



PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
February 28, 2007**

For more information, please contact:

Veronica O'Connor, v.oconnor@cgiar.org
Michele Pietrowski, +1-202-862-4630, m.pietrowski@cgiar.org

International Conference to Share Successful Strategies to Reduce Poverty by Improving Poor People's Access and Use of Natural Resources

Entebbe—High-level policymakers, community organizers, and experts from around the world are gathering here to discuss how to strengthen poor people's access to land and water. According to a global study to be presented at the conference, if poor people can harness these vital resources and work together to manage them more effectively, they can reduce their own poverty.

Conference participants will share success stories from studies conducted in seven developing countries—Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Uganda. The conference, “Collective Action and Property Rights for Poverty Reduction,” runs from February 28 to March 2. The meeting is organized by Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI), an initiative of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and coordinated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

“Millions of poor people depend on land and water for their livelihoods. Without secure access to these resources, they face a greater risk of losing the few assets they have and are more vulnerable to natural disasters, conflicts, illness, and similar shocks,” said Ruth Meinzen-Dick, IFPRI senior research fellow and CAPRI coordinator.

Through collective action, poor people and other disadvantaged groups, including women, build social networks that improve their access to natural resources. These efforts help to raise their incomes and foster sustainable use of natural resources.

“How can policies help strengthen the rights of poor people to natural resources? What factors contribute to more effective community organizing?,” commented Esther Mwangi, IFPRI researcher and a coordinator of the global study. “This research provides important insights that can help guide policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and community groups as they work together to reduce poverty.”

Based on the success stories, the study identifies several factors that can strengthen the rights of the poor to natural resources and contribute to more effective collective action:

- Support local activities, such as farmer-marketing groups in Kenya, which improve poor people’s access to credit, fertilizers, and other inputs that increase incomes.
- Sustain social networks that enable poor people to cope with “shocks,” including burial associations in Ethiopia, which assist members in paying for funeral and related expenses.
- Strengthen the capacity of local communities to negotiate collectively with government officials and powerful outsiders so the poor can reap the benefits of natural resources, as done in Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Uganda,.
- Clarify rights governing land and water resources used by multiple groups, such as pastoralists in Ethiopia, to help reduce conflicts and poverty.

During the conference, participants will visit the Mabira forest to learn how a local community is using collective action to conserve forests, earn income from forest-based enterprises, and prevent elite groups from exploiting resources for their own benefit, at the expense of the community. Participants will also visit a formal burial association in

Mpigi Municipality to understand how social networks can improve the welfare and incomes of poor people when faced with shocks, such as the death of a household member.

The study is the result of a three-year research project led by CAPRi and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, with collaboration from IFPRI, the Center for International Forestry Research, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, and several other international research organizations. The project aims to bring together an international team of researchers and policymakers to identify key lessons, disseminate research findings, and stimulate dialogue on these issues.

"This research reveals how poor communities across the developing world are successfully working together to reduce their vulnerability and expand their livelihood options," said Meinzen-Dick.

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. www.ifpri.org

Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRi), a CGIAR initiative, contributes to policies and practices that reduce rural poverty by analyzing and disseminating knowledge on the ways that collective action and property rights institutions influence the efficient, equitable, and sustainable use of natural resources. www.capri.cgiar.org