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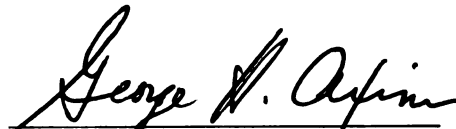
THE RESPONSE OF U.S.-BASED NON-GOVERNMENTAL
DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO INEQUITABLE
LAND TENURE IN LATIN AMERICA

presented by

William M. Van Lopik

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Resource Development


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**THE RESPONSE OF U.S.-BASED NON-GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT
ORGANIZATIONS TO INEQUITABLE LAND TENURE IN LATIN AMERICA**

By

William Mark Van Lopik

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Resource Development

2002

ABSTRACT

THE RESPONSE OF U.S.-BASED NON-GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO INEQUITABLE LAND TENURE IN LATIN AMERICA

By

William Mark Van Lopik

Access to land has historically been a contentious issue. This is especially true in Latin America where unequal landholding patterns are considered to be the most severe of any region in the world. Although landlessness continues to be a persistent problem, international non-governmental development organizations (NGOs) have been accused of not paying much attention at confronting this issue. This research explores whether the accusations are true or not, and if not, what are they doing in response to the issue. There are two fundamental arguments that underlie this research. The first is that access to land is a key component of rural development if the poor and landless are to improve their lives. The second is that international NGOs play an important role in contributing to the development process.

This research examines ten large U.S.-based non-governmental organizations currently doing development work in Latin America. Data was collected from secondary literature sources as well as interviews with key administrators in each organization. The results of the research indicate that there is no clear consensus in the type of response that these NGOs give to the issue of access to land. Some give little to no consideration to land tenure in their development

programming, while others see it as a fundamental component to their work. The discrepancy often lies in where their funding comes from. The research indicates that there is a definitive shift in recent years to how these NGOs view their role as development professionals. They are starting to realize the need to move their work from the local project level to the broader policy arena where decisions on land use and land ownership are made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my Dissertation Guidance Committee, Drs. Scott Witter, Jeffrey Riedinger, Assefa Mehretu and George Axinn for their time and support at making the completion of this dissertation research a reality. I give special recognition to Dr. Axinn who served as major advisor during my last few years in the Department of Resource Development. He has been an unending source of inspiration and encouragement to me both professionally and personally as I have worked on completing my academic studies at Michigan State University.

I would also like to acknowledge the impact that the poor farmers in El Salvador have had on my life and academic career. People like Rafael Guzman helped inspire me to focus this research on a topic that is meaningful to the many humble and dignified farmers of Latin America.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience and love during the times when it seemed like I would never finish my studies. My sons Christian and Rafael have always demonstrated their pride in me even when they have a hard time explaining to their friends what their dad does for a living. If not for the love, support, and sacrifices of my wife Susan, my dream of graduation would have never been realized.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Research Objective

Introduction

Latin America has been characterized as the most unjust and unequal region of the world. Statistical surveys indicate that the unequal distribution of wealth is disproportionately high in Latin America (Table 1). Most recent reports from the United Nations Development Programme indicate that nine of the fifteen most unequal countries in world are located in Latin America (UNDP, 2001).

About 25% of the Latin American income goes to 5% of the richest segments of the population while the poorest 30% receives 7.5% of total income (Chiriboga, 2000:13).

Top 15 Most Inequitable Countries in the World
Table 1.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Inequality measures: Gini index</u>
1. Swaziland	60.9
2. Nicaragua	60.3
3. South Africa	59.3
4. Brazil	59.1
5. Honduras	59.0
6. Bolivia	58.9
7. Paraguay	57.7
8. Chile	57.5
9. Colombia	57.1
10. Zimbabwe	56.8
11. Guinea-Bissau	56.2
12. Lesotho	56.0
13. Guatemala	55.8
14. Zambia	52.6
15. Mexico	51.9

The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or consumption) among individuals or households within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A value of 0 represents perfect equality, a value of 100 perfect inequality.

Source: UNDP, 2001 Human Development Report.

The inequality within Latin America is most pronounced in the unequal distribution of land and is seen as the underlying basis for the many historical

struggles among the poor. Latin America has the most unequal landholding pattern of any region in the world and this is cited as one of the principle impediments to the economic and social development of the region (Clawson, 2000:245). There have been many attempts to rectify the unequal distribution of landholdings. Land reform programs were initiated throughout most countries of Latin America, but the success of these programs has been arguable and none have fulfilled their intended goals of distributing the most amount of land to the most people in an equitable agrarian structure (Thiesenhusen, 1995:159).

In some instances land reform failed because it was implemented by uncommitted governments that were attempting to appease domestic or foreign political purposes be it to gain votes from the peasantry or aid from international agencies. In other instances, fierce opposition from the powerful landed elite undermined the success of the reforms (Gwynne and Kay, 1999:280). Land distribution was a highly contentious issue during the 1950s-1980s when both socialist revolutionary movements and capitalist governments throughout the world used it as a strategic tool in their efforts to win the political support of peasant farmers. However, as Cold War ideologies have eroded away and poor countries have transitioned into more neo-liberal and global economies, the land tenure debate has received marginal attention. Dorner says that land reforms of the past are unraveling with neo-liberalism and free trade (Dorner, 1999:5). Vandermeer believes that the bold vision for agrarian reform that countries like Nicaragua had in the 1980's has all but disappeared and is hardly a serious

proposition in any country in Central America. Therefore, he says that the basic rural program that would help stem the tide of deforestation - agrarian reform - is not realistically on the horizon (Vandermeer and Perfecto, 1995:122).

The concentration of land among the wealthy few in Latin America is increasing and can be seen in several negative social indicators. A composite look at these indices indicate a need for further consideration of land reform policies:

A. According to the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of poor living in Latin America was 211 million in 1999 as compared to 203 million in 1997. In 1999, there were more than 77 million poor people in the region's rural areas, as compared to 73 million in 1980 (IFAD, 2002). Rural poverty has not abated in spite of the flourishing economics that the rest of the world saw in the 1990s. In their annual *State of the World Report* the World Resources Institute states that rural poverty and hunger tend to be most severe where land is allowed to be concentrated in the hands of a few (Brown, Flavin and French, 2000:64). These findings would indicate a direct relationship between the distribution of wealth and land access.

B. There are increased indices of landless and land-poor farmers in Latin America due to further concentration of land and a growing population. The leading cause of rural poverty by far is the lack of access to sufficient land and low productivity of land use for the peasant population. Inequitable distribution of land resources is the norm in Latin America where a small

minority of landlords hold a high percentage of the best land and the majority are crowded onto tiny holdings. There is evidence that large farms are starting to acquire even more acreage while smaller farms are subdividing. In Latin America there were somewhat more than 4 million subfamily farms in 1950 and about 8 million in 1980 (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 1989:1211).

Author Andres Corr says that *“At the global level the landless in Africa, Asia (excluding China), the Middle East, and Latin America include 13.3% of all agricultural households. If we factor in the near-landless into this percent it balloons to 71.7% of all Third World rural households are landless or near-landless”* (Corr, 1999:55).

- C. When the numbers of landless and land-poor peasants in agricultural areas increases, there is a resulting rise in migration from rural areas to cities, frontiers, and other countries (Thiesenhusen, 1995:4). Increases in urban problems of over-population, traffic, pollution, sanitation, and housing can all be traced to the expanding rural to urban migration trends as people are forced to leave their farms.
- D. The World Resources Institute recently published their annual report highlighting the number of significant increases in the degradation of natural ecosystems throughout the world (WRI, 2000). It is clear that the most important environmental problems and challenges facing Latin America are directly or indirectly linked to the inequality of assets and poverty (DeWalt, 2000:2).

The assumption made in this research is that access to agricultural land and the reduced concentration of landholdings remains one of the main components for rural development in Latin America and for the economic and political mobilization of Latin America's small farmers. The World Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001 report "Attacking Poverty While Improving the Environment" succinctly states that people are poor because they lack income and assets to basic necessities. One of the basic assets that the World Bank identifies is access to land. Land reform is mentioned as a specific method for allowing the poor access to land (World Bank, 2000:34, 92).

Land tenure has different meanings and contexts depending on which part of the world is examined. It is a debate that is more volatile in some areas of the world than in others. In Europe and North America it does not take on the same inflammatory tone that it does in agriculturally based economies like Latin America and Africa. Industrialized countries normally have more urban-based employment opportunities to absorb the landless than do less-developed countries. Moreover, there are significant differences between Africa and Latin America - two agriculturally based regions. In Africa it is the State which often is the largest landowner, while in Latin America land is divided up unequally between the elites and a large underclass.

The genesis of this present form of land structure in Latin America can be best understood by looking at five historical, economic and political factors.

1. **The first factor has its roots in the Spanish colonization of Latin America. The Spanish crown established “la encomienda” in order to attract Spanish settlers to the Americas. The settlers were granted large tracts of land that had been expropriated from the Native Americans. The indigenous people were then forcibly made to work as indentured servants for the Spanish lords on land that previously was theirs. “La Encomienda” essentially guaranteed that the best and richest land would remain in the hands of the elite, and that a whole culture of poor, landless peasants would emerge over the centuries (Bower, 2001:22). The body of knowledge on the historical causation of inequitable land tenure regimes is expansive and leaves little doubt that it is a tragic consequence of European colonization.**
2. **Another factor is the deeply held economic ideology of “comparative advantage.” Economists have long held the point of view that Latin America should base its economy on the production of crops that outside foreign markets demand. Commodities like coffee, sugar, bananas and cotton were found to thrive in the tropical environment. These were products that the rest of the world wanted and it was believed that Latin America should concentrate on these export commodities and establish their market share. It was thought that large plantations could grow these crops in a more efficient manner, so the process of land consolidation was seen as necessary for the post-independence economic development of Latin America. This policy however has not rendered the results that it initially promised. Criticism against the comparative advantage ideology keeps mounting as land scarcity**

becomes more prevalent in the region (Brockett, 1998:37; Lappe, Collins, Rosset, 1998:111).

3. **Access to land through government land reform programs has historically been an extremely contentious issue. Thousands of Latin Americans have lost their lives either fighting to forcibly acquire a piece of subsistence land or trying to hold on to the land they have. Land distribution threatens the status quo and upsets the balance of political and economic power. It implies a change in power relations in favor of those who physically work the land at the expense of those who traditionally accumulate the wealth derived from it. It is because of this dominant power structure among the elite, which controls the economic, cultural, political and military power, that efforts at land reform have been relatively unsuccessful. As a result, there is little political will within to change the balance of power.**
4. **Between 1988 and 1998 net development aid given by the 30 richest countries in the world fell from 0.33% of their Gross National Product to 0.24%. This is the lowest proportion of aid ever given to low-income or least-developed countries where 85% of the world's poor live. The cut in aid has especially hurt rural areas where 75% of the world's poor live. Most aid is now targeted towards urban areas for programs of economic development. Dr. Michael Lipton, Director of the Poverty Research Unit at Sussex University in England, says *"Current development efforts grossly and increasingly neglect agricultural and rural people"* (IFAD, 2001). Therefore, the development aid**

funds that are needed to support agrarian reform programs, land banks, and land registration programs have become scarce.

5. Agrarian reform has been replaced on the development policy agenda by global economics and the free market system. Emphasis has now been put on debt-servicing by means of farm consolidation and export agriculture (Liamzon, 1996:317). Now when the World Bank and U.S. Agency for International Development talk of land redistribution it is in the form of "market-based" approaches to land exchange. They stress the development of land markets where land is sold and purchased like a commodity. This strategy unfortunately raises a number of serious questions. The first is whether this program truly allows the absolute poor and landless opportunity to participate and is not contingent on their economic status. The second is whether credit is actually available to them from public financial institutions. The third question is whether technical assistance and government subsidies are available for the poor as participants (Lastarria-Cornhiel and Melmed-Sanjak, 1999:7). Open land markets are effective when all willing participants have some wealth that allows them to negotiate, but the system breaks down when there is an ever-widening gap between the economic classes.

Problem Analysis

The land tenure debate is not one that will likely disappear from grassroots discussion any time in the near future. The mounting issues of environmental sustainability, urban and international migration, the rights of indigenous groups

and greater economic disparities between economic and social classes will keep the issue in the forefront. The landless and land-poor masses from the South will continue to organize as they are in Brazil and the Philippines and speak out on the issue. Third World advocates and peasant organizations will not let the issue disappear from the development agenda.

The abatement of land reform discussions among development strategists has not silenced the voices of the landless and land-poor masses from the South from speaking out. Farmer organizations, popular groups, Southern NGOs, and several United Nations specialized agencies such as UNDP, FAO, UNEP and UNICEF have taken opportunities at conferences, summits, and workshops to speak up for renewed global efforts for comprehensive land reform programs. At the NGO Global Forum on Food Security during FAO's Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration held in Quebec on October 1995, organized groups from the Third World unequivocally stated the need for a renewed effort to bring agrarian reform back to the fore of the international development agenda (Liamzon, 1996:322). At the 1995 Institute for Food and Agricultural Development Conference on Hunger and Poverty, Southern groups once again placed it at the forefront of the development agenda. They spoke from their own reality, convinced that land reform is a key development strategy towards alleviating poverty, environmental degradation, and democratic disenfranchisement (IFAD, 1995).

In 1997 the Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) hosted a conference

in Paris that was the kick-off for an international initiative to refocus attention back on agrarian reform. FIAN built a broad coalition of non-governmental organizations and development professionals that seek to bring renewed attention to inequitable land tenure. At this conference farmers expressed their frustration with Northern NGOs working in development. They made condemning statements against Northern NGOs for their lack of movement on agrarian reform. They explained that farmers are being hurt both by modern agrarian policies as well as apathy on the part of development organizations and the State. *"Peasants are without allies and neither the NGO's nor the academics are interested in their problems" said one participant*" (FIAN, 1997:16). This is an issue than will not go away, but rather will become more critical as Third World nations are pushed to consolidate their landholdings to concentrate on export products in order to meet the demands of international structural adjustment policies.

Whether these criticisms of Northern NGOs are warranted or not is still unclear. However, it is clear from the literature that these NGOs have a role to play in the land tenure debate. Some argue that NGOs have the important role of providing financial credit and technical assistance to new landowner beneficiaries which would enable farmers to maintain ownership (Blum, 1996). Others say that NGOs serve the poor best when they can help them organize to fill the vacuum left by the breakdown of government programs because of structural adjustment programs (Paniagua-Ruiz, 1997:4). Still others say that NGOs have an advocacy role to play in pressuring those in the larger political arena to pay

attention to this issue. There is little doubt that international NGOs can play crucial roles in movements aimed at approaching more socially and ecologically sustainable styles of development. The question is whether they are assuming this role?

Problem Statement

There appears to be a discrepancy between what people from “developing countries” are asking for and what Northern NGOs are delivering. The poor from the South accuse Northern non-governmental development organizations of being disinterested and even resistant to addressing agrarian reform issues in spite of numerous pleas to the contrary. Bebbington believes this inattentiveness can be traced to the fact that “NGOs do not look for alternative development strategies as they once did. They are now involved to a large extent in state-funded programs” (Bebbington, 1997:124). More and more the trend is for the central government to transfer development funds through NGOs, thus compromising the neutrality of the NGO. Paula Hoy says bluntly that “...NGOs now package their projects to satisfy USAID’s requirements, with little thought of the needs and desires of the intended beneficiaries.” (Hoy, 1998:104). These are serious accusations that are being leveled at the international NGO community, a community that was supposedly created to benefit the poor, not ignore them. There is an underlying concern that development NGOs are either being co-opted by government policies which they feel beholden too, out of touch with the real needs of the poor, or that their work is misunderstood.

Perhaps NGOs are concerned about access to land assets for the poor, but are supporting more indirect and less antagonistic means of dealing with the issue. Maybe they have come to the very rational understanding that continued financial support and permission to work in a country requires them to take a more low-key and less visible approach to dealing with land issues. These less formal initiatives may involve quietly advocating for more government-supported land reform programs, pushing for policies and laws that clearly define land rights, providing legal assistance to the poor, providing credit for land purchases, protecting women's rights to own land, organizing communities for land acquisition, and assisting in the development of more open land markets. Land reform programs involving extensive expropriation of land from the wealthy elites may now be seen as ineffective and inappropriate in today's world.

Research Assumptions

There are two foundational assumptions that underlie this research. The first is that access to land is a fundamental component of rural development if the poor and landless are to be strengthened and improve their socio-economic status. The second is that international non-governmental organizations and their global networks play an important role in contributing to the development process and the shaping of policies on poverty issues. (UNDP, 2000: p.79)

Research Objective

This research will examine ten large U.S.-based non-governmental organizations currently doing development work in Latin America. Data will be collected from two data sources:

- 1. Data collected from secondary literature sources. These sources would include printed materials that each organization normally makes public such as annual reports, country reports, progress reports of programs, IRS 990 financial statements and publicity materials.**
- 2. The second source of data will come directly from one to one interviews with key administrators in the ten pre-selected organizations.**

The data will be utilized to provide insight into the development strategies of these organizations. There are four basic questions that the acquired data will be used to explore:

- 1. Do these organizations consider access to land as an important development strategy for the rural poor?**
- 2. Do they undertake programs that can directly and/or indirectly lead to land access for the poor?**
- 3. Do these organizations provide funding for land access initiatives?**
- 4. To what extent do these organizations see land access programs as too politically volatile or simply inappropriate for development organizations to be involved in?**

The results of this research will be useful in gauging the perceived "inattentiveness" of this sizeable segment of the international development community to the land access issue. Additionally, the results will help determine the extent of the perceived discrepancy between what the rural poor are pleading for and what international NGO's are delivering.

CHAPTER 2

Dissertation Literature Review

The literature sources reviewed for this research fall into three broad perspectives. The first body of literature that is examined supports a key assertion made in this research - that access to productive land is indeed a relevant development issue. The body of knowledge corresponding to this theme is broad, comprehensive, and much of it relatively recent. A notable example of the current relevancy of this topic is that the World Bank in March 2001 sponsored a global email conference in which they solicited suggestions and feedback from academics and practitioners in regard to the Bank's market-based land reform initiatives. Participants from around the world weighed in on the importance of land and property policy to economic development. Although the discussion was lively with participation from all over the world, it was dominated almost exclusively by economists. Literature cited in this research seeks to expand the discussion far beyond the confines of economics.

The second perspective considered in this review pertains to the recorded petitions and pleas emanating from the grassroots level for reconsideration of land tenure issues. Land-poor and landless people from Latin America have been making their voices heard in the past ten years in a very public, articulate and organized fashion. The body of literature that exposes the efforts of Southern non-profit organizations, farmer groups, and peasant organizations to bring the land issue into open debate is briefly reviewed.

The third body of literature that is incorporated into this research is that pertaining to the organizational behavior of international development non-profit organizations (NGOs). There is a limited, but important literature base that explores the function and role of NGOs in facilitating either the direct or indirect acquisition of land resources for the poor.

A. Relevancy of Land Accessibility to Rural Development

The relevancy for land tenure as a development issue is simple – the landless and land poor are its main focus. This is the segment of society that has empirically been shown to be the poorest and most vulnerable segment of society. In spite of the increasing urbanization of Latin America, poverty continues to be most severe in rural areas (see table 2).

TABLE 2: Population below the Poverty Line, 1989 – 1994 (in percentages)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Total</i>
Colombia	31	8	18
Ecuador	47	25	35
El Salvador	56	43	48
Guatemala	72	34	58
Peru	65	40	49
Nicaragua	76	32	50
Dominican Republic	30	11	21

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/1*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.280-1, Table 4.

Authors Sadoulet and de Janvry write that the reason for the high incidence of poverty in rural areas is quite plain. They say “*the leading cause of rural poverty*

by far is the lack of access to sufficient land and low productivity of land use for the peasant population. Inequitable distribution of land resources is the norm in Latin America where a tiny minority of landlords hold a high percentage of the best land and the majority are crowded onto tiny holdings" (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 1989:1211). Therefore, if development policy holds the alleviation of poverty as an objective, then land tenure must be taken into consideration. The redistribution of agricultural land can benefit the rural poor in many ways, some of which are explored more in-depth below:

1. Peasant Mobilization

One of the foundational components of rural development is its emphasis on building capacity in local organizations. Land reform programs have shown to be effective stimulants for peasant mobilization. In Chile, the reforms by Presidents Frei and Allende led to the political participation of many more peasants than ever before. Political enfranchisement and participation in civil society was actually at its highest point in Chile during the time of greatest land-reform activity from 1970-1973 (Kay and Silva, 1992:292). Kay argues that agrarian reforms have promoted social stability and made major contributions to the democratization of society. He claims that historical evidence indicates that peasant participation in civil society is much enhanced during times of agrarian reform. Many peasants, especially when granted a land title, felt that only then had they become citizens of the country. By weakening the power of landlords and other dominant groups in the countryside, agrarian reforms encouraged the

emergence of a greater voice for the peasantry in local and national affairs (Kay, 1998:20). Agrarian reform can provide the stimulus for the peasantry to organize into various kinds of trade unions, grassroots organizations, and cooperatives, such as producer, marketing and credit associations. This ultimately enables them to become better integrated into the broader national economy, society and polity (Molano, 2000).

Grindle is one who takes issue with this claim. She acknowledges that reformist measures might lead to greater rural mobilization, but that there are formidable obstacles to this kind of mobilization and the situation could get much worse for rural peasants before it gets better. The rural poor have faced major impediments to the mobilization of widespread and aggregate reformist organizations. Over the decades the state has become sophisticated in learning how to intimidate, threaten, co-opt, and disperse these organizations (Grindle, 1986:192).

However, the social-political integration of former peasant movements is currently evident in the countries of El Salvador and Nicaragua. In the 1970's and 80's peasant mobilization in these two countries took the form of armed insurrections with the FSLN (Nicaragua) and the FMLN (El Salvador). The mantra of both of these revolutionary groups was that of equitable land distribution. Although the wars were devastating for each country and did not achieve their complete goal of equitable land redistribution, at least one important result came out of each conflict. That being that today both of these former

guerrilla groups are now legally recognized political parties in their respective countries. They have created a plurality in the political process that never before existed.

2. Positive Response to Environmental Degradation

The process of land concentration and accumulation by large landowners has pushed subsistence farmers off fertile agricultural lands. Painter says *"the crucial issue underlying environmental destruction in Latin America is gross inequity in access to resources "* (Painter and Durham, 1995:9). Hecht echoes these sentiments from her work in Amazonia when she says *"it is ludicrous to describe environmental degradation as only a function of demographics. Rather the situation is due to the extraordinary maldistribution of land"* (Hecht 1985:679).

This "maldistribution of land" is often attributed to the negative effects of agricultural modernization. Agricultural modernization, with its focus on mechanization and land consolidation, displaces the traditional agricultural farmer onto inferior land, where they are obliged either to work as part-time wage laborers to support their families or abandon their plots completely and migrate to the city. Modernization has also failed to absorb the surge in population growth in the '60's and '70s (Thiesenhusen, 1995:20). This leaves the landless with basically three options when confronted with the loss of their land.

First, they can migrate to the cities and try to find work in the informal sector.

Increasing numbers of landless or land-poor in agriculture, coupled with high

population rates have created a torrent of migrants to the cities and other countries (Thiesenhusen, 1995:4; Danaher, 1995:100). The homeless and unemployed populations of urban areas have swelled so rapidly that the infra-structural capacity of the cities are overloaded and cannot handle the increased housing, sewage, water, and crime demands. Many cities in Latin America are now facing critical environmental issues.

The second option a landless farmer has is to move to a piece of open land. They may migrate further into the frontier areas of the country, move onto marginal and unwanted land, or squat on someone else's land until they are removed. Dorner and Thiesenhusen argue that deforestation is done by farmers through their farming practices and also through migration and its relation to land tenure and deforestation. They claim that land tenure problems are often root causes - or play an important mediating role - in deforestation whether peasants are located in situ, in sending, or in receiving communities. They also claim that agrarian reform that would distribute some land presently used in extensive agriculture among the rural poor might prevent further migration to the forest frontier and the subsequent destruction of trees. (Dorner and Thiesenhusen, 1992:26). Sometimes landless farmers such as in Guatemala are moved or enticed by the national government to move to a frontier region. This process of colonization is basically designed to provide an expedient safety valve by the government in dealing with the growing landlessness in other areas of the country. The decision to colonize the rainforest is thus made for political, not

ecological, reasons (Manz, 1995:110). Other authors make the important point of saying that ensuring secure land tenure for indigenous peoples may be one of the most important ways of conserving tropical forests. On the other hand, conferring security of tenure on colonists actually acts like a magnet for outsiders wishing to clear land for agriculture (Pearce and Warford, 1993:122).

A World Resources Institute report further states that *"the real causes of deforestation are poverty, skewed land distribution (due to historical patterns of land settlement and commercial agricultural development), and low agricultural productivity"* (WRI, 1985:3). The linkage between land tenure and environmental degradation was powerfully spelled out by former Sandinista National Park Service Director Lorenzo Cardenal when he said:

"There is no environmental problem in Central America that is not connected to profound social, economic and historical factors - precisely because the history of the subcontinent has been marked by the progressive deterioration of the environment. The environment has been transformed by the patterns of land use that began in the era of the Spanish conquest, continued through the colonial era, and continue today with system of imperialist domination. Many ecologists look at environmental problems in the abstract, without analyzing the deep roots of the origin of the problem. We hope to demonstrate that the factors which have brought about the environmental crisis in Central America are precisely the same factors which have brought about the social and political crisis in the region. It is impossible... to study the classical

environmental problems of the region, such as deforestation, without at the same time studying and interpreting the factors which produce poverty, the misery, the social iniquity... Therefore, we have come to the rather untraditional conclusion for ecologists that one of the principal environmental problems for Central America is land tenure” (Weinberg, 1991:93).

A third option a farmer has is that of tenant farming. This is when a farmer rents a piece of land and pays either a fixed cash rate or a portion of their harvest in rent. In many cases the farmer is most likely farming on very marginal land that is prone to severe soil erosion and rainfall runoff. Even though runoff may be great and the farmer knows that his/her farming practices are debilitating the soil's productivity, he/she has little incentive to practice any form of soil conservation if the land is not theirs. Research by Seligson in El Salvador found the major disadvantages of tenancy to be:

1. Land is of inferior quality, often why it is rented out.
2. Insecure tenancy constrains a farmer to invest in land.
3. Renters are less likely to obtain credit.
4. Renters tend to be more abusive of the land they rent (Seligson, 1994:20).

Numerous studies have shown a direct correlation between land ownership and adoption of conservation practices (Russell, 1991:334; Ervin, 1986:105; MAG, 1989:114). Fusch says that *“lack of security of tenure will ultimately lead to a decline in soil fertility and an increase in soil erosion”* (Fusch, 1991:348). Soil erosion not only reduces soil fertility and crop productivity, but it also causes broad problems in the siltation of river beds, irrigation canals, and hydroelectric

reservoirs, as well as flooding in the lowlands.

Extensive research by Stonich in Honduras showed that short-term contract renters who had insecure tenure on small plots tended to exhibit the poorest conservation practices. They tended to grow mostly annual crops, to farm the worst and steepest property, to burn crop residues, and to clear the land of all trees. In contrast, small-holders who owned their properties farmed intensively but preserved trees, constructed rock-wall barriers to prevent erosion, and followed other soil conservation measures (Stonich, 1989:289). Further research by Bonnard in Honduras somewhat disputes the findings of Stonich. She says that it is not individual private land rights and land title that promote investments in land., but rather "perceived ownership." She says that the farmers considered themselves to be the owners of the land if they 1) have used a plot for an extended period of time; 2) purchased or inherited a plot regardless of the type of land; 3) possess some form of documentation; 4) installed fences or planted trees, both of which imply the farmer has expectations of long-term land use. (Bonnard, 1995:136). Her research also showed that adoption of improved soil management practices decreased as farm size increases. This would support the notion that redistribution of land from large landowners to small-holders would increase the adoption of conservation practices on the land.

3. Raises Farm Income and Labor Levels

Income levels are found to be higher among farmers who own their own land as compared to landless and land-poor tenant farmers. Seligson's research in El Salvador after the 1980's land reform program indicated that renters and sharecroppers only earn one-half the per capita income of small farm owners (Seligson, 1994:48). Other researchers point out that the efficient utilization of labor per unit of land (measured in terms of person-days per year and the number of working people per unit of output) tends to be lower in large estates than in small holdings (El-Ghonemy, 1999:5; Eckholm, 1979:25). New work by Rosset of Food First give evidence that the cost of creating a job in the commercial sector of Brazil range from two to twenty times more than the cost of establishing an unemployed head of household on farm land through agrarian reform. They also found that land reform farmers in Brazil have an annual income equivalent to 3.7 of the minimum wage, while still landless laborers average only 0.7 of the minimum wage (Rosset, 2001:7).

Not only is there more intensive use of labor per unit of land, but it is also argued that the labor is of better quality. Rosset says that when it's a farm family whose future depends upon maintaining the productivity of that soil and that piece of land, they naturally take better care of it (Rosset, 2000).

Another study by Jackson in El Salvador found that the income from farmers who rent is lower than the average industrial worker, while small farm owners have about the same income as those in industry (Jackson, 1993:47). This would

imply that a rural small farmer would not have the same economic incentive to migrate to an urban area as a landless farmer would. All of these studies would indicate that land ownership and the amount a person owns has a direct relationship on family income, while the income of the landless is far below national income averages.

A comprehensive study by McReynolds on the land reform program of El Salvador during the early 1980's found that farmers with smaller holdings employed more person-days per hectare than those with larger ones, and not only did they employ more person-days per hectare, but they also employed a higher proportion of these persons on a permanent basis. He found that the amount of labor employed per hectare increases as the size of holding decreases. He explains the reason for this relationship as being:

1. Small farmers are less likely to have access to or need for labor-saving technology.
2. Labor is cheaper than technology, which often requires a capital investment that the small farmer cannot afford.
3. Smaller farmers tend to be less educated and have less access to the technical assistance, which would help them understand how to use it.
4. Many small farms in El Salvador are on rocky hillsides that are difficult to access with machinery such as tractors and ploughs (McReynolds, 1998:464).

4. Deterrent to Violence

Lack of access to land has often been the catalyst to political conflict. The revolutionary movements in Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Cuba all had their roots in the unequal distribution of land. Noted author Samuel Huntington says that::

“Where the conditions of land tenure are equitable and provide a viable living for the peasant, revolution is unlikely. Where they are inequitable and where the peasant lives in poverty and suffering, revolution is likely, if not inevitable, unless the government takes prompt measures to remedy these conditions. No social group is more conservative than a landowning peasantry, and none is more revolutionary than a peasantry which owns too little land or pays too high a rental (Huntington, 1968: 375).

Land reform has been used as a political tool by governments to deter violence while it is happening or being threatened. This argument for land reform as a deterrent to violence has even been espoused from some very conservative sources. Rabkin writes in the National Review that:

“Experience backs up common sense. Any twentieth-century historian familiar with land reform can attest that in Asia (Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea) and Latin America (Mexico, Bolivia, and Venezuela), once a substantial number of the landless poor acquire their own farms, the likelihood that revolutionaries will secure a base of popular support in the countryside diminishes appreciably. In many parts of the world, no more

rapid and effective means exists of depriving Marxist guerrilla forces of grievances to exploit" (Rabkin, 1985:36).

Research by Prosterman and Riedinger found that when the number of landless peasants reaches over 25 percent of a countries' population, the chance of political conflict is high (Prosterman and Riedinger, 1987:24). The thought being that people who have access to their own land are less likely to risk it in a revolution or feel the need to do so. Further study by Seligson in El Salvador supports this idea. He found that in 1971 15.8 percent of the economically active national population were landless and 10.1 percent were tenants for a total of 25.9 percent. However, in 1991 government figures showed that 10.4 percent of this population were landless and 6.5 percent tenants for a total of 17 percent (Seligson, 1994:38). These percentage rates and dates correspond very closely to the beginnings of the civil war in El Salvador in the 1970's and the winding down of the war in 1991.

The state of Kerala in India is sometimes touted as an example of where equity of landownership can be a deterrent to political unrest in spite of extreme poverty. This state of over 29 million people is considered to be the poorest in India, yet it maintains one of the highest standards of living in the country in terms of education and health. Cristobal writes:

"there seems to be no social unrest due to a mass poverty that's incongruously co-existent with, a high standard of living. Observers credit this

phenomenon to the success of three policies, of which, a generous minimum wage is one. The other two are subsidized prices of commodities and a land reform program that handed property to 1.5 million former tenants, whose crops shield Kerala from absolute destitution” (Cristobal, 1998).

5. Improves Nutritional Status and Agricultural Productivity

The common notion held in the North is that small farms are primitive and unproductive, and that bigger is better. This is often the argument given against the redistribution of large-landholdings into small-farm holdings. However, there are many land policy researchers who dispute this claim and go as far as to say that large farms actually undermine the food security of a country. Susan George states in her 1984 book Ill Fares the Land that:

“To predict levels of hunger and malnutrition in any country, one need look only at the degree of land concentration, the circumstances of tenancy, and the proportion of landless laborers. The more unequal the holdings, the more insecure the tenancies, the higher the proportion of landless people, the greater the incidence of hunger will be” (George, 1984:7).

Research both in Guatemala and Honduras support George’s point that nutritional status is directly related to land availability. A study by Valverde showed that the incidence of children with moderate malnutrition was 2.3 times greater in farming families owning and/renting less than 2 manzanas than in those with a total access to more than five manzanas (see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of Guatemalan children (families of farmers) with moderate malnutrition by category of land owned and/or rented.

Category of land owned and/or rented	n	% of children with moderate malnutrition
0 - 1.9 manzanas	37	38
2.0 – 4.9 manzanas	74	31
> 5.0 manzanas	36	17

(1 manzana = 0.7 hectares)

Source: Valverde et al. 1977:4;

Additionally, work by Susan Stonich in Honduras found that there was a close relationship between access to land and nutritional status - of all undernourished children under 60 months of age, 70 percent belonged to landless families and 15 percent to families with access to less than 2 hectares (Stonich, 1995:76). In El Salvador there are troubling indicators that show a decline in the production of domestic food crops such as corn, sorghum and beans. The problem is attributed to an increase in soil erosion and resulting decrease in soil productivity. Most of the basic grains grown in El Salvador are grown on hillsides which have a greater than 15 percent slope and are therefore particularly susceptible to erosion (Barry and Rosa, 1995:8). They are grown on hillsides by tenant farmers who have been displaced to erosion-prone areas by a growing re-concentration of landholdings by the rich. Large landowners have laid claim to the most fertile areas of the country for the production of export crops. The problem once again rises that there is no incentive to practice hillside conservation without secure

tenure to the land.

The argument is also made that hunger in the world is not the result of a lack of food, but rather because more than half a billion rural people in the Third World are landless, or do not have sufficient land to grow their own food. They are thus denied access to land and the necessary purchasing power by which to grow or buy food (Kimbrell, 2000:35). It is interesting to note the food security differences between Bangladesh and Taiwan. Bangladesh has just half the number of people per cultivated hectare than has Taiwan. Yet Taiwan does not have starvation and malnutrition to the extent that it is found in Bangladesh (Gebremedin, 1997:20). It is important to note that Taiwan went through a comprehensive land reform program in the 1960s and Bangladesh has not had any significant land reform initiatives.

Most recently noted Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto wrote that capitalism has failed in most of the world and five-sixths of humanity remain desperately poor because they lack legal property. He says this *"explains why citizens in developing and former communist nations cannot make profitable contracts with strangers, cannot get credit, insurance, or utilities services: They have no property to lose. Because they have no property to lose, they are taken seriously as contracting parties only by their immediate family and neighbors. People with nothing to lose are trapped in the grubby basement of the precapitalist world"* (de Soto, 2000:56). Feder espoused a similar conceptual framework in 1987 after

considerable work in Thailand. His study revealed that titled farmers utilize significantly higher quantities of variable inputs and obtain higher crop output per unit of land than farmers that had no title to their land (Feder, 1987:26).

Perhaps some of the most comprehensive research on the positive productive effects of small farms over large farms has been done by Peter Rosset of the Institute for Food and Development Policy. He presents research from both Northern and Southern countries that demonstrates that small farms have the advantage of being “multi-functional” – more productive, more efficient, and contribute more to economic development than large farms. He says that small farmers can also make better stewards of natural resources, conserving biodiversity and safe-guarding the future sustainability of agricultural production (Rosset, 1999).

Rosset makes the argument that we must think more in terms of total output versus yield. It is assumed that large mono-culture farms produce a larger yield, but research shows that small farms actually have a greater total output. Total output is the sum of everything a small farmer produces: various grains, fruits, vegetables, fodder, animal products, etc. Rosset cites eight reasons why there is a greater total agricultural output on a small farm as compared to a large:

- a. Multiple cropping – farmers practice inter-cropping, have several plantings, and leave no idle land.

- b. **Land use intensity** – tend to use their entire parcel. Clawson backs this point up by saying that production of food in Brazil would increase almost twelve-fold if large-holders would use the same proportion of their land for farming as do Brazil's small-holders (Clawson, 1999:234).
- c. **Irrigation** – more efficient on small farms.
- d. **Output composition** – mono-culture agriculture is land extensive, small farms are labor and resource intensive.
- e. **Labor quality** – quality of the labor is much better when a farm is worked by a family rather than hired labor. When it's a farm family whose future depends upon maintaining the productivity of that soil and that piece of land, they naturally take better care of it.
- f. **Labor intensity** – small farmers tend to invest more labor in their land, thus making it more productive. An earlier study of Brazilian farms by Thiesenhusen and Melmed-Sanjak showed that farms of less than 50 hectares employed 71 percent of total farm labor. With only 12 percent of the country's farmland, these small farmers produced about half the value added in farming. (Thiesenhusen and Melmed-Sanjak, 1990:398).
- g. **Input use** – small farms tend to use more inputs per unit of land and those inputs are more likely to be non-purchased inputs like manure and compost rather than agro-chemicals.
- h. **Resource Use** –Small farms are more committed to sustaining their natural resource base through their labor intensive practices such as

manuring, limited tillage, ridging, terracing, composting organic matter, and recycling plant products into the productive process, enhance soil conservation and fertility (Rosset, 1999:6-7).

The argument for small farms as compared to large farms based upon total agricultural output over the long-term is a strong one. It is a model that has great potential to achieve broad-based economic development at the rural level. It is also a model that can facilitate the conservation and restoration of diminishing environmental resources in many developing countries. It is a fundamental component to the argument that the poor need access to good quality land in order to rise out of poverty.

6. Promotes strong community and family dynamics

Most debates on the pros and cons of redistributive land reform are couched within the rubric of agricultural economics. Rarely is there mention of the spiritual and familial ties that small farmers have with their land. Rarely is the debate seen as a justice issue rather than a social/economic issue. However, this non-quantifiable dimension of the land debate should not be overlooked because it is often the element that sparks the emotional passion to the whole controversy.

May in his book, The Poor of the Land: A Christian Case for Land Reform, makes the point that land has a spiritual dimension to it for poor farmers. He says "*for the rural poor, land - soil for cultivation and territory for living - is promise and salvation, identity and divine presence, sustenance and power over their own lives. It always means security, because their "portion" is still understood as*

inheritance, not as a consumer item” (May, 1991:107).

In 1997 the Vatican produced a landmark document which clearly spelled out the church’s position on land reform and the high priority it places on it as a means of overcoming poverty. The document made the strong statement that “*The social teaching of the Church is very clear ... that agrarian reform is one of the most urgent reforms and cannot be delayed: ‘in many situations radical and urgent changes are therefore needed in order to restore to agriculture - and to rural people – their just value as the basis for a healthy economy, within the social community’s development as a whole” (PCJP, 1997:15).* The document also mentions another attribute of land reform that other proponents have not mentioned – that land reform creates family-sized farms and contributes considerably to strengthening the family by developing its members’ capacities and sense of responsibility.

Protestant authors such as Calvin DeWitt also emphasize the moral and spiritual side of land reform. He writes ...*“responding to the biblical requirements for responsible and just stewardship of land and Creation means that food needs to be produced locally to supply local peoples and communities. Land tenure should not deprive occupants of the land from exercising their stewardship responsibilities, neither should it deprive them of the means to hold their lives and families together” (DeWitt, 1996:43).* He equates a deprivation of land to the prevention of a person to practice their God-given responsibility of being good

stewards and caretakers of the earth and their families.

The moral and spiritual dimensions of land tenure are not usually considered within high-level development discussions, but are aspects that I would contend to be highly relevant to this discussion.

7. Contributes to the comprehensive development of national economy

There is a growing literature base that links land reform to the total welfare of the national economy. Much of the content of this literature is based on careful study of the highly successful economies of several East Asian countries and the role that land reform played in their historical development. The economic success of countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China is often thought to be a result of their export-oriented economy. However, many authors have cited land reform as the pre-condition to their growth. Each country instituted comprehensive and radical land reform, resulting in agricultural sectors that consisted predominantly or exclusively of small farms (Korten, 1990:75; Adelman and Morris, 1982:12; Monsod, 1999; Dorner, 1999:6). Reliable estimates from South Korea (a private-property based economy) show that the incidence of absolute poverty in rural areas diminished rapidly from 60 per cent before re-distributed land reform to 9.8 per cent after the reform (El-Ghonemy, 1999:9). Although land reform without other economic supports such as credit and technical assistance is certainly not a one-time cure-all for poverty. There is strong evidence from many other countries of the direct relationship between

inequality and poverty. But clearly a more equitable distribution of resources and assets would provide a solid base for a broader development strategy that maximized employment and economic opportunities of all sorts, and that over time allowed for self-sustaining national economic progress (Daly, 1996:222; Navarro, 1995; Eckholm, 1979:41; Bebbington and Thiele, 1993:xviii).

B. Push for a New Land Reform Agenda from the Grassroots

While the first portion of this chapter examined some of the arguments made by development professionals on the relevancy of the land reform debate to the development agenda, in this section I will look at what people at the grassroots level are asking for. Particular attention will be given to the proceedings of international summits, conferences sponsored by the United Nations, objectives of landless peasant movements, and other authors from Southern countries.

As mentioned before, since the 1980s discussion of agrarian reform and land reform virtually disappeared from the international development agenda. However, since the mid-1990s it has received high priority among many people's organizations (POs) and NGOs in Third World countries who have been attempting to restore it as a development priority and policy imperative. The dwindling interest in pursuing agrarian reforms in the mid-1980s was largely the result of a shift in the development ideologies of major Western countries and international institutions. The policies of Ronald Reagan as US President and of Margaret Thatcher as the British Prime Minister, brought a radical move towards economic growth and support for market forces, especially large business interests, while also reducing

government intervention, except in order to assist big business. Support was focused on liberalization of trade, the promotion of export crops, and related policies. Debt-servicing by means of farm consolidation and export agriculture halted the agrarian reform movement. Governments were forced to veer away from rural development programs that included agrarian reform, to those designed to expand the production of export crops to service external debts. This left little incentive in which to actively pursue agrarian reform. As economic globalization began to widen and deepen with its ensuing consolidation of lands by corporations (especially Transnational Corporations), there was all the more reason to abandon agrarian reform programs and replace them with agro-business ventures that specialize in high-value export crops (Liamzon, 1996:317). However, it was not only governments who lost interest in agrarian reform, but also aid agencies and development scholars. Sobhan writes in 1993 that:

“Multilateral agencies, once in the vanguard of the intellectual movement for land reform, now mention such proposals for reform not at all or in highly qualified small print on the penultimate pages of their reports. Scholars who once staked their reputations on the need for agrarian reform have moved on to advocate targeting development at the poor, or to more fashionable issues of gender and sustainable development. Votaries of agrarian reform have been reduced to a fringe group of romantic throwbacks left over from the 1950s and 60s” (Sobhan, 1993:3).

A notable example of the erosion of support for agrarian reform within Latin America came in 1994. This was when the PRI government in Mexico rendered a very controversial decision of abolishing communal lands (ejidos). This was a repeal of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution that originally established the ejidos system of land ownership. The article was originally designed after the Mexican Revolution to make land available to villagers and protecting communal land holdings from privatization (Colatosti, 2001:24).

In spite of this seeming lack of support at higher governmental levels, there is an ever-expanding network of voices at the grassroots level calling for more attention to be given to land reform. At the NGO Global Forum on Food Security during the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration held in October 1995 in Quebec, private organizations and NGOs, particularly from the Third World, strongly stated the need for a renewed effort to bring agrarian reform back to the fore of the international development agenda (Liamzon, 1996:322). Since that meeting FAO has continued to focus on the land issue, principally because rural populations have demanded that it remain as a high agenda priority (UN FAO, 2000).

Other United Nations initiatives have also taken up land tenure issues. In May of 2000 the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development met and reiterated their position that access to land and security of tenure as being one of their top priority areas. The input of farmers, trade unions, indigenous peoples, NGOs,

and industry representatives was solicited through a “multi-stakeholder dialogue” prior to the meeting. The session proved successful in that it *“encouraged governments to develop and/or adopt policies and implement laws that guarantee their citizens well-defined and enforceable land rights and promote equal access to land and legal security of tenure, in particular for women and disadvantaged groups”* (UN NGLS, 2000).

In June of 1996 the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) met in Turkey with the participation of 171 U.N. members states. The purpose of the conference was to map out an approach to the development of human settlements in an urbanizing world. Two of the key commitments they agreed upon were the importance of providing security of tenure and equal access to land (UN NGLS, July, 2000).

A similar plea was voiced that same year at the IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) Conference on Hunger and Poverty held in Brussels, Belgium. Close to one thousand participants represented diverse stakeholders who addressed the issues of rural hunger including inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, NGOs and other civil society organizations. One of the points brought out in the conference was that six in ten households in the Third World work the land. One-quarter of them – 100 million households – do not own the land they work on. Among the rest, land distribution often continues to be highly unequal. The conference resulted in a call for the

revival of agrarian reform on the national and international agenda as a necessary condition for empowerment and sustainable development for the poor. They stated that access to land and secure land rights are of central importance in determining living standards. Reforms targeted at improving the condition of the rural poor must address the issue of rights to land and to land use. In the absence of land reforms, even rapid agricultural growth will not significantly reduce rural poverty and hunger. On the other hand, where land is distributed more evenly, agricultural growth tends to be more rapid, and the fruits of that growth better distributed. Participants asked IFAD to assist the emerging coalition to identify, disseminate and support the replication of successful experiences in land re-distribution, titling and inheritance rights (IFAD, 1995).

In 1997 another major conference was sponsored by FIAN (FoodFirst Information and Action Network) International and Via Campesina. This conference was the kick-off for an international initiative to bring agrarian reform back on the development agenda. This campaign has as one of its targets – the NGO's. The campaign seeks to educate NGO's on the link between access to land and the right to food. It also seeks to lobby and work for the financial support of agrarian reform programs. Participants at the conference made some condemning statements against NGO's for their lack of movement on agrarian reform. They pointed out that the farmer is hurt by both modern agrarian policies as well as the apathy on the part of development organizations and the state.

"Peasants are without allies and neither the NGO's nor the academics are

interested in their problems. It seems that the powerful have perpetuated a stereotype of peasants that invites such insensitivity” (FIAN, 1997:16). This statement was also interestingly affirmed by noted British economist Michael Lipton who writes, “There is almost no area of anti-poverty policy where popular, even professional, opinion is so far removed from expert analysis and evidence as land reform” (Lipton, 1996:62).

The conference was clear in stating that agrarian reform is not just the redistribution of land, but is rather a new holistic development strategy. It means an alternative development model and a redistribution process of control of economic resources. It implies the realization of human rights, education, access to resources, social justice, citizenship, democracy and sustainability.

Participants were quick to point out that food and access to land are a universal human right as stated in two important documents.

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states in article 17 that a) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others, b) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property (U.N., 1948).
2. Articles 11.1 and 11.2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights makes it clear that the human right to food is an international right (UNHCHR, effective January 3, 1976).

In December of 2000 the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development was held in the Philippines. As was the case in the other conferences, a consensus emerged on the positive contribution that more equal

access to land and other assets has in fighting poverty. Equity of land assets also helps to ensure sustained growth and stewardship of the natural environment. It was widely agreed that meaningful reform must involve a significant transformation of property rights and ensure access to the means to make agriculture more productive and sustainable. It must address the needs of those who work on the land including tenants, marginal farmers and landless workers – men and women alike – and be set in the context of a healthy balance between agricultural and industrial development (ICARRD, 2000).

The outcry over land rights has certainly not been confined to conference rooms and organized meetings. Peasant landless movements composed of landless peasants, small farmers, farm workers, rural youth, and peasant women have organized and become significant voices on several national arenas. Two of the most noteworthy of these groups are the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil and the Philippines Peasant Movement (KMP). Both of these national movements rose out of a popular response to the great concentration of land in the hands of a few landowners ((ISLA, 1999). They have taken militant positions in demanding agrarian reform that *“will abolish all forms of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation and will implement a free and equitable distribution of land resources to the tillers”* (Philippines Peasant Movement, website). There is enough information on the actions and history of these landless movements to write a complementary thesis to this one.

Besides the Peasant Workers Movement in Brazil, there are many other efforts going on in Latin America where people and popular organizations are asserting their rights for usable land. Hundreds of individual land occupation campaigns across the Americas are involved in one form or another of land occupation for the landless. Ander Corr in his book No Trespassing: Squatting, Rent Strikes and Land Struggles Worldwide documents the success of many of these campaigns. He argues that the neo-liberal policy of agricultural modernization is creating an increase in land concentration among large landowners and foreign agribusiness corporations. Individual campaigns to combat this trend will only succeed if extensive interconnections between social movements, civil society actors, and non-governmental organizations are built and each campaign is supported by a global coalition of advocates for agrarian reform. (Corr, 1999:196).

An important study by economist Rehman Sobhan supports the strengthening of broad-scale movements, but would actually go further in advocating for a more “radicalization” of land reform efforts. He compares land reform programs in Latin America and Asia and comes to the conclusion that a successful agrarian reform program must be comprehensive and egalitarian. He says that if a country really want to eliminate rural poverty and accelerate all-round economic development, then there is no alternative to a radical agrarian reform. This is the type of reform which redistributes land widely enough to incorporate the bulk of the landless and land-poor in its scope and which thereby totally eliminates the current as well as any potential new dominant class in the countryside (Sobhan, 1993:138).

Riedinger supports this view by pointing out in a recent paper that all notable land reforms throughout the world have not been voluntary, rather compulsory. That is, the land has been forcibly confiscated from wealthy landowners by revolutionary governments or by the power of eminent domain exercised by democratic or authoritarian governments (Riedinger, 2000:4).

The points to be made in the first two sections of this chapter have been to demonstrate that access to land is a rural development issue and is worthy to be addressed as such, and, secondly, access to fertile agricultural land is a current and still very pertinent issue among the millions of landless and land-poor who live in the majority of the countries throughout the world. The last section will look at some of the current literature that calls for international NGO's to take a lead in working towards alleviating this problem.

C. THE ROLE OF NGOS IN THE LAND TENURE DEBATE

I have thus far looked at what the literature says about the essentialness of land acquisition to a comprehensive rural development program and what rural peasants are asking of the development community. Attention now will be given to literature sources which address how NGOs have contributed to the land reform process and what potential lead roles they can play.

During the past few decades NGOs have increased in number, size, and scope and have established themselves in pivotal positions in social, economic, and

political landscapes across the globe. According to the Yearbook of International Associations, the total number of internationally recognized NGOs is well over 16,000. The 1994 Human Development Report estimates that there were about 50,000 local NGOs operating in the South (Fernando and Heston, 1997:8). In Central America it was really after the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 that NGO efforts expanded greatly, both nationally and internationally. Of seventy-one NGOs in Honduras identified in 1992 as having or having had agricultural projects, 64 per cent were formed after 1980. In El Salvador the percentage was even higher (Rodriguez, 1991; Kaimowitz et al.1992).

A massive influx of development assistance from foreign governments and NGOs, stimulated by the regional crisis, financed the NGOs' expansion in Central America. Donor support for NGOs went from almost nothing in mid-1970s to an estimated 200 million dollars a year in 1987. Many new NGOs were created or came to the region whose primary interest was gaining access to these funds (Bebbington and Thiele, 1993:182).

In general terms international NGOs play a significant role in the rural development efforts of many countries in the South. Government foreign aid agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development have recognized this and have increasingly channeled more and more of their bi-lateral aid to poor countries through international NGOs. Currently about twenty-

nine percent of U.S. official (or government) aid is currently administered by NGOs (Hoy, 1998:109). If people like Senator Jesse Helms of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have their way, the U.S. government would funnel the bulk of all of its development/relief aid through faith-based NGOs and do away completely with U.S. AID (Nichols and Slavin: 2/20/01). It is unfortunate, however, that despite the fact that the livelihoods of the majority of people in developing countries depend on agriculture, today less than one-sixth of all aid resources supports agriculture. Instead, international aid tends to favor the urban sector, where the poorest do not live (Hoy, 1998:8).

Much multi-lateral aid such as what comes from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank is also channeled through national and international NGOs. Multilateral and bilateral aid agencies are beginning to favor NGO implementation where possible because they believe that NGOs have a more legitimate and effective relationship with popular organizations than does the state, and therefore a greater ability to reach the poorest sectors of the population (Bebbington and Theile, 1993:50). This collaboration between government and development NGOs however does have its share of critics. An article appearing in The Economist pointed out that the reason why NGOs are growing so rapidly is because Western governments are financing them. The article asserts that this is more a matter of privatization than it is of charity and that NGOs are becoming sub-contractors for governments. Governments prefer to pass aid through NGOs because it is cheaper, more efficient—and more at

arm's length—than direct official aid (Economist, 2000). Some critics also suspect that some aid received by U.S.- based groups is used to propagate western values, often organized to promote particular goals...rather than the broader goal of development.

Other critics see a more sinister and conspiratorial side to the growth of NGOs in the Third World. They see NGOs as community-level agents of capitalistic neo-liberalism that try to diffuse social discontent from imperialism. They accuse NGOs of emphasizing projects not movements and that they "mobilize" people to produce at the margins but not to struggle to control the basic means of production and wealth; they focus on technical financial assistance of projects, not on structural conditions that shape the everyday lives of people. Their ideology and practice diverts attention from the sources and solutions of poverty (looking downward and inward instead of upward and outward). An article in the Monthly Review states that *"there is a direct relation between the growth of social movements challenging the neo-liberal model and the effort to subvert them by creating alternative forms of social action through the NGOs"* (Petras, 1997:10).

Other critics say that NGOs have become effective and efficient at implementing projects at the micro level, but have failed to address broader systemic issues that create poverty because this has not been the domain of their work. There is a feeling that they must be more action-oriented towards challenging development programs and policies that impoverish the already poor and not

spend all their energies in implementing projects. (Bebbington, 1997:122; Bhasin, 1991:6).

In spite of the critics, it is clear that NGOs are having a significant impact upon rural development policy both in influence and funding. At the opening of the 53rd Annual Department of Public Information (DPI)/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Conference of the United Nations the following remarks were given by Ambassador Theo-Ben Gurirab (Namibia), President of the 54th session of the General Assembly. "*NGOs must be active in galvanizing governments into action.*" These remarks were made to an approving crowd of 1,800 NGOs from 60 countries (Remson, 2000:2).

The question is often raised on whether NGOs have a role to play in land reform and what kind of role should that be? This next section seeks to respond to that question based upon the literature. NGO experts Edwards, Hulme and Wallace assert that NGOs are starting to integrate micro- and macro-level actions into their projects. They say we are starting to see a shift from development as delivery to development as leverage. This shift has major implications for NGOs as far as their organizational structure, fundraising, and relations to others (Edwards, Hulme, Wallace, 2000:10). This shift is no more evident than among the work of NGOs in the land reform issue.

The whole notion of advocacy is one approach cited by many authors by which NGOs are well placed to leverage for land reform. Edwards says that advocacy can take a variety of forms - from careful research and policy advice, to parliamentary lobbying, to public campaigning and development education – the overall goal is *“to alter the ways in which power, resources, and ideas are created, consumed and distributed at a global level, so that people and organizations in the South have a more realistic chance of controlling their own development”* (Edwards, 1993:164).

Ghimire presents a strong case for the need among peasant groups to form solid alliances with external institutions like NGOs and development agencies when dealing with the land reform process. The basis for these alliances lies in the fact that land reform is a legal process requiring information and resources that often only lawyers and other legal aid experts can provide to peasant groups. Land reform is also a political issue and thus the support and leverage that marginalized rural populations can gather from external allies will better enable them to get the attention of authorities and powerful landowners. Fisher says that the proliferation of NGOs may provide the only possible, albeit long-term, way of undermining power monopolies. Their increased presence make it difficult for governments to ignore them (Fisher, 1998:19). Ghimire argues for an international solidarity movement on land reform when he says:

“Outside alliances and support are crucial to peasants and other marginalized rural groups during the land reform process. Political

mobilization, leadership development, organization of land acquisition actions and protests, networking, and influencing the media, political parties and government land policies are important but often beyond the means of peasants without the assistance of more powerful outsiders. Rural groups also benefit from external assistance in the identification of land for redistribution, selection of beneficiaries, acquisition of titles, prevention of eviction of tenants by landowners, improvement in wages for agricultural labourers and negotiation with landowners or government departments. Outside support is similarly critical in resolving land conflicts among the rural poor themselves, as well as across tenurial classes, and in ensuring that the beneficiaries of land reform have access to essential agricultural inputs and support services” (Ghimire, 1999).

Some writers point out that the ability of NGOs to publicly advocate and influence policy coincides with a shrinking and decentralization of national governments. Structural adjustment policies imposed on many debt-laden countries in Latin America have forced national governments to greatly reduce their spending for agrarian reform initiatives and to aggressively begin privatizing government services and adopting open market policies. This has left a gap in the agricultural support network that many small-holder farmers were once receiving. Small farmers are exposed to a lack of access to financial services, insurance, information, and technical change and high transaction costs in accessing markets (de Janvry, Key, Sadoulet, 1997). However, a key phenomena in Latin

American agriculture today is the (mainly successful) efforts of NGOs to fill the gap between the declining public mechanisms for supporting agriculture and the private systems created to organize productions and distribution (Paniagua-Ruiz, 1997). This vacuum has created space for NGOs to create partnerships with the government, to assist in public policy design and implementation, and to become advocates of human rights and environmental protection. Governments are actually beginning to see the value of collaborating with NGOs to address long-standing issues of poverty in their country. Bebbington and Thiele say that these linkages will become more frequent and effective in the future. They also say that more radical and progressives NGOs should respond to this window of opportunity of working with the government. If they do not, the more opportunistic organizations and the private sector will occupy these new relations with government, gain influence over decision and policy-making, and ultimately grow to the extent that they marginalize other NGOs who do not grasp this opportunity (Bebbington and Thiele, 1993:57,144).

Research conducted by Adams looked specifically at the benefits and disadvantages of increased collaboration in agrarian reform between the government – donors- and NGOs. (see table 4)

The advocacy role that NGOs play in promoting land reform sometimes puts them in a adversarial position with the government. NGOs played an active role in the land reforms of Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Although these

land reforms accompanied social revolutions in which insurgent political forces seized state power with wide popular support. NGOs, nevertheless, played an important peripheral role as catalysts to politically mobilize and organize the rural landless and near landless (Barraclough, 1999:35). Peasant mobilization seems to be the key component shared by all successful land reform programs in Latin America.

There certainly are ethical questions an NGO must confront if it decides to take an adversarial role against the government. If it becomes too adversarial, it runs the risk of government repression and being expelled from being allowed to function in rural areas or even in the country. This is why many NGOs have opted to work within the existing agrarian structure and concentrate their work

Table 4: Government, Donor and NGO Collaboration

<i>From the government's perspective:</i>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better delivery of supporting services to rural communities ▪ More information available from the grassroots ▪ More interaction with rural communities ▪ Enhanced cost effectiveness ▪ More monitoring and control of NGOs 	<p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government's services shown to be inefficient by comparison ▪ NGOs mobilization work promotes political instability ▪ Demand for government services arising from participatory approaches increases beyond the capacity to meet it; too much focus on politics and not enough on poverty alleviation; NGOs lack competence in socio-economic/livelihood projects; NGOs compete with government for donors' funds ▪ NGOs reluctant to adhere to routine monitoring; unaccountability of NGOs

<i>From the donor's perspective:</i>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better delivery of supporting services to target group, in contrast to poor performance and high-cost public agencies. ▪ NGOs seen as a better means of creating general awareness of the need for sustainable development and agro-ecology ▪ Stress of NGOs on good governance, democracy and participatory methods. 	<p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NGOs are as reluctant as government to adhere to routine monitoring; unaccountability of NGOs regarding use of funds; NGO involvement complicates disbursement and creates administrative burdens for donor office; difficulty in arbitrating between national NGOs ▪ Innovativeness of NGOs constrained by service contracts ▪ Donor accused of interfering in domestic politics
<i>From the NGO perspective:</i>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved access to government policy formulation ▪ Access to more funds to pay for NGO personnel, training and operational costs. ▪ NGOs obtain access to more funds for poverty alleviation land reform and rural development. ▪ Opportunity to improve government services by providing training. ▪ Opportunity for scaling up operations. 	<p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-option by governments and greater bureaucratic controls ▪ Unreliability of funds routed through government channels; bureaucratic delays; tension between NGOs seeking funding; loss of autonomy and independence; domination by foreign technical assistance staff; loss of credibility among clients and a tendency to maintain existing social and political conditions. ▪ NGOs become implicated in government's scandals, especially from government-initiated NGOs (GRINGOs); cost and profligacy of consultants (local as well as foreign) funded by the donor ▪ Government acquires the NGOs' methods, dilutes and discredits them ▪ Relegation of NGOs to mere delivery activities to the detriment of the NGOs' wider programs

Source: Adams, 2000:31-2

on technical assistance, credit assistance, creating agricultural markets, and food distribution. NGOs that do chose to tackle the more systemic causes of rural poverty and address macro-level issues Barraclough would call "progressive NGOs" and says they definitely have an important role to play. He says:

“Progressive NGOs and committed international organizations can play important roles as catalysts in helping grassroots peasant and landless movements organize and press their demands for land. They can help through research focused on the livelihood and sustainable development problems of the rural poor. They can provide valuable technical assistance, material resources and legal aid. They can facilitate the use of modern communication technologies by peasants and others struggling for reform. They can publicize violations of socio-economic and human rights, corruption and other abuses suffered by the poor. They can advance land reforms through advocacy at all levels. But their roles will always be auxiliary to what must be fundamentally a domestic political process. The main actors in bringing about and consolidating genuine land reform must always include the landless and near landless, together with their political allies and the state. Well-intentioned NGOs and international organizations can help. They can also hinder if they fail to take into account the complex social dynamics that land reform implies” (Barraclough, 1999:47).

The legitimacy for northern-based NGOs to be involved in advocacy, policy formulation and decision-making on rural development issues lies in the fact that historically they have been well-connected with the poor at the grassroots level. By having a foot in the North and a foot in the South, NGOs are in a good position to link the micro and the macro levels, using their experience in the

South to inform their advocacy and policy work in the North (Hudson, 2000:90; Fisher, 1998:97). Some advocate that northern-NGOs should step aside from their work at the project level and let their Southern counterparts assume that role, while they should assume the equally important role of shaping their own governments' foreign policy and educating their fellow citizens. (Hoy, 1998:109).

There is very little justification in the literature on the need for NGOs to be directly involved in the purchase of land for distribution to tenant farmers. The direct acquisition of land seems to be an activity that is felt best left to the government, basically because inequitable land distribution is such a grandiose problem that only an institution the size of a federal government could deal with it. Secondly, because land acquisition can potentially be a very controversial area. Therefore, donor agencies have chosen to distance themselves from the land acquisition process and have put their support behind physical infrastructure and welfare facilities for settlement (such as wells, clinics, and access tracks) , or for on-farm development (Adams, 2001:3). Nevertheless, there are a handful of small northern-NGOs that make funds available either as loans or grants for the purchase of land. The AGROS Foundation based in Seattle provides loans for farmers in Central America to purchase land, while the NGO Grassroots International based in Boston provides financial assistance to the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil for the acquisition of land.

Besides the direct acquisition of land for the landless, Fisher presents a rather

comprehensive list of many indirect means by which an NGO can use to possibly facilitate more equal access to land.

- Organizing land invasions
- Sit down strikes, public heckling, road blockades, mass fasting, filling up jails
- Lobbying the government to protect land from developers and influence policy
- Neighborhood petitioning
- Contacting individual acquaintances in government bureaucracies
- Building ties to opposition parties
- Holding local demonstrations
- Building horizontal and vertical federations
- NGO members becoming political candidates
- Advocacy for human rights and environmental policies
- Advocacy networking to influence sustainable development. The grassroots tribal movement in Latin America, supported by NGOs and international networks, has been successful at challenging the very heart of inequitable land tenure based on violent encroachment
- Mass advocacy and protest
- Mediators for informational exchange
- Brokers between local communities and sub-national governments (Fisher, 1998: 82,126)

In spite of all the potential interventions that international NGOs could potentially be involved in both directly and indirectly in assisting the rural landless access to land, there is still a lot of frustration among many development experts on the lack of movement in regards to this issue. I think it is fair to say that William Thiesenhusen speaks for many when he asks *“how much worse does rural poverty have to become for international donors to take positive action in ameliorating the conditions that cause it? If donors do nothing and local elites*

and policymakers likewise are mute, the irony is that rebelling peasants (witness Mexico and Brazil) may interrupt the pattern of growth that has so recently begun again in the area" (Thiesenhusen, 1996:2).

CHAPTER 3

Dissertation Research Design

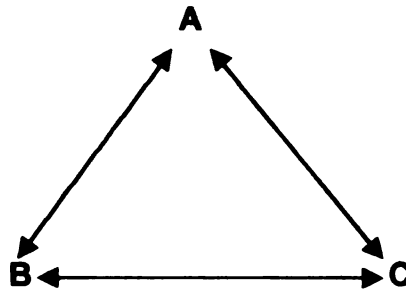
The research design of this study is based on the methodological process of triangulation. It is a process by which two or more different measuring instruments are used to examine the same variable. It allows a researcher to look at a given variable from two different vantage points. Social science researchers Singleton, Strait and Strait say that *“the key to triangulation is the use of dissimilar methods or measures, which do not share the same methodological weaknesses – that is, errors and biases”* (Singleton, Strait and Strait, 1993:392).

The advantage of trying to minimize errors and biases is that it increases the confidence level in the end results of the research. The World Bank relied heavily on triangulation in the formulation of the data contained in their most recent World Development Report 2000/1. World Bank researchers admitted that *“given the open-ended and flexible nature of participatory assessments, it is important that all the information and analysis generated is verified or ‘triangulated’*. *Triangulation is an iterative process and should be continuously sought during discussions with different groups of people”* (World Bank, 1999).

The Literature Review set the foundation for this research. That foundation is that the poor and other development professionals are advocating that NGOs have a role and an obligation to be working on helping the landless and land-poor gain access to land. Two separate research instruments are used in this study to gauge the level of responsiveness among 10 major NGOs to this position. These instruments consisted of gathering information and data from existing literature sources and interviewing key organizational informants. By

examining these two diverse data sources, a reliable picture was developed of the responsiveness of each organization in regards to the requests of the rural poor in Latin America (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Triangulation



- A = Requests from the poor and other development professionals for NGO involvement in land access issues.
- B = Face-to-face interviewing and telephone interviews with key informants from selected organizations
- C = Existing information and data gathered from organizations

Organizational Selection Process

Prior to conducting research on each individual organization, a selection process was established that helped determine which ten international development organizations would be examined. The ten organizations that were ultimately selected for this study were not selected from a random sampling and do not pretend to represent all the U.S.-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) currently encouraging development in Latin America. This study is strictly an examination of ten of the largest and most influential organizations currently participating in rural development work in the region. It is assumed that these organizations set the tone for a large percent of the development strategies

currently being practiced in Latin America.

The following six criteria were followed which were necessary in winnowing down the dozens of non-profit organizations based in the United States who are working at the international level.

1. Contact was made and membership lists acquired from both AERDO (Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations) and InterAction (the American Council for Voluntary International Action). AERDO is a professional forum for non-profit Christian agencies engaged in relief and development work at the international level. AERDO has a membership of 46 organizations who are all based in North America. InterAction is a diverse coalition of more than 160 US-based relief, development, environmental and refugee agencies working in more than 100 countries around the world. The membership lists of these two broad network associations contain the web sites, addresses, telephone numbers, and contact people for all of the major U.S.-based NGOs currently working outside of the United States. This first step was helpful in identifying a master list from which to start from.
2. From this master list of over 200 organizations essential financial information was gathered on each individual organization. This information was generally found in the organization's annual report. Each organization was then numerically ranked according to the size of their operating budgets. The top 30 organizations were determined and retained in the process of paring the

list down to ten.

3. From this list it was then determined which ones had on-going work in Latin America. This information was found on the web site and annual reports of each organization. The number of countries that each organization worked in was not as important as having a definitive presence in a Latin American country.
4. The key premise for this study is that equitable access to land among the rural population is an important component to rural development. It was then decided that interviewing NGOs that make no reference to “development” in their promotional materials as one of their organizational goals would be inappropriate. It would be unfair to hold them to a perceived development standard when they make no claims of practicing development work. Many of these organizations concentrate their work on relief and direct assistance programs often under the guise of child sponsorship programs. Although the effectiveness and appropriateness of these types of working strategies for bringing about long-term sustainable benefit to their target populations might be questioned, that is not within the scope of this particular study. This process eliminated several large and well-known organizations like Samaritan’s Purse, Christian Children’s Fund and Children International.
5. It was then decided that it would be appropriate to investigate only NGOs that were working directly or funding work in rural areas, whether that be in programs of agricultural production, food security or natural resource conservation. Once again, only those organizations in which land issues

might be relevant to their development work were chosen to be interviewed. This process eliminated two additional prominent organizations, Mercy Corp and Save the Children. These organizations were eliminated from the study after having telephone and written correspondence with representatives from both organizations. This correspondence revealed that international agricultural initiatives are not at all part of their development agenda in Latin America and that an interview with them would produce no substantive dialogue.

6. Twelve organizations were then left after this process of paring-down and selected for possible interviews. Even though the target number was ten, twelve were selected with the realization that 1 or 2 of them may either be resistant or unavailable for an interview for a variety of reasons. Once these organizations were selected, efforts were made to contact them to find out if they would be willing to participate in the research and if so, who might be the most appropriate person in the organization to meet with. Subsequently all organizations that were approached were receptive to the idea of participating in the study.

Key Informant Selection Process

The process of determining who might be the most knowledgeable and appropriate person to meet with in each organization was somewhat arduous, especially if there had been no previous personal contact or relationship with the organization. Four basic tactics were used in determining the appropriate informant within the organization. In each case it was the organization itself that

made the final determination based on the information given to them regarding the objectives of the research.

The first tactic, which proved most effective, was to contact a previous personal acquaintance within the organization. The objective of the research was explained to them and they were asked if they could recommend an appropriate person in the organization. Then, when making the second contact it could always be mentioned to them that their name was acquired from a colleague within the organization. This seemed to add a measure of credibility to the request. The unfortunate aspect to this tactic was that in many cases no previous contacts had been made in the organization.

A second tactic used was to go directly to the organization's web site on the Internet. Some of them would identify the names of the executive director and program directors along with contact information. However, in most cases the contact information for the organization would be their fundraising and/or promotion's department which were disconnected from the field operation of organization's programs.

A third tactic used was to ask a known key informant in one organization if they could refer the researcher to their counterpart in another organization. In a couple of instances it was discovered that people had previously worked at one time in a counterpart organization and could easily provide a name to contact.

The fourth tactic was one used if no prior contacts existed in the selected organization. This was to call the organization headquarters and talk directly with the receptionist. He/she would then be asked if they could forward the call to either the Latin American program department, the food security program or the agricultural program. This process usually led to a series of conversations with support staff before talking with the appropriate person.

In each case it was not the Executive Director who was identified as the most appropriate person to talk with and program support staff were found to not have the necessary knowledge in the subject area to warrant an interview. In all instances it was either a departmental head or Latin American field staff who were selected as the organizational representative.

Once the potential key informants were identified, a brief letter of introduction was sent to them that would identify the interviewer, how their name was acquired, the purpose of the study, how long it might take for the interview, and some suggestions for possible dates to meet. This letter was the initial attempt at gaining access to the person. The design of this letter was based upon writings by Singleton, Strait and Strait on effective procedures to gaining access and consent of a potential survey respondent. They mention that the objective of a introductory letter is to help in:

1. identifying the researcher and survey sponsor
2. communicating the general purpose and importance of the study

3. showing how the findings may benefit the individual or others
 4. explaining how the sample was drawn and the importance of each respondent's cooperation to the study
 5. assuring individuals that they will not be identified and that their responses will be kept confidential and will be combined with those of others for data analysis purposes
 6. explaining that the questionnaire will take only a few minutes to fill out or that the interview will be enjoyable and will be held at the respondent's convenience
 7. promising to send respondents a summary of the study's findings."
- (Singleton, Straits and Straits, 1993:271)

In each case this letter was sent to all prospective survey respondents by electronic mail which helped expedite the response rate in setting up interview appointments.

Once a time was set for the interview, a "Written Consent Form" was sent to each prospective interviewee prior to the actual interview. This form had been previously approved by the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). The one-page consent form briefly:

- explains the research
- gives an estimate of subjects time for the interview

- lets the subject know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the research without penalty
- states that all information is held in confidentiality and the subjects identity will be anonymous
- gives the name and contact person of UCRHS in case the subject has any concerns or questions
- asks permission to audio tape the interview

Each subject was asked to read over the consent form and sign and date it if they were in agreement with it. A copy of the form is found in Appendix 1.

Design of Survey Instrument

As mentioned in the "Literature Review" chapter, there has been little past research done on the role of NGOs in relation to the acquisition of land. The intent of this study was to gather initial information on the topic. For this type of research it was evident that a survey interview was the best type of research instrument to be used. An interview is considered the best way to acquire preliminary data in an area in which little research has been done, in order to generate an hypothesis (Singleton, Strait and Strait, 1993:259). The interviews were partially structured, designed for getting responses to some specific major questions, while allowing the interviewer the freedom to probe beyond the answers to these questions.

The interview followed a series of twelve open-ended questions. The open-ended question, as opposed to the close-ended, has the advantage of putting very few words in the mouth of the respondent. The open-ended question is more effective in revealing his/her own definition of the situation, whatever it is (Phillips, 1971:138).

Face to Face Interviewing

Face to face interviewing has one strong advantage over all other types of methods for data collection. That advantage is the high response rate. This may be attributed to the attractiveness of being interviewed and the novelty of the experience. It may also be attributed to the fact that the importance and credibility of the research are conveyed best by a face-to-face interviewer when the researcher can show identification and credentials (Singleton, Strait and Strait, 1993:261). A secondary advantage of an interview is that an interviewer can ask for clarification from the respondent and be more probing in acquiring an answer from a respondent. The opportunity to clarify the many terms associated with land issues like land reform, land ownership, land registration, land accessibility, land tenure and agrarian reform proved especially useful in this research.

The biggest disadvantage of conducting face to face interviews was that of costs. Each organization interviewed was located in a different locale and in almost all instances in a different city. The one advantage that helped cut costs was that all

the organizations that were subsequently interviewed were located in the eastern United States and therefore several could be visited during each trip.

In three instances a telephone interview was conducted rather than a face to face interview. One was done because the interviewee came down ill on the day of the face to face interview, one was done to save on costs and the expressed preference of the respondent, and the third was due to a scheduling conflict between the interviewer and interviewee. However, telephone interviews are also considered an effective method to gather information because of their high response rate. Their disadvantage was that it took a little longer to establish trust and rapport with the respondents, although in each instance the conversation ultimately lasted longer than the face to face interviews.

Pretest of the Survey Instrument

A pretest of the survey instrument was conducted prior to using it on the previously selected organizations. The pretest was done with a small U.S.-based development organization that has agricultural work in Latin America. The organization is one in which the researcher has previously worked for and has numerous colleagues. The pretest was available in gauging the time of the interview, setting the appropriate order and relevancy of the interview questions, and helping the interviewer become comfortable with the process. The agency representative who was interviewed knew that it was a pretest and offered helpful feedback on the interview experience.

Collection of Organizational Literature Sources

The second leg of the triangulation process (see Figure 1) was the collection of secondary literature sources from each selected organization. This was not a difficult task because for most of them the production of written promotional material constitutes a significant amount of their staff time and budget expenditures. Annual reports were collected from each organization as well as IRS I-990 Forms, country project reports, organizational newsletters and brochures, project proposals, and home office correspondence with field staff. After some of the interviews the researcher was encouraged to correspond directly with field staff. This proved helpful in gaining additional information beyond what the home office representative had offered. This material was helpful in providing a context to each interview and for either supporting or refuting what was said during the interview with the organizational representative. Relying solely on either the interview or the organizational literature would have not provided adequate information to gauge their perspective and behavior on land issues, however, combining the two data sources proved essential in gaining a full picture.

CHAPTER 4
Research Findings

Eleven organizations were ultimately selected for an interview as part of this research, with the understanding that one of them may be dropped due to unforeseen circumstances. This proved to be absolutely the case as the interviewing process unfolded. The eleven organizations that were chosen based upon the selection criteria outlined in chapter 3 of this study were as follows:

1. Winrock International – home office based in Washington, D.C.
2. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) – based in Silver Springs, MD.
3. World Relief Corporation (WR) – based in Wheaton, IL.
4. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) – based in Baltimore, MD.
5. CARE USA – based in Atlanta, GA.
6. World Vision - international program offices based in Washington, D.C.
7. Lutheran World Relief (LWR) – based in Baltimore, MD.
8. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) – based in Philadelphia, PA.
9. Oxfam America – based in Boston, MA.
10. Church World Service (CWS) – based in New York, N.Y.
11. Plan International (PI) – based in Providence, R.I.

Representatives from each of these organizations were individually interviewed. However, Lutheran World Relief was later dropped from the study due to the fact that on the day prior to the interview the assigned representative became very ill and was given a lengthy medical leave of absence. I was able to interview one of the program assistants at LWR who graciously gave of their time, but found that this person did not possess full knowledge of the organization's programs and could not adequately answer all the questions. There were three interviews that were not conducted face-to-face but rather by telephone. One of these was with the representative from Catholic Relief Services who is based in Guatemala. We

held the telephone interview on a day that she happened to be in the Baltimore office of CRS. The other was with the representative from CARE who suggested that we do the interview by telephone rather than in-person. The third was with Plan International for the reason that on the day that I was in Providence for the interview the representative had a family emergency and had to cancel.

The following is a brief summary of the responses that each organization gave to the open-ended questions that were posed to them during the interview.

Question #1

The first question asked of each organization was a simple one. "How long have you been working in Latin America?" It was posed in order to gain some historical perspective of their level of time and financial commitment to the region.

Responses

All ten organizations said that they had been working in Latin America for over ten years, with seven of them having been in the region for over 25 years. They all felt that this level of longevity allowed them to develop a deep level of knowledge of the region as well to establish a high level of credibility among people in the host country.

Question #2

The second question was designed to find out the manner by which each organization worked in Latin America. I wanted to know if they were funding organizations, direct project implementers or a combination of the two. The question asked was “does your organization work directly in development programs or do you work through national partner organizations?”

Responses

Eight of the organizations specifically mentioned that they work with partner groups by funding them, providing organizational capacity-building, collaborating with them, consulting with them and even forming them. The term “partner group” was viewed somewhat differently by all organizations. Some classified their partner groups as local churches, local government ministries, national organizations, and local development NGOs. All ten organizations admitted that originally they began their work as direct aid providers, but have changed their methodologies as they have witnessed the advancement of indigenous technical and institutional capacities throughout Latin America. However, one organization raised concerns that their “partnerships” are becoming increasingly more like a subcontracting relationship at the local level.

World Vision is an exception to the other eight in that they are direct implementers of development programs. This is primarily due to the fact that they are the type of child-sponsorship program that collects donated funds for direct

assistance to specific children and the communities in which they live. The relationship that World Vision might have with these communities could last 10-15 years. This long-term commitment requires them to be the implementers of direct aid projects.

The American Friends Service Committee on the other hand is neither a funding organizations nor direct aid implementer. They work through Field Representatives who do organizing at the grassroots level and Quaker International Affairs Representatives who are involved in national policy work. The Field Representatives work as catalysts in building up indigenous organizations from the ground level and helping them become self-sustaining by helping them look for funding from other donors.

Question #3

This question was “how do you establish the development priorities of your field work?” The intent of this question was to understand at what level each organization incorporates all potential stakeholders into the development planning process. I wanted to get a sense of whether the development priorities of the organizations’ were established in a highly centralized manner in the home office, or if it was a decentralized process with input gathered from all relevant participants including the “beneficiaries” of the prescribed program. As mentioned before in this research, poor rural farmers are begging for a place at the table

where development strategies designed to “help” them are discussed. Have these organizations created a place for them at the table?

Responses

There were a wide variety of responses to this question with the most popular being that development priorities are established through an iterative process of dialogue between partner organizations, outside consultants, international NGO staff, community members and government officials. These groups are regularly brought together for large-scale meetings that were referred to as “partner summits” or “world-wide assemblies.” At these meetings the development priority of the organization as well as their working relationship with each partner group were defined. However, there were some notable exceptions to this means of development prioritization.

Winrock is basically a subcontracted organization for large funding institutions like the United States Agency for International Development. They bid on contracts that require outside agricultural expertise. Therefore it is the funding organization not Winrock that decides what the field priorities are for each country based upon the assessed needs along with consultation from beneficiaries. Winrock may also work as the implementers of bi-lateral aid between the U.S. and Latin American countries.

World Vision says that it works with local communities in helping them identify their own needs. They have an established criteria for determining which communities they will work in, after the community is selected they work with local leaders using the Participatory Research Assessment method to identify community needs.

World Relief, Care and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) rely heavily on the expertise and local informational networks of their in-country field staff to assess and determine their development priorities. AFSC refers to this as a “process of discernment” and it allows each country office the autonomy to respond to issues in their region based on their capability to respond in the local context.

Question #4

The fourth question was a continuation of the third question. It was posed in order to find out exactly “what are your current development priorities and strategies of your work in Latin America?”

Responses

The responses to this question were as far-reaching as the individual organizations themselves. Each one had a slightly different focus, some with principle directives emanating from the home office in the United States and some leaving the development priorities and strategies up to the local or regional

office in Latin America. The following is a quick summary of the Latin American foci of each organization.

1. ADRA concentrates its efforts on community-based development activities and disaster preparedness and response. Their community-based development includes a wide range of activities leading to improved health, economic, and social well-being and self-reliance. ADRA's portfolios are food security, economic development, primary health, disaster response, and basic education.
2. Winrock's institutional priorities are to work in agriculture, natural resources management, clean/renewable energy and leadership training. Most of their work in Latin America focuses on market-based production systems. The markets may be local, national or international markets. They say that this is what major donors want and what they will fund. Examples of this are organic high-quality coffee and cacao. More specifically, in Nicaragua they are working with USAID helping farmers who were adversely affected by Hurricane Mitch. They help them establish producer associations, improve crops, and open up new markets. In Peru they are working in alternative development helping farmers move from planting coca leaves to other types of commercial crops.
3. World Vision has three main global priorities that they label "sustainable transformation and development." They are:

- a. **Helping communities identify and meet basic needs. These needs may relate to food security, the environment, education, micro-enterprise development and health.**
- b. **Empowering people to be agents of development in their own community. This entails educating people on their rights, community organization and mobilization, and justice/peace building.**
- c. **Demonstrating a Christian witness.**

Their current focus in Latin America is on natural resource management, agricultural production of food security, and the environment. Normally they focus on child welfare issues, but now realize that they cannot ignore the family and community in which the child is growing up.

- 4. **World Relief's Latin American priority is Nicaragua with their Sustainable Agricultural Program. This program focuses on building level curves, live barriers, alley cropping, green manuring, planting leguminous plants and brush, and reforestation. The health program is also integrated into their agricultural work through nutritional programs and establishing family gardens. In earlier years WR concentrated on providing agricultural technical assistance, now they concentrate on providing marketing assistance. This may involve the construction of metallic silos, fermentation and drying structures for coffee and cacao, storage centers, planting non-traditional commercial crops such as spice trees, fruit trees organic coffee, cacao and forestry species. They have also established a**

Farmer Supply Store that promotes a full range of products and post-harvest management structures. They believe that a competitive market will benefit everyone whether they own their own land or not. They also provide assistance by looking for marketing opportunities in the U.S. for the commercial crops such as spices, cacao and organic coffee that the farmers are growing.

- 5. The current plan for Latin America of Catholic Relief Services focuses on issues of social justice, human dignity and human rights. The manifestation of this plan is interpreted differently in each country. Each individual country develops its' own strategic plan every 5 years. The plan is based on the socio-economic data of the country. Each country office is to look at its major social justice issues and respond to them. For example, in Guatemala the major issue is land tenure and the unequal distribution of wealth. Nicaragua and Honduras on the other hand are still in the post-Mitch mode. Emphásis there is on citizen participation, local development planning, and use of budgets in distributing the aid coming into the country. In Brazil their role is to support the community organizing activities that the local church is already doing in helping people acquire title to their land.**
- 6. Church World Service says that it is learning to take a global approach to development and seeing that it also has something to do with human rights, civil society, street children, etc. Their development priorities vary according to time and the issues in each region. They are trying to break**

down the old notion that "if you do not give me money, then I cannot work." They want people to identify their own resources, tools, and local technology. They are continuing to try to distance themselves from "bringing technology" to communities and encouraging them to use traditional and appropriate technology. One example given was a shift from promoting tractors to animal draft power. Modernization theory is seen as something that creates dependency. CWS admits that the learning curve has been an arduous process for their Board of Directors to give up some of the control of the projects and put responsibility into the hands of national groups. Changing the mentality from "doing for" to "responding to" was a difficult choice, but proven to be cheaper and more successful. CWS puts much attention on the idea of cross-fertilization between projects within and outside of countries. When people share with others what has worked and what has failed, there is a coming together of ideas and strategies. CWS believes that it is important to always work with communities rather than individuals. Through community they are able to get at questions of human rights, civil society and security. There is great potential when working with communities.

7. CARE has established global organizational priorities, but each country office also has the autonomy to respond to issues in their own region based on their capability to respond in the local context. The global "sectoral foci" of CARE are: basic health, reproductive health, agriculture, natural resources, small economic activity development, and girls

education. They also have several cross-cutting themes in the organization such as: working with and through partner organizations, gender equity, and diversity. They use the “livelihood security framework” as one of their key analytical tools in looking at local contexts. They are also beginning to experiment with a “rights-based approach lens” when they do their analysis of context. Country offices then must adapt these sectoral focuses and cross-cutting initiatives to the local context and decide which ones are most appropriate. Each country has the right to focus only on particular sectors of the organization. Country offices are also responsible for determining the geographic focus within the country. Part of this is due to the fact that CARE basically lives on project proposals that invariably have a specific geographic focus.

8. In the Amazon Oxfam’s assistance has been geared towards helping communities gain legal rights to their land. They do this by providing legal expertise, filing the correct documents, conducting land surveys and everything else required by the government to gain legal title. Many of the indigenous communities in which they work are those impacted by extractive industries. They help communities negotiate with these industries on where, how, and when the resources will be extracted. They also help them develop mitigation and compensation plans. They even might help them fight to keep the companies out. This method of working has not threatened their legal ability to work in these countries because they work through local and national NGOs and therefore do not take

highly visible roles. In Central America their main entry point was working with farmer groups in resettlement projects during and after the wars (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala). They are now more focused on helping farmers and farmer organizations with the vertical integration of their agricultural products. They help farmers to not only control production, but also in the processing, sale, and marketing of their products. Oxfam focuses much more on economic development in Central America than in Andean South America. In the last couple of years they have focused a lot on relief efforts after Hurricane Mitch and the earthquakes in El Salvador. They are involved in rehabilitation projects that focus on re-building while thinking about how to avoid future catastrophes (ie, not building on a flood plain or below deforested hillsides).

9. AFSC recently did a six-month exploratory study in Central America on what the pertinent issues there currently are. Land tenure was identified as an issue that they need to be focusing their resources on. Although the study named in general terms land as an important issue along with many other identifiable needs, it was really the home office in Philadelphia who decided that AFSC needed to focus on land because others were not. Others avoided it because it is a very big and politically volatile subject and one that is frankly dangerous to get in to. AFSC says that there is a lot of talk now within organizations about land distribution without referring to it as land reform, they call it "market-assisted land reform." Many efforts are going on in mapping property lines and reexamining the whole land

registry system. Emergency situations in Honduras and El Salvador have really brought this to a head as internal refugees are looking to buy land, but there is no real assurance that the land they are buying has a secure title and will never be challenged in court in the future. AFSC claims that there is a lot of money available for people who want to get involved in land tenure, but people are afraid of getting involved.

10. Plan International (PI) has developed five organizational “Domains” which define the scope of their work as a child-sponsorship organization. Projects and activities from each Domain are integrated to address the multiple and interrelated areas of a child’s need. These “domains” are as follows:

- a. **Growing Up Healthy – Ensuring that children have the means and the knowledge to grow up healthy. PI does so by promoting and strengthening responsive, sustainable community-managed primary healthcare systems that encourage changes in health-related behaviors and attitudes.**
- b. **Learning - PI seeks to ensure that children, adolescents and adults acquire basic learning and life skills in order to contribute to the development of their communities.**
- c. **Habitat – PI seeks to create safe and healthy environments for children. They do this by promoting and strengthening the organizational, technical and resource capacity of children,**

families and communities to focus and act upon children's environmental habitat needs.

- d. Livelihood – PI works at ensuring that a families improved financial position leads to increased economic and social benefits for their children. PI seeks to enlarge the productive opportunities and increase access to resources for families and communities, and to strengthen their technical and managerial capacities.
- e. Building Relationships - PI strives to increase understanding and unity among people of different cultures and countries, and to promote the rights and interests of the world's children through child-centered development.

Question #5

A growing trend among many development organizations working in Latin America is to put more of their focus and resources on urban poverty through economic development and micro-credit programs. This question was asked to assess the value that each participating organization placed on working with the rural poor. "Do you or your partner organizations work with the rural poor?"

Responses

All ten organizations responded that working with the rural poor is one of the main focus areas of their organization.

Question #6

This question begins to narrow the focus of the interview specifically towards the access to land issue. It gets at the fundamental basis of the research in exploring the organizational perspective toward land. The question is “Do you believe that non-profit development organizations have a role to play in assisting the landless and near-landless access to agricultural land? If so, what might that role be?”

Responses

Nine out of ten respondents said that NGOs definitely had a role to play in responding to landlessness among poor farmers. Only World Relief was unsure how to answer the question because they had not really thought about what this role might be. Some organizations were quite adamant about the need for NGOs to be involved in this issue. The AFSC representative went so far as to say that if NGOs do not see a role they can play on land issues, then “I would be hard-pressed to see them justify their role in any activity. Why separate out land from all the other social issues?” He says a lot depends on the motivation of the NGO, is it to acquire government and donor funding or do they have a sense of calling to do what is right? He says that land is such a fundamental issue in Central America that everybody should be involved in it – including NGOs. Both Winrock and ADRA said that NGOs can play a significant role in helping small farmers make their land more productive. They can do this by concentrating their efforts on technology transfer, strengthening local infrastructure, market development, and capacity-building among local farmer associations. They said that the types

of efforts that bring in those capacities and provide capitalization of the land make land-titling efforts more effective.

Both CARE and Catholic Relief Services mentioned that only recently have NGOs started to realize a role for themselves in regards to land access. The motivators for this change in perspective stem from some of the criticism that the international development organizations have received both internally and externally. The criticism is that poverty continues to rise at the global level in spite of their best efforts. The CARE representative stated frankly “If all we do is deliver social services, what impact will we really have on poverty?” and “If all we do is build local capacity and local organizations, what impact will we really have on alleviating poverty?” CARE has come to the realization that development is a bigger ballgame than just assuring people adequate access to quality social services and that they need to be able to play at, have influence on, or at least be cognizant of the micro and macro level issues. The land issue is certainly one of those policy level debates that need to be grappled with at the broad level. It is the kind of issue that no individual organization can adequately address, but that possibly the collective NGO community would have enough weight and wisdom to get national government, private sector and aid agencies to pay attention to.

Plan International, World Vision and Oxfam all characterized the anti-poverty work of relief and development organizations as enabling the poor to maintain and acquire resources. Land and water were described as the real asset base of

the poor, so their whole livelihood is based upon access to these resources. However, when tenants must give one-third to one-half of their crops over to the land owner in the form of rent-payment, it becomes clear that they will never really get out of their poverty situation until they own their own land. Additionally, landless tenants have no collateral by which they can acquire a bank loan, so they are forced to borrow from money-lenders who charge extremely high interest rates. These issues all rise up because people do not have access to land.

The representative from Church World Service had a different perspective in saying that NGOs do have a role to play, but that they do not assume that role for selfish motives. He claims to have approached other U.S.-based development agencies with the idea of purchasing land for the poor instead of pouring money into development projects. He saw that loans were not available to the landless and even if they were successful in acquiring a loan – the debt would be insurmountable for them. All the agencies rejected his idea. He speculates that if you allow people to buy land and do their own thing – then they will no longer need outside help and development workers would be out of a job. He says development agencies need to do something to justify their presence. He wonders whether all this development work is fundamentally a control and power issue where those from the West can exercise control by questioning, evaluating, and disbursing money.

Question #7

This question was designed to move the interview from talking about access to land in the general sense to inquiring specifically what each individual organization is doing in regards to the subject. The question posed was “does your organization consider access to land an important issue for the rural poor? If so, what kind of programs or projects are you currently involved with in Latin America pertaining to land access?”

Responses

1. The farmers that Winrock works with generally have access to well-established agricultural land. They have obtained the land through the titling initiatives of other governmental or private institutions, or they have access simply through open access or traditional ownership norms. Winrock’s role is not to be involved in land titling or registration because ownership in and of itself does not develop a dynamic land market until the land is productive. Making it productive by concentrating on technology transfer, strengthening local infrastructure, market development, and capacity building among local farmer associations is what they see their role as being.
2. World Vision is involved in advocacy programs that help people acquire land. They believe people need to know their rights so that they know how to fight for equal land distribution. If the land is locally controlled their

advocacy focuses at that level, if it is controlled mostly by the government – then they take their advocacy to the national level. They have found that land ownership is critical if a farmer plans on doing any long-term investment on their land.

3. Plan International admits it is doing a lot in the area of land tenure in some geographical pockets around the world, but in other areas they are not doing nearly enough. The only difference between these pockets of success and inactivity is the knowledge or dedication of the field staff. Staff change every 2-5 years and each staff member has their own orientation or specific area of knowledge. The organizational “domain” areas are so large that no one can be fully knowledgeable in all areas. Therefore, where staff is really focused on Habitat issues, there is where they have strong land tenure programs. This unfortunately has resulted in only spotted success in land tenure. They have a written commitment to land tenure and have built some good programs around it. However, they have seen some regions where there are wonderful opportunities and nothing is being done, while in other more difficult areas great things are being done. It all depends on the focus of the country office staff. The child-centered focus of Plan International has prompted them to focus on the importance of children having secure tenure of their family home. Much attention has been given to their urban programs where almost all of the people they work with are squatters. There is a feeling that they might

not be doing enough in regards to land tenure. "We all know it is an important area, but a lot of us do not have much focus on it, so somebody like you can help us, by sending us something and putting something under our noses."

4. World Relief believes that the rural poor in Latin America have been pushed to farm on marginalized and mountainous parcels of land. Although the World Relief representative did not know the land tenure status in Nicaragua of the farmers that they are currently working with. He assumes that they must own it because they are willing to invest in the land and farm the same parcel for consecutive years.

5. In Nicaragua during the resettlement period after the Contra War ADRA was actively involved in facilitating the process for people to gain title to their land. Although legal issues are not ADRA's specialty, they will subcontract with national NGOs who are working in land reform and pay them for their services. ADRA works principally with farmers to enable them to stay on their land, make it productive and not be forced to migrate to the city and sell off their land. This is the complementary role to land reform that they can play. They believe that land reform and empowerment of small-holders have to go together.

6. CARE is dealing with land issues in Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador. In El Salvador they were contracted to take a piece of the work on repatriation and redistribution of land after the Peace Accords were signed in 1992. The Salvadoran government contracted CARE to redistribute certain tracts of land to ex-combatants. They were in charge of titling the property, delineating the property and doing all other registration procedures. In Ecuador they worked with the indigenous population in helping them have rights and priority to work in the buffer zone around a national biological reserve. They advocated for the rights of the indigenous people in being significant players in determining how the buffer zone would be used. The idea was both to protect the reserve but also to maintain a sustainable livelihood for the people. They helped them by organizing them and helping them get fair market value for the products extracted from the buffer zone in an environmentally sound manner.

Much of CARE's work in agriculture and natural resources management is working with farmers who have usufruct rights from the local municipality and are hillside farmers. CARE works at extending the productive capability of the land through soil conservation techniques so that farmers will not have to potentially leave their land and attempt to start up anew somewhere else. They want to cut the need of hillside farmers to encroach on new hillside plots. However, CARE admits that this strategy has limitations when the hillside is extremely fragile and already degraded.

The ideal situation would obviously be to try to get people off the hillsides, but then you have the issue of where to put them. "Redistribution of land quite frankly is still a very delicate and contentious issue in Central America." The rural to urban migration is so big in these countries right now because people have nowhere else to go. CARE has never taken the position of reexamining their work as it pertains to land tenure and land use planning at the national or regional level. They have not even debated the land issue seriously enough within the organization to identify what the drawbacks for addressing the issue are.

7. AFSC is currently concerned about the effects of the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas as it pushes for land markets and makes it a commodity. This concern is especially focused on indigenous rights and traditional forms of land tenure. Will indigenous people be pushed off their traditional lands because they do not have a formal title or because someone else corruptly obtained one? AFSC considers this a very important issue because there seems to be an increasing concentration of land ownership as a result of NAFTA and they are afraid this will repeat itself with FTAA. They believe in the effectiveness of the free market, but that it should be to the benefit of many rather than limited benefit to just a few. He says "The value we place on private property should not supercede the social function of land."

AFSC believes that after this final push for free trade, people are going to see that it does not work and only polarizes society even more. They then will start to look for other alternatives and there are already indications that this is happening. NGOs can play a role in developing alternative policy proposals that are clear, well-written, and draw upon credible research. The land tenure initiative cannot be pushed blindly simply because we want it, rather AFSC is acting as a catalyst to bring their counterparts, research institutions, and qualified people in Central America together to draw up alternative plans and strategies.

- 8. The relative modest size of Oxfam America allows them to work with groups that others do not yet fund. They work more with small and newly emerging national and indigenous organizations, and therefore must commit long-term to them in building up their organizational capacities. Oxfam believes that these organizations can have a greater impact on national policies pertaining to landlessness and land tenure issues. Oxfam provides them with funds for organizational development and capacity building. Building a strong local organization is viewed as a key element in achieving basic rights like access to land and changing the economic status of the poor.**

- 9. Church World Service has decided to focus on helping farmers get the most out of the land already possess. They do this through the promotion**

of multi-cropping, organic farming, fish farming and crop diversification.

They believe that through crop diversification a farmer can become more economically independent.

10. Catholic Relief Services sees a role for themselves in training communities on land titling procedures, providing free legal counsel, helping with the formation of community agrarian committees, and helping to establish vertical accompaniment relations with the state institutions that work on land.

Question #8

The intent of this question was to examine how up-front and direct the organization may be in its' efforts regarding access to land. The question was "Is your organization involved in any programs or projects that facilitate direct acquisition of land for the rural poor? If so, what are the best experiences you have had?"

Responses

World Vision, World Relief, Oxfam, Church World Service and CARE all said explicitly that they do not get directly involved in the acquisition of land. They said that they do not follow the Nature Conservancy model of purchasing land for preservation. Winrock stated that it is not involved in land acquisition. However, they framed the question as it might apply to land titling and registration. They

saw this as a highly technical field involving GIS mapping and cadastral registration. They felt that it is important area for an NGO like the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center to be involved in, but it is not within their realm of expertise.

Plan International, ADRA and Catholic Relief Services all felt that they are directly helping farmers gain access to land. Plan International said that in some cases it has purchased land and sold it to new landholders on credit. ADRA explained their program in Ghana as one where they work directly with landless people who are immigrants from other parts of the country. They have developed a program called "apportionment." In this instance a landowner will sign a contract with a landless peasant to develop the land. When the land is developed the landless peasant then is allowed title to one-third of that land. For example, a landowner may have 20 acres that he wants to plant in citrus trees. Citrus takes about 5 years to mature. Therefore, as the citrus trees are maturing the tenant farmer is allowed to do inter-cropping so he has food to subsist on during the 5 year waiting period. After 5 years one-third of the land is given over to the tenant farmer as his own property. ADRA gets involved by providing the inputs, seedlings, technical assistance, and seeing that the contract is well-done and legal. After the 5-year period ADRA makes sure the national land department has registered the tenant farmer with his one-third portion. This model has worked well in Ghana for a long time. They have found that after a period of time the

once landless peasant may have enough money to buy additional pieces of property.

Although Catholic Relief Service does not get involved in direct buying of land or giving out credit to do so, they still claim to be directly involved in land acquisition. They have enabled communities to get title to their land by providing training on legal procedures such as simply filling out an application to the land credit fund so that they can gain access to resources to actually buy land. They have also facilitated the process of measuring the land for registration purposes. So far they have measured out land boundaries in 150 communities in conjunction with their national counterpart organizations. Another important aspect of their work is to help communities organize so that they can provide a united front before the state institutions and also to learn from one another.

AFSC is not presently involved in direct acquisition of land. In the past they were very much involved at the local land acquisition level particularly with the resettlement of war refugees after the wars in Central America. AFSC says there is definitely still a need for land acquisition at the local level.

Question #9

The purpose of this question was to explore what kind of land initiatives these organizations may be involved in that could be seen as less visible and risky, yet equally effective. The question was "Is your organization involved in any

programs or projects that indirectly or potentially could lead to greater access of land for the rural poor?"

Responses

1. ADRA says that in most areas of Latin America (Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua) where they work, landlessness has not become a big problem. In these countries they see people working mostly on traditional and family lands. They feel landlessness is a bigger issue in post-socialist countries like Madagascar, Mozambique and Sudan where land was taken by the government and now needs to be redistributed. In Mozambique for example farmers lack land tenure security to their ancestral lands. Here ADRA works with local organizations in helping farmers register and gain title to their land. In the Sudan they are helping resettled refugees from the south prove their legal citizenship so they can acquire a parcel of land to build a permanent house. However, in the Altiplano of South America ADRA says that those people already have ownership of their land and landlessness is not a big issue. It is a bigger issue within the cities of Latin America they say.
2. Catholic Relief Services has taken a very indirect role in helping people gain access to land in Guatemala. After the Peace Accords were signed the government promised more land to people, but this promise has not been fulfilled. So far the government is basically only acquiring abandoned or common lands for the land credit fund. They have not expropriated land

from wealthy landowners who are not using their land. CRS is helping to fund organizations that push the government to comply with their promises and start making more land available for the poor.

3. Church World Service has decided to focus on helping farmers get the most out of the land they already possess. They do this by promoting crop diversification and multi-cropping. Additionally, this is accomplished through micro-enterprise development and community banking programs that facilitate credit to farmers. They also promote environmental sustainability by incorporating animals into the farm cycle and using their waste as organic fertilizer. This has generated a completely different type of economy for small farmers with an emphasis on intensive agriculture rather than the Northern concept of extensive production. They say the improvement of the conditions by which farmers grow food to live on is what is so needed. CWS is helping farmers think about vertical integration into the market. They want them to think about how crops will be sold? Where will crops be sold and at what price? Who will buy them and how will they get to market? All projects must consider these market factors. Through this process of agricultural capitalization CWS believes they are helping small farmers become more independent and reduce the risk of them selling their farm and becoming landless.
4. World Relief, similar to CWS, believes that by increasing a farmer's income this will provide more land security to them. Farmers typically lose their land because of financial debt, therefore having more income through

expanded market opportunities allows them to avoid catastrophic debt. It is important to WR to keep people on their land and be able to support their families. By growing commercial crops farmers gain more income so that they can send their children to school and not migrate into urban areas. They feel that debt is what forces farmers off their land, so they really avoid providing credit to farmers unless it is for short-term marketing of their crops. They provide only working capital credit to farmers, often for their secondary source of income.

5. Winrock is involved indirectly by training and building up the leadership capacities of local leaders who hopefully responsive to their constituents and sensitive to their need of acquiring access to land. Winrock admits that “if farmers are going to invest in the technologies that they are trying to transfer, then they must have secure land rights – otherwise they won’t do it.”
6. Plan International has been involved in the United Nations PrepCom conference in New York and they were able to influence some of the agenda, particularly as it relates to children and PI’s Habitat domain. They have an NGO status with the U.N. and participate in various U.N. Conferences. They are currently advocating for Child Rights with the General Assembly. They have applied for consultative statues with the U.N., but the application is still pending. Currently they are on a lower status relationship. Because they work directly with communities and get much of their information from communities, PI believes that they have

much to add to the development agenda in giving representation to people in need. They see that the information that they are gathering at the local level can be useful in influencing broader development policy. The important realization of finding a balance between addressing the micro and macro level issues is a relatively recent understanding for Plan International.

7. World Vision concentrates on advocacy and literacy. They believe that if people are educated and can know their rights, then they will be able to fight for land. This will also help improve a person's self-esteem and a sense of who they are – then they will be able to fight for their rights. WV has staff that are trained in these types of legal issues. Their level of advocacy depends on the intensity of the situation. For example, in Haiti the government there has nominated the President of World Vision to serve on a national peace commission that will be working on conflictive issues in the country. One of those issues they will be looking at is the issue of land. World Vision is also involved in advocacy at the Washington DC level. They can work with other NGOs to lobby on Capitol Hill to pressure the U.S. government to intervene in other governments on issues that keep people poor. World Vision has a whole department on government relations that work at this level. They work at two levels: they work in advocacy for land reform, but also help farmers get the most out of the land they are currently living and working on. This would involve technical assistance, credit, and promotion of environmentally sustainable

practices. They work at accessing agricultural resource technology by forming relationships with international research centers and national universities.

8. Oxfam, AFSC and CARE did not choose to distinguish the direct work they are doing in assisting people in accessing land from any indirect work.

Question #10

The intent of this question was to find out at what level each organization may be committed to addressing land tenure issues with the assumption that money will back up a real commitment. The question was “Does your organization provide funding for land access initiatives?”

Responses

Winrock, World Vision, Church World Service, CARE and American Friends Service Committee all stated that they provide no organizational funds for land access initiatives. World Relief and Plan International stated that they occasionally purchase land for the purpose of building a house on it, but not for farming. Oxfam, on the other hand, said that it is open to funding initiatives that help build coalitions at the pan-national level. An example of this would be Via Campesina, which is an international umbrella group working on land tenure initiatives that Oxfam supports.

Catholic Relief Services and ADRA are both open to provide direct funding for land access. ADRA says that if the need is there, they will try to address it. They get quite a bit of funding from USAID and have found that USAID is receptive to addressing land issues in Africa if not in Latin America. ADRA will give money to people to help them acquire title to their land. USAID is funding this initiative in Mozambique. ADRA says that in this country they identified land entitlement as a principal obstacle to food security. They admit that even if AID would not have funded it, they would have received funding from another source to do the program. Catholic Relief Services provide direct funding for land access in Guatemala and Brazil through church-based organizations. They get 50% of their total funding from USAID, but only a small amount goes toward the land access program in Guatemala. Unlike U.S.AID's involvement with ADRA in Africa, they only verbally promote land access in Latin America without providing even minimal funding for it. CRS admits that more recently U.S. AID has refused to fund any land tenure initiatives in the CRS strategic plan. They cannot convince U.S. AID that land tenure is an important element of their food security program.

Question #11

This was a fundamental question to the research because it really prompted each organization to articulate exactly what the restrictions and limiting factors are in dealing with the land issue. It is an issue that only recently has been even considered by some organizations and the intent of the question was to find out

why. "What obstacles have you experienced or can you envision in regards to development initiatives that facilitate land distribution?"

Responses

- 1. AFSC sees political risk, especially at the local level as an obstacle. The political risk rests in the fact that land ownership and the amount you possess has been a strong cultural determinant of ones' status and power in Latin America. Elites see sacrificing their land as giving up their status and power and resist doing so.**
- 2. World Relief sees political risks for NGO's to be involved in the land access issue. Political climates vary from country to country and even in today's post-agrarian reform time there are risks for NGOs. Although World Relief admits that it would be difficult to implement their type of programming into an area where farmers did not own their own land, they are not prepared to completely change their developmental approach.**
- 3. Winrock believes that funding issues would be an obstacle for their involvement in land access issues. They seriously doubt whether their donors would be supportive of such an effort.**
- 4. World Vision echoed this same concern. They get their funding from child-sponsorships, government aid, and private foundations. Donors can stipulate where their money goes to and what kind of intervention they want to fund. USAID funding depends on the priority that they place on certain countries. They give no funding for land acquisition, but their focus**

is more on food security. By this they mean that everyone should have access to food at all times. USAID generally avoids the land issue because it is too political.

5. According to Plan International one obstacle is that in some countries NGOs are just not allowed to purchase land according to governmental law. Another obstacle is that in many countries it is a real challenge to find out who really owns the land. The documentation is imprecise and much information may have been lost in the last coup. Plan International confidently states that it has felt no resistance from U.S. donors to its work in land tenure. Their sense is that donors would be receptive towards it given the high value that the U.S. puts on private property ownership and “pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps.” They also feel that their child-sponsors are highly educated on development issues and push a more progressive agenda of sustainable agriculture. Their donor profile reveals that 65 percent are woman between the ages of 35-64, and are highly educated with at least a master’s degree.
6. Church World Service says that the obstacle really lies in the fact that there are very few development projects that are designed from listening to the needs of the poor, and until that happens we will continue to make many mistakes and have many failed projects. Even when we say that a project is owned by nationals, the reality may actually be that it is controlled by local elites or administered by national professionals who are trained or have adjusted to the development mentality of the North.

7. ADRA believes that in most countries land reform has not become a big issue because no one is paying attention to it. Only when people start infringing on other people's land does it become an issue. A case in point would be Zimbabwe – only because of the conflict there did people recognize that there was a problem. Land is not an issue as long as farmers are planting subsistence crops. However, when they start planting commercial crops it becomes an issue because this implies permanency. Commercial farming is making land ownership an issue because it also implies increasing the value of the land. This is when ownership becomes an issue. ADRA has some reservations that the World Bank initiative to develop land markets could create more conflict. ADRA says that a two-tiered approach is needed, they say that:

- a. You cannot develop a land market without tackling the land tenure system issue. When the value goes up and a market is created for land, then we are faced with the complicating issue of who is the rightful owner of the land – the family, the chief, the clan, the tribe, the household head? If land markets are going to be pushed by organizations like the World Bank, then at the same time the land ownership/registration issue must also be addressed or you will have conflicts.
- b. On the other hand, land reform alone will not change the situation. Why would someone want to register their land if they do not see any increased value for doing so? Land reform only becomes

effective if people feel that there is a threat of losing it or if they see increased value in it. Therefore, land reform also needs to be accompanied by a land market. You cannot push one without the other.

8. Catholic Relief Service cites several obstacles to the broader acceptance of the importance of land tenure among their organization. The first is that CRS has come out of a traditional/technical development mindset where the staff possess technical abilities in health, micro-finance, education and agricultural productivity to address poverty. Therefore, some staff are reluctant to get into justice issues like land tenure, or do not fully understand its' relevancy to their work. Secondly, there is not a lot of organizational support for tenure initiatives at the home office level. Working on land tenure in only two countries in the world is indicative of this luke-warm commitment. Thirdly, U.S. AID gives a lot of positive rhetoric on the importance of land tenure, but does not provide the funding to support the rhetoric. Fourthly, there exists a low level of expertise among local people on legal issues pertaining to land and a high level of community disorganization. Churches have historically not worked on this issue or even wanted to because of its' political nature. Building capacity at the local level has become a slow process. Fifthly, there is a lack of political will amongst local government officials to be of assistance. There is a high level of corruption among these officials that expect to get paid

off for their help. There is also incompetency and rigidity in the government registration system.

9. Oxfam's annual budget of \$26 million spread out over 6 regions (27 countries) was cited as an obstacle. This really becomes an obstacle when one thinks about buying land. Another obstacle given is that internally Oxfam is staffed mostly by social scientists and anthropologists. The land issue however is fundamentally an environmental issue as the interview respondent sees it. The academic discipline biases of the staff hinder how they view the land issue. They can probably overcome this barrier through more cross-discipline training. Many of the staff in Latin America are anthropologists and see the land issue as just one element of the whole cultural/social realm of the region. They did not give it any special priority. Another obstacle that was cited is that Oxfam has never been an organization that really engages with local government and policy. They fund organizations that "may" engage the government at the policy level, but they do not do that directly. Obviously government policy is the biggest obstacle to land reform. He does not see Oxfam as a primary player in addressing policy issues. They do not advocate to national governments themselves, but see this as the role of national organizations. They do however participate in advocacy work at the U.S. and multi-lateral level on issues like globalization and free-trade. They have also aggressively analyzed how these policies affect the resource base of the poor. Therefore, they can do advocacy work on how these

global issues will effect land tenure and land management, but only at the international level.

10. One major obstacle that CARE expressed was that for 55 years they have focused primarily on individual projects related to one of their sectoral objectives. This has hindered them from taking a broad-based approach. It would be a huge shift for them as an organization to move from project and program-based types of efforts to taking on large cross-cutting initiatives that have large policy implications. There is not the organizational will in the organization at this time to make that shift. CARE is still trying to discover what some of the dynamics are that cause poverty. They have not really identified those structural and political root causes and have not yet decided if land is one of those causes. Moreover, sixty percent of funding for CARE USA comes from the U.S. federal government. Most funding proposals are generated out of country level offices. In Latin America there currently are about \$100 million worth of projects and programs. USAID is certainly comfortable with funding projects that build local capacities within community-based organizations and local municipalities. However, each "pot of money" within AID has its own funding objectives and you have to be able to determine which one is most appropriate for your project proposal. AID is also divided into "sectors" much similar to CARE. Therefore, it would be hard to find the appropriate office in AID that would fund cross-cutting issues such as access to land.

Another obstacle for CARE is that their presence in all their countries is based on agreements with national governments. This makes it difficult for them to take on any perceived confrontational role with these governments. This hinders what agendas they put on the table at the national level. CARE expressed doubts that the U.S. government would be willing to seriously look at policy issues, especially those policies in the U.S. that adversely effect poverty overseas. They also feel that the U.S. government must seriously rethink its role in poverty reduction.

Question #12

The intent of this question was to assess the future plans of each organization pertaining to their organizational strategies regarding land accessibility. The question posed was “Do you see your organization changing its position or development priorities regarding access to land in the future? What extenuating circumstances might prompt you to change?”

Responses

World Vision, Plan International, ADRA, Catholic Relief Services and World Relief did not envision any future organizational changes in regards to the strategic manner in which they respond to the land tenure issue.

AFSC stated that their position is always evolving according to the needs of the time. Their involvement in land tenure in one form or another has been going on for a number of years. They worked at resettling war refugees and acquiring land for them during the 1980s. This new effort at being catalysts in the development of land policy in light of land-markets initiatives is a new focus for them, so they will be sticking with it for a while.

Oxfam confessed that they do not have a systematic way of measuring impact and that this is one of their main strategic growth areas for the future. They need to quantifiably know whether they are making an impact when dealing with policy issues and political impact. They currently do not have baseline data to measure the impact of their work and they need it.

Winrock said that it is very unlikely that they would change their work priorities towards land tenure even if money became available to do such. They do not have the history or expertise in this area so therefore would not be competitive in bidding on projects. They might conceivably get involved as a subcontractor or as a component of a whole team initiative regarding land access, as long as some other organization would take the lead in land tenure issues.

CARE had by far the most to say in regards to this question. They have come to the realization in the past 5 years of a need to at least consider some of the macro-level policy issues that effect poverty. In their home office in Atlanta three

years ago they started a Policy and Advocacy Unit. This unit is charged with a two-fold focus: 1) to develop some basic guidelines and tools to build institutional capacity in the ability to do good policy analysis, 2) to contribute in the development of organizational positions on specific policies. An example of their work would be that CARE took a position on the Sudan situation and also got involved in advocating for the restricted use of landmines. This unit has not yet developed a position or advocacy on any issue in Latin America.

CARE says it is starting to change and now would even entertain proposals from country level groups that want to do something to effect policy. They are still trying to determine what is the most appropriate vehicle for exercising advocacy at the policy level.

The President of CARE has stated that just because they get more involved at the policy or human rights level does not mean that they are going to become like a Worldwatch Institute, but they do need to learn what their role could or should be. They want to move from being a “well-intentioned philanthropic organization to a much more effective and serious player in development.” They are starting to see the disconnects between this desire and 55 years of philanthropy.

However, there are obviously people in the organization who are not ready to engage at that level. But, there are others in the organization who see world poverty getting worse in spite of the fact that they have been able to touch individuals, families and community lives. “It is tough for organizations like ours to

play that game and especially for organizations that depend on aid agencies for their resources.” CARE is not sure what the reaction of their donors will be. They are not ready to give up possibly 40% of their funding base to address policy issues.

CARE says it is time to start thinking both individually and collectively (all NGOs) about the interconnectedness to poverty and start thinking it through. “We can and should be more major players than we currently are. People would have to stand up and listen to us because of our experience.”

The representative from Church World Service does not see the organization changing its position. In fact he personally regrets that the organization will probably regress from addressing structural issues such as land and move in the opposite direction of promoting more technology transfers. This will be done for the purpose of raising more funds in the United States. There is a strong push from donors to expect measurable results from their donated funds. However, it is difficult to show measurable results from efforts involving justice and community empowerment. He criticizes World Vision for its focus on child sponsorship and what your money can get the individual child. He says to show a child in hunger and then move them to a happy and smiling face is a powerful fundraiser. This unfortunately is the same kind of paradigm that CWS has opted for. He says that the problem really is that CWS does not sell their projects very

well. He says CWS is stuck in the production side of development with projects that people can take pictures of and use to raise funds.

CHAPTER 5

Research Findings From Organizational Literature Sources

As previously mentioned in the Research Design chapter, the second leg of the triangulation process was the collection of secondary literature sources from each selected organization. Annual reports were collected from each organization as well as country project reports, organizational newsletters and brochures, project proposals, and home office correspondence with field staff. Much of this information was located within each organizations' home page website. The process proved helpful in gaining additional information beyond what the interviews offered. This material was used to provide a contextual framework to the work of each organization as well as to support or refute what had been said during the interview. A dual analysis of the interviews and literature sources proved helpful at gaining a broader perspective of each organization.

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)

The promotional and programmatic literature obtained from ADRA clearly supports the views expressed by the ADRA representative during the interview. One of the main development focuses of ADRA in Latin America is that of food security. However, their understanding of food security and how to address it does not include any mention of access to land. They concentrate their efforts on providing emergency food relief to countries during times of natural and man-made disasters, but also by seeking long-term solutions to the lack of food by increasing both the quantity and quality of the locally produced food crops. Their strategies in Latin America for achieving food security are to strengthen local

community and farmer organizations, increase local production of crops through technical assistance initiatives, build up basic agricultural infrastructure, and promote the commercialization of agricultural products. ADRA makes extensive use of donated USAID Title II food as a means to achieve their food security objectives. Although ADRA makes reference in their literature of the fact that food security problems arise from a combination of factors and that integrated programs designed to accomplish multiple goals are needed, ways for people to gain access to land are not mentioned. In October of 2001 ADRA officials announced that they received \$51 million for food security projects from USAID for work in Ghana, Nicaragua and Mozambique. The news release mentioned that these projects are *“comprehensive, including organization of farmers groups, research, training, nutrition education, water conservation, market research, pest and disease management techniques, loans, and provision of seeds, tools, and other supplies”* (ADRA, 2001). The notable exception to this list from the perspective of this research is that access to land was not mentioned as a developmental intervention.

Winrock International

Winrock’s promotional material and website provide a clear picture of its focus on the transference of agricultural technology. This is no more evident than in President Frank Tugwell’s report in Winrock’s 1999 Annual Report where he says that *“Of particular importance in the years to come will be the impact of information systems and software applications in helping people understand their*

options and make informed technical choices. ... this year's report reflects our belief that the digital transformation of the globe will be a truly transcendent one for those of us involved in the work of international development" (Annual Report, 1999:3). The focus of Winrock's work is on developing new farm technologies and improved seed varieties, promoting market driven agriculture such as non-traditional crops, and establishing partnerships among public and private organizations, farmers, and educational institutions. Even though they mention land tenure as a limitation to agricultural productivity in Brazil, it is evident from their literature that their work does not seek to address this limiting factor. Winrock's written literature concurs with what was said during the interview that they have chosen not to engage in the access to land debate.

World Relief

In the interview with World Relief they expressed more of a concern for helping poor farmers increase the profitability of their land than in assisting the landless and land-poor gain access to land. Their literature equally supports this position. Emphasis is put on helping farmers enrich and conserve their soil, increase their harvest, and diversify into more profitable crops. This position is clearly self-evident in one of the "success stories" which is posted on their website. In the article "Farms Produce a Bountiful Harvest for Families" comes the brief description of their work in Nicaragua. The article says:

"While many North American farmers enjoy endless miles of flat land. Nicaragua's farmers must contend with steep hills in this mountainous nation;

little flat land is available for the typical family. World Relief is helping Nicaragua's farmers meet this challenge by demonstrating methods of farming that make it possible to have a thriving farm even on the steepest plot of land."(World Relief website, 2001)

This anecdote however raises a very fundamental but simple question that World Relief does not address in their work. Why is there not any flat land for poor Nicaraguan farmers to farm on, is it because non exists in the country or rather because it is not available to the poor?

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

It is evident from literature published by Catholic Relief Services that they consider the cross-cutting theme of "justice" to be the central focus of all their activities, overseas and domestically, within their external relationships and within the agency. They have begun to apply a "Justice Lens" to all their work.

This Justice Lens is identified as a tool that helps them:

- Analyze the world in terms of the promotion of justice
- Sharpen their responses to identified injustices
- To consistently apply their justice values to all their programs. (CRS-Justice, 2001)

The justice approach is equally applied to all their agricultural programming. It is through this justice lens that CRS recognizes control over and secure access to land as an area of concern. They realize that a farmer's plot is largely controlled by factors off the plot and out of the farmer's control. Therefore, many of their projects support the development of community organizations, enabling them to

provide credit and empower farmers to advocate for change in government policies that affect factors such as access to resources and markets. Specific land titling projects are cited in Guatemala and Brazil. The crosscutting themes of gender equity, human rights, justice and empowerment of civil society are just as pronounced in the literature of CRS as they were in the interview.

Church World Service (CWS)

The promotional material that Church World Service uses is very much different than the previous four agencies. They make strong reference to their work of addressing poverty through “issues and advocacy.” The target audience of this objective is their North American church constituents and individual donor base. They use a wide array of learning materials to educate people on the causes of poverty. Some of the causes they identify are HIV/AIDS, international debt, landmines and the plight of refugees. In the year 2000 CWS spent 9 per cent (\$2.5 million) of their total budget on these types of North American-focused educational programs. It is however ironic to see that only 1.5 percent of their organizational budget was spent on international programs leading to Justice, Peacemaking and Human Rights.

Moreover, CWS focuses a lot of their promotional materials on the number of refugees they have resettled in North America and in the amount of farm tools, blankets, food aid and educational materials they have donated to the over 80 countries that they work in. There is little information given in regards to the exact

nature of their work overseas, but by all indications it is very much based on direct aid and emergency relief since this is where the brunt of their budget is spent. The dual focus of educating North Americans while simultaneously offering direct aid gives a rather mixed message to the true nature of their work. The interview with the CWS representative further reinforced this perceived confusion. The interviewee repeatedly tried to distance his personal opinion from the official position of the organization. While the CWS representative advocated for an increased valuation of the need for farmers to have access to land, the organization continues to push for more emphasis on direct aid as a useful tool to raise funds. To an outside observer it would appear that CWS is not in total agreement on what development strategies they should be pursuing.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

AFSC has worked in Central America for most of the past 45 years. Its activities have included humanitarian relief, refugee support, human rights advocacy, health, community and economic development, support for popular movements and NGOs, and post-war reconciliation and reconstruction. Their human rights advocacy work is initiated principally by their regional Quaker International Affairs Representatives. The literature shows that AFSC is currently working on land issues in Ecuador with indigenous communities in helping them protect the cultural integrity, environmental resources, and community land rights. They have also supported peasant and landless peoples' associations in Brazil since the early 1980s. Although little reference is given in their promotional material to the

question of access to land, one might assume that they give considerable attention to it given the numerous references relating to their work on peace, justice and reconciliation contained in their written materials (AFSC, 2001).

World Vision

In spite of World Vision's television image of only helping poor children through their child sponsorship programs, their work has a much broader community focus. One of their core values is to promote justice that seeks to change unjust structures affecting the poor with whom they work. One of the ways they do this is through a U.S. advocacy office based in Washington D.C. where they monitor and advocate for policy issues discussed within congressional offices. In World Vision's 1999 Annual Report they cite "Ten Urgent Issues for the New Millennium." They believe that if the political will can be gathered to address these issues then the world could be rid of poverty and full of promise. One of the urgent issues cited in the report is that of food for everyone. The report says *"In developing countries, malnutrition leaves four of every 10 children stunted. The diet of a third of the world's population is either insufficient or lacks the essential vitamins and minerals necessary for good health and growth. Yet the world is more than capable of feeding itself. Increased production of food crops, investment in rural infrastructure, better food distribution, and land reform are among the measures that can reduce hunger"* (World Vision, 1999:48). Although little evidence is actually presented on how land reform might actually reduce

poverty, it is nevertheless significant that the subject is brought up in such a high profile document as the Annual Report.

CARE

Care is very up-front in its printed material regarding its work in helping farmers get access to land. In their 1996 Annual report they mention the importance of addressing the land issue:

“Women, children, indigenous peoples, the elderly and refugees are more likely to live in poverty. For these groups, powerlessness in the social and political arenas means less access to land, credit, education, health care, jobs and civil rights. Solutions to poverty must be thoroughly grounded in the complexities of the problem, both in its global dimensions and its real-life impact on people.” (CARE Annual Report, 1996)

In the CARE 1998 *World Report* “The Edge of Hunger “ they once again make the point that *“In rural areas, sufficient food depends largely on access to land and seeds”* (CARE World Report, 1998).

It is also clear from the CARE website that they are involved in land issues in Guatemala, El Salvador and Bolivia. In Guatemala they are helping 38 indigenous communities obtain land titles in the buffer zone just outside of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in the Peten Department. In Bolivia they are supporting the preparation of law proposals that would modify and/or substitute polemic laws, on topics, which include land tenure and land titling. El Salvador has been the site of their most extensive work in land titling. In El Salvador CARE has an

annual budget of \$16 million and a staff of 208 and are the largest non-governmental organization in the country. Since 1995 CARE and its Salvadoran partner organizations have been contracted by USAID and the Salvadoran government to design a process for equitably dividing government-assigned lands among ex-combatants from both sides of the war. This work is a direct result of the provisions laid out in the 1992 Peace Accords. CARE used a global positioning system to survey and mark off land holdings and to obtain titles for over 30,000 small farmers. Having their own land title will allow these farmers the level of security needed to make long-term investments and improvements in their land.

Plan International

As a child-sponsorship organization Plan International strives to make lasting improvements in the lives of poor children worldwide. They concentrate their work in 5 critical and interrelated domains: Building Relationships, Growing Up Healthy, Learning, Livelihood, and Habitat. These domains, in turn, lay the groundwork for their community development projects and are referred to in all of their country program reports. Security of tenure has been identified within the Habitat domain as one of Plan's main strategic objectives. Other objectives included in the Habitat domain are home construction, home repair and improvement, safe drinking water, basic sanitation facilities and access to credit. The position of Plan International regarding the importance of secure tenure is clear from its printed promotional literature:

"In rural areas, an overriding concern is the establishment and maintenance of title over agricultural lands to ensure food security. However, individual and community control over residences and immediate living environments are equally critical. Land and domiciles form the bulk of capital assets for the rural poor. Insecurity of tenure is a common condition of rural settings. In some countries, economic pressures concentrate land ownership in the hands of fewer, better-off people. In rural communities around the world, insecure tenure prevents the poor from taking direct action to address the critical elements of their habitat." (Iyer and Goldenberg, 1996:13)

However, in spite of the strong emphasis that Plan International puts on "security of tenure" in their promotional literature, specific country reports from Latin America do not clearly reflect the same level of prioritization. Of the 12 countries in Latin America in which Plan International has programs, only in Ecuador is there mention of efforts at helping people gain legal title to their land. Most all other country reports refer to the amount of homes improved and drinking and sanitation facilities constructed. Further correspondence with Plan International's field representatives in Bolivia confirmed that in some cases they do support families in the legalization of land, but that this relates to home construction and not to land for agricultural production.

Oxfam America

Oxfam is very public and vocal about its work in Latin America at helping small farmers gain access to land. They have particularly focused their work in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia in efforts at helping farmers achieve legal title over their ancestral lands. This is accomplished by working with partner agencies in conducting community level workshops on legal issues and natural resource management. Establishing legal title to land is particularly crucial in the Andean countries at this time as multi-national corporations continue to eye the region for its lucrative mineral resources. Oxfam is not only supporting local land tenure efforts, but is also working at the policy and advocacy level. In their Viewpoint magazine it is mentioned that *"Oxfam America's advocacy office in Washington, D.C., launched a new Extractive Industries Advocacy Program. With an expert in the law and policy of resource use on staff, it will prepare policy recommendations on the protection of indigenous people in the face of powerful industry challenges"* (Moss and Wilder, 1999-00:9).

Their relief work in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch has also taken into consideration the issue of land and the lack thereof. Through their partner organization Nitlapan they have enabled farmers to buy new lands by offering them low interest loans. *"Nitlapan has helped hundreds of subsistence farmers, small landholders, and farmers/ranchers with the particular challenges they face, including gaining title to property, diversifying agricultural production, promoting environmentally sensitive practices, and improving technical skills"* (Romero, 1999-00:10).

Country reports indicate that Oxfam has been actively supporting indigenous partners in South America on land title initiatives since 1987. The work of Oxfam in Central America on land issues however is not nearly as pronounced. In this region there is much more of a focus on increasing the productive capacities of farmers and little is mentioned in their Annual Report of work with the landless.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Limitations

Although each of the organizations that were interviewed voiced their own unique set of priorities and development objectives, during the course of the research there emerged several common themes shared by most if not all. Below I have summarized these themes and provided some corresponding recommendations that relate directly to each one.

Conclusion #1:

The first theme that emerged and acknowledged by all ten organizations was that each one originally began their work as direct aid providers. However, in recent years they have changed their way of working. They now are all more committed to doing either market-analysis training, organizational and community capacity building, providing loans, doing advocacy work, or organizing communities. In short, they have moved from distributing hand-outs (except in acute relief situations) to following a development agenda. Some organizations said that this change took place because of the growth and maturity in the technical and institutional capacities of the local organizations throughout Latin America. Their partner organizations in the South have become stronger and more assertive in expressing to their U.S.-based counterparts what it is exactly that they need and how northern NGOs can be most helpful to them. Others admitted that the motivation for change stemmed from some of the criticism that the international development organizations received both internally and externally. The criticism was that in spite of all the aid given to these NGOs in helping them do their work, poverty and inequity has not decreased as was mentioned in chapter 1 of this

research. Whatever the reason, all of the organizations interviewed admitted that there has been a definite shift in the way that they are working. This shift is touched upon in the recently published book Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs. Here the authors say that:

"it is plausible that the division of labor among global network members will change dramatically. For example, Northern organizations may have a special role to play in advocacy in Northern power centers, perhaps because of their proximity to these centers of decision-making as well as their special understanding of the context. It is fashionable to say that Northern organizations will have less of a role to play in service delivery in the developing world. A more probable statement might be that national organizations in every country have a special comparative advantage in program delivery in their own country compared to outsiders – due to their unique understanding of the context"(Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001:61).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the responses of the organizations interviewed is that they have indeed been paying more attention to the petitions of the rural poor in recent years through their partner assemblies, international meetings, and increased hiring of national staff. As was mentioned in the Literature Review, the poor want development programs that address the systemic causes of poverty – one of which is lack of available land resources. Research indicates this kind of change is afoot among these NGOs.

Recommendation #1:

The large NGOs that were interviewed all had long rich histories that date back to World War II and even before that. It is understandably hard to change the long-established culture of these organizations. They realize that development priorities are changing but are hard-pressed to keep up with the changes. I recommend that they learn from some of new emerging organizations that display a fresh approach to working in Latin America. One of these organizations is Grassroots International, which is a U.S.-based international development organization based in Boston, Massachusetts. It is a relatively small organization started in 1983 with an annual budget of just over 2 million dollars. In 1998 they began working in Brazil and formed a partner relationship with the Landless Workers Movement (MST). It is a good example of the type of organization that Kamal refers to in his Third World Quarterly article *"It is only in rare cases, and particularly in the case of small Northern NGOs without much money, that the power relationship has been more equal, with non-funding roles such as policy dialogue and advocacy moving to the centre of northern NGO relationships with Southern non-governmental organizations."*(Malhotra, 2000:658)

The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) is the largest social movement in Latin America and one of the most successful grassroots movements in the world. Thousands of landless peasants have organized and taken on the task of carrying out a long-overdue land reform in a country mired by an overly skewed land distribution pattern. In its 12 years of existence, some 6 million hectares of have been acquired with the settlement of over 140,000 landless families on

these lands (IFAD, 2001:222). The success of the MST lies in its ability to organize and manipulate the legal system of Brazil. Its members have not only managed to secure land, thereby guaranteeing food security for their families, but have come up with an alternative socio-economic development model that puts people before profits. This is transforming the face of Brazil's countryside and Brazilian politics at large.

The basis of the partnership between Grassroots International and the MST is aimed at confronting exclusionary development and the increasing concentration of land ownership with an emphasis on land rights and human rights. Grassroots contributes to this relationship by providing cash grants and material aid to the community development and legal rights work of the MST. For example, they are currently underwriting the position of a human rights lawyer who is working for the MST. However, in addition to direct grant making, Grassroots does advocacy and public education on behalf of the MST. They act as a conduit for educating the American public about the MST in order to leverage political and financial support for them. This is done through organizational newsletters, a website, Grassroots sponsored speaking tours of MST representatives in the U.S., and informational letters to donors. They strategically plan with the MST on how to effectively disseminate information to the American public on the land rights issues facing the landless in Brazil and what the MST is doing to overcome the problem.

The relationship between Grassroots Int'l and the MST is one based upon mutuality and respect. It gives a positive example of how a U.S.-based NGO is not only dialoging with the organized landless of Brazil, but also responding in a manner which promotes long-term development.

Conclusion #2:

A second significant theme that emerged was that nine out of the ten organizations interviewed said that NGOs have a role to play in helping poor farmers gain access to land. This conclusion was surprising given the number of formidable obstacles that each respondent identified for why it may not be safe or appropriate for them to be involved in issues of land tenure. However, the exact nature of that role was open to broad interpretation by each organization. Two broad diverging paths emerged during the course of this research. Winrock unofficially led the group that included World Relief, CARE and ADRA that put emphasis on market-based production systems. They followed the model that a competitive market will ultimately benefit all farmers by allowing them to stay on the land that they already possess while making it more productive. Project focus is put on crop diversification, soil conservation, farm modernization, making credit available, and improving rural infrastructure. This is a model that puts primary focus on preventing farmers from becoming landless and less of an emphasis on helping the landless become tenured farmers. These four organizations were the most avid supporters of this model for their work in Latin America. It should also

be mentioned that all four receive a substantial portion of their financial budgets from the U.S. federal government.

The second group opted for a path that put more focus on policy advocacy and saw landlessness as a result of unjust economic and political systems. This group was lead by AFSC and Oxfam America and followed in varying degrees by Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Church World Service, and Plan International. These organizations made verbal and written references to issues like human rights, community empowerment, development of civil society, and social/economic equity. AFSC and Oxfam America are by far and away the most outspoken organizations that have chosen to design their work at addressing root causes of landlessness. They have been upfront in publishing literature that specifically points at the concentration of wealth as a major cause of landlessness. They say that free trade agreements, agricultural modernization, privatization of public services, and U.S. government foreign policy have lead to concentration of wealth. Consequently, they have developed advocacy programs designed to address these issues.

Recommendation #2:

The fact that this is unfamiliar territory would lead one to assume that these organizations are open to new ideas and objectives. Many demonstrated an informal desire for more shared knowledge and cross-fertilization between organizations on the matter. Plan International admitted as much when they

voiced regret that they might not be doing enough in regards to land tenure. They asked for some direction by saying “We all know it is an important area, but a lot of us do not have much focus on it, so somebody like you can help us, by sending us something and putting something under our noses.”

AFSC strongly emphasized the need for scholars and practitioners to develop alternative policy proposals to the free trade push that are well-researched, well-written and draw upon empirical data. AFSC said that land tenure cannot be blindly pushed simply because we want it, rather NGOs must act as a catalysts to bring farmers, grassroots organizations, NGOs, and academics together to draw up alternative plans and strategies. Michigan State University was specifically mentioned as an appropriate forum for bringing together this group to discuss land policy strategies in a conference format. AFSC said questions regarding to what extent we value private property and whether it supercedes the social function of land need to be addressed. They see that these important issues need to be discussed and up until now they do not see anyone doing it. They expressed strong interest in seeing the final results of this research.

Conclusion #3:

Many of the organizations admitted that their financial donors were obstacles to their involvement in land access programs. This was primarily true if they received money from the United State government through U.S. AID. It is no coincidence that the two organizations most involved in advocacy for land reform,

Oxfam and AFSC, do not receive any U.S. AID funding. Four organizations admitted that the acceptance of government funds impedes their level of involvement on land issues in Latin America. Funds are available for community project work, but not for work on land policy issues. Unfortunately, the level of dependence that these organizations have on public funding does not allow them the freedom to deviate from the development priorities of U.S. AID.

Recommendation #3:

Even for those NGOs who may want to seriously address land tenure issues in their work, it is difficult for them to do so if their donors are resistant to it. There are three recommended directions that an NGO can take when confronted with this situation. Each one has proved successful at various levels for different organizations.

1. They can decide to be "program driven" rather than "budget driven." If they decide that their development strategy should include a land access component to it, then they should look only for donors who can support that plan. Although this may cause the NGO to forego other potential funding sources, it allows them a great deal of freedom in deciding how, where, and with whom they will work. This is what Oxfam America and American Friend Service Committee do and it has been successful for them.

2. They can dedicate certain funding streams to certain program initiatives. This is when the NGO tries to match the donor to the type of project that the donor may have an affinity with. This is what Catholic Relief Service (CRS) is doing in

Central America. CRS is very much involved in a land-titling program in Guatemala. However, the funds to cover the program do not come from U.S. AID, who does not fund such programs in Central America, the funds rather come from other private funding sources. U.S. AID, however, continues to fund many other programs that CRS is working in.

3. They can decide to educate themselves and their donors on the existing research regarding land access that has been done by academic, non-profit and multi-lateral research institutions. This knowledge is essential for NGOs if they are going to make a convincing case for new land initiatives to their donors. This is the tactic that CARE USA seems, or at least wants to take with their donors. They expressed a desire to be a "key player" at global level regarding policy and advocacy issues. This would indicate a move from being "budget driven" to be "program driven."

No matter which path an organization chooses, I recommend that they become aware of the growing pool of knowledge on this topic. This knowledge base is coming out of academic institutions, educationally-based NGOs, and international research organizations.

The Land Tenure Center at the University of Wisconsin is one such research institution. They serve as a global resource institution on issues relating to land ownership, land rights, land access, and land use. Their research is based on the

premise that widespread and equitable access to land is important in establishing viable economic, social, political, and environmental systems.

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) also is a valuable resource on land reform research. They have given considerable attention to identifying and documenting cases of where grassroots movements have been directly involved and played a key role in land redistribution and titling, and securing rights to agricultural land by landless farmers.

The World Bank has also established a Land Policy Network. This is an electronic resource link for people interested in improving and applying policy related to land tenure, land access, land titling, and administration. The site contains information for researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners. It can be accessed through the World Bank web site.

The Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as Food First, is another U.S.-based organization that has done extensive research on land reform in Latin America. Their mission statement states that they are a "nonprofit 'peoples' think tank and education-for-action center." Their work focuses on highlighting the root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to establishing food as a fundamental human right. Most recently they have been involved in research that seeks to

quantitatively support the idea that small, family-owned farms are more effective than large tenant-run farms in food production.

In February of 2001 FoodFirst representatives met in Chiapas, Mexico with four other international organizations that are working on the struggle for land and agrarian reform in the Third World. These organizations consisted of the National Land Committee from South Africa, the Center for Global Justice from Brazil, Focus on the Global South from Thailand as well as FoodFirst. One of the interesting issues they decided upon was to issue a call for committed researchers and analysts to critically respond to the World Bank's market-assisted model for land reform with carefully conducted studies, more objective research results and analyses. These organizations convened the Land Research Action Network (LRAN) to link activist researchers with each other and with grassroots movements. The idea of this network is to effectively mobilize their intellectual work where it is most needed, to empower the land access movements (FoodFirst, 2001:5).

Conclusion #4:

A fourth theme was that all of the organizations preferred the more indirect approach to helping people acquire or maintain security of land. This compared to the tactic of getting involved in the outright purchasing of land for agricultural purposes. All voiced skepticism of the effectiveness and appropriateness of direct NGO involvement in land acquisition. They envisioned many political and

legal pitfalls in this type of direct involvement. They opted rather for the indirect approach of community organizing, political advocacy and providing legal assistance. They felt that these methodologies offered the best prospects for producing long-term sustainable development. It was interesting to note however that none gave evidence of trying the direct land purchase method and having it fail.

Recommendation #4:

During the course of this research there emerged from the interviews and literature sources other examples of smaller, lesser-known Northern NGOs involved in land initiatives. Two of these development organizations are working in Latin America and are involved in the direct acquisition of land for the landless. I would like to briefly cite these organizations and make the recommendation that the larger organizations be open to investigating and learning from these alternative models. My experience is that cross-fertilization of development ideas and methods is an effective tool for individual and community actualization.

The AGROS Foundation is a northern-NGO based in Seattle that is directly involved in the purchase of land. They buy land for the expressed purpose of allowing the landless access to it. AGROS is a Christian-based organization that states plainly in its mission statement *“AGROS is people, rich and poor, working together to overcome the cycle of poverty in the world through ownership of land to build self-sustaining and thriving villages”* (Agros.org, 2001).

It is an organization that is working only in the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. AGROS follows a development process of buying available parcels of rural land, which is for sale on the open market. They will then settle an already organized group of landless families or AGROS themselves will select a group of families to move on to the land. They will then assist in the development of this new community by helping them become economically viable, self-governing, and owned by the people. This new community then begins to agriculturally improve the land and repay AGROS for the original purchase price of the land through their increased production. The size of these new communities usually varies between 25 – 50 families and the acreage of the land generally ranges between 50 acres to 300 acres. They currently claim to have resettled more than 300 families on newly acquired land.

Although AGROS is a relatively new and small organization it was cited for an award in 1998 by an alliance of the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Foundation for providing lasting solutions to poverty in Central America. AGROS proven track record of assisting the poor at becoming self-sufficient through land ownership was highlighted in the award.

A representative from the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) based in Grand Rapids, Michigan was interviewed at the early stages of this research as part of a field-testing of the interview instrument. CRWRC is a medium-sized international development organization with funding roots based in

the Christian Reformed Church of North America. I learned during the interview and in reading subsequent promotional literature that CRWRC this year started partnering with the Nicaraguan Church of Christ in a program called "Land for Landless Farmers." CRWRC helps provide the \$90,000 in capital to purchase large pieces of land and break them into smaller plots to sell to landless farmers. The farmers make payments on the land while they improve and farm it. Over the next 3 to 5 years, the farmers earn a higher income, implement improvements like terracing, fertilizing, planting trees and growing cover crops. When the loan is repaid and the improvements completed, they receive legal title to their land. The repayment money is reinvested in the purchase of more land for other landless farmers. Land values range from approximately \$100 per acre to \$500 per acre. The land values vary according to soil and land quality, and location related to urban areas. Where the land is nearer to markets and is of higher quality the farmers will receive approximately .75-1 acre. In the more mountainous areas and areas some distance from major markets, farmers will receive up to 5 acres. The loan size per farmer will not vary much being between \$500 - \$700 per farmer (CRWRC, 2001). This program is the first of its kind for CRWRC, but one that really grew out of a strong relationship with the church-partner group.

Conclusion #5:

The very fact that most of these organizations have broached this topic at any level was more than a small surprise to this researcher. The land issue has until recently been strongly avoided by NGOs as being too controversial, too political

and falling clearly within the jurisdiction of the state. This research demonstrates that either they are giving more weight to the voice of the poor and the organizations that represent them, or the erosion of state-sponsored social welfare programs have pushed NGOs to take a broader role filling the vacuum of providing for the long-term development of the poor. Whatever the reason, NGOs are moving into positions of influence and change on the land issue that they have never faced before.

Recommendation #5:

I recommend that more North-North and North-South coalitions and alliances be formed to address land issues in Latin America. George and Nancy Axinn point out in their book Collaboration in International Development that *“A vigorous, dynamic, creative, and insightful response to the issues of international rural development in the 21st century will certainly demand collaboration, and will require active long-term involvement of professional practitioners and scholars. There are plenty of challenges which promise to be demanding, exciting, and rewarding”* (Axinn and Axinn, 1997:310). There is emerging evidence that this collaboration has already begun to occur among smaller and lesser-known NGOs, but much more needs to happen at the level of NGOs that this research has focussed upon. They are the ones that have influence at the national and international policy level. Only collaboration will bring about the kind of synergism that needs to be mounted to address such a comprehensive issue such as inequitable land tenure. Further exploration must be done that begins to find new

ways for NGOs to become involved collaboratively in FIAN International and the work they are doing in the Land Research Action Network. NGOs should take an active role in international poverty summits convened by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, as well as hunger and poverty conferences sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development. These are the kind of forums where the poor have expressed their need for land reform in the past and where the presence of NGOs could be of mutual benefit.

NGOs must also consider more collaborative relationships with local government officials. They can offer legal and regulatory assistance to governments to strengthen the land registration system and protect people's resource rights. They can help leverage for increased financing for land reform and post-land acquisition services from northern governments. They can provide technical help to governments to establish their cadastral systems and land-survey methods. They can also help establish mechanisms for the resolution of community land disputes. This sort of collaboration with local governments could be key in minimizing one of the major obstacles voiced by NGOs regarding their fear of involvement in land issues – threat of state oppression.

Recommendations for Further Research:

This research has shown that NGO thinking on the land access issue is a relatively recent occurrence. While some are aggressively wrestling with the concept, even they have been doing so for only a short period of time. There is a

need for more research on this topic so that international development professionals can be effective and well-informed practitioners, scholars and advocates. I, William Van Lopik, would personally make the following two recommendations regarding future research.

1. The newness of this topic within the NGO world has left them with a paucity of results from fieldwork. NGOs lack well-established track records or information gleaned from an evaluative process that might help them determine the success of their work. There is a broadly-accepted position that advocacy at the policy level is needed to address the justice issues that cause rural poverty, but little empirical data has actually been generated that might help confirm that the poor are better off because of it. A large amount of research and money has gone into evaluating the state-run land reform programs of the 1950s-1980s. However, the interviews and literature sources did not reveal any attempt to evaluate the collective or individual work of northern NGOs involved in land access work. New research must be undertaken that seeks to determine the long-term sustainability of these new initiatives and an analytical determination of whether the results actually transfer down to the improvement of life among the poor of Latin America.

2. It is clear that most organizations are in agreement about the importance of land tenure to the development process. However, two divergent points have emerged from the study on how to remedy the problem. Most of the

organizations that receive some sort of government or multi-lateral funding favor land registration and individual property rights projects. Consequently, these organizations also have access to a larger pot of money that can be used for studies that support their point of view. While other more “progressive” NGOs who do not receive government funding seek to go beyond the property rights debate and raise the point that the quality of land is also an important consideration. Just because a farmer has title to her/his land does not mean that the land is capable of being productive. These groups call for equitable land redistribution in addition to land title and registration. However, I found scant research being done by development scholars supporting this development model. I would argue that the reason for this is because it is not widely embraced by major funding institutions. Therefore, more funding for comparative research is definitely needed to examine which of these methods is not only most effective, but which also yields greater economic benefit to the individual farmer and ultimately the entire country.

Limitations

As in all research projects, there are extenuating factors in the methodology, budget and human capacity that limit the validity, reliability, and representativeness of the data collected. Although measures were taken in this research to diminish these limitations, they were present nonetheless. There were four principal limitations in this research.

1. In each case only one individual from each organization was interviewed in this study. Great efforts were made to select the most appropriate person based on their position and knowledge of their organizations' Latin American development programs. Nevertheless, there is always a danger in the interview process that the person being interviewed is trying to purposely put on the best face of the organization and its activities. They may not want to respond to any question in a way that might cast a negative light upon their organization. Although additional interviews with other organizational representatives would have helped minimize this limitation, there was not sufficient time and money to broaden the scope of the research.
2. Another limitation was that information conveyed by each respondent had to be accepted as truth. There was no way of really knowing whether the person being interviewed was answering the survey questions according to what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear. The triangulation design of the research helped to mitigate this limitation by comparing the information gathered from the interview with the resource literature gathered from each organization. In no case did the literature contradict anything the respondent said. However, in several instances the literature did not verifiably support the responses given by the interviewee. Ideally an on-site visit to Latin America would have been helpful in providing more complete authenticity to the views expressed in the interview.
3. A third limitation was the differing interpretation of the term "access to land" among the organizations. Some interpreted the concept within the context of

a property rights issue, others as a technical issue related to poor cadastral mapping abilities, and others as a justice issue related to historical inequitable distribution patterns. The term "access to land" was carefully chosen in order to cast a broad net over all the various initiatives being undertaken by these NGOs. The broadness of the term helped to reveal the differing interpretations that each organization had of the subject. However, in retrospect more detailed information might have been gathered from each organization if a clearer distinction was made between the idea of land security and land equity. During the last interview, Oxfam America made available a report that they had commissioned Moss and Barraclough to do on Hurricane Mitch reconstruction efforts in Nicaragua. Here they point out the distinction between land security and equity:

"Insecure and inequitable access to land, water and other natural resources by the rural poor is a major factor in perpetuating their poverty, and also of environmental degradation, in all four countries of Central America. Land registration by individual small cultivators with insecure titles, peasant cooperatives and indigenous groups using land under customary common property regimes is desirable in the Central American context. Donors should recognize, however, that land registration, together with "land banks" and more competitive land markets, can alone do little toward providing secure access to adequate land for those who need it – and in some circumstances can even make the situation worse for the rural poor" (Barraclough and Moss, 1999:47)

4. The ten organizations selected for this study represent a significant amount of the private and public U.S. development budget for Latin America. However, it should be noted that several large NGOs were not included in the study because they either do not put a focus on development work or are not involved in rural agricultural development. Some of the most obvious organizations are Save the Children, Mercy Corp., Feed the Children, Christian Children's Fund and MAP International. Some of the organizations that were omitted from the study actually have much larger operating budgets than the ones included. Therefore it should be noted that these organizations are far removed from addressing land issues in even a general sense. Therefore, the ten organizations that participated in this research do not comprise a complete representation of the NGO response to inequitable land tenure in Latin America. They do however represent a large percentage of the private contributions given by people in the United States for development work in Latin America.

CHAPTER 7

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