



SUMMER 2023

IMPACT REPORT





Dear Friends,

As I write to you, I am reflecting on the exciting growth Landesa has experienced over the past year. As the global community has come to recognize the vital role played by land rights, Landesa's track record and experience has attracted several significant investments in our work. As you likely know, this includes an unprecedented gift from author and philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

With this growing support, we have set a 5-year target of empowering 400 million women to improve their lives. We know that when women have control over their land, better things happen for them, their families, and the communities in which they live. And when women have a stronger voice in decisions about land management and conservation—where secure land rights are often a

prerequisite—better outcomes follow for sustainable agriculture, climate action, and our one shared planet.

Unfortunately, we also know that women are still systemically denied equal property rights by law and custom in the majority of the world's countries. That reality provides a critical opportunity for change. Working with partners around the world, Landesa is targeting laws and policies that need to be reformed, and helping to address those other forces that deny women equal rights to land.

I am excited to share these examples from Landesa's programs that put women at the forefront of change. Thank you for all your support.

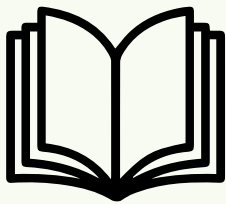
Chris Jochnick, President & CEO



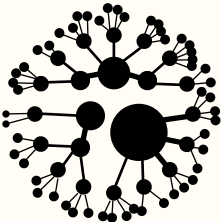


GLOBAL IMPACT

As a result of Landesa’s work in the last year,



166,559 people
received land rights training
and education (*97% women*)



734,700 people
stand to benefit from improved
government or CSO capacity (*63% women*)



432,900,000 women
stand to benefit from better laws and policies
*Learn more about the amendment to China’s Law on the
Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests on page 11.*



Photo by Mohammad Ashraful Huda

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

STRENGTHENING LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND THE WORLD

LAND lies at the root of prosperity. It is fundamental for food security, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods. Yet between unequal laws and discriminatory social norms, women encounter obstacle after obstacle to enjoying the benefits of secure rights to land.

Landesa's Center for Women's Land Rights and the Stand for Her Land campaign work to remove these obstacles, opening pathways to prosperity for women and their communities.

The Stand for Her Land Campaign

Landesa acts as Global Secretariat for Stand for Her Land (S4HL), the global campaign for women's land rights. S4HL's Global Steering Committee works in tandem with national coalitions in six countries to amplify

the voices of grassroots women and make land rights a reality for millions of women around the world.

S4HL Bangladesh

Inheritance is one of the most common ways people can acquire land and property rights of their own. But in many regions, cultural norms discriminate against widows and daughters. Social and customary practices denying women's rights to land—sometimes by means of inheritance discrimination—linger in 90 countries worldwide.

As one of the paths to challenge social norms related to inheritance, S4HL national coalitions are amplifying examples of families who choose to bequeath land to their daughters.

One such family can be found in a rural village in Faridpur District, Bangladesh, a short distance from the capital of Dhaka. Monoara Begum (*left*) is a divorced mother of two, who left an abusive marriage—and with it, her home and access to land to earn a living. In that moment, her father made a choice to give her a piece of family land to build a home, and another plot of farmland.

The decision defied social norms in Bangladesh that favor men in land and inheritance rights. When asked about his decision, Monoara's father laughed at the idea he had gone against social customs and insisted his daughter should have her right to land. It was an inspiring choice, and a surprising one in a country where less than 5 percent of land in Bangladesh is held by women, despite the fact that women constitute nearly 3 out of every 4 of the country's farmers.

S4HL works to ensure more stories play out like Monoara's. The Bangladesh S4HL Coalition of women-led grassroots organizations engages in collective advocacy to address discrimination around women's land rights, at both legal and social levels, so more women can access, inherit, and own land.

S4HL Colombia

In Colombia, the S4HL Coalition is strengthening women's land rights in the Caribbean Region through the Feminist School, a demand-driven comprehensive series of trainings developed by Coalition lead CINEP, for women leaders, activists, and community members from six women's organizations in the region. The women leaders will take their learnings and then conduct them again with more women in their communities.

During the first module of the Feminist School (*below*), women leaders learned about rights to land and territory in Colombia, and specifically about the rights of rural women. They explored the impact of gendered barriers to land ownership and access to resources and discussed strategies for overcoming these barriers. The training also provided them with the tools and knowledge to advocate for their rights and to resist threats. The training is timely because violence against women is becoming more acute and visible.

One participant commented, "All this knowledge learned during this Feminist School module leads us to reflect, investigate and communicate about all

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In South Asia, women disproportionately experience the impacts of climate change, including warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and glacial and coastal flooding.



those barriers that exist so that as owners of our territories and our lands, we can break all the stigma that shows us as weak.” Another shared: “We leave thinking that this gathering will continue to sustain us, we hope that the world will be different for us rural women, that our seeds will be the basis for growth and that together we will lose our fear.” The next part of this school is for women leaders to take what they have learned and use it to conduct training for women in their respective communities.

At the global level, S4HL provides a voice for local actors in influential conversations around sustainable development, including regional and international bodies like the UN and African Union. By combining advocacy at the grassroots and global levels, the S4HL campaign is influencing policy that can impact over 140 million rural women while focusing efforts that ensure better policies are put into practice.

Women-Led Collective Advocacy for Climate Action

As land stewards, women hold immense potential to build climate resilience. Yet with livelihoods dependent on a diversity of natural resources, women often experience the impacts of climate change more acutely.

Landesa works in three countries experiencing significant climate risk—Bangladesh, Nepal, and Maldives—to advance women-led collective action against climate change. Together with the International Land Coalition and a land-focused organization in each country, Landesa is supporting formation of a national coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Maldives and strengthening existing national coalitions in Bangladesh and Nepal, to ultimately foster climate resilience, effective advocacy, and gender-equitable land rights.

In May of this year, each of the three country coalitions convened workshops and successfully identified priority climate-related risks to ecosystems, biodiversity, and women’s land rights and community livelihoods, in addition to key responses that emphasize capacity building and advocacy windows.

Equipped with vital connections, information, and resources, the women-led coalitions will drive problem solving, offer policy leadership, and serve as models for the broader geographic region. Ultimately, this project seeks to bolster gender-equitable land rights and enhance sustainable, inclusive climate action, positively impacting almost 200 million people.

Sangha Facilitation Centers

Computer literacy is probably not our first thought when considering farming practices around the world—but in West Bengal, India, the two are merged in the work of Sangha Facilitation Centers (SFCs).

The Sangha program equips women in rural communities across West Bengal with the technical skills and training necessary to offer an easily accessible way to update land records in their communities—a key step in helping rural households gain secure rights to their most critical asset, the land they farm.

Gender stereotypes suggest women have limited knowledge about land rights, further marginalizing them as not worthy or deserving of land rights. Women service providers in the SFCs are helping to burst those misconceptions and normalize the relationship between women and land while demystifying the land record updation process for families.

Women who access the Sangha services are able to update family land records, sharing the security and confidence that comes with having strong rights to land, and allowing the family greater access to government programs that require updated records. Meanwhile, service providers gain valuable technical skills while earning additional

income through the modest fees they charge for their services. As women-led business centers, the SFCs act as a model to encourage and normalize women entrepreneurs in rural West Bengal.

The government program, conceived by Landesa and jointly initiated by the West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission and the Land & Land Reforms Department with Landesa's continuing technical support, has launched more than 130 SFCs to provide land records services for thousands of people to date. As the program continues to grow, the SFCs have potential to reach many thousands more—and reframe the conversation about women and land in households and communities across West Bengal. 🌱

Tumpa Digpati, a service provider at Chetana Sangha Facilitation Center in West Bengal, is strengthening land rights for her neighbors while proving that women have the expertise to handle complex land records processes.





Photo by Carielle Doe

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SPREADING AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES IN LIBERIA

LIBERIA'S Land Rights Act (LRA), adopted in 2018, is widely considered one of Africa's most progressive land rights reforms. Under the LRA, the 2.3 million Liberians whose customary land was previously unrecognized can formally register their land as their own. Safeguards for women's and youth's land rights within communities are key provisions within the law.

However, even a progressive law can fall short if it is not carefully implemented. This is particularly important in Liberia, a country that experienced protracted conflict

and a devastating Ebola crisis, and one in which most people cannot read or write.

Landesa strengthens communities' awareness of their land rights using innovative audio devices. Landesa distributes Amplio Talking Books—durable and user-friendly handheld devices that play educational audio messages—to 600 homes monthly in rural areas with low literacy rates.

For example, 200 households in Kornimu, a town in Bong County, received Talking Books in April. The land rights messaging from these



“Talking Books have made a lot of changes in the community. The program has opened our eyes on women’s land rights and on land business. They have helped women to have confidence.”

Talking Books reached people like James Pima, Youth Town Chief, who shared, “I don’t know how to write or read, but the Talking Books are designed for different users, even like me with no literacy skills.”

Another obstacle is the wide diversity of languages spoken in Liberia. Landesa develops land rights messaging in local languages; in Kornimu, residents primarily speak Kpelle.

“You put it in our language. If it’s English, we will not hear all. But saying the Kpelle language, we can listen to it clear,” explained 63-year-old Kaymah Mbonah. *(featured in header photo on facing page).*

Landesa regularly circulates 600 Talking Books across three Liberian counties, having reached over 40,000 people with vital knowledge since 2020. Gormah Cooper, whose town received the devices previously, declares: “Talking Books have made a lot of changes in the community. The program has opened our eyes on women’s land rights and on land business. They have helped women to have confidence.”

A resident of Garmu Town in Gahn Clan, Bong County, explained how since the Talking Books were circulated, women are invited to meetings and involved in community discussions around land. Others who participated in the Talking Books program expressed how the audio lessons taught them women and men are entitled to equal shares of profit from land they farm together.

The benefits continue once the Talking Books move on: a girl in Kornimu plans to educate other youths around women’s land rights; two women in a different community started a women’s group to spread the awareness.

In some families the Talking Books have already helped women gain access to land. Two women in Garmu did not receive land when their respective fathers passed away; instead the land went to their brothers. After learning from the Talking Books, family members gave both women a share of the inherited land.

Legal awareness, while critical, is only one piece of the puzzle. Landesa and DEN-L also support communities who

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“My father died from Ebola and my uncle was a guardian. The land was given to my brothers. However, through the Landesa project I am currently living in my farm inherited from my father’s land...my farm which I inherited is big, I can walk within the farm for five hours. Farming rice and cassava for food. I have palms and orange. I sell some of the products and pay for my children’s school fees.”

– Sarah Togbah, Garmu Town



can now formally register their customary land and obtain deeds. More than 40,000 individuals will see their land rights secured through the formalization process.

In Bong County, three communities that previously received Talking Books are in the process of obtaining the deeds for a total of 44,000 hectares of land with Landesa's support. Once a community decides to engage in the land formalization process, it must follow multiple steps, including identifying itself as a community, electing a management committee, harmonizing boundaries with neighboring communities, and drafting a land use plan. The process can be laborious; for example, Gahn Clan must negotiate and sign an agreement with each of 20 communities with which it shares a border—even communities in Guinea, not Liberia. Boundary harmonization often involves long days trekking through mud and brush to confirm an agreement.

Residents of the communities in the land formalization process expressed their

desire to gain an official deed to their land to protect it for future generations.

"If we get our land deed, we have the opportunity to do anything on our land," explained a woman in Gahn Clan. For communities, a formal deed will help avoid conflict with neighbors, and protect their rights from external threats like exploitive industry and land grabs.

Gahn Clan experienced such a threat in 2010, when a mining company promised the community jobs, scholarships, schools, medical centers, and roads in exchange for drilling on the small mountain overlooking the village. Instead, the company spent two years clearcutting the forest and boring exploratory holes before leaving without delivering a single benefit to the community.

"This time around it will not happen," declared a woman leader in Gahn. "No one will get our resources free." 🌱

*Last year, severe winds swept through Garmu Town in Bong County and ripped the roofs off 62 houses. Extreme weather patterns like this are increasing in frequency for Garmu and other villages in rural Liberia. Inconsistent rainfall destroys crops before they can grow, and means community members must walk two hours to find drinking water. **"The weather has changed," said Erica Togbah, who lives near Garmu. "Now when we plant, the things cannot grow."***

*This year, Landesa launched a new project to build climate resilience in rural Liberia. Landesa is supporting communities who rely on forests and land for livelihoods and food security to integrate climate risks and adaptation into their land use plans. Over the next two years, the project seeks to **protect more than 90,000 hectares of threatened biodiverse ecosystems and vulnerable human settlements.***



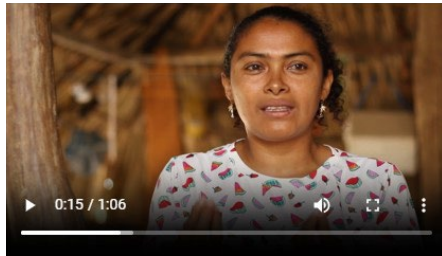
Protecting Gender Equality in China

In rural China, membership in collective economic organizations is an essential element to acquiring rights to collective land. These organizations can determine their own rules for membership and have often excluded women who divorced or otherwise changed their marital status.

Landesa, alongside many scholars and institutes, advocated for an amendment to China's Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests to mandate women's and men's equal rights to membership. The amendment passed and went into effect in January, strengthening the land rights of an estimated 432.9 million women in rural China.



Erika Patricia



Erika, a dedicated member of AMUCOL living in Colosó, Sucre, sheds light on the problem of access to land in her community.

Erika explains that one of the most significant challenges facing youth in her village is the lack of access to land to work. Although there is a perception that young people are not interested in farming, Erika estimates that about half of them have a genuine passion for farming, but are limited because they do not have access to available land.

[Read more →](#)

Thérèse Mbaye



My name is Thérèse Mbaye and I'm a member of the Réseau National des femmes rurales du Sénégal. I've been an activist for women's land rights since my early childhood. At the age of 20, I joined "La Maison rurale de la région de Thiès", a group of village women and girls. Thanks to my commitment, I was soon able to take on a number of responsibilities.

A few years later, I set up my own association, the Groupement des femmes de Fandène. One of its main objectives was to give women access to land.

[Read more →](#)

New storytelling platform amplifies grassroots women's experiences

The Women's Land Rights (WLR) Platform is a powerful new resource that provides an inclusive space for women across the world to share and document their experiences, perspectives, and work to strengthen land rights.

Through sharing stories and mapping organizations that focus on WLR, the Platform amplifies grassroots voices, increases visibility of the issue, and advances collaboration between WLR stakeholders.

Explore the WLR Platform: stand4herland.org/wlr-platform

Landesa is the Global Secretariat for Stand for Her Land, a global campaign closing the implementation gap for women's land rights through collective action and advocacy at grassroots, national, and global levels.

Musahar families



A verdant jewel of farmland is emerging from an arid corner of eastern India, thanks to the collective effort of some 20 families. Crops of wheat, lentils, onion, corn, and even paddy now grow on land that was once barren and drought-stricken.

The families who live in Duari village belong to the Musahar caste, customarily one of India's most disadvantaged groups. Many Musahar families earn a meager living as bonded agricultural laborers, tilling land that doesn't belong to them. But for the people of Duari, land titles in their names have given the community the sense of security and motivation to make life-changing investments in their land.

[Read more →](#)

Lin Lianhua



In Neilu village in China's Fujian Province, Lin Lianhua and her husband, Su Yuan, spent their lives farming a small piece of land. It was a hard life, one of physical exhaustion and a meager income.

Then their village decided to allocate the collectively owned land to individual farm households like Lin and Su. They obtained secure rights to five hectares of land and their lives changed dramatically.

[Read more →](#)

Susan Bakita



“Because of the bad experience we endured with my mother to reclaim our land, some women in our district started fearing owning land, even me myself at one point I felt bad and prayed I had a brother who would have inherited my father's land. I have however attended many training sessions by women groups like UCOBAC and Stand for Her Land campaign in Uganda so I know I have a right to own land,” said Ms Bakita.

[Read more →](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Check out some of Landesa's top recent news mentions:

- [The campaign that's building solidarity for women's land rights](#) | *Girls' Globe*
In this conversation with Girls' Globe, Dr. Monica Mhoja shares examples of how women in Tanzania are investing in smart agriculture and more land. She speaks about how Stand for Her Land is organizing across countries and at the grassroots level to advocate and create opportunities for change.
- [Responsible land based investments: Rising benefits, reducing conflict](#) | *IPP Media*
Masalu Luhula explains how Landesa helped design the process and coordinate the land transfer in a case of responsible land based investment, the "first of its kind in Tanzania where the investor decides to hand over land that they don't use so that communities can make good use of it."
- [Keeping dignity at the centre of women's land rights](#) | *IDR Online*
Shipra Deo explains how the conversation around land rights is incomplete without giving due consideration to dignity. "How [women] use the land, whether for livelihood or survival, is closely interlinked to an individual's existence and dignity."
- [To avert the next humanitarian crisis, empower women and girls](#) | *Skoll Foundation*
Zainab Salbi and Chris Jochnick underscore how women and girls are resilient agents of change – and that their potential to respond to all crises, from conflict to climate change, is accelerated when they enjoy secure rights to land.
- ["40 Across: Charitable grp. such as Landesa"](#) | *The New Yorker*
Landesa was pleasantly amused to be included as a clue in The New Yorker's Daily Crossword on August 22, 2023.



ENGAGE IN GREATER IMPACT

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