981). The Rural Welfare Division was also created in 1947 and was to pass through a number of organisational transformations over the years (Rural Institutions and Services Division, Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division, Rural Development Division). This division also dealt with issues of land tenancy, settlements, rural institutions, agrarian reform, education and extension services, credit, co-operatives, rural sociology, etc. One of the principle objectives of this division has been the inclusion of the more marginalised rural groups in development, training them to participate in the processes and decisions that affect them. Its activities have been characterised by the use of a concept of integral rural development, dealing with different institutional, social and structural aspects.

In terms of the policy approach promoted by the FAO in land policy and agrarian reform throughout this period, probably the most characteristic document is the UN/FAO study, produced at the request of the UN General Assembly and published in 1951. The principal aim of the study was to identify the defects in agrarian structures that were obstructing economic development in food production (UN, 1951). The defects identified included the economically inappropriate size of estates (in the form of small holdings or vast estates) in many parts of the world; the concentration of land ownership in vast estates which did not allow the occupants or agricultural labourers to make a living from their work; the insecurity of land tenure, including the land tenure of tenants, because of the lack of appropriate provisions about titling; inadequate provision of agricultural credit and exorbitantly high interest rates; and inadequate fiscal systems. Among the measures recommended to overcome these obstacles, the report highlights the context in which certain reforms may be

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<sup>1</sup> The FAO conference, which meets every two years, is the organisation's supreme governing body and deliberative space.

introduced without having to affect the socio-economic structures of a society. These might include the consolidation of very fragmented forms of land tenancy (small holdings), the registration of land and water rights, the provision of long-term credit at reasonable rates of interest, the fairest and least onerous fiscal reforms, and the reinforcing of rural education and advisory systems. In other contexts, where social and economic problems were more pressing, the reforms would have to be more profound. In general, this meant the redistribution of land from large landowners to farmers. The hope was expressed that agrarian reforms that alter income distribution and increase agricultural production would permit industrial expansion by generating consumer capacity and creating their own market. In this sense, the reform of defective agricultural structures becomes key to economic and social progress.

Based on this study and the resolution issued by the UN Economic and Social Council in its 13th session, in which it calls on the FAO to take a leading role on the issue of land reform, the 1951 FAO Conference took the challenge, called attention to the fact that reform of agrarian structures is not only crucial to economic development, but also for freedom and human dignity, and urged the Member States to reform their agrarian structures. The measures the Conference resolved to take included:

- Increasing available information about land tenancy and related topics with the aim of analysing this information and making this analysis available to Member States.
- Revising the FAO's work programme to give greater priority and integrated focus to all projects in the different divisions related to agrarian structural reform.
- Technically advising countries prepared to make reforms, including land tenancy, agricultural credit, agricultural cooperatives, extension services and rural industries.
- Promoting the use of Expanded Technical Assistance Programmes for the ends of agrarian reform.
- Creating regional centres for training and exchange about land problems (Brazil, Thailand and Iraq).
- Seeking cooperation with other international organisations including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to

deal with issues related to the internal and external financing of agrarian reforms.

This intense level of activity within the FAO continued throughout this period. Among the main initiatives were the Working Group formed in 1953 on methods for the consolidation of small holdings, the comparative studies of land tenancy systems between 1962 and 1963, the World Conference on Agrarian Reform in 1966 jointly organised with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Special Committee on Agrarian Reform created in 1969. In 1963 the first issue of the publication *Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives* was produced, with M.R. El-Ghonemy among its co-founders. This journal continues to be one of the most outstanding publications on the topic worldwide.

In terms of emphasis, it could be said that the UN/FAO study of defective agrarian structures emphasises the economic rather than the socio-political justification for agrarian reforms. One might even go so far as to consider them more in line with reforms within a capitalist framework (Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, the Latin American reforms within the Alliance for Progress). It is interesting to observe that the directors of the Land and Water Development Division all came from the United States between 1947 and 1965, and the directors of the Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division were almost all of Anglo-Saxon origins, from the US, New Zealand, the UK, Canada, India and Denmark, between 1947 and 1972 (Phillips, 1981). In general terms, the United States had an overriding political influence during the first decades whereas the Soviet Union was absent in building the organisation (Marchisio and Di Blase, 1991).<sup>2</sup> China, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary suspended their membership in the early 1950s and rejoined between the late 1960s and early 1970s. Unfortunately, the author could not access documentation about the field projects and consultancy provided by the FAO during these years. Nevertheless, FAO publications seem to indicate that they supported different kinds of agrarian reforms, that is to say, also those reforms carried out within socialist frameworks (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vietnam, Cuba, Ethiopia) and/or the reforms whose socio-political motivations come either from processes of independence from colonial rule (Mozambique, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Zaire), or peasant revolutions (Bolivia, Mexico) (Cox et. al., 2003).

As explained in detail by Marchisio and Di Blase (1991), in the first decades, the role of the FAO was defined by the member states as international co-ordination of independent

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<sup>2</sup> The Soviet Union was never a member of the FAO, although they attended the founding conference in Quebec (Phillips, 1981).



national actions following a quasi-normative (non-binding recommendations) strategy. In line with this understanding, since 1949 it was stipulated that technical assistance was only to be provided with the agreement of the government concerned and that the nature of the assistance was to be defined by the government requesting such services and should not be a pretext for economic or political interference in domestic affairs. Marchisio and Di Blase state that for agrarian reform this meant that the FAO concentrated its activities on areas that were unlikely to be contested by member states (for example, agro-technical practical advice, technical assistance, and training and dissemination of know-how) given the fact that agrarian reform is a highly politicised issue under individual government jurisdiction (1991: 36).

Without a doubt, the culmination of all the FAO's initiatives and efforts in the 1960s and 1970s was the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) held in Rome in July 1979. In the words of the Director General of the FAO at that time, Edouard Sauoma, the FAO hoped that the conference and its plan of action would become a point of inflection in the history of humanity and the fight against poverty (FAO, 1981). The conference's Declaration of Principles mentioned, among others:

- The principles of human dignity, social justice and international solidarity;
- Individual and social improvement, the development of endogenous capacities and increased quality of life, particularly for the poorest people, as the fundamental aims of development;
- The right of each state to exercise complete and permanent sovereignty over its natural resources and economic activities;
- The use of foreign investment of transnational corporations, for agricultural development of developing countries in accordance with national needs and priorities;
- The need to redistribute political and economic power, completely integrate rural areas into national development efforts, expand the rural population's possibilities for employment and income and encourage the development of peasant associations, co-operatives and other forms of autonomous and democratic organisation of primary producers and rural workers in order to achieve national progress based on growth with equality and participation;

- The duty to make the utmost effort to mobilise and effectively use internal resources for rural development;
- Respect for ecological balance and environmental conservation in the fair distribution and efficient use of land, water and other natural resources.
- That the policies and programmes effecting rural and agrarian systems should be formulated and implemented with the clear understanding and the complete participation of the entire rural population, including the youth, and their organisations at all levels; and that efforts at development should respond to the diverse needs of different rural groups;
- That women should participate and contribute on an equal footing with men in the social, economic and political processes of rural development, as well as fully share in the improvements in living conditions in the rural environment;
- Constant vigilance must be maintained to ensure that the benefits of agrarian reform and rural development are not neutralised by the reaffirmation of old forms of concentration of resources in private hands, or by the appearance of new forms of inequality;
- Reinforcing international cooperation and the increased flow of financial and technical resources for rural development.

In general terms, the declaration of principles and the WCARRD's programme for action, known as the Peasant Charter, treat rural development as a global problem that should be simultaneously tackled on different, interrelated fronts: the actions of rural institutions at a local level, the reorientation of national development policies, and the establishment of a New International Economic Order across the world (FAO, 1981).

The Peasant Charter is different from the UN/FAO study of 1951 in that it gives more space and relevance to the socio-political justifications for agrarian reform, going so far as to argue for these kinds of reforms on an international level, as they were discussed in the 1970s within the framework of the non-aligned countries in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, searching for alternatives to the Bretton Woods system and conditions of trade and finance for fairer and more just development for the countries of the South, which had recently become independent of European

countries (Bhagwati, 1977). As Marchisio and Di Blase (1991) outline, WCARRD was part of a major attempt to re-organise and re-orient the FAO in line with the demands of developing countries from a cooperation-approach based on supplying countries in the South with advanced technology, machinery, fertilisers and pesticides towards long-term criteria and structural socio-political changes concerning the elimination of food dependence, resource conservation and the participation of rural masses in development. Finally, it is noteworthy that the Peasant Charter was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979.

### **THE TRANSITION PERIOD OF THE 1980S**

The 1980s began for the FAO with the impetus of wanting to implement the Peasant Charter. For the first five years, the FAO aimed at collecting \$20 million of extra budget resources through voluntary contributions, as well as revising its work plan in accordance with the priorities established in the Peasant Charter and mobilising existing personnel and resources to support the Charter's implementation (FAO, 1979). Within the framework of the WCARRD, the FAO supported 25 high-level inter-agency missions for the formulation of agrarian reform and rural development policies. The FAO also promoted meetings and consultations, and provided technical assistance (Cox et. al., 2003). Nonetheless, the four reports prepared by the FAO on the progress made in the application of the WCARRD plan of action in the member states show that the advances were minimal and a rise was even registered in the total number of rural poor in the period 1980-87 (FAO, 1991). There was also a notable fall in the number of publications produced by the FAO in the period 1980-89, compared with the preceding period 1970-79: from 286 to 176 (Herrera et. al., 1997). The paradox of the 1980s for the FAO is that the Peasant Charter arrived just when international conditions had begun to change in ways that sidelined the issue of agrarian reform. Among these conditions were the external debt crisis that began in 1982 and brought with it the politics of structural adjustment, imposing massive limits on public spending on many developing countries; the general crisis in agriculture, and the politics of agrarian reform in particular in the sense that they were not giving the expected results, in either capitalist or socialist contexts; the Green Revolution and its technological advances which suggested that the problem of hunger and rural poverty could be resolved through technological innovation; the ebb of peasant struggles and national liberation movements; and finally, the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of the decade (Akram Lodhi et. al., 2007). These conditions also meant that the UN development agencies lost resources and influence in the Bretton Woods institutions and regional development banks that came to assume the functions of development agencies. This loss of influence and resources particularly affected the FAO (FAO 2007b: para. 184-203).

## FROM THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT DAY

The reorientation of the FAO's policies can be traced to the World Food Summit (WFS), held in Rome in 1996. Although agrarian reform is mentioned in its action plan as one of the principal policies for combating poverty and food insecurity, the document shows evidence of and acceptance of the neoliberal critique of state-led agrarian reform, by emphasising legal reforms to the judicial framework for reinforcing property rights as a way of stimulating investment (Binswanger and Deininger, 1999).<sup>3</sup> The Action Plan also confirmed the agenda of liberalising agricultural trade within the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and a food security strategy based on trade, as expressed in the fourth commitment of the Action Plan (FAO, 1996a).

In 1997, the FAO decided to abandon the mechanism of producing specific and periodic progress reports on the implementation of the Peasant Charter, and resolved instead to include reports on this in the reports submitted on the WFS Action Plan (FAO, 1997).

Perhaps the most explicit document demonstrating this reorientation of the FAO's policies are the articles published by members of the Land Tenure Division in 1997 and 2000 (Herrera et. al., 1997; Ridell, 2000). In these articles the authors list the failings of past state-led agrarian reforms, they highlight the failure to bring an end to poverty, the inability of subsidised extension services to benefit the beneficiaries of agrarian reform, the high costs of the regularisation and distribution of land, the inability to guarantee security of land tenure, owing to the absence, or inadequate functioning of registry offices and registers, among other things. Faced with the failure of the statist approaches, the FAO sees many of its member countries in the process of redefining the role of the state in the new political and economic conditions created by structural adjustment reforms. The FAO member states sought the support of the FAO in the application of market-based land policies, for example reinforcing land markets and distributing lands via the market, as was the case in Columbia in 1994 (Ibid). Faced with these profound changes, the FAO in these articles, visualises its role in land politics and agrarian reform as contributing to the reform of public institutions and the creation of private institutions, with a view of promoting competition and removing the obstacles to investment in land; improving land valuation and taxation systems; reforming and modernising cadastral and registration systems; modernising and

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<sup>3</sup> Objective 1.2b of the Action Plan says, for example: "Establish legal and other kinds of mechanisms, as appropriate, that allow advances in land reform, recognise and protect rights to property and the use and usufruct of water, in order to improve access for poor people and women to resources. Such mechanisms should also promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (such as land, water and forests), reduce risk and stimulate investment" (FAO, 1996a).

improving systems of collecting and processing geo-spatial information; guaranteeing the necessary legislation for these policies; analysing in depth the function of the land and land rent markets.

A more detailed analysis of the policies currently being applied by the FAO is presented in the next section.

## 2. The current work of the FAO

### **PRINCIPAL MOTIVATIONS**

Based on international commitments created through the WFS and the Environment Summit in Rio, in 1999 the FAO adopted a strategic framework to guide its action for the period 2000-2015 (FAO, 1999). This document identifies three principle and interrelated goals: contribute to the reduction of hunger; attaining sustainable agriculture and rural development; and the conservation, improvement and sustainable use of natural resources in order to guarantee food and agriculture. The question of land is intimately related to these three goals, and it is from them that the justification and the mandate of the FAO to work in this field are derived. It is interesting to observe that the FAO's official motivations for working on land issues present surprising continuity from its founding to the present day. The changes that have taken place are to be observed, above all, in the focuses and contexts deemed necessary for meeting these goals.

As well as outlining the principle goals, the strategic framework analyses the current context in which the FAO must act. It is described in the following way:

- Greater emphasis on the principal function of the State being the provision of a normative and regulatory framework that favours sustainable development
- Continuation of the globalisation and liberalisation of trade, including the trade of agriculture and food

- Growth in the number of countries in the middle-income group and greater importance given to regional and sub regional groupings
- Persistence of poverty and growing inequality: an increasing gap between rich and poor
- The continued risk of complex emergencies related to catastrophes
- New demands on agriculture, fishing and forestry in increasingly urbanised societies
- Changes in eating habits and growing public awareness of food and environmental issues (safety and quality of food)
- Growing pressure on natural resources and competition for their use
- Constant progress in technological research and development and persistent inequality in terms of access to its benefits
- Growing impact of information and communication technologies on institutions and societies
- Changes in the nature and composition of funds for agricultural development
- Changes in the function and public perception of the United Nations system

In response to this contextual analysis, the strategic framework formulates the principle strategies that will guide the FAO's work. Land policies are relevant to three of these strategies:

- Contribute to the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty, promoting the means of sustainable subsistence in rural areas and fairer access to resources. Within this framework, the FAO will support efforts to reinforce local institutions and promote policies and legislation that aim for fairer access for both women and men to natural resources (particularly land, water, fishing and forestry) and to the relevant economic and social resources.

- Promoting, producing and reinforcing regulatory frameworks and policies for food, agriculture, fishing and forestry. The FAO will provide specialised legal and technical advice about land tenure and rural institutions as a way of responding to the emphasis placed on state functions to establish the regulatory frameworks that favour sustainable economic growth and the mitigation of poverty.
- Supporting the conservation, improvement and sustainable use of natural resources for food and agriculture. Faced with the challenge of finding an appropriate balance between conservation of natural resources and their sustainable use, the FAO will promote integrated zoning systems for natural resources (including land) that are at the same time economically viable, ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate. Special attention will be given to reinforcing mechanisms for resolving conflicts around the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources and water and land for agriculture.

It is important to take a moment to examine both the contextual analysis and the strategies laid out in the strategic framework because they more clearly reveal the FAO's current motivations when dealing with the issue of land.

Firstly, attention is drawn to the emphasis on the regulatory function of the state, and the resulting emphasis on the regulatory and legal frameworks governing land tenancy, access to and use of land. This emphasis on the regulatory function of the state is part of the redefinition of the role of the state – a result of neoclassic economic theories, which later came to be known as neoliberalism (Friedmann, 1962). Other state functions, such as the redistribution of resources or the direct provision of public services, recognised by other theoretical frameworks, have been set aside. As we will see below, although the FAO is working on the issue of land redistribution, in the last decade they have not published a single policy document that discusses in theory and practice the issue of land redistribution giving guidance about policies and instruments for this purpose, whereas they have published a number of policy documents on issues related to land administration. One possible reason why the issue of redistribution is not given priority could be the fact that the high concentration of land is only perceived as a central problem in some regions and countries of the world, and not as a generalised problem. Reforms to the administration of land, on the other hand, to increase the security of land tenure as an incentive for economic growth and investment; or in countries making the transition from socialist to market economies; or for motives of sustainable environmental management, have been on

the agenda of almost all developing countries in the past decade. As mentioned above, the FAO's character from its origin has been of mere international coordination among independent national states with quasi-normative competence. This means that the organisation does not have any binding powers on its own to claim compliance with certain standards from Member States. Unlike other multilateral organisations, the FAO neither has mechanisms of conditionality, which make it possible to impose policies on member countries. To a large extent then, the Member States determine the organisation's priorities, focuses and tasks. It could therefore be said that the FAO has always accompanied the dominant trend in land policy among its Member States, and that it acts more in a reactive way, rather than defining the agenda.<sup>4</sup>

A systematic examination of the motivations and decision-making processes with regard to land policy within the FAO is outside of the scope of this study. For future research it would be interesting to study the different variables that could shed light on the decision-making process, for example the role of its high ranking officials (their ideological background and political interests), the informal networks of government officials and multilateral organisations that share political visions, schools of thought, etc.; the role of the different governments and how they exercise their influence in the FAO; and the interaction with other multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD and others.<sup>5</sup>

The document that reveals most about how the FAO analyses the lessons of past agrarian reforms, and how it defines its role in the present circumstances, was produced by members of the old Rural Development Division (Cox et. al., 2003). The table quotes the lessons collected in this document.

On the role of the FAO in agrarian reform, the document asserts that the persistence of rural poverty and landless communities in the majority of developing countries, as well as growing social unrest in rural areas means that the FAO continues to receive a large number of requests from member states seeking consultancy and assistance on the issue. Owing to its longstanding experience in this field, the FAO considers itself well equipped to offer assistance in situations of potential conflict, and it has the comparative advantage of being perceived as an 'honest broker' by governments, civil society organisations and decentralised institutions (Cox et. al., 2003: 25).

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<sup>4</sup> Commenting on the difficulties to implement the principles for national and international action set by WCARRD, Marchisio and Di Blase interestingly note: "It would appear, therefore, that the legal framework for agrarian structures, the institutional man/land relationship, property, and land use and exploitation continue to fall essentially under each State's domestic jurisdiction. The real threat to continued exclusive State sovereignty in agrarian matters is probably the concept referred to as 'the international law of human rights' (1991: 101, 102).

<sup>5</sup> Thanks to Paolo Groppo, member of the FAO's Land Tenure Service, for identifying of these variables in an interview with the author in March 2007.



**Table 1: FAO's Agrarian Reform Lessons Learned**

<p><b>Lesson 1:</b></p> <p>Good governance and the rule of law correlate closely with the successful implementation of the process.</p>	<p>“The rule of law needs to prevail throughout the process. Measures to reduce the inherent instability and uncertainty that accompany profound social change should be enacted decisively. Social mobilization, which is necessary to maintain momentum and political support of such changes, should be kept within rational limits. [...] Moreover, good governance and effective state apparatus are required for successful implementation. [...] Among the most important [factors] were political will and good governance (limited corruption and rent-seeking behaviour in the implementation of the reforms). Similarly, it is essential to establish suitable institutions to resolve land conflicts.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 2:</b></p> <p>Non-biased macroeconomic policies are crucial to the successful implementation of an agrarian reform.</p>	<p>“[...] the overall macroeconomic conditions, especially those affecting interest and exchange rates, and including promotional policies for agricultural production, are essential for the success of the agrarian reform process.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 3:</b></p> <p>Land redistribution needs to be coupled with the provision of support services for beneficiaries, including targeted access to capital, services and markets.</p>	<p>“[...] a lack of support services for beneficiaries and unfavourable macroeconomic factors subsequently hampered the performance of the reformed sector severely. The provision of these services is critical, especially when dealing with beneficiaries with low entrepreneurial experience. [...] Where these services were provided by centralized state institutions, they were often slow, bureaucratic and unable to provide essential financial, technical, organizational and other institutional support.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 4:</b></p> <p>The previous managerial experience of agrarian reform beneficiaries is essential.</p>	<p>“The agrarian reforms in Egypt, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China and several states in India enabled tenants to become owners of the land they cultivated. In part, these reforms were successful because bestowing ownership rights on former tenants allowed the continued use of existing physical infrastructure, [...] and institutional infrastructure, as previously existing input supply, credit and marketing structures were not disrupted. [...] Opportunities for reforms of this kind are no longer significant as they have already been undertaken.”</p>

<p><b>Lesson 5:</b></p> <p>A rational system of individual economic incentives in the reformed sector is critical.</p>	<p>“Unclear systems of rewarding individual productivity in the reformed sector have proved damaging, as is reflected in the poor results from most experiences with collective farming. Conversely, the introduction of individual economic incentives can generate a highly dynamic response [as in the cases of China and Viet Nam]. However, some types of agricultural activity, such as extensive livestock production or plantation-type exploitations, may require longer units. In these cases, some form of collective access to or use of land may be appropriate. However, also in these cases there is a need to set up managerial and economic incentives structures that guarantee individual responsibility within a collective exploitation of natural resources.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 6:</b></p> <p>Fair compensation packages for landowners (that is, fully compensating for reinvestment and providing for some real liquidity) reduce the potential negative impacts on economic growth.</p>	<p>“Payments for expropriated land that are viewed as confiscatory can generate violent reactions and will affect production and the overall economy substantially during the initial phase of agrarian reform. However, where there are well-established and relatively fair rules for compensation, outcomes are more positive. [...] No massive and extensive agrarian reform process has been undertaken by paying market values for land in cash. Hence, it is necessary to check the costs of land purchases and strike a proper balance between the need to contain these costs and that of providing fair compensation that will not discourage investment in agriculture or elsewhere in the economy.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 7:</b></p> <p>Social capital formation is important, through the participation of local communities and beneficiaries in taking control of their own development.</p>	<p>“With the technical assistance of FAO, [farmers’ groups in the Philippines] have provided a successful model for community development, including the capacity to negotiate for community specific needs, such as infrastructure, credit, education and other social services. [...] This example supports the need for these processes to be highly participatory, involving the local communities in their own development. Also important in this case is an inclusive perspective involving a territorial rather than sectoral approach, contrary to that in most agrarian reform processes.”</p>
<p><b>Lesson 8:</b></p> <p>Appropriate land administration capacity is crucial to land reform implementation.</p>	<p>“Land administration is critical tool enabling the implementation of agrarian reforms, particularly through land surveying, titling and registration, but also through land-use planning, land valuation and land taxation. Land titling is frequently a costly process, but it generates major economic advantages by securing land rights and providing investment incentives. The need to give due attention to the interests of the poor and underprivileged, particularly women and indigenous peoples, has been recognized as they have lost out in some titling projects.”</p>

Source: Cox, et. al., 2003: 21-23

## **INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

A number of FAO bodies work on activities related to land policy and agrarian reform. As mentioned in the introduction, the two principle bodies were, until the end of 2006, the Land and Water Development Division, part of the Agriculture Department, and the Rural Development Division, part of the Sustainable Development Department comprised of the Land Tenure Service and the Rural Institutions and Participation Service.

The Land and Water Development Division is concerned with the productive and sustainable use of land and freshwater resources through good practice in tenancy, zoning, development and conservation. In particular, the Division is concerned with planning and integral management of the land and plant nutrient resources, improving soil fertility and the productivity of the land for food production and other environmental services.

The Land Tenure Service analyses agrarian structures, land administration and the design of settlements. It offers advice about markets and land transfers, regularisation of land tenure, ways of giving landless farmers access to land, land information systems and institutions for the transfer of property.

The Rural Institutions and Participation Service used to offer assistance with the formulation of policies and institutional mechanisms that increase the access of poor peasants to employment, resources and services. It produced guidelines for those responsible for the formulation of policies and encouraged the creation of rural development institutions. It actively sponsored popular participation in socio-economic development, for example, through experimental projects that contributed to the creation or reinforcement of autonomous peasant organisations.

As part of the current process of reforming the FAO (2005b), the Land and Water Division was moved from the Agriculture Department to the recently created Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, successor to the Sustainable Development Department. This division will be divided into the Water Development and Management Unit, on the one hand, while the other part, together with the old Land Tenure Service, will make up the Land Tenure and Management Unit. The old Rural Development Division, particularly the Rural Institutions and Participation Service, has disappeared. As a result of civil society criticism of the disappearance of the Rural Development Division, the FAO council decided recently, in its 132<sup>nd</sup> session, to appoint the Gender, Equality and Rural Employment Division in the Economic and Social Development Department as a focal point for rural development (FAO, 2007c).

The Agriculture Department, and the Agriculture Policy and Resource Mobilisation Division of the Technical Cooperation Department also develop activities related to land policy.

It is important to highlight here the different FAO bodies that deal with land policy and agrarian reform, because, as will be seen, they act with different mandates and work in different areas.

### 3. The FAO's current land and agrarian reform policies

Both in land policy and in general, the FAO articulates its tasks along three main lines: normative work, operational work, and the promotion of exchange and mutual understanding between governments on relevant themes. The normative work includes the collection, analysis and dissemination of information related to land. It also develops and tests new research methodologies, and produces guidelines and recommendations about good practice, to guide the political consultancy work (support with planning, legislative reform, production of strategies, etc.) to the member states. Operational work consists of the technical assistance that the FAO offers its members through projects that specifically apply the expertise developed and accumulated in the normative work. As a multilateral forum, the FAO promotes debate and exchange between governments on issues where common understanding and agreements about cooperation and collective action would be beneficial.

#### **3.1 NORMATIVE PROGRAMME**

Within the FAO's normative programme on land policies, the work of the Land Management Unit (formerly the Land and Water Division) is particularly significant.<sup>6</sup> This unit has databases such as TERRASTAT, perhaps the most important information system for national statistics about the use, potential and limitations of land for agriculture. The unit also produces many publications, training materials

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/landandwater/portals.stm>

and other databases that deal with specific themes; agro-ecology zones, mapping and classification of land, soil degradation, integrated plant nutrition systems, manure and fertilizers are some of the most important.

The other part of the normative work was developed by the Land Tenure Management Unit (formerly the Land Tenure Service) and the now defunct Rural Institutions and Participation Service.

Within the normative work carried out by these two bodies (formerly the Rural Development Division) it is worth noting the publication, *Land Reform, Land Settlement and Cooperatives*. This publication is one of the principal forums for discussion of field experience, land tenure and agrarian reform policies at an international level. It brings together voices of practitioners and academics dealing with a wide range of contemporary issues. The mixture makes this publication particularly rich.<sup>7</sup> The role of these two bodies in developing an unambiguous and unequivocal terminology of the subjects related to land tenure – for example, the Multilingual Thesaurus on Land Tenure - has also been a major contribution to clarifying the debates around land issues.

The Land Tenure Management Unit has produced an extensive number of publications offering good practice guides in different areas such as agrarian reform and land tenure, land and agricultural reconstruction information systems, land administration, rural taxation, cadastre, registration, regularisation of land, land rights, land markets, gender and land, common ownership, individual property, analysis of agrarian systems, the alternative management of land tenure conflicts, population dynamics, land availability, and others (Cox et. al., 2003: 19). A summary of some of these studies is presented below in order to give an idea of the institutional thinking behind some of the central issues in the current land and agrarian reform debate.

Cadastral Surveys and Records of Rights in Land (FAO, 1996b). This study is a revision of an FAO study dated 1953. It starts from the premise that planning and positive development should be based on a precise understanding of the land situation and it urges countries to build this understanding. The study sets out to demonstrate the advantages derived from topographic surveys of land on a grand scale (maps), and of a precise and up to date register of corresponding rights from the points of view of the champion of agrarian reform, the land owner, governments, agriculture, economic development and the general public. To this end, it introduces concepts and methods relevant to topographic measurement, such as cadastral maps and land

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/sd/LTdirect/landrf.htm>

registries. The study also offers very practical guidelines to governments about the design and application of projects of this kind, highlighting the importance of keeping affected groups and public opinion duly informed and the importance of these group's acceptance of the incoming systems or reforms.

It is interesting to observe that this study specifically stresses the importance of cadastral surveys and land registries for the purposes of agrarian reform, while current literature on this theme (World Bank, 2003) focuses on the advantages of the same to protect property rights, encourage investment and improve taxation, without mentioning the need to have precise land data in order to redistribute it in an accurate and secure way.

Good Practice Guidelines for Agricultural Leasing Arrangements (FAO, 2003a). This study explains how leasing has become a key issue for the FAO because of its importance in agriculture, and its potential to give access to land to those who do not own it. The guidelines seek to better understand the elements to be taken into account when agreeing leases to promote equilibrium and equality in the relationships between landowners and lessees. The guidelines introduce concepts and general principles, and go on to make recommendations for good practice in leasing contracts and their relationship with other contextual factors.

The reasons given by the FAO for dealing with the issue of agricultural leases are the same as those given by the World Bank in its report on land policy (World Bank, 2003). Their handling of the issue differs from that of the World Bank in that the FAO guidelines give greater attention to an analysis of unequal power relations between the landowner and the lessee. Nevertheless, this does not lead to recommendations for the regulations that would be necessary in order to protect the weaker party in the contract; in fact, they recommend not scaring the land owner with “redistribution of power that is too great, or with responsibilities that are too onerous”, and finding a balance between the needs and desires of the land owner and the lessee in order to favour the long term cause of private sector leasing (FAO, 2003a: 47, 48).

Land Tenure and Rural Development (FAO, 2003c). This study contains a guide as to why land tenure is important for rural development programmes. The reasons given emphasise the eradication of hunger and guaranteeing food security for vulnerable groups, particularly women, minorities and indigenous communities; providing the rural population with assets so that they have more sustainable means of making a living; stimulating economic growth and avoiding social instability and conflict. The principle aim of the study is to familiarise the people responsible for designing rural

development policies with the context and key questions of land tenure. To this end, the guide begins by explaining what land tenure is, and explaining the concepts related to land administration, access to land and security of land tenure. It goes on to approach the reasons why land tenure should be taken into account in project design, highlighting ecological issues, questions of gender, conflict and migrations, and the relationships between them. Finally, the guide gives a series of practical recommendations for including land tenure in the design of rural development projects.

The guide manages to practically and integrally present key aspects of land tenure in terms of designing rural development focussed on guaranteeing food security and combating poverty. From the point of view of our analysis, the allusion made to a human rights approach to land is interesting (FAO, 2003c: para. 2.5). Quoting the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, it says that discrimination against women in rights to land is a violation of human rights. Without going into more detail about aspects of human rights related to land tenure, the guide examines what rights to land are recognised and for whom, for how long, with what ends and under what conditions; and what institutional mechanisms exist to establish rights, and how these are organised within a given project. With the exception of discrimination on grounds of gender, other human rights concepts and tools, such as the right to food and the right to adequate housing, international human rights provisions against forced evictions and arbitrary displacements, or indigenous rights to land and territory were not taken into account.<sup>8</sup>

Gender and Access to Land (FAO, 2003b). This study presents guidelines with a view to providing land administrators and other professionals with basic information about the reasons why gender issues are important for agrarian projects; and other practical guides to the way in which problems of gender and equality could be approached in the administration of land. The study begins by giving definitions of what is understood by access to land and security of tenancy and then describes its importance in a rural and urban environment. It goes on to deal with the reasons why gender questions are important for agrarian reform and land administration. In this vein, the study presents some basic indicators that can be used to evaluate and supervise access to land in relation to questions of gender. Finally, the study emphasises the responsibilities of those responsible for the administration of land and issues a series of practical recommendations for tackling the problems of gender and equality in their work. It also recommends certain action principles to national and international organisations, to promote the integration of gender issues into land administration projects.

<sup>8</sup> For a systematic list of international human rights instruments linked to access to land, see Monsalve Suárez, 2007.

In a way that is coherent with the study on land tenure and rural development, this study highlights among the reasons why it is important to deal with issues of gender in land policy, the fact that equal access to land is a question of human rights, and discrimination in land rights on gender grounds constitutes a violation of human rights (FAO, 2003b: para. 3.1). Although there is no systematic or explicit treatment of the issue from a human rights point of view, these guidelines touch on the issue on a number of occasions, for example, the proposed indicators include a call to document and publish violations of rights to land when they take place, and exhort those responsible for land administration to be vigilant and ensure that reforms to land administration systems, legislation and procedures do not negatively affect groups' or individuals' rights to land.

Without a doubt, this study presents a more complex and detailed analysis of issues around gender and land, and unlike the mainstream trend in land administration projects, it is not exclusively restricted to the identification and documentation of rights. On various occasions the study thematicises the disadvantages and possible damage done to women in specific situations and contexts when formalising land rights. It also talks about the importance of other factors such as access to other productive resources, infrastructure, etc. to really guarantee control of the land by women. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable absence of information when it comes to landless women and how to increase women's access to land in terms of redistribution policies.

Access to rural land and land administration after violent conflicts. (FAO, 2005a). This study is a practical guide to help countries reconstruct their land administration systems following conflicts. The study begins by offering an overview of the general conditions that prevail after the end of hostilities, and of the specific conditions in terms of access and land tenure. It goes on to study possible international interventions, starting with missions to evaluate the situation, short term emergency humanitarian aid projects, the development of a broader land policy framework within which to deal with issues such as claims, restitution, resettlement and the setting up of an operative land administration system. Finally, it looks at how to evaluate and monitor the impact of the established policies.

Unlike other studies on the issue of land in post-conflict situations, which take a more economic approach (World Bank, 2003), this FAO study stands out because it consistently prioritises the question of access to land for the most vulnerable groups affected by the armed conflict, highlighting it in each of the different post conflict phases, as a crucial issue for ensuring lasting peace. Once again, the FAO presents rights to land and housing as human rights, recognised in international law. It refers to



various instruments such as the Geneva Convention, and the non-binding instruments recently developed to protect the internally displaced persons, in order to deal with the issue. (FAO, 2005a: para 3.4, 3.17).

In terms of access to land for indigenous peoples and pastoral nomads, the FAO has commissioned expert studies and external consultants on these issues but it has not dedicated a particular study to the topic, nor has it produced any specific guidelines. The FAO provided technical support for a paper on “Cultural Indicators of Indigenous Peoples’ Food and Agro Ecological Systems” for the 2nd Global Consultation on the Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples in 2006 (FAO, 2007a).

The Rural Institutions and Participation Service produced training material about topics including rural producers organisations, decentralisation processes, participatory action research as a method for rural development, and the formation of rural groups and associations. It has also worked on the institutional issue, compiling information about decentralisation processes and summarising the lessons learned from these processes and from the development of local government in rural areas, pastoral institutions and other kinds of institution.

Particularly noteworthy here is the Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD) approach developed by both the Land Tenure Service and the Rural Institutions and Participation Service (FAO, 2005c). The starting point of this approach is to analyse the existing relationships between local actors and their territories and the implications of these relationships on local development. Key concepts of this approach include the recognition of the heterogeneity of the actors’ interests and visions of the territory; the concept of territory as spatial units of analysis, shaped by the social and historical relations between the actors and the territory; and the integration of the environmental, social, economic, political, cultural dimensions of the actors’ visions of the territory. The main purpose of PNTD approach is to reach socially legitimised agreements by involving all actors and leading to their commitment and ownership over the development process whereby power asymmetries that are determined by unequal access to and control over resources and information, and unequal capacities should be reduced in order to attain policies which are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and culturally appropriate. Methodological guidelines on how to implement this approach have also been developed.

These are some of the issues tackled in the FAO normative programme, producing guidelines for civil servants, entities and organisations involved. It is worth mentioning that the FAO’s normative work focuses in most cases on the development of policies

in rural areas, leaving the urban spaces aside, although issues such as peri-urban land tenure have begun to be developed.

### 3.2 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The FAO's technical assistance programme, also known as the field programme, offers technical assistance to governments, donors and organisations, based on the knowledge held by staff and consultants at the FAO. The FAO's technical assistance programme is present at a global level and in various fields related to land policy. Principle fields include land tenure reform, land regularisation, cadastre and land registries, rural taxation, land markets, access to land, agrarian reform, agrarian systems and family-farm agriculture, gender and agrarian reform, and rights to land for pastoralist communities (Cox et. al., 2003: 19-20). The FAO's technical assistance projects generally do not have large financial volume, and in many cases they take the form of pilot projects that are subsequently expanded and replicated.

The extent of FAO technical assistance activity since 2000 is between 1500 and 2000 active field projects per year, with an overall annual delivery of \$350 to \$400 million per year. The finance for the field programme comes in part from the FAO central budget or Regular Programme (contributions from the member countries), which finances approximately 6 per cent of the activities, through projects from the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). The remaining finance comes from extra-budget resources, that is to say resources received from donors such as the developed and developing countries, UN agencies, funding bodies, the private sector, local authorities and voluntary donations from the general public. The FAO/Government Cooperation Programme (GCP), Unilateral Trust Funds and Trust Funds for emergency assistance also play an important role in the funding.<sup>9</sup> The budget for the FAO Regular Programme for technical work decreased by around 15 per cent between 1994-95 and 2004-05. Combined with a decrease of 22 per cent in extra-budget resources in the same period, this meant total resources fell by 19 per cent (FAO, 2007b: para. 229). The budget reduction of the regular programme meant a cut in resources for technical work around land by 26.8 per cent (FAO, 2007b: para. 234).

We have extracted a list of current FAO projects related to access to land and rural development from the database of FAO projects.<sup>10</sup> The complete list can be found in

<sup>9</sup> The financial figures presented here were obtained from the FAO website: [http://www.fao.org/tc/funding\\_es.asp](http://www.fao.org/tc/funding_es.asp).

<sup>10</sup> See [http://www.fao.org/tc/com/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/tc/com/index_en.htm)

Appendix 1. The periods covered by the database vary. The most extensive period covered is 2003 to 2011. It is not easy to unequivocally identify all the FAO projects related to land access. They are not specified in the database, but form part of other projects, registered under categories such as:

- Food security, poverty reduction and other development cooperation programmes
- Rural development
- Natural resources
- Land policy
- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Food production in support of food security
- Legal assistance

Furthermore, the database does not provide complete descriptions of the projects that would enable an unequivocal selection to be made. In spite of this serious caveat, the list made provides some estimates.

Based on these estimates, around 22 per cent of field projects that the FAO carried out and /or will carry out in the period 2003-11 are directly or indirectly related to access to land. By region, this percentage is distributed in the following way: approximately 83 per cent of the projects are concentrated in Africa, 9 per cent in Latin America, 6 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 1 per cent in Europe and the Middle East respectively. As well as the greatest number of projects being concentrated in Africa, the greatest volume of finance for the projects is also concentrated there. Countries such as Sudan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe receive projects with a financial volume of between \$69 and \$32 million per year. In Latin America, the countries with the biggest projects in terms of financial volume are (in descending order) Venezuela, Brazil, Haiti and Honduras, which range from \$38 to \$4 million. In Asia, Afghanistan has projects with the FAO for almost \$12 million, India for more than \$7 million, Indonesia for \$6 million, and Cambodia for \$3 million.

A more detailed and specific, although not exhaustive description of the projects by FAO in the last decade related to access to land has been presented by members of the Land Tenure Service (FAO, 2006a). Using this document, a table presenting FAO activities around land is presented below.

**Table 2: FAO land related technical cooperation projects**

No.	COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT
<b>Improving access to land through redistribution:</b>		
1.	Honduras	FAO has provided technical assistance for the acquisition of land for small or landless farmers in the Land Access Pilot Project (PACTA) through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank and through a TCP project linked to trust fund projects promoting the Special Programme for Food Security.
2.	Guatemala	FAO provided technical assistance to Guatemala through the Cooperation Programme with the World Bank to support commitments of access to land under the Socioeconomic and Agrarian and Indigenous Peoples sub-agreements.
3.	Brazil	FAO has provided technical support to the country's agrarian reform and development of sustainable family strategies through a series of projects. FAO provided assistance to the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agraria (INCRA) to transfer technology and production systems of successful family farms to the new land reform beneficiaries. Guidelines were elaborated for sustainable development for small family farming and household agriculture. FAO provides assistance to the gender responsive policies, programmes and projects that reduce or eliminate legislative, administrative, socio-economic and behavioural obstacles to rural women's access to productive resources in the agrarian reform sector.
4.	Colombia	FAO supported the modernization of Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria (INCORA), and strengthened its capacity to evaluate the effects of its work in the land redistribution, subsidies and credits, and the economic success of the new agrarian reform.
5.	Philippines	FAO has provided support to the Government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) through a number of projects; FAO's technical assistance is targeted at agrarian reform communities (AECs), that is, a cluster of villages (barangays) where 60 per cent or more of the population has received land through the land reform programme.

6.	Namibia	FAO has provided technical assistance in support of the country's Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act through a TCP project and consultancy financed through the UK/FAO Consultants Trust Fund. FAO provided assistance in the preparation of regulation for the land tax and in the preparation for the implementation of the tax.
7.	Azerbaijan	FAO provided technical assistance through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank in the privatisation and titling of formerly collective farm land, and the development and implementation of the organisational and legal framework for a unified real estate cadastre system.
8.	Tajikistan	FAO provided assistance for the privatisation of farms through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank.
9.	Thailand	Through a Telefood project, innovative use was made of land reform area by providing ponds to raise tilapia in Chiang Rai.
<b>Improving access to land through leasing:</b>		
10.	Nepal	The Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project (HLFFDP), founded through a loan from IFAD and a grant from the Netherlands, aimed to raise the incomes of families living below the poverty line and improve the ecological conditions of hill forest lands.
<b>Improving access to land in emergency situations:</b>		
11.	Angola	FAO has been providing technical assistance to improving access to land in Angola by resolving conflicting claims for land arising from the settlement of Internally Displaced Persons through several projects including one under the Special Programme for Food Security.
12.	Sudan	FAO assistance enabled the land question to be addressed both in the context of emergency (the IDP-resettlement and the minimization of conflict) and of sustainable development. The emphasis was placed on a rapid transition from humanitarian relief interventions associated with a conflict environment to development interventions that lay foundations for longer-term recovery to former levels of self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

13.	Sri Lanka Indonesia	Following the devastating Tsunami of December 2004, the FAO has provided technical assistance on assessing land tenure problems of displaced people.
<b>Improving access to land for pastoralists:</b>		
14.	Syria	Technical support was provided to Syria to support the coordination of state ownership of pastoral lands with rights of use by local populations. The interventions assisted in defining the responsibilities of herder organizations in terms of territory, not a straightforward exercise among pastoral populations who hold different rights at different seasons. Rather than a simple territorial demarcation, the projects aimed at defining reciprocal rights and duties in relations to territory.
15.	Mali	The FAO provided technical assistance in support of the elaboration of a Pastoral Charter to ensure sustainable access to, and use to of, pastures by herders as well as the fair and peaceful use of natural resources by other beneficiaries such as farmers and fisher folk.
<b>Improving access to better land holdings:</b>		
16.	Armenia Hungary Lithuania Serbia and Montenegro	The FAO is currently providing assistance through TCP projects.
17.	Tunisia	The FAO provided technical assistance to deal with land fragmentation. Land consolidation was used as an instrument to mitigate conflicts over the land, to modernize agricultural techniques, and to make production internationally competitive.
<b>Improving secure access to customary land for communities:</b>		
18.	Mozambique	The FAO provided technical assistance in an innovative approach to land rights that allows both local residents and investors to gain. Through the implementation of a new policy and legislative framework, land rights of local communities are delimited and recorded.

19.	Ghana	Technical assistance through the Cooperative Programme has been provided in support of efforts to improve land tenure security and build an efficient land registration function by demarcating and registering stool and skin land boundaries in selected rural areas.
20.	Panama	The FAO is providing technical assistance through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank in an intervention that pays particular attention to the protection of access to land by indigenous people through the demarcation of their territories.
<b>Improving the security of access to privately-held land:</b>		
21.	China	The FAO is implementing a TCP project on rural and registration that has been assigned highest priority by the Government of China.
22.	Thailand	The Thailand series of land titling and registration projects are widely recognised as being amongst the most successful in the world. Thailand is moving towards its target of issuing 13 million titles to farmers.
23.	Sri Lanka	Assistance is being given to improve an ongoing land-titling programme that the Government initiated in the mid-1990s by testing the methods for introducing an appropriate systematic registration of title to land parcels in five trial sites.
24.	Lao People's Democratic Republic	The assistance support the development of a land titling programme aimed at extending secure ownership by providing a system of clear and enforceable land ownership rights.
25.	Ukraine	Technical assistance includes support for the systematic subdivision of the land from former collective farms and the issuing of state deeds for land to individual rural owners, the development on national cadastre system, and the services for restructuring of farms.
26.	Panama	The FAO is providing technical assistance through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank for the completion of a systematic legal cadastral survey and the regularization of property rights.

27.	Niger	The FAO assisted in the establishment of a legal framework that provided long-term security for farmers who migrated to new areas to gain access to land.
<b>Improving the delivery of rural services through property taxation:</b>		
28.	Namibia	The FAO provided technical assistance for the implementation of a land tax of commercial farmland in order to support the country's Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act. The FAO provided assistance in the preparation of regulations for the land tax and in the preparation for the implementation of tax.
29.	Thailand	The FAO's technical assistance to Thailand through the Cooperative Programme with the World Bank in a series of land titling and registration projects is resulting in greatly improved land taxation efficiency being achieved.
30.	Philippines	Cooperative Programme support to the Philippines addresses property taxation aspects and the FAO is particularly involved in the design of the implementation of the property taxation side of the scale project envisaged to follow.
31.	Cambodia Lao People's Democratic Republic	Assistance on an appropriate system of land taxation is being provided through the Cooperative Programme.
32.	China	In China, policy advice is at an early stage in response to the government's request for support in the implementation of property taxes.

Source: FAO, 2006a.

This list raises interesting questions about the cooperation of the FAO with the World Bank in the implementation of projects about land. FAO-World Bank cooperation goes back a long way. From its very beginnings, the FAO has cooperated with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), a bank that forms part of the World Bank. In 1964, this cooperation was institutionalised with the



creation of the FAO Investment Centre with a view to better coordinate the use of the FAO's technical and economic knowledge with the financial resources of the IBRD/ World Bank for agricultural development. The agreements between the FAO and the regional development banks also date from this period (Phillips, 1981). The World Bank contributed an average of 45 per cent of the total resources of the Investment Centre in the period 2000-06 (FAO, 2007b: para. 308). Staff of the Investment Centre and other FAO departments contributed to the production of both the rural development strategy *Reaching the Rural Poor* adopted by the World Bank in 2002 and the World Development Report 2008 dedicated to agriculture. In the 2006 World Bank document *Renewed Strategy for Rural Development*, the FAO and IFAD, are named as the **key** UN agencies with which the World Bank collaborates in order to deepen its knowledge and experience of rural development in general, and more specifically, to deal with the issue of rural poverty beyond agriculture, including land tenure reform and nutrition (FAO, 2007b: para. 317).

The exact functioning of the cooperation between the FAO and the World Bank on land matters is outside of the scope of this investigation, but it would be worth studying in more depth in future. The preliminary report of the FAO's Independent External Evaluation published in June 2007 suggests that institutional collaboration between the FAO and the World Bank through the Investment Centre may have made it possible for the FAO's expertise to influence the World Bank's rural development strategy, and in that way considerably widen the scope of its influence (Ibid).

Similar to what we have seen with the normative work, the FAO field projects relating to land concentrate on the regulatory framework for land tenure, including fiscal systems (Namibia, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, and China), legal frameworks, registration, cadastre, demarcation, security of tenure in private and consuetudinary systems (Ghana, China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Panama, and Niger), etc. Projects related to increasing access to land that basically apply the market mechanism are found in Honduras, Guatemala and Colombia; while in the case of Brazil and the Philippines, they are supporting the sustainability of settlements of beneficiaries from national agrarian reform programmes based on expropriation mechanisms. There is also an access to land project in Nepal that uses leasing. Projects to privatise collective land systems were carried out in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. According to this document, there is only one project relating to indigenous lands, and that is in Panama. Projects related to pastoral land exist in Syria and Mali. Finally, there are projects in post-conflict situations (Angola) and emergencies (Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia).

### 3.3 MULTILATERAL EXCHANGE FORUM

In the past decade, the FAO has organised many seminars, conferences and meetings to debate a wide range of issues, including land privatisation in countries on the way to becoming market economies, land markets, public and private sector participation in land tenure reform, analysis of agrarian systems, land tenure databases, land conflicts, methodology for territorial planning, traditional land tenure systems, communal/collective property resources, popular participation, gender and others (Cox et. al., 2003: 19).

Almost thirty years after calling the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in 1979, the most prominent even at that level was the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) organised by the FAO in close collaboration with the Brazilian government in March 2006 in Porto Alegre. With this conference, the FAO sought to promote and assume a renewed commitment to agrarian reform and rural development in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals set by the international community, to halve the number of hungry people in the world by 2015. The principle thematic axes at the conference were:

- Policies and experiences that have improved access to resources for the poorest people;
- Construction of local capacity to improve access to land, water, agricultural inputs and agrarian services, to promote development and the sustainable management of natural resources;
- New development opportunities to strengthen communities and rural producers;
- How to combine concepts such as agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development;
- Food sovereignty and its contribution to fairer access to resources.<sup>11</sup>

The conference was attended by 92 governmental delegations and around 150 farmers', indigenous peoples, fisher folk, rural women's organisations and NGOs. Unfortunately, there were no Heads of State present. The final declaration of ICARRD emphasised

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.icarrd.org/index.html>

the outstanding role agrarian reforms have to play in fighting hunger, the need for a sustainable development model and respect for human rights. The declaration adopts a participatory focus based on economic, social and cultural rights, for the fair management of land, water, forests and natural resources, particularly for women and vulnerable or marginalised groups. In areas with strong social disparity, poverty and hunger, agrarian reform should widen and secure access and control of land and natural resources. States should play a crucial role in the implementation of agrarian reforms. International solidarity and support for peasant farmers and rural workers and landless peasant's organisations should be increased. With the aim of supporting agrarian reform, the FAO wants to establish platforms for social dialogue, cooperation, monitoring and evaluation of progress in agrarian reform and rural development. To this end, the final declaration recommends that the FAO Committee on World Food Security adopt the appropriate measures for implementing the ICARRD final declaration and setting guidelines for submitting reports (FAO, 2006b).

Although the ICARRD declaration did not deal with the structural causes that these days strip rural communities of their lands and of their control over agricultural resources, food systems and markets,<sup>12</sup> the ICARRD is in both form and substance an important contribution to the debates and actions that need to take place on the issues surrounding agrarian reform and rural development in the years to come. The ICARRD was a unique experience enabling rural social movements and other civil society organisations to participate in the process of preparing and holding the conference on an equal footing with governments, and in a way that respected their autonomy. The ICARRD was therefore a rare example of an international governmental conference that offered sufficient space and possibilities for rural social movements and civil society organisations to be able to effectively influence the results of the conference.<sup>13</sup> Social movements and other organisations highlight the fact that the ICARRD final declaration contains a series of relevant guidelines that allow for a critical revision of land policies and agrarian reform taking place within the framework of structural adjustment policies in the past decade. These include:

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<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of these structural causes, see Lewontin, 1998; Ross, 2003; Rosset, 2005; Windfuhr and Jonsen, 2005; FIAN and La Via Campesina, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> The participation of civil society was facilitated by the NGO/SCO International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). IPC is the global network that includes organisations of peasants, small farmers, landless peoples, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, rural workers and NGO networks with long experiences of action and advocacy on issues linked to food sovereignty and agriculture. The IPC has been working since 2002 to listen to the voices of social movements and civil society organisations in international forums dealing with issues related to Food Sovereignty, particularly the FAO. In 2003, the Director General of the FAO recognised the IPC as its principle interlocutor with civil society at a global level, in terms of the initiatives and issues arising from the NGO/SCO Forum *The World Food Summit: Five Years Later* in June 2002. The IPC organised "Land, Territory and Dignity" parallel to the ICARRD. The final declaration of this forum forms part of the official documentation of the ICARRD. See [http://www.icarrd.org/en/news\\_down/IPC\\_en.pdf](http://www.icarrd.org/en/news_down/IPC_en.pdf).

- The reference to the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.
- Reference to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food as an essential consideration in rural development.
- Recognition of individual, communal and collective forms of land tenure.
- A strong focus on gender.
- The recognition of different rural groups (rural women, peasant communities, landless peasants, indigenous people, forest communities, fisher folk, nomadic pastoralists), their rights and interests.
- The need to establish agrarian reform policies in situations of great social disparity and poverty in order to increase sustainable access and control of land, water and other natural resources.
- A participatory focus, based on economic, social and cultural rights, and good public management of land, water, forests and other natural resources.
- A recognition and specific support in various paragraphs for traditional and family farming, small-scale production systems and small-scale use of natural resources.
- An emphasis on the importance of local and national markets, above international ones.
- Strengthening the role of the State so that it implements and develops more just policies and programmes, centred on the population to guarantee food security and welfare for all citizens.
- Recognition of the organisations working for food sovereignty.

The implementation of the ICARRD final declaration has unleashed an intense polemic at the heart of the FAO. Owing to strong opposition from the European Union, the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan, in November 2006 it was not possible

to reach any agreement during the session of the FAO Committee on World Food Security about how it should be implemented. The issue was therefore remitted to the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), which met in April 2007. In the first months of 2007, social movements and other civil society organisations continued to mobilise in many countries, demanding their national governments implement the ICARRD. Pressure from civil society, together with the strong commitment of countries such as Brazil to follow up the ICARRD at an international level, made it possible to unblock the process.<sup>14</sup> In its final report, the COAG highlights the importance of agrarian reform and rural development and the particular significance and role of the FAO in this field. Furthermore, it asks the FAO secretariat to take a series of specific measures to guarantee the necessary institutional capacity to follow up the ICARRD (FAO, 2007d: para. 48-49). In fact, FAO management decided to fund from its core budget, three regional Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) for ICARRD follow up. The TCP for Africa has already been approved and intends to contribute to the process started by the African Union to adopting land policy guidelines. The TCP for Latin America (one for the Southern Cone region and one for the Central American region) is currently being discussed whereas the drafting for the Asian TCP still needs to gather momentum. There is no doubt that following up the ICARRD process of reforming the FAO has been a key part of a much broader and more profound debate about the organisation's mandate, role and priorities as a global public institution and a UN agency specialising in food and agriculture.

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<sup>14</sup> During the COAG session, Kuwait, in the name of the Group of 77, Nicaragua in the name of the Latin American and Caribbean group, Iran in the name of the Near Eastern Countries, Zambia, in the name of the African countries, and Bangladesh in the name of the Asian group, as well as Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria and many other countries in their own names, emphasised that agrarian reform and rural development policies are crucial for meeting the first Millennium Development Goal, combating hunger, and they emphatically called on the FAO to make agrarian reform and rural development a priority issue and a central part of its mandate. They also urged the FAO to ensure enough institutional capacity to be able to work in this field, and recommended measures such as producing periodic reports on the state of agrarian reform and rural development around the world. However, the United States, Australia, Canada and the European Union reiterated their position against the FAO following up the ICARRD, stating that given the scarce resources available to the FAO, it should not overburden itself with tasks outside of its mandate, and that it was necessary to wait for the results of the external evaluation of the FAO and complete the reform process currently underway before dealing with the issue. Nevertheless, despite this scepticism, the EU has left the door open to continue the debate.

#### 4. Critical reflections on the implementation of the FAO's land policies and its overall performance in this field

A systematic evaluation of the work of the FAO in the field of land policy and agrarian reform is outside of the scope of this article. In fact, it is notable the FAO's work in this field has not really been made the subject of any academic scrutiny by researchers or independent experts. In the process of gathering material for this article, not one academic study of this kind was found. The team working on the independent external evaluation of the FAO confirmed that evaluating the effectiveness or efficiency of the FAO has been very difficult, because of the almost total absence of monitoring mechanisms and progress indicators that would allow a systematic evaluation of the organisation's work. They added that this deficiency exacerbates all the difficulties already inherent in evaluating the work of an organisation whose task is to provide public goods at a global level (FAO, 2007b: para. 166).<sup>15</sup>

Have the FAO's land and agrarian reform policies really benefited the poor? To what extent have those policies contributed to securing human rights for the poorest and most marginalised rural groups? Having said that a systematic evaluation of this kind is outside the scope of this article, we have selected those two questions as the criteria on which to base some heuristic reflections that we think would be interesting to investigate further in future studies with a broader remit.

For FAO's normative work on land policy, the soil database, the classification of agro-ecology areas and other tools are extremely important for planning agrarian and agricultural policies, and for identifying regions vulnerable to food insecurity and environmental degradation. Multi-dimensional indicators of rural development are also being produced,<sup>16</sup> which will no doubt contribute greatly to the design of policies that are better adjusted to existing problems. Nevertheless, there is a considerable lack, both within the FAO and at a national level, of information relating to socio-economic

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<sup>15</sup> The external evaluation examined the progress of the FAO on the land question. However, it seems to have restricted itself to examining the old Land and Water Division, leaving to one side all the other divisions and departments dealing with land issues. The evaluation confirms that the progress of the FAO in this field has been fundamental for building current levels of global understanding about soil, classification, agro-ecology zones and mapping. It continues to be a key reference at a global level. This work provides basic data on which to build an analysis of vulnerability in terms of food security, poverty and the environment (FAO, 2007b: para. 413). The evaluation confirms that this work has been among those most affected by budget cuts in the FAO, seriously endangering its continued functioning, despite the fact that demand for FAO services in the area of land is growing and was considered a high priority issue for member states (FAO, 2007b: para. 572).

<sup>16</sup> See the indicators developed for West Africa (FAO and OECD, 2007).

conditions and land tenure that would allow us to better identify marginalised groups and the problems they face. We are referring, for example, to global statistics disaggregated by gender about the number of landless people or people with insufficient land, the degree of concentration of land and other resources, about the loss of access to land for different rural groups, the reasons for that loss, public land use, and other issues. Identifying these groups properly is one of the primary measures that states should adopt in order to meet their human rights obligations. Given the FAO's vast experience in developing indicators and methodologies to produce basic information, providing more and better socio-economic information about tendencies in land tenure around the world would be a fundamental contribution both to monitoring the global situation and improving the capacity of national governments to produce this kind of information.

There is no doubt that the main direction taken by the normative work of the old Rural Development Division, made up of the Land Tenure Service and the Rural Institutions and Participation Service, points to combating poverty and food insecurity in a rural context, using a multi-dimensional approach that places affected groups at the centre. As was said in section 3.1, the FAO has gradually begun to make passing references in its normative work on land, to international human rights provisions related to the issue. The FAO's work on land and gender was pioneering in this respect. Integral incorporation of the conceptual developments and instruments produced by United Nations human rights bodies on the issue of land would considerably enrich and strengthen the orientation of the FAO's normative work on land in favour of the most marginalised and oppressed. We refer particularly to the work done by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (particularly General Comment N° 4 on the right to adequate housing, N° 7 on forced eviction, N° 12 on the right to adequate food, and N° 15 on the right to water) treaty body in charge of interpreting and monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the work of the Special Procedures of the UN Council of Human Rights. Special attention is due to the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, who has specifically dealt with the relationship of this right and access to land and agrarian reform (UN General Assembly, 2002); there is also the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing who has dealt intensively with the problem of forced evictions and has recently outlined some basic principals and guidelines on eviction and displacement generated by development (Human Rights Council, 2007). It is also important to highlight the developments and studies done by the Working Groups and the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, particularly in matters relating to indigenous rights to land and territory.

Furthermore, the FAO, with the approval of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, has its own tool that clarifies the practical application of a human rights approach to land issues, agrarian reform and rural development.<sup>17</sup> It is worth highlighting that in the promotion and implementation of international human rights instruments at a national level, the FAO could play a key role, as its role par excellence is precisely advising governments on the design of legal frameworks to regulate land tenure, and the design of public policy and land and rural development projects.

As we mentioned above, the emphasis in the FAO's normative work in recent years has been on land administration policies, methodologies for resolving land conflicts, decentralisation processes and participatory and negotiated territorial development. On the other hand, the question of land redistribution in contexts where land ownership is highly concentrated has been almost completely neglected at a normative level in recent years. This omission is significant because the problem of high concentration of land and the lack of land for large sectors of rural populations is still an issue of concern in a number of regions around the world (Latin America, Southern Africa, South East Asia), and trends towards the (re)concentration of land and the reversal of agrarian reform processes can be clearly perceived in regions of the world where there was previously more egalitarian access to land, such as China, some states in India and West Africa (Akram Lodhi et. al., 2007; Baranyi et. al., 2004; Leite, 2006; Moyo and Yeros, 2005; Guidi and Chuntao, 2006).

As we saw in the section on technical assistance projects, the FAO is *de facto* applying market-based land distribution policies with a number of projects running in cooperation with the World Bank. As we will see in more detail when we present critical reflections on the technical assistance programmes, this model has not delivered the expected results in the countries where it has been applied, as it was unable to effectively overcome the inequalities in access and control of land for wide sectors of the population. (Borras, 2003, 2006; Garoz et. al., 2005; Mondragón, 2006; Sauer, 2006; Sauer and Pereira, 2006; Wegerif, 2005; Lahiff et. al., 2007). Critical revision of the model in theoretical and practical terms, and developing effective alternative models of land redistribution policies in the current context, taking into account the lessons learned from successful present and past agrarian reform processes (Borras, 2006) are urgent tasks. The FAO could play a leading role in that process.

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<sup>17</sup> An example of how a systematic human rights approach could be developed to respond to the question of rural development was produced by Monsalve Suárez (2007), based on the Voluntary Guidelines.



To what extent does the FAO apply its normative work to its fieldwork? It would be interesting to investigate this question in future, to have a better idea of the real capacity of the FAO to influence specific policies and programmes as applied in the different countries; and also whether the results of their studies and research are applied, or whether they are applying other policies in practice. In the latter case, it would also be interesting to look into why, and see what factors are responsible for possible deviations.

In terms of technical assistance, or fieldwork, it is important to reiterate that a systematic evaluation of the real impact of the field programmes is beyond the scope of this study. We have to restrict ourselves to make some brief critical comments based on the evidence we have heard from some countries. As said before, the majority of FAO field projects are related to the regulatory framework for land tenure, including registration, registry offices, titles, demarcation, legal frameworks, fiscal systems, and others. To what extent have these projects benefited the poorer sectors of society? In the case of land deeds in Thailand,<sup>18</sup> the evidence seems negative. In provinces such as Lamphun, in the north of the country, it is documented that during the period of intense economic growth, 1990-93, the process of land-titling led to corruption among those issuing the titles, with fraud being committed over extensive areas of land in favour of foreign beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the communities occupying these lands never even knew deeds were being issued, and were expelled from their lands. It seems, therefore, that the titles did not increase security of land tenure for the most marginalised groups. Forest communities, for example, whose tenancy status is very precarious, were excluded from the programme, which applied only to non-forest land. Furthermore, communal/collective rights to resources were not recognised and it was only possible to register land as an individual. The Dankunbot district in Nakhon Ratchasima province confirmed that the issuing of land titles had led to concentration of lands. The significant cover given to the issuing of land titles over a short period of time in Thailand, meant that purchasing land again became an attractive investment for economically and politically powerful sectors, and, without a doubt, it played a key role in the property speculation experienced in Thailand in the 1990s (Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2006).

The experience in Mozambique seems to have been different from that of Thailand. Following the end of the war in 1992, there was considerable conflict and pressure to privatise and commercialise access to land. In 1995, the government of Mozambique

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<sup>18</sup> This project was carried out by the FAO in cooperation with the World Bank. The negative impacts described here refer to the overall process of land titling as it took place in Thailand. It was not possible to establish the exact role played by the FAO in this process.

embarked on a process of land tenure reform with the support of the FAO. Two Technical Cooperation Programmes and one Governmental Cooperation Programme were implemented between 1995 and 2000, financed by the Dutch Government. This technical assistance was made up of three phases: policy design, legislative reform, and training and implementation. The law approved in 1997 was the product of wide reaching debates between different social actors which established an innovative approach for recognising customary rights and institutions, and the interaction between these, the state and other actors (Tanner, 2001). This process was managed on a highly participatory basis in which the FAO played a key role. This law is viewed by civil society in Mozambique to have been an important achievement (Negrão, 1999; Sucá, 2001; Saruchera and Odhiambo, 2004) that contributed to strengthening security of land tenure for small agriculturalists.

As for access to land projects, the FAO, in cooperation with the World Bank, participated in a project to support the Guatemalan government in the implementation of the Peace Accords and the Land Fund Law with a view to facilitating access to land for the rural poor.<sup>19</sup> The Guatemalan Land Fund operates with a model of voluntary buying and selling of land in which landless groups receive loans to buy land at market prices. Progress made by the Land Fund has been poor. According to evaluatory studies, between 1998 and August 2006 the Land Fund only distributed 87,215 hectares of land, a mere 2.3 per cent of productive land in Guatemala, giving it to around 18,000 families (Gauster, 2006: 84-85).<sup>20</sup> The lands distributed were of poor quality, with bad access routes and scarce water and forestry resources. In fact, nine out of 10 of the properties were abandoned or mortgaged before the purchase took place, which has given rise to the hypothesis that the Land Fund, “actively or by omission, [has been subsidising] the productive transformation of large and inefficient estates, dedicated to traditional export produces, to more profitable activities, such as high-tech, capital intensive agro-industry linked to non-traditional export products” (Garoz et. al., 2005: 43-44). The poor quality of the land, the lack of support for beneficiaries and problems in the selection of beneficiaries has led to a 30 per cent desertion rate among the owners of the newly bought land, while the rate of defaulting on the loans reached 80 per cent of the 214 loans issued (Ibid: 43). The World Bank programme provided for three phases, after the first phase, but the Guatemalan government made no plans to continue the project. Instead FONTIERRAS changed its strategy from promoting market-assisted land distribution to subsidised land rentals which give a short term

<sup>19</sup> As with the case of Thailand, the critical comments made here refer to the general progress of the Land Fund. The specific role of the FAO in support of this project could not be established.

<sup>20</sup> Guatemala has one of the highest indices of land concentration in Latin America: 92.06 per cent of producers (small farmers) cultivate 21.86 per cent of the surface area, while 1.86 per cent of producers (commercial producers) control 56.59 per cent of the agricultural land (Gauster, 2006: 77).

solution to the widespread land demand without upsetting Guatemala's underlying power structure (Gauster and Isakson, 2007: 1533-34).

Future systematic studies of the impact of FAO projects will tell us whether the evidence presented here is simply of isolated cases or whether it reflects wider tendencies. It would also be interesting to investigate the cases in which the FAO has managed to effectively intervene in favour of the most marginalised rural groups and in which cases they have not, and what are the contexts, conditions and factors responsible for a positive or negative outcome.

The issue of coherence between FAO land policies and other policies affecting land use like management of natural resources, forestry, trade, agricultural development, biodiversity, etc. remains a key aspect for future research in order to be able to assess to what extent the FAO is fulfilling its core mandate to combat hunger and rural poverty. In that regard, Barraclough (2001: 12) warns:

“During the 1950s and 1960s, FAO had been one of the most vocal international organizations in calling attention to issues of soil and water conservation, deforestation, dangers of ocean fisheries depletion, loss of biodiversity and the like. Some of its units and staff members had also been consistently concerned with issues of rural poverty, small farmer productivity, popular participation and agrarian reform, as well as their linkages with environmental and economic issues. FAO's major programmes absorbing the greater part of its efforts and resources, however, were directed toward promotion of 'agricultural modernization' and trade in agricultural products and requisites. FAO was especially active in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s in promoting 'green revolution' high-external-input technologies in developing countries with little attention given to the undesirable social and environmental impacts frequently accompanying them. In this sense, FAO's overall development strategy has always been somewhat contradictory. The bulk of its resources have been dedicated to promote agricultural modernization contributing to rather quick increases in production and productivity, but there were always also some efforts, usually by units located elsewhere within the organization, to promote policies and institutions conducive to greater longer-term social equity and natural resource conservation.”

This reflection clearly highlights the fact that FAO is not a homogeneous monolithic actor but rather a battle-ground where conflicting perceptions, values and interests of different social actors face each other.

It is too early to evaluate to what extent ICARRD has made a difference. In any case, the rather progressive ICARRD final declaration is already a victory for civil society after decades of hegemonic neoliberal thinking in land and rural development policies. In terms of procedure – meaning the methodology of interaction between rural social movements, governments and multilateral organizations – ICARRD has been a milestone. Rural social movements and other CSOs have been referring to ICARRD as a good practice model for organising civil society participation in international conferences. As suggested by CSOs, the Second EU Rural Forum held in Berlin in June 2007 followed to an important extent, this practice of opening up a space to small farmers organisations, which had been so far controlled by consultants, private foundations and NGOs. On the other hand, in countries like Honduras, Dominican Republic and Nepal, civil society organisations, inspired by the ICARRD process, have convened broad multi-constituency platforms to discuss policy and action proposals in order to implement ICARRD. The challenge now is to bring together these efforts with supportive initiatives that sympathetic governments and actors within the FAO and IFAD might launch to fulfil ICARRD commitments. Resistance to implementing ICARRD is still very strong, even more in the current context of aggressive agrofuel expansion.

## 5. Conclusions

As an agency for multi-lateral cooperation, the FAO has one of the longest trajectories in the field of land policy and agrarian reform. More or less from its very beginning, the FAO has worked in this field, which is closely linked to its central mandate. The organisation's most intense period of activity was from its founding up until the 1970s, when it played a leading role at the level of international cooperation. In the following period, due to the creation of other agencies such as the UNDP and IFAD and the assumption by the World Bank of a role as a development agency from the 1980s on, the FAO lost the initiative in this field. As well as competition with other agencies, the lack of appropriate financial resources has probably been the most decisive factor in the decline of the FAO. Although it is still an important point of reference, from the 1990s on, the initiative in the design and development of land policies and agrarian reform has been taken up by the World Bank, and in general terms the FAO has followed the policies set by the World Bank.

Nevertheless, and despite its financial restrictions, the FAO seems to provide space for approaching the issue of land and agrarian reform in a multi-dimensional, rather than a purely economic way. It provides a greater plurality of visions in its analysis and projects, as it gives more space for the participation and interaction of rural social movements and other civil society organisations. It is therefore no accident that the International Conference on Agricultural Reform and Rural Development that took place in Brazil in 2006 generated such expectation. Faced with an increase in conflict over land around the world, created to a large extent by the application of structural adjustment programmes, modernisation and economic transformation in the past decades; faced with the historical debt for the plundering of lands committed against indigenous and other peoples as a result of racial discrimination; faced with the persistence of gender inequality, hunger and rural poverty; and faced with environmental deterioration and climate change, broad sectors of civil society see the need to generate profoundly transformatory policies that respond to these problems. With this in mind, they are supporting a revival of the FAO's work in this fundamentally important field. The FAO as an organisation will have to overcome considerable difficulties and the panorama is by no means clear. Civil society, in turn, faces the challenge of knowing how to use the existing spaces, open them up and go deeper into them through critical interaction, in order to build alternatives capable of changing the lives of millions of landless families.

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## Appendix 1

Region/Country	Total FAO projects (\$US)	Projects about land (\$US)
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>		
Argentina	4,104,031	769,870
Bolivia	35,588,810	949,967
Brazil	58,694,689	21,910,044
Chile	3,704,333	685,570
Colombia	19,712,550	500,000
Costa Rica	3,240,540	500,000
Cuba	2,825,187	500,000
Dominica	10,659,928	
Ecuador	2,888,632	500,000
El Salvador	7,891,106	500,000
Grenada	11,144,979	
Guatemala	15,844,152	500,000
Guyana	5,854,430	
Haiti	50,627,258	6,283,611
Honduras	13,710,748	4,144,850
Jamaica	4,088,406	
Mexico	15,032,922	5,494,792
Nicaragua	9,830,332	500,000
Panama	3,164,877	500,000
Paraguay	3,511,023	519,260
Peru	4,457,566	500,000
Dominican Republic	8,817,185	500,000
Saint Kitts and Nevis	12,744,003	
Saint Lucia	10,806,179	
San Vicente and the Grenadines	10,466,363	
Surinam	6,120,099	
Trinidad and Tobago	10,243,046	
Uruguay	3,217,926	
Venezuela	39,988,638	38,969,755
<b>Europe</b>		
Albania	22,884,330	
Armenia	25,855,154	1,381,273
Azerbaijan	28,428,481	
Belarus	5,978,053	
Bosnia Herzegovina	11,166,227	3,438,154

Bulgaria	9,465,819	
Cyprus	381,112	
Croatia	15,853,637	
Slovakia	2,260,000	
Slovenia	6,277,692	
Spain	338,028	
Georgia	26,269,012	1,372,823
Greece	381,112	
Hungary	9,268,663	337,211
Israel	381,112	
Italy	9,081,434	
Latvia	200,125	
Lithuania	545,024	
Macedonia	10,625,014	
Malta	2,803,742	
Poland	624,515	
Republic of Moldavia	10,891,588	
Rumania	12,681,517	
Russia	7,268,170	
Serbia and Montenegro	17,775,142	2,576,514
Turkey	19,155,600	
Ukraine	10,755,436	
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>		
Afghanistan	89,145,322	12,824,404
Bangladesh	45,719,129	
Bhutan	22,740,193	
Cambodia	71,768,403	3,122,840
China	29,149,563	1,868,001
North Korea	17,591,559	
South Korea	15,215,352	
Philippines	35,421,922	2,054,440
India	50,561,149	7,773,404
Indonesia	86,401,584	6,187,338
Kazakhstan	21,979,193	
Kyrgyzstan	34,773,536	
Laos	64,835,552	1,372,823
Malaysia	32,787,152	
Maldives	41,121,970	
Mongolia	23,768,490	

Myanmar	45,672,758	182,320
Nepal	29,642,189	1,788,000
Pakistan	69,190,227	1,953,711
Sri Lanka	57,544,926	
Thailand	58,933,885	
Tajikistan	42,849,535	3,072,823
East Timor	22,923,578	
Turkmenistan	22,113,603	73,000
Uzbekistan	22,791,141	
Vietnam	52,576,169	1,500,000
<b>Near East</b>		
Saudi Arabia	157,748,504	3,980,990
Bahrain	6,600,494	
Djibouti	14,807,921	
Egypt	41,031,189	
Iran	33,207,952	
Iraq	11,0726,517	
Jordan	17,946,533	
Kuwait	6,600,494	
Lebanon	21,447,981	
Libya	36,376,950	
Oman	6,928,379	
Qatar	6,600,494	
Syria	29,944,641	
Somalia	61,908,857	
Sudan	90,137,220	
Yemen	11,674,948	74,900
<b>Africa</b>		
Algeria	28,837,094	5,183,250
Angola	38,904,865	10,247,187
Benin	34,164,415	9,026,105
Botswana	20,961,183	733,399
Burkina Faso	54,958,246	24,313,784
Burundi	36,814,980	10,569,232
Cameroon	27,510,289	4,148,007
Cape Verde	24,796,553	13,310,887
Chad	49,906,709	8,076,420
Comoros	5,548,997	270,000
Congo	23,615,764	1,985,653
Ivory Coast	26,030,567	5,699,546
Egypt	44,711,824	3,888,734

Eritrea	34,346,631	13,255,872
Ethiopia	76,634,545	18,405,489
Gabon	22,978,968	5,607,860
Gambia	20,970,785	558,872
Ghana	20,425,928	818,499
Guinea	24,563,573	4,947,025
Guinea Bissau	21,599,612	4,875,502
Equatorial Guinea	22,713,037	1,183,702
Kenya	48,686,473	15,976,471
Lesotho	38,345,764	18,605,630
Liberia	20,035,006	1,579,749
Libya	36,373,503	558,872
Madagascar	19,344,906	481,390
Malawi	43,918,267	20,258,884
Mali	59,639,308	8,915,897
Morocco	45,288,777	316,606
Mauritania	52,722,322	2,633,056
Mauritius	5,755,648	275,880
Mozambique	93,139,735	32,806,470
Namibia	39,555,049	1,554,795
Niger	55,434,142	11,429,833
Nigeria	68,039,956	47,609,779
Central African Republic	25,750,572	2,670,589
Democratic Republic of Congo	96,029,686	33,577,605
Rwanda	25,337,388	2,892,259
São Tomé and Príncipe	9,275,744	681,842
Senegal	59,640,914	11,516,526
Seychelles	13,249,031	648,400
Sierra Leone	22,983,665	5,768,937
Somalia	62,568,182	28,896,329
South Africa	23,162,355	2,196,794
Sudan	95,460,194	69,607,619
Swaziland	33,845,984	13,435,918
Tanzania	50,315,703	14,535,290
Togo	21,373,447	5,975,641
Tunisia	50,101,671	558,872
Uganda	42,341,117	15,380,508
Djibouti	20,720,800	1,058,556
Zambia	39,384,736	19,553,293
Zimbabwe	51,572,861	32,811,471

## LAND POLICY WORKING PAPER SERIES

The **Land Policy Working Paper Series** is a joint publication of the Belgian Alliance of North-South Movements (11.11.11) and the Transnational Institute (TNI). Activist researchers from various non-governmental research institutions have come together to carry out this collective undertaking.

Three quarters of the world's poor are rural poor. Land remains central to their autonomy and capacity to construct, sustain and defend their livelihoods, social inclusion and political empowerment. But land remains under the monopoly control of the landed classes in many settings, while in other places poor peoples' access to land is seriously threatened by neoliberal policies. The mainstream development policy community have taken a keen interest in land in recent years, developing land policies to guide their intervention in developing countries. While generally well-intentioned, not all of these land policies advance the interest of the rural poor. In fact, in other settings, these may harm the interest of the poor. Widespread privatisation of land resources facilitates the monopoly control of landed and corporate interests in such settings.

Local, national and transnational rural social movements and civil society networks and coalition have taken the struggle for land onto global arenas of policy making. Many of these groups, such as Via Campesina, have launched transnational campaigns to expose and oppose neoliberal land policies. Other networks are less oppositional to these mainstream policies. While transnational land campaigns have been launched and sustained for the past full decade targeting international development institutions, there remains less systematic understanding by activist groups, especially their local and national affiliates, about the actual policy and practice around land issues by these global institutions.

It is in the context of providing modest assistance to rural social movements and other civil society groups that are engaged in transnational land campaigns that this research has been undertaken and the working paper series launched. It aims to provide a one-stop resource to activists engaged in global campaigns for progressive land policy reforms. The research covers analysis of the policies of the following institutions: (1) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); (2) World Bank; (3) European Union; (4) International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); (5) UK Department for International Development (DFID); (6) Belgian Development Aid; (7) German Technical Assistance (GTZ); (8) Australian Aid (AusAid); (9) Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA).

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**FIAN** is an international human rights organization working for the right to feed oneself. It was founded in 1986, and can count on members in more than 50 countries. The aim of FIAN is to contribute in the whole world to the implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights. FIAN works in particular for the right to feed oneself of persons and groups threatened by hunger and malnutrition.

[www.fian.org](http://www.fian.org)

**11.11.11** is a coalition of the Flemish North-South Movements. It combines the efforts of 90 organisations and 375 committees of volunteers who work together to achieve one common goal: a fairer world without poverty.

[www.11.be](http://www.11.be)

### **TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE**

Founded in 1974, TNI is an international network of activist scholars committed to critical analyses of the global problems of today and tomorrow. It aims to provide intellectual support to grassroots movements concerned to steer the world in a democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable direction. The Environmental Justice project aims to unveil existing injustice issues of land use and conflict, pollution, water issues, deforestation and agriculture, through in-depth research, multimedia, linking issues, education and the promotion of transnational solidarity.

[www.tni.org](http://www.tni.org)



The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has a long history of work in the field of land policy and agrarian reform, playing a lead role in international co-operation from its founding up until the 1970s. But a lack of appropriate financial resources saw it gradually eclipsed during the 1980s. From the 1990s on, the initiative in the design and development of land policies and agrarian reform has been taken up by the World Bank, with the FAO generally following its policies.

Could the FAO provide space for an alternative approach to the issue of land and agrarian reform? Sofie Monsalve Suárez examines this possibility. She shows that the FAO, unlike the World Bank, has the potential to deal with agrarian reform in a multi-dimensional rather than a purely economic way. Such a course is by no means assured, since the FAO is a battle ground where conflicting perceptions and interests meet, but some cause for optimism can be found. In particular, the positive example of the International Conference on Agricultural Reform and Rural Development in Brazil in 2006, a victory for civil society after decades of neoliberal hegemony in land and rural development policies, offers new political opportunities.