

Energy

Energy investments in contested landscapes in Asia

A. Rationale

Regional trends show greater investments in non-renewable sources such as coal, as well as in renewables such as hydropower and biofuels that rely on oil palm and sugar cane. The majority of energy systems are land-based, and their expansion leads to large spatial footprints that can drastically alter landscapes, resulting in large scale social and environmental impacts caused by land clearing, relocations and population resettlement, and waste disposal.

These pressures, combined with pressures from a growing human population in need of food, fiber, accommodation and recreation, results in land use conflicts that require careful consideration of risks and trade-offs in order to avoid irreversible harm to people and the environment. These challenges are particularly acute in fragile and contested landscapes, where ownership and land rights are weak or unclear.

Under this theme we seek to explore ways to ensure equitable (SDG5, SDG10) and sustainable uses of land resources (SDG15) while striving to achieve affordable and clean energy (SDG7) for all. The goal of regional events on this topic is to address the current dynamics of land use and energy investment in the region and gather current knowledge while sharing best practices.

B. Important keywords

Clean energy, energy investment, land conflict, land tenure, land title, gender, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, marginalized groups, trade-off, innovation, technology and finance.

C. Sub-themes

- 1) **Laws, policies and practices:** The state has a powerful role in land use decisions and can broker negotiations during conflict. Under this sub-theme, we seek to explore the laws, policies and planning strategies of different countries in the Asia region that have successfully managed conflict and minimized impacts.
- 2) **Ethnic and cultural landscapes:** Land has deep cultural meaning for many communities in the region, providing both subsistence and identity. Though many energy investments and concessions are on ethnic and cultural lands, these communities rarely reap the benefits of such projects. Under this sub-theme, we seek to explore experiences and community level efforts (legal, activist, etc) that have sought to resolve land conflicts. What are the trade-offs with competing development needs for food, fiber and accommodation? What about ecosystem functions?

3) Innovations in science, technology and finance: Energy investments through CSR (corporate social responsibility), sustainable business policies or other means can minimize conflict. Under this theme, we seek to explore private sector experiences aimed at minimizing conflict. What are the major energy investments in the region and where are they? What risks do these investments pose and to whom?