

SYSTEMATIC  
**Knowledge and Learning**  
APPROACH



INTERNATIONAL  
LAND  
COALITION

## WHO WE ARE

The ILC is a global alliance of 152 intergovernmental and civil society organisations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and empowerment. In pursuit of this mission, ILC members, with the support of the Coalition's Secretariat, develop and implement quadrennial strategic frameworks that guide ILC interventions.

The Coalition's diverse membership comprises civil society organisations (CSOs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), and research organisations. ILC's Charter and Governance Framework defines CSOs, *inter alia*, as: Organisations of farmers, producers, women, indigenous peoples, agricultural workers, fishers, the landless, pastoralists, forest users; Other associations of rural peoples, including community-based organisations and social movements; Local, national, and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their networks; National, regional, and international research institutes.

The network is supported by an international secretariat and three regional coordination units for Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

## OUR MISSION

A global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue, knowledge sharing, and capacity building.

## OUR VISION

Secure and equitable access to and control over land reduces poverty and contributes to identity, dignity, and inclusion.

## ABOUT THIS APPROACH PAPER

With the mandate of the ILC Council, the ILC Secretariat has developed this Systematic Approach to Knowledge and Learning (SKLA), under the coordination of Annalisa Mauro and Jan Cherlet, to guide the knowledge management and learning initiatives of the International Land Coalition. It does not pretend to influence or guide the knowledge management and learning initiatives of single member organisations of the Coalition, but to build synergies among the different parts of the network, levels of actions, and types of knowledge and learning activities.

The present approach paper will be revisited with the approval of the new Strategic Framework commencing in 2016.

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# Executive summary

Since the creation of the Coalition, knowledge and learning initiatives have always been important in the coalition life. They are as diverse as: the joint collection and dissemination of land-related data, focused research, exchanges of information and experiences in meetings and online forums, capacity building workshops, marketplace of ideas, member-to-member fellowships, learning paths, or communities of practice.

However, as the Coalition's membership, intuitional setup, and political outreach grows, different stakeholders in the Coalition have suggested that the Coalition should become more systematic and strategic in its knowledge and learning initiatives.

The document proposes an approach to make the many knowledge and learning activities more *systematic*, meaning: more methodical, coherent, efficient, and better geared towards actual policy changes in line with the Coalition's mission.

The approach consists of bringing together existing assets and initiatives along five 'axes of systematisation', meant to guide the future implementation of knowledge and learning activities. For each axis, a number of systematisation tools are suggested.

**1<sup>st</sup> axis: make effective knowledge connections across levels.** Knowledge and skills need not only to be shared between members (horizontally), but also between global, regional and local levels (vertically). *Related tools: cross-cluster/cross-level reviewing; database of good practices; online monitoring of knowledge demand; forums; publication series*

**2<sup>nd</sup> axis: take advantage of capacities in the network.** Firstly, this requires the systematic mapping of knowledge resources and needs of members; secondly, understanding the information and knowledge they are willing to share; and thirdly, the skills they can put at the disposal of the coalition. *Related tools: network book 'Connecting the Dots'; horizontal mentoring through the 'Talent Map'*

**3<sup>rd</sup> axis: orient knowledge and learning activities towards change.** ILC needs to ensure that members actually adopt and embody the knowledge so that they can apply it in order to generate actual change within the policy arena. *Related tools: learning routes; trainings on knowledge for advocacy/action*

**4<sup>th</sup> axis: learn from monitoring.** Moving towards the change ILC wants to achieve is complex. As a result, ILC needs to continuously learn from its own experiences, such as projects and partnerships, in order to fine-tune its day-to-day activities, and in order to find new ways towards the envisaged change. This internal learning needs to build on the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. *Related tools: internal learning notes; thematic reports*

**5<sup>th</sup> axis: make the roles of ILC entities complementary.** ILC is a knowledge broker and this brokering requires complementarity of roles for the different entities that compose the Coalition: single member organisations, subgroups of members such as thematic working groups, regional platforms (RCUs), national platforms (NES), and the global secretariat.

# Introduction

The members of the International Land Coalition (ILC) work together to enable poor rural women and men to gain secure and equitable access to, and control over land in order to increase their food security and overcome poverty and vulnerability. The achievement of this goal requires the formulation and effective implementation of pro-poor land governance policies at the national level<sup>1</sup> that are inspired or complemented by regional and global commitments.<sup>2</sup> In order to empower members to effectively engage in these global, regional and national processes, the coalition needs to be *“a leading knowledge network on land governance and monitoring, sharing, and uptake of land-related knowledge”*<sup>3</sup>. In other words, generating and sharing information, experiences and knowledge amongst the members of the coalition is essential for the coalition to achieve its goal.

With the continuous growth of the ILC membership, it has become clear over the years that knowledge sharing is much more than a single step in the process towards policy change. Knowledge sharing and joint learning is also the lifeblood of the ILC as a global action network: it is fundamental in maintaining a vital coalition and contributing to the development of a collective identity.

Since the creation of the Coalition, knowledge and learning initiatives have always been important in Coalition life, and they are as diverse as: the joint collection and dissemination of land-related data, focused research, exchanges of information and experiences in meetings and online forums, capacity building workshops, marketplace of ideas, member-to-member fellowships, learning paths, or communities of practice. However, as the Coalition's membership, intuitional setup, and political outreach grows, different stakeholders of the Coalition have suggested that the Coalition should also become more systematic and strategic in its knowledge and learning initiatives.

Indeed, a growing membership entails an increasing diversity in knowledge, experiences and skills, which will help the Coalition to advance the understanding of complex land matters and innovate action for land governance. That being said, this rich diversity has not yet been fully taken advantage of.

Moreover, the institutional setup of the Coalition is also becoming more decentralised and articulated. The Coalition consists of 152 individual member organisations, while for institutional purposes they are commonly grouped in five platforms, representing different constituencies. Three of these platforms –the African, Asian and Latin American and Caribbean constituencies– are supported by decentralised Regional Coordination Units. The entire Coalition is supported by the global Secretariat. The role of each of these different entities in knowledge production, knowledge sharing, and learning needs to be clarified.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Objective 1 of ILC's current strategic framework (2011-2015).

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Objective 2 of ILC's current strategic framework (2011-2015).

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Objective 3 of ILC's current strategic framework (2011-2015).

The knowledge and learning activities of the Coalition are also situated at different levels. Some activities such as capacity building, specifically focus on individuals (e.g. fellowships) or organisations (e.g. learning paths). Other activities involve the entire coalition (e.g. marketplace of ideas). Finally, some ILC activities also target the Coalition's environment, especially during global and regional land forums, when the Coalition shares knowledge with decision makers. The activities at these different levels have been undertaken in absence of a systematic approach.

Finally, ILC exists within a broader system of actors. Some instances of inter-organisational learning that included non-members proved to be very fruitful and innovative (e.g. Land Portal, Land Matrix). Also these extra-organisational knowledge activities emerged and evolved without a systematic approach.

The many knowledge and learning dimensions and opportunities described above need a more systematic approach, meaning more methodical, coherent, efficient, and better geared towards actual policy changes in line with the Coalition's mission.

Box 1: Glossary of the terms used in this approach paper

WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT – THE SUBSTANCE	WHAT WE DO WITH IT – THE ACTIONS
<p><b>information</b> Facts or data about an observable event or entity (e.g. data about large-scale land acquisitions)</p> <p><b>knowledge</b> Information that is elaborated in such a way that it can inform action; it can be explicit knowledge (e.g. a manual) or embodied knowledge (e.g. how to interact with policy makers)</p> <p><b>explicit knowledge</b> Knowledge that has been or can be recorded (e.g. as text) and can be transferred</p> <p><b>embodied, implicit, or tacit knowledge</b> Knowledge that is hard to record or transfer</p> <p><b>skill, competence</b> The embodied ability to do something, including the application of knowledge (e.g. the application of Gender Evaluation Criteria to evaluate a policy); a skill or competence can be learned and taught but not shared or transferred</p> <p><b>capacity</b> The embodied ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully; capacity supposes the acquisition not only of knowledge and skills but also a vision (e.g. the capacity to lobby the government); a capacity can be developed, not taught or learned</p> <p><b>talent</b> A skill, competence or capacity considered to be superior to that of peers and certified by results</p>	<p><b>production (of information or knowledge)</b> The act of organising and recording information or knowledge (i.e. making explicit) in a transferable form (e.g. the production of a database, article, manual)</p> <p><b>legitimisation (of information or knowledge)</b> The act of demonstrating, endorsing or increasing the credibility of information or knowledge; this makes the information or knowledge more likely to be picked up or shared by third parties</p> <p><b>sharing (of information or knowledge)</b> The act of exchanging information or explicit knowledge between two or more individuals or organisations</p> <p><b>learning</b> The act in which one individual or organisation acquires or develops knowledge or a skill</p> <p><b>co-learning, social learning</b> The act in which two or more individuals or organisations jointly acquire or develop knowledge or skills through a joint experience</p> <p><b>capacity development</b> The process whereby people, organisations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time</p>

# Needs assessment

A critical assessment of ILC's knowledge and learning efforts shows significant opportunities for systematisation. The six needs that are listed below are the condensed synthesis of several such assessments carried out by different stakeholders:

- (i) recommendations made in the *mid-term review* of the current Strategic Framework<sup>4</sup>;
- (ii) discussions of the mid-term review in the *Coalition Council*<sup>5</sup>;
- (iii) review by the *Secretariat* of knowledge and learning activities in the 2014 Work Plan;
- (iv) members' expectations regarding knowledge and learning, expressed in various surveys<sup>6</sup>.

The following six "needs" for improvement in knowledge management and learning emerged:

**1. Need to map knowledge resources and knowledge needs in the Coalition.** One of the main reasons why organisations join the Coalition is to learn from and share experiences with others. However, there is no systematic screening and recording of the knowledge assets, experiences and skills that each member organisation has to offer, nor of their needs in these areas. In addition, as the membership grows, the diversity in assets and needs also increases – and this currently not mapped in a systematic manner.

**2. Need to clarify ILC's ambition as knowledge producer or broker.** When ILC *produces* knowledge, it is usually produced by individual members, partnerships of individual members, or external experts. *Dissemination* is usually done by the secretariat, the regional coordination units, or the single members. While there is an added value to knowledge produced by ILC (a merger of multiple perspectives) as well as to knowledge produced by members (very specific perspectives), the different roles of both types of knowledge need to be specified. The mid-term review suggests that the ILC secretariat could act as knowledge broker, dedicated to creating and sustaining an up-to-date infrastructure through which relevant available knowledge could be easily prioritised and shared.

**3. Need for knowledge and learning activities to be geared at policy change.** Much information and knowledge is produced and shared, but there is little follow-up of their effective use in advocacy and in generating change. Still, the ultimate goal of the coalition is to provoke policy changes at national level in line with the Coalition's mission. More efforts are needed to track the usefulness of knowledge activities and more efforts are needed to accompany members in the effective adoption and use of knowledge.

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<sup>4</sup> Mid-term review of the 2012-2015 Strategic Framework, carried out by consultancy company MDF <http://www.landcoalition.org/en/publications/independent-mid-term-review-strategic-framework-2011-2015>.

<sup>5</sup> The 23<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting, 2-3 June 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Survey amongst members at the Learning Day of the 2013 Global Land Forum; survey amongst members in the framework of the 2016-2020 Strategic Framework formulation; analysis of the application letters of prospective member organisations in 2013.



**4. Need to create knowledge flows between national, regional and global processes.**

Access to relevant knowledge is key in shaping convincing advocacy efforts, whether it is at national, regional or global level. Currently, knowledge and experience at national level are captured only to a limited extent in order to inform advocacy activities at regional and global level, and vice versa.

**5. Need to decentralise knowledge and learning activities.** Most of the ILC-branded knowledge and learning activities are initiated and facilitated by the global secretariat. Currently, the coalition has very few tools or instruments at its disposal for member-to-member knowledge exchanges or co-learning without the mediation of the secretariat.

**6. Need for a systematic internal learning.** There is a need for internal learning and learning from past activities – not only about land-related issues, but also about advocacy, policy processes at different levels, and the use of knowledge in advocacy. The monitoring and evaluation system currently used by ILC is mainly geared towards accountability, rather than internal learning.



Sharing experiences at the 2013 Global Land Forum in Antigua, Guatemala



# Five axes for a systematic approach

ILC already works with a wide range of knowledge assets and mobilises knowledge and skills through various learning initiatives and knowledge management tools. However, it is clear from the needs assessment that ILC can improve its capabilities for learning and knowledge sharing through systematisation. The approach consists in converging existing knowledge resources and tools along five 'axes of systematisation' meant to guide the future implementation of knowledge and learning activities. For each axis a number of tools are suggested.

## 1<sup>st</sup> axis of systematisation: make effective knowledge connections across levels

Knowledge and skills should not only to be shared between members (horizontally), but also between global, regional and local levels (vertically). National monitoring, research, capacity building and evidence-based advocacy will inform the regional level of action. Regional monitoring, research, capacity building and evidence based advocacy will inform national and global levels of action. Global initiatives, monitoring and research will capture main messages emerging from the other levels of actions and will develop policy recommendations to inform not only global but also national and regional processes.

The five tools that underpin the 1<sup>st</sup> axis of systematisation are:

**Cross-cluster/cross-level reviewing.** The ILC secretariat is organised in three main clusters: Global Policy and Technical Cluster (GPTC), Global Network Coordination (GNC) and Administration and Planning (APC). Global initiatives, managed at secretariat level by the GPTC Cluster, are reviewed by the Network cluster, in order to find possible links. National and regional initiatives coordinated by members, RCUs, or the GNC are also screened by the GPTC cluster for links.



**Database of Good Practices.** The ILC secretariat is developing a Database of Good Practices to collect and disseminate the experiences and lessons learned by ILC members and partners in promoting people-centred land governance (PCLG). The case studies will be used in different learning activities of the coalition, such as the global and regional land forums as well as local learning routes, and will inform members during the inception of new projects and programmes.

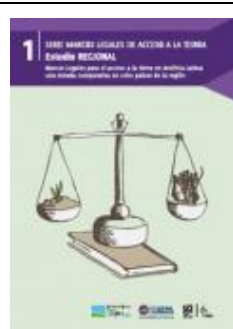
**Online monitoring of knowledge demand.** The knowledge demands of the land community will be monitored by systematically tracking the users' behaviour on online platforms (ILC Web, Land Portal, Land Matrix, regional webs). A periodic monitoring report (e.g. quarterly) will summarise the most frequent search queries, most downloaded documents and typical browsing behaviour.

**Regional and global land forums.** The importance of regional and global land forums in creating connections across levels and entities in the Coalition is hard to underestimate. Members, thematic member sub-groups, the global secretariat, regional coordination units, and external stakeholders interact in an organic way, establishing cross-level connections.

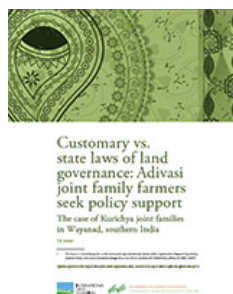
**Publication series:** ILC develops knowledge products of different kinds. The production can be led by a member, a consortium of members, the secretariat, or a mix of these. The goal can be to produce and disseminate new knowledge, to collect existing knowledge around a specific theme, to digest and legitimise existing knowledge, or to turn existing knowledge in something actionable. Therefore the secretariat manages various publication series that can accommodate these different types of knowledge products. These publication series make cross-level connections: they bring members' experience to the global level, and vice versa, they translate existing or complex knowledge into actionable tools or policy recommendations. All ILC publications are published under the *Creative Commons* license and available for free, both in print and in digital form. A complete overview of all publication series is given in Box 2.

Box 2: Overview of publication types

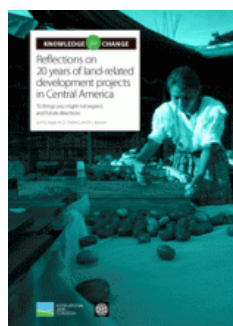
	<p>The <b>Framing the Debate</b> series was created to facilitate a deeper understanding of land governance debates in one geographical or thematic area. Renowned land experts are commissioned by the Secretariat to give a complete overview of existing knowledge on key land issues that is accessible for a wide audience, by framing this knowledge according their own view, without ignoring views. The issues aim to build a better understanding of land governance debates and to trigger further debate and study.</p>
	<p><b>Case Studies</b> and <b>Manuals/Tools</b> are two types of publications that are directly based on the experiences of members and/or linked to the Database. Case studies tell the successful experiences and good practices of members. The case studies are linked to the ten commitments of the Coalition. Manuals/Tools are based on the lessons learnt from these experiences in order to provide guidance to other members. The Manuals/tools can be on topics as diverse as land monitoring, advocacy, rangelands, or human rights.</p>



**Global and regional thematic series** are tailored to the particular needs of specific ILC initiatives, such as: women's land rights initiative, the commercial pressures on land research project, indigenous peoples, or the international year of family farming. The publications in these series are generated by members and partners and are used to feed into the different advocacy levels, from the national through the regional to the global level.



**Policy Briefs** are based on knowledge in specific areas of land Governance that is accepted and legitimised by (a majority of) the Coalition members. They provide policy recommendations that are aimed at influencing policy development and reforms. This publication type is also a tool for making knowledge more 'actionable' (axis 3).



The **Knowledge for Change series** provides an outlet for knowledge products, including videos and other forms of multimedia, that give special consideration to the rural poor, both men and women, grassroots communities, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. They emerge from the members themselves. This publication type is also a tool for making knowledge more 'actionable' (axis 3).

The **Land Digest** is a new series, proposed by the research-based member organisation of the Coalition. Each issue will collect and digest existing research, produced by ILC members and non-members, in one specific area. It is different from the Framing the Debate series because the latter is meant to introduce a public of non-experts to the land debates in a geographical or thematic area, while the Land Digest is more focused on a stock-taking and digestion of research. Since it builds on the capacities of the research-based members of ILC, it is also a tool in support of axis 2.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> axis of systematisation: take advantage of the capacities in the network

ILC embraces a huge diversity of organisations that possess different types of knowledge, experiences and capacities. To take advantage of this diversity, the knowledge resources and needs of members need to be mapped, along with the skills they can put at the disposal of the coalition.

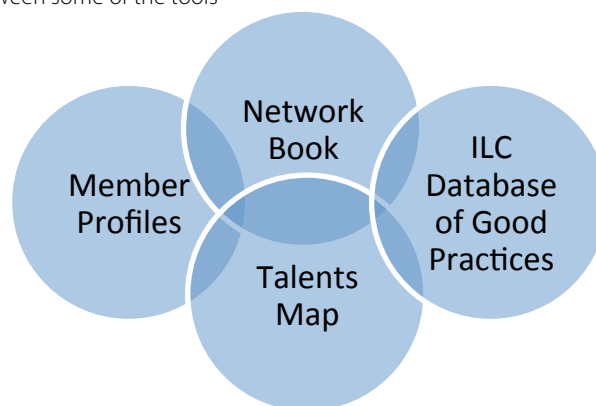
While the mapping of resources and needs is relatively straightforward, tools and instruments will need to be devised to effectively address the needs and effectively take advantage of the resources. This includes the prioritization of knowledge needs and a translation of these needs into activities; the matching of the resources of some members (knowledge offer) with the needs of other members (knowledge demand); and the facilitation of horizontal mentoring.

The principal tools that underpin the 2<sup>nd</sup> axis are:

**Network Book 'Connecting the Dots':** The need to move from a membership identity to a network identity is prompted and facilitated by the creation of an ILC Network Book. Membership information currently lacks consolidation and cohesion, as well as lacks the ability to prompt horizontal mentoring and collaboration. In order to mend these gaps and rectify inconsistencies, member profiles will include basic information, as well as strong visual data and personal testimonies, so as to create a more intimate understanding of the members and to understand how they can best work together. It is a long-term initiative and will be periodically updated (e.g. after each membership expansion) to reflect the changing nature of the coalition.

**Horizontal mentoring through the 'Talents Map':** A tool for the visualisation and linking of talents in the coalition, called the 'Talents map', will be used for facilitating horizontal mentoring within the network with the aim of building capacities that are effectively supporting the implementation of PCLG. The use of the Talents Map will include a system of incentives that are translated at global, regional and national level. The modality of interaction among ILC members can go from voluntary support, mentoring to consultancy and technical assistance.

Figure 1: Linkages between some of the tools



### 3<sup>rd</sup> axis of systematisation: orient knowledge and learning activities towards change

ILC should not only facilitate knowledge *production*, knowledge *sharing* and *learning*. ILC needs to ensure that members actually *adopt* and *embody* the knowledge so that they can *apply* it in order to generate actual *change* in the policy domain. This means that ILC will increase its efforts in the application of knowledge, skills and capacities and the development of capacities. The knowledge and learning activities need to incorporate this goal right from the design phase: all knowledge and learning activities need to be geared at maximising their potential to generate change.

The principal tools that underpin the 3<sup>rd</sup> axis are:

**Learning Routes or similar:** Developed and implemented by ILC member PROCASUR, the learning route is an innovative tool for capacity building. It is tailor-made to a specific theme or to specific learning objectives in the area of rural poverty eradication. It is innovative because it is based on the experiential exchange and interaction with local ‘champions’, who in effect become trainers to their peers. The knowledge that is adopted and embodied by the participants of the learning route is made actionable at the end of the route through the development of an innovation plan. The innovation plans and their impacts are the actual outcome of a learning route.

**Trainings on knowledge for advocacy/action.** ILC has experience with, and plans to scale up, training formats that enable participants to apply knowledge for advocacy or to apply knowledge for policy change. A workshop on the use of open data for advocacy and the workshops on the use of GLTN’s Gender Evaluation Criteria are good examples. A similar training format is going to be developed in the framework of ILC’s National Engagement Strategies to ensure effective adoption and use of knowledge.



#### 4<sup>th</sup> axis of systematisation: learn from monitoring

The pathways towards the change that ILC wants to achieve are complex. Therefore, ILC needs to continuously learn from its own experiences, such as projects and partnerships, in order to fine-tune its day-to-day activities and in order to find new ways towards the envisaged change. This internal learning necessarily needs to build on the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. While until recently the M&E system was mainly focused on accountability, the entire system has been revised in order to serve the double goal of accountability and internal learning.

The principal tools that underpin the 4<sup>th</sup> axis of systematisation are:

**Internal learning notes:** The internal learning notes are based on a cross-analysis of several M&E reports, in order to learn lessons on one specific topic, theme or process. They are the main tool for translating monitoring into learning. Around 2-4 internal learning notes are produced per year and they are principally meant for internal learning. Forthcoming learning notes will (most probably) focus on the National Engagement Strategies (NES) and on Land Monitoring and Indicators.

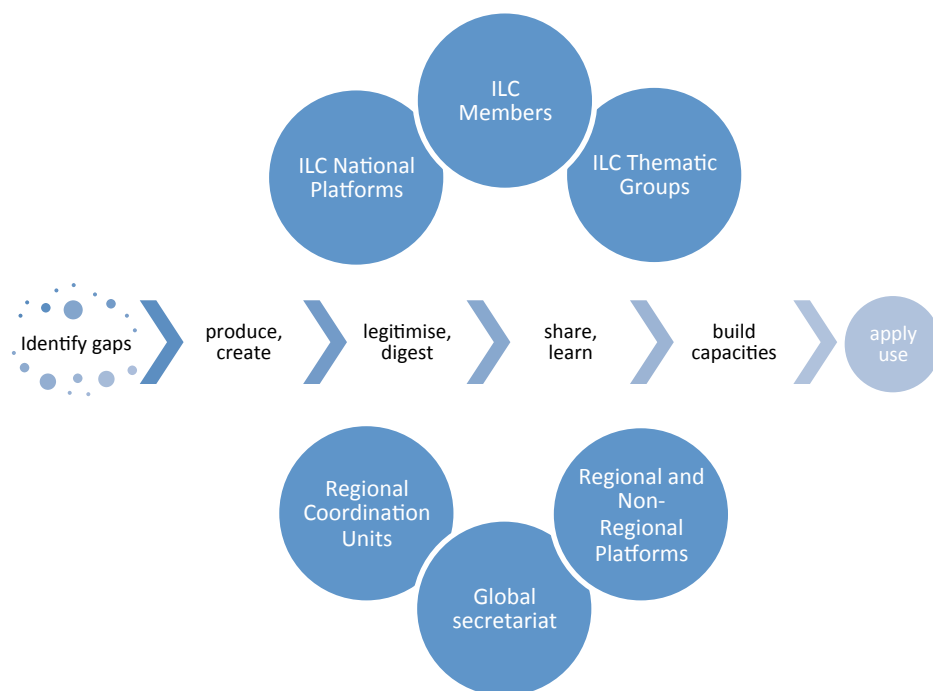
**Thematic reports:** The thematic report is the condensed product of a cross-analysis of all M&E reports and knowledge products in a specific thematic area (e.g. Indigenous Peoples, or Women's Land Rights). One thematic report is produced per year and it is meant for wide dissemination, in and beyond the Coalition.

## 5<sup>th</sup> axis of systematisation: make the roles of ILC entities complementary

The mid-term review team recommends that ILC become a 'vibrant global meeting place' for knowledge legitimisation, exchange and learning, in which the secretariat plays the role of knowledge broker (such as the transformation of information into knowledge) and puts at the disposal of the members state-of-the-art knowledge management infrastructure (for dissemination and interaction).

However, this knowledge brokering requires complementarity of roles for the different components of the Coalition: the member organisations, subgroups of members (such as thematic working groups), the regional platforms (RCUs), the national platforms (NES), and the global secretariat. The different roles are: the identification of knowledge/capacity gaps, the production or creation of knowledge, the legitimisation of existing knowledge (e.g. knowledge produced by single members), knowledge sharing, learning, capacity development, and the application of knowledge/capacities for the sake of provoking policy changes.

Figure 2: The different ILC entities and different steps in the knowledge cycle: links that need to be defined



# What next

The aim of this document is to change the habitual thinking about knowledge production, sharing and learning in the Coalition and to better articulate the processes that underpin them. To achieve this aim, the document proposes an approach (the SKLA) that is organised along five axes of systematisation. The approach is flexible – it does not propose a rigid knowledge management system, but at the same time it is concrete – for under each axis, it lists a number of tools that will help the systematisation.

This document is only the start of a longer journey to improve and systematise knowledge production, sharing and learning in the Coalition. The SKLA needs to be linked to the internal monitoring & evaluation system of the ILC (which in the process of being improved), to a Coalition-wide communication strategy (which is in process of being developed), and to the new Strategic Framework of the Coalition that will take off in 2016.

The SKLA will already become active in 2015, with the setup and implementation of some of the new tools that accompany it. But its final aim is to influence the formulation and implementation of the new Strategic Framework. After the approval of the new Strategic Framework in 2015, the approach will be integrated in the Road Map, where the links between monitoring, learning, knowledge sharing and communication will be made explicit and optimised in order to serve the objectives of the new Strategic Framework.