



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Round Table Discussion on Enhancing
Food Security through Sustainable
Agriculture - Quezon City, Philippines -
4 July 2011

Regional Consultative Meeting, U.N.
Women South Asia Office -
Kathmandu, Nepal - 7-8 July 2011

ILC Monitoring Workshop - Jakarta,
Indonesia - 11-15 July 2011

Republic day celebrated by sowing the paddy seeds on road by landless people

With the support of National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) and Abhiyaan Nepal, the landless people of Sunsari sowed the paddy seeds all around the road on 29 May 2011 on the occasion of Republic Day. According to the people of Sunsari, different movements were held in the past; however, until now, no progress is prominent. The political members lack commitment, despite of bringing into action. Frustrated from the slow pace of activities, a group of activists spearheaded a protest program by sowing seeds on the road. They also warned that they will plant more seeds on the road on 22 June 2011.

Tearing through the Water Landscape: Evaluating the environmental and social consequences of POSCO project in Odisha, India

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Background

On 2 May 2011, Indian Environment and Forest Minister Jairam Ramesh finally approved the diversion of over 3,000 acres of forest land (of the 4,000 acres demanded) for a steel-power-port complex of the POSCO India project. Earlier in the year, on 31 January 2011, Ramesh had approved the environmental and coastal regulation zone clearances that the project had secured in 2007. However, it turns out that all these clearances were obtained by fraud, as proved by an independent investigative committee appointed by the MoEF last year as well as by another expert committee.

Forest Rights denied is violation of Fundamental Rights

The diversion of forests for non-industrial use by POSCO was based on "categorical assurances" that Jairam Ramesh sought from the Odisha Government, that the Forest Rights Act did not apply to communities affected directly and indirectly by POSCO. The Odisha Government gave him this assurance on the basis of fraudulent claims that there were no non-traditional forest dwellers and tribes in the POSCO project affected villages of Jagatsinghpur, thus making this massive land transfer merely an administrative arrangement. The Odisha Government accused Shishir Mahapatra, the Sarpanch of Dhinkia Panchayat, of fraud in providing resolutions of Palli Sabhas, demonstrating that not only were there OTFDs and tribal people in the project affected area, but that they had been dependent on the region's natural resources, particularly forests, for centuries. Ramesh did not hesitate for a moment and questioned this claim by the Odisha Government. On the basis of this uncertainty in fact, he proceeded to support the POSCO clearance, claiming it was of "strategic importance" to India.

Authorising the loot of India's natural resources:

As the single largest industrial foreign direct investment ever in India (with a capital cost of Rs. 51,000 crores at 2005 prices), POSCO's ambitions in India aren't merely of locating a steel-power-port complex in the ecologically sensitive Jagatsinghpur district. In fact, company officials have submitted before the investigative committees that they will not invest in the steel-port complex if permission is not granted to mine for iron ore in over 6,100 acres of dense jungle in the Kandadhar Hills in Sundergarh district. Most of the iron ore mined is for export without any local value addition, and thus will serve the economic interests of South Korea and POSCO stockholders – mainly American banks and Warren Buffet, one of the world's richest's individuals. POSCO has also demanded a dedicated railway line to the port, which means additional land demands. Furthermore, the project requires at least 2,000 acres for a township for its employees, and diversion of drinking water from the Jobra barrage for industrial use. All this has been agreed to by the Odisha Government when the project MOU was signed in 2005, but the people have been kept in the dark of the real consequences of the amount of looting of India's non-renewable natural resources.

The Making of a 'Right-less People' by Jairam Ramesh

Over 13,000 acres is merely the demand of land for realising POSCO's dream venture in India. Thousands of families will be displaced, and suffer irreparable damage to their lives and livelihoods. It is time we appreciated that this steel-power-port-township-mining project is the single largest industrial venture conceived in recent memory, and that such a scale of investment will be done only because we are gifting highly expensive and excellent iron ore for POSCO to make stupendous profits. There is absolutely no benefit for India in this deal, and what POSCO will leave behind, if they succeed at all, is a lot of fly ash, destroyed ecologically sensitive coastal and forest environments, and thousands of people in misery.

To help appreciate the full consequences of the POSCO investment in India, Environment Support Group, a not-for-profit public interest research, training, campaign, and advocacy initiative, has produced a study entitled *Tearing through the Water Landscape: Evaluating the environmental and social consequences of POSCO project in Odisha, India* is co-authored by Leo Saldanha and Bhargavi Rao. This study was undertaken at the request of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (POSCO Project Resistance Movement), leading the opposition against the POSCO project. The study reveals on the basis of extensive review of historical, ecological, social, and economic evidence that Jairam Ramesh's support for POSCO is nothing but a highly condemnable act that legitimises fraud and corruption in environmental decision making. As a result, the study reveals that Ramesh has today become the architect of one of India's greatest planned disasters that begins its ominous initiative by turning the affected communities into a 'right-less people', as their fundamental rights have been snatched on the basis of "faith and trust" in the Odisha Government's lies.

Women's Legal Empowerment Workshop

STAR Kampuchea organized a workshop on Women's Legal Empowerment at the Hotel Goldiana in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 11 to 15 June 2011. Participants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines were in attendance, with inputs from CCIM, LICADHO, ActionAid, NPA, COHRE, Oxfam, and FAO. The workshop highlighted a number of successes in the project countries, and this is useful for other countries, such as Cambodia, to learn from.



**CSO Land Monitoring Writers' Workshop
16-17 May 2011; Bangkok, Thailand**

Land Watch Asia (LWA) is a regional campaign to ensure that access to land, agrarian reform and sustainable development for the rural poor are addressed in national and regional development agenda. One of the advocacy activities of LWA involves monitoring land/agrarian reform programs. It is viewed that such monitoring improves land governance vital in addressing rural poverty and food security issues. It provides the necessary feedback in assessing program implementation while ensuring the accountability of program implementers.

In 2010, the Land Watch Asia campaign implemented an ILC-supported project on CSO land reform monitoring. An initial output of this project is a framework for a CSO-led Land Monitoring Report which was piloted in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines. The framework will focus on two aspects: namely land tenure and access to land. Land tenure refers to the rules, authorities, institutions, rights and norms that govern access to and control over land and related resources.

The writer's workshop provided an opportunity for CSO partners in Cambodia, India, Nepal and Pakistan to understanding the monitoring framework. Country plans were then formulated to initiate the piloting processes in these countries.



Consultation meeting on formulation of land policy

A consultation meeting was held on 3rd June 2011 in the chairmanship of the Secretary of the Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MoLRM) of Nepal regarding the formulation of a national land policy. The meeting was followed by sharing government plans and priorities in formulating a national land policy. The meeting attendees agreed to elaborate on the concept note in the form of terms of Reference (TOR) and a budget, including a timeline to streamline the land policy formulation. A task force committee was formed to develop the TOR and plan of action.

The attendees include: Mr. Krishna BC, Joint Secretary, MoLRM – Coordinator; Mr. Jagat Basnet, CSRC; Mr. Krishna Pathak, The Lutheran World Federation Nepal; and Mr. Anil Marasini, Chief Survey Officer, MoLRM.

Thus, the task force will deliver a work plan, which will have a detailed plan of action, budget, and TOR by 17th June, 2011.

Demonstrations by Haruwa/Charuwa

On 25 May 2011 in the jointly-initiated Haruwa/Charuwa Rights Forum, Land Rights Forum, and Janchetana Dalit Sangam, the Haruwa Charuwa of Saptari held a widespread demonstration. Even though Haruwa Charuwa slavery has been abolished for 85 years, until now, nothing has been done to stop the practice. Thus, all of the participants revolted and put forth the demand, including the end of Haruwa/Charuwa practice, provision of agricultural grants, rehabilitation service, Interest free loan, free education for children, dismissal of loan, and people's constitution respectively. There were 2700 participants in the rally demonstration.

SDDPA Documentation of Conflicts

The first project for the documentation of conflicts in select areas in the Mehabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh concluded with the identification of 35 cases, covering 247 acres of land and 238 beneficiaries in 10 villages. The project period was over six months, and due to unavoidable circumstances, the project period was extended to two more months. After documentation of the cases concluded, the documentation paper was submitted to the ILC. Subsequently, the narrative report also was submitted to the ILC.

In continuation of this programme, another project was approved for six months starting from 1 December 2010. The grant amount is US \$ 5000. Accordingly, we have identified another 10 villages near the first 10 villages covered in the first phase. This project also is under completion and we have to submit the final report as soon as possible. We had identified 63 land conflict cases in 10 villages, and the total land involved in the cases covers 231.5 acres. The common interest groups are formed at the village level and the legal awareness on land-related issues was given at the village and mandal levels. The federation of all the groups is under process to create an infrastructure to fight against land grabbers.

Capacity Building and Learning Activities

CSRC Nepal organized a round table discussion on Land Grabbing and Food Insecurity in Nepal, held at SAP Phalcha, Kathmandu, Nepal, on 17 June 2011. A half-day interaction programme was organized with the active participation of various stakeholders including the Chair of parliament committee of Natural Resource and coordinator of sub-committee of Land Reform and Management. A learning and monitoring visit also took place from 15 to 19 June 2011 for all staff members by exchanging each other's working areas and documenting all the progress and challenges collectively. Finally, a National Land Rights Forum Assembly took place from 20 to 21 June 2011. CSRC has been working among 50 districts and at least two participants from each district participated in the Assembly.

SARRA organized a forum from 25 to 30 June for 20 participants from 5 provinces (Rajasthan, Orissa, Pondichery, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh). The forum is on the importance of land rights regulation and on natural farming hands-on training. This programme was an advanced course for senior professionals from the NGO sector and for doctorate students.



After long wait, farmers take over Hacienda Bacan

Sixty-eight farmer-beneficiaries finally took over Hacienda Bacan in Isabela, Negros Occidental, in a tightly guarded installation ceremony on June 28, over the objections of one of the former landowners, Negros congressman and former presidential brother-in-law Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo. The farmers were installed in 148.22 hectares covered by Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), out of the total 157. The installation was long overdue and took place despite the legal manipulations of the Arroyos whose Rivulet Corporation was the formal owner of the land.

Provincial agrarian reform officer Felix Servidad led the installation, accompanied by 40 policemen and 52 soldiers from the Third Infantry Division of the Philippine Army's 47th Infantry Battalion. But farmers loyal to the Arroyos tried to stop the installation. Thirty of them set up a bamboo gate serving as a barricade in front of the main entrance to the hacienda. They also parked a tractor near the barricade.

Helen Gradiola, who introduced herself as administrator of Rivulet Corporation, led the pro-Arroyo farmers. When Servidad arrived and started calling the roll of beneficiaries, Gradiola asked Servidad to delay the installation and wait for the arrival of Arroyo and his lawyer Ruy Rondain. Gradiola also told Servidad the Supreme Court had issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) stopping the installation of the farmers. But Servidad rebuked her and said it was his job to install the farmers on Hacienda Bacan, since they had been holding Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOA) for years now.

At the roll call, the farmer-beneficiaries held up their copies of the CLOA, waving the documents in the air. They also held their CLOAs aloft during the march towards the installation area, about half kilometer from the gate. After the farmers were installed, they immediately started to fence off the

land, and then sat down to a lunch of stewed pork, beans and rice. Also present during the installation were members of the German group International Peace Observers Network.

Charito Celis, head of the Hacienda Bacan farmer-beneficiaries association which is affiliated with Task Force Mapalad, said she was delighted with the installation. "We are extremely happy that after 10 years of struggle, we can now start our lives with peace and with the land that we own." She added, "We dedicate our victory to Rogelio Salvan who was with us throughout the long struggle. I can feel he is with us." Salvan died in November last year while he and his fellow farmers were holding a protest camp in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Quezon City. The farmers were pushing President Benigno Aquino III and Agrarian Reform Secretary Gil delos Reyes to distribute the Arroyo properties and other big problematic landholdings.

Salvan's wife Conchitina was among the installed farmers. She held here tears when her husband's name was called during the roll call. "I am sad that Rogelio is no longer with us to taste our victory," she said. "But I am happy that we finally gained what we have longed for, a land we can call our own." As of June 29, the farmer-beneficiaries were continuing with the task of fencing their land and building huts inside the hacienda. #

Private-Public Partnerships for Land Investments: A Regional Workshop on Land Grabbing

06-07 June 2011; Bangkok, Thailand

Private sector investments in agriculture have been increasing in Asia. This is evident in the growth of Foreign Direct Investments in South, East and Southeast Asia, and the steady rise of trade within Asia's borders. Increased land investments are putting great pressure on fertile, cultivable lands. Most of these investments have resulted to the conversion of agriculture, forest and foreshore lands into plantations, and commercial and industrial centers. Moreover, these agricultural investments, when unregulated, tend to undermine land occupants in the way deals are contracted, the type of agricultural production adopted and the technologies employed. These transactions come in various modalities: government to government, private companies to government, private companies to private companies.

It is in this context that this regional CSO workshop was organized with the view of contributing to the understanding of the various faces and modes of land agricultural investments. The participants from eight Asian countries identified the following areas of cooperation: a) empowerment thru capacity building, b) advocacy with national governments, c) critical engagement with the private sector; and d) regional advocacy thru collaboration of CSOs.

