



FALL 2021 | IMPACT  
REPORT





Dear Friends,

Last year, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we were given a potent reminder of the critical importance of land to farmers and families around the world. Lockdowns in major cities left millions without their livelihoods, pushing countless migrant workers to return to family land in the countryside. In the new reality of the pandemic, these plots of rural land took on renewed importance as sources of security and economic stability – not only for the people already living on them, but for those returnees who found themselves cut off from the economic lifeline of urban centers.

Over a year later, the pandemic is still raging — especially in the Global South, where vaccine distribution and access continues to lag, and deadly variants of the virus pose an evolving threat to public health. In these challenging times, land remains a foundation for women and men to improve their livelihoods and their lives. From Liberia to Myanmar, rural communities are leveraging their land rights to secure a more prosperous — and hopeful — future. At Landesa, we saw this firsthand, as our teams continued their work with rural communities, local leaders, and government officials to secure and strengthen the land rights that make resiliency possible.

This work continues to produce significant impact: in the last year, Landesa’s efforts across the globe have helped over 60,000 people receive land documents in their name and have benefited another 186,000 through individual and community land rights education. As you will read in this report, we have achieved this impact through intensive and deliberate community-focused action, and through work with authorities to make reforms to existing laws and policies. **These partnerships help build the capacity of local authorities to implement broad-based, gender-equitable land laws, creating economic opportunities for communities and families who need them the most.** I am immensely proud of our team’s continuing impact, especially considering the challenges presented by the global pandemic and changing political and environmental conditions in many of the countries where we work.

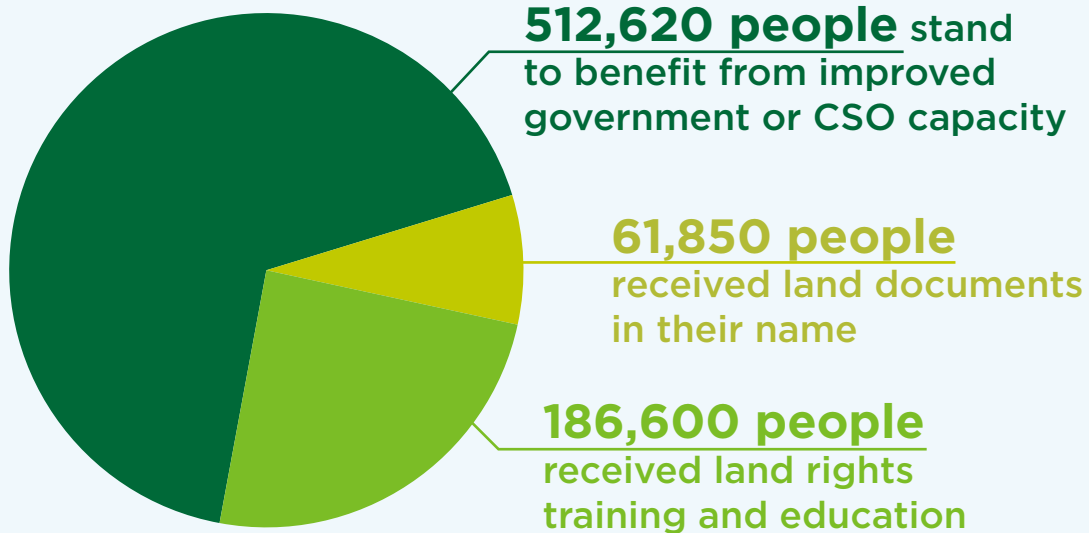
**I want to express appreciation to all our supporters and land rights champions who help make this work possible every day.** Thank you for your support of Landesa, our mission to secure land rights for all women and men, and our promotion of social justice.

With regards,

**Chris Jochnick**  
President & CEO



# LANDESA'S 2021 GLOBAL IMPACT



**Total: 761,070 people**



To see a gender breakdown and learn more about our impact, visit [www.landesa.org/global-impact/](http://www.landesa.org/global-impact/)



“When we look at Landesa’s mission, it is clear that impact can come in many ways: from direct land allocation, to education, to policy reform, our teams leverage a diverse set of tools, strategies, and partnerships to strengthen and secure land rights for communities. Whether it is women in India leasing land to produce potatoes or widows in Tanzania who are now able to prove their rights to a plot of land, our efforts help empower individuals and communities to exercise their rights.”

**Diana Fletschner**  
Chief Program Officer





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

# WOMEN LEAD THE WAY IN INNOVATIVE LAND SERVICES PILOT



*Working alongside women’s community groups, Landesa is bringing gender-sensitive land resources to women in rural West Bengal.*

Women in India, particularly those living in rural communities, have long lacked dedicated institutions to help them access legal resources in a country where gender disparities in legal practice remain prevalent.

When looking to update their land records, women throughout the country are left with few resources in an environment dominated by patriarchal laws and practices. Often, women can fall victim to harassment and exploitation by middlemen when accessing land-related services.

Landesa is helping women in West Bengal to change this norm and build businesses along the way. Landesa’s team of land rights experts are working with existing Sanghas (networks of women’s self help groups) to establish special centers focused on providing land related services for women in rural areas. These Sangha Service Centers are dedicated facilities in which women can obtain information about their land rights and help in updating family land records. The information and services provided at these centers are critical in helping women — and their families — exercise and protect land rights, build economic independence, and challenge gender-discriminatory norms.





Whereas navigating state-sponsored institutions was often difficult for women, the Sangha Service Centers provide a space to access land-related services safely and at a nominal fee. Furthermore, the new centers not only provide valuable services for local communities, but also create entrepreneurial opportunities, as the centers are exclusively staffed by women Sangha members. Pinaki Halder, Landesa's National Program Director in India, notes that the Sangha Service Centers are "a unique platform to offer land recordation services through trained women in a comfortable and congenial environment."

While this project partnership with Sanghas is new — currently, Landesa is working with seven centers around West Bengal — the potential for impact is promising. Each center will serve twelve villages, providing upwards of four thousand households access to these gender-sensitive resources. Even with public health restrictions enacted in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sanghas are continuing to reach women in rural areas; between March and July 2021, Landesa-supported Sanghas received 58 applications to update land records. Other Sanghas adjusted to these circumstances by organizing virtual trainings and check-ins with women's groups working on



A Sangha Service Center staff member helps a woman navigate the land services offered through the state's online portal.

record updates, keeping in touch with applicants who had begun their updating process.

Starting with support from the Rising Tide Foundation, Landesa hopes to scale the program to work with 250 centers serving a population of one million families and providing land record updation services to up to 300,000 of those families over the next few years. Already, this work has attracted the attention of other Indian states, creating new opportunities for significant impact and providing a critical step towards protecting land rights for both current and future farmers, regardless of their gender. 🌱





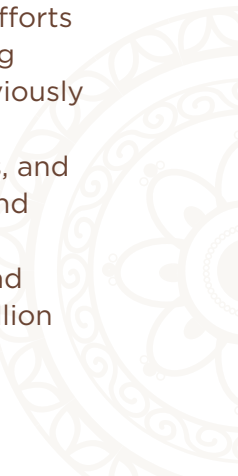
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

# IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, SOWING SEEDS OF RESILIENCE



*Despite challenges presented by a military coup earlier this year and the ongoing pandemic, Landesa's team in Myanmar is engaging with communities to secure their land rights and empower environmental stewardship.*

Prior to the military coup, Myanmar's land reform efforts had immense impact, making progress in reallocating previously confiscated land, allocating farmland to landless families, and certifying forestland of upland communities. By December 2020, it is estimated that land had been allocated to 1.5 million of the most vulnerable rural





residents of Myanmar. However, following the coup, many of the policymakers who were strong proponents of this effort found their authority hindered as many were detained or removed from their roles. Farmers have also felt the shocks of the coup, with the prices of commodity crops like corn and chili peppers dropping significantly, forcing those living off the land to rethink their farming strategy.

Fortunately, thousands of families whose land rights were secured or strengthened thanks to Landesa's work in Myanmar over the past six years can weather the economic chaos created by the coup. In Ayeyarwady region, 94% of community leaders surveyed attested that they had not seen land lost by their community members following the coup. Families in these communities now have the legal security and economic assets to invest in long-term crops, such as fruit orchards or planting seedlings for timber.

Landesa's team is working directly with the residents of rural communities, providing information and support for farmers who are anticipating future land allocations, and emphasizing women's and forest dweller land rights. The team is also continuing its partnership with the National University of Singapore to study forest cover and the efforts to empower forest dwelling communities to protect vital mangrove forests. Taking advantage of the opportunity to visit communities, Landesa staff are also sharing vital information about the COVID-19 vaccine, a critical service in an environment that is flooded with misinformation about the disease and its prevention.



### **Building a Coalition in Cambodia**

Landesa expanded its work in Southeast Asia this year by establishing a new program in Cambodia that seeks to strengthen the land rights of the country's estimated 12 million rural residents. Long after the end of the Khmer Rouge regime, many of these rural residents still lack secure land titles, leaving them without the legal foundation from which they can build up their farms and communities.

Building on past learnings from land reform successes in India, China, and Myanmar, Landesa's small team is working alongside local organizations to research and understand the land rights situation in Cambodia and provide recommendations that can help the government address inequities that are found. As a well-established organization in the region, Landesa is leveraging its reputation for securing and strengthening land rights to rally a coalition of Cambodian organizations that are similarly dedicated to advancing



land rights across the country. Landesa has established strong partnerships with Parliamentary Center Asia and Analyzing Development Issues Center, both of which have an established history of working with the Cambodian Parliament and natural resource ministries and are regarded as leaders in development policy in Cambodia.

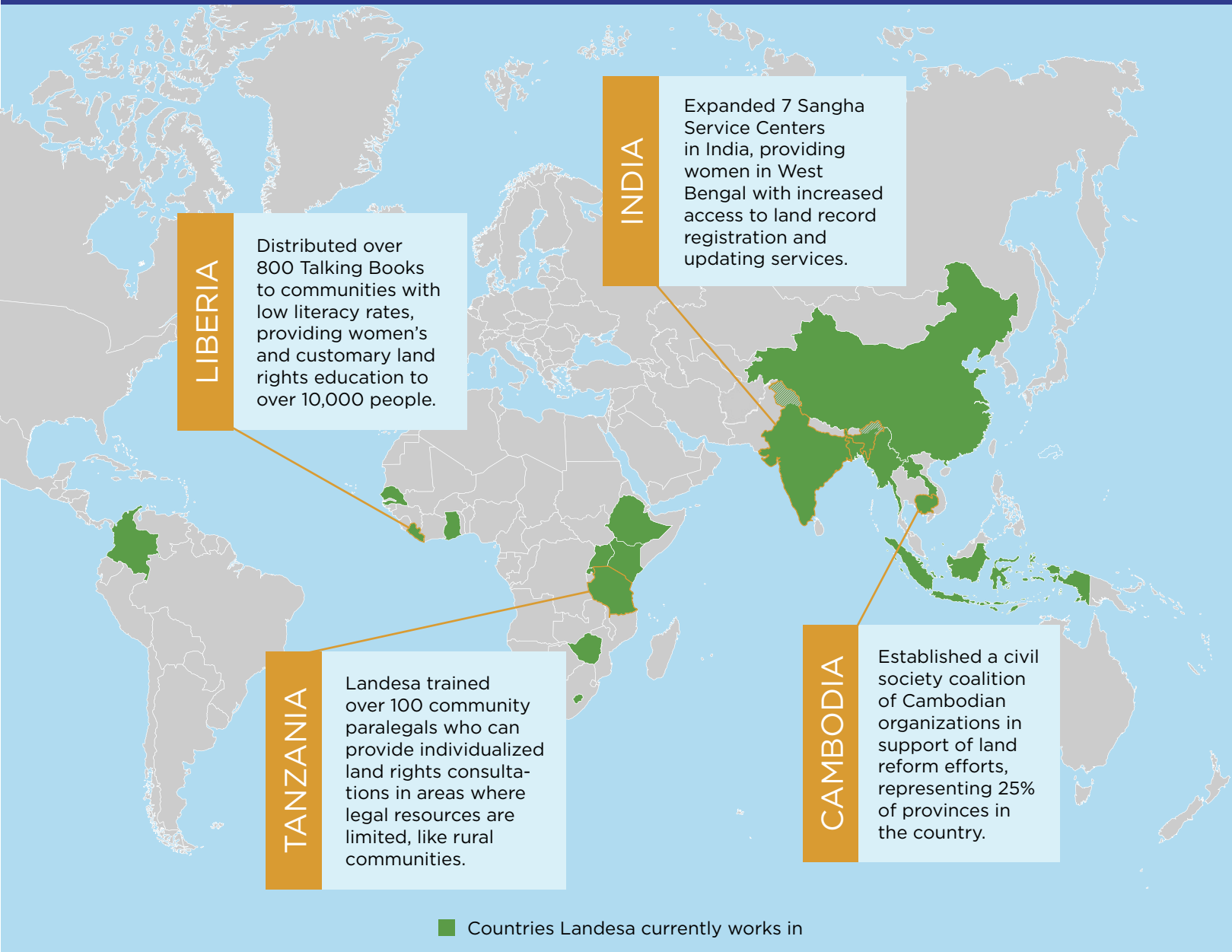
With these partners, Landesa staff field research is building the capacity of local groups to work with government to expand titling efforts, reaching thousands more landless families. By connecting these organizations under Landesa's leadership, land rights experts and advocates across the country can share their findings and experiences. Landesa is also providing technical and grant support for several community and national-level organizations, building the technical capacity and security needed to advance their work. **Through these networks of experts and advocates, Landesa is building a more resilient land**

**tenure system in Cambodia, ensuring that those who are isolated from national institutions are able to safely exercise their land rights.**

Much like in Myanmar, securing and strengthening land rights in Cambodia has the chance to not only better the economic prospects of millions of families, but also encourage environmental stewardship, including the restoration of vital mangrove forests throughout the region. Coastal and forest-dwelling communities are particularly apt stewards of the environment, as both tend to plant more trees and practice crop rotations and increased soil care. Landesa staff in Cambodia are working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest, and Fisheries to replicate the success of community forest rights in Myanmar for these communities in Cambodia, which may go far in protecting the country's vulnerable coastline and upland forests from the impacts of climate change. 🌱



# 2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



## ENGAGE IN GREATER IMPACT

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