

Social Entrepreneurship and Systems Change Landesa

Teaching Case

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This case was prepared by Camilla Thorogood, researcher, Cynthia Schweer Rayner, senior researcher and Dr. François Bonnici, founding director, at the Bertha Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, a specialized unit of the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business. It was reviewed and approved before publication by a company designate. Funding for the development of this case was provided by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the Motsepe Foundation.

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Introduction

It was a beautiful autumn afternoon in November 2011 as Tim Hanstad walked down Manhattan's 8th Avenue. Hanstad was clearing his head after an arduous four-hour Landesa Board meeting, and before going into another with one of the organization's long-time funders. Landesa's Board and Executive Team were developing a global advocacy strategy and Hanstad felt that the organization still needed to refine and clarify its direction. His attempts to facilitate a democratic and consultative process had not yet resulted in a way forward for the organization.

Landesa was a global organization working to secure legal land rights for the world's poorest people. Secure ownership of land in the developing world is a critical contributor to sustainable livelihoods, providing access to shelter, income, education, healthcare and improved economic and nutritional security. The organization worked closely with governments and civil society to promote and implement national land reform initiatives to benefit landless people through pro-poor land policies. With offices in the United States, India and China, and an annual budget of nearly USD 10 million, Landesa had worked in over 50 countries and had worked with governments on reforms that had provided secure legal land rights to more than 110 million families.

Landesa's founder, Roy Prosterman, was an inveterate globetrotter and networker and had long been recognized in the global arena as an expert and passionate advocate for land rights, receiving countless accolades and even two Nobel Peace Prize nominations as a result. As the CEO of Landesa, Hanstad had also made valuable connections over the years with his work at both the grassroots and global levels. At this point, Hanstad wanted to access all viable and available options to advocate for land rights for the poor, whether they be at a national level in their country programmes or through globally recognized platforms. He and the newly appointed Advocacy Director, Hien Tran, sought a clear direction for the organization's advocacy activities, and they believed that this was a critical point in the history of land reform to implement a strong and decisive strategy.

Recently, an opportunity had arisen for Tran to develop a white paper with co-author and land rights expert Mayra Gomez, presenting a case for land rights to be included in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, currently in development at the United Nations (UN). This paper had the potential to set Landesa on a course toward a global advocacy strategy, working closely with other land rights organizations to put land rights squarely on the global agenda. However, some of Landesa's Board members and Executive team worried that engaging at the global level would be an ineffectual exercise, and that a stronger focus on national-level policy efforts would have greater and more tangible impact.

As Hanstad turned left into 43rd Street, he recalled some of the critical milestones that had led him to this point in his career with Landesa. The organization had only recently changed its name from the Rural Development Institute to Landesa. The re-branding exercise had signified a new strategic outlook for the organization, with a stronger focus on creating a more meaningful awareness of its activities. Since 1967, Landesa had focused on service delivery alongside national and local governments, maintaining a level of anonymity in their work. However, as land rights had moved from being a highly politicized issue to one with broader appeal, Landesa recognized the need to advocate their work in the broader public space. During Landesa's 2009 strategic planning process, the Board of Directors, with strong support from Hanstad, had unanimously decided to include Global Advocacy as a new strategic initiative for the organization.

This new initiative addressed an issue that had, in fact, come to dominate Hanstad's thinking in recent years. Despite reaching more than 110 million families through their partnerships with governments, Hanstad realized that the magnitude of the problem of insecure land rights was far greater than the organization could ever hope to achieve on its own. Hanstad, as well as Landesa's leadership, felt a compelling need to not only facilitate their existing programmatic work, but also to influence other organizations and policymakers to include land rights in their initiatives. They believed that only through this type of influence could they ever hope to achieve a positive future for the more than 300 million poor rural families globally who still lacked secure, legal rights to land.

There was considerable debate amongst Landesa's leadership about how this global advocacy strategy should best be achieved. The first question was whether Landesa should expand its longstanding focus on national and local advocacy, or redirect some of it to include global audiences, such as the UN. Secondly, Landesa needed to decide which land-related issues it should align with, and consequently, what type of organizations presented good partnership opportunities. Finally, Landesa needed to select an advocacy strategy from the options that it had developed internally.

As he arrived at the funder's offices and entered their building, he considered what he would present to the Foundation's leadership. He knew that this could be a critical moment in the history of land rights, and he wanted to ensure that Landesa would grow its impact in the years to come.

History of Land Reform

Landesa worked in one of the most significant, yet controversial, areas of social change. Land reform – defined as the “purposive change in the way agricultural land is held or owned”¹ – had been at the root of some of the most significant movements in world history. The ways and means by which land was used and distributed among members of communities varied significantly. Many societies had long-held customary systems for determining how to use and allocate land. These rules, or land tenure systems, had developed over generations, defining how land should be controlled, used and transferred – including communal, private and public forms of land tenure. These tenure systems were vitally important for determining the social, political and economic structure of societies.

With the rise of agriculture and industry, the value of access to and ownership of land had intensified, providing control of food resources, wealth and social stature, and a tool for social and political influence. Land tenure norms had significant impacts on the distribution of wealth in societies, giving people and communities the right to control and make decisions about the use of land for their own livelihoods. As rising global trade, colonialization and corporatization emphasized statutory and private forms of land ownership over customary and communal forms of land tenure, land rights became an issue of vital importance, often promoting the elite and powerful against the poor and powerless.

Modern Land Reform Movements

The 20th Century witnessed social experiments with land reform on a grand scale, with governments and ruling parties moving hundreds of millions of people into new systems of land ownership and access. Following World War II, with the collapse of existing systems and the decline of colonial powers, agrarian reform was attempted in numerous countries, however with varying degrees of success. Most notably, the Communist-led governments of China and the Soviet Union (USSR) collectivized the vast majority of agricultural land.

In many cases, land reform efforts resulted from a need to correct unjust historical events when land access had been expropriated from its original inhabitants. For countries struggling to throw off centuries of colonial rule and feudal law, land tenure had the potential to change society’s “haves” and “have-nots”. Countries who wholly committed to, and participated in, land reform experienced noted improvement in economic growth and a decline in rural poverty, as agricultural productivity, literacy and livelihoods improved². However, many of these land reform efforts were associated with state appropriation of private land and Marxist-style reforms, receiving little support from Western-led development efforts.

In the early 1950s, with the Cold War as a backdrop, there was limited non-socialist land reform activity. At the same time, rising agricultural productivity and industrialization was changing the rural landscape. In the 1960s and 1970s, the rural context shifted dramatically and populations moved en masse to cities. Some countries experimented with integrated land reform approaches, combining production with social infrastructural developments, producing the most successful and ambitious “land to tiller” programmes such as those instituted in South Vietnam. At the same time, radical reforms funded by Communist-led countries emerged in countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique³. In these cases, land was expropriated and nationalized for collective farming, with farmers able to cultivate and live on the land, but without a mechanism for ownership.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the Cold War, land reform shifted dramatically to transitional economies with a focus on re-privatization. At the same time, land rights activists pointed to the many positive impacts of land redistribution brought about by secure tenure⁴ of land. By providing an inclusive mechanism for farmers to participate in the economy, land reformers argued that secure land rights encouraged rural progress, allowing farmers to invest and improve their land. This inclusion and subsequent investment reduced the exploitation of farm workers and promoted democratic institutions through private ownership or secure tenancy of smaller-sized plots for optimum production. Land reform was increasingly seen as a strategy to contribute to the social stability and prevention of political unrest in a country.

Land Rights and the Millennium Development Goals

At the turn of the millennium, population growth, changing social norms, and rising concerns over scarcity of land and its resources further exacerbated the issues surrounding land. The UN’s development agenda which was launched in 2000 – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – rallied the global powers to focus on development goals, but it was criticized

1. Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.

2. Mennen 2009.

3. [http://www.d.umn.edu/~lknopp/geog1202-1/Lecture%20Notes/Chapter%206%20\(detailed\).htm](http://www.d.umn.edu/~lknopp/geog1202-1/Lecture%20Notes/Chapter%206%20(detailed).htm).

4. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4307e/y4307e05.htm> defines land tenure as an institution, i.e., rules invented by societies to regulate behavior. Rules of tenure define how property rights to land are to be allocated within societies. They define how access is granted to rights to use, control, and transfer land, as well as associated responsibilities and restraints.

for failing to include fundamental human rights. Notable development economists such as Hernando de Soto argued⁵ that the majority of the world's poor (in Latin America, Middle East, Asia and Africa) already had the assets they needed to survive in land. However, as the rights to these land assets were not properly documented, they could not use it to access credit or encourage investment. De Soto and others proposed that, with the support of a global platform to advocate for formal land rights, landowners would have assets to act as collateral, furthering individual economic sustainability.

Not everyone, however, was convinced that a focus on land rights was an effective development tool. Opponents to land reform argued that while secure land rights had elevated the social status of the poor, there was little evidence that these efforts created long-term political change. The redistribution of land had rarely precipitated national policy measures to secure land for the farmer, and therefore the sustainability of these reforms was largely in question. Others were concerned that a singular focus on land reform would possibly exclude rights for excluded groups—such as women and minorities—from the development process.

With the pending expiration of the MDGs in 2015, policymakers and civil society were pushing for a more inclusive global agenda for sustainable development. Social justice and human rights activists were clamouring for a greater role for human rights in the development conversation, while economists and development experts were supporting the idea that legal reform, equality and empowerment were important factors in economic development. These issues provided an opening for land rights to be included in the forthcoming post-2015 global development goals.

Landesa and its leaders had been navigating the complex world of land rights for more than four decades. During this time, they had learned how to work the system from many angles, often utilizing seemingly adverse political contexts to the advantage of land rights for the poor, seeing their relative obscurity as an essential role for working quietly alongside government reform efforts. Yet, the political situation globally seemed to be turning in their favour: development experts and politicians alike were interested in the prospect of land rights as a mechanism for social and economic change. Hanstad now sensed that his organization was in the difficult but enviable position of having a “wealth of opportunities” when it came to advocacy. Hanstad knew that they had to select their advocacy strategy carefully so they could utilize their decades of experience to elevate the issue of land rights on the global agenda without risking the trust-filled working relationships with national-level policymakers that depended in part on Landesa's under-the-radar approach.

The Rural Development Institute

Hanstad suddenly found himself reflecting on the rollercoaster journey he embarked upon since meeting Prosterman in the mid-1980s. His decision not to enter the world of corporate law but instead embark on this journey was both a personal and professional quest. From an academic research project to a globally operating organization, Prosterman and Hanstad had worked hard to bring land reform and land rights to the world's poorest.

Roy Prosterman

The organization was imbued with the personality and passion of its original founder. Prosterman had always been considered a bit of a “prodigy”. After graduating from the University of Chicago at just 19, then completing his JD at Harvard Law School⁶, Prosterman spent six years practising as an associate at the New York law firm Sullivan & Cromwell, spending much of this time at the company's office in Liberia⁷. This is where Prosterman's awareness about issues of social justice and global poverty emerged and compelled him to move outside of corporate law. Seeking a new direction, he took on a faculty post at the University of Washington's Law School in 1965.

5. De Soto 2000.

6. World Justice Project n.d.

7. Seattle Business Magazine n.d.

Prosterman's earliest engagement with the land reform debate came in the mid-1960s, when he wrote a response to a law review article promoting confiscatory land reform. His response, *Land Reform in Latin America: How to Have a Revolution without a Revolution*⁸, positioned democratic land reform with compensation for landowners as a tool for helping the poor move out of poverty and into a more equitable position in society. Prosterman's article attracted significant interest from the United States government, and he was asked to join a team of experts studying the roots of conflict in South Vietnam. The government was looking for new ways to end the conflict in Vietnam, and to stem the tide of recruitment from the Vietnamese rural population into the Viet Cong, the communist insurgency group operating in the south of the country. Prosterman's research determined that landlessness and land tenure insecurity among large portions of South Vietnam's rural population left them without a strong stake in the government's success and open to the Viet Cong's recruitment. He advised the South Vietnam government to adopt and the United States government to support a land rights reform initiative that provided land ownership to poor landless families and tenant farmers. Finding his approach appealing, Prosterman was eventually recruited by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)⁹ to help the South Vietnam government draft a Land to the Tiller law and programme in Vietnam.

From 1970 to 1973, South Vietnam's Land to the Tiller program gave land rights to one million tenant farmers. The results were remarkable: the farms exhibited a 30% increase in rice production and decreased Viet Cong recruitment by 80%. Described by the New York Times as "probably the most ambitious and progressive non-Communist land reform of the 20th century", the programme was widely reputed to be a success. Following the success of the programme, Prosterman began to receive invitations from governments to conduct field research and assist with the design and creation of land reform programmes, which he continued to do from his post at the University of Washington.

In 1981, Prosterman established a non-profit entity, Rural Development Institute (RDI). Prosterman's aim in creating RDI was primarily administrative, with the aim of using RDI as a publishing platform to circumvent the University of Washington's restrictive publishing rules. However, having an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) also proved to be another way to receive funding to continue his land reform work. In the late 1980s, Prosterman received a donation of USD 50,000, allowing him to appoint a new researcher to work with him on field research projects. This new field researcher was an ambitious and passionate young law student named Tim Hanstad.

Tim Hanstad

Hanstad grew up as a child of the 1960s in a large, working class family of nine children (including seven sisters). Originally from Norway, Hanstad's grandparents had immigrated with many other Norwegian families to the US in the early 1900s, eventually settling in farm country of the Pacific Northwest. From the age of eight until he left for university, Hanstad and his siblings spent most of their summers working on farms harvesting strawberries, cucumbers, and other crops alongside poor migrant workers from Southern Mexico. It was these summer work experiences that planted the first "seeds of international issues of development and social justice"¹⁰ for Hanstad.

After briefly flirting with joining his father in the construction industry, Hanstad decided to attend college, earning his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History at Seattle Pacific University and getting involved with social justice groups on campus. It was during these years that Hanstad was first introduced to Prosterman's revolutionary work on land reform. Hanstad was already considering law school, and his interest in Prosterman's work led him to apply to the University of Washington's School of Law. While pursuing his law degree, Hanstad sought out Prosterman and started working with him as a research assistant, spending his law school breaks conducting field research in Egypt, the Philippines and China.¹¹

After graduation, Hanstad had two options available to him: he could either join the corporate law firm where he had clerked, or accept a one-year placement with Prosterman as a full-time field researcher and adjunct faculty member. Hanstad was torn between following his growing passion for the land reform work and the greater economic and career security of the law firm. A principal at the law firm made the choice easier for Hanstad by advising him to take the one-year research role with Prosterman and telling him that he could join the law firm a year later.

Deep into the field research that they were conducting that year in China, Hanstad knew that the law firm's principal was right: through the efforts that Prosterman and his small team were making, and the growing number of contacts in the country, Hanstad felt certain that their work could have long-term impact in China and beyond. Ultimately, the law firm's generous offer was never needed: Hanstad never went into corporate law and instead stayed on with Prosterman at the University of Washington.

8. Prosterman 1964.

9. Jacinto 2015.

10. Duff 2015.

11. Duff 2015.

Early Years (80s & 90s)

Prosterman and his team's early successes came from their ability to deal quietly and competently with countries in transition. Two of these countries, China and Russia, were making reforms to Communist-era agricultural efforts and required assistance in transitioning to more market-led economies.

China in the 1980s did not seem a likely place to pursue land reform efforts. However, RDI's combination of academic rigor and pragmatic solutions found an unlikely niche in the Communist Party (CP)'s reform efforts. After the Communist Revolution of 1949 and with encouragement from his Soviet colleague, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong of the CP pursued a radical model of collective farming called The Great Leap Forward. This strategy of collectivization, from 1958-1961, forbid farmers to work private plots, instead organizing all farm activity under the control of collective committees. However, Mao's collective movement was largely unsuccessful, resulting in a severe decline in agricultural productivity that contributed to the Great Famine, and during which tens of millions of Chinese died.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the CP began a series of agricultural reforms through the introduction of the "household responsibility system". This system effectively reversed the collective farming model of providing households with independent plots and reducing quotas, instead allowing households to sell their surplus on the open market at unregulated prices. The results were dramatic and two-fold: food production and productivity increased, while rural incomes soared. According to economist Stanley Fischer, the reforms led to "the greatest increase in economic well-being within a 15-year period in all of history."¹²

It was during this time that Prosterman and Hanstad had a fortuitous meeting with an influential cabinet minister, Du Runsheng¹³, giving them the opportunity to share their field research findings and related policy recommendations with an interested and influential senior policy maker. Their study had revealed that while agricultural productivity had increased, the practice of regular reallocation of plots prevented farmers from making long-term investments in their farms. Based on this research, Prosterman and Hanstad recommended further policy reform, giving secure legal land rights to the household farmers through official land titling and long-term tenure. The field study and recommendations were well received, however, the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 resulted in Du's demotion within the Communist Party and a conservative backlash that slowed policy reforms.

Not to be deterred, Prosterman and Hanstad continued their efforts in China, even appearing at Party meetings and promoting their field findings and related reform recommendations, while also meeting with Party officials in private consultations. Eventually in the early 1990s, the CP was persuaded by the practical application of the recommendations, and passed policy reforms and legislation allowing for official certificates to householders preventing reallocation of household plots for 30 years. The top-down implementation of the certification process was relatively rapid, delivering the message that "these peasants now own the land", and providing secure land tenure to tens of millions of Chinese farmers. After the policy implementation, Prosterman, Hanstad, and RDI were engaged to monitor the rollout of the certification process, which has continued to be one of their key roles in China.

Following the success of the research and advocacy in China, RDI embarked on similar efforts in the former USSR. Under Stalin, the USSR collectivized more than 95% of its agricultural economy, yet experienced a similar issue to China, where forced collectivization resulted in dramatic declines in agricultural productivity. As the USSR initiated reforms starting in 1990, preceding its collapse in 1991, some of the newly independent countries undertook at least partial re-privatization of land through farm break-up and reallocation to families. However, the volume of new laws, the unfamiliarity of private land ownership, and the sheer magnitude of the undertaking required an enormous effort to educate and assist private citizens on their new rights.

RDI deployed its first employee to Russia in 1994. RDI played a role in influencing the introduction of private agricultural land rights in Russia, but the primary obstacles were in implementing the new laws. So, RDI focused more of its efforts on setting up a legal aid centre to increase awareness about new laws and assist farmers on the collective farms to leave and claim land as private family farms. RDI later duplicated the legal aid centre model in other countries. These centres helped rural landowners understand, protect and utilize their newly instituted property rights. RDI also created content that was used in local newspapers and on the radio to educate and communicate with the farmers who did not have access to these centres. Over the course of a decade, RDI built the centres to eventually be self-sustaining, Russian-led entities and ultimately handed over their Russia operations in 2002. By this time, their work in Russia had impacted nearly 18 million rural farmers.

12. Passell 1994.

13. Allison 2013.

Growing RDI

The early projects in China and the former USSR were representative of RDI's approach. The organization typically started its work in a new country by gaining a thorough understanding of land policies and laws and their impact on the rural poor through extensive field research. This research then gave RDI the ability to work with in-country stakeholders to provide effective policy recommendations to governments. Finally, if land reform laws were adopted, RDI could use its grassroots and comparative knowledge to support the government in implementing the reforms. This process was both successful and politically savvy: RDI was able to avoid the pitfalls of being associated with political ideology, and instead build its reputation on practical, evidence-driven recommendations.

For more than 25 years, Prosterman had operated on a small scale out of the University of Washington Law School, benefiting from the resources and credibility that the university offered and enabling RDI to “wear their academic cloaks while working at a policy level,” as Hanstad explained. In the early 1990s, Prosterman and Hanstad decided to take key steps to move the operations out of the university and into the already existing non-profit entity in order to expand the work. Hanstad recalls that Prosterman “never wanted to build an organization”, being far more interested in the core issues of land reform and pro-poor policy advancement than running and managing an organization. Prosterman was fully aware of the limitations of expanding the work from within the academic environment in which it had been successfully incubated. The institutional framework of the university proved challenging for hiring new staff members, fundraising, and overhead. Hanstad was convinced that they needed to move the work out of the university in order for it to achieve its potential, and Prosterman gradually agreed.

In 1992, they made the leap. Prosterman maintained his position as a law professor and became President of the newly charged RDI. Hanstad took on the role of Executive Director, reporting to his mentor Prosterman. In this regard, Prosterman and Hanstad's relationship was fully realized: Prosterman had long introduced Hanstad as “the one who runs the show,” and in 2005, Hanstad was appointed CEO of the organization. At the same time, Prosterman remained in the role for which he was eminently suitable, advancing land rights for the world's poor in both national and global arenas.

During this period, the fundraising role within the organization was also growing in importance. RDI had appointed its first professional fundraiser in 1999, which began to pay dividends, with the organization exceeding USD 1 million in revenue for the first time. By 2004, this had more than doubled to USD 2.4 million.

India

RDI's work up until this point had been largely opportunistic, working in countries with explicit invitations for its research and legal expertise. However, as the organization began to grow, Hanstad realized that a more strategic outlook would be needed if they were to impact the vast numbers of landless poor in the world. With a growing mandate to identify countries where their work would be influential, Hanstad and his team began researching land reform efforts in India. As the country with the largest population of rural landless households on the planet, the country seemed a natural fit for the organization, and one it could hardly ignore. Despite producing large amounts of grain, India's severe poverty and food insecurity was prodigious. With an estimated 32.7% of the population living on less than USD 1.25 per day and the country being home to a quarter of the world's undernourished¹⁴, India had one of the highest negative rankings in human development, global hunger and gender inequality.¹⁵

After Independence in 1949, recognizing the close nexus between rural landlessness and poverty, India's policy-makers had attempted land redistribution through state-led initiatives. Virtually every state adopted land redistribution laws, but implementation was poor. The proposed two-acre plot distributions by taking land from large landowners were largely seen as unfeasible, as this would have required redistributing approximately 25% of India's agricultural land, primarily through taking it from politically powerful interests. As RDI conducted its preliminary research into the country's efforts, their findings challenged the assumption that rural landless families needed multiple acres in order to obtain meaningful benefits. They highlighted the experience in several states where landless families had received house-and-garden plots of about one-tenth of an acre. RDI's experiences in other countries had also highlighted the benefits of micro-ownership, and while multiple-acre plots were ideal, the organization realized that isolated efforts of successful house-and-garden plot distribution in several Indian states might provide a national case for micro-plot distributions.

14. World Food Programme n.d.

15. Draboo 2015.

Furthermore, India highlighted many of the socio-economic benefits of land reform that RDI was beginning to incorporate into its mission and approach. Landlessness was seen as the most accurate predictor of poverty¹⁶ and was central to economic empowerment. Insecure land tenure trapped entire communities in extreme poverty, restricted economic growth and caused great conflict. On the other hand, access to secure land rights provided income and food security to farmers; instilled a sense of stewardship of the land, which provided greater investment in the land to improve their harvest and protection of bordering forests; and, if designed and implemented correctly, could increase women's legal rights to tenancy or ownership of land, providing access to government economic and nutrition programmes. As their research revealed these patterns, RDI began to incorporate these arguments for land reform into their advocacy approach with countries.

In 2000, RDI received a large grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), which enabled them to scale up their research work in India. With this injection of funding, Hanstad decided to move with his wife and four children to India to launch the research. The project was substantial, and tasked RDI with understanding India's unique land reform situation. India's federal system, which gave states the primary role for land reform, had more than 20 different state-level sets of land legislation throughout the country. While land was primarily subject to state-level legislation in India's federal system, the national government still established and funded influential national policy through its five-year plans, giving RDI a chance to influence at the country level. Through sustained engagement with the national government, RDI successfully proposed its recommendations in India's five-year plan, which was adopted in 2002. Using that new national-level policy as a foundation, RDI – together with their Indian partners – successfully advocated for a second generation of more practical land reform measures in several states.

RDI's success in India heralded a new stage of growth for the organization. By assisting with the land policy language included in India's national planning process, RDI opened the door for the organization to work at the state level. However, in sharp contrast to the work in China and Russia, which were more centrally-planned economies, India's land reform process required deep, grassroots level engagement for both policy and implementation. Hanstad understood that the work in India required a shift for the organization overall, increasing the number of field-based staff, and creating a more disparate staffing structure. To accommodate the growing organization, Hanstad began to focus efforts on codifying RDI's programme model, ensuring that its staff, now situated in offices around the world, were able to identify the common approach that they were using to ensure land rights for the poor globally.

The RDI Model

By the mid 2000s, RDI had solidified its model of working with host countries. In particular, the organization's work in China, Russia and India had helped to frame and inform their growth and strategic approach, from initial research, to programme rollout and implementation. At the core, RDI saw themselves as an organization of lawyers acting as technical experts and advisors to governments. Through Prosterman's three decades of working closely with governments, they had refined their methodology and gained widespread respect for their approach and success.

Through these experiences, RDI had developed a four-phased programmatic approach to land reform:

1. **Research:** In the first phase, RDI would deploy its research team to conduct extensive interviews with rural farmers and village leadership, identifying current conditions, laws and regulations, policies and cultural conditions.
2. **Design:** In the second phase, and at the invitation of a country, RDI would assist in the design of land reform policy and programmes, as well as propose changes to existing laws and policies related to land ownership and rural development.
3. **Advocacy:** Concurrently, RDI was persistent in its local advocacy work, constantly seeking ways to promote land ownership for the poor through educating public officials about the positive effects of secure land rights for economic development and social stability.
4. **Implement:** Finally, RDI would promote, plan and assist in the implementation of land reform measures, while also employing a monitoring and evaluation phase, noting key learnings from the process to recommend improvements for future programmes.

16. Giovarelli et al. 2013.

Figure 1: Landesa's Four-Step Engagement



Through the multi-phased approach, each country programme was specific to the local situation and context, identifying approaches that strengthened the rights of existing landholders while broadening secure land access to the poorest. By establishing land rights for the land-poor, RDI's research showed that well-designed land reform programmes improved agricultural productivity and nutrition, and decreased violence and teenage pregnancy.

While advocacy was part and parcel of the four-phased approach, it was clearly embedded in the organization's country-level operations. RDI had always considered its advocacy efforts to be quiet, practical, and directed toward national and local-level politicians and civil servants with the direct influence to enact land reform in countries. With each national context uniquely different, and with the complexity and diversity of legal frameworks for land tenure across the globe, local advocacy efforts were highly tailored to the context in which they were operating. Local advocacy was also advantageous in that the impact was identifiable and tangible: typically, RDI could pinpoint the exact policies they were trying to change, and identify the appropriate decision-makers who needed to be influenced.

However, the global context for land rights was changing. With the galvanizing success of the Millennium Development Goals, and with global leaders seeking more far-reaching tools for poverty alleviation, the prospect for land rights reform to contribute to sustainable development had caught the attention of development experts. While Prosterman had long been a global advocate for land rights, Hanstad was also interested in incorporating global advocacy into the stated strategy of RDI. However, this would stretch the organization far beyond its current operations and funding, which were largely country and project specific.

Becoming Landesa

Toward the end of 2009, Hanstad made a dramatic decision: he decided that RDI needed to change its name and undergo a significant re-branding exercise. Hanstad had long felt that the name of the organization, RDI, did not sufficiently reflect the organization's core focus. He could recall many times when he would need to patiently explain what the organization did, instead of being able to talk more deeply about their work. Although respected in the land rights sector and by the countries in which they operated, Hanstad felt RDI needed to build its image for a potentially larger audience. With a new name and brand, he felt they would yield better results with their programmatic impact and bring in new donors and partners.

For Prosterman, there was little importance in the name as it had just been a means to set up an entity, enabling him to operate autonomously. Irrespective of the organization, Prosterman "lived" land rights, taking the issue into every arena he entered, maintaining close connections with many top government officials around the world, and traveling extensively for RDI despite his semi-retirement.¹⁷ When Hanstad proposed the idea of a re-branding exercise, Prosterman gave his full support.

Hanstad, supported by a newly hired Chief Communications Officer, enlisted a brand strategy agency that had gained fame for naming Starbucks, among other well-known brands. After much internal debate, they eventually chose the name Landesa, a name which combined "land" and "destiny", reflecting both the method and the mission of the organization. By rebranding, Landesa was able to clearly associate itself with the targeted issues of land rights, rather than the broader sector of rural development. According to Hanstad, "The rebranding process took much longer and cost more than I expected. However, its impact has proven far more beneficial and effective than I ever imagined."

17. Allison 2013.

At the same time, Landesa was beginning to grapple with the changes that came with a growing non-profit organization. Prior to 2000, RDI's funding had been comprised primarily of "flexible" funding – either loosely guided by project needs or altogether unrestricted. As the organization grew its operations, they increasingly took on larger contracts but with restricted funding. In the early years, Prosterman had been insistent that all of RDI's funding be raised from non-US government sources, as he believed the perception of being a government-funded recipient would damage their cause and put restrictions on political engagement. However, in the post-Cold War landscape, Landesa had moved beyond its initial reluctance to utilize US government funding, and was now managing contracts through USAID, as well as project-restricted funding from significant foundations, such as BMGF, the Templeton Foundation, and others. Through its project work in the former Soviet Union, India, and several African countries now constituting more than 75% of its overall budget, Landesa had shifted from being an organization with largely flexible funding, to now managing significant restricted funding from large foundations and government agencies.

In 2009, a large, unrestricted, multi-year grant from the Omidyar Network (ON) helped fuel the organization's growth and impact. The unrestricted revenue helped RDI leverage additional restricted funds. The ON funding and the additional project-restricted funding it helped leverage increased their revenue significantly, and the organization was now bringing in more than USD 8 million annually. However, as the unrestricted grants began to wane, they were increasingly replaced with restricted grants and contracts that often did not fully cover the administrative expenses associated with running a large enterprise, particularly in the areas of marketing and communications.

Landesa's capable Chief Operating Officer had presented the current funding scenario to Hanstad, showing the impact of the changing weight in funding types and how they needed to rethink their strategy for sustainability. This included giving priority to billable staff and those managing funded projects. This eye-opening presentation had been pivotal for Hanstad, and he realized that funding for advocacy was limited. Funding for advocacy not associated with a country-level programme would have to come from a dedicated source, or it would threaten the organization's ability to deliver on its country-level programmatic commitments.

At the same time, increased advocacy had the advantage of bringing greater visibility for Landesa – a visibility that might, in fact, bring more unrestricted funding their way. It was a bit of a "Catch 22", and the organization was struggling to determine whether the risk of investing in advocacy would pay off in time to recover its costs.

The Advocacy Strategy

Landesa's historical approach to advocacy was deeply embedded in their country-level operations. What was unclear, however, was whether or not they should elevate this advocacy to the global level, and if so, what type of global advocacy strategy they should undertake. Landesa had experienced its previous successes by immersing itself in country-level land rights reform efforts, getting to know the nuances of each environment well and using this to work closely alongside national and local governments. With this strategic approach, Landesa was usually operating in the background, with very little recognition for its work beyond a small circle of land rights activists who knew and respected their approach. This strategy also ensured that Landesa's programmes would have maximum benefit for beneficiaries, minus the political wrangling that land reform efforts often attracted. Landesa's locally-driven approach represented the organization's desire for their work to become integrally part of national and local policy, ultimately ensuring long-term sustainability of land reform efforts, rather than idealized (or worse, foreign-led) policies that were difficult to implement.

However, Hanstad and several influential Board members had recognized that the issue of land rights was becoming a critical piece of the development conversation globally. As the development world had shifted its attention to land rights as a possible solution, it seemed that there could be an opportunity to build on this interest to influence global players, who could, in turn, influence national-level policy makers. Some other Board and management team members saw things differently: they felt that global advocacy efforts could be wasteful for the organization, and that sticking to national and local advocacy would give more tangible and cost-effective results.

One thing was certain. In all of the options they identified, Hanstad and Advocacy Director Hien Tran both agreed that they would need to position land rights as an "issue within an issue". This approach had already been successful for the organization in its national and local advocacy efforts, where Landesa had positioned land rights as a precursor to other rights, such as food security and environmental rights. Furthermore, if Landesa were to pursue a global advocacy strategy, it seemed that the global agenda would perceive land rights as a trigger for other development objectives. For example, the Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent conversation around the Post-2015 Development Agenda, was focused heavily on poverty alleviation, economic development and public health objectives. It was clear that land rights as an issue on its own would not motivate policymakers, but the benefits of land rights had become increasingly prominent on the global stage.

Hanstad, Tran and the Landesa team had spent considerable time thinking through the social and environmental issues that were directly linked and positively impacted by pro-poor land reform. These included:

- **Education:** Evidence from Central America had shown that farmers with secure land rights provided greater educational security for their children. Furthermore, in households where women had land rights, children were shown to have higher levels of educational attainment.¹⁸
- **Gender Equality:** Numerous studies showed that providing women secure land rights had strong, positive socio-economic outcomes. Women with land rights contributed a greater proportion of income to the household, exercised greater control over agricultural income, and were more likely to receive credit; women who owned land were more likely to have the final say in household decisions; severe childhood malnutrition¹⁹ was reduced by half if the mother owned land; households where women owned a larger share of the household's farmland allocated a larger proportion of their household budget to food.²⁰
- **Conservation:** Evidence showed that farmers with secure land rights became natural advocates by conserving natural resources, growing organic produce and planting trees that not only protected their crops but improved the state of the environment. In addition, micro-land ownership supported conservation advocacy by cultivating only small sections of land, decreased mass demolition of natural vegetation and forests, protected water resources and limited soil erosion.²¹
- **Agriculture:** Localized land ownership was proven to enable families to provide their own seasonal food, thereby limiting the issue of access, availability and cost related to food. Land rights supported long-term, sustainable food production that in turn offered economic security and regenerative cultivation as support for families.²²
- **Public Health:** Land rights were also associated with improved public health indicators, particularly in countries with large populations in dense urban settings. As malnutrition and vaccine resistant diseases caused widespread illnesses, slowing the onset of forced migration contributed to resolving these health issues.²³

Another certainty was that Landesa would not be able to pursue a global advocacy strategy alone. Hanstad knew that aligning with other organizations in its advocacy – whether local or global – was crucial. However, a critical question was what type of organizations Landesa should seek out in its advocacy efforts.

A Way Forward

In the lead-up to the Board Meeting in November, Hanstad had formed an internal Working Group, comprised of his Chief Communications Officer, Tran, a few Board members, and a small number of outside experts. This Working Group had met several times over the course of September and October to develop a set of options for Landesa's advocacy strategy.

The four possible options included:

- **Inspire:** One option was to develop well-researched and compelling opinion pieces to be submitted to popular publications and radio stations, such as the New York Times and National Public Radio. Through these efforts, the Working Group felt that Landesa would be able to bring the issue of land rights to the broader public and inspire broad interest in the issue. The Chief Communications Officer was strongly in favour of this approach, which she felt would be a successful and cost-effective approach to elevate Landesa's stature and bring the issue of land rights to a broader audience.
- **Influence:** A second approach would be to focus on potentially influential global development policies, such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda. While it was not yet clear whether the process would have a similar impact, the MDGs had been surprisingly influential for global development agendas. Furthermore, the UN had promised to make the process far more inclusive than the MDG process, which could be beneficial for civil society actors. However, some cynics believed that inclusivity would rather result in "too many cooks" in the proverbial kitchen. The post-2015 process was currently underway, and Landesa would need to act quickly if it wanted to be included in the process.

18. Giovarelli et al. 2013.

19. Hanstad n.d.

20. Landesa 2012b.

21. Landesa 2004.

22. The World Bank 2014.

23. Landesa 2012a

- **Convene:** A third option was to identify and bring together other land rights organizations, using a collective approach to raise the issue of land rights. Hanstad also felt that this would be a good opportunity to influence other land rights organizations to adopt the strategy of looking beyond the central issue of land rights and building on linkages to other rights issues that had proved successful for Landesa. One of the Board members was particularly attached to this strategy, wanting Landesa to embrace a more movement-building approach. He felt that convening NGOs in the field would be particularly effective in elevating land rights within the global development field. One of Landesa's key funders was also particularly interested in this approach.
- **Equip:** Finally, a fourth option was to work closely with organizations in other sectors, encouraging them to insert land rights into their own programming. This approach could include joint projects where Landesa provided the land rights expertise within broader project objectives. Organizations identified as possible partners included big players such as Habitat for Humanity, MercyCorps, World Vision, CARE, and BRAC. These organizations had all expressed an interest in working with Landesa to incorporate land rights into their activities.

A Board member with a previous role as an advisor to a US Senator was particularly outspoken within the Working Group. He strongly believed that Landesa's global advocacy activities needed to be directly linked to national efforts, with an explicit connection between Landesa and key decision-makers at the country level. He was opposed to any advocacy efforts in arenas that were exclusively global – such as the United Nations.

Given the recent conversation with his COO about the changing funding mix of the organization, Hanstad knew that there were few financial resources currently available for their advocacy strategy. Therefore, he wanted to use them wisely. While some of Landesa's Board and Executive team were interested in testing a few of the options, Hanstad was opposed to what he called the "peanut butter approach" of spreading resources thinly across a range of activities. Rather, he believed that they should choose one approach and dedicate resources decisively.

Regardless of the strategy, they needed to choose something that had traction and could move them forward.

Assignment Questions:

- Should Landesa continue its historical strategy of focusing on national and local advocacy, or should it pursue a new course of global advocacy?
- Should Landesa redirect some of its programme-level funding for its global advocacy strategy? If so, how much?
- What are the pros and cons of each of the advocacy options?
- What advocacy strategy should Landesa choose? Why?

Appendices

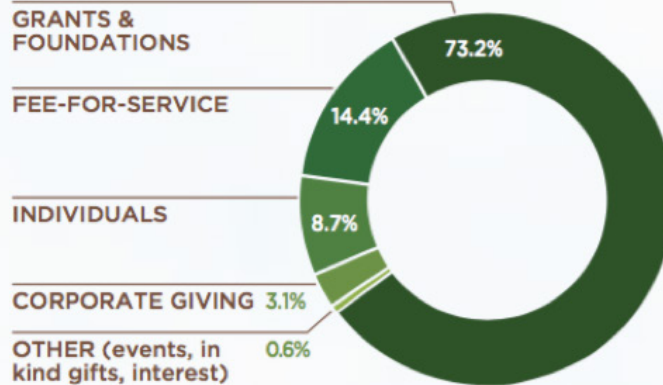
Appendix 1: Landesa Financials 2011

FINANCIALS

for the year ended
June 30, 2011

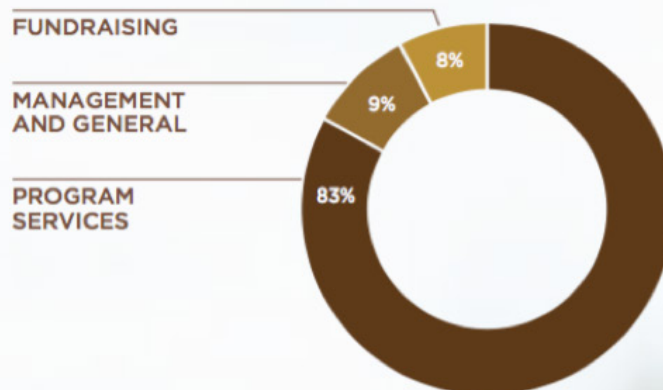
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUES

Total Revenues: \$8,221,617

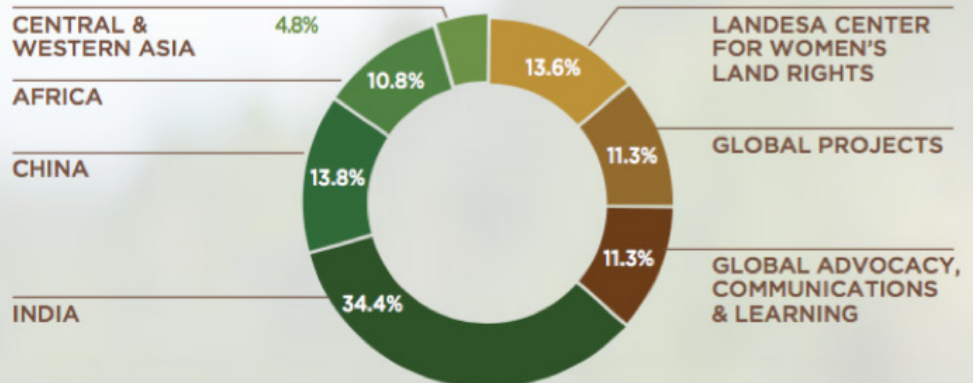


FUNCTIONAL ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES

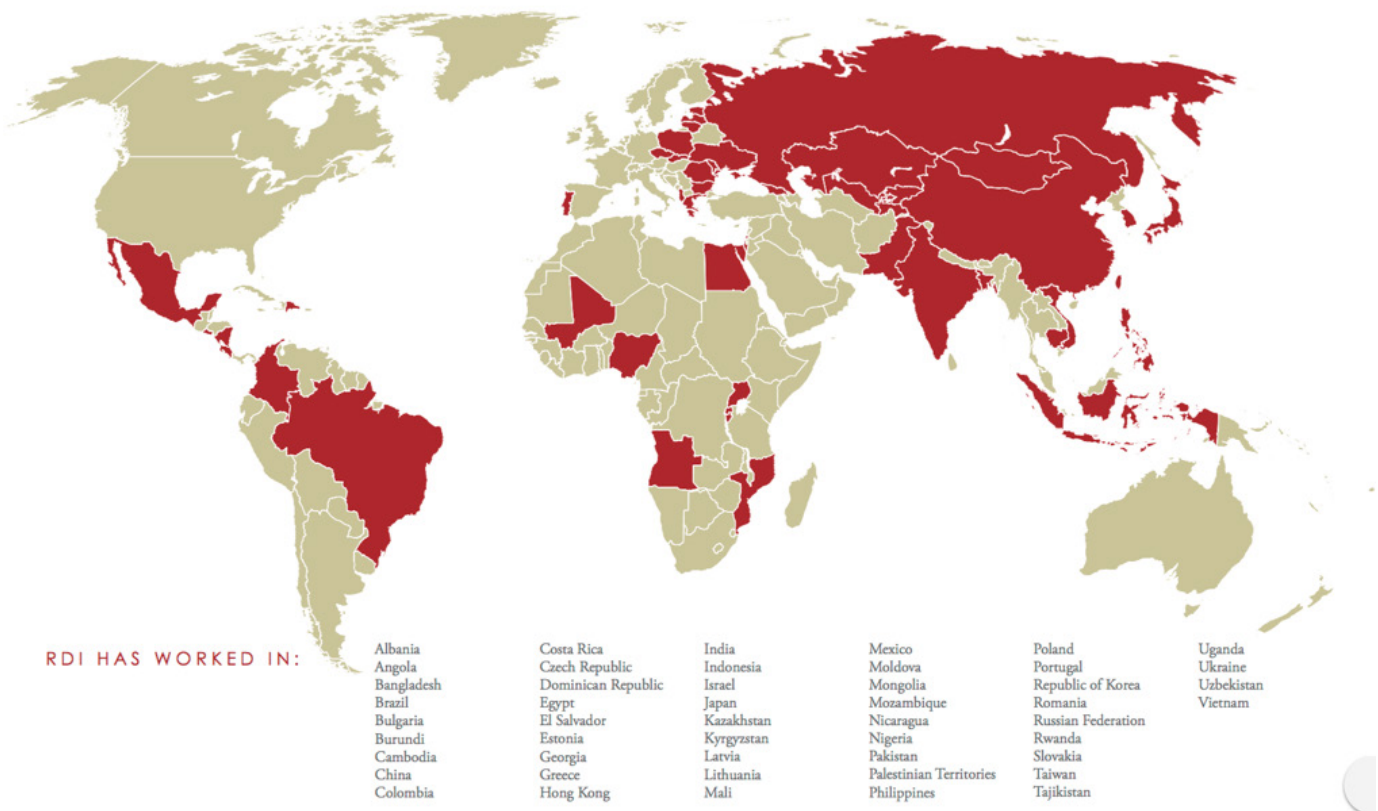
Total Expenses: \$9,729,936



ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES BY PROGRAM AREA



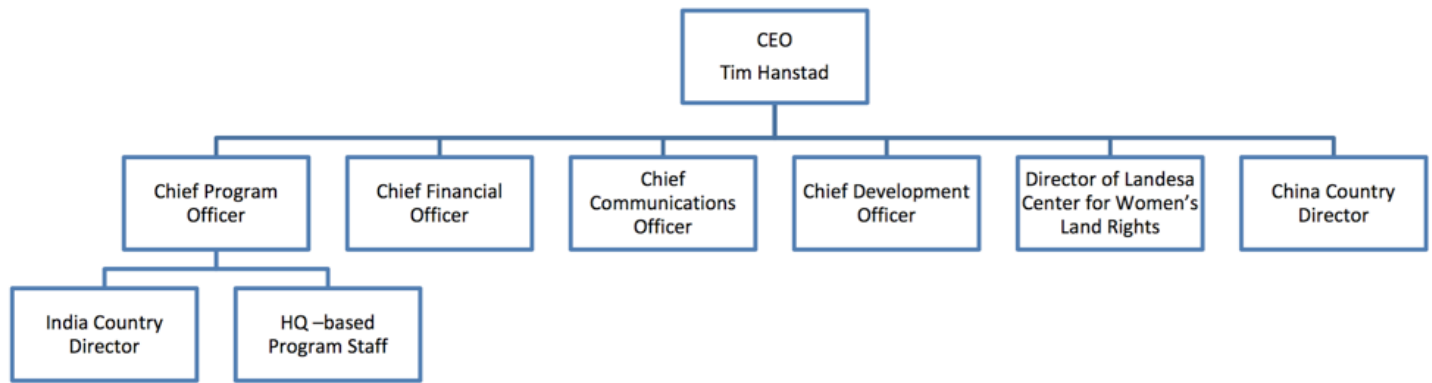
Appendix 2: Countries In Which Landesa Has Operated



Appendix 3: Landesa's Reach

NATION	YEARS	FAMILIES BENEFITED
South Vietnam	1970-73	1,000,000
Philippines	1972-80	161,000
El Salvador	1980-84	49,000
Russia	1992-2003	17,800,000
Kyrgyzstan	1992-2002	232,000
China	1996-present	85,100,000
Moldova	1997-2000	522,000
Ukraine	2001-2006	3,450,000
India	2001-present	1,105,000
Rwanda	2003-09; 2011-13	1,477,219
Kenya	2010-present	3,443
Uganda	2009-present	285

Appendix 4: Landesa Organizational Chart



Appendix 5: Before and After in West Bengal

Before – November 2010



One Year Later – November 2011



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World Economic Forum
91–93 route de la Capite
CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 (0) 22 869 1212
Fax: +41 (0) 22 786 2744
contact@weforum.org
www.weforum.org