



One land, many generations -

A snapshot of land conflict: past, present, and future

2025 Philippine Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report

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Disclaimer

The views contained in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the EU.

List of acronyms

ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
BARRM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)
CADT	Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title
CALABARZON	Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon
CARL	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CLUP	Comprehensive Land Use Plan
CSO	civil society organization
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAR	Department of Agrarian Reform
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DHSUD	Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development
EU	European Union
FPIC	free, prior, and informed consent
GOCC	Government Owned or Controlled Corporation
HRV	human rights violation
IP	Indigenous people
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act
KAISAHAN	Kaisahan Tungo sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan at Repormang Pansakahan
LGU	local government unit
LJI	Land Justice Initiative
LRCM	Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring
MGB-DENR	Mines and Geosciences Bureau - Department of Environment and Natural Resources
MIMAROPA	Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MWSS	Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
NAPC	National Anti-Poverty Commission
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
NGO	non-government organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NIPAS	National Integrated Protected Areas System
NLUA	National Land Use and Management Act
PCIJ	Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism
PO	people's organization
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
UNGP-BHR NAP	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights - National Action Plan

Introduction

In this 2025 edition of the Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring report, 19 new cases were added to the existing database on land conflicts maintained by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). Of these added cases, two arose in 2025. None of the previously recorded cases from the 2023 database was resolved and hence, remain in the database.

This underscores two main points in land conflict cases.

First, the present legal framework is inadequate to address the concerns of the rights-holders. While there may be existing laws that declare the policy to protect rights-holders, the implementation, enforcement, and remedial measures fall far too short of the desired outcomes.

Second, there are many land conflict cases that remain unmonitored or unreported. Indeed, there were cases added to the 2025 edition that are over 20 years old. It is important to stress that the resolution of cases must be to the satisfaction of the rights-holders and not what any other person believes suffices.

The study acknowledges that many challenges remain. Stakeholders should come together, look at the data, analyze the problem, and together come up with immediate to long-term solutions.

Land Conflict Monitoring Initiative in the Philippines

In 2014, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), in collaboration with the Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF) and the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development (UP-CSWCD), prepared a report identifying resource conflicts in the Philippines, focusing on actors, causes, intensity, impacts, and resolution strategies using secondary materials from civil society organizations (CSOs) and government agencies.

By 2018, ANGOC and Land Watch Asia produced reports on land conflicts in several countries, including the Philippines, emphasizing the nature, causes, impacts, and responses to these conflicts.

The 2020 Philippine Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring (LRCM) Report adopted a systematic methodology, involving peoples organizations (POs) and CSOs in data gathering, analysis, and recommendations, which were presented to government agencies in collaboration with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). Then the 2021 report updated the land and resource conflict database, and a case profile form was developed as a tool to help in gathering of cases from the communities.

This tool was used for the subsequent 2023 Philippine LRCM Report. In 2023, the framework and methodology for monitoring were enhanced, and in collaboration with Philippine CSOs, POs, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), the indicators, categories, and their definitions were further refined.

The 2024 LRCM Report presents updated data on affected populations, conflict actors and drivers, human rights violations, and community responses. The request for government data was coursed through NAPC and the findings were validated through multi-stakeholder and inter-agency consultations jointly organized with NAPC and CHR.



Land and resource tenure reforms have long been instituted in the country, manifesting a rights-based approach to poverty reduction and social equity. The 1987 Constitution signalled the enactment of key tenure reforms, particularly the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) of 1988 and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997.

However, the full impact of agrarian reform has been dampened by a general lack of rural infrastructure and support services for farmers and small producers. In many cases, property rights remain unsettled, with disputes relating to program coverage and land valuation, landowner resistance, and harassment. National poverty level is at 23.7 percent and remains largely rural and agricultural.¹

Meanwhile, there has been a continuing conversion of agricultural lands, combined with a reduction in the average farm size. The Philippines is a growing net importer of agro-food products; it was the world's second largest importer of rice in 2021. Agricultural land resources remain under constant strain from natural disasters, population growth, and urbanization.² Rural and agricultural poverty continue to drive internal migrants to seek employment opportunities in urban areas. Today there is a swelling urban population, an estimated 43 percent of whom live in informal settlements.³

There is no official statistics on landlessness.

An estimated 20 to 30 percent of the population live in classified forestlands, and depend on forests, farmland and fishing waters for their homes, food and livelihoods. They include indigenous peoples, many of whom are without security of tenure. Although there is no comprehensive census of forest dwellers, an estimated 17 to 22 million people who depend on forests have no legal tenure rights (Fortenbacher and Alave, 2014).

The lack of access to land amidst high levels of inequality, continues to be a key driver of conflict and an impediment to national development. Rural poverty continues to fuel a decades-long Communist insurgency, and Moro/ethnic tensions in Mindanao.

Most of the country's key biodiversity areas are part of the ancestral land and/or domains of indigenous peoples (IPs) where they have claims. Some of these claims have been granted ancestral domain/land certificates/titles (CADTs/CALTs). IPRA provides IP communities with a legal mandate to utilize and manage resources within their ancestral lands and domains. However, the recognition of traditional governance remains largely ceremonial, and is still not fully institutionalized among local governments and government agencies. Meanwhile, land rights of indigenous peoples are continually being threatened by mining, logging, quarrying, and by the expansion of private & public investments, including plantations and settlements.

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases/nid/162541>

² As cited in De Vera, Quizon and Ravanera (2022). Land, Life and Livelihoods: A Scoping Study on Land Tenure Issues in the Philippines. Study prepared for IFAD.

³ 2018 data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?locations=PH>

Compounding the situation, in September 2025, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. signed a new law allowing foreigners to lease land for up to 99 years. In a bid to boost investment, Republic Act 12252 amended a 1993 measure that limited land leases to 50 years, renewable once for up to 25 years. The law aims to create “a flexible and dynamic policy” to attract foreign investment in industrial estates, factories, processing plants, tourism, and agriculture, among others.

Overall, Philippine land laws lack an integrated approach to the governance of tenure, making land administration complicated. There are numerous land-related laws that have been enacted at different periods that span several decades. And while new laws and amendments are passed, the old laws are *not repealed*, allowing some old laws or provisions to retain their *residual validity*. The land classification system is outdated, and there is no final delineation of the forest line.⁴ Along with cases of corruption in the private and public spheres, this may lead to community land disputes and conflict.

For this edition of the report, the following definitions were adopted:

- **Case:** A case shows the basic information (type of land/resource, area, location, etc.) for a set of competing relationships between at least one community and at least one stakeholder over a land or resource, where such conflicting claims relate to control and rights to decision-making over the land or resource, within at least one or multiple, but connected storylines.
- **Criminalization:** Criminalization refers to the act of State agents of transforming and interpreting a person’s legal behavior into an offense punishable by law, either through legislation, administrative and judicial decisions, or law enforcement.
- **Drivers of land conflict:** Drivers of land conflict are activities where an adversarial claimant may reduce the enjoyment by persons or local communities of their land rights.

In addition, there were further tweaks made in the data as can be seen in the following:

- The indicator *Eviction, Displacement, and Work Termination* was limited to Eviction and Displacement to emphasize the involuntary separation of the victim from her/his land.
- The indicator *Detainment/Legal Arrest or illegal detention, and criminalization* was disaggregated to separate criminalization, which is more closely related, if not the same, as red-tagging.

Certain terminologies were also changed for accuracy. For instance, “primary sources” now include field-based data since these cases consist of those gathered on the ground or those databases that can be considered official, such as trial records of court cases. The use of the term “slum dwellers” was also halted and the indicator only refers to “informal settlers.” This report also adopted the use of “State security agents” rather than “armed agents of the State” to accurately present these persons’ role in government.

⁴ As cited in De Vera, Quizon and Ravanera (2022). Land, Life and Livelihoods: A Scoping Study on Land Tenure Issues in the Philippines. Study prepared for IFAD.



This 2025 edition of the LRCM Report provides updated information on the: a) affected populations and areas, b) adversarial claimants and drivers of land and resource conflict, c) incidents of human rights violations and reported perpetrators, and d) responses of affected communities.

Specifically, this study seeks to:

- present the prevalence and types of land and natural resource conflicts;
- analyze the nature and causes of land and resource conflicts;
- explain how communities respond to conflict, and how conflicts are resolved/being addressed; and,
- present recommendations to prevent and address such conflicts.

Methodology and data sources

This 2025 Philippine Land and Resource Monitoring Report used field-based and secondary data sources.

Field-based sources comprised four percent (21 out of 539) of the total data sources; the rest were secondary sources.

Secondary data were sourced from mainstream news media (print, online), written accounts, as well as online platforms and websites of POs, CSOs, and government. There were also data coming from professional organizations and the academe.

In 2024, cases sourced from CSOs/NGOs accounted for 44 percent. For the same period, 35 percent of the data sources were mainstream media reports, including those found in newspapers, online platforms, and news broadcasts. Access to this data source increased to 41 percent in 2025. Cases found online were included only if they were published by credible sources. To validate the reliability and accuracy of the reports, the names, dates, locations, sizes of contested land or resources, and parties involved were cross-referenced with other sources.

Government sources accounted for 12 percent in 2024, but compared to 2025, it only accounted for about 11 percent of the secondary data sources. In addition, there were no cases gathered from the judiciary or the CHR in this 2025 report.

However, information coming directly from the community remains low at four percent. Only one additional case was reported directly by communities for this edition of the report.

ANGOC's existing database of previously documented land conflict cases⁵ was also reviewed and revalidated through online research for updates, progress, or non-progress of the cases. This continued to provide the bulk of information for the 2025 Report.

Table 1 shows the distribution of main data sources used in the study.

⁵ Database used for the earlier 2024 Land Conflict Monitoring Report.

Table 1. Sources of information for the cases

Source	Number	Percentage (%)
Mainstream media (print, online, radio)	223	41
CSO/NGO	217	40
Government agencies, institutions	56	11
Professional organizations and academe	22	4
Community, community-based organization	21	4
Total	539	100

For the older cases that were sourced from CSOs, the validation process involved direct consultations with the respective CSOs to check on the status of the case, i.e., whether the land/resource conflicts had been resolved, or whether they were ongoing.

Resolved conflicts pertain to the elimination of the conflict where the parties — the rights-holder and the adversarial claimant — no longer have contradictory claims on the land or resource. However, resolved conflicts do not include final adjudicated court cases where the rights-holder may remain unsatisfied.

This is so because a case does not end with the judicial resolution of an action filed in court. A case may be resolved through extra-judicial measures such as the executive branch changing its policy on land and resources or the legislature passing a law for the benefit of rights-holders.

In the report, if the specific area in conflict could not be determined, or informed estimates could not be made, it was reported as *no data available (nda)*. As a result, the number of cases reported does not correspond to the areas indicated in the data. In cases of conflicting or unverifiable data, government estimates and conservative figures were used.

The data gathered covered the period from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. The information was rechecked, validated, and compiled, and then encoded, processed, and finalized.

It should be noted that this study does not purport to provide a complete picture of land and resource conflicts for 2025. Many land conflicts continue to be undocumented and unreported. Thus, the validation process will continue to make future monitoring reports more reflective of the true situation on the ground.

Scope and limitations

This study presents data on land conflict cases that were reported in 2025. These include *ongoing* land and resource conflicts in 2025, and incidents of human rights violations (HRVs) related to specific cases of land and resource conflict that occurred in the same year.

A perennial challenge encountered in the monitoring reports was the difficulty in securing data from government agencies. In requests for information, the government agency either took time to respond or replied that the data requested was still being processed or encoded. There were many instances where government simply did not gather data for specific types of information.



Main findings

Affected populations and areas

A total of 281 cases of ongoing land and resource conflict in 2025 were covered by this report. These cases involved 796,586.68 hectares and affected 109,208 households (see Table 2). This increased from 262 in 2024, pointing to the fact that there are still many unaccounted cases in the previous monitoring activities. In the cases that were added in the database, only two started in 2025. In addition, it should be noted that there was no resolved case, and hence, none was removed from the database.

Table 2. Total number of cases, area contested, and households affected by land and resource conflicts, 2025

Ongoing cases	Number
Total number of cases	281
Total number of hectares contested	796,586.68
Total number of households affected	109,208

The ageing of cases is a reminder of the systemic problems that allow land and resource conflicts to persist. There are also 127 cases of unknown duration or about 45 percent of the cases. Even in the 19 newly monitored cases, 10 have unknown durations. Many of these cases pertain to landlord-tenant conflicts in sugar plantations in Negros, the fourth largest island in the Philippines. There is no information however, on when the conflict started.

Of the 281 cases, 73 have not been resolved for over 20 years. If the number of cases aged 10 years or more are counted together, there are 119 cases accounting for 77 percent (119/154) of all the cases with known duration. Of the nine cases added to the database with known duration, four have lasted for over ten years. They include cases that have been ongoing for 45, 33, and 32 years.

Table 3. Duration of Conflicts in Terms of Number of Years

# of Years	Number
Less than two years	7
2 to less than 5 years	10
5 to less than 10 years	18
10 to less than 15 years	30
15 to less than 20 years	16
20 years or more	73
Unknown	127
Total	281

Table 4 shows that the majority of land conflicts involve smallholder agriculture and farm lands accounting for 168 out of the 281 or 60 percent of total cases. Six cases were added from the 2024 data and consequently increasing the affected area from 63,551.67 hectares to 74,204.67 hectares or an increase of almost 17 percent.

Conflicts that involved ancestral domains and indigenous peoples (IPs) comprised the second most numerous land conflict cases, at 18 percent. However, in terms of the size of the affected area, conflicts involving ancestral domains ranked first, comprising 81 percent of the total affected area.

Water/fisheries resources were the third major type of resource affected by conflict, both in the number of cases and size of affected area. Specifically, 52,933.09 hectares of water/fisheries resources, including coastal and inland waters, were affected. Some of these were found in: a) the coastal areas of Bulacan Province in Central Luzon, proposed site for the construction of an international airport; b) tourism areas in Palawan (MIMAROPA Region) and Iloilo (Western Visayas Region); c) mining/quarrying activities in the rivers of Zambales and Marinduque; and, d) land reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

There were four cases added to the data from the 2024 cases involving waters and fisheries. This constitutes an increase of 20 percent in the number of cases that are being monitored. This also corresponds to an increase of almost 13 percent in terms of affected area.

Table 4. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts

Type of land/resource	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)	Contested area (in ha)	Percent of contested area (%)
Smallholder agriculture/farming	168	60	74,204.67	9
Indigenous people/customary land/ Ancestral domain	51	18	646,994.83	81
Water/fisheries resources	24	9	52,933.09	7
Housing and settlements	17	6	157.29	0
Smallholder agroforestry and people's plantation	15	5	13,453.62	2
Common lands/Public lands managed by the community	6	2	8,843.19	1
Total	281	100	796,586.68	100

Note: The largest area under dispute is the Teduray-Lambangian case involving IP lands in BARMM, covering 208,258.68 hectares. The case with the second-largest contested area is the San Manuel case in Pangasinan, involving the San Roque Dam and covering 8,500 hectares.

Ancestral domains, as defined by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), encompass not only land but also inland waters, coastal areas, and natural resources therein. One particular case pertains to 51,855 hectares of ancestral waters in Calait Island in Coron, Palawan, the rights to which are being disputed by the IP group Calait Tagbanwa and municipal fishers.

To clearly show which resource was particularly affected by conflict, the report disaggregated ancestral waters (being the primary use) from ancestral domains. Conversely, ancestral waters were counted as part of the ancestral land where water resources were not the dominant use threatened by the conflict. Thus, from Table 4, where the 51,855 hectares of ancestral waters were excluded, the area of waters increased to 104,788.09 hectares when the Calait case was included.



Table 4a. Conflicts involving land and waters, by number of cases and total area contested (in ha)

	Number of cases	Total area contested (ha)
Land/land resources	256	691,798.59
Water/fisheries resources	25	104,788.09
Total	281	796,586.68

Note: The water/fisheries resource include one case involving disputed ancestral waters in Coron, Palawan, covering 51,855 ha.

In terms of sectors, farmers are the most frequently affected by conflict, at 64 percent of the cases. Indigenous peoples (IPs) were the second most affected sector, at 19 percent of the cases. Fisherfolk were the third most affected sector, at nine percent of the cases.

Table 5. Primary sector or community affected by land or resource conflict, by number and percent of cases

Primary sector or community affected by conflict	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)
Farmers: peasants (landless smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, lessees, small owners)	181	64
Indigenous peoples (IP)	52	19
Fisherfolk	24	9
Informal settlers	12	4
Tenured residents	11	4
Non-IP forest users, pastoralists	1	0
Total	281	100

The term “farmers” must be used to more accurately describe such sector affected by conflict. These farmers are different from the romanticized idea of a farmer promoted by land developers that sell 1,000 square meter “farm lots” to city dwellers. The farmers referred here are smallholder farmers, most of them do not even own the land they till; and, their land tenure is often at risk of being terminated at any time together with their livelihood.

Adversarial claimants and drivers of land/resource conflicts

With regard to adversarial claimants, 37 percent of all cases involved private companies. In 32 percent of the cases, politicians, businessmen, landlords, and former government officials or public officers were the adversarial claimants. Conflict among settlers, migrants, refugees, and other community members, takes up 12 percent of the total cases. When all private interests are added, they comprise 81 percent of all adversarial claimants.

Government units, agencies, and State enterprises comprised the third largest proportion of adversarial claimants, at 12 percent. If all government instrumentalities were added, they would comprise 17 percent.

Table 6 shows the adversaries faced by land and resource rights-holders.

Table 6. Adversarial claimants in land conflict, by number and percent of cases

Adversarial claimants	Number of cases	Percent of cases (%)
Private companies	104	37
Powerful individuals (e.g., politicians, businessmen, landlords, officials/ex-officials, ex-military)	91	32
Community vs. community (residents, settlers, migrants, refugees)	33	12
Government agencies and State enterprises	34	12
Local Government	7	2
Both National and Local Governments	6	2
Military, police, armed forces	4	1
Others	2	1
Total	281	100

Drivers of land conflict include private-led investments or enterprises. These may be in the form of industrial farms or agri-business that operate plantations; mining and quarrying; and real estate. These result in displacement, destruction, or dehumanization that lead to conflict.

Drivers also include landlord-tenant conflicts and conflicting claims between communities or sectors. Government programs may also drive land conflicts when there is lack of due process, policies that do not take into account the welfare of people, or displacement of people from their homes and livelihoods. These may come in the form of public utilities, infrastructure projects, land reclamation, special economic zones, and housing & urban developments, that drive rights holders from their land.

In terms of drivers of land and resource conflict, the highest number of cases (about 41 percent) involved private-led businesses. In fact, of the 19 new cases added to the data, 12 were driven by private businesses. Cases pertaining to landlord-tenant or agrarian conflicts were second (35 percent), while cases of conflicting claims between communities and other sectors comprised about 12 percent of the total. Note, however, that under private led businesses, agribusiness/plantations comprised about 14 percent of the total cases, while mining constituted about 12 percent.

In terms of affected area, conflicting claims between communities and sectors accounted for the largest share (44 percent), followed by cases involving private-led business enterprises (36 percent), and government projects (16 percent). Significantly, 17,000.66 hectares were added to private-led enterprises and 4,535 hectares were added to landlord-tenant conflict from the 2024 data.

Conspicuously, mining is listed under private-led business, and not under government-led business or State enterprises as a driver of conflict. Under Philippine law, the government or the State owns all mineral resources; private companies enter into mineral agreements with it in order to extract the natural resource. In essence, mining activities in the Philippines are a joint venture between government and a private entity. This category alone comprises about 22 percent of the total land area affected by conflict.

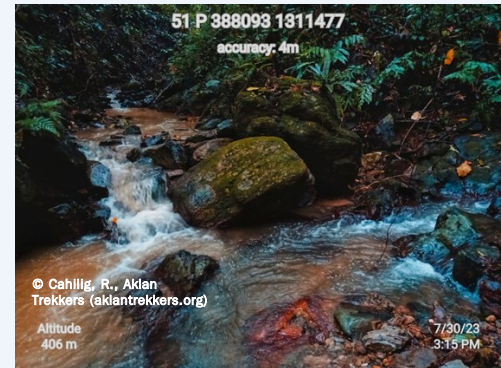
Table 7 summarizes the drivers of land and resource conflict in the documented cases and the affected area.

Box 1. Land and Resource Conflict in Renewable Energy Expansion

Wind energy is viewed as a clean energy alternative to fossil fuels. Government has promoted the pursuit of alternative sources of energy.

However, residents of Malay, Aklan oppose the expansion of the Nabas wind energy project by PetroWind Energy due to concerns about adverse effects on the Nabaoy River.

Aklan Trekkers, an environmental CSO tasked by the LGU to monitor the effects of the construction, documented adverse consequences on the waters of Malay. They saw coastal waters turn into brown from blue after a downpour as runoff from the mountains brought loose soil down from the construction sites. They also recorded silted water in the streams in the mountains. The adverse effects were already foreshadowed by the Nabas Phase 1 wind energy project which caused irreversible damage to the Napaan River and watershed.



The project also affects the biodiversity in the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park. Aside from flora and fauna, endangered species inhabit the natural park. They include the Visayan Warty Pig, Philippine Macaque, Negros Bleeding Heart Dove, and Visayan Tarictic Hornbill.

Even businesses have opposed the project. The water utility Boracay Tubi Services recounted the poor environmental record of PetroWind dating back to Phase 1 of the project. It pointed out that PetroWind had faulty siltation ponds as silt flowed into the waters. The water utility's pumping stations had to be shut down due to the silt. Furthermore, fresh water shrimps were wiped out because of the silt in the river.



This renewable energy project is not the first controversial one facing the communities of Malay - a hydro-electric project involving the construction of two dams, waterways, and an underground powerhouse. The project is to be undertaken by Strategic Power Development Corporation which promises to bring 300 megawatts of power into the grid. Incidentally, the project falls within Barangay Nabaoy, the namesake of the river and watershed sought to be protected by the residents of Malay, which is also their source of water.

Objections to the hydro-energy project include encroachment into sacred ground of the Ati indigenous peoples and the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park. The affected area covers community-based eco-tourism sites such as the Nabaoy River and the Nagata Falls. The communities also contend that there were no sufficient consultations regarding the project.

While sourcing energy from alternative sources and not from fossil fuels should be done, such efforts must not compromise environmental protection. The adverse environmental effects cannot be simply shifted from the left pocket to the right, so to speak. In addition, consultation, especially with IP communities must be performed with full respect for the FPIC requirement under the law. In short, private business should not be greenwashing their economic activities with profit as the only objective.

Table 7. Drivers of land and resource conflict, by number of cases and contested area (in ha)

Drivers of conflict	Number of cases	Contested area (in ha)
Private-led enterprises	114	287,609.11
• Mining, quarrying	33	173,527.63
• Logging and tree plantation	4	
• Agribusiness, plantations	39	59,072.14
• Property/housing/real estate development	17	1,870.99
• Industry/manufacturing/production	6	597.35
• Power generation and transmission	6	4,748.00
• Tourism, ecotourism	8	41,793.00
• Others	1	6,000.00
Government projects/programs	30	130,351.95
• Public infrastructure (including roads, bridges, airports, ports)	7	11,850.00
• Public utilities (dams, power lines, power/energy, irrigation, etc.)	8	100,882.40
• Military facilities	1	
• Social housing, urban development	2	2,304.58
• Special economic zones	3	11,965.00
• Land reclamation	6	3,326.14
• Others	3	23.83
Landlord-tenant conflict/Agrarian conflict	1	23,271.77
Conservation/Protected Areas and “No Go” Zones	1	3,719.00
Conflicting claims between communities/sectors	33	351,634.76
• Overlapping tenure and use	31	340,624.76
• Encroachment (e.g., migrants, settlers, refugees)	2	11,010.00
Others	4	0.09
Total	281	796,586.68

Responses of affected communities

Conflict resolution, through local or direct negotiations, a government administrative mechanism, or judicial courts, human rights bodies, or legal adjudication, made up about 70 percent of the different forms of known community responses to conflicts. This may indicate a continued trust in the legal systems of the Philippines. Peaceful demonstrations and non-violent acts were the second most favored recourse for communities, at around 28 percent.

The percentages were computed based on the number of known responses at 365. It should be noted that about 20 percent (91 out of 456) of the cases have no known response to the adversarial claimants. This is crucial in the monitoring process to determine what remedial measures the communities have availed themselves of.

The data indicates that communities hardly resorted to retaliation, suggesting the preference for peaceful methods. But there were three additional incidents of retaliation against the adversarial claimant were reported in 2025. Two of these cases were retaliations against demolition teams in urban settlements.

Table 8. Responses to conflicts by communities

Responses of Communities to Conflicts	Number
Seek conflict resolution	254
<i>through government administrative mechanism, NHRI, courts or other legal adjudication</i>	185
<i>through local or direct negotiations</i>	69
Peaceful demonstrations/non-violent acts	101
Withdrawal/escape	4
Retaliation	5
No information available	91
Others	1
Total	374

Note: Communities may take one or more approaches in response to conflict, resulting in the total number of responses exceeding the number of cases. The chosen responses reflect the mechanisms or platforms that are more accessible to the communities.

Table 9 shows that the government was practically the only party that undertook any corrective action, and it did so in 22 percent of the cases. However, no corrective action was taken in almost 50 percent of cases. The ratios would be higher if only the cases with known responses were considered.

It needs to be emphasized that “corrective action” refers to an adversarial claimant’s *efforts* to explore possible resolutions to the conflict. It **does not** indicate the full resolution of conflicts.

Meanwhile, there is no information on as many as 27 percent of the cases, and it is likely that no action was also taken in these cases.

Table 9. Corrective actions to address the conflict

Were there any corrective actions taken to address the conflict?	Number
Yes	67
<i>by the Government/State</i>	63
<i>by agreement with the adversarial party</i>	0
<i>by third party</i>	4
No/Not yet	137
No information available	77
Total	281

Incidents of human rights violations and reported perpetrators

Table 10 shows the tally of HRVs related to land and resource conflicts that were reported in 2025. For 2025, 13 incidents of HRVs were committed against 28 individuals while at least 312 households were affected in 21 incidents of HRVs in their communities.

Table 10. Human rights violations (HRVs)

Incidents of HRVs	Number Incidents	Number of Victims
Against individuals	13	28
Against communities	21	At least 312 households
Total	34	

The cumulative number of HRVs, where an individual would have been subjected to multiple violations is not recorded, only the last HRV experienced was recorded. Thus, the victims of murder may have experienced red-tagging and intimidation prior to being killed, but such incidents were not counted. There were 13 incidents of HRVs involving 28 individuals (15 females, 13 males). Half of the victims (nine males, five females) were illegally detained. Five individuals (four females, one male) were either physically threatened or intimidated while four females were injured, three persons were evicted (two males, one female), and two individuals were killed (one female, one male).

Table 11. Forms of HRVs committed against individuals based on number of incidents and individual victims

Type of HRVs	Number of incidents	Number of individual victims		
		Male	Female	Total
Physical threat and other forms of intimidation	4	1	4	5
Detainment; illegal detention; and criminalization	3	9	5	14
Eviction, displacement, work termination	3	2	1	3
Killing/Murder	2	1	1	2
Physical injury/assault	1	0	4	4
Total	13	13	15	28

Box 2. Hidden Iceberg Report 2025

ANGOC studied human rights violations (HRVs) linked to land conflict committed against indigenous, land, and environmental defenders (ILED) in the Philippines during the period 2020 to 2024. The study focused on non-lethal attacks against ILEDs.

The study found that incidents of arbitrary detention and displacement had gone down dramatically, a shift from their peak in 2020. However, new types of attacks have been observed. The study described to more covert repression through legal and digital platforms.

From the middle of 2022 to 2024, the study found the increasing use of the law to file fabricated and spurious cases against ILEDs. The Anti-Terrorism Act and the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act have been weaponized against rights defenders.

On digital platforms, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) continues to use its counter-insurgency mandate to label activists as terrorists or members of armed communist groups.

The study found that the attacks have left indigenous peoples and women increasingly more vulnerable to the above-mentioned types of attacks. Digital defamation appears to also target youth activists.

The study also found out many non-lethal attacks are actually precursors to more harmful and fatal incidents against ILEDs.

The study found that in 2020, the 80 individuals who were red-tagged also subsequently suffered HRVs ranging from illegal detention, killing, or abduction & disappearance. About 28 percent of the red-tagged victims were killed.

While the number of HRVs went down through 2024, red-tagging continued to be a precursor to illegal detention, killing, or disappearances.

In 2023, one victim was detained, three victims were killed, and five disappeared. All of them were red-tagged. In 2024, one victim was illegally detained and three were abducted. Again, all of them were red-tagged prior to suffering the more severe HRV.

Source: Naungayan, M. J. E. and Marquez, N. D. E. (2025). Hidden Iceberg Report 2025: Five-Year Retrospective Analysis of Non-Lethal Attacks on Indigenous, Land, and Environmental Defenders in the Philippines (2020 to 2024). Asian NGO Coalition

Table 12 shows the distribution of the HRVs committed against individuals based on the reported perpetrator. They were either State security agents (military or police) or unidentified assailants. They could also be private armed groups.

The majority of the incidents of HRVs (54 percent) were perpetrated by State security agents. These perpetrators are the same persons that rights-holders usually look to for protection. It is also worrisome that there were three incidents that involved unidentified assailants. This means that the victims would not be able to find relief until their assailants are identified.

Table 12. Reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals based on number and percent of incidents

Reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals	Number of incidents	Percent of incidents (%)
State security agents (police, army, or military)	7	54
Private companies, private armed groups	3	23
Unidentified assailants	3	23
Total	13	100

Table 13 shows the number of incidents of HRV against communities and the number of affected households. Three incidents of HRV against informal settlers affected 212 households while incident of HRV against farmers affected 100 households. There were no reports of HRV incidents against IPs, fisherfolk and tenured residents.

Table 13. Communities affected by HRVs based on number of incidents and affected households

Communities affected by HRVs	Number of incidents	Number of affected households
Farmers	1	100
Indigenous peoples	4	nda
Fisherfolk	3	nda
Tenured residents	3	nda
Informal settlers	3	212
Others	7	nda
Total	21	312

As per Table 14, five incidents of destruction of crops/properties affected 212 households while three incidents evicted 100 households. There were six incidents of physical threats and intimidation; three incidents were recorded for destruction of habitats; and an incident of forcible entry without FPIC (free, prior and informed consent) happened. However, there were no reports on the number of affected households related to these HRVs.

Table 14. Type of HRVs committed against communities based on number of incidents and affected households

Type of HRVs against communities	Number of incidents	Number of affected households
Eviction, displacement	3	100
Destruction of crops, homes, property	5	212
Destruction of habitats, pollution	3	nda
Forcible entry/entry without FPIC	1	nda
Physical threat and other forms of intimidation	6	nda
Others	3	nda
Total	21	312

One fourth of the reported perpetrators of HRVs against communities were government (five out of 21 incidents), specifically as State security agents. Seven incidents of HRVs consisting of 33 percent of all cases were committed by private companies or private armed groups.

Table 15. Reported perpetrators of HRVs against communities based on number and percent of incidents

Reported perpetrators of HRVs against communities	Number of incidents	Percent of incidents (%)
Armed agents of the State (police, army, or military)	5	24
Private companies, private armed groups	7	33
Others	9	43
Total	21	100

Developments in 2025

Passage of Republic Act No. 12252

Republic Act No. 12252 became law in September 2025 and amends provisions of the Investors' Lease Act. The law now allows foreigner investors to lease land up to 99 years (Section 2) when previously it was only for 50 years. Nevertheless, the law mandates that such land should only be used for the registered purpose of the investment.

While there are safeguards in the law including one that states that provisions of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) shall be respected, land conflicts may arise with the amendments. With the law geared towards attracting foreign investments, the influx of foreign businesses may increase the conflicts that rights-holders face against the private sector.

Flooding and Corruption in Flood Control Projects

In the on-going corruption controversy in flood control projects, those involved have been shown to have stolen billions of pesos from public funds that were meant for flood control projects. Aside from this, there are also massive losses to agriculture. The Department of Agriculture (DA) opined that the annual losses of

up to 600,000 metric tons of rice due to flooding would have been mitigated with effective flood control measures (Pelonia, 2025).

While corruption in infrastructure has been a focus of the investigations, land use also became a subject of discussion. Landslides and inundation of low-lying areas caused by overdevelopment or improper land use brought the issue of land use to fore. In particular, the construction of high-end hillside condominiums in Cebu, which was cited as a probable cause of the massive flooding, became an example of improper land use (Flores, 2025). Thus, this issue makes the passage of the National Land Use Act more compelling.

Election of Advocates

The 2025 elections brought to the Senate and House of Representatives a number of advocates for land rights and farmers or for human rights in general. This is an opportunity to push for the passage of certain laws and for these elected officials to sponsor the relevant bills or even initiate investigations on land conflict and HRVs.

Recommendations

Based on the data above, the circumstances that give rise to land and resource conflicts persist. Agrarian reform has not been fully implemented. IPs remain vulnerable and not only is FPIC not complied with, but government policies and private actions contradict IPRA.

There are numerous instances of overlapping claims to land that have not been resolved by specialized administrative agencies. The data shows that most conflicts arise from private-led activities, yet these activities are issued permits and licenses by government. In fact, a new law in 2025 allows foreign investors to lease land for up to 99 years.

In addition, these private entities do not lift a finger to resolve or attempt to resolve the conflict. Also, there is generally a lack of readily available data on land conflicts, making it difficult to determine, for instance, how many cases have been resolved by courts or other agencies.

In view of these observations, the following actions are recommended:

For Government:

In practically all situations of land and resource conflicts, government is found to have a direct or indirect hand. Even in instances where private investment was the main cause of the conflict or was implicated in an HRV, their actions could be traced to government action and policy.

Apart from laws, the Philippines has many regulatory bodies that issue licenses and permits; not counting local government units which have duplicitous regulatory authority. Nonetheless, land conflict persists because of regulatory loopholes and even corruption.

- **Implement and enforce laws to protect rights-holders**

The data show that many of the land conflicts arose simply because laws were not followed. A prime example are farmers who have yet to enjoy their land despite decades since being identified as agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). Another example are the many instances of non-observance of the FPIC requirement under IPRA.

Thus, in land conflict cases, government needs to take action. While the data also show that it is the one that mostly performs corrective action on conflicts, if government only implements and enforces laws and regulations, the land conflicts would not even arise. In short, implementing the law, and if there are gaps or loopholes, following the spirit of the law, preempts the land conflict from developing.

The current administration through the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) needs to complete the awarding of the remaining lands covered by agrarian reform. It also needs to resolve overlapping lands claims that have given rise to land conflicts between farmers. The same should be done for the registration of ancestral lands. In 2023, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) only issued 1,531 CADTs and CALTs (IWGIA, 2024).

The government should also enforce a coherent policy that complies with land laws. While it is laudable that the government is pursuing alternative sources of energy to power the country, this thrust should not undermine IPRA and threaten communities.

For instance, the streamlined mining application in the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) designed to cut the processing of permits from seven years to two is seen to increase violations of the FPIC requisite. The streamlined process fosters a parallel system wherein the application process would move even without complying with some requirements like the FPIC (IWGIA, 2025).

Even business activities ultimately designed to save the environment have also become sources of conflict. Two cases involve enterprises geared toward alternative sources of energy. One land conflict case involves residents of Malay, Aklan who oppose the expansion of the Nabas wind energy project by PetroWind Energy due to concerns about adverse effects on the Nabaoy River. Wind energy is viewed as a clean energy alternative to fossil fuels.

To this day, projects are being pushed in ancestral lands without securing the required FPIC. In September 2025, indigenous peoples opposing hydroelectric power plants to be constructed in Kalinga sought to stop the FPIC process. They alleged that the proper procedure has not been observed, as the community was never consulted (Dumlao, 2025).

Government cannot cite benefits from its policies while rights-holders suffer. There is a way where economic development and environmental protection are pursued without trampling on the rights of others to enjoy their land and resources.

In incidents of HRVs, the data show that many of these were perpetrated by State security agents. Government should act swiftly to restore trust in its security agents. Those who perpetrate HRVs must be disciplined and made liable, otherwise, these government agents will continue to commit HRVs with impunity.

- **Pass laws that protect land and human rights**

There are many proposed legislations that would fill the gaps and address issues regarding land rights. Many of the land and resource conflicts mentioned above may be addressed through laws. It is the whole of government, including Congress, that needs to take action to make protection of land rights comprehensive and effective.

Government should use the present clamor to enact laws that protect land rights. For instance, the flood control issue also brought proper land use to the fore. Hence, it is an opportune time for government, both national and local, to pass the National Land Use and Management Act or update the LGU's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

From the data, with many powerful people, like local politicians, being part of the adversarial claimants to land, the Anti-Dynasty Law should also be supported by government. While the campaign for its passage is mainly to curb corruption, it would also help in the protection of rights-holders since many of the powerful people who are adverse claimants in land conflict cases are part of such dynasties.

The data on HRVs also call for the enactment of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act. Under this, those who advocate and fight for human rights would be protected and find justice when victimized by HRVs.

Other laws that need to be passed include:

- ⇒ An Act Mandating the Completion of the Land Acquisition and Distribution Component of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program
- ⇒ Agribusiness Ventures Arrangements in Agrarian Reform Lands Act
- ⇒ National Land Use and Management Act
- ⇒ Human Rights Defenders Protection Act
- ⇒ Anti-Red Tagging Act
- ⇒ Indigenous Communities Conserved Areas and Territories Act
- ⇒ Philippine Mineral Resources Act

- **Compel the private sector to respect land rights**

The data show the crucial role that the private sector plays in land conflict cases. The private sector has emerged as the major adversarial claimant and driver in land conflict cases. Moreover, the data shows that the sector does not take corrective action to alleviate or resolve the conflict. In addition, the private sector is often recorded as a perpetrator in HRVs.

As already established, government has its hand in virtually all land conflicts. Thus, it also has the power to compel the private sector to comply with laws and regulations. Government must withhold permits and

licenses and cancel those already issued to non-compliant enterprises. In addition, government should investigate and prosecute erring private persons who violate land laws and who commit HRVs.

Government agencies with rule-making powers can also promote respect for land rights by institutionalizing a Human Rights Impact Assessment as part of the submissions for land-related development or projects (ESCR, 2023). This may go hand in hand with mandating a Human Rights Due Diligence for big business as prescribed by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP-BHR).

These steps may ensure that businesses follow the law and respect land rights.

For the Commission on Human Rights:

- **Strengthen the education of rights-holders concerning their rights and available remedies and reliefs**

Rights-holders continue to be confused, and they also express helplessness regarding the enforcement of their rights. They lack knowledge on the rights they have and more importantly, on how to seek redress for the violations they suffer.

As the data show, not all communities respond by filing cases or seeking resolution through legal means. The CHR should increase the knowledge and capabilities of rights-holders. This would enable the rights-holders to respond appropriately, particularly through the legal system, and not be frustrated when pursuing their peaceful protest actions.

- **Monitoring and investigating land and resource conflicts, especially red-tagging incidents**

The CHR, as the primary government agency that advances human rights, should heighten its activities in monitoring and investigating human rights violations. It should first institutionalize a monitoring mechanism for land rights. Relationships between duty-bearers and rights-holders in land and resource conflicts are tense.

Having a monitoring system established for land rights is important since monitoring improves the protection of human rights (OHCHR, 2011). Moreover, cases discovered or monitored by the CHR should be shared by them since in this study, no case was sourced from the CHR.

Pursuant to its mandate under EO No. 163, series of 1987, the CHR has the power on its own to conduct investigations of violations of civil and political rights. Thus, it does not need to wait for a complaint to initiate investigations.

- **Continue advocating and asserting to the national government the duty to protect human rights**

The CHR should likewise encourage legislators to pass crucial bills that protect human rights and reduce land and resource conflicts. These crucial bills are enumerated above and the CHR should make its position known on these important pieces of legislation.

For Business:

- **Businesses should comply with laws and government regulations**

Businesses should rigorously comply with laws and regulations. Even if there are gaps and loopholes in the law, businesses must respect the spirit of the law and not escape compliance through semantics or legalese.

For instance, mining companies have often recognized false tribal leaders in order to appear compliant with the FPIC requirement (Almeda, et al., 2023), but obviously, this is not compliance with the law. Businesses must abide by the intent and spirit of the law.

With the Philippines touted as the second-best investment destination for renewable energy and the government promoting this industry, businesses should protect rights-holders and not paint their business activities as being green.

There have been many concerns in this regard with 291 wind power projects approved as of April 2025 (Haribon 2025). These projects may adversely affect forests, watersheds, and protected areas like the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape and the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve and affect water supply and increase flooding (Haribon 2025). Thus, businesses undertaking these projects must also observe laws and regulations and respect land rights of affected communities.

- **Act in good faith and observe corporate accountability**

Businesses must adhere to the spirit of the protection of rights-holders. Businesses should not enter into contracts without including provisions that protect the rights-holders. Agreements with farmers should be fair to them and businesses should understand that between them and the farmers, the latter have more to lose.

While there are laws in place to regulate business activities, many of these are minimum standards. Businesses are free to impose upon themselves other duties and responsibilities that promote human rights. Businesses may conduct their internal human rights impact assessment or conduct human rights due diligence to see if their operations would adversely affect communities or result in land or resource conflict.

For Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):

- **Organize vulnerable communities and individuals and empower them in protecting and defending their rights to land and resources**

Many rights-holders do not know their rights to begin with. Thus, CSOs need to provide the proper knowledge and assistance to vulnerable communities, especially when government is slow to respond to their needs, or worse, if government itself infringes on the rights of individuals and communities.

CSOs also are more trusted by communities with whom they have worked over long periods. They usually also personally know the members of the community. They can encourage communities to initiate cases or pursue other avenues for relief.

- **Push for passage of laws**

CSOs must continue to campaign for the passage of relevant laws. The National Land Use and Management Act is often mentioned. CSOs should also push to protect themselves through the passage of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act.

With the ongoing investigations on corruption in infrastructure projects, the negative effects of political dynasties were highlighted. This prompted a push to pass an Anti-Dynasty Law and bills are now pending in the legislature.

In a study by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), 71 of 82 governors are members of political dynasties. Powerful individuals, oftentimes members of political clans, are usual adversarial claimants as shown in the study. There are also members of political families who own vast plantations and export processing zones. Many also have interests in mining or protect businesses that violate FPIC or those that do not adhere to ecological practices. Thus, communities must stop electing members of political dynasties. The politicians' interests run counter to the community. It is therefore time to remove their influence through relatives in government by communities not supporting them.

- **Improve monitoring and reporting on land and resource conflicts and HRVs**

The government is unreliable in monitoring and reporting on land conflict and HRVs for reasons ranging from reluctance to release data, red tape or simply because it does not collect the data needed. For instance, the request for government data for this study had to be coursed through the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).

As of this writing, the main source of land conflict cases for monitoring is mainstream media. While there is a process of validation to ensure that reports are legitimate, there are cases that media fails to cover.

CSOs have their ear to the ground. They are also trusted where community members are hesitant to report incidents to state agents. CSOs also have the ability to accurately relay information that may be lost through transference. It is no coincidence that the bulk of the data was gathered through various CSOs.

End note

The data reflect many problems in land and resources governance in the Philippines.

But any improvements in processes give communities hope that their cases would sooner or later be resolved.

Focusing on the ages of the cases in the database would trigger frustration in the system, and rightly so. Land justice indeed continues to be a pipe dream for many of the rights-holders in this report.

Nevertheless, this initiative helps in pushing for continued reforms and action by the various stakeholders. ■

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The 2025 Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring (LRCM) Report shows that many land conflicts in the Philippines continue to rise and a large number of them remain unresolved for decades, exposing weak enforcement of laws that should be protecting smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples, and fisherfolk. A total of 281 cases of ongoing land and resource conflicts in 2025 were covered, involving 796,586.68 hectares and affecting 109,208 households. It calls for urgent collective action to ensure rights-based, participatory and accountable land conflict resolution.

