

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **RISD enters strategic alliance with the Office of the Ombudsman**

19<sup>th</sup>/01/2010: Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development (RISD) will today sign an indefinite Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Ombudsman, establishing a partnership to jointly fight land related injustices and monitor whether implementation of land reform programs aimed at providing more security for land rights are appropriate and fair.

Given that majority of Rwandans depend on land for their livelihood, the number of land related disputes have constantly been on the rise. And, with land being the engine for Rwanda's economic and political development, any such disputes only slow down the country's development process.

The new alliance will see RISD which has experience in implementing strategies to solve land disputes at local levels join efforts with the Office of the Ombudsman which has among its mandate prevention and fighting against injustices.

According to the Office of the Ombudsman, land related disputes constitute about 90 percent of the total cases they deal with.

“We are convinced that in order to intervene effectively, there is a need to partner with civil society organisations like RISD, given its long-term experience in the area of land related research, and land related technical dispute management, “Tito RUTAREMARA, Rwanda's Ombudsman said.

A part of Rwanda's Land Tenure Regularization Process (LTRP), RISD successfully completed the implementation of the pilot phase of the Land Dispute Management Project (LDMP) in 2008 in the districts of Gasabo and Musanze. During this phase, local level institutions including mediators, land commissions and land committees were strengthened in managing land related disputes appropriately and fairly. RISD also carried out public information awareness on land rights and obligations.

In 2009, RISD used the pilot phase experience and worked in ten more districts. Over the next two years, RISD has committed to rolling out the programs to all the 30 districts in close partnership with the Ombudsman's Office.

“If the local institutions have the right skills and knowledge to manage land related disputes and the population is aware of their land rights and obligations, then the Rwanda National Land Reform process will be implemented successfully, fairly, peacefully and justly, which is a critical path to sustainable development,” Bishop Nathan KAMUSIIME GASATURA, Chairperson, Board of Directors, RISD said.

RISD and the Office of the Ombudsman will focus their partnership on programs that will enable Rwandans understand the laws and regulations related to land, while paying special attention to protecting the land rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups.