



# *Joining Hands*

—Country Network Profiles—

Cameroon

Democratic Republic of Congo

El Salvador

Haiti

Peru

Sri Lanka



# JOINING HANDS

The Joining Hands (JH) Initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) is a proven way to mobilize people in focused campaigns to tackle systemic causes of hunger both in the United States and abroad.

Rather than replicate project-based mission, presbyteries, congregations, organizations and individuals are invited to partner with civil society networks in six countries to organize in both the northern and southern hemispheres to campaign for change in a globalized world.

Most of the issues identified by global partners as contributing to poverty abroad are also relevant in the United States. We look together at the immense troubles we all face on a small planet and pull together in prayer, research, repentance, and a process of mutual transformation that reflects our shared commitment to global peace and justice.

## CURRENT GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS



**Food:** Support efforts that promote the rights of people to determine their own food and agricultural systems, and to produce and consume food in accordance with their cultural traditions, through ecologically sustainable methods.

**Campaign Foci:** Food sovereignty; agroecology; supporting smallholder farmers; pesticide-free agriculture; protecting, conserving and distributing traditional seeds

**Country Networks:** El Salvador, Haiti

**Mission Co-worker:** Cindy Corell (Haiti)



**Land:** Promote, defend and secure the land rights of local communities and Indigenous peoples, assuring their access to food, water, shelter, and livelihoods.

**Campaign Foci:** Land reform; fighting land grabs; protecting land defenders

**Country Networks:** Cameroon, Haiti, Sri Lanka

**Mission Co-worker:** Cindy Corell (Haiti)



**Resource Extraction & Environment:** Uphold transparency and oppose corruption in countries where mineral and fossil fuel extraction are prevalent; address the impact of extractive industries on communities and the environment; and advance the rights of people to clean water, air, soils and public health.

**Campaign Foci:** Monitoring the financial, social and environmental obligations of extractive industry corporations, and advocating for transparency in payments made by those corporations to governments (Publish What You Pay); rights to clean water and specialized health care

**Country Networks:** Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Peru

**Mission Co-workers:** Jed Koball (Peru)

# Cameroon



Cameroon photos courtesy of RELUFA

## Our Organization

**RELUFA (Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim)**, the Network for the Fight Against Hunger, is a national platform of civil society organizations and grassroots organizations in Cameroon. The network is composed of 13 member organizations who joined forces in a concerted effort to fight poverty, hunger, and economic, social and environmental injustice on a national level. RELUFA gained legal status in 2001.



## Our Mission and Vision

RELUFA seeks to promote a society of justice where there is no hunger or poverty and citizens participate actively to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

RELUFA has a mission to combat systemic problems that generate and perpetuate poverty, hunger, and economic, social and environmental injustices. The activities include advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups, including internally displaced people affected by conflicts and indigenous peoples (Baka and Bagyeli “pygmies”). The network also advocates for the recognition and protection of customary land ownership by the state and food security for communities.

The network aims to:

- Create a platform of actors with a shared vision of global human development.
- Contribute to national and international efforts toward social justice, transparency and good governance in the fight against poverty and hunger.
- Contribute to building awareness of regional, national and global issues affecting poor and disadvantaged populations, and seek solutions to those problems.

## Our Context

Cameroon is a country with diverse climates, cultures, and languages. It is also a country endowed with abundant natural resources: oil, gas, minerals, forests, etc. However, revenues generated from the exploitation of natural resources have not contributed to the social and economic development of the country due to corruption. In both 1999 and 2000, Cameroon was declared the most corrupt country in the Transparency International Corruption Index.

Multinational companies are increasingly seeking land in the country’s southern rainforests for mining, forest products or agro-industrial projects. This rush for land is reducing the available land for local communities involved in family farming and therefore generating conflicts between multinational companies and local communities.

Variations in climate have created disparities in food security across the country. The southern portion of Cameroon is relatively food secure due to favorable conditions for agriculture, while the northern Sahel region of the country faces increasing food insecurity due to difficult terrain, extreme weather events, and since 2014, a violent militant insurgency that threatens livelihoods and sustainable food production. The population of the region now includes hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people who coexist with host communities primarily comprised of farmers and herders.



Cameroon's colonial history makes it one of the rare countries where French and English are the two official languages. Poor political governance has led to the marginalization of the English-speaking population. In 2017, relations between English-speakers and the French-controlled government deteriorated into an armed conflict in the Anglophone regions, leaving 600,000 people internally displaced and another 39,000 refugees.

## Our Programs

We strategize our actions around three main themes: Transparency in the Extractive Industries, Land and Resource Justice, and Food Justice. We also engage in emergency response to support internally displaced people who face food insecurity and loss of livelihoods due to violent conflict.



### Transparency in the Extractive Industries

Cameroon has significant untapped extractive resources in oil, minerals and gas. The Cameroonian government has developed a policy framework identifying the extractive sector as one of the key sectors for generating revenue for the country's development. However, the appropriate mechanisms for the effective management of these resources are not in place. With the goal of ensuring that the extractive sector contributes to the development of local communities, RELUFA has identified the following key objectives:

- Monitor the governance of revenues to ensure transparency, fairness and accountability.
- Monitor the impact of projects on local communities.
- Monitor international resource governance initiatives like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Kimberley Process, and others.
- Advocate for transparency and responsible management of the extractive industries revenues for poverty alleviation.

### Land and Resources Justice

Cameroon does not have a shortage of arable land for agriculture. Paradoxically, most people still suffer from hunger and poverty due to the aggressive land acquisition by multinational agro-industrial companies for the cultivation of palm oil, banana, rubber, sugar cane, etc. As more fertile farmland is grabbed up in these large land deals to produce cash crops for export, access to farmland available for local agriculture is becoming more limited. Under this program RELUFA seeks to:

- Document large scale land concessions in Cameroon and raise awareness of their negative impacts
- Improve transparency and increase community involvement in land transactions in Cameroon
- Support and equip local communities to defend their land rights

### Food Justice

With the Sahara Desert stretching out over the Far North region, this part of Cameroon is constantly on the brink of famine. Equally, the Boko Haram Insurgency has added to the food security problems faced by the population. Through the establishment of community cereal banking systems in vulnerable villages in this region, RELUFA hopes to break the cycle of food scarcity and dependency on food distribution programs. The community granaries allow for self-governance of food supplies by villagers and curb price speculation mechanisms that generate poverty and hunger.





# Democratic Republic of Congo



Photo by Valery Nodem

## Our Organization

**The Platform of Civil Society Organizations Working in the Mining Sector (POM)** is a network, founded in 2009, which currently brings together 22 nonprofits, mainly located in the Katanga Region in the Southeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).



POM is working to reform mining sector governance in the DRC with the goal of improving the living conditions of populations impacted by mining projects. Efforts are primarily focused around improving transparency, strengthening the accountability of public leaders and representatives, building capacity of civil society organizations, bolstering laws and regulations and their compliance, and contributing to the sustainable management of ecosystems.

## Our Mission

The mission of POM is to offer a space for civil society organizations to come together to share resources and information and strategize on alternative proposals for better governance in the mining sector.

## Our Context

The Katanga Region is bordered by the neighboring countries of Angola, Zambia and Tanzania. The Region includes 4 provinces: Haut-Katanga, Lualaba, Haut-Lomami and Tanganyika.

The Katanga Region is very rich in mineral resources such as copper, cobalt and uranium. While the region is resource rich, it suffers from the proverbial “resource curse,” where local populations receive minimal benefits, whether economic or social, from the mining of resources in their locales.

The 2002 mining code and regulations led to the liberalization of the mining sector and the attraction of new mining investors in the DRC. In 2002, there were just 35 mining companies in the DRC compared with 482 companies in 2016. Production of metals also grew in that timeframe. Copper production grew from 28,000 tons in 2002 to 1,035,000 tons in 2016. And cobalt production grew from 12,000 tons to 69,000 tons in 2016. The production of copper and cobalt along with other metals place the DRC amongst the top African producers of mining products.

However, mining investment and increased mining production in the DRC had failed to produce positive impacts on the mobilization of state finances, community development and the protection of the natural environment.



A piece of copper from an artisanal mine in the DRC.

Photo by Valery Nodem, PHP

Mining governance was characterized by customs and tax evasion, pollution of the environment, the intensification of the poverty of the populations living around the industrial and artisanal mining areas, the corruption of the agents of the mining administration at all levels of the state, and the interference of political authorities, police and military in mining.

The 2002 mining code did not provide any provisions for the principle of free, prior and informed consent. Therefore, few mining investors consulted with local populations during the development and implementation of their mining projects.

## Our Campaign

From 2012 to 2018, the work of the POM was mainly focused on advocating for improvements to the DRC Mining Code and Mining Regulations. The DRC Mining Code of 2002 presented weaknesses particularly in relation to taxation and the development of local communities living within industrial mining zones.

POM's technical expertise and advocacy in community development facilitated the revision of the Mining Code in 2018 by inserting new favorable provisions which could stimulate the development of local communities.

Some of the new aspects that promote sustainable development include:

- Communities are involved in the negotiation, development and signing of contractual obligations with mining companies in their areas;
- Mining companies must pay a portion of mining royalties directly to affected local communities;
- Mining companies must contribute 0.3% of their gross annual profit towards a social development fund for affected local communities;
- Mining companies must compensate affected local communities in the event of relocation and resettlement.

The revised Mining Code sets considerable monetary benefits for affected local communities in order to boost grassroots development. Tens of millions of U.S. dollars in royalty payments is to be paid directly to communities every month.

However, several concerns remain: how local communities will actually benefit from this fund, how they will invest in its management, and how they will negotiate and implement the contractual obligations.

POM is now focused on:

- Building capacities of local communities to monitor and manage the funds for sustainable development.
- Building capacities of communities to elaborate, negotiate, sign and implement contractual obligations and monitoring and control techniques.
- Advocating with local and national authorities for compliance with fiscal obligations related to the mining royalties and funds for community development and drafting of contractual obligations by mining companies.



Community members collect water near the Ruashi Mining projects. Photo courtesy of POM



Women review a mining report at an education event for communities. Photo courtesy of POM



# El Salvador



Photo by Kristi Van Nostran

*“How could we have ever believed that it was a good idea to grow our food with poisons?” – Jane Goodall*

## About the Network

**Asociación Red Uniendo Manos El Salvador (ARUMES)** is a fraternal network composed of grassroots farming organizations, non-governmental organizations and church bodies which aims to develop and implement campaigns of awareness and capacity building, social and political advocacy, to propose and promote structural changes and human development, which will enable people to live fulfilling lives, with dignity, on a healthy planet. We work closely with the communities and people most affected, especially women, youth and indigenous people, under a holistic approach that encompasses educational, emotional, economic, social and spiritual well-being.

**ARUMES**



Asociación Red Uniendo Manos  
de El Salvador

We focus much of our work on advocacy trainings to strengthen the capacity of leaders from the most vulnerable populations, so they are better equipped to advocate for and defend their rights to live full, happy lives in a healthy environment.



Selected seeds from a farm in San Luis Tappa, El Salvador, kept for the next planting season.  
Photo by Valery Nodem, PHP

We promote the recovery of ancestral foods and agriculture based in agroecology, free from pesticides. We demonstrate the viability of agroecology on demonstration plots with native and creole seeds, diversified crops, and fertile living soils. We involve the whole family in caring for the garden plot, and they enjoy the health and well-being that comes with eating fresh, healthy foods. We also demonstrate that these ancestral crops and agroecological techniques are adaptive and resilient in times of drought and floods that are more common with climate change.

## Our Vision

It's our vision to be a movement of diverse social and religious groups that build community, committed to human development, equity, equality and the defense of nature while promoting inclusion and a culture of peace.

## Our Mission

It's our mission to raise awareness and build the capacities of all partner communities so they know their rights, are able to defend their rights when threatened or violated, and are able to advocate for public policies and legislation that will transform the structures that would enable people to live fulfilling lives on a healthy planet.

Our core values are love of neighbor, spirituality, respect, solidarity, service and justice.

## Our Strategic Objectives

- To advocate for legislation that prohibits agrottoxins;
- To advocate for the Food Sovereignty Law and the Water Law;
- To facilitate processes of awareness-raising and sensitivity training, education, and organization in order to strengthen and build capacity among women, men and youth;
- To strengthen local, regional, national, and international alliances to advocate together in defense of clean, safe and sovereign agriculture, free from pesticides.
- To promote relationships based on equity, equality, respect and solidarity as well as lifestyle integrity practices within and between the national and international communities.

## Our Current Campaign

We are working towards an agriculture free from agrottoxins. We are advocating for legislation that prohibits the use of harmful pesticides in agriculture, and we are advocating for a reduction in the aerial fumigation of sugar cane plantations which leads to soil and water contamination and chronic kidney disease in humans.

The monoculture of sugar cane has expanded dramatically throughout the coastal belt of El Salvador, from the municipality of Ahuachapán to the municipality of La Unión. A total of 296.2 kilometers are planted with this single crop, displacing subsistence farming families from the land, leaving them without the ability to farm basic grains (beans, corn) and other crops to feed themselves and their communities.

Chronic kidney disease is seen frequently among families that live in proximity to the sugar cane plantations, as they are exposed to contaminants from the many chemicals used in production. There are cases of newborns who have been diagnosed with chronic renal insufficiency and are receiving dialysis treatment.



Alex Cuellar, a local farmer from the village of Guachipilin, San Pedro Puxtla in Ahuachapán, used to, in his own words, "poison the land with the worst of the worst toxic chemicals." Over ten years, he converted his land into a diverse, thriving, fully organic farm.  
Photo by Kristi Van Nostran



# Haiti



Photo by Cindy Corell



## Our Organization

In a context where Haiti is becoming more dependent on food imports, and smallholder farmers are being displaced from land as it is being sold to large corporations, the **FONDAMA network (Fondasyon Men-lan-men Ayiti)** is working to “restore the Haitian environment toward food sovereignty and sustainability.” FONDAMA wants to secure food sovereignty through the promotion of family and cooperative agriculture, an agriculture that is organic and respectful of the environment so that the rights of future generations may be protected.

The Peasant Movement of Papay and Service Chretien d’Haiti organized two consultations in the first half of 2009. The consultations recommended that a deeper understanding of the systemic causes of poverty in Haiti was needed, and that organizations should come together to work in addressing them. The result was the constitution of a Joining Hands network for a new approach to anti-hunger ministry in Haiti. In June 2009, the network was formalized under the name of FONDAMA for “Fondasyon Men-lan-Men Ayiti” or “Foundation Hands in Hands Haiti.”

## Our Context

In 1980, Haiti was growing enough food to feed itself. During the 1990s, after trade liberalization in Haiti, the U.S. began dumping its heavily subsidized rice on Haitian markets and essentially destroyed local rice production.

Haiti is one of the countries the most vulnerable to severe weather events. And as disasters have taken place, foreign food aid has impacted the ability of smallholder farmers to sell their crops and created more dependence on foreign food imports.

Today, agriculture makes up one quarter of Haiti’s GDP and accounts for about half of the country’s total employment, 66 percent of the rural employment and 75 percent of the employment in low-income households.

After the 2010 earthquake that killed more than 250,000, displaced millions and destroyed much of the capital city of Port-au-Prince, the Haitian government declared that “Haiti is open for business” and set in motion aggressive land-grabbing actions.



Madame St. Pierre talks about the high cost of oranges at the local market after her family’s gardens and fruit trees were destroyed by Agritrans S.A., a Haitian corporation that took property from 800 farm families near Trou du Nord in late summer 2013. The St. Pierre home was destroyed within weeks of this photo taken in February 2014. Photo by Cindy Corell

Arable land in the country continues to be at risk of being taken over by private companies — both local and international. Land-grabbing evicts farmers from their land and steals their homes and livelihoods. In many cases, the farm families have occupied the land for many years, but powerful entities displace them to sell the land.

Without land security, many of the farmers leave Haiti, emigrating to South America or the Dominican Republic. The land in turn, rather than producing food for Haitians, is used for large-scale production of crops for export, industrial parks, or other tourism or financial projects with no benefits for local communities.

By the end of 2019, [more than half of Haitians](#) were chronically food insecure due to extreme poverty and frequent natural disasters.

The primary impediments to progress for rural families — the root causes of the country’s poverty — are land-grabbing, effects of climate change, food imports and government corruption.

## Our Campaign

The primary campaign for FONDAMA is to fight for the protection of farmers’ lands, and to ensure that farmers are equipped to produce enough food to feed the country.

FONDAMA trains its network members to understand land rights and provide the peasants with tools to resist loss of property. FONDAMA partners with other organizations in the country to raise awareness and help people learn about the dangers of land-grabbing.

FONDAMA believes that access to agricultural land, natural resources, seeds, farming credit and agricultural infrastructure is a fundamental right of all Haitians. Therefore, FONDAMA promotes and supports national agrarian reform.



A child's toy lies abandoned at the edge of property taken by Agritrans S.A., a Haitian corporation that took property of 800 farm families near Trou du Nord in late summer 2013. Photo by Cindy Corell



The Presbyterian Hunger Program/Joining Hands companionship facilitator in Haiti is [Cindy Corell](#).



# Peru



Photo courtesy of Red Uniendo Manos Peru

## Our Mission and Vision

**Red Uniendo Manos Peru** (Peru Joining Hands Network) is an ecumenical network open to other faith and spiritual confessions. The network was formed at the start of the 21st century with a mission of bringing together the Church and civil society to accompany vulnerable populations and contribute to the social, environmental and economic management of their communities.



The network seeks to generate alternative models for local and global sustainability by promoting inclusive and equitable spaces for participation. At the same time, the network advocates for public policies that will shape an economy driven by solidarity and cooperation in the interest of all of life.

It is the vision of the network that through this participatory work, it will contribute to undermining the powers of marginalization, discrimination, exclusion and violence, and thereby promote a world of harmonious co-existence among all.

Presently, the network includes eight Peruvian NGO's and Churches, located throughout the country, representing a broad diversity of populations and environments. The network seeks to ensure the full participation of women, indigenous populations, African-Peruvian communities, rural farmers, and youth.

## Our Context

From the desert along the Pacific coast to the Andes Mountains and the Amazon Jungle, Peru is one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world, rich with natural resources.

Cultural diversity is also part of Peru's story. Once home to the Inca Empire, it was invaded by Spanish Conquistadores in 1532, and later received thousands of African slaves and Asian indentured servants that were forced into harsh labor.

Due to its vast territory and gold and silver production, Peru was considered one of Spain's most important colonies. Declaring its independence from Spain in 1821, Peru continued to exploit the resources of the land for its own economic growth and development.



Community members of Villa El Sol outside La Oroya post signs on their land to encourage the care for the Earth. "Let us care for the Earth because we do not have anywhere else to go." Photo by Jed Koball

Today, the Andes continue to have great mining potential, and the Amazon basin has rich oil deposits. Increased exploitation of such resources, known as extractive activity, has led to major economic growth in recent



decades, yet the gap between rich and poor in Peru is one of the highest in the Americas. Among the most impoverished peoples are indigenous populations whose livelihoods and way of life are gravely impacted by contamination of air, land and water. Furthermore, Peru is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change.

## Our Strategies

The network organizes its mission into three strategic lines of work:

### I. Promoting the Care of Our Common Home

Two initiatives shape our efforts to address the impacts of extractive activity and climate change in Peru:

1. ***Environmental Health for Communities Impacted by Mining.*** This advocacy campaign is rooted in the accompaniment of the population of La Oroya, one of the ten most contaminated places in the world, where nearly 100% of the children have been shown to have severe lead poisoning due to metallurgical activity in the town. Our focus is to secure comprehensive health care for the people, mitigate the contamination from toxic metals, and ensure such contamination does not continue.
2. ***The Tree Fund.*** This developing fund is used to support reforestation efforts of our network members in order to mitigate the impacts of human-generated carbon emissions as well as to rehabilitate lands effected by climate change. Also, this fund supports actions to protect the Amazon Rainforest.

### II. Facilitating Local and Global Solidarity

Three initiatives shape our work in building meaningful partnerships among people of radically different contexts. This work is not only focused on the accompaniment and support of vulnerable populations, but also on the transformation of individuals to become greater actors in dismantling racism, sexism, other forms of discrimination, as well as in becoming better stewards of the Earth.

1. ***Short-Term Service Trips*** with project foci on reforestation, education, or women's rights.
2. ***Study Trips*** to develop shared strategies in addressing the extractive industry and climate change.
3. ***Young Adult Volunteer Program*** – a year-long service opportunity for 19-30 year-old young adults in which vocational discernment, leadership formation, simple living, and dismantling systemic racism are central components.



Women from Villa El Sol and Covenant Presbyterian Church of Madison, WI, stand on the hillside above the community with the acid washed mountains of La Oroya in the background. Together they commit to help recuperate the poisoned land, restoring life and hope. Photo by Jed Koball

### III. Modeling the Strength of Diversity

As an intentionally diverse body of eight NGO's and churches from across Peru, we are committed to be a healthy example of multiple perspectives coming together out of love and concern for humanity and this One Common Home we share. Our institutional viability is a witness to the goodness of God's vast Creation. Continuing to build upon our own capacities and finding new and creative ways to collaborate is a service to the world that we take to heart.



Video: [Long-term advocacy for Justice in Peru](#)



The Presbyterian Hunger Program/Joining Hands companionship facilitator in Peru is [Jed Koball](#).

# Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka photos courtesy of Praja Abhilasha

## Our Network

In May 2005, a number of grassroots, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at the invitation of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), and agreed to form a network among organizations representing marginalized communities from coastal and farming areas affected directly and indirectly by the tsunami. By early September 2005 the **Praja Abhilasha (People's Aspirations) Network** was formed. This is a countrywide network composed of 19 organizations. It is inclusive of all faiths and religious bodies present on the island, although there are no institutional churches among its membership.



## The Context

The name Sri Lanka was adopted in 1972 and was formerly known as Ceylon. The current ethnic composition of the population is 74 percent Sinhalese, 13 percent Lankan Tamils, 7 percent Lankan Moors and 6 percent Indian Tamils. The religious profile of the country shows 69 percent Buddhist, 15 percent Hindu, 8 percent Muslim and 8 percent Christian. Since the outbreak of hostilities between the government and armed Tamil separatists in 1983, several hundred thousand Tamil civilians have fled the island; as of mid-1999, approximately 66,000 were housed in 133 refugee camps in south India, another 40,000 lived outside the Indian camps, and more than 200,000 Tamils sought refuge in the West.



People asked for their land back.

According to the Swedish South Asian Study Network, one major reason for the present conflict in Sri Lanka is the way the British separated the ethnic groups and gave them different access to resources. This created militant chauvinistic groups among Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese and a conflict started to brew from the 1920s onwards. In 1983 a full-scale civil war started in the northern and eastern parts of the country between government troops and the separatist movement, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In 2000 a Norwegian initiative was launched to broker peace between the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE. Again in early 2006 there were reports of violent incidents and fighting. New negotiations are under way to re-establish peace.

On December 26, 2004, a powerful tsunami devastated the coastal areas around the island destroying fishing villages, flooding rice fields and plantations and sowing grief among rural and urban communities. The disaster affected particularly fishing communities on the coast, and also destroyed much of the tourist infrastructure of the country. Sri Lanka is a very popular tourist destination particularly for north Europeans, and hundreds of tourists were killed by the tsunami. There was immediately a worldwide rally to help tsunami victims and millions of dollars were contributed by individuals, businesses and charities. While the Sri Lankan government

was beginning to organize the relief efforts, international relief organizations descended on Sri Lanka to provide help. While intentions to help were sincere, various negative dynamics surfaced resulting in various kinds of local responses.



People evicted for the mega tourism

Foreign organizations and countries were engaged in a competition for visibility in the relief efforts. Billboards advertised campsites and donations. Journalists and television crews mobilized to broadcast particular interventions. Powerful foreign governments and international institutions began voicing their interest in working on post tsunami reconstruction plans. From the World Bank, The Asian Development Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Japan and the European Union among others came offers to the Sri Lankan government to develop policies to reclassify land on the coastline, restrict their access and use and to rebuild the tourist infrastructure on a scale bigger than ever before. Meanwhile, some Christian agencies were seizing the opportunity of the disaster to engage into aggressive evangelistic proselytism that raised strong objections from local Buddhist, Muslim and Christian churches alike.

## Our Response

Members present at the September 2005 workshop worked together to identify the focus areas and content of the program. The Network Steering Committee then met to finalize the proposal: “We agreed that the tsunami has only exacerbated the underlying causes of poverty in our country. We have decided to focus on the following key issue: Access to Land, as it is the core issue of poverty in our society. We agree to work on the right to land as a human right of the people as it relates to the right to life and livelihoods of the people, in a context of globalization, privatization and International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed economic reforms in our country.”

