

# Land Reform Policies in Belgian Official Development Assistance

Jonas Vanreusel



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## **CONTACTS**

### **Transnational Institute**

De Wittenstraat 25

1052 AK Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Tel: +31 20 662 66 08

Fax: +31 20 675 71 76

website: [www.tni.org](http://www.tni.org)

### **11.11.11 – Coalition of the North-South Movements**

Vlasfabriekstraat 11

1060 Brussels

Belgium

Tel. +32 536 11 13

Fax +32 536 19 10

website: [www.11.be](http://www.11.be)

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## Table of Contents

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 1.   | <b>From colonial productivism to rural development (1960s – 1980s)</b>                              | 7  |
| 1.1. | Diversification and rural development (1970s-1980s)   | 10 |
| 2.   | <b>Integrated rural development and institutional support to secure land access (1995 onwards).</b> | 15 |
| 3.   | <b>Land and Food Security Policies in Belgian ODA</b>   | 17 |
| 3.1. | Bilateral aid   | 17 |
| 3.2. | Multilateral institutions: IFAD and FAO   | 23 |
| 3.3. | Special Programmes: Belgian Survival Fund (BSF)   | 26 |
| 3.4. | Non-governmental assistance   | 31 |
| 4.   | <b>Implementation of land policies in Belgian ODA</b>   | 33 |
| 4.1. | Bilateral ODA: The case of BIARSP in the Philippines  | 33 |
| 4.2. | Bilateral ODA: Land restitution in South Africa   | 39 |
| 4.3. | Flemish ODA: Food security in Southern Africa   | 44 |
| 4.4. | Multilateral institutions: IFAD and FAO   | 45 |
| 4.5. | Special Programmes: Belgian Survival Fund   | 47 |
| 4.6. | Non-governmental assistance   | 50 |
| 5.   | <b>Conclusions</b>  | 52 |
|      | Bibliography .....  | 56 |
|      | Annexes .....   | 61 |
|      | About the Land Policy Series .....  | 74 |

## List of Abbreviations

**ABOS:** Algemeen Bestuur voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (General Administration for Development Co-operation)

**AGCD:** Administration Générale pour la Coopération au Développement (General Administration for Development Co-operation)

**ARB:** Agrarian Reform Beneficiary

**ARC:** Philippine Agrarian Reform Community

**B(I)ARSP:** Belgian (Integrated) Agrarian Reform Support Programme

**BIARTS:** Belgian (Integrated) Agrarian Reform Technical Support

**BSF/FSB:** Belgian Survival Fund

**BTC/CTB:** Belgian Technical Co-operation

**CARP:** Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme

**DAR:** Philippine Department of Agrarian Reform

**DFID:** Department for International Development (UK)

**DGOS/DGIS/DGCD/DGDC:** General Directorate for Development Co-operation

**EC:** European Commission/Community

**FAO:** UN Food and Agriculture Organisation

**IERAC:** Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización (Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Settlement)

**IFAD:** International Fund for Agricultural Development

**ILC:** International Land Coalition

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**INEAC:** Institut National pour l'Etude Agronomique au Congo (National Institute for Agricultural Research in Congo)

**IPM:** Integrated Pest Management

**ISABU:** Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (Agricultural Sciences Institute of Burundi)

**ISAR:** Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda (Agricultural Sciences Institute of Rwanda)

**LGU:** Philippine Local Government Unit

**LTI:** Land Tenure Improvement, component of B(I)ARSP

**MASIPAG:** Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development

**NCOS:** Nationaal Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (National Centre for Development Co-operation)

**PO:** People Organisation (Co-operative structure in the ARCs)

**PSD:** Productivity System Development, component of B(I)ARSP

**SIBS:** Social Infrastructure and Basic Services, component of B(I)ARSP

**SOGETA:** Société de Gestion des Terres Agricoles (Agricultural Land Management Co)

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme

**UNEP:** United Nations Environment Programme

## Abstract

For the most part of its history, the Belgian Official Development Assistance (ODA) focused on narrow agricultural productivity issues. With the slow but steady insertion of Belgian ODA into the international development community's priorities, instruments and methods, Belgium started to focus on broader rural development. In some cases, this evolved into broader support for agrarian reform projects and encouraging change in rural technical infrastructure and the provision of services to improve the possibility of making a living from the land for smallholders and recent land reform beneficiaries. Two projects in Ecuador and Honduras are examples of this. In the 1980s, little attention was paid to the effects of redistributive land reform. Belgian ODA to the agricultural sector, along with international trends, dwindled at the end of the 1990s, but at the same time, two major agrarian reform projects were undertaken, in the Philippines and in South Africa. While these projects were ambitious in size and scope and showed overall positive results, they were not guided by a consistent and practical set of policy guidelines and priorities, which resulted in unclear participation by and targeting of vulnerable populations. The pro-poor objectives have consequently been watered down because of disappointing partner government support and poor execution of land reform. The publication of the Belgian ODA's Strategy Note on Agriculture and Food Security in 2002 mentioned the importance of access to land but fell short of providing practical guidelines on how such a strategy can be carried out in reality. Special programmes, multilateral funding and NGO co-funding of the Belgian ODA have also somewhat neglected the land issue, but some interesting experiences and pressure from partner organisations show some potential for prioritising land policies.



## 1. From colonial productivism to rural development (1960s – 1980s)

Rural and land policies within the Belgian official development assistance had to deal with the heritage of the colonial past, but it had no clear response, for the most part historically, to the tensions of land access created by this heritage. One issue was the legacy of the administrative approach of “indirect rule” during the colonial period, which pursued both a “proto-state that should help people to civilisation”, and a parallel capitalist system that could assure benefits for the colonizer’s economy. Belgian colonialists had discovered the potential that the fertile soil in some regions (for example, eastern Congo) offered for the development of plantation agriculture<sup>1</sup> (Vandommele, 1981). There was already a well-developed consciousness of communal territorial ownership and well-developed customary tenure systems before colonialism. The colonial administration thus introduced a dual system of land ownership. On the one hand is the customary system, based on access to customary land in return for tribute to a customary chief, was “rigidified” within delimited boundaries and with chiefs who were granted additional power by their connection to the state acting as intermediaries to approve land use rights. On the other hand is a “modern” system of title ownership for colonial companies and white settlers was set up, enabling them to establish plantations and large farms through application to the central state. These titles were mostly granted on “lands considered vacant”, a confusing and flexible term that failed to recognise customary rights of use exercised over land (leaving fallow lands for future needs, for hunting, right-of-way, collection of timber etc.). The extension of customary lands became even more limited with the confiscation of land for a system of wildlife parks and forests (Vlassenroot, 2004).

Secondly, the customary system was also somehow undermined by the migration of people from or into new settlements for industrial and commercial agricultural purposes: mining operations, food production for mining workers, or export crops production, without granting secure claims to land in the new settlement area of the migrants.<sup>2</sup> The second option for people without enough access to land - working on

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<sup>1</sup> The “Société des Huileries du Congo Belge” had an almost near monopoly on plantation agriculture and received permission to develop a total of 350,000 ha of land to grow, buy and process industrial crops (for oil extraction, for example) and employed up to 300,000 black workers. Land could also be distributed to set up family farms of less than 100 ha from 1953 on (Vandommele, 1981). This opportunity was almost exclusively used by whites, although they never played a substantial role in the colonial economy, however, due to competition for labour with the big commercial firms and price competition with African farmers. They virtually disappeared after independence and subsequent nationalisation policies (Jewsiewicki, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> In order to secure food for mining workers and promote export earnings from industrial crops, farmers were obliged to spend 45-60 days of work per year on working these crops (Vandommele, 1981).

the plantations – oftentimes proved to be not viable due to very low wages (André et al., 1996). Competition grew between “local” communities and “immigrant” communities. Attempts to divide the territory into chiefdoms for different ethnic groups failed because the original chiefs expected compensation for the land that was occupied by the newcomers (Maroro, 1990). In eastern Congo, Belgian colonialism: (i) institutionalised the link between ethnic identity and land access within the political structures of the state, which was further used for political gain during President Mobutu Sese Seko’s patrimonial rule in Zaïre;<sup>3</sup> intensified local competition for land with the promotion of migration of labour (mainly from Rwanda); and favoured the commercialisation of land access (predominantly the best lands).

After decolonisation in Rwanda, customary systems were generally upheld and recognised by law, and land registration was only required when land was sold or for non-original inhabitants. A 1976 law meant that customary land could not be sold without permission from the relevant ministry and communal authorities, and was only permitted when the seller had at least two hectares left and the buyer did not have more than two hectares. This provided a safeguard against the concentration of land, which was necessary in a country where land was scarce (Musahara, 2001).

However, the accumulation and concentration of land did still occur. It was mainly driven by government officials who wanted to profit from the distress sales of the struggling poor and the subsequent increase in cheap agricultural labour than to face the challenges of the growing environmental constraints caused by a population increase. Most people working in communal land have insecure tenure rights; their land could be expropriated at any time. Widespread tenure insecurity led to a preference for low-input, perennial crops (for example, bananas) to strengthen claims on land use without requiring any risky capital outlay. By the 1980s, Rwanda’s Government had consolidated control and more or less exclusive ownership over large parts of the agricultural capital. Yet, at the same time, it did not accept responsibility for growing food insecurity, which was declared “a personal

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<sup>3</sup> The colonial centralistic and exploitative norms were further consolidated as the guiding principles of Mobutu’s rule through policies related to Zairianisation. Control over natural resources, including agricultural and pastoral land, was an important factor in political transactions that aimed to “buy in” local elites and prevent the formation of a counter-force. The 1973 “Bakajika” land law provided the legal framework for this process by nationalising all lands in Zaïre, apparently to suppress customary land ownership regimes. The state apparatus, however, never succeeded in clarifying the new legal position of these regimes or in managing the distribution of land to individual small farmers, and in that way it disenfranchised the Congolese rural masses. Those in power used their political influence to appropriate any land not yet titled and they became the privileged intermediaries for the illegal sale of land (Vlassenroot, 2004). New landowners performed poorly, however; plantations that were nationalised under the “Zairianisation” programme in the early 1970s had to be offered back to their foreign owners by the end of the 1970s because of decline in productivity (Vandommele, 1981).



affair grounded in face-to-face patronage” and thus conferred to the social “safety nets” of the customary systems. By 1984, 57 per cent of farmers had holdings of less than one hectare (Pottier, 2002).

How did early Belgian agriculture support programmes in independent Congo, Rwanda and Burundi perform in the face of this legacy? They mainly continued with the productivist approach to rural development in both land tenure systems: plantation farming and processing plants for export at the one hand, and improvement of productivity and extension services for local farmers to improve their participation in export crop cultivation<sup>4</sup> on the other.

The idea prevailed that there was still enough space available for the population and the need to change land tenure relationships was not perceived as necessary. Pursuing different interests and different productive processes was not seen by the Belgian ODA as problematic. In areas where land did become scarce (for example, in Rwanda, due to migrations), the main solution was to prepare new lands for agricultural production through marshland drainage and irrigation of dry plots<sup>5</sup> (Verbelen, 1992).

Groups of people were resettled in some places according to the extended colonial model of “*paysannats*”. These were co-operatives started in Rwanda in 1952 and copied in Burundi<sup>6</sup> as a scheme to alleviate the situation of tenants who had no security of tenure over the land they cultivated because of migration, a period of forced off-farm labour, or fragmentation by inheritance. Plots of about two hectares were given to monogamous families; boys over 18 could have their own plots. Agricultural productivity in the newly colonised regions or reorganised communities was to be increased by the “descendants” of the colonial research centres, named INEAC (Congo), ISAR (Rwanda) and ISABU (Burundi). They provided extension services to the farmer groups, with the emphasis on export crops (coffee, tea and pyrethrum).

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4 A typical export-oriented project was the implantation of a tea factory in Kitabi. Tea was grown on 100 ha of industrial blocks and 400 ha of village plantations, 1200 workers were employed and the factory provided income for 3600 families, most of which came to the region after the factory started processing. An interview with the project managers revealed that they had no clear idea if the production of tea and the planting of a forest for fuel to dry the tea caused any pressure on land for food production (ABOS, 1982). In Burundi’s Kirundo region, there were plans for similar projects to provide income opportunities for farmers from neighbouring, overpopulated regions (Tollens, 1976).

5 For instance, in the 1960s, 20 million Belgian francs were spent to drain the Nyabugogo marshes near Kigali. The project Icyanya installed (relocated) 2,300 families on “bare” land that was put under irrigation, with a projected increase in the number of families to 9,000 in less than 10 years.

6 In Burundi, colonisations or productivity programmes in existing farmer communities were organised in the 1970s by the state in “Sociétés de Développement Régional”, “villagisation” programmes, or farmer co-operatives, which were often supported by Belgian ODA. Most of these initiatives were not very successful; some 200 co-operatives had been founded by 1985 (AGCD, 1986).

In short, the 'land policy' of the Belgian ODA merely meant dividing new or under-used state land into individual plots organised in a co-operative structure. The agricultural development budget within the Belgian ODA grew steadily and has slowly gave way to the concept of "integral development" of rural communities, providing a range of related economic and social services. These approaches however did not provide much relief from the pressure on the traditional coping mechanisms created by the colonial dichotomy (especially in Zaire) and by the natural population increase (especially in Rwanda). Immigration flows and the division of ever-smaller land plots among heirs within the collective land tenure systems made many farmers landless. They were forced to use land in the short-term and with very insecure rental contracts, or to work as labourers on plantations or on the farms of others (Vlassenroot, 2004).

### **1.1 DIVERSIFICATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (1970s-1980s)**

During the 1970s, the oil crisis and the resulting accumulation of debt created awareness in developed countries of the economic interdependence of countries. Third world economists presented their "dependency" theories, arguing that the role of developing countries on the periphery remained restricted to the provision of cheap food and labour for the production and export of primary materials to the centre. Against this setting, the ODA Agency was reorganised in 1972 and renamed *Algemeen Bestuur voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking* (General Administration for Development Co-operation) and *Administration Générale pour la Cooperation au Développement*, henceforth referred to here as 'ABOS/AGCD', which focused on "the promotion of investments and transfer of Belgian capital to low-income countries with the objective of social and economic development and the transfer of 'know-how' to low-income countries through sending experts, providing scholarships and internships" (Timmermans, 1998). The rationale behind the expansion of aid to countries in the early 1970s (first Cameroon, Senegal and Tunisia in Africa; then Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Indonesia on other continents) was influenced by (ABOS, 1972):

1. the presence of historical ties;
2. a desire to orient activities towards Latin America (as an economically more advanced, and thus more promising, region);
3. the presence of Belgian development workers (including former colonial civil servants);
4. Belgium's general desire to aid countries of above-average (economic) interest.

As a result of the regional diversification, nine countries received at least \$3 million in 1979, while 33 countries received smaller but still substantial amounts (Eyskens, 1980). Central Africa still accounted for more than half of the budget. Also, the instruments of aid were diversified. Whereas in the initial period of ODA only three aid mechanisms existed (aid in kind, ABOS/AGCD projects and technical assistance), in the 1970s and 1980s, financial instruments were also developed to enable gifts, loans and stakes in state companies/development banks to be made.

Due to fashionable development concepts such as self-reliance, basic needs and rural development, and the growing critique<sup>7</sup> of top-down projects in education, agricultural research and infrastructure, the 1980s featured smaller scale, (more) participatory farm research and productivity support to increase food security and farmer income. Agricultural productivity support evolved into a more holistic approach to “rural development”. In Belgium, the NGOs which had become an important development assistance actor through co-financing by the state, led this paradigm shift.

However, in accordance with the international discourse of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, Belgian ODA largely adhered to a focus on market-driven rural entrepreneurship. It aimed to capitalise on its experience in agricultural research and extension of the postcolonial development policies through replication in other regions. This strategy was supported by budget increases: in 1979, agriculture-related projects accounted for 12 per cent of bilateral aid. In the second half of the 1980s, the amount for agriculture and rural development had increased to 15-20 per cent. There were 130 rural development projects which were carried out in 25 countries (44 per cent in Central Africa, 36 per cent in other African countries, 39 per cent in Latin America). Intervention domains included research/extension, cattle productivity, agriculture (subsistence and industrial), and reforestation (ABOS, 1988).

A coherent approach to land policies was non-existent in the 1980s. An analysis of some single support projects reveals the implications of this. One involves the financial aid mechanism, to the Société de Gestion des Terres Agricoles (Agricultural Land Management Co) or **SOGETA** public land administration enterprise in Morocco. Secondly, the two most important bilateral projects that reflected the changed rural development policy focus in areas experiencing land reform were implemented in Ecuador and Honduras. The third initiative reflects the important growth of special programmes and multilateral aid: the *Belgian Survival Fund*, created in the early 1980s, is still significant in the struggle against hunger through rural development and food security projects.

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<sup>7</sup> These were criticised because these had not significantly improved living conditions, were often socially biased and were associated with expensive staffing costs (Renard, 1973).

SOGETA in Morocco, was one of the two state enterprises created in the early 1970s to manage 250,000 ha of state land confiscated from colonials in the 1960s (almost 12 per cent of the total arable land at that time), and which were responsible for developing the agricultural production in large state domains of dry (non-irrigated) lands (Blanc, 2002). Furthermore, 40 per cent of the recovered land was illegally sold to wealthy landowners and 35 per cent was distributed to small farmers (Jouve, 1999). In the 1980s, finance problems began to trouble SOGETA due to poor climate conditions, the diminishing of the area under management to 124,000 ha (mainly because of concessions to politically influential people), problems of bureaucracy and expensive loans from commercial banks. In the same period, Morocco came under the influence of the Structural Adjustment Programme's discouragement of state intervention in agriculture and the economy. It was in this context that Belgian ODA probably decided to provide financial support to SOGETA at the end of the 1980s (ABOS, 1988). In spite of this support, SOGETA's troubles remained. After an unsuccessful management contract with the government in 1996, the latter decided to reorganise the company by semi-privatising it.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1985, an agreement was made between the Belgian and the Honduran government to set up a rural development project, which seemed to acknowledge political stabilisation and managing of social unrest as important factors in choosing the target group and region: "this project can provide a positive learning experience in a land reform area... [which] could be an example for other conflictive regions".<sup>9</sup> The project was part of a bigger European Community (EC) project in the Honduran southern regions of Choluteca and Valle. The EC funded about ECU 9 million, while Belgium contributed about ECU 2.5 million. The intervention zone covered about 38,500 ha, of which 32,000 ha had been subject to land reform. Some 245 groups and about 1,000 individual farmers were targeted. No data were found in the project agreement concerning their socio-economic situation. About two-thirds of the area was to be developed agriculturally, with accompanying strategies for credit, market channels, anti-erosion measures, rural

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<sup>8</sup> Most of the lands are now leased on a long-term basis, mostly to foreign investors, in public-private partnerships. A smaller part is still conserved for the state-led production of seeds.

<sup>9</sup> The conditions of the rural situation in Honduras seem to support the hypothesis of the political aspect as a main motivation. Firstly, prior to 1981 Honduras had been under military rule. Land reform efforts had originated in the Land Reform law of 1962, reformed in 1974. Most considerable land reform efforts were made under military rule, which was concerned with controlling social unrest. Land reform was indeed taking place during a parallel expansion in agricultural exports in the 1970s (cotton, sugar cane, African palm, coffee, bananas and cattle). Permanent or seasonal agricultural workers in these sectors constituted the main social groups exerting pressure for reform. Secondly, the early 1980s were also a period of rural militarisation and arbitrary murders, as the south of Honduras was also a key region in the Cold War, serving as a base for United States-supported operations by the *contras* in Nicaragua, destabilising the region (Baumeister, 1999).

infrastructure and promotion of 'appropriate' technologies. The project continued until the early 1990s.

No formal evaluation efforts by the Belgian ODA agency could be traced for the purpose of this paper, however, Belgian ODA officials did not consider it to be very successful (Renata Vandeputte, personal communication). The main reason for this "was the lack of political support to land reform and land reform beneficiaries". When this argument is examined it becomes clear that the land reform effort in Honduras, although important, has remained limited: over three decades, only 409,000 hectares (the equivalent of 12.3 per cent of the agricultural area of Honduras) were handed over to 60,000 peasant families (13 per cent of the rural population). By 1993, when land reform had virtually come to a halt, more than 126,000 peasant families had neither access to land nor a secure place of employment. If this is added to the group of 80,000 peasant families who were near-landless (owning less than 1 hectare of land), it is a worrying 44 per cent of the rural population who have either no access or very limited access to land. In spite of the land reform efforts, land distribution remained highly unequal (1.6 per cent of landowners owning 40 per cent of the land) (FIAN International, 2000). In 2000, 72 per cent of land reform beneficiaries, mostly organised in co-operatives, still lived in extreme poverty (Herrera and Molina, 2005). The project's target group was apparently well chosen, but the project could clearly not reverse the main trend.

The Ecuador project supported by the Belgian ODA was to address the main poverty factor, according to a 1989 feasibility study, which was the difficulty for the agrarian reform beneficiaries to set up a viable farming enterprise in the target region. The preliminary socio-economic study, however, did not define a clear target population to be supported. The main project objective - to increase quality of life and revenues through increasing small farmers and co-operatives performance - was to benefit the rural population in a general way, whether these people were former beneficiaries of land reform or not. The unequal distribution of land was mentioned in the study, without questioning the unfinished character of the preceding land reform or addressing it in the project.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In Ecuador, the Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Settlement (Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización - IERAC) was responsible for implementing the land reform law enacted in 1964, by expropriating idle arable land for redistribution to farmers (Library of Congress Country Studies, 1989). The law outlawed absentee ownership and limited the size of holdings to 800 hectares of arable land and 1,000 hectares of pastureland in the Sierra. The law also set the minimum amount of land to be granted in the redistribution at 4.8 hectares. Revisions of the law in the early 1970s required that all land with absentee landlords be sold to the tenants and that squatters be permitted to acquire title to land they had worked for three years. Although IERAC made some progress initially, political opposition slowed implementation of the land reform act. IERAC received little government funding and was not permitted to actively encourage expropriation. Its main focus

Although Ecuadorian land redistribution had not been successful, it made sense for the Belgian Government to intervene in the Andean region to keep farmers on their land, knowing that co-operatives received little or no government assistance or services to make the plots productive (Martinez, 1998), and that three-quarters of the highland farms were worked by their owners (Library of Congress Country Studies, 1989). Therefore, better soil management practices were to be implemented, together with services of mechanisation, commercialisation and credit. The project lasted well into the 1990s and had a grant of more than €1 million. According to an Ecuadorian NGO leader, Ivan Cisneros, “the major problem of the project was targeting” (personal communication). Indeed, there were several problems with the Ecuadorian project. Firstly, demonstration parcels were set up to get farmers to adopt new farming techniques. Secondly, credits and services were provided, but in a sudden and massive way, creating indebtedness and dependency and being used mostly by older co-operative members who controlled the co-operatives’ land use rights and other privileges, to the discontent of the younger generation. Apparently, the co-operatives project was redesigned in a later phase (with French funds) to subdivide the co-operatives into individual plots and make them mere service-providing bodies.

The Belgian Government did not consider institutional or technical support to strengthen and extend the land reform process itself in any of these countries. Land reforms in Ecuador and Honduras, as in many countries in Latin America, had land redistribution goals, but they were primarily modernist programmes that aimed to break up idle hacienda lands and boost the national agricultural production of commercial farmers. Additionally, co-operative landholding bodies (which were the main target of Belgian ODA) were often imposed in a top-down way on indigenous communities, without consideration of their land tenure systems (Griffiths, 2004). Belgian ODA has mainly tried to address Latin-American land reforms being generally “incomplete” on the technical extension side, and that beneficiaries were not provided with the prerequisites to be competitive (De Janvry, 2002). By the end of the 1980s the continuation of the double agenda in Latin America resulted in “a true counter-reform of neo-liberal agricultural policies, which consider the peasantry to be superfluous and inefficient” (Breton, 1997). The combined problems of an unfinished land reform and counter-productive neo-liberal policies have thus partly hindered effective project results, and have raised the issue of Belgian ODA’s efficacy.

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became the colonisation of new lands (mainly in the tropical *selva*). By 1984, only 700,000 hectares had been distributed to 79,000 peasants, representing only 15 per cent of farmland. Five per cent of the farms had more than 50 hectares, but these large farms represented over 55 per cent of land under cultivation. Between the 1954 and 2000, the Gini coefficient measuring inequality of land distribution diminished only marginally, from 0.86 to 0.80 (Gangotena et al, 2006).

## 2. Integrated rural development and institutional support to secure land access (1995 onwards).

The second half of the 1990s witnessed a profound reorganisation of Belgian ODA, both institutionally and of its content.<sup>11</sup> The recommendations of the parliamentary commission that had looked into the structural ODA problems were enshrined in a 1999 law on international co-operation. ODA was henceforth to focus on fighting poverty and sustainable human development in five sectors: healthcare, education, agriculture and food security, basic infrastructure and strengthening social structures/peace building. Equal opportunities for women, combating AIDS, social economy and environment/sustainability were defined as cross-cutting themes.

For these key strategic areas and for each of the 25 prioritised countries (later reduced to 18),<sup>12</sup> “strategy papers” were prepared in the following years. Most of these strategy papers were based on a large consultation with parliamentary commissions, civil society, the federal commission on sustainable development and other experts. This huge effort, the first of its kind in the history of Belgian ODA according to ODA state secretary in 2001, Eddy Boutmans, aimed to guide policies and evaluate them, to build an “institutional memory” (which had been largely lacking), to be progressively and constantly adapted.

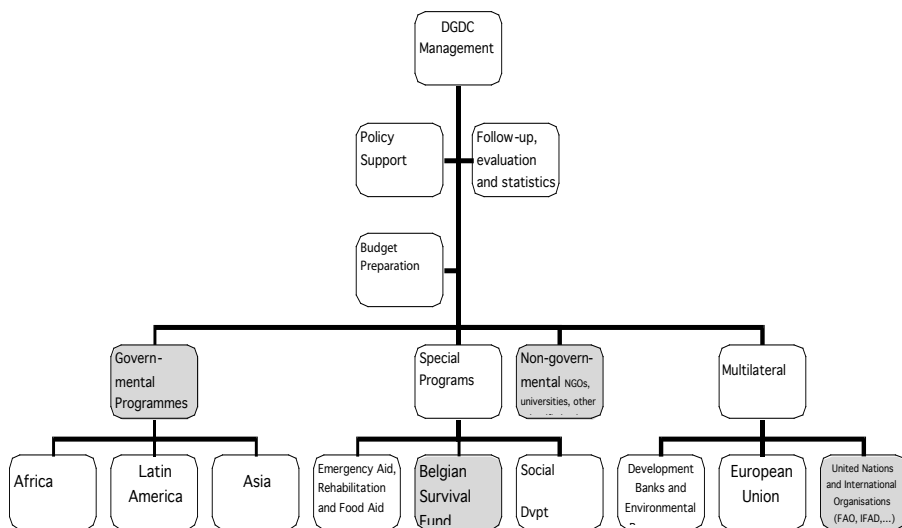
In terms of organisational changes, the division of policy preparation (to be done by the General Directorate for Development Co-operation, DGDC) and technical execution (to be done by Belgian Technical Co-operation, BTC) was the most important. Additionally, the organigram of Belgian ODA was restructured along the different development assistance channels: direct aid through government programmes (organised per continent), special programmes (of which one is the Belgian Survival Fund), co-financing of non-governmental actors (of which NGOs

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<sup>11</sup> In the early 1990s, the ODA priority shifted to human rights, good governance and debt relief, following international trends and priorities. In 1995, a newspaper published a series of useless “white elephant” projects supported by ABOS/AGCD, and exposed the lack of good governance by Belgian authorities themselves: aspects of this were heavy involvement of commercial interests, and a focus on technical issues instead of poverty alleviation and human rights to benefit vulnerable populations. A parliamentary commission analysed the structural problems inherent in Belgian ODA, including: too small aid funds, geographical and sector dispersion, ill-adapted aid instruments which lacked clearly formulated objectives, with too much influence by political and economical interests (Develtere, 2005). Moreover, the same agency was responsible for policy preparation, execution, follow-up and evaluation without adapted tools. Being both judge and jury, its approach was heavily bureaucratic and lacked transparency, both in procedures and decision making.

<sup>12</sup> Currently South Africa, Algeria, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, DR Congo, Ecuador, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Vietnam, Palestinian territories

play the most important role), and multilateral (the most important players in land policies are the development banks, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Fund for Agricultural Development).<sup>13</sup> The next part will focus on the policies and strategies developed, and funds channelled, by each of these actors or “gates” (marked in grey in the organisation chart), for land-related programmes in the past decade.



**Organigram of the Belgian Directorate General for Development Co-operation**

<sup>13</sup> By 2006, DGDC spent €835 million, of which 25 per cent was for governmental co-operation (executed by BTC), 40 per cent for multilateral co-operation (about 40 United Nations organisations and European Union institutions, the World Bank), three per cent for the Belgian Survival Fund and 22 per cent for indirect non-governmental cooperation (of which slightly more than half was for NGOs, the rest went to universities, scientific institutions and regional institutions).



## 3. Land and Food Security Policies in Belgian ODA

### 3.1 BILATERAL AID

For the agriculture and food security sector in the bilateral aid sector, the following strategic priorities were established by the new DGDC:

- (i) adapt aid to national policies and programmes to reinforce them;
- (ii) contribute to capacity building of the agricultural development actors;
- (iii) improve the access of smallholders to production factors, extension services and markets.

The Strategy Note for Agriculture and Food Security, published in 2002, includes further policy analysis and outlines broad policy options. Land access is one of the production factors included in the third strategy on food security - besides capital, rural infrastructures, crops and livestock inputs, woods and agroforestry resources and fishing resources. The assistance to land policies is thus motivated by the recognition that access to land is one of the crucial issues in ensuring better access to natural resources in general, which in turn is a limiting factor to assure improved food security and rural development.

The way in which land reform is integrated seems perhaps the most important principle for Belgian ODA: it should, as such, become a comprehensive process of agrarian reform that strengthens the economic and productive potential of peasants who were formerly constrained by an unequal land rights system. Land policies should therefore be completed with credit, extension and technical services. Land access must be made secure and sustainable by governments, so that farmers can better withstand liberalisation and competing markets. In other words, service provision and market access facilitation can stabilise the situation of the farmers on their land through generating extra income. As such, “they become autonomic actors assuring their self-development by reinforcing their learning and management capacities to improve production, thereby assuring their land tenure on the longer term”.

Two possible fields of action to secure access to land are defined: 1) proper land reform, that is, land redistribution in favour of landless or small peasants (most relevant, for example, in Latin-America); 2) tenancy reform, that is, changing land property regimes which affect land rights security or transferability (relevant in sub-Saharan Africa due to different co-existing land tenure systems).

The re-emergence of the land issue on the development agenda is justified, according to the Strategy Note, due to the importance of land for subsistence and agricultural revenue, for basic conditions for successful long-term small scale exploitations, and for stronger rural economies in the longer term. A more equitable distribution and security over land is important for higher productivity, and improves sustainable management by making the beneficiaries more responsible. Access to “the commons”, communal resources such as pasture land, water and woodlands, is considered to be equally important for certain groups. Finally, a special gender focus in land policies is proposed to avoid discrimination against women and their access to land, as they have a crucial role in food production for family subsistence.

At first view, these principles seem balanced and comprehensive. Unfortunately, they are general and vague and the entire land policy analysis and action strategy only fills two pages of the strategy note. Its specific objectives do not explicitly mention improving access to land or securing land tenure, and favour the market and nutritional aspects of agriculture and food security:

- ◆ increase revenues of small farmers and poor populations;
- ◆ promote sustainable production systems;
- ◆ assure and improve the dietary intake of poor populations;
- ◆ contribute to the economical development of the countryside and rural stability.

A second look for the land issue within the contextual analysis of the Strategy Note reveals why it is not there: the main cause of the hunger problem in rural areas is defined as “lacking economic access to food stuffs”. The lack of economic access is “primarily caused by the difficulties experienced by small farmers exposed to international (subsidised) competition in liberalised markets”. This narrow interpretation of economic access focuses on surplus market access for revenue, rather than access to food by subsistence production.

The main target group of such an approach are the commercial oriented small farmers who have the capacity to compete under liberalisation pressure. This focus is, in part, at the expense of targeting the most vulnerable, (near-) landless agricultural workers. Targeting is not unequivocal in the document. On the one hand, prioritising the poor and vulnerable sectors is mentioned (with special attention given to women-headed families and families hit by HIV/AIDS). On the other, the targeting of actors in a less precarious situation is also defended because “they can have a leading role in providing economic development, creation of jobs, improving food security, adopting new technologies..., with eventual beneficiary repercussions on the poorer parts of the population”. It is not clear which target

group should be given priority in which situation and which preliminary analysis should be used when defining projects.

The second page of the land section includes “action principles for intervention”:

- A national solidarity (redistributive) principle is paramount to consider Belgian ODA involvement in agrarian reform programmes: “a real transfer of wealth and resources from the rich landed class to the poor and landless” (Borras, 2006). Due to the highly politicised character of such a redistribution process, a profound historical, social and cultural analysis of the partner country is needed before considering support, in order to guarantee “equitable” results.
- With regard to security of tenure, a balance between individual property systems (which may not be imposed in a way that favours individual appropriation when supporting agricultural productivity projects) and communal, collectively managed land use systems must be sought, developing appropriate legal frameworks. Where a private, market-based land property system has “potential social and economic benefits”, support to a legislative and normative framework can be considered.
- When supporting land reform process, support can be given to redistribution or resettlement of farmers, to cadastre registration or individual land title distribution, and tenancy reform.
- On the institutional level, land reform processes may be also supported, by:
  - improving the participation of all involved actors and beneficiaries in the development of a land policy;
  - supporting (preferably decentralised) institutions for land management and conflict resolution (for example, traditional arbitration courts);
  - supporting legislative reform based on equal access to land and other resources, with special focus on the poor and the women
- administrative and legal transparency in the design of an agrarian policy framework, the setup of land policy institutions or arbitration organisms to promote (decentralised) good governance, improved access to information and political participation, in particular of vulnerable groups such as the poor, indigenous communities and women, are the mentioned building blocks of a “rights based approach to development”.

Again, the discourse is promising and comprehensive but lacks clear guidelines for implementation. For instance, no priority setting or benchmarking is mentioned in order to implement a rights-based approach to reinforce the legal framework and facilitate access to information and justice. When analysing the Strategy Note on Society and Peace Building (DGIS, 2002), which is referred to for a more explicit elaboration of a rights-based approach, land property problems are mentioned as a cause of conflict, but they are omitted in the intervention strategies to resolve them.

With regard to the political complexity of the issue, it is clear that Belgium does not see a role for itself as leading a land reform process. “...any intervention is to be thoroughly discussed with the partner country government, and co-ordinated with other donors and sectors (for example, rural development, infrastructure) due to the complexity of land reform in achieving success”. Belgium’s position in such co-operation exercises is not specified. For instance, it is not specified whether Belgium should follow the market-led agrarian reform proposed by the World Bank or support alternative approaches. In general, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), if a recipient country has one, is Belgium’s reference for defining actions. The perception on the desired interaction between state and market actors is pragmatic, without favouring any option. The main rationale for adapting Belgian policies to other actors (country institutions, European Union, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation) is the need for a sector approach, in which a government is supported in reaching its long-term objectives rather than financing one-off actions. (This is according to the Paris principles which are an important guideline for the Belgian Technical Cooperation.). As poverty in rural areas is multi-dimensional, the advantage of a multi-sector approach is recognised by development agencies, addressing not only access to financial means and resources but also to social, physical and human goods.

The strategy note says that considering the impact land policies have on the daily life of people and the importance of local systems of land tenure, a participatory approach is indispensable. In general, the political representation of rural and farmers organisations is sited as an important element of capacity building in order to support rural development. More specifically, the following participation principles are mentioned:

- Local population should collaborate actively with the development process supported by Belgian ODA, at all levels having an impact on the life of people. That means, not only on the project/programme level, but also in the design phase of the policy. In that way, beneficiaries and local communities realise the fundamental right to be involved in the decisions that affect their future.

- For the execution of the development policy, the participation of the local populations will be assured by representation of popular organisations (rural and farmers co-operatives, trade unions, farmers' and women's organisations) to ensure harmonisation of the policy with the priorities of the population.
- At the project/programme level, the development activities should meet the needs of the beneficiaries and be carried out in a transparent way, in order to appropriate and control them, ensuring motivation and sustainability in the intervention and to make the right cultural and technical choices. The partnership created at this level can, as such, facilitate the progressive sharing of decisions and administration of means.

To achieve this, participation mechanisms have to be followed, which are listed in some detail:

- By country strategy papers and co-operation strategy missions, consulting civil society (especially farmers organisations) as representatives of the beneficiaries, and enabling them to play a participative role by training, capacity building, striving for a gender balance in this participation.
- By integrating the participation of the local population into all phases of the project cycle, from identification to execution and follow-up/evaluation.
- By choosing the right participation method depending on the specific context.
- By constantly steering and adjusting the project according to participative input.
- Involving public and private institutions to manage the intervention.

Belgian ODA has, on paper at least, an open attitude towards civil society, assigning it an important role both in institutional capacity-building and as a technical executor of development programmes. By empowering civil society, the ownership of the partner country to giving a direction to its own strategies to combat poverty is stimulated.

As mentioned above, the Belgian Technical Co-operation (BTC) is to execute the policy guidelines set out by General Directorate for Development Co-operation (DGDC). It is therefore interesting to analyse the attention it gives to the land issue. An analysis of food security by the BTC on its website largely reflects the analysis by DGDC:

- § The knowledge of population groups and their problems concerning food security
- § The responsibility of the state
- § Decentralisation
- § Emergence of pressure groups
- § Stabilising population on the countryside
- § Job creation and training
- § Food self-sufficiency
- § Commercialisation

Certainly, these are useful core elements for a strategy of food security improvement, showing an integrated approach to production related to services, to improving production factors together with marketing opportunities, to enabling the beneficiaries to reap the benefits of their activities. Defining target groups according to their (lack of) access to food and income, giving them information, increasing pressure and addressing channels to influence policies, emphasising self-reliance through creating jobs and commercial opportunities... are essential elements for a food security strategy. It is remarkable, however, that the security of access to productive resources is not added as *a conditio sine qua non*, without which the rest of the strategies do not make much sense for the most vulnerable population groups.

Finally, in the federal state of Belgium the Flemish and the Wallonia-Bruxelles regions can take up ODA activities as well in the fields of their policy competences, of which agriculture and rural development is one field. They are rather modest actors on the international development landscape, with budgets of respectively €17.5 million and €3.8 million, awareness raising activities included. Wallonia-Bruxelles supports 190 small projects, of which about one third are in the D.R. Congo and mainly executed by NGOs, trade unions or local authorities. A few of these projects consider agricultural productivity, but without any relation to land issues.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For details, refer to the website of the Conseil Wallonie-Bruxelles de la Coopération internationale: <http://www.cocof.irisnet.be/site/fr/relainter/cwbci>

The Flemish region concentrates its resources in the Southern African region (Mozambique, South Africa and recently Malawi).<sup>15</sup> Its general objective is to support governments in the areas of poverty eradication, democratisation and the reduction of economic and social inequalities, and in the framework of fair and sustainable development (economic, social and ecological). The promotion of good governance, respect for diversity and human rights, and the development of civil society are more specific objectives.

Apart from the fight against HIV/AIDS, food security improvement is an important intervention sector (VAIS, 2006). The intervention rationale is inscribed in the first Millennium Development Goal and in the FAO food security definition (availability, access, quality and distribution), but no operational policy strategies are mentioned. Target groups are defined in a very general way: rural women and young people. Geographic concentration is on three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Free State. The restructuring of state farm enterprises by redistribution according to positive discrimination principles towards black people (Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment) is mentioned, but no specific strategies or actions towards this process are mentioned. The recent beneficiaries of land reform are just mentioned as a potential group with food insecurity due to a lack of knowledge, resources and infrastructure.

### **3.2 MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS: IFAD AND FAO**

The relations with multilateral institutions relevant to food security and land policies, IFAD and FAO, are described in strategic papers, which focus above all on the financial support modalities of Belgium towards these institutions.

In general, the advantages of working through multilateral institutions are perceived as follows:

- Due to their organisation and institutional dimension, they have a global view on the development issue.
- They are neutral, without being subject to ideological or national influence.
- They have the experience, practices and capacity to continuously improve actions in their domain.
- They have an extensive information gathering capacity.
- They possess substantial means to ensure effectiveness and avoid dispersion.

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<sup>15</sup> For more information, refer to the website of Internationaal Vlaanderen: <http://docs.vlaanderen.be/buitenland/index.htm>

Following a resolution at the UN World Food Conference of 1974, the International Fund for Agricultural Development became operational in 1978 as a financial institution focused on combating rural poverty and hunger through strengthening the productive capacity of the poor. In its start-up phase, Belgium played a significant role in re-enforcing IFAD's activities (mainly through the Belgian Survival Fund, see below). Due to a diversified strategy of country contributions, loan returns and financial investments, IFAD had, in 2004, active low-interest loans totalling \$3.4 billion for 234 projects (of which 39 per cent were in sub-Saharan Africa) (DGOS, 2004b). About 25 new projects are supported annually for a total of \$450 million (plus \$50 million extra administrative budget) (DGOS, 2007).

Belgium supports IFAD's strategy of "enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty" to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal, through:

- Capacity building of poor rural communities and their organisations.
- *Enhance equitable access to productive natural resources and technology.*
- Improve access to markets and financial services.

In an evaluation during the sixth fundraising round of IFAD, the following aspects of their strategy were pointed out:

- Effectiveness (follow-up, political dialogue, participation in the poverty reduction framework (PRSP), sustainability and critical mass of actions).
- Evaluation (mandate of co-operating agencies, introduction of new follow-up and evaluation system).
- Need to develop form and content of development strategies and action plans for poverty reduction.

These strategies are considered to be in line with - and complementary to - those of Belgian ODA. For Belgian ODA, a key advantage in working through IFAD is the subsequently lighter administrative burden for the Belgian agency (ABOS, 1986). DGCD does not mention further special preferences for the content and the execution of IFAD projects in the 2004 IFAD-DGCD co-operation strategy note, but in general terms it strives for more concentration of IFAD's means and more focus on sub-Saharan Africa (in line with its own strategy).

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, founded in 1945 to combat hunger and rural poverty by increasing productivity and institutional reforms, has different strategies to achieve that goal; among others are: norms setting, information gathering and exchange, emergency aid and technical assistance.<sup>16</sup> FAO is responsible for the

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<sup>16</sup> The FAO is considered important due to its actions at the source: assistance to policy making, strengthening national capacities to develop new programmes with suitable follow-up and evalu-



follow up of the World Food Summit Action Plan, taken up by the MDG process. It has several priorities that are important for land issues:

- o It helps to eradicate food insecurity and poverty in rural areas, with following sub-strategies:
  - A.1: Sustainable resources in rural areas and equal access to them.
  - A.2: Access of vulnerable and poor groups to sufficient and nutritious food.
- o It promotes, develops and strengthens policies and regulatory frameworks for food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry.
- o It strives for the integral sustainable management of territories

According to the DGCD-FAO strategy paper (DGOS, 2004), one of the programmes under these themes which is supported by Belgian ODA is called “participative approach to and management of land/territories”. One of the main guiding principles of the strategy paper is the involvement of the actors and beneficiaries: “A participatory approach is necessary, due to its social and political dimension. It gives the fundamental right to beneficiaries and local communities to be involved in the decision making that will shape their future. Therefore, the participation of the local population is to be integrated systematically in all phases of the project, from identification to evaluation. The resulting increased sustainability of the project can further be enhanced by a financial participation of the beneficiaries to the costs of the development project or programme.”

The participative approach is considered to be of particular importance for the theme of land management: “the beneficiaries’ involvement in policy making and strategies, project analysis / planning / execution / control and evaluation permits an increased knowledge of the most disadvantaged groups and more effective control of their livelihoods. These groups in a rural context can be families, community interest groups, socio-economic groups, local collectives, public and private institutions”. Further, it is argued that target groups that are well informed, educated and capacitated about their regions and territories are the best guarantee

— ation, adaptation of legislative and administrative instruments for development, assistance to put in practice international agreements and conventions. This facilitates a programmatic approach, focused on specific topics, facilitating a more holistic and integrated development dialogue.

The focus points for Belgian assistance to FAO’s mandate are described in the Strategy Paper:

- Anchored in national strategies and plans for poverty eradication.
- Participative approach.
- Capacity building for public sector, civil society and the private sector.
- Development of an appropriate politic and legal framework.
- Support to the normative role of the FAO.
- Respect for the sustainability criteria of projects and programmes according to the recommendations of the (Development Assistance Committee - DAC) of the OECD.

for sustainable management of the natural resources, making them the best actors in the fight against food insecurity. Therefore, the programme focuses on:

- Courses for local populations on how to avoid degradation of natural resources and extending research to sustainable food security.
- Acquiring basic technical and social knowledge to manage local resources.
- Support to optimise and renew social organisation structures.
- Education and practice for the effective management of natural resources and agricultural production.
- Developing an institutional framework that safeguards and promotes local initiatives and investments for sustainable management of natural resources in the long term.

From these priorities, it is clear that the distribution question of access to land and resources is not the primary concern. The main rationale seems to be the (ecological) sustainability of resource use, through appropriate food production and land use techniques, appropriate social organisation, education and regulatory framework.

### 3.3 SPECIAL PROGRAMMES: BELGIAN SURVIVAL FUND (BSF)

BSF started as an initiative of the Belgian Parliament responding to an international call in the early 1980s to abolish hunger. It united the ABOS and the National Lottery funds, channelling support to some Belgian NGOs and to international agencies, to specifically ensure the survival of the most vulnerable people threatened by hunger, malnourishment, poverty and isolation in sub-Saharan African countries that were struggling with food shortages. It has thus a unique broader character,<sup>17</sup> and important financial means (in recent years increasing from €19 million to €27 million).<sup>18</sup> Co-financing by partners is an important principle,<sup>19</sup> and amounted to 57

<sup>17</sup> The activities of the BSF are organised around five programmes based on the single objective of improving food and nutritional security for households: (i) Joint Programme with IFAD and participating agencies (BSFJP); (ii) IFAD Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification; (iii) Programme with international organisations: FAO, UNICEF and UNCDF – UN Capital Development Fund; (iv) Programme with Belgian NGOs (until 2000: ACT, AQUADEV, Bevrijde Wereld, Broederlijk Delen, Comité Belge de Soutien à l'Erythrée, COOIBO-Vredeseilanden, la Croix Rouge de Belgique, FOS, les Iles de Paix, Médecins sans Frontières, NCOS, Oxfam- Solidarité, PROTOS, SOS-Faim, Solidarité Mondiale, Vétérinaires sans Frontières); (v) Bilateral (BTC) food security projects/programmes.

<sup>18</sup> 44 per cent of funding went to projects run by international organisations, 36.5 per cent to Belgian NGO-run projects and 18 per cent to government projects implemented by BTC (DGDC, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> In 2000, the following co-financing percentages were fixed: 90 per cent for projects presented by local partner authorities or NGOs; 85 per cent for Belgian NGOs; 45 per cent max for loan-based UN organisations (IFAD); 60 per cent max by UN funds (UNICEF & UNCDF); 85 per cent for FAO.

per cent until the year 2000. The BSF plays a clear role as a co-ordinating platform: a workgroup of seven parliamentarians, four UN organisation representatives, four NGO umbrella representatives and three DGDC staff regularly meets to steer the strategy based on project evaluations.

The 71 projects finalised in the period 1984-99 mainly focused on food security, poverty reduction and access to basic services. A strategic policy note, based on extensive evaluation, sets the framework until 2010 (FSB, 2000). An entirely economic approach to food security and rural development, the main BSF project rationale until the beginning of the 1990s, is no longer perceived as effective, and BSF wants to develop a multi-sector, long-term approach to food security.<sup>20</sup> Projects must contribute to promoting agricultural and food production, water supplies, and to improving public health, education (as a stepping stone to increased access to work, to social status, to social development) and other basic social services. Increased attention must be given to gender inequality and family planning, coping strategy improvement and security of subsistence means in ecologically fragile regions. Furthermore, it is perceived that a holistic approach can more easily be implemented by intensive collaboration between the several BSF partners (NGOs, multilateral organisations, BTC), something which had been extremely rare in the preceding period.

The BSF objectives are complementary to the Belgian ODA strategy for agriculture and food security, but are at the same time aimed at a clear, integrated multi-sector approach.<sup>21</sup> BSF also follows the Belgian ODA principles of geographic concentration,<sup>22</sup> a focus on countries with a low human-development index, and paying special attention to evaluation efforts, which should have at least one per cent of the annual budget. Extra attention is to be given to targeting the most vulnerable populations; applying a holistic strategy to food security and poverty reduction; ensuring “ownership” and “empowerment”.

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<sup>20</sup> The following aspects of food security are considered: i) adequate availability of food stuffs; ii) access to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate food by furnishing concerned (usually most vulnerable) populations with the means to ensure subsistence; iii) security of access to food stuff at all times and for everyone; iv) improvement of basic social infrastructure.

<sup>21</sup> Defined priority sectors: (i) capacity building (education, functional alphabetisation, extension); (ii) economic development of services, inputs, infrastructure and micro-finance; (iii) basic social services (school, health, drinking water); (iv) sustainable resources management (water and soil conservation, reforestation); (v) balanced institutional development between public, organisational and community services (society building, minority rights enforcement). This holistic approach has only been implemented gradually due to the management complexity associated with it, but considered to be far more effective for poverty reduction.

<sup>22</sup> By 2000, 70 BSF projects had been carried out in 23 sub-Saharan countries, of which three quarters were in countries on which the Belgian ODA concentrated.

The root causes of food insecurity (lack of human capital, lack of social infrastructure and social capital, bad governance, absence of encouraging economic conditions, environmental risks and degradation) are to be addressed by:

- Promoting sustainable agricultural production (adapted small-scale irrigation, input provision, extension services).
- Commercialisation policies (price regulation, processing and distribution support).
- Access to subsistence means through sufficient revenues (training, employment creation, activity diversification, micro-credits).
- Sustainable management of natural resources (water conservation, soil fertility regeneration, reforestation..).
- Basic social services (education, drinking water, health care) that eventually improve the nutritional status, with special attention to HIV/AIDS victims.
- Decentralised administration systems, communities and organisations enabling a sustainable institutional environment.
- Participation procedures in the development process for **women** are considered to be particularly important for each of these strategies.

BSF objectives have been translated in achievable results and related indicators, which give a good guarantee of a human rights approach with due attention to participation, equitable distribution of project benefits, improvement of access ratio to services. Much importance is assigned to the establishment of a base line survey of the situation to be improved by the project; the resulting food insecurity and poverty profile of the project regions can fine-tune the logic framework of the project and its impact assessment.

BSF also tries to encourage its partners to adopt a longer-term (10 year) programme approach of coherent short-term and mid-term objectives, with the following specific project criteria: target groups, coherence of the approach, appropriateness for development, sustainability, impact, methodology, vision of institutional strengthening of the local partners and beneficiary groups (empowerment, ownership), work, follow-up and evaluation methods.

Even though action for land reform or tenure is not explicitly mentioned among these objectives, BSF has defined eight operational niche actions to target specific food security problems, of which one states: “support to agrarian reform (mainly through support of pressure groups) and promote equity in land rights” (these niche actions cover about 35 per cent of the BSF budget).

In the FAO, BSF supports mainly the food and nutrition division. According to the Memorandum of Understanding, common strategies of the BSF and the FAO include:

- Community participation and capacity building.
- Promoting *equitable access by all community members, including men, women, and disadvantaged groups to resources, including land and water, credit, extension advice, and appropriate technology to achieve improvements in agricultural productivity of selected food and non-food crops.*
- Institutional strengthening for delivery of services by local governments in accordance with needs and demands defined by communities.
- Support for efforts to implement policies and legislation that will ensure equitable access by women, men and disadvantaged groups to natural, economic, social and other productive resources, including the right of access to adequate food, health, knowledge and education.

Also, the (additional and voluntary) mobilisation of BSF resources to IFAD is considerable (for the last financing round, they constituted 58 per cent of all additional contributions). In 2004, BSF co-financed 37 projects, of which 17 were under execution (DGOS, 2004). By the end of 2006, Belgium's overall commitment through the BSF, the most important co-operation programme, totalled €139.6 million (IFAD, 2006).

No specific strategies are outlined for BSF support to IFAD in the DGDC - IFAD Strategy Paper. The BSF and IFAD secretariats have, however, outlined common strategies for the BSF Joint Programme, which are mainly general and project-related, but of which some are relevant for land policies and programmes. They see it as important to strengthen local government and civil society and make these accountable as they have the main responsibility for project execution. They also highlight the importance of a situational analysis for project design, as well as nutritional and other impacts on beneficiaries.

The BSF - IFAD joint activities are perceived by Belgian officials to have added value, in part because they strengthen BSF's own orientation towards a comprehensive, integrated, participatory and multi-sector approach aimed at enhancing and strengthening household food security, nutritional status, local governance and the capacity of civil society. These objectives constitute an entry point to an integrated approach, and encompass multiple elements such as production, marketing, access,

entitlement, intra-household distribution, basic social services and empowerment.<sup>23</sup> These activities improve the capacity of the poorest to benefit from IFAD projects afterwards.

After geographical delimitation of the poorest and agro-ecologically most vulnerable regions, the most food-insecure and marginalised rural dwellers are targeted, mainly land-poor smallholders, landless people and female-headed households with minimal access to means of production (land and technology, off-farm income-generating activities, and financial or social services). They are selected through a participatory and self-targeting mechanism, letting the beneficiary groups select activities of their concern (IFAD, 2001).

The land element was not very explicit in the mentioned the Belgian-funded multilateral programmes, reflecting the low priority of the issue in the previous two decades. In 1995, however, IFAD organised a conference on hunger and poverty hosted by the Belgian Government which brought together a wide range of government and civil society actors. As a result, the International Land Coalition (initially the Popular Coalition against Hunger and Poverty) was founded as a spin-off from IFAD specifically to tackle poverty by securing access to land. As a global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations, the coalition aims to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue, and capacity building for collective empowerment, resulting in pro-poor land policies, laws and practices. Current activities include the knowledge, networking and community empowerment of the 65 partners involved in its civil society programmes, the replication of its Land Alliances for National Development (LAND) Partnerships programme, the development of land indicators, and publications on common property, pastoralism, land conflict, and women's access to land and forest tenure.

Since 1995, BSF has made substantial donations to support ILC projects which had increased to about 15 per cent of the ILC's \$3.5 million budget in 2007 (ILC, 2007), and have initiated a tripartite partnership together with IFAD, showing BSF's interest in testing the incorporation of land issues into the joint BSF/IFAD work.

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<sup>23</sup> The joint brochure (IFAD & BSF, 2004) makes the multi-sector approach tangible: ...Better access to clean water and basic health care is a major focus, so children grow to become strong, healthy adults and treatable diseases no longer prove fatal. Projects help to boost yields through technology and to improve access to markets, making it possible for farmers to earn more from their harvests. Financial services help poor people to save money or take a loan to start a business. Opportunities for learning encourage farmers to also become fishers or herders, and women to acquire new skills that reduce drudgery and raise income. Empowering communities to develop and strengthen their own organisations enables them to advance their interests...

### 3.4 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ASSISTANCE

Some of the Belgian NGO programmes which the DGDC<sup>24</sup> co-finances are also active on land reform issues. None of the Belgian NGOs has a clear strategy on land policies however. Lip service is paid to the land issue when analysing the obstacles for development in many countries where the NGOs are active,<sup>25</sup> but this rarely translates into support for partners to specifically work on the issue. In Latin America, most NGOs consider the legal framework to be sufficient to guarantee access to land; but landless people or people with insecure access must be informed about their rights, and political mobilisation must be built up to gain support for land redistribution. The expulsion of small farmers from the countryside by industrialised, export-oriented agriculture must be halted by providing support to household-based smallholder farmers. In Africa, the Belgian NGO analyses reflect the myriad of challenges present on the continent: the clarification of land tenure rights; the restitution due to apartheid in South Africa; the access problems posed by neo-liberal policies in southern Africa; the need for people to know their rights and to have customary rights enshrined in legislative frameworks or land policies.

Recently, Oxfam Solidarity and a francophone NGO umbrella organisation (CNCD, Centre National de Coopération au Développement) have showed a renewed interest in the issue of land rights by drafting a position paper (Kesteloot, 2007). The paper's main argument is on the negative influence of the industrial agricultural model and liberalisation on access to land, increasing inequalities in the control of this production factor between externally-funded exploitations and family-based smallholder farms. This evolution leads to less sustainable land use and degradation, and increasing land speculation. Increasing competition over land decreases space for pasture, pass ways for cattle or to water wells. The fair distribution of land between men and women, between producers, between generations, between migrants and locals, between farmers and pastoralists, between agro-industrial and smallholders farms, among rural, neo-rural and urban, mining and industrial activities, between traditional or religious uses, between nature protection or productive areas... asks for a clear policies that guarantee social justice and sustainable development. If pro-poor access to land is guaranteed, the poor can accumulate wealth and transmit it to the next generation, get credit, have an asset of social security, make long-term investments, build up social capital, and have some guarantee of food security. In summary, access to land is

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24 According to the liaison office COPROGRAM, in 2004 the most 47 important NGOs had total revenues of €292 million, of which €88 million from the federal government, €7 million from other governments, €44 million from international governments (mostly European Union) and €151 million own funds (of which almost half are private gifts) (De Standaard, 2007).

25 See, for example, the regional analysis on the websites [www.oxfamsol.be](http://www.oxfamsol.be), [www.broederlijkdelen.be](http://www.broederlijkdelen.be) and [www.fos-solsoc.be](http://www.fos-solsoc.be)

one of the factors that limits the development of a thriving smallholders agricultural model, besides water, seeds, credit, technology and rural infrastructure. That is why an intervention by the state, rather than the market, is needed to secure land rights (private or collective) and guarantee the social function of land.

In Africa, the reform of land laws is important as land generally belongs to the state and a smallholder's family cannot invest in the long term because of insecurity of legal tenure. The major political challenge of these reforms is the land use balance between peasant agriculture and the agro-business model, which tends to favour the latter.

The land issue is thus seen as a crucial element in the defence of the peasant agriculture model, which has already been described by several NGOs and the BSF as essential to assure food security (Vannoppen and Kesteloot, 2004). In the position paper by NGOs, the peasant organisations are to be considered the privileged partners to defend the central position of peasant agriculture in agricultural policies, defending the possibility of creating added value, to access the necessary production factors and to enjoy the necessary infrastructure and social services in the rural communities. A reference is made to the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (CFDD/FRDO), which wants more support for the (still dominant) smallholders, peasant and co-operative agriculture, because of their important so safeguard food security, food quality and use of land, water and forests. Because of their important role in a vast intervention area, peasant organisations must be supported to overcome their structural weaknesses, limitation in human and other resources and become fully recognised political actors.

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning the inter-university co-operation. The Flemish universities have several projects on natural resources management in Latin-America, Africa and Asia, but none of the 78 currently running projects specifically addresses land access.<sup>26</sup> The francophone universities have an institutional support programme of €6.5 million and a project support programme of €5 million.<sup>27</sup> In a single case, the land issue forms part of a broader project (with a budget of €265,000) on development options analysis and planning, namely in the Catholic University of Bukavu in Kivu. Besides research on micro-finance, training, infrastructure, agricultural techniques, the law faculty studies issues of land rights to establish priority indicators for re-development. One project, however, is dedicated entirely to the study of changing land relations (access, practice, conflict resolution) to redefine land policies in a context of liberalisation and decentralisation. The total budget is €351,000 for a four-year period (2005-2009).

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<sup>26</sup> The list can be found on the website of the "Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking": [www.vliroos.be](http://www.vliroos.be)

<sup>27</sup> See the website of the "Commission Universitaire pour le Développement": [www.cud.be](http://www.cud.be)



## 4. Implementation of land policies in Belgian ODA

### 4.1 BILATERAL ODA: THE CASE OF BIARSP IN THE PHILIPPINES

Land reform was already on the political agenda in the Philippines in the 1930s. This was after a long history of Spanish feudal hacienda exploitation and land grabbing by American colonisers for export crop production since 1898, which both resulted in increasing inequality in land ownership. Several Filipino presidents implemented some half-hearted tenure reforms and resettlement programmes. President Ferdinand Marcos was the first to establish a formal land redistribution programme from 1972 onwards, but he limited the scope to rice and corn lands, which were transferred to the actual tillers. Additionally, titling was plagued by bureaucracy and beneficiaries were in a weak position due to the lack of support services (DAR, 2006). A combination of repression, resettlement and limited reform has been the traditional way in which the elites and the state “coped” with cycles of peasant mobilisation and revolt.

After the move to democracy in 1986, a political space opened up for peasant organisations to demand effective land reform, although entrenched political elites remained dominant at a local level. Because of sustained popular mobilisation, the new Constitution, ratified in 1987, stated: “The state shall promote comprehensive rural development and agrarian reform,” which resulted in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP). This land reform law started in 1988 after a drafting process during which both farmers and landowners groups tried to influence the outcome. The result was a compromise that was inevitably criticised by many, but was still a breakthrough for the cause of the peasantry, with room for participation by farmers and other stakeholders, an emphasis on the welfare of beneficiaries through support services, and an aim for agrarian justice delivery to settle land conflicts.

Based on the 1988 land reform law (CARP law), all farmlands, private and public, regardless of tenurial and productivity conditions, were to be subject to agrarian reform. There are two broad types of reform: (i) redistribution of private and public lands, and (ii) “lease” reform, including leasehold on lands legally retained by landlords and “stewardship contracts” for some public lands. CARP was supposed to cover 10.3 million hectares of the country’s farmland via land redistribution, and the estimated number of beneficiaries was potentially four million landless and land-poor peasant households; close to two-thirds of the agricultural population (Borras, 2006). Private lands (and government-owned land leased to landowners and companies or land allotted for (re)settlement programmes in the past but long-

since cultivated) were to be redistributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). The Department of Environment and Natural Resources was responsible for redistribution of public lands, including forest lands (but generally long-since cultivated), and excluding areas under timber lease agreements with elite families and companies, which often had been cultivated. The land targeted for redistribution was soon reduced to eight million hectares, probably mostly by excluding larger estates (Borras, 2003).

The redistributive aspect was moderate: landowners were allowed a retention limit of five hectares, plus three hectares per elder child working on the farm. Beneficiaries paid the compensation (initially below market prices but later sometimes at higher prices due to policy changes or administration corruption) back over 30 years.

An important component of CARP was the Programme Beneficiaries Development (PBD), a major service delivery programme to make beneficiaries' land more productive, to enable them to venture into income-generating services, and to actively participate in community governance. Services included infrastructure support, training and capacity building, credits and marketing assistance, among others. The founding of the "Office for Supporting Services" in 1990 was considered to be very important by the Belgian DGDC for the success of CARP (ABOS, 1995). Many of the beneficiaries were former farmers who leased land from landlord estates. This had provided them with credit and inputs according to a complex system of rights and obligations. One aim was to replace their dependence on these landlords with a similar state system that not only provided services but also capacitated farmers to become independent entrepreneurs.

President Fidel Ramos' administration reorganised the ongoing redistribution programmes by achieving more efficient land titling and conflict resolution processes and accelerating the rate of land redistribution. Most important to convince the Belgian development officials (and other donors), was the establishment of the Agrarian Reform Communities (ARC) strategy in 1993, with the aim of concentrating government, NGO and community efforts in local, decentralised and economically viable entities that could boost agricultural productivity. An ARC encompassed a (cluster of) barangay (villages) where a minimum 2,000 ha was distributed to agrarian reform beneficiaries at an average of two hectares per family. The success of these ARCs depended on an ambitious extension support system; the means for this were to be partly provided by ODA. Many donors reacted positively to the comprehensive ARC approach and in addition to Belgium, Japan, the EU, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, FAO/IFAD, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank became important supporters of ARC development, either through concessional loans or through grants. As the project was under

constant political pressure from landowners to reduce its scope or to slow down its pace, the new momentum of the ARC approach also gave way to political gain for those who wanted to assure the viability of the programme and the deepening of agrarian reform objectives and counter CARP opponents.

In 1995, a first €5 million project (Belgian Agrarian Reform Support Programme - BARSP) was set up in the provinces Cebu, Bohol and Negros Oriental (region VII). The main rationale for the geographic selection of the projects was the number of poor families and the degree of penetration and advancement of CARP (partly due to existing land use patterns such as sugar cane monoculture and difficult land registration). The project aimed to assist farmers to secure their land title, to set up farmer groups and co-operatives and to adopt improved farming methods. The final target was the poverty reduction of about 10,000 farmers' families in 11 ARCs (DGIS, 1998); this number was reduced after data 're-validation' revealed that only about 9,000 hectares of 16,000 projected were effectively subject to land tenure improvement. The total land transfer scope for the region was 139,000 hectares (Borras, 2003).

BARSP started slowly but by 1997 it had gained momentum and the Belgian Integrated Agrarian Reform Support Programme (BIARSP) was agreed on. This 22 mio. € follow-up project aimed for an integral approach to community building through basic services provision in the following areas: health, education, agricultural productivity services (including micro-credits, infrastructure, inputs). The budget allocation from the Belgian counterpart for specific sector projects was distributed as follows (NCOS, 1998):

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Agricultural Productivity            | 55% |
| Basic Education Services             | 17% |
| Primary Health Care Services         | 17% |
| Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation | 9%  |
| Technical Pool                       | 2%  |

The overall goal of BIARSP, the first phase of which was executed from 1998 to 2001, was "to alleviate rural poverty, improve agricultural productivity and uplift the well-being of rural low-income communities, with an emphasis on selected ARCs". The project was not only extended sectorally, but also geographically to Mindanao, where the peace process needed stabilising. In 2000, the second phase (BIARSP II) was outlined, and increased the target group to 60,000 farmer and 20,000 non-farmer beneficiaries in 74 ARCs. The programme aimed "to improve the conditions for self-reliant and sustainable rural development in the ARCs" (BTC, 2000).

In 2003, BIARSP III was initiated, the last project to emphasise capacity building in order to make the project sustainable and independent in view of a phasing out of the external ODA support. Emphasis in this last phase was on the transfer of knowledge through documentation, the shift of implementation responsibilities to local institutions, and a replication of acquired know-how in other rural areas so as to consolidate past experiences and encourage non-assisted ARCs to engage in some of the activities promoted under the BIARSP (Belgian Embassy to the Philippines, 2003). The project materials were officially handed over to the Philippine authorities in August 2007, after completion of the three phases during which more than €20 million was granted:

| BIARSP                 | Phase 1         | Phase 2         | Phase 3         |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Period                 | 3/1998 - 8/2000 | 9/2000 - 8/2003 | 9/2003 - 8/2007 |
| Belgian grant (+/-75%) | €3.9 million    | €8.8 million    | €7.5 million    |

These Belgian grants were significant for the support for agriculture and agrarian reform. Most of the ODA flows for these sectors were in the form of loans during this period, and represented only around five per cent of total loans for all sectors. Well in line with the later Strategy Note (finished in 2002), the Agrarian Reform Support Programme was well ahead of time. Its ultimate aim - to reduce poverty through an increase in productivity by CARP beneficiaries together with the provision of community services - carried the spirit of the policy guidelines.

Weak and strong points for the first two phases were highlighted in a civil society study carried out by Eddie Quitarano (2000). For the third phase, most of the criticism and a mid-term review were included in the project design, showing readiness to adjust the project to civil society input. The key elements and issues for each phase are described in detail in Table 2 in the Annex. The main problem points identified included the following:

- The link with the actual redistribution of land to beneficiaries was foreseen initially, but later abandoned. While the Land Tenure Improvement project component gave some initial technical assistance to the survey capacity of the Department of Agrarian Reform, the condition for the Philippine counterpart to assure land transfers for further project implementation was not really enforced. So B(I)ARSP had no clear impact on actual land transfer rates and security in the project areas. In the second phase, only three of the 56 ARCs in region VII could be considered completed, but Belgian ODA chose not to help resolve the remaining land conflicts. It did, however, provide some access to the project for leaseholders and others that did not

(yet) benefit from CARP. To summarise, Belgian ODA never did take a clear position to deal with problems in bringing the land distribution process to an end: whether or not to support Land Tenure Improvement beyond providing technical equipments to DAR's survey department? And if it did, what support: budget support, increase of legal expertise to diminish the backlog in legal disputes? Financial support for landowners compensation or fund land acquisition as a productive investment (by providing credits)? Expropriative or market-assisted land reform? These options were never considered objectively.

- Difficulties in managing these projects were raised, with a heavy coordination structure and little autonomy over expenditures. The project often worked in parallel to the existing institutional system (because it was not prepared to work in a broader and flexible way). This posed the question of the sustainability of such projects after the withdrawal of ODA at the end of the project. However, the third phase wanted to address this by specifically focusing on the transfer and appropriation of project knowledge and methodologies.
- Beneficiaries targeting: without a thorough social baseline survey, beneficiaries were selected based on registered membership to peoples' organisations / co-operatives, which were created where they did not yet exist, and therefore excluded part of target group (individuals and other community organisations). Little consultation was done with community members prior to project formulation, and unclear role during project execution (civil society partners' role was limited to the execution of some technical aspects and promotion).
- The targeting problem was reflected in the evaluation and impact assessment difficulties in the project, making it difficult to assess if it had a pro-poor effect (so with a higher share of the poorest parts of the population benefiting and increasing their assets). The impact of the project had been positive, but the indicators were mainly related to project realisations, general revenue and social services access<sup>28</sup> (BTC, 2007).

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<sup>28</sup> Agricultural productivity: number of micro projects (about 1,000) proposed and executed by co-operatives, number of rural credit co-operatives and pilot farms created, beneficiaries revenue increase (25%)...; Education: number of kindergartens with food supply program, increase of enrollment in BI-ARSP supported schools and above-average performance on national knowledge indicators, number of schools and teachers benefiting from material and courses, number of adult groups benefiting from alphabetization courses...; Health: number of health districts and rural health centres created and equipped, number of trainings for medical personnel, ... ; Infrastructure: reduction of transport time from community to markets, increase of motorised transport, number of families having new access to drinking water, number of toilets installed , area served by new irrigation infrastructure.

- Although environmental sustainability and gender balance are now important principles of Belgian ODA, the performance of the project in these aspects has not been properly monitored

Despite these difficulties, according to DGDC and BTC, they were related to the complex multi-sectoral character of the project. Many remarks from the NGO mid-term review were taken into account during the remaining execution period of the project, they state, and the final project results were some of the most positive results in this area for the Belgian ODA, and were widely recognised within the donor community. The shift from a strict project execution approach to a wider capacity-building and advocacy strategy to overcome some obstacles of stabilisation of agrarian reform beneficiaries on their land were welcomed, although no evaluation made clear what were the chances for the sustainability of the programme after handing over to the Philippine authorities.

As the end of the project coincided with the virtual halt of land redistribution in the Philippines, it is interesting to look again at the overall picture of what was achieved during CARP. According to official figures, by 2004, 5.9 million hectares of private and public lands, accounting for about half of the country's farmland, were redistributed to three million rural poor households, representing two-fifths of the agricultural population; while 1.5 million hectares of land were subjected to leasehold, benefiting about one million tenant-peasant households. These figures seem to be not far from the initial objectives, but they are not easy to interpret. Apart from possible inaccuracies in the official data, the results were heavily criticised by scholars and civil society, because only one-third of the redistributed land involved private lands. As mentioned before, however, much public land (for example leases) was already under private cultivation, and in many cases, the peasants working under harsh tenancy relations with the landlord could improve and secure their leasehold conditions or obtain a title. Such cases came under public land distribution, but involved a real transfer of wealth and power (Borras, 2006). On the other hand, recent variants of the "willing seller, willing buyer" voluntary approach – that do not constitute real redistributive reform – have started to proliferate when reforming private lands. In some cases, land to be redistributed has been overvalued, including some in the areas of BIARSP, and farmers could not possibly pay back the government, with the risk of losing the land again (FIAN, 2004). In other cases, the conditions of the sale did not mean any real transfer of wealth and power from the landlord to the owner (Borras, 2006). Examples of this are when worker beneficiaries were to lease the land back to the landlord for 60 years; payment for the land was to be amortised within 30 years and be automatically deducted from the lease rental due to the worker-beneficiaries; the lease rental was set very low; the

worker-beneficiaries were to remain employed as workers on the plantation; and the landlord had the sole right to buy back the land from any beneficiaries who gave up their land or were later disqualified as beneficiaries. These examples show that new owners would, in many cases, never actually own the land during their lifetime. Frequently, land transfers were taken up in the statistics, but land tenure was not secured, because of pending administrative problems or landlord's judicial action.

With this in mind, it is surprising that the initial conditions of the beneficiaries of agrarian reform in the project and obstacles of tenure experienced by them have never been clearly evaluated within the project, while the redistribution of land was initially a basic condition set by the Belgian ODA. Nor were clear efforts made to assist the partner government to speed up or improve the quality of land distribution.

## **4.2 BILATERAL ODA: LAND RESTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This on-going project aims at land restitution (information campaigns, verification of claims, preparation of transfer) and a future support programme to all land reform beneficiaries (not only the land restitution beneficiaries) who wish to develop agricultural production or other economic activities on their land.

After the abolishment of South Africa's apartheid regime in 1994, the new government worked out a land reform programme to adjust the historically grown situation in which whites (almost 11 per cent of the population) owned 86 per cent of land, and to improve rural development (Lahiff, 2007). The dispossession or extreme marginalisation of smallholders and tenant farmers and the consolidation of production in the hands of relatively few large-scale producers, as well as the highly commercialised nature of the agricultural sector, meant that a "land to the tiller" approach was not a realistic option (Bernstein, 1996). The commercial sector contributed only 3.2 per cent to the gross domestic product and 10 per cent of employment, and almost half of the black population lived in the countryside but were mostly unable to live from agriculture. Land reform, therefore, had to be fundamentally redistributive to be meaningful and to benefit not only those currently involved in agriculture but also those who had long been dispossessed.

South Africa's Constitution sets out the legal basis for land reform, particularly in the Bill of Rights, and places a clear responsibility on the state to carry out land and related reforms, and grants rights to victims of past discrimination. It allows for equitably compensated expropriation of property for a public purpose or in the public interest (including the nation's commitment to land reform, and to reforms to bring about equitable access to all South Africa's natural resources). The land policy framework identified three categories of reform in 1997:

- Land Restitution, which provides relief for victims of forced dispossession (through racist legislation after 1913).
- Land Redistribution, a discretionary programme aimed to redress the racial imbalance in landholding. And
- Tenure reform, intended to secure and extend the tenure rights of the victims of past discriminatory practices.

By 2006, land redistribution accounted for the majority of the transferred land (43.1 per cent), while restitution contributed for 29.9 per cent. A voluntary “willing buyer-willing seller approach” has, however, heavily influenced land redistribution (Lahiff, 2007). While the type of land program grants were often tailor-made to poorer parts of the population before 2001 (with the remark that support to make land productive was mostly lacking), the grants became increasingly commercial after that and less accessible to the poor. The government has tended to attribute the slow progress in land redistribution to resistance from landowners and the high prices being demanded for land. But studies show that application procedures have been complicated, budgets for acquisitions limited, and bureaucracy inefficient.

The perceived lack of redistributive efficiency of the second reform category and the slow definition and take-off of the third reform category, initial made Belgian ODA focus on land restitution, according to Belgian ODA documents cited elsewhere in this paper. This reasoning is in line with the DGDC strategy note’s focus on the necessary transfer of wealth to the poorer part of the population. To diminish the problems of application in the restitution programme, in 1998 Belgian ODA decided to start with a national information campaign to urge historical victims of land evictions to formulate a claim as a beneficiary of the programme, through cooperation with local NGOs and the National Land Committee. This fits well the strategy note’s focus on civil society participation.

In 2001, within the framework of the Indicative Programme for Cooperation between South Africa and Belgium (2000 to 2005), a second Belgian contribution of €1.4 million was earmarked for the validation of registered land claims. In April 2002, implementation of this agreement was initiated by BTC. At the agreement’s conclusion in October 2004, more than 16,800 claims had been researched and validated. In addition, the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) used an amount left at the end of the project to improve its information management system and to upgrade the existing Land Base database and statistics.

In May 2004, a third Specific Agreement for Speeding up the Land Restitution Process was signed to realise the next two steps in the restitution process. The first



was land claim verification, through which legitimate claimants are determined. This includes the process of settling claims through the assessment of the available options for settlement (restoration of land, payment of compensation, provision of alternative land). The second was the development of a 10-year planning strategy, which included developing capacity-building models for those who receive land in order to make their land sustainable. The implementation of these two phases began in February 2005. The associated grant of €6 million in 2005 was mostly spent on collaboration with South-African consultancy agencies that provided experts to manage the database and the cadastre needed to control the restitution process. These activities were expected to end in 2008, although some land transfers could well be blocked for several more years. Many remaining claims to be resolved are problematic, according to Belgian officials. Some examples:

- more than one beneficiary is identified (because several people claim the same plot, or because a group of descendants from the original owner file a claim);
- the plots to be transferred are large, export-oriented estates;
- it is impossible to return the plot of land originally owned by the beneficiaries, in which case another plot or a financial compensation is proposed.

The restitution programme has not been entirely satisfactory and has delivered few results. According to the DGDC officials, this is mainly due to the complexity and slowness of creating new legislation and execution mechanisms to compensate or relocate the actual landowners. The disillusionment of the beneficiaries is also caused by initial expectations of unrealistic transfer rates, and the diminishing interest by the political establishment to build a strong agricultural sector of smallholders. Without doubt the problem is worsened because the relatively large estates which become available for land reform are not subdivided, which obliges would-be beneficiaries to pool their grants to acquire them, and creates management difficulties afterwards when they try to manage the farm collectively (Lahiff, 2007).

In November 2006, Belgium agreed to a fourth contribution of €6 million to the land reform process which focused on “post-settlement and development support” to land reform beneficiaries (also from redistribution and tenure reform) to improve their conditions and agricultural production, in collaboration with the National Department of Land Affairs and civil society. Although the programme planning is not yet finalised, it will use an area based planning (ABP) process to realise the following strategies:

- Improved co-ordination and integration across all levels. This will speed up delivery, include more stakeholders and resources, and improve quality.
- Improved the quality of the service delivered to beneficiaries. This needs a better range of resources and more stakeholders contributing to the process (different government institutions and spheres of government (such as the Department of Land Affairs and the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights), the private sector and civil society).
- Improved information, learning and knowledge management. The process of improving learning - in terms of policy, procedures and products.

According to the BTC, the agency's "consistent performance in the Land and Agrarian Reform Sector" has led to a reputation of being "land reform experts" and a delegated cooperation agreement between Belgium and the United Kingdom. Through the agreement, the rural component of the UK's Department for International Development's (DFID) land reform programme (+- €1.5 million) was delegated to BTC for implementation, in the context of downscaling its own activities in South Africa and to further donor harmonisation.

The Land Reform for Livelihoods and Land Market Development in Rural Areas Project still needs fine turning but will mainly focus on the following policy aspects:

- resolving policy and regulatory obstacles to effective implementation;
- coordinate and integrate land reform policy development and implementation as a joint government programme;
- improve pro-active engagement by civil society and other stakeholders;
- make policy management responsive to the needs of the rural poor.

With the opening up of support to all types of reform beneficiaries, the target group becomes very diverse. It includes people or descendants evicted in the past with different needs and interests in the land including subsistence production, economic or tourism activities; land reform beneficiaries wanting to develop commercial farming; and tenure reform beneficiaries focused on basic food crop production. This reflects the spirit of the South African redistribution programme in general "premised on the principle that the beneficiaries will 'self select', rather than be selected by government officials. In practice, little is known about the type of people benefiting from land reform, those who apply and are rejected, and those are not being reached by the programme at all" (Lahiff, 2007). The few studies available suggest that only a small proportion of the landless and land-hungry

access the programme; they are predominantly literate men over 40 years old; increasingly they are those with access to wage incomes or pensions, rather than the unemployed; and they have relatively good access to information and are able to make a business plan.

In summary, although land restitution for historical claims is not an issue which is explicitly dealt with in the Belgian ODA Strategy Note, this programme puts into practice several principles, such as accents on capacity-building, an important role for NGOs that facilitate people's access to programmes and provide consultancy. This has not been able to prevent the perception that the low levels of mobilisation (and the absence of militancy) among the rural poor and landless is an important factor overall low speed of land redistribution: only 4.1 per cent of total white-owned agricultural lands has been redistributed after almost 10 years. As a result, the design and implementation of land reform policies has been left to state officials and their technical advisors and, less directly, to landowners through their power to withhold land from the programme.

An initial pro-poor strategy seems to have broadened up recently to include a focus on the development of commercial rural and even urban activities, serving purposes other than just food security and rural development. This seems to be related to several things: the partner government's (i.e. South Africa government's) failure to define clearly the intended beneficiaries of land reform, the lack of a specific poverty alleviation strategy, an emphasis on economic "viability", and a chronic failure to monitor the programme. It is unlikely that the Belgian ODA project under the current setting will put a stop to the exclusion of poor and marginalised groups in government policies.

The redirection of the support to post-land settlement support involving a range of partners reflects a real need for project support. The current lack of post-settlement support stems from a general failure to conceptualise land reform beyond the land transfer stage, and from poor communication between the Department of Land Affairs (responsible for land reform), the nine provincial Departments of Agriculture (responsible for state services to farmers), and local government which is responsible for water, electricity and other infrastructure. It is questionable, as is argued, whether these services will reach many resource-poor farmers or if the services will be geared to their needs, rather than to those of commercial farmers. The land reform landscape in South-Africa is immensely complex with divergent forces focusing on the needs of the poor and commercial farming sectors, as the South African government's recent Settlement and Implementation Support document shows, and as became apparent at the 2005 Land Summit.

### 4.3 FLEMISH ODA: FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

As mentioned before, the Flemish International Cooperation Agency (VAIS) has a modest but quickly growing cooperation programme, partly focused on food security. This intervention is targeted mainly on the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal and for future support in Malawi.

KwaZulu-Natal receives €7.5 million, to be used:

- to increase agricultural production;
- to improve access to the market and boost people's buying power;
- to improve nutrient intake by raising awareness of high-quality, varied diets.

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government has independence to define and execute actions within the programme: it focuses on agricultural technology issues and on marketing, transport infrastructure, hygiene and food diversification. Another intervention in agriculture does not relate to food security, but is aimed at the development of small agribusiness operations. Access to land is not specifically supported. Nor do land reform beneficiaries form a specific target group of any action.

Support in Malawi will focus on food security, strengthening local farmers' organisations, increasing food production by local communities, diversifying production by providing small-scale irrigation, encouraging initiatives that generate additional income for households and providing nutritional education, and securing and promoting access to land (it is not clear yet how this will be done).

### 4.4 MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS: IFAD AND FAO

As mentioned before, IFAD has, from the start, been an important recipient of Belgium funds. In 1983, Belgium provided 10 per cent (\$33 million) of the Special Programme for African Countries affected by Drought and Desertification (PSA). In 1993, Belgium's total contributions to IFAD had reached \$120 million, 1.6 per cent of all contributions (IFAD/BADC, 1993). Belgium continues to make higher contributions to IFAD than minimally necessary (between 2.3 and 2.8 per cent of total support from countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)). Currently DGDC annual support is slightly over €3 million.

| DGDC multilateral support to IFAD (euro) |           |           |           |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2001                                     | 2002      | 2003      | 2004      | 2005      | 2006      |
| 2,974,722                                | 2,975,000 | 2,974,444 | 3,270,000 | 3,418,969 | 3,354,297 |

| IFAD support through BSF (euro) |           |         |           |           |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2001                            | 2002      | 2003    | 2004      | 2005      | 2006      |
| 5,699,322                       | 5,381,000 | 727,587 | 1,467,600 | 3,458,000 | 1,515,000 |

The big share of the budget consists of obligatory contributions, completed by a small share of voluntary contributions and support for a staff member for evaluation activities. Although Belgian ODA has a negligible influence on the content of IFAD's work (apart from the special programme BSF, discussed below), it is active in the permanent evaluation of IFAD's functioning and is represented on its Executive Board.

The obligatory (structural) contributions of Belgian ODA to FAO constitute 1.135 per cent of the total budget, or yearly around €3.5 million. The voluntary, project-specific support has been slightly higher in recent years. As the FAO is one of the 12 priority organisations for Belgian multilateral support, the projects are defined in programmes running over several years.

| DGDC multilateral support to FAO (euro) |           |           |           |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2001                                    | 2002      | 2003      | 2004      | 2005      | 2006      |
| 2,974,722                               | 2,996,751 | 3,965,998 | 7,111,073 | 7,577,825 | 8,690,984 |

| FAO support through BSF (euro) |      |         |           |           |         |
|--------------------------------|------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 2001                           | 2002 | 2003    | 2004      | 2005      | 2006    |
| 1.344,784                      | 0    | 892,000 | 3,900,000 | 1,397,614 | 788,000 |

According to the DGCD-FAO Strategy Note, supported projects mostly focus on:

- rural producers organisations in the Sahel region, developing their skills to negotiate with government, their networking capacities, and their cooperation in the areas of the fight against desertification and food self-sufficiency;

- their involvement in developing an institutional and legal framework by land management institutions, that ensures equitable access to the natural resources and goods and services that are obtained from them;
- improvement of food security in accordance with the optimal and diversified use and potential of land and water resources and the needs of users and their involvement in the management;
- the maintenance, organisation and sustainable development of natural resources based on local knowledge of biological diversity to improve water catchments, forest hydrology and ecosystem management;
- the development of technologies and courses to increase local capacity to process and pack products.

The activities must be integrated into a broader progressive inter-disciplinary sector approach,<sup>29</sup> taking into account previous and current development initiatives from different FAO programmes. Furthermore, the different roles of men and women in the use and management of natural resources is acknowledged, as well as the importance of conflict resolution to relieve increasing competition of access to natural resources.

When looking to the running projects, they seem to have little to do with land policies: for example a peri-urban horticulture project (in RDC, Ivory Coast, Bolivia and Namibia), a support programme for building agricultural policy in RDC, and bird flu control in the Great Lakes Region. One programme, however, is called Participatory Approach and Land Management, and has included – or still includes - projects in Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal. A second aspect of this programme is its support to the Dimitra network. (This is a tool for rural women and their organisations to make their voices heard at the national and international level by empowering them and improving their living conditions and status through their contributions.) The methodology of the programme is interesting: local collectives (producers’ organisations, cooperatives, village organisations, women’s’ groups) are encouraged to set their objectives in a participatory way, in the fields of socio-economic development, community management and the legislative framework.

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<sup>29</sup> Examples of other FAO programmes which are coordinated with this programme are mentioned as a proof of the holistic approach: the development communication programme that ensures continuous local guidance to projects, the participative forestry programme, the forestry extension programme, the national forestry programmes, the forest products promotion programme, the socio-economic analysis programme that defines gender-sensitive policies and projects and the programmes to strengthen rural women organisations, and finally the Trees Outside Forests programme focused on the knowledge and development of trees use.

The national food security and agricultural policies are meant to be influenced by this building-up of decentralised political mobilisation through more autonomous peasant groups and organisation with clear positions. However, neither the annual reports nor the DGCD-FAO strategy note mention to what extent this also includes land policies. Officials and involved NGOs ignore any important work on land tenure in any of these projects. The programme has mostly focused on the issues of agricultural/land use practices, rural infrastructure and the sustainable management of natural resources.

The only funded (small) FAO project directly related to land policies is the development of the Multilingual Thesaurus on Land Tenure (in French, English, Spanish). This document, published in the context of the World Food Summit follow-up by the Land Tenure Service of the FAO Rural Development Division, covers the following sectors: legal, institutional, historical, description of space, traditional or written land tenure regulations, topographical, land management, and land-tenure related information techniques. As such, it aims to establish an unambiguous and unequivocal terminology of the subjects related to land tenure in order to contribute to clarifying the debates in this field and to make related field interventions more efficient.

#### **4.5 SPECIAL PROGRAMMES: BELGIAN SURVIVAL FUND**

As already mentioned, the land issue has a certain importance among the ‘niche action points’ within BSF, and has about 35 per cent of the BSF budget. Its focus is especially on important land issues for sub-Saharan Africa:

- § local conflicts and environmental degradation (for example, by conflicting interests for natural resource exploitation between farmers and pastoralists);
- § the need to translate and enforce agrarian laws and property regimes on a local level, securing land tenure, or for them to evolve; and
- § the need to strengthen women’s’ rights to own land.

According to a BSF official, more than a dozen of the (more than 80 running) projects (direct, NGO, multilateral) include a component on land conflict resolution for natural resources use of farmers and cattle raisers. This component includes the strengthening of land commissions at the village level; planning of cattle paths, plot fences and access paths to wells, etc. Also, actions to secure land tenure are

sometimes included.<sup>30</sup> A lot of projects are also sensible to land rights discrimination against women.

The institutional and legislative work on land policies mainly involves pilot actions of awareness raising and lobbying within the partnerships with IFAD and ILC in Niger and Uganda, in the context of rural development and decentralisation projects.

By the end of 2006, Belgium's overall commitment through the BSF,JP (Joint Programme) was €139.6 million (IFAD, 2006), providing grants for 40 programmes and projects in BSF,JP target countries.<sup>31</sup> During a global evaluation of the Joint Programme in 2004, one of the challenges that emerged was collaboration with other partners to address better land rights (IFAD/BSF, 2004). Already in 2001, the ILC had, together with IFAD, and BSF,JP organised an evaluation meeting of its ARnet programme, and aimed to document and diffuse the knowledge on tools that civil society organisation can put into practice to improve the access of rural poor to the land and other productive resources, both for replication and international policy influencing (IFAD, 2001).

In 2002, it was agreed to expand the JP with a tripartite IFAD/BSF/ILC partnership in Niger and Uganda. This project, CALI (Collaborative Action on Land Issues), uses an innovative multi-stakeholder approach to support pro-poor land policy formulation and implementation. This is done through bottom-up processes, using the space for multi-stakeholder consultation opened by the government.

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30 For example, in Mali the UNCDF Seno-Gondo project had identified productivity and environmental degradation problems and growing conflicts between farmers and stock-holders. It identified a strategy for conflict-free coexistence between farmers and herders and supported the consensus-based management of agricultural and pastoral lands by: (i) the development of herding tracks, transit corridors and access to water sources; (ii) the identification of grazing lands; and (iii) the improvement of systems for associating herding and farming. Further, an evaluation revealed that "establishment and development of frameworks for joint action and negotiation among farmers, herders, technical services and government authorities is a crucial condition for the success of any land management programme" (UNCDF Evaluation Unit, 1999).

UNCDF is a lesser known UN organisation supported by BSF, although for almost €3 million annually. The supported "local development programme" (LDP) emphasises technical and financial assistance to local government, (planning and strategising mechanisms, building of local capacities...). BSF-supported projects show how these principles are translated into actions aimed at dealing with the most important causes of local poverty and at improving local livelihoods, in Mali, Niger, Eritrea, Benin, Burkina Faso and Rwanda. In some projects, land issues have been addressed.

31 Project countries include Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. Projects are financed by BSF grants (a maximum of 45 per cent of total costs) and IFAD loans (a minimum of 55 per cent) plus contributions from any other financial partners, including the government and project participants. Project costs range from \$1 million to \$20 million (IFAD & BSF, 2004).



CALI researches and documents key land issues that are central to mediating rural poverty, in order to establish the basis for their inclusion in the new policy, its regulations and related legal and operational frameworks. This is after an assessment of community-based and institutional approaches and innovations that have the potential for scaling-up and replication (ILC, n.d.).

In Uganda, CALI supports the formulation of a new land policy through bottom-up processes, using the space for multi-stakeholder consultation opened by the Ugandan Government. A Partners' Forum comprising various government agencies, CSOs, research institutes, community groups and international partners, is established under the leadership of the Uganda Land Alliance and Ministry of Lands. This is not only to share the emerging knowledge, but also to foster improved and ongoing stakeholder collaboration and to monitor the implementation of land policies at national, district and local levels.

The CALI project in Niger started in a second phase, after consultation with key civil society, inter-governmental and governmental stakeholders on a joint formulation. The pivotal governmental agency in promoting decentralised management of land and natural resources is the Secrétariat Permanent du Code Rural. The CALI Partner in Niger is the IFAD-BSF project PPILDA – Projet de Promotion de l'Initiative Locale pour le Développement based in Aguié. The CALI initiative will pilot and test a methodology at village level to help farmers obtain sustainable land tenure security (ILC, 2007).

Finally, in the area of NGO co-financing by BSF, Oxfam-Solidarity is currently modifying a proposal to support consultation and lobby work on land issues with peasant organisations in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to put more weight on local peasant organisation, land collectives and traditional chiefdoms) and less on the regional (West-African) action of ROPPA.

In summary, when it comes to a pro-poor approach including the problems of land access, BSF is arguably the best performing programme, aimed for a balanced mix of the most vulnerable populations with better-off groups, and for coherence between proposed activities and target groups. This means, concretely, that the choice of supported crops / techniques / credit amounts / irrigation infrastructure is influenced by the ones grown, used or practiced by poor farmers, or the most attainable for them; farm practices are to be adapted to household labour availability; solidarity mechanisms must be accessible normally for the most vulnerable section of the population. Still, on a project management level there is room for improvement: a big 2006 evaluation exercise reveals that evaluation reports give too little information about the real impact on poverty and the sustainability of the

results. Also, they tended to identify what went wrong but did not examine close enough the causes of the problems.

#### 4.6 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ASSISTANCE

As mentioned before, the implementation of projects or partner support related to land issues falls short of the awareness of the land access problem within the Belgian NGOs. The theme, however, is often indirectly brought in by the structural support for the advocacy or training activities of partner rural NGOs and farmers' organisations, which often take up the struggle for land rights as an element of their work. In some cases, partner organisations work solely on land issues.<sup>32</sup>

Considering to relative importance of the land issue for partnerships with South Africa, it is clear that some alignment and complementarities exists between the NGO priorities and the official ODA. An example is the Oxfam-Solidarity programme: it supports communities that lost land historically or which want access to more land (so both restitution and redistribution). Often families living off subsistence agriculture and/or depending on migrant labour revenues are involved. Support has been channelled through the national federation of these communities, the Landless Peoples' Movement, to put pressure on the South African Government to move faster and to broaden the restitution and redistribution of land. Communities are also supported to submit a file to a land claims commission by other partner organisations (Transkei Land Service Organisation – TRALSO, and Cala University Students Association - CALUSA) to return to their original land and increase their development opportunities, or to buy land from white owners with a government-supported loan. Partners also focus on post-settlement support, strengthen the

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32 The following (non-exhaustive) list presents some partnerships around land issues of the bigger NGOs. Oxfam, besides its programme in South Africa, supports the Forum Terra de Nampula in Mozambique for land rights training, the ANUC-UR peasant trade union in Colombia, the Save Andanan Network in Thailand (access to land in post-tsunami area), Fenocin in Ecuador, and ROPPA in Western-Africa for formulating land policies at a regional level. Broederlijk Delen supports SPP and AFRA in South Africa and FARMCOOP in the Philippines. Vredeseilanden (VECO) supports SYDIP in Kivu (DRC), Prosem (southern Togo), YPI's political work on land in Indonesia, UNAG in Nicaragua and has also given important support in the past to the Uganda Land Alliance (mainly on womens' access to land). FOS supports Ndima and CIRD in South Africa, the TERRA campaign (with partners AKSM and UCAMA) in Mozambique, ATC in Nicaragua, and peasant union COCOH in Honduras. Oxfam, BD and FOS also jointly support a land conflict detection and follow-up project in Honduras with partners COCOH, ACAN, CNTC and FIAN. 11.11.11 has given support to land-based organisations in the Philippines, South Africa and Brazil, and has supported civil society on land reform in Maastricht (2001), Valencia (2004) and The Hague (2006), but has decided recently to abandon the issue in its partnership and thematic programmes.

institutional capacity of the communities and their participation in the elaboration of land reform policies. Despite these efforts, it has already been argued in this paper, that politicians are reluctant to effectively advance land reform, partly through lack of mobilisation.

The single university cooperation programme clearly focused on land access is the PIC-Mali project, *Politiques foncières et stratégies paysannes dans le nouveau contexte malien de libéralisation et de décentralisation*. The university partners are the ULB and FUNDP (Bruxelles-Namur) in Belgium and the Université Mande Bukari in Bamako, Mali. The project aims at action-oriented research with three peasant organisations. In order to achieve this, training, groups discussions and the organisation of a final political discussion meeting are organised to support the peasant organisations. The project focuses on involving the organisations' member base, clarifying how access rules and use of community resources are changing, and how individual land property rights are evolving in terms of access modes, tenure rights and transferability. The first collected data reveal many informal transactions (rents, buying/selling, sharecropping), a lack of transparency on public land titling rules, a dualisation of farmers with increasing debt but also consumption rates, and contradictions between the new land rules imposed by some donor countries and the expectations expressed by the farmer organisations (Dave, 2007).

## 5. Conclusions

The (recent) strategic recognition of land access as an element of strengthening the agricultural sector and food security shows the potential of Belgian ODA for developing stronger and more coherent land policies. So far, however, this potential has not been put into practice as an important principle or objective to pursue.

This study clearly reveals the low priority of land issues in Belgian ODA, a fact which has been repeated again and again by contacted officials. In direct bilateral programmes, only two important land projects have been implemented for a total budget of slightly more than €30 million. While this budget is important, it represents only about three per cent of the total agricultural budget in the execution period. Some explanations for the small importance of projects focused on land access can be offered as a conclusion.

First, the low priority for land has to be seen in the diminishing importance of interventions in the agricultural and rural development sector as a whole, which has fallen over the last decade to a level of about 8-10 per cent of the total ODA budget. Even if the absolute agricultural budget remains stable, this proportion has been decreasing steadily. The increasingly low share of agricultural support in the total ODA follows an international trend. The share of aid in agriculture to global ODA has fallen even more drastically, from a peak of 17 per cent in 1982 to 3.7 per cent of total ODA in 2002 (Arnold, 2004).<sup>33</sup> The reasons mentioned for this dwindling interest during interviews with Belgian ODA officials reflect the reasons perceived at international level. They include difficulties and costs in setting up agricultural projects, other priorities of development partners, failing projects, and doubts about

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<sup>33</sup> 50 According to Arnold, the main reasons are:

- Changed donor perceptions: loss of confidence in agriculture as a motor of growth and poverty reduction (due to stagnating productivity increases after the Green Revolution, the diminishing role of public institutions as counterparts because of economic reform processes associated with structural adjustment, lower prices, increasing transaction costs causing low cost-effectiveness...).
- Different potential partner stakeholders no longer have homogeneous views on rural priorities.
- Weaker developing country demand (because the agricultural sector is seen as costly and complex).
- Shifting emphasis in development assistance: an increased proportion of ODA now goes to 'social infrastructure and services (health, education)'. This assistance can be channelled through large public sector entities, either as programme support to ministries or as general budget support, and can be clearly linked to increased delivery of basic services, which in turn can be relatively easily linked or at least associated with progress towards achieving internationally agreed development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals

the importance of agriculture as a driver of economic development. The negative perceptions are in sharp contrast with the principles and the importance of the agricultural sector in the different mentioned strategy papers (on food security, FAO and IFAD). This indicates a gap between official strategic intentions and the reality of the terrain as perceived by ODA officials.

Secondly, Belgium often appears to adapt the operationalisation of its priorities to the decision-making process and political will of the partner countries. This makes it difficult to pursue its own objectives in supporting land policy targets. That is why land is perceived as a difficult intervention area, and does not get the attention it deserves. The BTC should take a more and more active role in proposing Belgian ODA priorities during the design and follow-up process of bilateral development programmes on land issues. When supporting interventions in complex agrarian reform settings, it makes little sense to only evaluate the part of the development programme that was financed, without continuous evaluation of the entire development policy framework.<sup>34</sup> This includes the context of market liberalisation, which poses additional obstacles for poor beneficiaries that need to be addressed in the project.

This is partly due to the weakness of the strategy note on agriculture and food security, which has valuable theoretical principles on land policies, but that are not made operational. They leave open too many options and strategies and are not concretised for the design, implementation or evaluation of projects. According to several Belgian NGOs working in the field, that is also why it is not a point of reference and it is hardly used.

Finally, Belgian ODA is performing weak in the field of land and social justice because it is still largely focuses on technical solutions for higher agricultural

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34 As an example, Philippine CARP policy was perceived to gradually lose its redistributive efficiency due to the growing influence of agro-export sector interests (to the detriment of food security of the most vulnerable target populations) and of “willing buyer, willing seller” mechanisms (which exclude the poorest farmers not able to access credits for land purchase or not able to pay them back). Although not conforming to Belgian initial ODA objectives, it was not deemed proper for Belgian development policy to set conditions on CARP implementation or redistributive performance. As explained, a similar process is occurring in South Africa, and the Belgian ODA is adapting accordingly without sticking to the pro-poor approach of the strategy note. Belgian ODA is too often perceived by officials to be a small player that cannot influence structural problems and policy options on a higher level. Even if Belgium’s grant to the Philippines was the largest ever in this sector, Belgium barely made any effort of serious policy dialogue to overcome the problems of land distribution. Instead of hiding behind the Paris principles, stating that priority and strategy setting lies with the partner country, Belgium should therefore reconsider its strategic role in these issues and discuss more proactively with the partner countries and its civil society organisation how to combat hunger and rural poverty more effectively.

productivity and more sustainable land use, rather than a rights-based approach. Management and monitoring must evolve from purely quantitative performance indicators, without clear targeting of the rights-holders who are supposed to improve their means to produce food or an income from improved access to land and resources as a result of the project. Production increase makes little sense from a development and human rights perspective without ensuring that it is effectively the most vulnerable groups which are reached as a priority and that the project has had a redistributive effect.

The need to promote the human right to food, work or life for peasants who lack access to land is the basic motivation for a more equal distribution of land resources. Therefore, it must become the basis of targeting and follow-up of projects to contribute more effectively to the MDG process. In a world where three quarters of the 850 million hungry live in rural areas and often a majority of the national population in partner countries depend on agriculture for a living, food security programmes, rural development and redistributive agrarian reform support must be cornerstones of any ODA policy to improve this situation in the short term. From a human rights approach, the fact that land is still very unequally distributed among landowners and landless, and employment opportunities are scarce, facilitating the access to land becomes imperative because the poorest populations have the right to access land as a means to produce food. As right holders to the right to food and an adequate living (as enshrined in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), they should be provided with the means to claim lasting solutions from their government. This should not only provide immediate food security but also fulfil the longer-term possibilities for rural populations to feed themselves. This provides important arguments to push partner governments to prioritise the land issue, supported by international assistance to complement the budget necessary for progress in a reasonable time-frame.

Two evolutions provide opportunities to finally put into practice the theoretical strength of the land access principles in the strategy note, and refocus Belgian ODA attention onto land and rural development policies as a core to fighting poverty and providing social justice. First, the international policy framework is experiencing a clear “rediscovery” of agriculture and land issues, into which Belgian ODA can be inserted<sup>35</sup>. Secondly, the valuable experiences of NGOs and the Belgian Survival Fund can be capitalised.

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35 Some proof of this includes the elaboration of EU Guidelines on Land Policies in Development Assistance (2004), the organisation of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006), promoted by the FAO, and the EU donor conference on rural development in Berlin (2007).

The World Bank's World Development Report 2008 also pays a lot of attention to the land issue. Land is one of the assets of the rural poor often squeezed by population growth, environmental degradation, expropriation by dominant interests, and social biases in policies and the allocation of public goods. Enhancing assets sometimes requires significant public investments, as in health and education, but in many others it is more a matter of institutional development, such as enhancing the security of property rights and the quality of land administration, especially to include disadvantaged groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Therefore, political support is essential, both from partner and donor countries. While solutions proposed by the World Bank (rental markets, market-led agrarian reform) are not always unequivocally to the benefit of most vulnerable populations, Belgian ODA can jump in by making its strategy note operational and including the positive past or current experiences of Belgian actors. The growing emphasis on equal access to land, land tenure and the resolution of land conflicts of the Belgian Survival Fund (in its own projects and with the IFAD/ILC) and NGO, should be evaluated to define what works best and how to best integrate the role of peasant organisations.

#### **LIST OF PEOPLE CONTACTED/INTERVIEWED**

Paul Mathieu, Belgium liaison person at FAO

Jean Yves Standaert , BSF

Sofie Van Waeyenberge, BTC, rural development

Alain Laigneaux, BTC, social economy

An Eijkelenburg, BTC, sectoral and thematic expertise

Jean-Marie Korporaal, BTC, food security

Renatta Vandeputte, DGDC policy advisor on agriculture

Harry Michel, DGDC

Philippe Gérard, DGDC, World-Bank relations

Peter D'Huys, BIARSP project co-ordinator

Jan Aertsens, director Vredeseilanden (VECO)

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**TABLE 1: BRIEF SUMMARY OF MAIN PERIODS IN THE HISTORY OF BELGIAN ODA**

| Period            | Main actors   | Policy focus   |
|-------------------|---|--|
| 1.<br>(1960–1962) | Ministry of African Affairs   | Extension of colonial “indirect-rule” policies from 1908 onwards, with more social aid (alphabetisation, health care and university cooperation from 1947 onwards). Focus on technical aid, employing ex-colonists as co-operants. Focus in the countryside to further development of ‘cooperatives indigènes’, ‘paysannats’ & ‘comités éducatifs’ |
| 2.<br>(1962–1971) | Foreign Trade & Technical Assistance, FOMETRO, AIDR   | « Paternalist » assistance in domains of education, health, infrastructure, agriculture (in close relationship with Belgian companies as suppliers)  |
| 3.<br>(1971–1981) | -ABOS/AGCD<br>-NGO’s rise   | Technical assistance to state intervention in agriculture for development, infrastructure projects, basic needs to fight poverty<br>Focus on economically stronger countries/sectors<br>Cofinancing of NGO’s from 1976 onwards   |
| 4.<br>(1981–1990) | -ABOS/AGCD<br>-Belgian Survival Fund  | SAP’s on macro-economic level.<br>Rural participatory & training programs, rapid appraisal techniques<br>Increasing multilateral aid   |
| 5.<br>(1990–1999) | - ABOS/AGCD<br>>DGOS/DGCD<br>- Belgian Survival Fund<br>- Strong growth EC/<br>UN multi-lateral aid | Scandals of useless big projects, institutional reform, drop in public support, decrease in co-operants, appearance of transversal topics (gender, environment, sustainable development..)   |
| 6.<br>(1999–2006) | - DGOS/DGCD<br>- BTC/CTB<br>- Belgian Survival Fund   | Budget and institutional support, focus on good governance, partnership, debt relief.<br>More multilateral funding but to less agencies (focus on 12)<br>Policy Guidelines defined in Strategy Notes   |

Sources: Develtere<sup>36</sup>(2005), [www.dac.org](http://www.dac.org), ABOS, DGOS

36 Develtere, Patrick (2005). “De Belgische ontwikkelingssamenwerking”, Davidsfonds, Leuven.

| <b>Regional focus</b>  | <b>yearly ODA budget range</b><br>(actualised value in million US \$) | <b>Mean % ODA of GDP</b> | <b>% agri. aid of bilateral ODA</b> |
|--|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Congo, Rwanda, Burundi   | 600   | 0.8                      | n.a.                                |
| Congo, Rwanda, Burundi   | 400-600   | 0.45- 0.55               | n.a.                                |
| Central Africa (in spite of authoritarian regimes) + other African countries (e.g. Senegal, Northern Africa), Latin-America (Chile, Andean..), Indonesia | 900-1500<br><br>(NGO/ indirect aid share in 1981: 50%)                | 0.5 – 0.6                | 12% in 1979                         |
| Further deconcentration: many countries in all continents  | 800 - 1200  | from 0.6 down to 0,4     | 15-20%                              |
| Belgium becomes second player in Central Africa because of escalation of political problems and violence   | 900 – 1200<br><br>(multilateral share in 1999: 40%)                   | 0.3-0.4                  | 10-15%                              |
| Geographic concentration (first to 25, then to 18 countries), focus on Central/S-E-Africa, Sahel, Andes and S-E Asia                                     | 1000 – 1500<br>(of which up to 50% debt relief)                       | 0.4 – 0.6                | 10-12%<br>(20% BTC budget)          |

**Acronyms:** FOMETRO: Fund for Tropical Medicine

AIDR: International Association for Rural Development

ABOS/AGCD: General Agency for Development Co-operation

DGOS/DGCD: Directorate General for Development Co-operation

BTC/CTB: Belgian Technical Co-operation

**TABLE 2: DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE BARSP PHASES EXECUTION**

| Phase                | Topic   | Intervention rationale  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| BARSP<br>(1996-1998) | Project Design  | Project components:<br>§ LTI (Land Tenure Improvement)<br>§ SIBS (Social Infrastructure & Basic Services): consolidation and expansion of <i>existing</i> PO's (targeting 36 coops with 3500 members)<br>§ PSD (Productivity Support) (made dependent on progress in land title distribution to ARB's)  |
|                      | Gender  | could also be beneficiary according to the land reform law (but low actual number of female ARB's). Some specific activities such as non-agri-cultural training and women coops.  |
|                      | Environment   | By responsabilisation of farmers to invest on their own plots and sustainable techniques, such as organic dung, MASIPAG and IPM   |
|                      | Project target population                                     | According to the Philippine classification of vulnerable populations: "hard core poor" and "poor" people (having difficulties of economic access to food, focus mainly on (former) land workers, less on small farmers).<br>Special effort for further identification and living conditions of the target group, as well as their training and access to the program (during project execution!). |
|                      | Management setting / partners / engagement with civil society | Tripartite Project Management Office: involving BADC, DAR and the NGO community (through PhilDHRRA, a network organisation, selected by Belgium government).<br><br>Contracts with 9 local NGO's (mainly for SIBS)  |
|                      | Project execution   | Project start was very slow, due to difficulties with the transfer of land titles<br>Strict financial procedures<br>No legal capacity to intervene in LTI   |
|                      | Donor position  | Following Philippine Government's rationale, little effort to use assistance as a leverage to reform and strengthen institutions/organisations?   |



| Civil society comments   |
|--|
| Missing link between project execution and land transfer   |
| No clear gender concerns in program design and project activities; although most gender issues were related to the community and household level and not directly to project execution.  |
| No clear integration of sustainable agricultural practices in project execution  |
| <p>Beneficiaries were defined by CARP program (based on registered membership to People's Organisations/Co-operatives, which were created when they didn't exist yet), therefore excluding part of target group (individuals and other community organisations).</p> <p>No consultation with community members prior to project formulation. Lacking social investigation and data on the actual beneficiaries and delayed baseline survey, making socio-economic development impact assessment of target group difficult.</p> |
| <p>Belgian Technical Adviser had too much weight in decision making</p> <p>Partner selection based on unclear criteria. Partner NGO did not involve sufficiently other NGOs and POs</p> <p>Role of People's Organisations (co-operatives) not clear; they are not represented in the project steering committee</p>  |
| <p>The project skipped the land tenure issue, no efforts to clarify LTI problems in the project sites</p> <p>Cumbersome budget requests and financial reporting to Belgium</p>   |
| No clear commitment to expropriative version of AR. No efforts to ensure land transfer before productivity-enhancing investments. No clear focus on the poorest. Hastening institutional reform seems important for decision making, planning, implementation, monitoring, assessment.   |

|                                   |                             |  |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
|                                   | Monitoring and evaluation   | No official information found  |
|                                   | Political context           | Integral (technical and social) support provided in higher volumes to agrarian reform beneficiaries aimed to strengthen CARP and the Agrarian Reform Communities (making them more self-reliant)   |
| <b>BIARSP I-II</b><br>(1998-2003) | Project Design              | <p>LTI component eliminated.<br/>           Innovative integral project design, tackling several sectors at once:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ <b>basic education:</b> included school renovation, instructional material and training for teachers, and non-formal education to target school-dropouts and illiterates, employment opportunities</li> <li>§ <b>primary</b> community-based <b>health</b> care and insurance plans, hospital building and renovation</li> <li>§ <b>rural infrastructure:</b> irrigation, post-harvest facilities, potable water supply and sanitation, farm-to-market roads, bridges and school buildings</li> <li>§ the development of <b>agricultural productivity</b> systems by transfer of technology and training according to beneficiaries' self-identified needs</li> <li>§ the strengthening of local and social <b>institutions.</b></li> </ul> |
|                                   | Geographical Implementation | Region 7 and 9   |
|                                   | Project target population   | <p>LTI still base line, but not exclusive:<br/>           Region 7: 60% title holders, 40% others (leaseholders, potential ARBs)<br/>           Region 9: 75% title holders, 25% owner-cultivators<br/>           SIBS activities considered to strengthen ARB's position to negotiate with landowners in case of LTI problems<br/>           Non-ARBs and cooperative members could also benefit indirectly from education, health and infrastructure services<br/>           Non-members should be asked to become members instead of targeting them separately</p>  |

|   |
|---|
| <p>Mechanisms primarily measure fund utilisation with quantitative indicators</p>   |
| <p>Indeed highly needed: CARP was still not in a comfortable position: two million hectares remained undistributed. Land endowments were not yet fully secured for many beneficiaries, nor could they reap maximum benefits from their newly acquired endowments. From a GDP share of 0.44% in the first year of CARP, agrarian reform was only allocated 0.35% in the mid 90s.</p> |
| <p>Some (initial) management problems but multi-sector approach gradually becoming reference to DAR and other donors<br/>         Little social investigation prior to geographical or sectoral expansion, causing project insensitivity to actual realities on the ground</p>  |
| <p>Positive policy to get into “difficult” areas of engagement through extension to Region 9, showing above average poverty and illiteracy, and prone to ethnic conflict (CARP contested because of divestment of indigenous land); however, no adapted implementation strategy for ethnic specificity</p>  |
| <p>In only 3 of 56ARCs in region VII there was no more land to be transferred; in all others land transfers were pending and problematic, but without commitments from Belgian government to resolve these.</p>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Management setting / partners / engagement with civil society</p> | <p>Contract with PhilDHRRA not renewed<br/> Contracts with 9 local NGO's (mainly for SIBS)<br/> Increased involvement of Local Government Units<br/> Region 7: Strengthening of PO's: number increased from 29 to 152 in first three years, 29 PO's established, 17% membership increase in 1 year, 75% of them ARBs (32% of them are PO member)<br/> Funding of NGO's outside BIARSP is proof of support of civil society<br/> Need to organise feedback of NGO's following their study on project implementation (2001)</p>   |
| <p>Project execution</p>   | <p>Part of funds provided by revolving funds for productivity improvement (PO's) and local government (LGU) participation in infrastructure projects</p>  |
| <p>Monitoring and evaluation</p>                                     | <p>Improvements of monitoring system, e.g. by training PO's on monitoring forms including outwomes on improved production and increased income</p>  |
| <p>Political context</p>   | <p>In 2001, DAR still distributed 100.000 ha with limited budget, reaching 70.000 beneficiaries, according to targets. Private lands distribution share was decreasing, reflecting increasing land-owners opposition and quasi-judicial and court disputes, due to low land valuation. Higher valuation faces even more budget constraints, to be partly offset by more swift settlement of agrarian disputes. More than 1 million ha remains to be distributed by 2008.<br/> The Belgian government "is prepared to continue its assistance to the agrarian reform on the assumption that the same commitment and unequivocal support for AR can be expected from Philippine national and local governments". The main means of support remains with providing adequate support services to the ARB's.</p> |

(Sub)contracting to NGO's does not give them the status of genuine partners; Belgian government's position very unclear on their role  
Capacity and co-financing of most LGU's is limited, some LGU's opposing ARC development plans (although they have been consulted when making them)

Mechanisms needed to include effects of outputs on the household subsistence of beneficiaries

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>BIARSP III</b><br/>(2003-2007)</p> | <p>Project Design<br/>(BTC, 2002)</p>                                | <p>The main purpose of Phase III is to “consolidate the achievements for appropriation by the partners”. Rather than new intervention scopes, it is aimed at strengthening the institutional know-how and capacity building, by improving institutional management structures and introducing modern management techniques (monitoring, reporting, documentation, PR...).</p> <p>Based on former project intervention areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural Support Services (ASS)</li> <li>• Education and Training</li> <li>• Public Health (PH)</li> <li>• Institutional Capacity Building (ICB)</li> </ul> <p>New areas are only taken up if they can be clearly consolidated by the end of this last phase.<br/>More attention to LTI when delays are due to lack of capacity.<br/>More focus on building and strengthening social infrastructure<br/>Special focus on communication on the project and on the importance of agrarian reforming in “the general policy dialogue”, introducing an advocacy element that was absent in the previous phases.<br/>Special focus in changing entrepreneurial attitudes within partners and co-operatives, through the “Comprehensive Rural Enterprise Academy (CREA)”</p> |
|  | <p>Geographical Implementation</p>                                   | <p>Project activities in the difficult region IX “because of its potential beneficial impact on the peace and order situation”. Still, it is recognised that the project objectives of consolidation might prove difficult to achieve</p>  |
|  | <p>Management setting / partners / engagement with civil society</p> | <p>Programme structures need to be organised around a facilitating, co-ordinating, and catalyst role. The central office main tasks will be accounting and providing the tools to efficiently coordinate and manage the set tasks. Partners are to be coached in their endeavours to provide relevant social services, “efficiently managing rural development”.<br/>Management is mainstreamed to DAR, with the Technical Support and Coordination Office (TSCO) (see <a href="http://biarsptsco.org">http://biarsptsco.org</a> for more details)</p>   |

## **PRINCIPES D'ACTION**

(160) On assiste ces dernières années à la réémergence de la problématique de la réforme agraire dans les programmes de développement après une période de désenchantement de la plupart des bailleurs de fonds. La « réforme agraire » regroupe des programmes et processus assez distincts qui peuvent aller de la redistribution des terres au profit des sans-terre et des fermiers (la réforme agraire proprement dite) à la réforme du régime foncier renforçant ou clarifiant les droits fonciers, notamment par rapport à la sécurité et la transférabilité qu'ils confèrent.

(161) Cette réémergence s'explique par la demande croissante de la population rurale pour qui l'accès garanti à la terre est indispensable à un développement de leur exploitation familiale à long terme. En général, pour les pauvres en milieu rural, la terre est à la base de la subsistance et du revenu agricole. Il est reconnu qu'une distribution plus égale de la terre peut davantage mener à des niveaux de production agricole plus élevés qu'une situation où la propriété de la terre est concentrée dans les mains de quelques-uns. De plus, l'accès garanti à la terre et aux ressources naturelles engendre une meilleure gestion de celles-ci grâce à une responsabilisation des bénéficiaires. Par ailleurs, pour les sans-terre et ceux qui dépendent d'une subsistance non agricole, les droits communaux d'accès aux ressources naturelles communales (pâturages, eau, produits forestiers, ...) sont également essentiels. Ainsi, la gestion de ces biens communaux mérite une considération particulière dans la lutte contre la pauvreté et la gestion durable des ressources naturelles.

(162) La problématique du droit foncier est différente selon les continents et les pays et est souvent hautement politisée. En Amérique latine, les réformes agraires du vingtième siècle n'ont pas toujours donné des résultats équitables. Dans beaucoup de pays, notamment en Afrique subsaharienne, il existe un dualisme entre le système coutumier-traditionnel de gestion des ressources de propriété commune d'une part, et le système moderne-législatif basé sur le marché d'autre part, qui engendre des tensions importantes.

(163) L'accès à la terre est particulièrement important pour les femmes en raison de leur rôle prépondérant dans la production vivrière familiale. Néanmoins on constate que dans la plupart des cas, aussi bien les systèmes fonciers coutumiers que les systèmes formels discriminent les femmes.

(164) En général, l'accès à la terre (et les autres ressources naturelles) est une condition nécessaire mais non suffisante pour un développement durable. Par conséquent, il est important d'examiner des synergies entre les interventions au niveau foncier et d'autres

problématiques du développement agricole. On devrait dès lors utiliser la réforme comme un moyen pour renforcer le potentiel économique et productif des fermiers qui étaient précédemment contraints par un système foncier inéquitable et la compléter avec d'autres interventions au niveau du crédit agricole, de la vulgarisation, de la technologie adaptée etc. (comme dans le projet « Belgian Integrated Agrarian Reform Support Programme » aux Philippines).

## **ACTIVITÉS/LIGNES DIRECTRICES**

### ***Stratégie générale***

(165) Les programmes de réforme agraire sont généralement très coûteux. De plus, ils exigent un partenariat solide avec le gouvernement national et un cadre politique et institutionnel transparent. En conséquence, un support à ces activités ne peut se faire qu'après une analyse poussée des implications possibles. Particulièrement, il faut veiller à ce qu'une réforme agraire ne soit pas « accaparée » par des milieux politiques et économiques aisés avec des résultats décevants sur le plan de la redistribution plus équitable, comme c'était souvent le cas en Amérique latine (p.ex. Honduras). Une solidarité nationale, impliquant un transfert réel de moyens des plus riches, propriétaires des terres, vers les pauvres, sans-terre, doit être considérée comme une condition préalable à toute implication de la Belgique dans le processus.

(166) Etant donné son aspect hautement politisé et sujet à des dissensions internes d'une part, et son coût élevé d'autre part, une concertation et coordination avec les autres donateurs est indispensable.

(167) Comme la problématique du droit foncier et de l'accès aux ressources naturelles est très complexe et particulière dans chaque pays, elle doit être analysée dans le contexte historique, social et culturel du pays.

(168) Dans des situations où la distribution de la terre ou le manque d'accès à celle-ci entrave le développement des petites exploitations (smallholders), la Belgique veillera à inclure ces aspects dans le dialogue politique avec le pays partenaire, de préférence en concertation avec les autres donateurs.

(169) Une attention particulière sera accordée à la garantie d'accès à la terre des femmes.

(170) Les programmes de développement agricole financés par la Belgique doivent veiller à protéger les petits paysans contre la généralisation des mécanismes d'appropriation individuelle (qui mène souvent à leur exclusion) et à protéger les domaines communautaires (qui ont un rôle de tampon important pour les couches marginalisées en milieu rural, surtout en temps de crise) et les pratiques de gestion collectives (qui ont un rôle social essentiel et constituent dans de nombreux cas des modes pertinents de gestion).



(171) Les activités supportées par la Belgique peuvent se situer à plusieurs niveaux et à plusieurs degrés d'intervention: Activités spécifiques de politique et d'encadrement

(172) Un aspect essentiel à toute politique foncière et réforme agraire est celui de la législation et de la réglementation foncière. Le marché de la terre est impossible sans procédures efficaces d'enregistrement de la terre, un système législatif cohérent et des institutions légales efficaces<sup>24</sup>. La Belgique peut contribuer à ce processus par:

- un support à la participation de l'ensemble des parties intéressées (bénéficiaires, ...) dans le développement d'une politique foncière
- un support aux institutions (de préférence décentralisées) de gestion de la terre et de résolution des litiges (organes d'arbitrage traditionnels,...);
- un support à la réforme législative et réglementaire axée sur un accès équitable à la terre et autres ressources naturelles, particulièrement pour les pauvres et les femmes.

### ***Activités spécifiques de redistribution et de réforme agraire proprement dite***

(173) Les activités peuvent se situer au niveau :

- de la redistribution des terres et de l'installation de paysans (« resettlement »), excepté l'aide pour l'achat des terres proprement dit qui doit rester minime;
- de l'enregistrement cadastral et de la distribution de titres individuels (de préférence séparé du financement/remboursement du crédit pour l'achat des terres);
- de la « tenancy reform ».

### ***Activités complémentaires***

(174) Dans le cadre d'une réforme agraire, une attention particulière doit être prêtée au fait que les nouveaux propriétaires doivent être à même de participer pleinement au marché et doivent être rapidement rentables, ce qui implique de développer des activités complémentaires au problème foncier, tels que crédit, vulgarisation agricole, etc. (ces domaines d'action sont développés dans les chapitres correspondants), nécessaires pour éviter que des (nouvelles) relations de dépendance se développent entre le petit paysan et son créancier.

The **LAND POLICY WORKING PAPER SERIES** is a joint publication of the Belgian Alliance of North-South Movements (11.11.11) and the Transnational Institute (TNI). Activist researchers from various non-governmental research institutions have come together to carry out this collective undertaking.

Three quarters of the world's poor are rural poor. Land remains central to their autonomy and capacity to construct, sustain and defend their livelihoods, social inclusion and political empowerment. But land remains under the monopoly control of the landed classes in many settings, while in other places poor peoples' access to land is seriously threatened by neoliberal policies. The mainstream development policy community have taken a keen interest in land in recent years, developing land policies to guide their intervention in developing countries. While generally well-intentioned, not all of these land policies advance the interest of the rural poor. In fact, in other settings, these may harm the interest of the poor. Widespread privatisation of land resources facilitates the monopoly control of landed and corporate interests in such settings.

Local, national and transnational rural social movements and civil society networks and coalition have taken the struggle for land onto global arenas of policy making. Many of these groups, such as Via Campesina, have launched transnational campaigns to expose and oppose neoliberal land policies. Other networks are less oppositional to these mainstream policies. While transnational land campaigns have been launched and sustained for the past full decade targeting international development institutions, there remains less systematic understanding by activist groups, especially their local and national affiliates, about the actual policy and practice around land issues by these global institutions.

It is in the context of providing modest assistance to rural social movements and other civil society groups that are engaged in transnational land campaigns that this research has been undertaken and the working paper series launched. It aims to provide a one-stop resource to activists engaged in global campaigns for progressive land policy reforms. The research covers analysis of the policies of the following institutions: (1) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); (2) World Bank; (3) European Union; (4) International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); (5) UK Department for International Development (DFID); (6) Belgian Development Aid; (7) German Technical Assistance (GTZ); (8) Australian Aid (AusAid); (9) Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA).

The research is coordinated by Jun Borras (TNI), Jennifer Franco (TNI), Sofia Monsalve (Food First Information and Action Network, FIAN – International Secretariat), and Armin Paasch (FIAN – German section).

**JONAS VANREUSEL**, is the coordinator of the FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN), Belgian Section.

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For the most part of its history, the Belgian Official Development Assistance (ODA) focused on narrow agricultural productivity issues. With the slow but steady insertion of Belgian ODA into the international development community's priorities, instruments and methods, Belgium started to focus on broader rural development.

In the 1980s, little attention was paid to the effects of redistributive land reform. Belgian ODA to the agricultural sector, along with international trends, dwindled at the end of the 1990s.

The publication of the Belgian ODA's Strategy Note on Agriculture and Food Security in 2002 mentioned the importance of access to land but fell short of providing practical guidelines on how such a strategy can be carried out in reality. Special programmes, multilateral funding and NGO co-funding of the Belgian ODA have also somewhat neglected the land issue, but some interesting experiences and pressure from partner organisations show some potential for prioritising land policies.