



# Mid-Year **Impact Report**



# Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our 2024 Mid-Year Impact Report. I am excited to share these recent examples of Landesa's work among communities, alongside local organizations, and in policy circles to strengthen land rights—a critical driver of prosperity, equity, and resilience for rural women, men, and their families. These stories will take you to the mangrove forests and coastal communities of Southeast Asia, the tropical forests of Liberia, and the sweeping river deltas of Bangladesh.

Landesa was founded on the simple but transformative idea that rural communities across the Global South have the ability to lift themselves out of poverty. What they often lack is opportunity in the form of

secure rights to land. Landesa tackles that invisible driver of poverty by strengthening land rights laws and ensuring those reforms deliver impact by equipping local government, grassroots organizations, and communities to exercise these new rights.

We are grateful to a growing community of supporters who enable Landesa to create this lasting impact. I hope you will find inspiration in these stories of change, and in the remarkable efforts of our global staff and partners.

Sincerely,



Chris Jochnick, President & CEO



## Global Impact

*July-December 2023*

**3,251 people**

received documents in their name

**207,615 people**

received land rights training and education (98% women)

**963,376 people**

stand to benefit from improved government or CSO capacity (>50% women)





## Stronger together: Communities claim customary land in rural Liberia

*With surveying support from Landesa, 45,000 people in Liberia stand to gain land title, safeguarding against land grabs and giving thousands of families improved access to food, education, and livelihood protections.*

DEEP in the tropical rainforest of Rivercess County, Liberia, a small group of community members hold GPS devices as they navigate palm trees and streams. Government officials from the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) accompany the group, validating coordinates with surveying equipment and embedding poles in the ground along the way. These poles demarcate the boundary for land belonging to Togba Nyakon Clan, a community of 4,000 people.

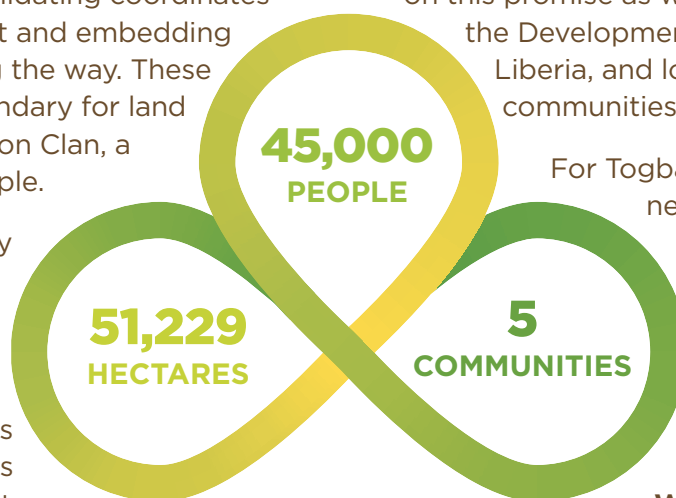
This land boundary survey is among the final steps<sup>1</sup> in an intensive process for Togba Nyakon to formally claim their traditional land—a process made possible by Liberia's passage of the Land Rights Act in 2018, which Landesa supported through legislative drafting and advocacy efforts. For Togba Nyakon Clan, formal title will mean the ability to safeguard their lands while maximizing its productive value: the deed not only protects the community from encroaching land grabs, but enables them to receive compensation from investors, build schools, grow crops, fish,

and otherwise sustain their livelihoods. With strong land rights, boundary conflicts decline and residents can plan for the future confident that their home is their own. Landesa's technical expertise puts us in a unique position to deliver on this promise as we work with the LLA, the Development Education Network of Liberia, and local leaders to help Liberian communities formalize their land rights.

For Togba Nyakon Clan and four neighboring communities, the land survey is a critical step on the path to obtaining formal title. Landesa provided surveying expertise and purchased the necessary equipment to complete the process.

**With their surveys now in hand, these communities, home to 45,000 people, expect to receive formal deeds to their 51,229 hectares of land in a matter of weeks.**

"It's important for us to have our land, to empower us," explained Tenneh, a resident of Togba Nyakon. "If we have this land, it would benefit us and our children."



<sup>1</sup> Togba Nyakon Clan has completed the precursor steps which include electing a land development and management committee, writing by-laws, and harmonizing land boundaries with neighboring communities.



# Scaling impact: Policy reform offers promise for Southeast Asia's coastal residents and ecosystems

*Policy wins in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Southeast Asia region set the stage to protect millions of hectares of mangrove forest and support livelihoods for millions of people.*

LAND is life in rural Southeast Asia—a place to farm and harvest food, a source of income, and a shelter from extreme weather. But without strong rights to this land, communities are at risk. Landesa supports land rights reform across Southeast Asia to lay the foundation for rural communities to invest in their future. Southeast Asia is home to more than one-third of the earth's mangrove forests—a vital carbon sink and source of livelihood for coastal communities. Indonesia in particular hosts the largest and most diverse mangrove forest in the world. After years of Landesa counsel and training, Indonesia's presidentially appointed Agrarian Reforms Task Force named mangrove conservation and coastal land rights as the government's top policy priorities for the sector in last year's Karimun Declaration. **This lays the groundwork for the protection of more than 8.8 million acres of coastal forests, which store an estimated 730 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent and support the livelihoods of 48 million people.**



We have also undertaken work at the regional level: this year, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission invited Landesa to advise on coastal tenure in drafting an Environmental Rights Framework, in addition to advising on tenure rights more broadly across ASEAN policy. **This regional work allows us to scale the positive impact of secure land rights across Southeast Asia, home to nearly 700 million people.**

Finally, Landesa is supporting rural communities in Cambodia, where more than three quarters of the population live in rural areas and one million people do not formally own land, Landesa works to support the national government and local civil society organizations to bring socially inclusive land allocation to scale. Last year, the Government of Cambodia invited Landesa to participate in the revision process of the new Land Law. Landesa and partners led a series of informational and consultative sessions with local civil society groups and Indigenous Peoples, giving them a voice in the reform process (pictured left). **Proposed improvements to the law, including incorporating protections for smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, and women, would ultimately strengthen the land rights of three million families who earn their living from Cambodia's rural land.**





# Women-led collective advocacy for climate action

*Landesa is investing in grassroots, women-led coalitions across South Asia to champion gender-equitable land rights and climate action.*

IN Bangladesh, women are at greatest risk of enduring the adverse impacts of climate change. At the same time, they are often denied the right to own and inherit land. This land insecurity constrains their ability to apply responsible climate adaptation strategies, compounding the harms experienced by women and their families. To break this vicious cycle, Landesa is working alongside civil society organizations in Bangladesh to deliver lasting change for women, by women.

“Stronger land and inheritance rights can empower women economically,” says Rowshan Jahan Moni, Deputy Executive Director of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), a Bangladeshi NGO and Landesa partner organization. “With access to khas (public) land, women can adopt sustainable agriculture practices and boost productivity through the practice of climate resilient agriculture.”

**Landesa is providing technical support and capacity building trainings for a coalition of women-led organizations in Bangladesh, and to similar groups in Nepal and Maldives.** It is part of our effort to grow the field of land rights practitioners—channeling our expertise in policy advocacy and network-building to grassroots organizations who can deliver lasting impact.

These stories are waypoints on a journey toward stronger land rights for all. Everywhere that Landesa works, our experts walk this journey side-by-side with governments, civil society, and communities to deliver transformative and lasting solutions to poverty, gender equality, and climate change.

We invite you to join us in this critical work.

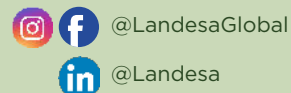


## ENGAGE IN *GREATER IMPACT*

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Landesa is an international non-governmental organization that fights rural poverty and provides opportunity and security for women and men through the power of land rights.



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