

THE LAND CAMPAIGN IN MOZAMBIQUE

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How it emerged and how it was organized

There existed a consensus between members of civil society that the new Bill [Law No.19/97] represented an advance in relation to the former law [Law No.6/79] and that it was urgent to pass the information about what had been achieved by it to small farmers all over the country. A group of national and foreign non-governmental organisations (NGO) associates and academics founded a National Committee in order to join forces in the dissemination of information aimed, in particular, at rural families¹. Thus, the Land Campaign emerged.

Everybody had a presupposition about the law. On the one hand, the new Land Bill represented an advancement regarding security of, access to and possession of land through the recognition of the land occupation by oral testimony. On the other hand, the effective application of the Land Bill would depend to a large extent on the knowledge rural families had about which of their preoccupations would be considered under the law.

Thus, the dissemination of the new land bill amongst producers became the common platform which was combined with approximately two hundred non-governmental organisations, churches, associations, cooperatives and other entities representing civil society which had similar preoccupations at the provincial level.

The central office announced through various media that it would launch a campaign for the dissemination of the Land Bill. A campaign representative was sent to all the provincial capitals in order to hear about their interests and about what type of reference materials they thought should be produced. In less than a month, the provincial nucleus were formed including organisational committees to support the campaign. Very early a group dynamic developed between organisations which previously did not even know each other and which were situated over a large geographical area. The combination of each organisation's individual actions was better and more effective than the simple addition of the parts.

The National Committee decided that the campaign should be decentralised and that the responsibility of each organization would be to articulate the campaign at provincial and district levels. It was decided that the Land Campaign would not substitute for the ongoing activities and would not constitute an organ, which defined land policies for civil society organisations. Thus organisations with varied and sometimes opposed political tendencies joined together to run the campaign.

The Land Campaign did not aim to substitute for the voice of the small farmers, but to inform the producers, as well as the operators and businessmen, about the rights and duties of each according to the new Bill. In other words, the Land Campaign disseminated information, but it remained up to the individuals themselves to defend themselves in the case of eventual transgressions of the Law and to define future interventionist strategies. The Campaign did not consider itself as a new NGO nor as a forum for organisations, but only as an activity limited in time to between six and nine months and with clear objectives and transparent purposes.

Thus, it was necessary that the organisational and administrative machinery should be as light and as cheap as possible. In addition to the National Coordinator an Executive Secretary was contracted. The two were the only full time staff at the central office comprising the National Committee. The organisations, which took the initiative to start the Land Campaign, had already managed to raise donor funds in order to disseminate the Law. The collective activities of the campaign, its scheduling as well as its budget were determined by the lack of dependence on only one donor, the financing from national organisations, the production of all materials in Mozambique as well as the need for trying to reduce costs without compromising its quality.

Objectives of the Campaign

Three objectives have been defined: to disseminate the new Land Law, to promote justice by enforcing the application of the new Law and to stimulate discussion between the family and the commercial sectors that occupy the same area. The Land Campaign sought to inform about land rights and duties and to stimulate group dynamics at the community level and in civil society.

A team of specialists in communications, land legislation, advocacy, media, pictures and traditional, customary rights were contracted in January 1998. In addition to their individual functions, the first collective activity was the identification of a set of precise messages, which could be clearly transmitted and would meet the expectations of the people. On the other hand, it was decided that all messages should be positive, that they should suggest alternative methods of problem solving and the defence of land rights but should not create more conflicts than the ones that already existed. These messages would be the essence of the Land Campaign.

Messages of the Campaign:

- Land Rights
- Demarcation of Land
- Women and Land
- Land: Together in Partnership
- Urban Land Rights
- Conflict Resolution

The first preoccupation was to provide information about land rights. One of the acquired rights was the oral testimony of the communities and individuals in good faith.

The right of women to land, particularly women who are discriminated against at the community level were reinforced by the new Land Bill. The Bill clearly recognises the right of the women to land by stating that both, men and women can be subject to the right of use and benefit of land. However, the traditional, customary practices only allow the access to land through the father, the husband or the maternal uncle, which impedes access to land in cases of widowhood, divorce or extra-conjugal maternity. That is why the message was oriented specifically to those women whose rights had already been violated, advising them to apply for an individual title deed or to unite with other women in identical situations in order to obtain a collective title deed. Due to the cultural diversity of the country, an anthropologist specialising in traditional, customary rights regarding land prepared a supporting text on the

theme of women and land according to traditional, customary laws for use by the provincial committees.

The right to participate in decision making was included in the message on urban land. The suggestion was made to the Municipal City Councils that citizens organise street demonstrations in order to demand a transparency in the adjudication of urban and semi-urban plots.

The Campaign also intended to inform about the duties. It was clear it was the duty of the State to consult the local population in order to confirm if an area of land was free when an individual or a business wanted to occupy it. Thus, it was a duty and an obligation to demonstrate land use in order to have the occupation rights recognised. The law provided that duties applied equally to rural families and investors.

The group dynamics, particularly those at community and organization levels, were stimulated by the message concerning conflict resolution. This message detailed the various types and levels of conflict resolution available before appealing to the judiciary including mutual agreement, mediation, other alternative solutions or petitions. Suggestions also included the completion of a form by members of the organisations so that the information about particular conflicts was made public and collective pressure could be used for conflict resolution.

At the beginning the National Committee thought that it would be ideal to create a legal assistance office for citizens whose rights were not being recognised. During the national seminar of the campaign, it was concluded that it was not only economically and technically unfeasible to have a network of lawyers assisting in the emerging land problems but it was also not desirable. It was not considered desirable because the dependency of the communities on the technicians and their expectations regarding the judiciary would be increased rather than promoting the development of endogenous organisational forms at the community level so that they could fight for their own interests and define their own priorities.

Material produced

The Campaign produced: 120.000 copies of a total of six 8-page comic books; three thousand audio cassettes with the dramatisation of the comic book scripts one side in Portuguese and the other in one of the local languages; a manual to accompany the reading of the new Land Bill with a printing of 20.000 copies; 15.000 copies of an aerogram like form for registering land conflicts, six guide-books for theatre in Portuguese and 20 national languages; 500 posters with the symbol of the Land Campaign; one supporting text about traditional, customary rights and access of women to land. All of this material was distributed to the provincial capitals using road and air transport.

A national seminar and ten provincial seminars were organised, more than a thousand letters and faxes were distributed, members of the National Committee travelled to the provincial capitals and the launching ceremony of the Land Campaign took place in Marracuene village which included countless invitees and local population. Total campaign costs amounted to 181,500 American dollars.

Several forms of dissemination of messages were identified: the comic book, the radio-theatre and the cinema. The first draft of the six comic books was presented to the National Committee and analysed jointly during the national seminar. Several alterations were incorporated, including the improvement of the drawings sequence, types of personalities and the change of two messages: the message concerning legal assistance was altered to a message on conflict resolution and the message regarding pressure on candidates in the municipal electionsⁱⁱ was changed to the demand of transparency in the adjudication of land plots by municipal city councils. During the provincial seminars local organisations were requested to suggest changes or provide additional messages to reflect realities in their provinces.

The use of a comic book instead of a written text for the rural communities was due to the fact that approximately 70% of the citizens are illiterate. The text of the comic book is in Portuguese. Granted for those who can read, they read in Portuguese, as cases of literate citizens who only know national languages are quite rare. It is for this reason that the comic books were accompanied by the audio dramatisation (radio-theatre) of the scripts, which were done in 20 national languages in addition to Portuguese. The translation of the scripts was sent to all provincial committees.

In addition, there is the *Manual to Better Understanding of the New Land Law* whose target group were the literate population at the district level: professionals, civil servants and workers from the organisations which joined the Land Campaign. It will be the task of the latter groups to take the Land Campaign to the village level, where they will act as facilitators of the individual and collective understanding of the messages and of the resolution of eventual land conflicts through the completion of land conflict forms, and accompanying future development. The role of the campaign “activist” was defined as one of facilitator of group dynamics and a vehicle in order to return the information to the communities

Finally a video was prepared representing the six comic books as a comic film to be transmitted without fee by the video cinemas, which exist in a few locations all over the country, by the national television stations and by organisations with the ability to do so.

ⁱ The group was comprised of UNAC, the National Peasant Union, ORAM, the Association of Mutual Assistance, AMRU, the Rural Women’s Union, CEA, the Centre for African Studies, CEP, the Centre for Population Studies, NET, the Nucleo for Studies in Land and Development, Action Aid, KEPa, the Centre of Cooperation Services for Development, MS, the Danish Association of International Cooperation, OXFAM UK/Ireland, Oxfam’s Joint Advocacy Program.

ⁱⁱ The Land Campaign was launched officially on the same day as the beginning of election campaigns in 33 cities and villages throughout the country on June 13, 1998.