

A — — PATH — — TO — — TOMORROW

The Promise of Land



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Letter from the CEO

The past year was a time of reflection at Landesa, as we celebrated the life of our visionary founder, Roy Prosterman, who passed away in February at the age of 89.

It was Roy's vision for pro-poor and democratic land reform that became the blueprint for a new and transformative approach to global development. Roy was a courageous optimist who believed in using the law to do the most good for people living on the margins—the billions of people in rural areas who rely on land to survive. As a former attorney at a white-shoe law firm, Roy saw people experiencing poverty not simply as Landesa's constituents, but as our clients. Over the course of five decades, Landesa's clients have grown to more than 700 million people enjoying stronger rights to land across 66 countries and counting.

And we continue to look for new ways to protect their rights. In keeping with Roy's approach to systemic change through law and policy reform, Landesa formed the Law and Policy Practice Group (see sidebar), a crosscutting team that draws from Landesa's deep bench of experts to promote law and policy solutions to safeguard the land rights of rural communities.

The stories in this report are a testament to Landesa's commitment to building a secure future for rural women and men. I hope you'll find them to be a fitting tribute for Roy's remarkable legacy.



Chris Jochnick
President & CEO



Spotlight on the Law and Policy Practice Group

Landesa was founded by Roy Prosterman and a small team of lawyers on the belief that law and policy changes focused on secure land rights could transform lives.

Today, in the shadow of climate change, shifting trends in energy and resource use, and rapid advances in technology, the need to safeguard the foundational land rights of smallholder farmers, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples is more urgent than ever. To meet this evolving demand, Landesa formed the Law and Policy Practice Group (LPPG), a permanent initiative that convenes our global law and policy experts to address emerging challenges and opportunities affecting land, natural resources, and the people who depend on them.

In one of the group's signature achievements in 2025, the LPPG and partner International Land Coalition (ILC) submitted recommendations on rights-based approaches to renewable energy development—vital for a sustainable future and deeply dependent on land—to the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change. The recommendations were incorporated into a report by the Special Rapporteur to the UN General Assembly, opening a path for global reach and impact.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Stronger Together: Investing in National Networks

The South Asian countries of **Bangladesh, Nepal, and Maldives** are among the most climate vulnerable places in the world. In all three countries, deep gender gaps in land rights intersect with disproportionate climate impacts, leaving women to bear the brunt of climate change.

To confront these challenges, Landesa supported national coalitions in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Maldives to strengthen women's land rights and inclusive environmental management decision-making as a foundation for climate action. Led by national partners and comprised of women-driven civil society organizations, the coalitions developed national climate resilience strategies and advocated together for climate action and gender-equitable land rights at local, state, and global levels. These efforts resulted in local government commitments to strengthen women's participation in decision-making on sustainable land management and climate-smart agriculture, as well as enhancements in disaster preparedness. The Bangladesh and Nepal coalitions also saw advocacy breakthroughs for land rights in national climate policy. (See *"Climate Action" highlight*)

"Women need land security if they are to have any chance of resilience."

— Monira Begum (in black), a grassroots leader from Faridpur, Bangladesh, involved in the project





Land Registration and Capacity Building in Rwanda

In **Rwanda**, Landesa is working alongside local land administration officials on registration efforts that strengthen household land rights and increase government capacity. Land registration in three districts in Eastern Province, Rwanda, includes work on correcting boundary and demarcation errors, as well as registration of new parcels of land.

In the districts of Kirehe and Kayonza, Landesa provided technical support to help process 59,571 parcels of land, including 35,003 parcels with boundary error corrections, and 24,568 new registrations. Landesa's support ensured households could access these services free of charge, amounting to significant savings for families and increasing access to land registration services. Each boundary correction case typically costs 67,000 Rwandan Francs (about 46 USD), while new registrations cost 45,000 Rwf (about 31 USD)—figures which can be significant barriers for rural households. Taken together, Landesa's registration work in Kirehe and Kayonza was valued at 3.45 billion Rwf, equivalent to 2.37 million USD. Similar work is underway in Nyagatare District, providing increased access to stronger land rights for more families.



Mutual Benefit: Entrepreneurs for Public Good

In rural **India**, 85% of women work in farming—yet only 13% of women own land. Updating household land records is a key step to securing rights to the land one farms, but discriminatory gender stereotypes regularly deter women from doing so.

Landesa works with the West Bengal state government and national organization Gram Niyojan Kendra to establish rural hubs where community members can easily update their land records. These Sangha Facilitation Centers (SFCs) build on existing networks of women-led community groups focused on improved livelihoods and entrepreneurship. In 2025, the partnership expanded across West Bengal, establishing 58 new SFCs, training 554 women service providers, and providing 42,796 land-related services. The state government showed strong commitment to the model, conducting regional and district workshops and implementing a public monitoring system. This support is critical to meet the demand to scale SFCs nationwide—to grow livelihoods, dismantle gender stereotypes, and strengthen land rights across India.

From the Ground Up: Registering Indonesia's Indigenous Land

The upland forests of **Ngada Regency on Indonesia's Flores Island** are often shrouded in fog and showered with cold rain—a chilly micro-climate in a country better known for sweltering, tropical heat. Conditions are ideal for cultivating the coffee beans that the region is famous for, and it is both a staple beverage and cash crop for the Indigenous communities that live in the area.

While land in the area is held by custom, rarely is it formally recognized by local land authorities. In 2025, the Karo Indigenous Community took the important step of registering its 2.3 hectares of *ulayat*, or customary, land. Landesa Bumi Indonesia helped facilitate the registration process through outreach and community discussions that involved all members of the Karo community, including women and youth. The registration process culminated in June 2025 with the Land Agency of Ngada Regency presenting a customary land registration certificate to the Karo community, formally recognizing their land rights. And, for the first time in Indonesia's history, this land registration process was carried out in a bottom-up, participatory manner, ensuring that the entire community had a voice in the process. The Karo Indigenous Community continues to serve as an example for how participatory land registration can be implemented in other parts of Indonesia.

“I want to thank Landesa. From the beginning of the participatory training to the submission of recognition of our customary community land, Landesa supported us with time and resources for the process.”

— Heribertus Nono (right), a village leader and member of the Karo Indigenous Community



Rights in Practice: Gender Equal Land Governance

For decades, women in rural **Liberia** were commonly denied land ownership. In 2018, that began to change, as the new Land Rights Law laid the path for the 2.3 million Liberians living in rural areas to gain legal recognition of their customary land rights and safeguarded women's rights within communities.

The new law recognizes land ownership by customary communities and enables communities to issue residential deeds to their members. To issue residential deeds, communities must complete a multi-step process, including updating community bylaws, mapping house plots and residential zones, and establishing community rules for allocation and land use. Over the past two years, Landesa partnered with the Liberia Land Authority and several CSOs to pilot this process in three communities. Landesa led protocol design and provided training on gender equality and social inclusion to ensure that the land registration process included and prioritized women.



Many certificates were issued jointly, listing both spouses on the certificate—a vital step to protect women's land rights. **Seventy-nine women—30% of all certificate recipients—received certificates solely in their names**, reflecting important progress in women's access to land rights.

With new bylaws approved by the communities, land boundaries harmonized, and 538 structures and house plots mapped, community members are ready to receive deeds from the Liberia Land Authority. The deeds will replace the certificates issued during the pilot, marking the final step of the process and recognizing full ownership under the law. These residential deeds for customary communities will be the first of their kind in Liberia. And with the success of the pilot, the government plans to scale the protocol to protect the land rights of customary communities nationwide.



Climate Action for People and Planet

As part of the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change, each signatory country submits its action plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change. These Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) form the policy blueprint for climate action. And with land a critical resource for both climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, the measures outlined in NDCs can have a real impact on the lived realities of millions of people who rely on land to survive.

In 2025, the governments of **Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Nepal** took significant strides in strengthening land rights as a key element of national climate policy by adding land tenure commitments to their updated NDCs—in each case thanks in part to advocacy initiatives and research supported by Landesa.

In Bangladesh and Nepal, national coalitions of women-led civil society organizations (see “*Networks*” *highlight*) held policy dialogues with key government ministries to advocate for women's land rights, gender equity, and equitable climate action in updated NDCs. In Cambodia, Landesa's research on coastal mangrove tenure in community fisheries highlighted how strong local land tenure can enhance climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The revised NDCs will help clear a path to greater protections for the land and resource rights of local communities in each country. For climate policy advocates, these successes demonstrate how collective advocacy can drive environmental action through land rights.



The Global Movement to Close the Gender Gap in Land

As Secretariat of Stand for Her Land (S4HL), Landesa is helping to guide a global movement to strengthen women's land rights, powered by **grassroots, women-led coalitions in 11 countries and counting**. In 2025, we saw that the need and momentum for women's land rights advocacy is stronger than ever. To that end, S4HL took two big steps to scale our work: changing our process to be able to welcome new coalitions and partners from 30 countries worldwide, and the finalization of a global strategy that will take us through 2030.

This past year also saw the formation of a new S4HL coalition in **Kenya**. Led by Landesa Kenya, the new coalition brings together grassroots women organizations, community-based organizations, national-level civil society organizations, media groups, and international NGOs in a collective effort to challenge social norms and strengthen women's land rights in practice.

In late 2024 and 2025, S4HL representatives participated in UN Rio Convention processes on climate action, biodiversity protection, and land and soil health, supported by Landesa's climate and gender experts. Our presence at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change brought together global S4HL Steering Committee members with grassroots and national-level representatives from S4HL coalitions. Our delegation helped ensure that women's land rights were on the agenda and that these global advocacy spaces include the lived realities of women managing ecosystems at the local level.





OUR IMPACT

As a result of Landesa's work in FY2025:

26,820,156 women
and
24,024,339 men

stand to benefit from stronger land rights thanks to

3 law or policy
changes

supported by Landesa.



5,689,704 people

received land literacy trainings and educational services from Landesa, empowering them to better protect and enjoy their rights to land.



7,023

government officials, service providers, practitioners, and other key influencers received training and resources through Landesa to strengthen and protect land rights.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Check out some of Landesa's top news mentions from 2025:



Roy Prosterman, land reform advocate and UW law professor, dies at 89

27 February 2025 | Seattle Times

The Seattle Times published an obituary for Roy Prosterman, Landesa founder and chairman emeritus.

[Read the article ->](#)

The New York Times

Roy L. Prosterman, 89, Dies; Worked to Secure Land for the Rural Poor

15 March 2025 | New York Times

Seeing land rights as the key to lifting up the impoverished, Roy Prosterman pushed authoritarian governments as well as emerging democratic ones to distribute farmland.

[Read the article ->](#)



What is stopping women in Africa from inheriting land?

9 April 2025 | BBC Africa Daily

Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Landesa's global advocacy director for the Stand for Her Land initiative, was featured on BBC World Service's Africa Daily podcast. Esther shares data and stories to highlight the cultural and systemic barriers that prevent women across Africa from owning and inheriting land.

[Read the article ->](#)

Grist

California extends cap-and-trade, as Indigenous nations grapple with the trade-offs

29 September 2025 | Grist

Landesa's Juan Robalino emphasizes that carbon markets must ensure both environmental and social integrity. The article cites Landesa's 2023 report, which warns that poorly regulated projects can displace Indigenous communities and calls for safeguards that uphold community rights.

[Read the article ->](#)



Suku Karo's ulayat land officially registered, becomes Indonesia's first participatory land administration process

23 June 2025 | Kupang News

Marking a historic milestone, the Government of Ngada Regency, in partnership with the Ngada Land Office and Landesa Indonesia, formally recognized the Karo Indigenous Community's customary land—the first such registration in Indonesia's national land system through a participatory, community-led process.

[Read the article ->](#)



Protecting women's land tenure rights begins with women

8 August 2025 | Guardian Tanzania

Landesa's Khadija Mrisho and Godfrey Massay were interviewed about the urgent need to close the gap between Tanzania's progressive land policies and the realities women face, calling for dismantling discriminatory traditions, improving governance, and ensuring women know and claim their land rights.

[Read the article ->](#)



No emission goals without sustainable land management

26 August 2025 | Daily Star

Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Landesa, and The Daily Star organized a roundtable discussion titled "NDC Implementation Challenges: Accelerating Mitigation & Adaptation through Sustainable Land Management" at the newspaper's office in Dhaka.

[Read the article ->](#)



Exclusive: Bridgerton author Julia Quinn reveals admiration for 'really cool' Queen Camilla

15 September 2025 | HELLO! Magazine

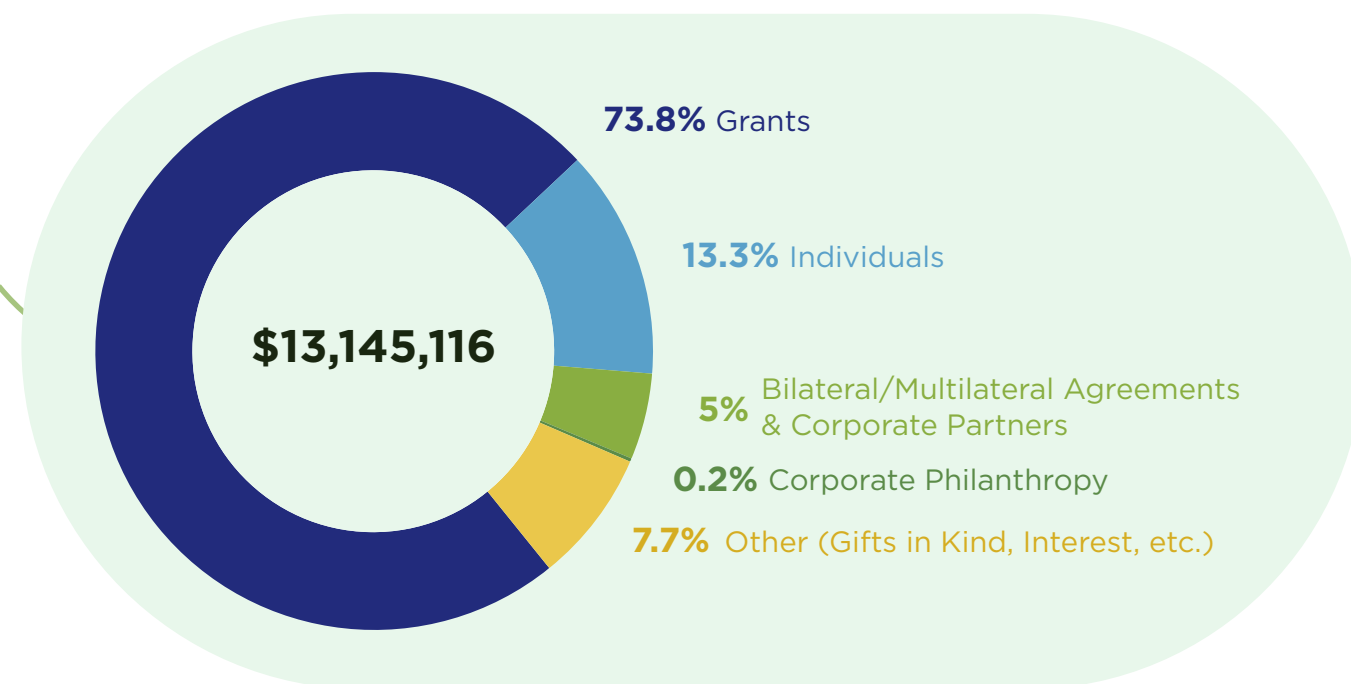
In an exclusive interview, Bridgerton author Julia Quinn highlighted her role as a goodwill ambassador for Landesa. Quinn shared how her platform helps raise awareness of the importance of land rights, noting her recent trip to Kenya with Landesa and emphasizing that secure land rights are a foundation for food, medicine, and education.

[Read the article ->](#)



FY2025 - FINANCIALS

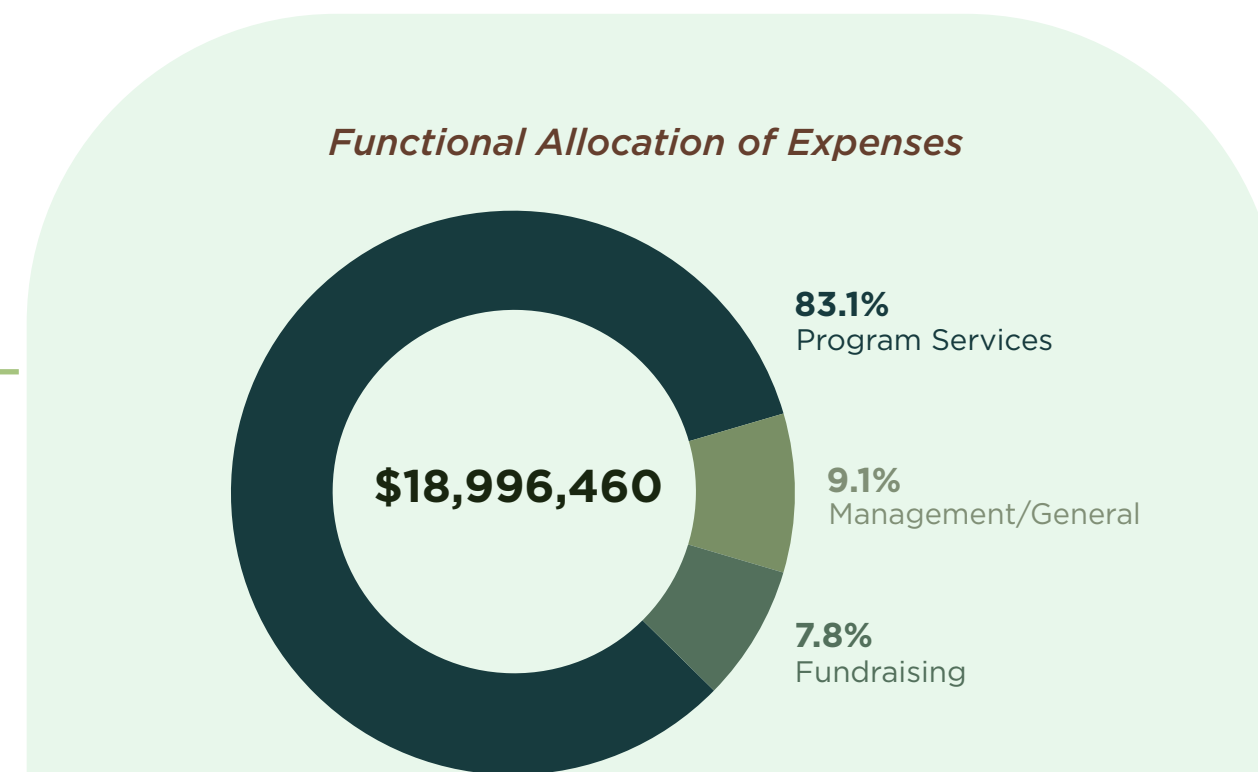
Revenue Breakdown



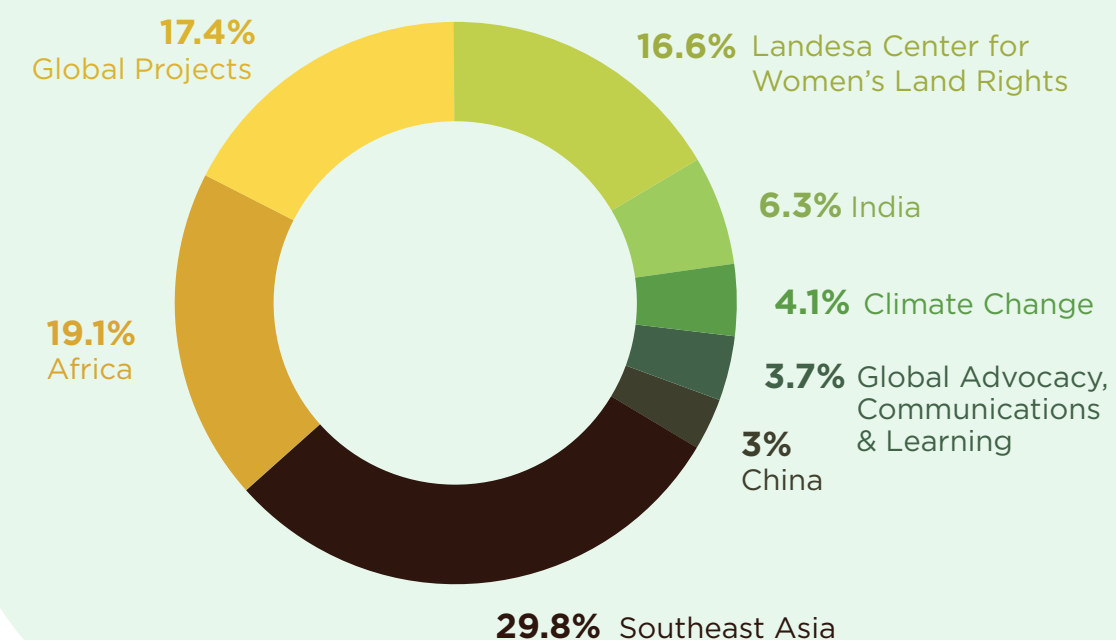
FY2025 | July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Note: Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States require Landesa to recognize the full amount of unconditional multi-year grants in the year in which they are awarded. Expenses, however, are recorded in the year they are incurred.

Expenses Breakdown



Program Services by Area



OUR SUPPORTERS



— *Thank you.*

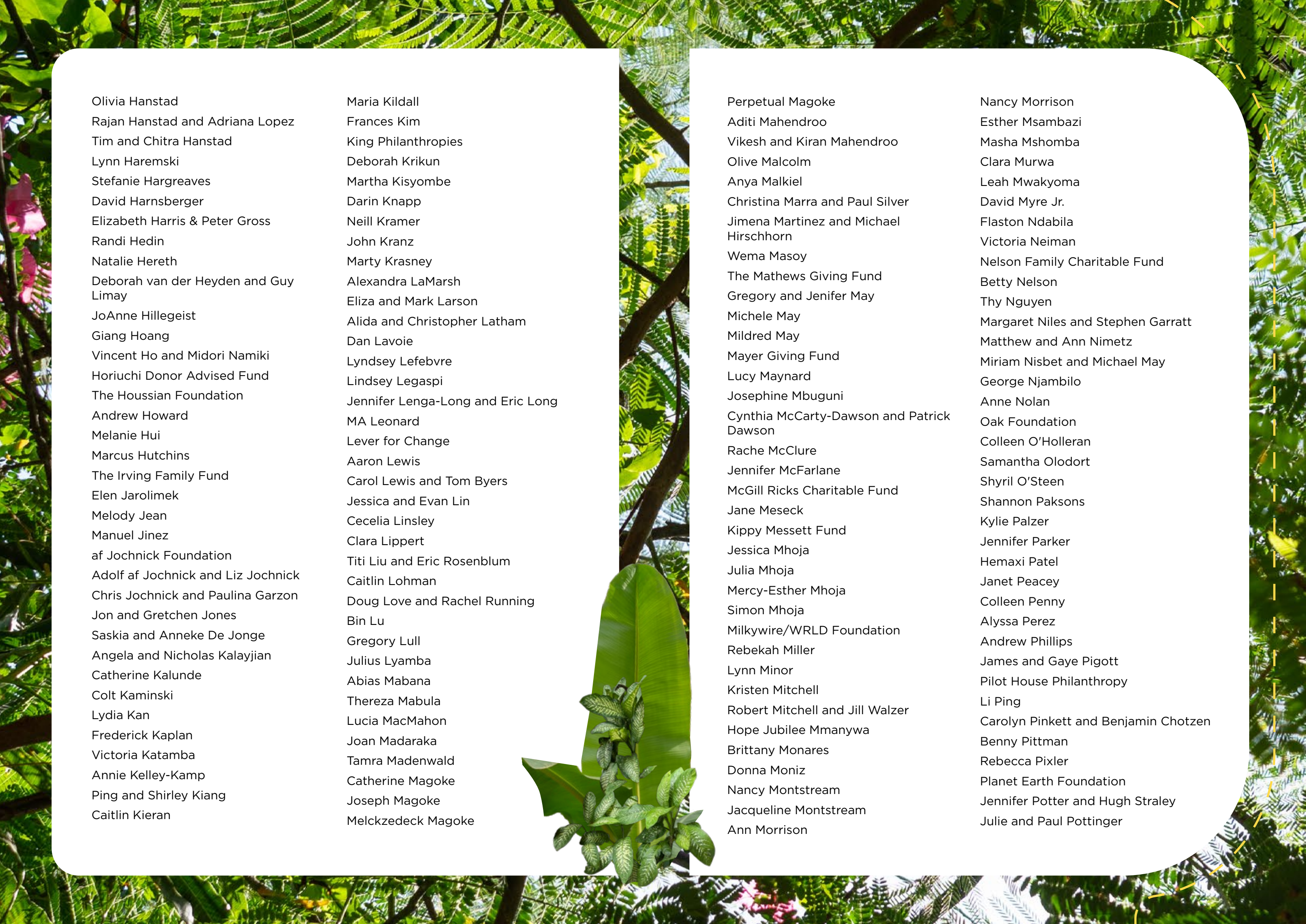
The stories of change in this report are possible thanks to the people, foundations, corporations, and government partners that support Landesa and our work. We express our deepest gratitude to this growing community of supporters.

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