Panel: Large Scale Land Acquisitions in India: New Act with Old Challenges

Organized by: University of Cambridge & Ekta Parishad

Large Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) has been a critical subject of public debate across the world and has particularly drawn attention from various stakeholders in the last decade. Low and middle-income countries have been on the frontline of these discussions, trying to identify sustainable and equitable solutions to address the multi-faceted challenges around land governance that affect local farming and indigenous communities. In particular, land acquisitions in India and China have primarily been for industrial, infrastructure and urbanization purposes in the last decade, and in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, there are additional pressures due to large-scale agricultural plantations. Making land acquisition work in a way that is transparent and fair has become a key development issue, and there is growing concern that people’s association to their land and livelihood are being undermined by current processes. However, the social and economic progress of any developing countries depends on resolving land conflicts, converting customary rights into statutory law and making compensation mechanisms work in the interests of project affected people.

Unresolved conflicts over land tenure significantly augment the financial risk for projects, as well as their overall potential to contribute to local and national development. Many LSLA projects in resource rich economies in Asia, Africa and Latin America are stalled or have been withdrawn due to delays in land acquisition, social conflicts, ecological concerns, and cost overruns among other issues. Although, land tenure issues are too complex for individual project developers to resolve independently, mitigating social and financial risks provides a strong incentive for the governments to contribute to clarifying and securing tenure rights, improving compensation policies and addressing the overall impact of land acquisition on locally affected communities.

About the session

This session will deliberate on the scale of stalled investments in India and the primary drivers of land conflicts across India. It will throw light on the procedural challenges and experiences with the implementation of RFCTLARR Act 2013. It will also share learnings from an ongoing research project titled- ‘Fair Community Benefits and Equitable Land Governance’ – that focuses particularly on two critical research questions around large scale land acquisitions: (i) Developing ‘fair compensation’ models; and (ii) Articulating a Rights Recognition Framework for the ‘Occupants’ on the common land. The research team is working closely with government and civil society actors to develop an improved land governance framework, and to explore ‘sustainable solutions’ for local communities to secure their lives and livelihoods. The panel will have a representation from State Government, Academia, Corporations, Civil Society and Judiciary.
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Date and Time: 11:00 – 12:30 hrs | 2 March 2020
Venue: India International Centre, New Delhi