

In This Issue:

RDI Receives Grant from the Gates Foundation to Help Rural Families in India!

RDI is happy to announce a \$6.7 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help landless women and their families achieve food security and escape poverty through “micro-land ownership” in Orissa and West Bengal. [More...](#)

Creating a Prosperous China: A Look Inside China's New Economic Landscape

You've probably been following RDI's breaking news broadcasts about China's historic rural land policies announced last month. Why is this story seizing global media attention? Read more to learn what China's biggest economic reform could mean for global prosperity. [More...](#)

Save the Date: RDI's Third Annual International Women's Day Luncheon on May 12!

Last year, hundreds converged in Seattle for RDI's second annual International Women's Day celebration, a forum to raise awareness and support for women's land rights. Join in this year's event and help create a more secure future for women and girls. [More...](#)

RDI Names Renée Giovarelli as First Senior Fellow of its Global Center for Women's Land Rights

RDI is pleased to welcome internationally renowned gender and property rights expert Renée Giovarelli to help lead the efforts of the world's first Global Center for Women's Land Rights. [More...](#)

Act Now: Support RDI and Double Your Impact with a Dollar for Dollar Match!

Thanks to the generosity of the Weyerhaeuser Foundation, your gift to RDI will go twice as far in helping to create a more prosperous world with a dollar-for-dollar match until December 31! [More...](#)

RDI Receives \$6.7 Million Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Help Women and Their Families Achieve Food Security, Escape Poverty in India

RDI is thrilled to announce a \$6.7 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help landless women and their families achieve food security and escape poverty through “micro-land ownership” in India!

This new initiative will focus on strengthening the property rights of women, who comprise the majority of India's agricultural labor force yet lack secure access or rights to land.

In India, one of the most impoverished countries in the world, poverty and hunger are primarily concentrated in rural areas where families rely on the land for their nutrition, income and status. With over 15 million landless rural households in India, the majority are agricultural laborers surviving on less than \$1 per day.



RDI is working to end poverty and create food security by helping rural women and their families obtain secure access to land.

Since the late-1990s, RDI has worked closely with national, state and local governments to secure land rights for India's rural poor by demonstrating that a little bit of land can yield enormous benefits, including food security, income and status. This grant will allow RDI to expand its micro-land ownership work to the states of Orissa and West Bengal.

Like the idea that catalyzed the micro-lending movement, RDI's micro-land ownership initiative has demonstrated that you don't need large farms to provide meaningful benefits. Even 1/10th of an acre can provide enormous benefits to poor families—particularly women and girls who make their living as agricultural laborers—including better nutrition and health, increased incomes, agricultural growth and security.



“Agricultural productivity has a significant impact on the livelihoods of the world’s poorest people,” says Raj Shah, director of the Agricultural Development program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “Women provide the majority of agricultural labor but are underrepresented at every level of agricultural development. Helping these smallholder farmers get more from their land can increase their status, income, health, and ultimately empower them to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.”

Last December, India's central government endorsed micro-land ownership as a key strategy for poverty alleviation by including it in its 11th Five-Year Plan. Since landlessness is the best predictor of poverty in India, the Five-Year Plan

aims to allot micro-plots the size of one-tenth of an acre to landless rural families in India. After years of intensive research and assistance to state and national policymakers, it is exciting to see the national government embrace key RDI-proposed programs for micro-land ownership.

But while the political will is there, the state government programs are unlikely to reach that potential without external, private assistance to address several limitations.

This grant will allow RDI to assist local or state governments to obtain and analyze data needed to effectively plan and implement the programs; to monitor and evaluate the program processes or impacts; to train local officials charged with implementation; to help beneficiaries make the most effective use of their plots through high quality agricultural inputs and extension services, and to link beneficiaries with other government programs that could make the plots more productive.

To learn more about RDI's work in India, click [here](#).

Creating a Prosperous China: A Look Inside China's New Economic Landscape

You've probably been following RDI's breaking news broadcasts about the historic announcement of China's new rural land policies over the last few weeks. On October 19, Chinese leaders announced a new rural growth policy (the Central Committee Decision on Several Important Issues of Pushing Forward Rural Reforms and Development) designed to increase the income of China's 800 million farmers by the year 2020, setting in motion what could be the nation's biggest economic reform in years and laying out a blueprint for the future.

The story made headlines in major newspapers all over the world, with economists speculating about the potential economic potential that could be unleashed in China's vast rural sector.

The story made headlines in major newspapers all over the world, with economists speculating about the potential economic potential that could be unleashed in China's vast rural sector.

Why is this news so important?

Under the policy, China's farmers will receive more secure rights to their land—giving them more freedom in transferring their land rights—signaling an important shift in the country's land management system. This is a significant step toward more long-term, marketable land rights for individual farmers.

Embracing many of the recommendations from RDI's regular surveys of rural families, the government's new policy will allow China's 800 million peasants to engage in almost unrestricted trade of land use rights—good for 30 years. Adopting such a system is seen as a significant move toward fully secure land rights, allowing farmers to trade, purchase or sell their land rights.

Strengthening protection of farmers' land rights is an important structural policy change that could have a profound long-term impact, because it will help boost consumer confidence among rural households in the short run, and encourage investment and improve productivity in the agricultural sector in the longer term.

Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide, Ending Unrest

While China's urban cities have profited enormously from economic reforms over the last two decades, residents in the countryside have lagged further and further behind. Today, the income disparity between rural and urban Chinese is one of the largest gaps in the world.

As rural land is increasingly taken for development and urbanization, the issue has become a source of social unrest; there are over 20,000 violent protests each year.

To feed China's economic boom, local officials expropriate land for sale to manufacturers or property developers. Farmers allege that the process is rife with corruption, with local officials profiting from these development projects and farmers not given adequate compensation. More than 40 million farmers in China have lost their farmland to satisfy the demands of urban economic growth. The majority of families received little or no compensation, and most lack the education and skills to find alternative income.

To help reduce this social unrest, RDI is creating **Legal Aid and Education Centers staffed by "barefoot lawyers."** The initiative recently won the [World Bank's Development Marketplace competition](#), where it was chosen out of 1,800 applicants from around the world as an innovative strategy to reduce poverty.

The project will provide legal aid and education to China's rural poor and local officials via "barefoot lawyers"—RDI-trained lawyers and law students who will work to raise awareness among farmers and local officials, defend farmers against violations and ensure that farmers receive adequate compensation if their land is taken for development projects.

RDI's Legal Aid and Education Centers will provide free and accessible legal aid to these families. Last week, RDI received additional support for the initiative from the U.S.-China Legal Cooperation Center.

Providing Food Security

All rural land in China is owned by village collectives; each household is allocated a share, which gives land-use rights under 30 year contracts. However, this land can be "readjusted" at any time by village cadres, or seized for urban development.

As a result, farmers have no security and no incentive to invest in their land. This has resulted in diminishing crop yields, a loss in biodiversity,



and local climate change. With cheap, short-term chemical fertilizers, much of China's arable soil is contaminated, raising concerns about food safety. Loss of arable land to development and contamination at a time of spiking food prices and food shortages could have serious consequences for China's agricultural productivity.

China's new policy echoes RDI's recommendations to lengthen the 30-year rights given to rural families and eliminate land readjustment, providing rural families with more security. The guiding principle is to "grant to farmers more complete and more secure land contracting and operation rights and maintaining the current contracting relationship stable for a long time without change."

Towards Economic Prosperity

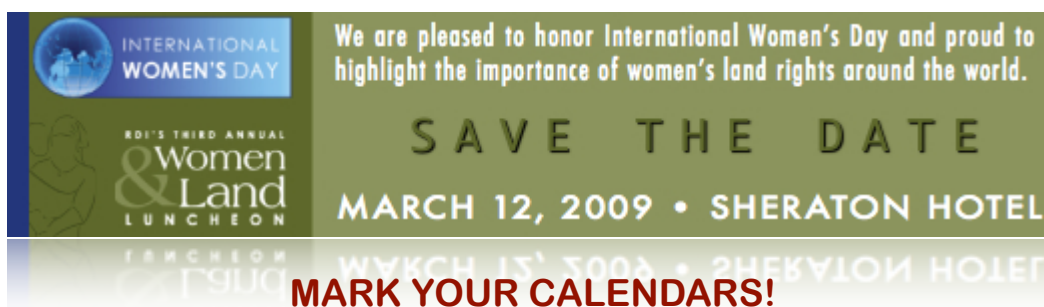
While the news of China's new policy portends great trends for China's prosperity, it must be implemented for China—and the world—to reap the benefits.

RDI is committed to helping China implement these land policies, and **thanks to the generosity of the Weyerhaeuser Foundation, all tax-deductible gifts to RDI's work in China will be matched dollar-for-dollar until December 31!**

Thank you for your support to help create a prosperous world for all.

To support RDI's work through an online donation, click [here](#).

Save the Date: RDI's Third Annual International Women's Day Luncheon on May 12!



On **Thursday, March 12**, RDI will hold its third annual International Women's Day (IWD) luncheon for women's land rights at the Sheraton in downtown Seattle.

Now in its third year, RDI's annual International Women's Day event celebrates global efforts to strengthen the rights of women and girls in the developing world. Last year, hundreds converged in Seattle to raise awareness and support for strengthening property rights for rural women and girls as a key strategy to help end poverty, increase food security and improve economic stability.

This year's Keynote Address will be given by **Ambassador Swanee Hunt**, president of the Hunt Alternatives Fund and Founding Director of the Women & Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

The event Co-Chairs are **Jill Ruckelshaus**, Costco Board of Directors, and **Mimi Gardner Gates** of the Seattle Art Museum. The MC will be **Nancy Carter-Foster**, Senior Advisor for Health Affairs at the U.S. State Department.

Stay tuned for more details. We look forward to having you join us on March 12!

For more information about RDI's International Women's Day event, click [here](#).

RDI Names Renée Giovarelli as first Senior Fellow of the Global Center for Women's Land Rights

RDI is pleased to welcome gender and legal consultant Renée Giovarelli as its first Senior Fellow for the new Global Center for Women's Land Rights!

Giovarelli is an internationally renowned legal and policy consultant on gender issues related to land tenure reform, land market development, farm reorganization, rural development, and land conflicts. She has consulted on gender and land reform with the World Bank, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, ARD, Asian Development Bank, USAID, Ford Foundation and UNHABITAT.

Giovarelli pioneered RDI's Women and Land program in 2000, and is one of the world's leading experts on women's land rights. She has also been an adjunct professor in Law, Economic Development and Social Change at Seattle University School of Law.

RDI announced its commitment to create a Global Center for Women's Land Rights at the 2007 Clinton Global Initiative, where it was highlighted by former President Bill Clinton as an innovative strategy for alleviating poverty. Housed within RDI, the Center will focus on strengthening secure land rights for women, who provide 60 to 80 percent of the world's food production, yet own less than 5 percent of the world's titled land.

Research has shown that when women have secure land rights, they are better able to improve their lives and those of their families. The ripple effect of investing in women and girls changes not only their lives, but their families, communities and regional economies. Women and girls invest 90 percent of income back in their family, ensuring that prosperity is passed on to future generations.

However, there is a dearth of experts in the field to address the complex legal and policy issues that must be faced in correcting, over time, the dramatic imbalance in land ownership between men and women. The Global Center for Women's Land Rights will address this shortage of expertise by drawing together a community of practice around these issues, and helping to provide resources and training for legal professionals.

RDI envisions the Global Center for Women's Land Rights as a clearinghouse for laws, best practices and supporting research related to women's legal and customary rights to land throughout the world, including marriage, family laws and inheritance laws.

Stay tuned for more information about these efforts over the coming months.

To learn more about RDI's Global Center for Women's Land Rights, click [here](#).

To view a sample of Giovarelli's publications on women's property rights, click [here](#).



Renée Giovarelli (right) receives an award at the World Bank's Development Marketplace competition in 2002 for an initiative to help village leaders in the Kyrgyz Republic overcome resistance to land privatization.

This Month, Double Your Impact with a Dollar-for-Dollar Match and Turn Poverty into Prosperity

You may be overwhelmed with a variety of holiday notes in your mailbox. But amidst all of the letters that may come your way this season, we hope that our message will stand out.

Why? Because **RDI's work affects whole economies, helping hundreds of thousands of people** to lift themselves out of poverty and become self-sufficient.

Our approach to poverty is highly leveraged, with ripple effects that flow to future generations, helping to turn poverty into prosperity for thousands of families.

Your support is the reason this is possible.

Thanks to the generosity of the Weyerhaeuser Foundation, **your gift to RDI will go twice as far in helping to create a more prosperous world** with a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$25,000 until December 31!

Don't miss this incredible opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of these families and our global economy. Please give today!



[DONATE NOW!](#)

We need your help more than ever. As a result of the global economic slowdown, the world's poorest people are hungrier, sicker and have fewer jobs. Your gift can help create a new future.

Our work depends on support from people just like you who share our commitment to ending poverty and recognize the need for laws and policies that get to the root of the issue and help make structural changes. Secure land rights remove barriers, helping to put resources in family's hands.

[Please help RDI to secure land rights for the world's poorest through your tax-deductible gift.](#)

Together, we can create sustainable solutions to poverty and a safer, more just world.