



October 14, 2015

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact:

Rena Singer

[renas@landesa.org](mailto:renas@landesa.org)

**LANDESA RECEIVES HILTON HUMANITARIAN PRIZE, WORLD'S LARGEST  
HUMANITARIAN AWARD**

*The Hilton Foundation recognizes Landesa for its efforts to alleviate human suffering*

NEW YORK – Landesa, an international nonprofit organization that works to strengthen land rights as a pathway out of poverty for millions of the world's poorest women and men, today was awarded the Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

Established by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to recognize organizations that make extraordinary contributions to alleviating human suffering, the \$2 million prize is the world's largest.

"Landesa's vision is a world free of extreme poverty – a vision made possible by securing land rights for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people throughout the world," said Conrad N. Hilton Foundation President and CEO Steven Hilton. "We are proud to recognize Landesa for its dedication to lifting individuals, their families, and entire communities out of poverty, and we know that the organization will put the Hilton Prize to good use."

Landesa joins the Hilton Prize Coalition, established in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Hilton Prize and comprised of all 20 Hilton Prize Laureate organizations.

"We are incredibly grateful that the Conrad N. Hilton Prize jurors have selected Landesa as the recipient of the 20th Hilton Humanitarian Prize," said Landesa President and CEO Chris Jochnick. "And we're delighted by their recognition that secure land rights are transformational for the world's poor."

Landesa works with governments and other local organizations to strengthen land rights through laws, policies, and programs, creating scalable, leveraged solutions that help not just individuals or individual families, but entire communities climb out of poverty.

"Land rights as a foundation for broad-based economic development are too often overlooked," Jochnick said. "In India, for instance, the greatest predictor of poverty isn't illiteracy or low caste. The greatest predictor of poverty is landlessness. There are an estimated 18 million rural families who are completely landless, and many times that number of families have insecure rights to the land on which they rely. With secure land rights, women and men have the opportunity, incentive and security to improve their harvest, and thereby their lives. We look forward to leveraging the Hilton Humanitarian Prize to bring more attention to this work, which can bring much needed economic security for the world's most vulnerable populations."

One of the pillars of Landesa's work is a focus on women's rights to land. Innovative programs include:

- A partnership with the government of Odisha to open more than 70 Women's Support Centers in India, which connect divorced, widowed and abandoned women and their children with government services, including land distribution programs.
- Advocacy efforts from China to India that have strengthened women's rights to land in law and in practice.
- A partnership with Rwanda's National Women's Council to educate women and men about women's rights to land.

"In the world's poorest rural societies, secure rights to land is everything," said Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Vice President and Prize Director Judy Miller. "Land serves as a source of food, housing, income and credit, and it can both empower individuals, and provide social status and influence."

Almost 50 years ago, University of Washington Law School Professor, Roy Prosterman planted the seed that became Landesa with his work on land reform efforts in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. More than 50 countries later, the organization has strengthened land rights for more than 115 million families -- from reforming national land laws in Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, to helping tenant farmers in Vietnam and El Salvador gain rights to the land they farm. Today, Landesa has programs underway in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, China, Myanmar, and India.

Each year, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation reviews hundreds of nominations from notable nonprofit organizations from across the globe, and an independent, international panel of distinguished jurors make the final selection of the Humanitarian Prize recipient after a rigorous vetting process.

For more information, please contact: Rena Singer [renas@landesa.org](mailto:renas@landesa.org)

To learn more about Landesa, please visit [www.landesa.org](http://www.landesa.org).

###