

In Defense of Land Rights: Fourth Edition

Tracking land conflicts: evidence and insights for policy and action



**A monitoring report of land and resource
conflicts in five Asian countries, 2025**



Cover design and image: OpenAI (2026) Gemini and Chatgpt, April 12, 2026 version

Citation:

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). (2025). *Tracking land conflicts: evidence and insights for policy and action — A monitoring report of land and resource conflicts in five Asian countries, 2025. In Defense of Land Rights: Fourth Edition.* ANGOC.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, GLTN, UN-Habitat, and ILC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The country reports were prepared by:

- Bangladesh: A.K.M. Bulbul Ahmed, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD)
- Cambodia: Nhek Sarin, STAR Kampuchea (SK)
- Indonesia: Benni Wijaya and Molisna Naibaho, Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA)
- Nepal: Sarita Lama, National Land Coalition (NLC) and Jagat Deuja, Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC)
- Philippines: Geminiano Sandoval, Jr., Nathaniel Don Marquez, Marianne Jane Naungayan, and, Aquilina Galang-Onesa, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)

ANGOC expresses its appreciation to the valuable feedback provided by the country authors and Antonio B. Quizon in preparing this regional summary report.

ANGOC acknowledges the financial contribution for the preparation of the country monitoring and regional summary reports by the European Union (EU), Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and International Land Coalition (ILC).

This initiative contributes to the evidence-based advocacy work of ILC in Asia. As part of the Rural International Civil Society Organizations Cluster work plan of the GLTN, ANGOC supports the Network in its efforts to promote dialogue and targeted interventions that prevent land conflict escalation and protect vulnerable communities from land dispossession and marginalization in South and Southeast Asia.

ACRONYMS

ALRD	Association for Land Reform and Development
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
CBO	community based organization
CSO	civil society organization
CSRC	Community Self-Reliance Centre
GLTN	Global Land Tool Network
HRV	human rights violation
ILC	International Land Coalition
KPA	Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria
LWA	Land Watch Asia
PO	people's organization
SK	STAR Kampuchea
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Legend

The following abbreviations are used in the tables and figures throughout this regional summary report:

BGD:	Bangladesh
CAM:	Cambodia
INDO:	Indonesia
NEP:	Nepal
PHI:	Philippines
ha:	hectare
HH:	Household
Inci.:	Incident
Indiv.:	Individuals
F:	Female
M:	Male
No.:	Number



Overview

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reiterated in 2015 a universal truth that land is essential for the enjoyment of other rights, from shelter and food to human dignity and security. And as many people or communities attach their collective identity on the land, it also carries dearly held social, economic, political, and cultural rights. The human rights dimensions of land intersect with diverse issues such as poverty alleviation, development, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, disaster prevention, and urban and rural planning.

In Asia, land and resource conflicts may be traced to enduring historical injustices, inequitable access to land and resources, faulty and weak implementation of past land and resource reforms, clashes of statutory and customary tenure systems, and the lack of human rights of the disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors (Quizon, 2013). Urban development initiatives can exacerbate socioeconomic disparities by driving up land and housing prices, impacting affordable housing options for low-income communities. Environmental conservation efforts sometimes clash with the rights of populations reliant on land for sustenance and livelihood. Forced displacements resulting from development projects lead to homelessness, land deprivation, and severe impoverishment for millions globally. In post-conflict scenarios, restoring housing, land, and property rights is crucial for returning refugees and internally displaced persons. Extreme climate events, such as typhoons, floods, and droughts, damage homes and farms, reduce land productivity, and strain tenure systems, often displacing vulnerable groups. Slow-onset changes like sea-level rise and soil salinization gradually erode land resulting to the loss of homes and livelihoods. Poor households, especially those without secure land tenure, are most at risk to the direct impact of climate change. Poverty, often forced them to cultivate marginal lands or to settle in hazard-prone public areas, with limited options and low capacity to recover after disasters.

The acceleration of conflicting demands on land resources driven by climate change, exacerbated population growth, food insecurity, migration and urbanization, intensifies land conflict dynamics in the region, with human rights violations (HRVs) as one of the most visible and severe consequences, particularly for vulnerable populations. When people lose their tenure rights to land and resources due to corrupt tenure practices, or the failure of implementing agencies to protect them, they are often pushed into loss of livelihood, chronic hunger, and extreme poverty. In certain cases, weak tenure governance has resulted in violent conflict and loss of life.

Conversely, responsible governance of land tenure promotes sustainable social and economic development that can help eradicate poverty and food insecurity and encourage responsible investment. It can likewise enable individuals and communities to acquire rights and corresponding responsibilities — to use, manage, and control land, water, forests, and natural resources. Land conflict is a critical indicator of land governance. Land conflicts result in loss of livelihoods, violations of human rights, and even loss of lives, and thus signal an urgency for governments and other stakeholders to act.

Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign, with the assistance of ANGOC, has been monitoring land conflicts as part of its regular assessment of the state of land rights and governance in the region in support of its policy and advocacy work.

Land Watch Asia advances monitoring of agrarian reform and land conflict

In 2007, upon the initiative of the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), in partnership with CSOs and land advocates, the Land Watch Asia (LWA) was launched to promote, advocate, and lobby for land (and water) rights of the rural poor in Asia. The LWA campaign began as a monitoring mechanism to keep track of and assess the status of agrarian reform in the region. It worked to ensure that issues on access to land, agrarian reform, and equitable and sustainable development in rural areas are addressed in national and regional development agendas.

In 2013, the LWA partners incorporated land conflict in the monitoring component of the campaign. Country reports on land conflicts¹ in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines were prepared in 2018 to look into the nature, causes, and impacts of land and resource conflicts, and to highlight the human rights issues that were intertwined with them.

The LWA partners found that the lack of a common methodology for monitoring land conflict limited their ability to aggregate, compare, and analyze data at the regional level. Thus, in 2020, LWA partners developed tools for data gathering, more systematic way of recording data, and reporting on land conflicts. Subsequently, the tools were updated in 2023 and 2025.

The overarching goal of this initiative is to understand the context and underlying factors that allow land and resource conflicts to persist in the countries being monitored.

Framework of land conflict monitoring

Definition

Land and resource conflicts are often rooted in weak land governance, which lead to unequal access, control, and ownership of land and resources. These structural inequities create tensions and are intensified by development projects by both government and private actors, including large-scale agribusiness, infrastructure and commercial ventures, that encroach on community lands. These land

¹ Land conflict monitoring reports were prepared in 2018 (<https://angoc.org/portal/in-defense-of-land-rights-a-monitoring-report-on-land-conflicts-in-six-asian-countries/>), 2020 (<https://angoc.org/portal/in-defense-of-land-rights-a-monitoring-report-on-land-conflicts-in-six-asian-countries-vol-2/>), and 2023 (<https://angoc.org/portal/contested-lands-incidence-drivers-and-impacts-of-con%ef%ac%82ict-a-monitoring-report-of-land-con%ef%ac%82icts-in-six-asian-countries-2023-in-defense-of-land-rights-third-edition/>).



conflicts can lead to human rights violations, including the loss of lives and livelihoods, and require urgent action from governments and stakeholders. Hence, understanding the context and underlying factors is essential to prevent land conflicts, protect human rights, and promote equitable land use.

Land conflict is defined as “a result of contradicting interests over the control, use and management of land and resources, where the primary actors... have differences in goals” (Engel and Korf, 2005). In land conflict, interests can differ over: (a) access to and distribution of resources; (b) control of power and decision-making; (c) cultural, social, and political identity; and, (d) status, particularly those embodied in systems of government, religion, or ideology (Engel and Korf, 2005). As used in these studies, “conflict” implies tension and the threat of violence, but does not necessarily involve violent incidents, unless specifically mentioned.

Objectives

The objectives of LWA’s land conflict monitoring initiative are to:

- describe the prevalence and types of land and natural resource conflicts;
- examine the nature and causes of land and resource conflicts;
- discuss the human rights violations on individual and communities; and,
- formulate recommendations based on the study findings and consultations.

Ultimately, the monitoring reports are used to support the evidence-based policy work of LWA partners.

For 2025, the countries monitored included Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines.

Parameters of the monitoring initiative

The land conflict monitoring initiative examined three primary facets: (a) cases, (b) relationships, and (c) incidents. Cases detail the storyline of the conflict; providing basic information about the conflict (i.e. type of land/resource contested, size of contested land, location). Relationships refers to the links between the stakeholders involved (affected communities, aggressors) and their actions. Incidents of human rights violation (HRV) constitute violence, victims and perpetrators, and their impacts and consequences.

Four key parameters guided the collection of land conflict information:

Populations and areas affected by conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What primary sector is affected? • How many households are affected? • What land or resources are being contested? • Where is the conflict located? • What is the total area of the land being contested? • How long has this conflict been going on?
Adversarial claimants and drivers/ causes of land conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are involved in the conflict? • What are the causes and drivers of conflict?
Incidents of human rights violations against individuals and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there cases of violence and human rights violations? • What are the forms of violence? • Who are the reported perpetrators and victims?
Responses and corrective actions to address conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What responses has the community undertaken? • What are the demands of the community? • Were corrective action/s taken to address the land conflict and by whom?

Each parameter has a set of corresponding indicators and categories. These indicators and categories are product of subsequent updating of the land conflict monitoring tool developed and used in 2020 and 2023 reports. For further details, see Annex A.

Methodology

Sources of data and validation. The monitoring used both primary and secondary sources of information.

In selected regions where local CSO partners operate, primary sources included testimonies and reports from affected families and communities, assisting people's organizations (POs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and CSOs, as well as field staff and researchers. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), field visits, and questionnaires (i.e. case profile form) were the tools used for primary data gathering.

Secondary sources consisted of news media and online articles, which were cross-verified with at least one additional independent source to ensure reliability. Reports from CSOs, POs and the Governments were likewise utilized.

Hence, case selection was more of purposive — prioritizing locations with available data and feasible access, within the limits of available human and financial resources.

In the process of documenting land conflicts for 2025, reported cases in the 2023 country reports were updated. Those cases that were resolved in 2024 and earlier were excluded in this report.



In-country roundtable discussions and dialogues were convened in Bangladesh (by ALRD), Cambodia (by SK), Nepal (by CSRC), and the Philippines (by ANGOC) to present and validate the findings of the country reports with partner-communities, CSOs, and key government agencies. In Indonesia, having its own annual agrarian conflict monitoring system, KPA integrated their data into the LWA’s summary tables to align with the information needed in this regional initiative.

Figure 1. Sources of information for the cases, 2025

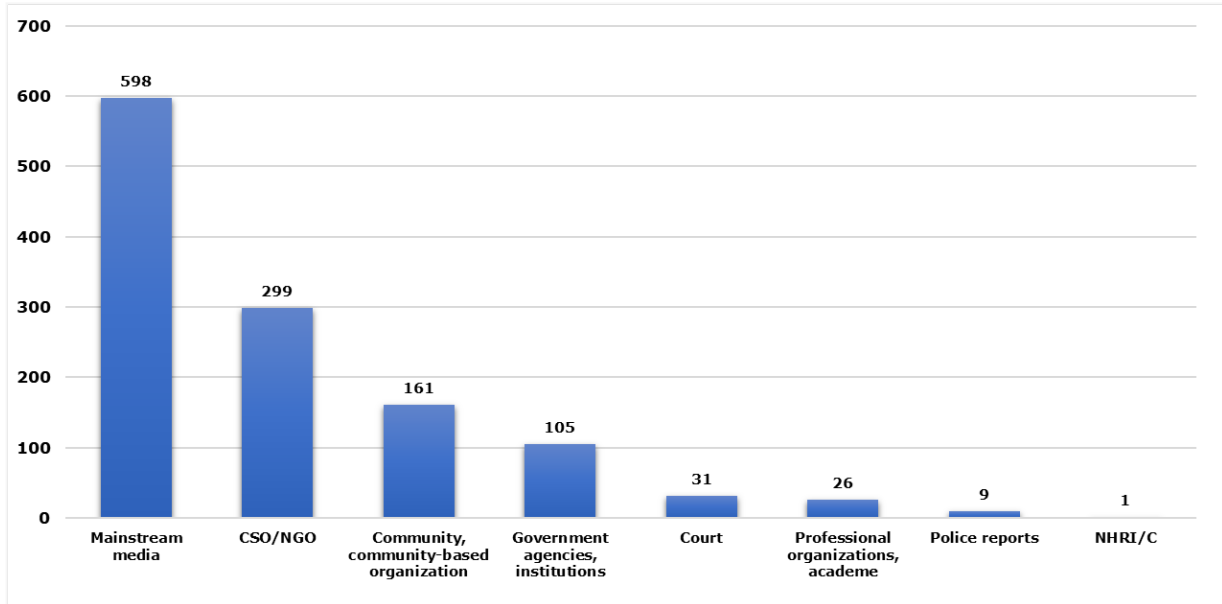


Table 1. Sources of information for the cases, 2025

Source	No. by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No.	%
Mainstream media (print, online, radio)	71	4	262	38	223	598	49
CSO/NGO	17	25	31	8	218	299	24
Community, community-based organization	42	17	48	33	21	161	13
Government agencies, institutions	30	20	0	0	55	105	9
Court	30	1	0	0	0	31	3
Professional organizations, academe	0	1	0	3	22	26	2
Police reports	8	1	0	0	0	9	1
National Human Rights Institution/ Commission (NHRI/C)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	199	69	341	82	539	1,230	100

In 2025, mainstream media accounted for 49 percent of all sources used in documenting cases and was the predominant source of the country reports, except in Cambodia where CSO/NGO was the main source. Overall, mainstream media was followed by CSOs (24 percent) and community and community-based organizations (13 percent). Data were gathered as well from government agencies in the case of Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Philippines. Police reports and court records were also significant sources of data in Bangladesh and it was the only country where National Human Rights Commission served as source for one case.

It is worth noting that there may have been multiple sources for one case.

Scope/Coverage. The monitoring focuses on structural land conflicts rather than land disputes. Land disputes typically involve conflicting claims over a parcel of land by two or more parties, arising from “incompatibility of perceived interests, objectives, and future positions.” These disputes may not always reflect broader tensions over land, and are usually addressed within the existing legal framework. These include issues that involve inheritance, boundaries, legal titles, commercial transactions, and similar cases.

In contrast, structural land conflicts, often involve entire communities, not just individuals or families, and involve competing interests among sector or groups over land use, allocation, and governance. These conflicts typically concern competing claims to larger areas of land and resources, and may involve questions about public policy and priorities. Unlike land disputes, structural conflicts sometimes lack a clear consensus on applicable rules, with parties having different interpretations of the nature and scope of the conflict.

Structural land conflicts highlight social issues and raise questions about public policy and development priorities, and interventions. Since these conflicts affect entire communities, they may involve underlying economic, political, and social inequities resulting to physical and psychological harm, significantly impacting people’s lives, as indicated in the country reports.

The monitoring covered structural land conflicts that were ongoing as of 01 January 2025 until 31 December 2025, including conflicts documented in previous reports that remained unresolved. The monitoring likewise reported incidents of HRVs (both violent and latent). These incidents are linked to specific cases and are manifestations of ongoing structural land conflicts.

Storing and analyzing data. Data were stored and analyzed using a standardized Excel template for all the countries, except for Indonesia which have its own annual agrarian conflict monitoring system. The template is designed for encoding the data according to the parameters, indicators, and categories used in land conflict monitoring. It also includes a built-in pivot table to allow users to quickly run summaries, frequency tables, and cross tabulations for data analysis.



Box 1. The country contexts of land and resource conflicts

The competing demands of food production, urbanization, industry, and settlement, among others, are putting unprecedented pressure on the world's land tenure system, or the way in which land is owned and managed. At the same time, climate change and environmental degradation are reducing the availability of land and resources, such as fisheries and forests. Many land and resource conflicts arise because of unequal distribution of land and resources, lack of access to land especially among poor people, unclear or insecure tenure rights, and weak land governance.

Bangladesh. Land conflict remains one of the most persistent social and governance challenges in Bangladesh, affecting millions of rural and urban households. These disputes are closely linked to unequal land distribution, tenure insecurity, weak administration, overlapping claims, and large-scale public and private projects. Smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, and other marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted. A significant share of conflicts stems from the encroachment of *khas* (public) land and waterbodies by politically influential actors, local elites, or land grabbers — whether corporate or individual, leaving landless and marginal farmers without access to critical resources. Climate change further intensifies these pressures: river erosion, floods, and cyclones displace communities, forcing them to seek land in char and coastal areas where they face heightened vulnerability, violence, and control by landlords or land mafias.

Conflicts over indigenous peoples' territories and wetlands are growing concerns in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, coastal belts, and wetland regions. Customary lands are frequently reclassified as State forests or allocated to commercial plantations, infrastructure, or tourism projects often without recognition of long-standing occupation and stewardship. Indigenous communities frequently face land dispossession as a result of forest reserve declarations, commercial plantations — often established under the banner of “social forestry” — as well as infrastructure and tourism projects that fail to recognize and protect their customary rights. In many cases, disputes escalate into violence, forced eviction, or legal harassment. Moreover, environmental degradation driven by deforestation, shrimp farming, and industrial pollution further undermines livelihoods, particularly for women who depend heavily on forest and aquatic resources.

Cambodia. Cambodia's land sector has been marked by profound upheaval stemming from decades of conflict and political transformation. The Khmer Rouge regime (1975 to 1979) abolished private property and systematically destroyed land records, creating a legal and administrative vacuum that persists today. The economic liberalization and rapid growth since the 1990s have intensified pressure on land resources, making land as the country's most valuable and contested asset. Large-scale economic land concessions for agro-industrial plantations, mining, and hydropower projects have been granted by the government — often covering hundreds of thousands of hectares — frequently overlapping with areas occupied or used by rural communities. Urban expansion, particularly in Phnom Penh and provincial cities, has driven property values skyward and triggered widespread forced evictions. Tourism development in areas like Siem Reap and coastal zones has similarly displaced communities.

The key drivers of land conflict in Cambodia thus reflect interconnected governance failures and development pressures. Unclear or contested land rights, stemming from incomplete registration, overlapping claims, and fraudulent documentation, create vulnerability for smallholders and indigenous communities. Weak judicial independence and endemic corruption mean disputes are rarely resolved fairly, with courts often favoring powerful actors.

Indonesia. The Prabowo-Gibran administration has pursued agrarian reform in what may be described as a year of paradox. While the Asta Cita agenda initially inspired optimism, given its commitments to food and energy self-sufficiency, poverty reduction, and social equity, the implementation has diverged from the constitutional spirit of people-centered reform. Policy execution has been marked by centralized authority and expanded military involvement in strategic programs. Although this approach has accelerated project implementation, it has weakened participatory governance, replacing dialogue and democratic engagement with top-down command structures that marginalized affected communities.

As a consequence, agrarian conflicts involving land grabbing, forced evictions, and large-scale land acquisition have intensified, often justified in the name of “national interest.” People’s resistance particularly in the rural areas, throughout 2025 reflects mounting frustration over deepening inequality in land control and the concentration of productive resources among a small political-economic elite. Environmental disasters in Sumatra further exposed the structural costs of unresolved agrarian injustice. The establishment of the Special Committee on the Resolution of Agrarian Conflicts (Pansus PKA) in the DPR RI (House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia) offers a potential corrective mechanism, but meaningful reform will require decisive political and legal action to address policy fragmentation, institutional weaknesses, and flawed implementation.

Nepal. Land reform in Nepal has remained a persistent demand for decades. However, the State’s inadequate and inconsistent response has enabled land-related conflicts to proliferate nationwide. These conflicts are deeply embedded in historical injustices, entrenched social hierarchies, economic inequalities, and political dynamics, rendering them complex and resistant to durable resolution. Nepal’s diverse geography and cultural plurality further intensify the intricacies of land disputes across its regions.

Despite constitutional guarantees, such as the Right to Equality (Article 18), Right to Property (Article 25), Rights of Women (Article 38), and Rights of Dalits (Article 40), as well as several progressive legislative and policy measures, implementation remains critically weak. These include the Right to Housing Act of 2018, Land Act of 1964 (Eighth Amendment), Land-related Regulations 20th Amendment, 2025 (which prescribe that landless Dalits and squatters should be provided with one-time land for housing, agriculture, or both for their families), and National Land Policy, 2019.

Notwithstanding these frameworks, approximately 1.3 million landless and informal settler families continue to lack secure tenure. Institutional instability has further undermined reform efforts, with 19 land commissions formed and dissolved since 1990, disrupting continuity and sustained resolution.

Philippines. 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 weak rural infrastructure and limited support services for farmers and small producers. Property rights remain unsettled in many areas due to disputes over program coverage and land valuation, landowner resistance, and harassment.

On the other hand, although some indigenous peoples have secured Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) or Certificates of Ancestral Land Titles (CALTs) under IPRA, their land rights remain threatened by mining, logging, quarrying, and expanding public and private investments.

The national poverty level is at 23.7 percent, with poverty largely concentrated in rural and agricultural communities. At the same time, agricultural land continues to face mounting pressures from land conversion, shrinking farm sizes, natural disasters, population growth, and urbanization. The Philippines has become a growing net importer of agro-food products and was the world's second largest importer of rice in 2021. Furthermore, an estimated 20 to 30 percent of the population live in classified forestlands. Around 17 to 22 million people — who depend on forests, farmland, and fishing waters for their homes, food, and livelihoods — lack legal tenure rights.

Compounding these challenges, the 2025 law (Republic Act 12252) allows foreigners to lease land for up to 99 years to attract investment. Overall, Philippine land laws lack an integrated approach to tenure governance with overlapping laws enacted over decades. Other challenges remain — outdated land classification system, absence of a final forest line delineation, and corruption in public and private spheres — all contributing to complex land administration and community land conflicts.

Sources: 2025 Country land and resource conflict monitoring reports

Variances in approach

While the methods employed across countries shared commonalities, they were not entirely uniform. Each country research team was given leeway to adapt changes within the general agreed research framework to consider country-specific contexts and objectives as well as to suit to the capacities of the country focal organizations.

Common elements included the use of: a) common parameters, indicators, categories, and definitions; b) standardized recording tools; and, c) summary tables.

There were variations in the country reports in terms of the main types of data sources, approaches in data gathering, and in some cases, in sub-categories developed within the general monitoring framework. Examples of these adaptations include differences in terminology to reflect local realities, inclusion of

analysis of case distribution by province where conflicts occurred in Cambodia, Nepal, and Indonesia, and mapping of the covered provinces in Cambodia.

Table 2. Main sources of data, and approaches to data gathering and validation

Country/Institution	Source and approaches to data gathering and validation
<p><i>Bangladesh</i> Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD)</p>	<p>Primary and secondary data were collected from diverse sources, with most originating from mainstream media, followed by government and court records, and community sources. Documented land conflict cases in previous report were updated to identify which cases continued into 2025. The draft report was presented in an online meeting in February 2026 attended by 33 participants, including a member of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRCB), experts, and CSO partners to validate the report findings and recommendations.</p>
<p><i>Cambodia</i> STAR Kampuchea (SK)</p>	<p>Data collection began with coordination with civil society organizations (CSOs/NGOs) to generate community-based data, making them the primary source of information, followed by government agencies and community-based organizations. Previously recorded land conflict cases were reviewed to check for updates and determine ongoing cases as of 2025. The draft report was validated through an online workshop on March 2026, with 34 participants, including representatives from communities, NGOs, the Cambodian Human Rights Committee, and the Ministry of Land Management, Urbanization, and Construction.</p>
<p><i>Indonesia</i> Konsorsium Pembaruan Agrarian (KPA)</p>	<p>The data presented in this report were collected from multiple sources, including community complaints submitted to KPA, reports from the National Committee for Agrarian Reform's (KNPA) emergency response system, field investigations by KPA, monitoring of national and local media, verified social media monitoring, and, for Papua province, collaboration with the Pusaka Bentala Rakyat Foundation. All data were validated through cross-checking across sources and comparison with existing data to prevent errors and double counting, ensuring reliability and quality. In several instances, additional field investigations and interviews were conducted to verify information and minimize analytical errors.</p>

Country/Institution	Source and approaches to data gathering and validation
<p><i>Nepal</i> Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC)</p>	<p>The study used a mixed-method approach, combining desk reviews with field verification through site visits, observations, and interviews. The 2023 Nepal database served as the foundation for case identification and was updated through consultations with community members, CSOs/NGOs, and leaders from the National, District, and Village Land Rights Forums, while 2025 media reports were cross-verified with the sources cited. Overall, the data were collected primarily from mainstream media, community and community-based organizations. A validation workshop on findings and recommendations was held in February 2026 with the participation of 16 representatives from People’s Organizations (National Land Rights Forum/NLRF), NGOs, Amnesty International Nepal, National Land Coalition (NLC), Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and a former government employee/land expert.</p>
<p><i>Philippines</i> ANGOC and partner CSOs and POs</p>	<p>Primary data were collected from partner communities, while secondary sources included mainstream media, written accounts, and the platforms and websites of POs and CSOs. Only cases and reports published by credible sources were included, and all data were cross-checked against other sources to ensure accuracy. The database of previously recorded land conflict cases was also reviewed to verify updates and identify ongoing cases as of 2025. The interim report was presented at an online validation workshop in February 2026, where 11 representatives of basic sectors and CSOs provided feedback, and discussed collaboration and mechanisms to address land conflicts and related human rights violations.</p>

Limitations

There were limitations, brought by external factors, that remain evident in this monitoring report. Many land conflicts were unreported or undocumented. The exhaustiveness of each country report varied, depending on references available, the skills of implementing partners, their resources, and networks.

Hence, this land conflict monitoring initiative does not claim to be a repository of all land and resource conflicts. Rather, it is an attempt to present the ongoing trends based on readily available information within the covered period.

The studies do not cover land disputes in the context of larger ethnic or regional conflicts or specific cases of climate change or environmental refugees. However, some of the cases may be linked to these larger events.

Main findings

It is important to note that many land and resource conflict cases remain undocumented and unreported due to various factors such as communities' fear of retaliation, lack of legal awareness, geographic isolation, and limited access to formal reporting mechanism by affected communities. Thus, the monitoring reports prepared by the LWA partners, including this report, show the prevailing trends and patterns, rather than provide a comprehensive account of all existing cases in the five countries covered by this report.

Overview of population and areas affected by land conflict

Table 3. Total number of cases, area contested, and households affected by land and resource conflicts, 2025

Ongoing cases	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	Total
Total number of cases	64	34	341	54	281	774
Total number of hectares affected	25,125	10,852	914,575	5,512	796,587	1,752,651
Total number of households affected	78,981	8,559	123,612	17,544	109,208	337,904

Figure 2. Land and resource conflicts in five countries, 2025



774

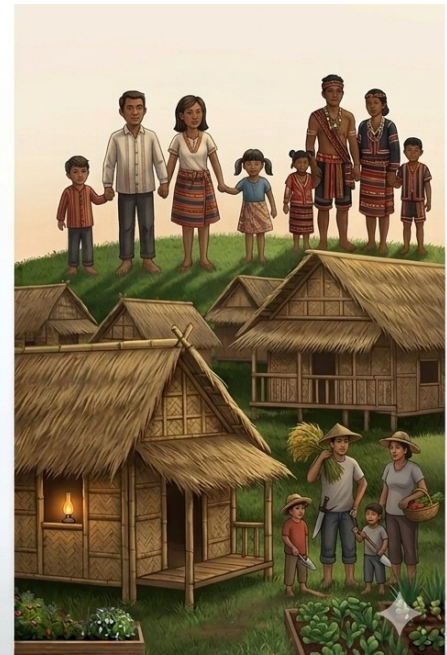
Land conflicts in Asian countries:

Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia,
Nepal and Philippines



1,752,651

**Hectares of land affected
by ongoing conflicts**



337,904

**Households affected
by ongoing conflicts**

A total of 774 ongoing cases of land and resource conflicts in 2025 were recorded in the five Asian countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, and Philippines. The total cases covered 1,752,651 hectares of contested areas, larger than the size of Timor Leste (1,487,000 hectares). The conflict cases directly affected the lands, customary territories, fishing areas, settlements, and livelihoods of at least 337,904 households, or approximately 1.689 million people (Table 3).

Indonesia and Philippines had the highest number of documented cases. They were followed by Bangladesh, Nepal, and Cambodia. On the size of contested area, Indonesia accounted for 52 percent of the total affected land area, followed by Philippines (45 percent), Bangladesh (1.4 percent), Cambodia (0.6 percent) and Nepal (0.3 percent).

In terms of affected households, Indonesia had the largest share (37 percent), followed by Philippines (32 percent), Bangladesh (23 percent), Nepal (five percent), and Cambodia (three percent).

Table 4. Duration of land and resource conflicts by number of years

No. of years	No. of cases by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No.	%
Less than 2 years	4	6	29	3	7	49	6
2 to less than 5 years	9	4	11	20	10	54	7
5 to less than 10 years	5	5	20	4	18	52	7
10 to less than 15 years	6	7	12	7	30	62	8
15 to less than 20 years	12	7	27	3	16	65	8
20 years or more	24	2	42	17	73	158	20
Unknown	4	3	200	0	127	334	44
Total	64	34	341	54	281	774	100

Indonesia and the Philippines had the highest number of longest-running cases lasting 20 years or more (Table 4). In percentage, Bangladesh had a relatively high share of cases that have remained unresolved for 20 years or more. Overall, these long-standing cases account for 20 percent across all five countries. This trend reflects historical causes (e.g. unresolved land tenure issues, overlapping claims and weak governance) and persistence of structural challenges in land administration and conflict resolution allowing conflicts to endure across decades.

Around 30 percent of the cases ranged from two to 19 years of duration.

Six percent of the cases were less than two years old, and the proportion of these shorter-duration cases was highest in Indonesia. This reflects recent conflict emergence or improved monitoring and reporting. Nepal study found that the three cases that emerged within the last two years, were likely linked to recent infrastructure projects or policy changes.

Forty-four percent of the cases had unknown durations and were particularly high in Indonesia and the Philippines. In Indonesia, it is reasonable to assume that their 200 cases of unknown duration were at least 10 years old, as they began during the administration of former President Joko Widodo. These proportion of cases with unknown duration is alarming. It reflects serious gaps in monitoring systems and signal weak commitment to addressing and preventing land conflicts.

This distribution demonstrates that most land conflicts are protracted rather than short-term disputes, with 43 percent of the cases lasting over a decade. It reflects persistent weaknesses in land governance, dispute resolution mechanisms, and enforcement systems.

Considering only the cases with known duration (440 out of 774 cases), the data shows a persistent trend of unresolved agrarian conflicts over the past two decades, with 36 percent lasting at least 20 years, 11 percent as new cases, and 12 to 15 percent remaining unresolved within each five-year period (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of land and resource conflicts with known duration

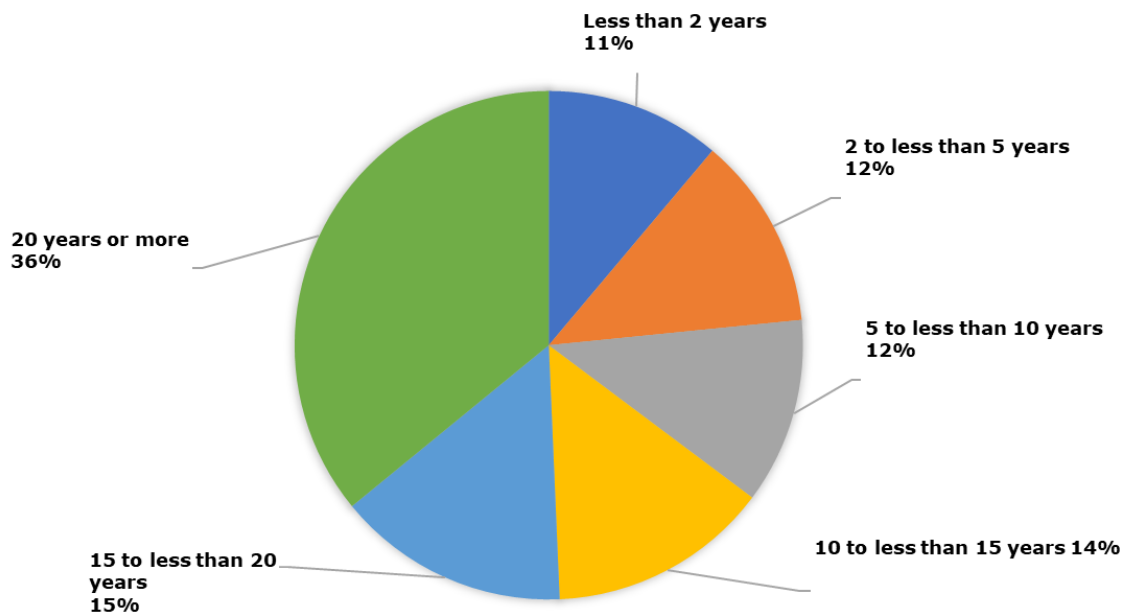


Figure 4a. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts, by percentage of cases

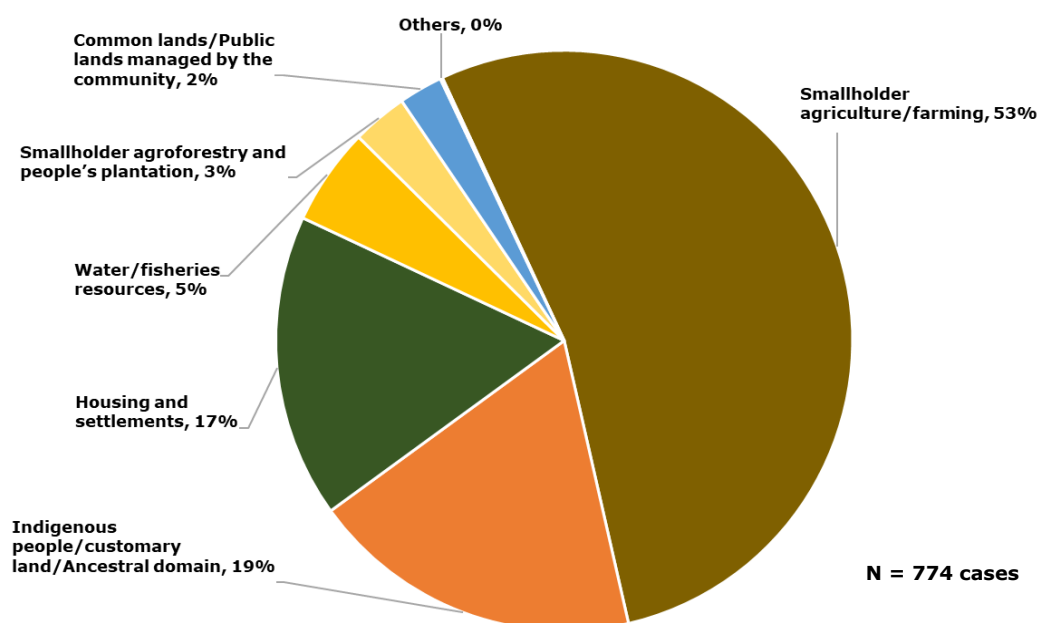


Table 5a. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts, by number of cases

Type of land/resource	No. of cases by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No.	%
Smallholder agriculture/farming	25	14	188	18	168	413	53
Indigenous people/customary land/ancestral domain	28	3	57	5	51	144	19
Housing and settlements	2	4	84	24	17	131	17
Water/fisheries resources	5	0	12	1	24	42	5
Smallholder agroforestry and people's plantation	0	6	0	3	15	24	3
Common lands/Public lands managed by the community	3	7	0	3	6	19	2
Others	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	64	34	341	54	281	774	100

The categories of land type refer to the dominant use of the land, as in most cases, multiple land uses may be involved. For 2025, approximately 53 percent of the conflict cases in the five countries involved smallholder agriculture/farming land. This was followed by cases involving indigenous people/customary land/ancestral domain (19 percent), and housing and settlements (17 percent). Land conflicts are mainly concentrated in smallholder farming, ancestral domains, and settlement areas, highlighting disputes over productive and inhabited land (Table 5a).

Ranked according to the size of area affected, indigenous peoples/customary land/ancestral domain was the most affected by land conflicts (66 percent), followed by smallholder agriculture/farming (28 percent). Overall, these two land types were the dominantly affected areas, except in Cambodia with no gathered data on affected area in three cases involving customary/ancestral land (Table 5b). (Among the five countries monitored, Cambodia has the lowest proportion of IPs.)

Land resources accounted for 96 percent of the affected areas across five countries. It should be noted that water and fisheries resources ranked third in commonly affected areas for Philippines, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. These competing demands on water bodies and fishing grounds threaten livelihoods, particularly of small-scale fishers, and may also heighten environmental degradation in already vulnerable coastal and inland communities.

Figure 4b. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts, by percentage of total area contested

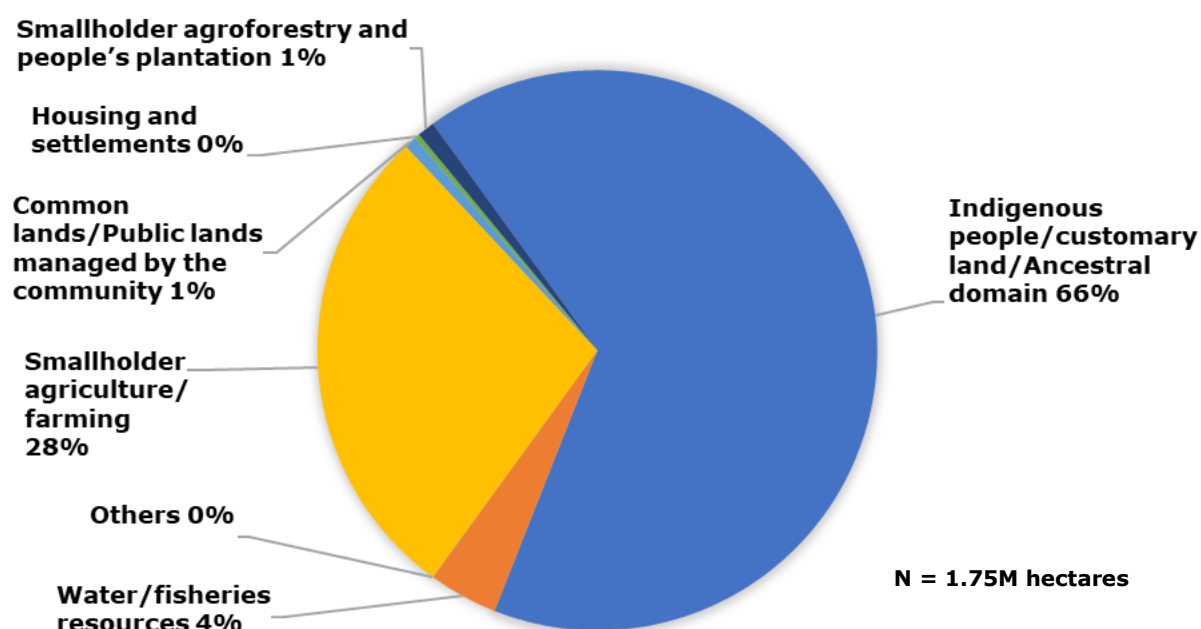


Table 5b. Types of land and resource affected by conflicts, by total area contested (ha)

Type of land/resource	Area by country (ha)					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No. (ha)	%
Indigenous people/customary land/ancestral domain	7,814	nda	500,637	1,206	646,995	1,156,653	66
Smallholder agriculture/farming	11,633	4,575	398,546	3,432	74,205	492,391	28
Water/fisheries resources	4,350	0	12,960	0	52,933	70,244	4
Smallholder agroforestry and people's plantation	0	2,199	0	86	13,454	15,738	1
Common lands/public lands managed by the community	1,306	2,045	0	103	8,843	12,297	1
Housing and settlements	20	2,034	2,431	684	157	5,326	0
Others	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	25,125	10,852	914,575	5,512	796,587	1,752,651	100

Box 2: Development without consent: Santal community's fight for land justice in Gobindaganj - Bangladesh

In *Gobindaganj upazila* (sub-district) of *Gaibandha* district, indigenous Santal communities have faced prolonged injustice stemming from State land acquisition and development projects. Historically, approximately 1,842 acres (745.5 hectares) of land, predominantly belonging to the Santal community, were first requisitioned and later acquired in 1962 for the cultivation activities of the Rangpur Sugar Mills, under an agreement that the land must be returned if it was used for purposes other than those specified. After the mill was laid off in 2004, the land was leased for other commercial cultivation, violating the original terms.

Tensions escalated on 6 November 2016 when local administration, police, and mill affiliates forcibly attempted to evict Santals protesting to reclaim their ancestral land. The confrontation left three Santals dead and many injured. Despite the gravity of the incident, justice remains elusive, with limited legal accountability and unresolved demands for restitution. The government subsequently proposed establishing an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) on the disputed land and relocating the affected Santal families to alternative sites, a plan the community opposed.

Santals have argued that the relocation disregarded their cultural ties and livelihood linked to ancestral land — a core failure of FPIC principles. Their protests have continued amidst fear of eviction and broader concerns over irregular and unjust acquisition practices without adequate environmental or social impact assessments.



Photo: Santal women hold a placard demanding justice for the violent eviction carried out against her community.

Source: 2025 Bangladesh Land and resource conflict monitoring report

Figure 5. Primary sector or community affected land conflict by percentage of cases

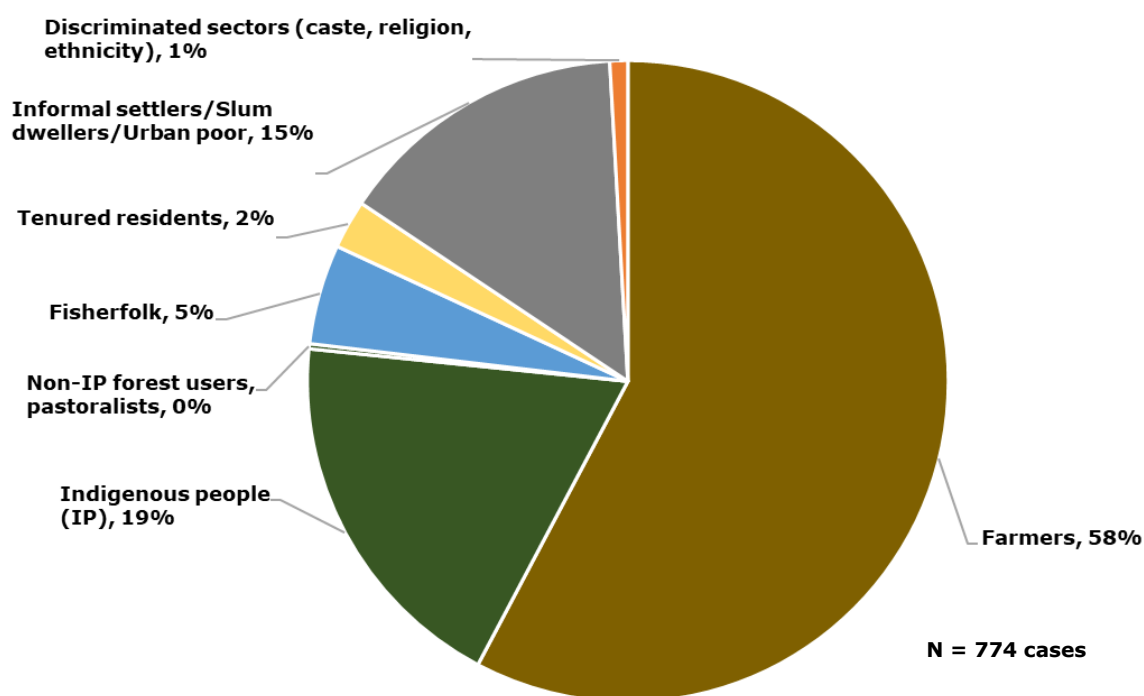


Table 6. Primary sector or community affected land conflict, by number and percent of cases

Primary sector/ community	No. of cases by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No.	%
Farmers/peasants (landless smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, lessees, small owners)	29	26	188	23	181	447	58
Indigenous people (IP)	30	5	57	2	52	146	19
Informal settlers and urban dwellers	1	1	84	16	12	114	15
Fisherfolk	3	0	12	0	24	39	5
Tenured residents	0	1	0	7	11	19	2
Discriminated sectors (caste, religion, ethnicity)	1	0	0	6	0	7	1
Non- IP Forest users, pastoralists	0	1	0	0	1	2	0
Total	64	34	341	54	281	774	100

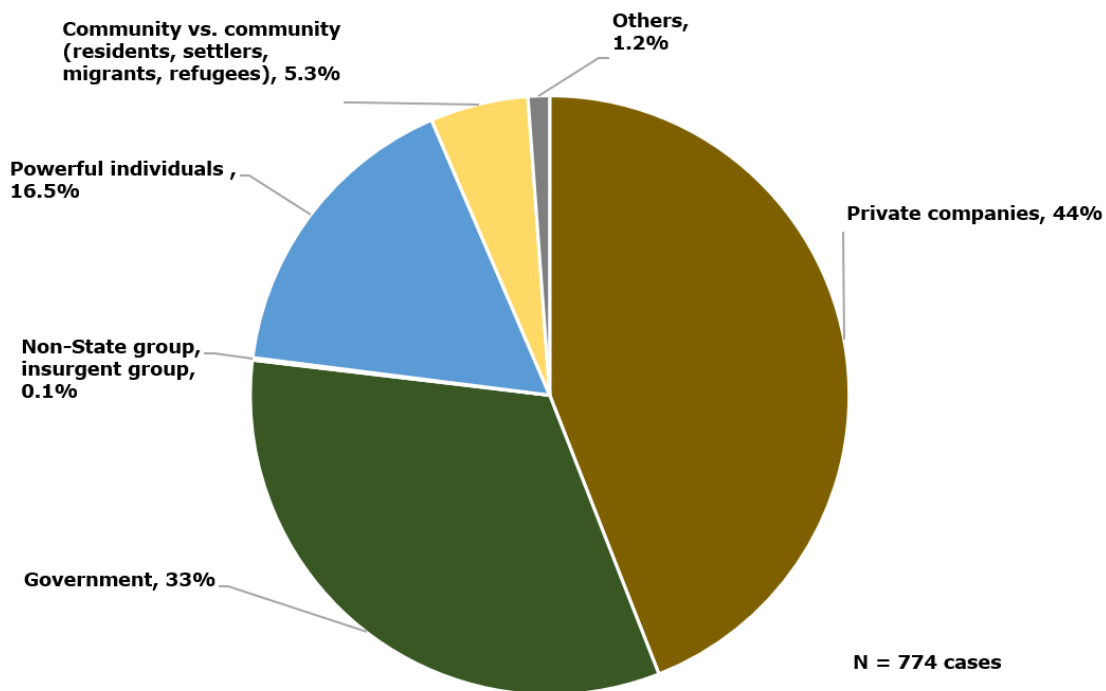
The most affected sectors of land and resource conflicts were farmers/peasants at 58 percent, followed by indigenous peoples and informal settlers at 19 percent and 15 percent, respectively (Table 6).

Farmers were highly involved in the conflict cases in Cambodia (76 percent), Philippines (64 percent), Indonesia (55 percent), and Nepal (44 percent). Cases that affected IPs occurred mostly in Indonesia, Philippines, and Bangladesh. As for cases that affected informal settlers and urban dwellers, the significant proportion were documented in Indonesia (25 percent) and Nepal (30 percent), while for the fisherfolk, the most number were found in Philippines and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the tenurial status of urban dwellers are formally recognized by the government.

Land conflicts disproportionately affect vulnerable groups who depend on land not only for livelihood but also for cultural identity. With limited access to legal protection, they are more exposed to displacement, and loss of livelihood when conflicts arise.

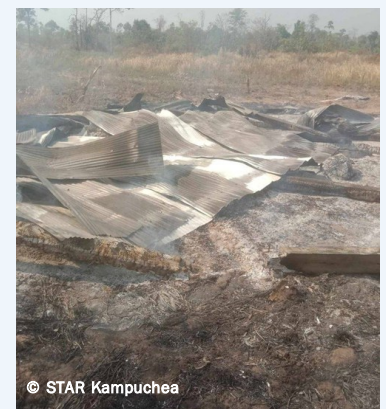
Adversarial claimants and drivers/causes of land conflict

Figure 6. Adversarial claimants in land conflicts



Box 3. Dispossession and resistance: The Srayong land conflict - Cambodia

The land dispute in Srayong commune traces back to 1 March 2011, when the Ministry of Economics and Finance granted a 9,000-hectare economic land concession to Seladamex Co. Ltd for a rubber plantation. Approximately 600 hectares of this area overlapped with community land owned and cultivated by more than 300 families across Srayong Cheung, Srayong Tboung, and Mrech villages. Although the company initially promised employment and local development, it proceeded to demarcate boundaries and clear around 250 hectares without consultation or consent. Community protests were met with force, and many residents reported lacking formal land titles despite long-term occupation, with some alleging that their documents were destroyed.



After several years of inactivity, the conflict escalated in 2022 when military personnel entered the area and cleared approximately 450 hectares, demolishing homes and displacing families. Villagers were threatened with arrest if they resisted or documented the operations. In December 2023, local authorities ordered 131 families to vacate the disputed land, followed by the installation of barricades and armed guards to restrict access. These actions intensified tensions and further limited the community's ability to sustain their livelihoods.

On 6 March 2024, a large-scale forced eviction was carried out by a combined force of military personnel, police, and government officials. Around 130 villagers attempted to resist, resulting in violent clashes involving warning gun shots, tear gas, and physical assaults. Homes were burned and demolished, and many residents fled into nearby forests. At least 29 community members were arrested, with 25 charged with illegal encroachment on State land. After 36 days in detention, they were released on bail under restrictive conditions, including prohibitions on protest and returning to the area. Many returned to find their homes destroyed and were forced to relocate.

Despite ongoing advocacy by civil society organizations, access to justice remains severely constrained. Legal barriers, intimidation, and political repression continue to limit community action, while restrictions on NGOs have hindered the provision of assistance. Displacement has led to severe economic hardship, food insecurity, and family separation, with some residents seeking refuge in forest areas under precarious conditions. The case highlights the persistence of land conflicts driven by overlapping claims, weak tenure security, and the use of force in resolving disputes, leaving affected communities in prolonged vulnerability.



© STAR Kampuchea

Source: 2025 Cambodia Land and resource conflict monitoring report

Table 7. Adversarial claimants in land conflict, by number and percent of cases

Adversarial claimants	No. of cases by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No.	%
Private companies	9	10	217	1	104	341	44.4
Government	31	16	124	32	51	254	32.8
• <i>Government agencies</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>13</i>
• <i>State enterprises</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>7</i>
• <i>Local Government</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>6</i>
• <i>State security agents</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>4</i>
• <i>Both National and Local Governments</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>2</i>
Powerful individuals (e.g., politicians, businessmen, landlords, officials/ex-officials, ex-military)	23	1	0	13	91	128	16.5
Community vs. community (residents, settlers, migrants, refugees)	1	4	0	3	33	41	5
Others	0	2	0	5	2	9	1.2
Non-State group, insurgent group	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
Total	64	34	341	54	281	774	100

Adversarial claimants refer to outside parties with a contested claim to land that is held and used by local communities. Conflict arises when the land is claimed, taken, or converted to other external uses.

The three main adversarial claimants across all five countries were private companies in 44 percent of cases, government at 33 percent, and powerful individuals at 17 percent (Table 7).

Land conflicts involving private companies were particularly prevalent in Indonesia (63 percent), Philippines (37 percent) and Cambodia (29 percent). In Indonesia, these conflicts, driven by private companies, are



largely concentrated in agribusiness, plantation, and mining sectors. In the Philippines, private-led investments, such as industrial agriculture, mining and quarrying, and real estate development, are key drivers of land conflict, often resulting in displacement, environmental degradation, and social harm. In Cambodia, large-scale economic land concessions issued by government to private companies granted for agro-industrial plantations, mining, and hydropower projects have similarly contributed to widespread land conflicts.

Across all countries, government agencies were the most common adversarial claimants among State actors, with Bangladesh recording the highest share at 48 percent of its total number of cases. As emphasized in the ALRD study, this reflects a governance paradox in which the State acts both as regulator and primary claimant in land conflicts, which often arise from infrastructure projects, special economic zones, conservation areas, energy developments, and disputes over public (*khas*) and forest lands, particularly affecting indigenous communities. On the other hand, in Indonesia and Philippines, a recurring scenario of land conflicts involved contested claims where State enterprises, State security agencies, and local and national government units assert control over lands used by local communities.

Powerful individuals such as politicians, businessmen, landlords, officials/ex-officials, and ex-military were also among major adversaries in land conflicts, especially in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Philippines.

In Cambodia, some land conflicts occur within families and communities, driven by external pressures such as land acquisition and unclear tenure, which often go unreported, hiding deeper impacts on community cohesion.

Figure 7a. Main drivers of land and resource conflict by percentage of cases

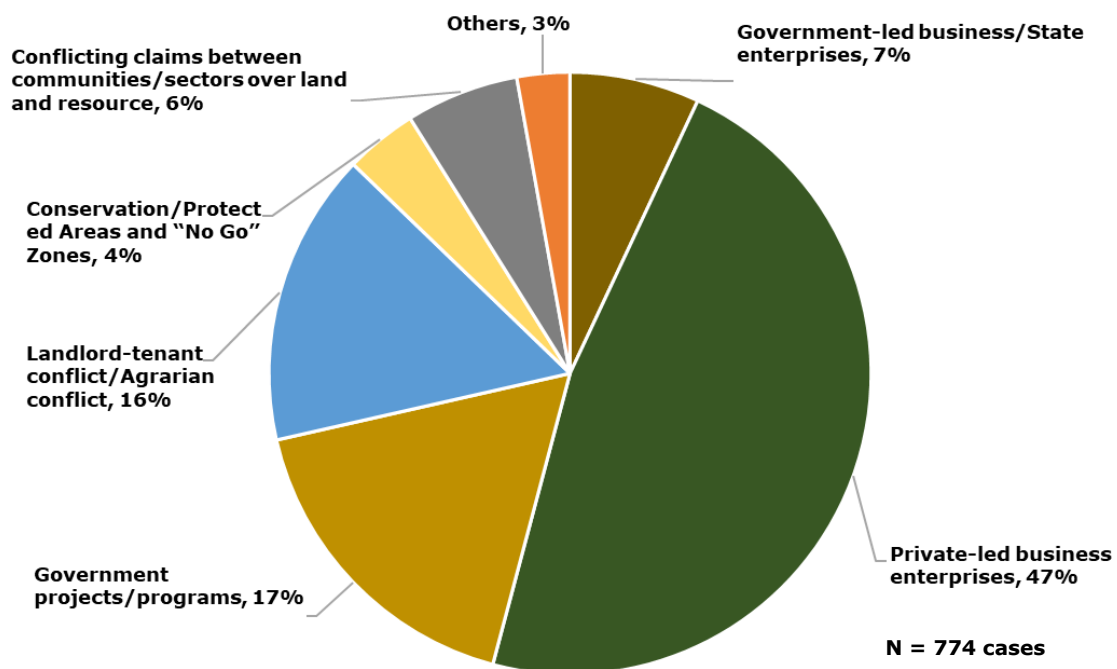


Figure 7b. Main Drivers of land and resource conflict by percentage of contested area

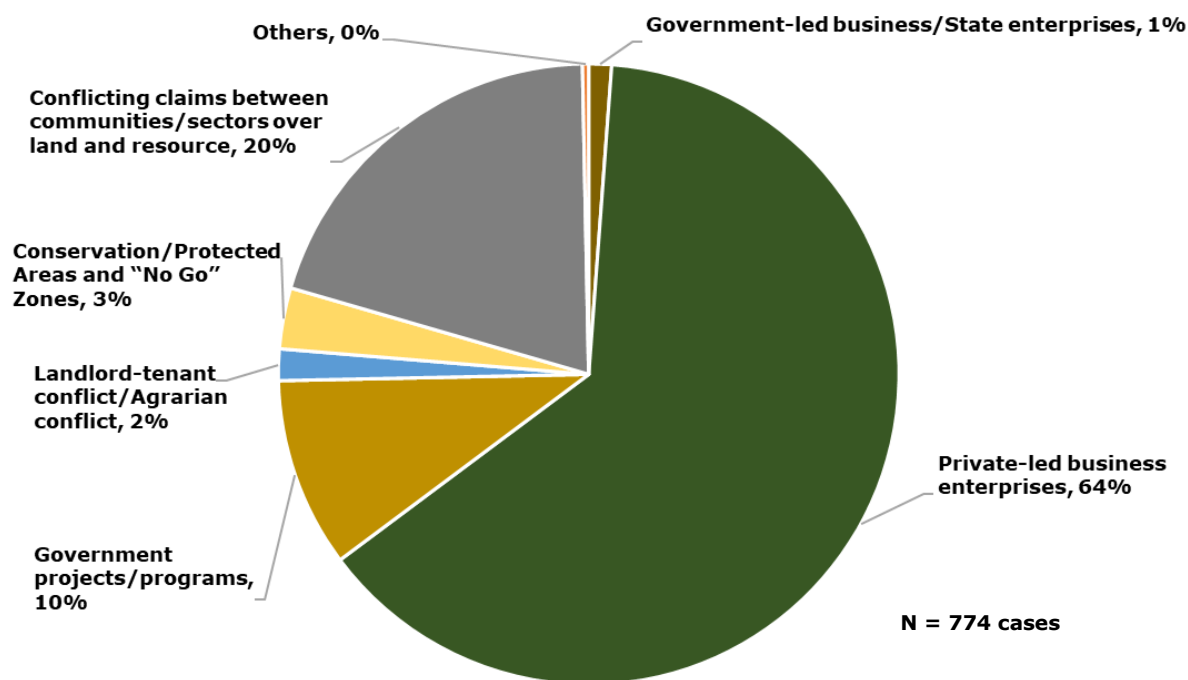


Figure 8a. Types of private-led business enterprises in land and resource conflict by percentage of cases

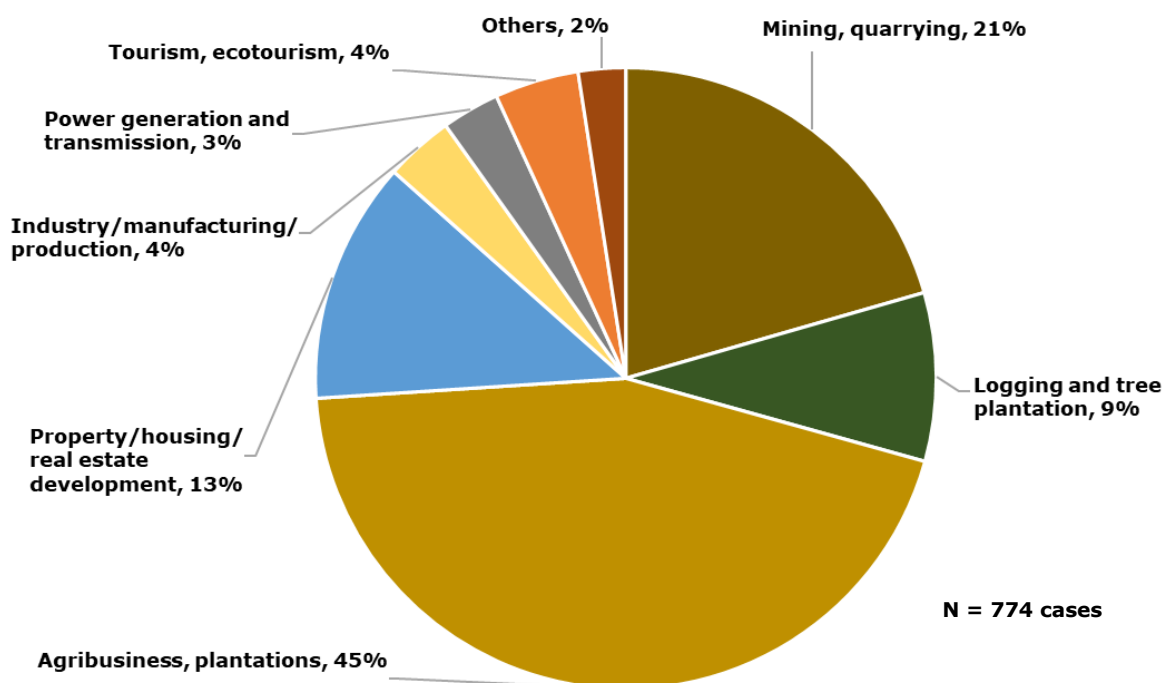


Table 8. Drivers of land and resource conflict, by number of cases and contested area (in ha)

Drivers of conflict	BGD		CAM		INDO		NEP		PHI		TOTAL	
	#	ha	#	ha	#	Ha	#	ha	#	ha	#	ha
Private-led business enterprises	9	978	18	8,726	217	817,491	7	98	114	287,609	365	1,114,902
• <i>Agribusiness, plantations</i>	3	243	18	8,726	103	331,340	0	0	39	59,072	163	399,381
• <i>Logging and tree plantation</i>	0	0	0	0	28	390,948	0	0	4	0	32	390,948
• <i>Mining, quarrying</i>	0	0	0	0	42	51,866	0	0	33	173,528	75	225,393
• <i>Tourism, ecotourism</i>	0	0	0	0	8	203	0	0	8	41,793	16	41,996
• <i>Power generation and transmission</i>	3	518	0	0	2	27,700	0	0	6	4,748	11	32,966
• <i>Industry/ manufacturing/ production</i>	0	0	0	0	6	8,036	1	7	6	597	13	8,641
• <i>Property/housing/real estate development</i>	0	0	0	0	23	1,288	6	91	17	1,871	46	3,250
• <i>Others</i>	3	217	0	0	5	6,110	0	0	1	6,000	9	12,327
Conflicting claims between communities/ sectors over land and resource	1	1,943	9	33	0	0	4	294	33	351,635	47	353,904
• <i>Overlapping tenure and use</i>	1	1,943	6	0	0	0	4	294	31	340,625	42	342,861
• <i>Encroachment (e.g., migrants, settlers, refugees)</i>	0	0	3	33	0	0	0	0	2	11,010	5	11,043
Government projects/ programs	14	5,007	1	2,000	71	32,123	18	3,569	30	130,352	134	173,051
• <i>Public utilities (dams, power lines, power/ energy, irrigation, etc.)</i>	2	2,204	0	0	18	54	2	27	8	100,882	30	103,167
• <i>Public infrastructure (including roads, bridges, airports, ports)</i>	0	0	0	0	14	16,818	10	3,351	7	11,850	31	32,020
• <i>Special economic zones</i>	2	867	0	0			1	120	3	11,965	6	12,952
• <i>Military facilities</i>	0	0	1	2,000	24	5,894	0	0	1	0	26	7,894
• <i>Land reclamation</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3,326	6	3,326
• <i>Social housing, urban development</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	51	2	2,305	4	2,355
• <i>Others</i>	10	1,936	0	0	15	9,356	3	20	3	24	31	11,336
Conservation/Protected Areas and “No Go” Zones	11	6,628	5	93	2	44,492	11	681	1	3,719	30	55,613
Landlord-tenant conflict/ Agrarian conflict	17	5,501	0	0	0	0	6	17	99	23,272	122	28,789
Government-led business/State enterprises	1	202	0	0	51	20,469	2	83	0	0	54	20,755
Others	11	4,867	1	0	0	0	6	770	4	0	22	5,637
Total	64	25,125	34	10,852	341	914,575	54	5,512	281	796,587	774	1,752,651

Figure 8b. Types of private-led business enterprises in land and resource conflict by percentage of affected area

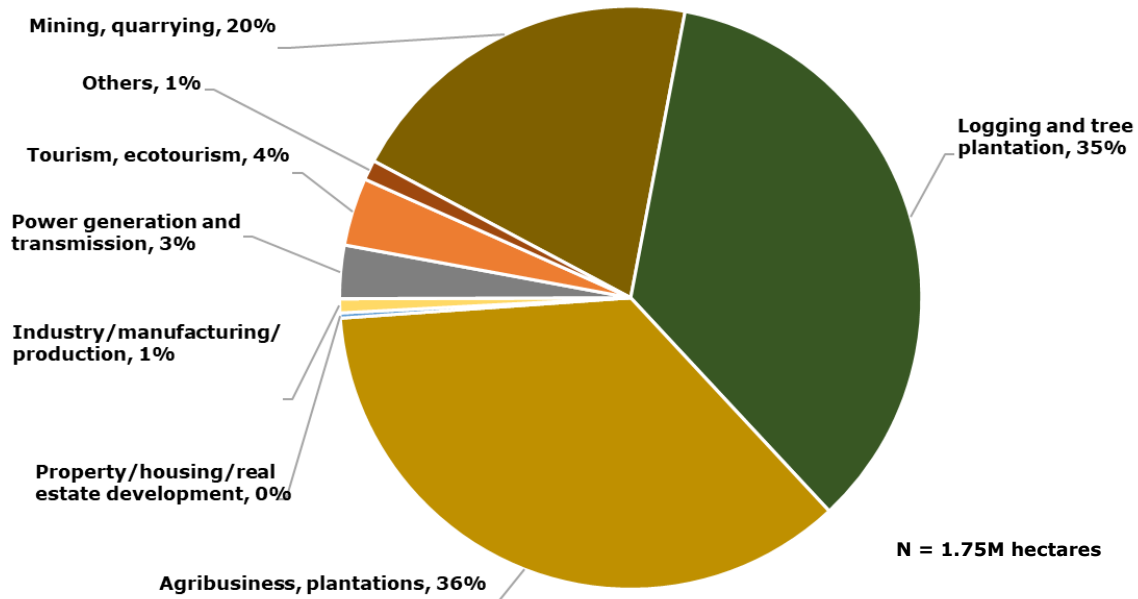


Figure 9a. Types of government projects in land and resource conflict by percentage of cases

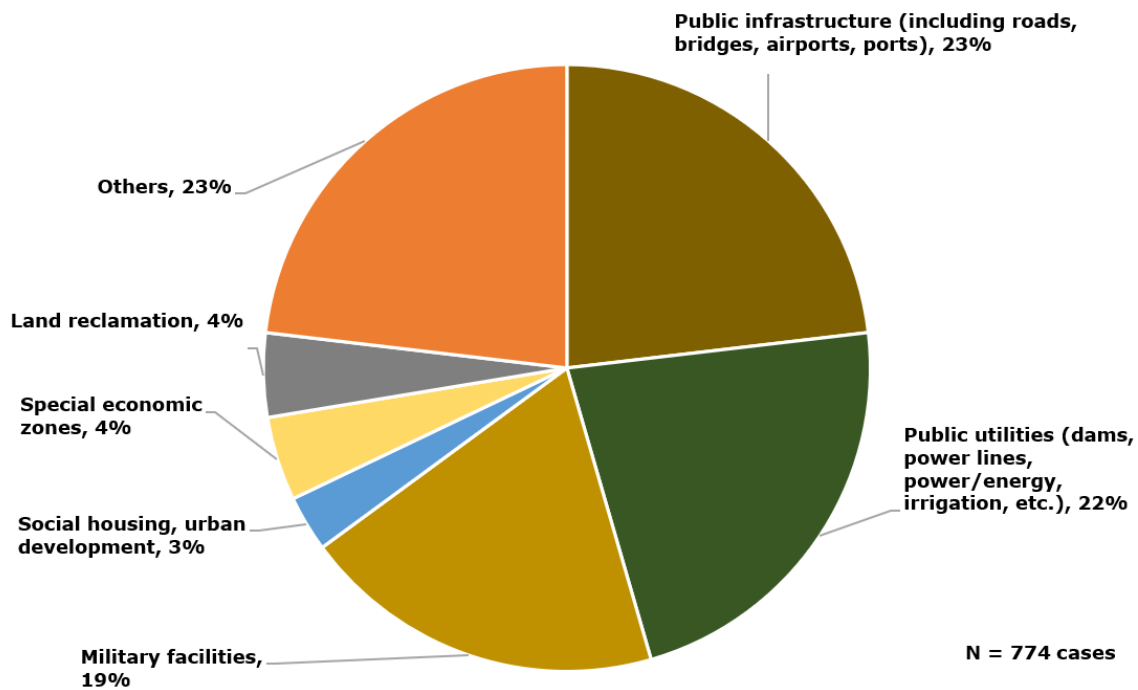
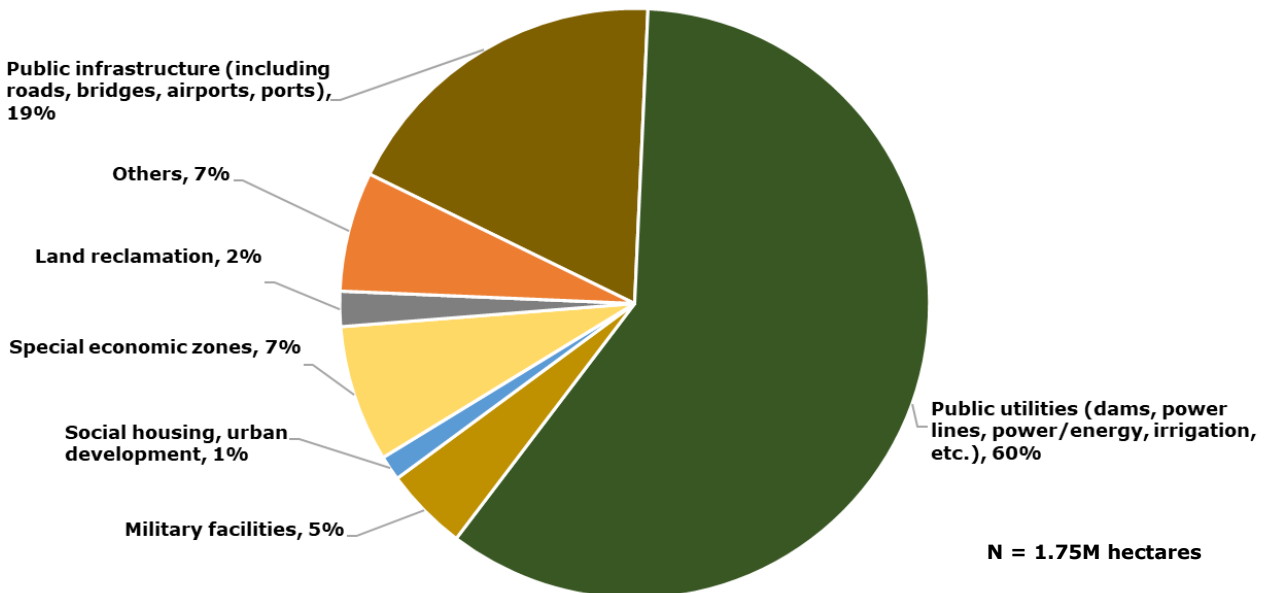


Figure 9b. Types of government projects enterprises in land and resource conflict by percentage of affected area



The primary driver of land conflict refers to the adversarial claimants, and how they intend to use the contested land or resource — which usually puts them in conflict with local communities. The driver determines what benefits and resources are to be derived from the land, who controls the land, and how the benefits are expected to flow from its allocation and use. Understanding the driver is critical because it shapes the nature of the dispute, determines which actors are involved, and highlights the underlying structural, policy, or governance factors that sustain the conflict. Thus, it is important in designing interventions that address both immediate disputes and the deeper systemic causes.

Nearly half of all documented land and resource conflicts (47 percent; 365 out of 774 cases) across five countries were driven by private-led enterprises often putting them in conflict with local communities, smallholders, and indigenous peoples over land use, access, and resource control (Table 8). These conflicts affected 64 percent (1,114,902 out of 1,752,651 hectares) of the total contested land area and were particularly pronounced in Indonesia, Cambodia, and Philippines. The private sector involvement in land and resource conflicts is not only frequent but also spatially extensive, as commonly linked to large-scale agribusiness, plantations, mining/quarrying, property/housing/real estate development, logging and tree plantations.

Government projects accounted for 17 percent of all documented land and resource conflict cases (134 out of 774) across five countries. These cases were most prominently recorded in Indonesia, where they comprised 21 percent of cases (71 out of 341). Although government-driven conflicts represented a smaller proportion of total cases compared to private-led enterprises, they still affected a substantial land area — 10 percent of the total contested hectares. The types of government projects commonly associated with land and resource conflicts include public infrastructure, public utilities (energy facilities,

water systems, transmission lines) and military and security installations. In many cases, tensions are linked to compulsory acquisition processes, inadequate consultation, or overlapping tenure systems.

As in the case of government land concessions in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, policies of the governments encourage investments in expanding agro-industrial plantations have consequently fostered land grabbing. Such land concessions are often justified on the basis of false claims that the lands being taken are “idle,” “marginal,” or “marginally productive.” But in reality, indigenous communities and small farmers are often deprived of and evicted from the lands they once held and cultivated.

Box 4. Land and resource conflict in renewable energy expansion - Philippines

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 local government unit 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.

Source: 2025 Philippine Land and resource conflict monitoring report

Landlord–tenant or agrarian conflict-driven cases were notably high in the Philippines, accounting for 35 percent of cases (99 out of 281) and affecting 23,272 hectares of contested land. These conflicts reflect persistent tensions linked to agrarian reform, tenancy rights, and land redistribution, highlighting the limited implementation of land reform programs and gaps in enforcement of existing laws. Decades of slow or incomplete reform have left smallholders and tenant farmers vulnerable to land conflicts. Bangladesh also recorded a significant proportion of agrarian conflicts at 27 percent (17 of 64 cases), though these involved a much smaller total contested area of 202 hectares. Across Asia, studies show that weak implementation of land reform, unclear land tenure, where ownership, rights, or boundaries are ambiguous or disputed, and institutional gaps contribute to enduring agrarian tensions, thus reinforcing patterns of marginalization among rural communities.

Community-to-community conflicts, particularly in Bangladesh and the Philippines, comprised only six percent of cases (47 out of 774) but accounted for 20 percent of the total contested land, indicating that while fewer in number, these conflicts often involve large and overlapping territorial claims. In the Bangladesh Chittagong Hill Tracts, widespread encroachments on indigenous lands also include members of the Bengali community, which continue to jeopardize the livelihoods of IPs. In Philippines, overlapping claims arise from multiple laws and agencies with conflicting mandates, separate databases, and lack of unified tenure mapping system. In 2021, the Department of Agrarian Reform found over 138,000 Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) within indigenous ancestral domains, creating potential conflicts between farmer beneficiaries and indigenous communities when titles overlap.

Land conflicts are primarily driven by the interconnected governance failures and development pressures. Smallholders and indigenous communities are vulnerable due to unclear or contested land rights, weak legal protection of customary claims, and judicial systems often favoring powerful actors. Rising population, rural-urban migration and climate change impacts further intensify competition over land resulting to displacement and heightened tensions.

Table 9. Human Rights Violations (HRVs)

Incidents of HRVs	No. of incidents and victims by country										Total	
	BGD		CAM		INDO		NEP		PHI		No. of Incidents	No. of Victims
	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims		
Against individuals	18	108	1	1	122	736	6	10	13	28	160	883 individuals
Against communities	10	218	1	670	219	123,612	31	6,038	21	312	282	130,850 households
Total	28		2		341		37		34		442	

From the 774 cases, there were 160 documented incidents of human rights violations against individuals and 282 incidents against communities. These incidents affected a total of 883 individual victims and at least 130,850 households (Table 9).

Indonesia accounted for the largest share of total documented HRV incidents against individuals, representing 76 percent, as well as in terms of number of individual victims at 83 percent. Bangladesh followed with 11 percent of incidents and 12 percent of the number of affected individual victims.

Indonesia has the highest number of recorded HRVs committed against communities (78 percent) and affected households (94 percent). It is followed by Nepal with 11 percent of the total incidents and five percent of the affected households.

The data show that HRV incidents against individuals affect an average of six people per case, while incidents against communities impact an average of around 460 households. In Cambodia, even a single HRV at the community level affected hundreds of households, demonstrating that the scale of impact largely exceeds the incident count. Reports from Bangladesh and Nepal highlight that land conflicts primarily manifest as collective dispossession, reflecting broader conflict dynamics and community-level harm rather than isolated events of individual violations.

Although fewer in number, incidents against individuals can still affect a larger number of community members and possibly, including human rights defenders. Community-level incidents, on the other hand, have far wider repercussions, disrupting livelihoods, access to land and natural resources, and overall community security. These cumulative violations are often underreported, masking prior harassment, red-tagging, or intimidation before more severe violations occur, as also emphasized in the Philippine report.

In Indonesia, both individual and community level incidents illustrate persistent patterns of violence and criminalization in agrarian conflict areas, which remain discriminatory and repressive, driven in part by the growing involvement of the military in land acquisition and government projects.

Table 10a. Forms of HRVs committed against individuals, by number of incidents and victims

Type of HRVs	No. of incidents and victims by country										Total Incidents
	BGD		CAM		INDO		NEP		PHI		
	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	
Labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, criminalization	1	15	0	0	72	404	0	0	0	0	73
Assault/physical injury	10	78	0	0	42	312	0	0	1	4	53
Torture	0	0	0	0	7	19	1	1	0	0	8
Detainment/legal arrest or illegal detention	3	6	0	0	0	0	2	6	3	14	8
Killing/murder	3	8	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	6
Eviction, displacement, work termination	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	3	5
Physical threat and other forms of intimidation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	5	5
Sexual assault	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Disappearance, abduction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	18	108	1	1	122	736	6	10	13	28	160

Note: The recorded type of HRV reflects the most recent violation inflicted on the victim.

Table 10b. Forms of HRVs committed against individuals, by gender of victims

Type of HRVs	Total Incidents	Total No. of Individual Victims			
		M	F	nda	Total
Labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, criminalization	73	400	19	0	419
Assault/Physical injury	53	236	136	22	394
Torture	8	18	2	0	20
Detainment/legal arrest or illegal detention	8	21	5	0	26
Killing/Murder	6	10	1	0	11
Eviction, displacement, work termination	5	2	3	0	5
Physical threat and other forms of intimidation	5	2	4	0	6
Sexual assault	1	0	1	0	1
Disappearance, abduction	0	0	0	0	0
Others	1	1	0	0	1
Total	160	690	171	22	883

Note: The recorded type of HRV reflects the most recent violation inflicted on the victim.

The highest number of HRV incidents against individuals involved labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, and criminalization comprising 46 percent, followed by assault/physical injury at 33 percent (Table 10a).

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. These cases occurred mostly in Indonesia and were associated with community protests over land permits issued and concessions on community lands. Authorities frequently portrayed the protests as security threats rather than addressing underlying issues. Similarly, in Bangladesh, assault and physical injury was the most prevalent form of HRVs (56 percent of incidents, 72 percent of affected individuals), while in the Philippines (23 percent of HRV incidents, 50 percent of affected individuals), violations were detention/legal arrest or illegal detention.

Among reported victims of HRVs, those who suffered criminalization were 95 percent male (400 out of 419 individuals). Victims of assault or physical injury were 60 percent male. The 26 victims of detention or illegal arrest included 21 males and five females. Of the twenty people who suffered torture, 18 males and two females were victimized. Ten males and a female were killed. More so, females also experienced physical threats and other forms of intimidation, and eviction and displacement. These patterns highlight that while men are more frequently affected in documented HRVs, women also faced significant risks. Overall, 19 percent of individual victims recorded were females (Table 10b).

Box 5: Violence and human rights violations in agrarian conflicts - Indonesia

These incidents illustrate the intensifying pattern of violence, criminalization, and human rights violations linked to unresolved agrarian conflicts in Indonesia. Collectively, these cases point to systemic governance gaps, particularly in ensuring accountability, protecting rights-holders, and resolving land disputes through peaceful and inclusive mechanisms.

In Pasinan Village, Lekok Subdistrict, Pasuruan Regency, East Java, a female peasant was shot by members of the 15th Battalion of the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) amid a long-standing land dispute. The conflict involved residents from 10 villages opposing the military’s plan to construct a battalion facility and school. The dispute arose because of the inadequacy of the proposed relocation arrangement, where only 379 hectares were allocated for an estimated 67,000 affected families. The use of force in this context underscores the risks faced by rural communities defending their land rights against powerful State actors.

Similarly, in North Luwu Regency, 17 members of the Rampi indigenous community were criminalized for resisting mining operations by PT Kalla Arebama. Their opposition stemmed from the destruction of rice fields and gardens, as well as culturally significant sites such as sacred grounds and cemeteries.

This case highlights the failure to safeguard livelihood and identity of indigenous people and the trend of criminalizing resistance, where communities asserting customary land rights are met with legal reprisals rather than fair dialogue.

Violence linked to agrarian disputes is also evident in plantation areas. In South Konawe, three peasants from the Angata Peasants Group were seriously injured following an assault by employees of PT Marketindo Selaras, in connection with a 1,300-hectare oil palm plantation that allegedly encroached on community land.

In Deli Serdang, the fatal shooting of Rahmad Dani (42) marked a tragic escalation in a protracted conflict between local residents and the State-owned plantation company PTPN II. His death underscores the entrenched nature of agrarian conflicts in plantation zones, where overlapping claims between communities and State-owned plantations, justice continue to fuel tensions.

Source: 2025 Indonesia Land and resource conflict monitoring report

It is possible that other forms of HRVs have been committed but unreported because of their sensitive nature.

Table 11. Reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals, by number of incidents and percentage

Reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals	No. of incidents by country					Total	
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI	No. of Incidents	%
Government	3	1	72	3	7	86	54
• State security agents (police, army, or military)	0	1	72	0	7	80	50
• Government agencies	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
• Local Government	0	0	0	2	0	2	1
Private companies, private armed groups	0	0	50	0	3	53	33
Powerful individuals, authorities (e.g., politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-military, landlords, etc.)	11	0	0	2	0	13	8
Unidentified assailants	2	0	0	0	3	5	3
Others	2	0	0	1	0	3	2
Total	18	1	122	6	13	160	100

Armed agents of the State, including the police, the army, or the military, were the most frequently reported perpetrators of HRVs against individuals, accounting for 50 percent of the incidents overall (Table 11). In Indonesia, they were responsible for 59 percent of total recorded incidents, while in Philippines, State security agents were also the reported perpetrators for 54 percent of the incidents. No incidents involving armed agents were reported in Bangladesh and Nepal.

Private companies and private armed groups composed the second highest number of reported perpetrators (33 percent), which occurred mostly in Indonesia and some in the Philippines. In Indonesia, cases of criminalization and violence in agrarian conflict areas increased significantly by 32 percent from 2024 to 2025. Community protests were often treated as security threats rather than responses to structural issues, with heavy deployment of armed personnel, instead of accountability for officials. Most cases involved State security forces (i.e. police military and public order agency) and private companies, reflecting a pattern of biased and militarized responses that favor corporate interests and fail to address the root causes of conflict. Similarly, in most Philippine cases of HRVs against individuals, the perpetrators are police and military personnel, the same persons that rights-holders rely on for protection.

Other reported perpetrators involved powerful individuals and authorities such as politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-military, landlords (seven percent), and, private companies and private armed groups (eight percent).

Driven by the desire for profits and investments, the rich and the powerful were able to tilt the playing field firmly to their side. With the use of superior positions of money, knowledge, and influence to gain rights to land, the poor and the marginalized are being systematically dispossessed of coveted land that is theirs by right. Oftentimes, land is captured by the elite with the use of fraud or force. Fraud may take the form of falsification of public documents, bribery, spreading rumors and fake news, and making false promises. The use of force is similarly expressed in several ways: threats, intimidation, legal cases, evictions, and physical harm.

Although HRVs are documented against individuals, cases often indicate collective harm, as these violations are experienced and directed at community level. In land and resource conflicts, individuals are more frequently targeted as representatives or defenders of community interests. Hence, impacts extend beyond the immediate victims and creating an atmosphere of fear that weakens collective action.

Table 12. Communities affected by HRVs, by number of incidents and number of affected households

Communities affected by HRVs	No. of incidents and affected households by country										Total	
	BGD		CAM		INDO		NEP		PHI		No. of Incidents	No. of affected HH
	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH		
Farmers	4	123	0	0	98	107,099	10	1,554	1	100	113	108,876
Informal settlers	0	0	0	0	67	13,920	15	4,245	3	212	85	18,377
Indigenous people (IP)	6	95	1	670	47	1,470	0	0	4	nda	58	2,235
Fisherfolk	0	0	0	0	7	1,123	0	0	3	nda	10	1,123
Tenured residents	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	216	3	nda	8	216
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	23	7	nda	8	23
Total	10	218	1	670	219	123,612	31	6,038	21	312	282	130,850

Farmers (landless smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, lessees, small owners) constituted the largest share of incidents for households affected by HRVs against communities, representing 40 percent. Informal settlers/slum dwellers and their households followed accounting for 30 percent, while indigenous households were the next most affected with 21 percent of the HRV incidents. The farming community was the most affected sector in Indonesia, informal settlers in Nepal, and indigenous people for Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Philippines. In Indonesia, informal settlers involved urban poor that were issued with certificate of land ownership by the government.

In terms of the total number of households affected by HRV incidents against communities, farming households accounted for 83 percent, representing the majority in Bangladesh (56 percent) and Indonesia (87 percent). Households in informal settlements followed at 14 percent, with the largest impact in Nepal where they represented 70 percent of affected households. IP households accounted for 20 percent, comprising large number of households in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Indonesia. In Cambodia, the single community HRV incident affected 670 indigenous households. Fishing households were affected in some cases (one percent), particularly in Indonesia and the Philippines.

These patterns (Table 12) underscore that HRVs disproportionately affect communities with insecure land tenure or marginalized access to resources. Farming, informal settlement, and indigenous households face heightened vulnerability to violations due to structural inequalities, contested land rights, and pressures from development projects or State and corporate interventions.

Box 6: Families mapped into community forest without consent in Gandaki - Nepal

In the Amar Community Forest area of Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province, families have faced a 36-year struggle over land tenure insecurity rooted in conflicting land governance systems.

Families have lived in the area since 1989, paying Bal-Bitauri tax before the Amar Community Forest handover in 1995. However, during surveying and mapping for the Community Forest, their settlement was included within the forest boundary without their knowledge or consent. The issue only surfaced during the 16th General Assembly of Amar Community Forest User Group (CFUG) in 2014, revealing that their homes had been designated as forest land for nearly two decades. Affected families submitted petitions to the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and Ministry of Land Reform in 2015, leading to a verbal agreement on map revision in 2017 by the District Forest Office. In 2020, families received Temporary Nissa (occupancy rights), but without specifying land area, plot numbers, or legal boundaries — thus, rendering the documents ineffective for securing tenure.



After a failed negotiation on 20 October 2025 where the Amar CFUG proposed resolving the issue through a General Assembly without written commitments, the struggle committee closed four CFUG offices (Dhuseri, Chautari, Amar, and Bartari) on 07 November 2025, demanding map adjustments and land allocation for landless families. A meeting with all stakeholders on 06 December 2025 decided to relocate the Sukumbasi settlement outside the forest, and a Ministry task force formed on 05 January 2026 led to the reopening of CF offices after 51 days. However, affected families now face a lengthy bureaucratic process with the Forest Department to formalize relocation and land rights — returning them to the same cycle of administrative delays and tenure insecurity that has persisted for 36 years, despite consistent tax payment and long-standing residence. This case illustrates how communities settled before Community Forest establishment face displacement when improperly mapped into forest areas without their participation or consent.

Source: 2025 Nepal Land and resource conflict monitoring report

Table 13. Types of HRVs committed against communities, by number of incidents and number of affected households

Type of HRVs against communities	No. of incidents and affected households by country										Total	
	BGD		CAM		INDO		NEP		PHI		No of Incidents	Affected HH
	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH	Incidents	HH		
Eviction, displacement, work termination	0	0	0	0	161	116,652	10	961	3	100	174	117,713
Labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, criminalization	1	16	0	0	58	6,960	0	0	0	0	59	6,976
Destruction of crops, homes, property	8	152	0	0	0	0	3	56	5	212	16	420
Physical threat and other forms of intimidation	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1262	6	nda	14	1,262
Destruction of habitats, pollution	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3,447	3	nda	9	3,447
Forcible entry/ encroachment, entry without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)	1	50	1	670	0	0	1	150	1	nda	4	870
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	162	3	nda	6	162
Total	10	218	1	670	219	123,612	31	6,038	21	312	282	130,850

Across five countries, eviction, displacement, and work termination were the most prevalent HRVs committed against communities, accounting for 174 incidents (62 percent) and 117,713 households affected (90 percent). This was particularly high in the case of Indonesia with 74 percent and 94 percent of their reported incidents and household victims, respectively. Criminalization, labelling, and “red-tagging” mainly occurred in Indonesia and Bangladesh, with 59 incidents (21 percent) affecting 6,976 households (five percent) overall, showing how authorities use administrative and legal pressures to suppress opposition. A few of the documented HRVs targeted attacks on livelihoods, particularly in rural communities by destruction of crops, homes, and property which affected 420 households in 16 incidents. This was the majority of the cases in Bangladesh (70 percent) and also a prevalent incident (24 percent) in Philippines with relatively large number of affected households (68 percent). Notably, environmental

harms, i.e. destruction of habitats and pollution, had the largest share of affected household in Nepal (57 percent) despite occurring in just three incidents. Physical threats, and forcible entry without FPIC, though less frequent, disproportionately affected indigenous and rural households, undermining their land and resource rights, specifically in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Nepal (Table 13).

Table 14. Reported perpetrators of HRVs committed against communities, by number of incidents and percentage

Reported perpetrators of HRVs against communities	No. of incidents by country					Number of Incidents	%
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI		
Private companies, private armed groups	0	0	167	0	7	174	62
Government	1	0	52	20	5	78	28
• <i>State security agents</i>	0	0	52	1	5	58	21
• <i>Government agencies</i>	1	0	0	9	0	10	4
• <i>Local Government</i>	0	0	0	8	0	8	3
• <i>Both National and Local Governments</i>	0	0	0	2	0	2	1
Powerful individuals, authorities (e.g., politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-military, landlords, etc.)	6	1	0	7	0	14	5
Others	3	0	0	4	9	16	6
Total	10	1	219	31	21	282	100

Of the 282 HRV incidents against communities documented across five countries, private companies/private armed groups and government actors were mostly responsible for the majority of violations (Table 14).

Private companies and private armed groups were the most frequently documented perpetrators, responsible for 174 incidents (62 percent), overwhelmingly in Indonesia (167 of 219 incidents or 76 percent) and in the Philippines (7 of 21 incidents or 33 percent). This highlights the significant role of corporate and private interests in HRVs against communities, concerning land and resource conflicts. Government actors were reported in 78 incidents (28 percent), primarily in Indonesia (52 incidents), followed by Nepal (20) and the Philippines (five). Among these, State security agents were the main reported perpetrators (58 incidents, 21 percent), indicating the use of police, army, or other security forces to enforce State interests. Government agencies and local authorities were responsible for smaller numbers of incidents (ten and eight, respectively), while combined national and local government involvement was unusual.

Powerful individuals or authorities (politicians, ex-bureaucrats, landlords, etc.) accounted for 14 incidents (five percent), mainly in Bangladesh and Nepal, reflecting localized elite-driven violations.

Perpetrators reflect structural power dynamics, with private companies and private armed groups, and State actors driving the majority of HRVs, while smaller-scale violations by local elites or others demonstrate that both systemic and localized abuses also threaten communities.

Responses to address land and resource conflicts

Table 15. Responses by communities to address land and resource conflicts

Responses of communities to land conflicts	No. of responses by country					Total no. of Responses	%
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI		
Peaceful demonstrations/non-violent acts	18	3	341	2	101	465	49
Seek conflict resolution	44	31	0	53	254	382	40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through government administrative mechanism (including alternative dispute resolution) 	10	5		36	128	179	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through local or direct negotiations 	1	22		15	69	107	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through judicial courts, NHR/C, legal adjudication 	33	4		2	57	96	10
No information available	2	0	0	0	91	93	10
Retaliation	0	0	0	0	5	5	1
Withdrawal/escape	0	0	0	0	4	4	0
Others	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.1
Total	64	34	341	55	456	950	100

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.

A total of 950 community actions in response to land conflicts were documented across five countries during the monitoring period. Nearly half (49 percent) of these were non-violent, primarily consisting of peaceful demonstrations to assert land rights. In Indonesia, all documented community responses (100 percent) took the form of peaceful protest (Table 15).

Seeking resolution through formal and informal mechanisms was also common, accounting for 40 percent of responses. These included local or direct negotiations, engagement with government administrative processes, and recourse to judicial courts. In Nepal, 96 percent of responses reflected a strong preference for institutional pathways over public protest. While this may suggest continued trust in formal systems, access remains constrained. In Bangladesh, for instance, a backlog of over 4.5 million court cases, most related to land conflicts, delays resolution and discourages communities from seeking legal remedies, often fueling social tension. A similar pattern is observed in Cambodia, where communities tend to rely on institutional approaches, though this may also reflect limited alternatives.

Overall, affected communities largely rely on peaceful and institutional avenues rather than confrontational or violent means. Only one percent of community response involved retaliation, as noted in Philippines, where isolated incidents included resistance against demolition teams in urban settlements.

Table 16. Corrective actions to address land and resource conflicts

Whether corrective actions were taken to address the land conflict case	No. of responses by country					Total	%
	BGD	CAM	INDO	NEP	PHI		
Yes	4	21	0	31	67	123	16
• <i>by the Government/State</i>	4	18	0	10	63	95	12
• <i>by agreement with the adversarial party</i>	0	1	0	3	0	4	1
• <i>by third party, specify</i>	0	2	0	18	4	24	3
No/Not yet	45	12	341	22	137	557	72
No information available	15	1	0	1	77	94	12
Total	64	34	341	54	281	774	100

“Corrective actions” in land conflicts refer to efforts by adversarial claimants to pursue resolution and do not indicate that the conflict has been fully resolved.

In 72 percent of reported cases, no corrective action was taken, particularly in Indonesia, Philippines, and Bangladesh, pointing to weak or ineffective resolution mechanisms (Table 16).

Where corrective action occurred (16 percent of cases), government or State intervention was the most common approach (12 percent), especially in Philippines and Cambodia. It is followed by third-party mediation (three percent) primarily in Nepal. Direct agreements between adversarial parties were rare, accounting for only three percent of cases, suggesting that marginalized communities seldom achieve resolution without external support.

The high proportion of unaddressed cases, alongside data gaps in some contexts, underscores significant limitations in existing conflict resolution systems.

Impact of land conflicts

Following the surge of global land acquisitions, land-based investments in Asia continue to expand as driven by the growth of agricultural plantations, extractive industries such as logging and mining, and the establishment of industrial parks and processing zones.

Over the past few decades, large-scale land acquisition by the government has increased, particularly for the development of export processing zones (EPZs) and special economic zones (SEZs) in the region. In this process, governments act as land brokers, investors, and land developers — acquiring agricultural lands in peri-urban areas for conversion into industrial estates. Government have also authorized private sector participation in building and operating EPZs and SEZs. These developments have contributed to further loss of land, as industrialization — along with the expansion of commercial and residential areas — continues to encroach on agricultural land. Urban expansion has driven property values upward and triggered widespread forced evictions while tourism development in lowland, forest and coastal areas has similarly displaced communities.

Development programs and projects are often implemented without adequate safeguards, reflecting weak social and environmental protections. Affected communities frequently have limited participation in planning and implementation processes, resulting in decisions that overlook local needs, rights, and long-term sustainability. This exclusion often generates frustration, negative repercussions, and heightened tensions, which can escalate into confrontation and, in some cases, violent conflicts. The loss of livelihoods and shelter leaves affected population in precarious and highly vulnerable conditions.

These economic drivers operate within a context of weak rule of law, where powerful political and business elites can leverage their influence and connections to acquire land, often at the expense of poor and marginalized groups lacking formal documentation.

Climate change impacts (e.g., flooding and drought) further drive displacements and heighten tensions. The resulting conflicts range from individual boundary disputes between neighbors to large-scale confrontations between communities and concession holders or State authorities, often involving violence, intimidation, and human rights violations that have drawn national or even international concern.

Some land conflicts occur within families and communities, where internal tensions are often shaped by external pressures such as land acquisitions, unclear tenure, and competing claims. These disputes frequently remain unreported, as they are mediated informally or avoided due to social ties, power imbalances, or fear of escalation. As a result, underlying conflicts may persist beneath the surface, hiding the broader impacts of land pressures on community cohesion and stability.

Agrarian conflicts in 2025 increasingly threaten agricultural systems and food security, particularly as indigenous territories continue to serve as vital sources of local food production. The persistence of unequal land structures limits access to land and undermines livelihoods, making food security and poverty reduction difficult to achieve. As land expansion and resource extraction intensify, sustainable development efforts face growing ecological and social constraints.

When entire communities are displaced, the impacts extend beyond livelihoods, eroding cultural systems and identities, especially among indigenous peoples.

Recommendations

Land and agrarian reforms not only bring a source of survival but also increases one's sense of human dignity and security, and the opportunity to break out of poverty. More equitable access to land reduces resource conflicts and rural outmigration, and improves overall peace for greater economic and political stability. The 2025 country land conflict monitoring reports have confirmed this belief — that despite the presence of legal frameworks on access to land, its poor implementation has led to land conflicts. As such, 53 percent of the cases involved land used for smallholder agriculture, with farmers as the main sector affected in 58 percent of all the cases. Even among the private-led business enterprises, agribusiness and plantation sectors had the most number of cases and affected land areas.

Without fundamental changes to the structure of land ownership and control, all development policies risk continuing to revolve within the same cycle of crisis as agrarian conflicts will persist in various forms — whether as disputes, violence, criminalization, or as prolonged poverty and ecological vulnerability. As the Indonesia country paper puts it: *“Agrarian reform must not be positioned as an additional agenda or merely one ideal option among many. The State must place it as the primary — and indeed the only — viable pathway out of the crisis politically, economically, and socially.”*

Related to the above, there is a need to establish a unified land governance framework as the Nepal report pointed out. Governments should develop and implement a coherent and integrated land governance framework that harmonizes existing laws, policies, and institutional mandates. As such, this harmonization would reduce overlapping jurisdictions, clarify roles and responsibilities, and promote transparency and accountability in land administration.

In light of these, the country reports have called for a series of policy reforms that are critical to enhancing access to and ownership of land for the poor. In particular, ***enhanced and transparent land governance and effective implementation of land and resource tenure reforms should be undertaken by governments.***

- Fast-track the completion of land redistribution programs, and enhance existing land and agrarian laws in a transparent and inclusive manner. Land reforms should be revived through more responsive legislations in order to address the sluggishness of government processes that have plagued the implementation of past land reforms, and to address deficiencies in agrarian reform policies. Specific proposals include:
 - *Bangladesh:* Conduct a full inventory of all *khas* land and water-bodies, and distribute all agricultural *khas* land to the poor and landless immediately. Institute effective mechanisms to ensure the successful retention of *khas* land by the landless poor. Retrieve all *khas* lands seized illegally by local elites and landgrabbers.
 - *Cambodia:* Strengthen land governance and institutional performance by publishing data on land allocation, concession contracts, and dispute resolution outcomes. Digitize and centralize cadastral and land conflict information systems.
 - *Indonesia:* Agrarian reform program should be founded on the principles of, among others: (a) reducing inequalities in agrarian land tenure and ownership, and (b) addressing land conflicts through social justice. At the same time, the establishment of the National Agrarian Reform Implementing Agency (BP-RAN) is urgent. With a clear mandate, this agency would be able to lead land redistribution, resolve agrarian conflicts, restore the rights of indigenous peoples, and integrate agrarian reform with food sovereignty, rural economic development, and ecological restoration agenda.
 - *Nepal:* Land ownership certificates must be expedited for 1.15 million registered landless families within a 3-year timeframe with quarterly progress reporting. Joint titling in both spouses' names should address the gap where three out of four women lack property ownership. Local-level land administration must be strengthened with trained personnel,

adequate resources, and clear accountability to process pending applications and resolve boundary disputes efficiently.

- *Philippines:* The government through the Department of Agrarian Reform must accelerate land distribution to fulfill agrarian reform commitments. Similarly, the registration of ancestral lands must be prioritized.
 - *For all countries:* Protect agricultural areas against indiscriminate land use conversion. Ensure sustainable use of natural resources to meet the challenges of food security and climate change.
- The legal framework on land should recognize, respect, and protect the diversity of tenure systems upon which people's livelihoods depend, including communal, customary, and informal tenure systems. Provide legal recognition and protection to lands under customary laws and practices of indigenous communities, forest dwelling people, and pastoralists in a new and vibrant policy framework. In the case of Cambodia where collective titling and collective land registration are provided, government should provide special support to indigenous communities in order to take the first step in establishing and protecting their tenure rights, in line with national legislation. At the same time, all necessary legislative and administrative measures should be taken by the government to implement the land rights of indigenous peoples. In Bangladesh, the collective land rights to forests and swidden cultivation areas in the CHT — as partially acknowledged in the CHT Regulation of 1900 — should be pursued. In Nepal, protection of community-managed lands and water bodies should be undertaken.
 - The incursion into indigenous peoples' lands should be put into halt immediately. A complete moratorium should be imposed on further acquisition of lands of indigenous communities — by settlers and nonresidents, by investors and corporations, and by the Forest Department, the security forces and other agencies of the State, as well as by State-led development projects. At the same time, States should establish mechanisms to ensure the implementation of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) prior to the entry of development activities or investments in the lands and territories of indigenous peoples. As in the case of Nepal, FPIC must be mandated in land acquisition policies for all government projects, given that public infrastructure accounts for 93 percent (3,351.19 hectares) of government program-related contested land. The Forest Land Regularization Bill voided upon Parliament's dissolution must be reintroduced to provide legal pathways for families residing on forest land.

However, an FPIC process should not be seen as an end in itself, nor as a stand-alone right. Additional safeguards should include prior impact assessments, the establishment of mitigation measures to avoid/minimize impacts on the exercise of those rights, benefit-sharing, and adequate compensation for impacts in accordance with relevant international standards.

- Strictly implement safeguard mechanisms that regulate land investments by integrating the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in land and resource governance. Unanimously

adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, the UNGPs not only affirms the duty of States to protect human rights, but also the responsibility of corporations to respect human rights, and the need to ensure access to remedies where business-related human rights abuses occur. The private sector has a responsibility and duty to respect human rights of people in all their operations, regardless of the State legal framework or government actions in the host countries. In adopting the UNGPs, governments should take the lead in promoting good business practice by immediately applying UNGP BHR principles in all State-run corporations and plantations. Of equal importance is the inclusive formulation and effective implementation of National Action Plan of UNGPs.

- Ensure integrity, transparency, and public access in land administration, and the management of land records. Governments should be transparent and should proactively make accessible up-to-date data on land information and check corruption, bribery, and fraud in land administration. Likewise, government must publicly share and ensure full disclosure of master plans, as well as Environmental Impact Assessments and Social Impact Assessments, true risk-benefits analyses, contracts and relevant documents with the communities. These documents should be shared in a timely manner, and disclosed in ways and in a language that affected communities fully understand.

On the other hand, 28 percent of the 744 cases have been ongoing for at least 15 years. It is therefore not surprising that no corrective action was taken to address 557 out of 774 land conflicts documented in 2025. Unfortunately, all the documented cases have led to 442 incidents of human rights violations victimizing at least 130,850 households and 883 individuals. Thus, the following set of recommendations in relation to ***undertaking immediate action and resolution of land conflict cases should be pursued:***

- Conduct independent field investigations of land and resource conflicts, especially when human rights are violated. Immediate administrative and judicial relief must be given to aggrieved individuals and communities. Administrative penalties must be mandated for officials engaging in unlawful evictions, with affected communities guaranteed access to legal remedies. Forced evictions must be prohibited without court order, minimum 6-month notice, and alternative housing provision.
- Government should act swiftly to restore trust in its State security agents. Those who perpetrate HRVs must be disciplined and made liable, otherwise, these government agents will continue to commit HRVs with impunity. As in the case of Indonesia, the President must: a) order the National Police and Armed Forces (POLRI–TNI) to halt repressive actions in agrarian conflict areas, release criminalized peasants, indigenous peoples, women, activists, and students; and, b) return the control of agriculture, food systems, livestock, aquaculture, and fisheries to peasants, fisherfolks, and indigenous peoples.
- Restore access to land for farmers, peasants, fisherfolks, and indigenous peoples in conflict areas to strengthen the people’s productive base, reduce poverty, and lower the potential for violence. This step also sends a political signal that the State is willing to shift its orientation from administratively and legally driven conflict management toward justice-based resolution.

- Strengthen and promote local mediation mechanisms for addressing land conflicts at the community level. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms used by local or rural communities to manage conflicts, are rooted in local culture and customs, and have passed down through generations. They focused on restoring relationships, building harmony and peace, and addressing the interests of the parties involved, rather than just determining who is right. However, traditional justice systems also need to cope with changes in demography, cultural practices and local realities where they operate. Mobile land rights clinics should be deployed to conflict-affected areas providing documentation support, legal awareness, and grievance registration.
- Prohibit evictions and enforce administrative action against officials and powerful individuals involved in unlawful evictions.
- Provide legal support and protection for land rights defenders. Comprehensive legal aid and protection measures should be provided to land rights defenders facing threats, harassment, or criminalization. Safeguard mechanisms must ensure their safety and enable them to carry out their advocacy without fear of reprisal. Provide legal awareness and legal/paralegal support to affected communities.
- Inclusion of transparent compensation and resettlement systems in acquisition laws — compensation and resettlement processes must be fair, timely, inclusive, and transparent, ensuring that affected individuals and communities receive adequate compensation based on current market value and livelihood loss.

Finally, as resolving land conflict will be a protracted battle, ***strengthening land conflict monitoring mechanisms and enhancing capacities on land conflict monitoring should be promoted*** through:

- Withstanding funding limitations, a robust land conflict monitoring system must be institutionalized. CSOs must deploy trained monitors to document conflicts through victim interviews, site observations, and photographic evidence. Regular quarterly visits should track case progress, resolution status, and emerging violations.
- Improve data verification and source triangulation, with media-reported information must be systematically cross-verified by reaching out to cited individuals, affected communities, and local authorities. Pre-prepared case summaries must be maintained for each documented conflict to enable efficient follow-up and prevent information gaps during subsequent monitoring cycles.
- A centralized, publicly accessible database must be established tracking all documented conflicts with regular updates on case status, interventions made, and resolution outcomes. Government should provide adequate and effective systems for recording individual and collective tenure rights (registration, cadaster, licenses, and leases). The system should record land and water bodies under dispute and conflict. The information should be suitably classified and organized, so that it can be

retrieved quickly, in forms suitable for specific purposes. Systems of land registration and recording should be modernized so that forgery in the land registration process is stopped, processing time is reduced, and opportunities for bribes and extortion is eliminated.

- Support should be given to communities for developing early warning systems to identify rising tensions and potential triggers of land-related violence. Timely data collection and coordination among authorities and communities can help prevent escalation into conflict.
- CSOs should connect with, organize, and mobilize communities that are victims of land rights violations. Since land conflicts may take years to resolve with potential threats to communities and land rights defenders, CSO work should be closely linked to affected communities. CSOs should provide support and assistance to affected communities, and to victims of human rights violations where they occur. Cases of land rights violations should be properly documented and brought before competent forums, to hold rights violators accountable for their actions.
- CSOs should recognize that communities take the lead and should own the initiative. CSOs also have to be proactive to connect the voices of the afflicted in order to influence the policy level. Strategies should aim to gain traction with the public by bringing land rights issues to the mainstream, and by proposing possible solutions. In all their actions, land rights advocates and defenders should live and practice non-violence.

End note

Land conflicts in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Philippines, continue to reveal the deep structural inequities in land governance and the urgent need for transformative reforms. As this report demonstrates, unresolved land and resource conflicts are not merely administrative or legal concerns — they are human rights issues that directly affect the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of millions of rural and indigenous communities. The persistence of long-standing conflicts, coupled with rising pressures from development and climate change on top of population growth, underscores the critical importance of addressing land governance challenges with urgency and accountability.

Ensuring equitable access to land and resources, protecting the tenure rights of marginalized sectors, and resolving conflicts through transparent and rights-based mechanisms are essential steps toward sustainable development and social justice. Governments, civil society organizations, and communities must work collectively towards strengthening transparent and accountable land governance, ensuring the effective implementation of land and resource tenure reforms, undertaking immediate action to resolve land conflict cases, and promoting stronger land conflict mechanisms and monitoring systems.

Ultimately, securing land rights is fundamental not only for poverty reduction and food security, but also for community stability and security, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development. The findings and

recommendations presented in this report serve as a call for sustained commitment and coordinated action to ensure that land and resource governance in Asia moves toward greater equity, accountability, and respect for human rights and dignity. ■

References

- Ahmed, B. A. K. M. (2026). *Contested land -- underlying causes and consequences: 2025 Bangladesh Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report*. Association for Land and Resource Development (ALRD). [Paper prepared as part of the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign convened by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). This report was made possible with the financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through the International Land Coalition (ILC)].
- Engel, A., and Korf, B. (2005). *Negotiation and mediation techniques for natural resource management*. Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Lama, S. and Deuja, J. (2026). *Tracking land conflicts and justice gaps: 2025 Nepal Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report*. Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC). [Paper prepared as part of the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign convened by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). This report was made possible with the financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through the International Land Coalition (ILC)].
- Quizon, A. B. 2013. "Land Governance in Asia: Understanding the debates on land tenure rights and land reforms in the Asian context". Framing the Debate Series, no. 3. ILC, Rome.
- Sandoval, G., Marquez, N.D., Naungayan, M.J., and Onesa, A. (2025). *One land, many generations — A snapshot of land conflict: past, present, and future. 2025 Philippine Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report*. ANGOC. [Report prepared under the Land Justice Initiative, a joint project implemented by KAISAHAN and ANGOC, funded by the European Union EU].
- Sarin, N. (2026). *Land rights in focus: 2025 Cambodia Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report*. STAR Kampuchea (SK). [Paper prepared as part of the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign convened by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). This report was made possible with the financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through the International Land Coalition (ILC)].
- Wijaya, B., and Naibaho, J.M. (2026). *The paradox of Prabowo-Gibran's agrarian policy in 2025 — rejecting correction, reproducing crisis: 2025 Indonesia Land and Resource Conflict Monitoring Report*: Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA). [Paper prepared as part of the Land Watch Asia (LWA) campaign convened by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)].

Annex A. Parameters, indicators, and categories of the 2025 LWA land conflict monitoring

Parameters	Indicators	Categories	
Populations and areas affected by conflict	Overview of Land and Resource Conflicts <i>(Refers to the summary of land/resource conflicts in terms of their number, area affected or contested, and duration.)</i>	Number of land and resource conflict cases	
		Area affected/contested (in hectares)	
		Duration of land conflict cases	
	Main Type of Land or Resource Contested, as Used by the Community <i>(Refers to the category of land and resource based on its primary use by the affected community.)</i>	Smallholder farming/agriculture	
		Smallholder agroforestry, people's plantation, or community forest/social forest	
		Indigenous people/ <i>adat</i> /customary land	
		Community forest/Social forestry	
		Common lands/Public lands managed by the community	
		Water/fisheries resources	
		Housing and settlements	
	Primary Sectors or Communities Affected by Conflicts <i>(Refers to households and communities that have a stake on the contested land and on the related services that the land provides. They may hold or claim rightful tenure over the land. They are identified by their sector, or by livelihoods that describe their use of the land.)</i>	Farmers: peasants (landless smallholder farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural workers, tenants, lessees, small owners)	
		Indigenous people (IP)	
		Non-IP Forest users, pastoralists	
		Fisherfolk	
		Tenured residents	
Informal settlers/Slum dwellers			
Discriminated sectors (caste, religion, ethnicity)			
Adversarial claimants and drivers/causes of land conflict		Adversarial Claimants <i>(Refers to individuals or groups usually from outside the community, with a contested claim on the community land or resource. The conflict may also be between poor sectors with competing land claims in the same community.)</i>	External
			Private companies
	State enterprises		
	Government agencies		
	Local government		
	National and Local Governments		
	State security agents		
	Non-State group, insurgent group		
	Powerful individuals (e.g., politicians, businessmen, landlords, officials/ex-officials, ex-military)		
	Internal		
Community vs. community (residents, settlers, migrants, refugees)			

Parameters	Indicators	Categories
Adversarial claimants and drivers/causes of land conflict	Dominant Driver/Cause of Land or Resource Conflict <i>(Refers to the way the adversarial claimants use or intend to use the contested land or resource — in conflict with local communities.)</i>	Government-led business/State enterprises
		Private-led business enterprises
		Mining, quarrying
		Logging and tree plantation
		Agribusiness, plantations
		Property/housing/real estate development
		Industry/manufacturing/production
		Power generation and transmission
		Tourism, ecotourism
		Government programs
		Public infrastructure (roads, bridges, airports, ports)
		Public utilities (dams, power lines, power/ energy, irrigation, etc.)
		Military facilities
		Social housing, urban development
		Special economic zones
		Land reclamation
Landlord-tenant conflict/agrarian conflict		
Conservation/Protected Areas and “No Go” Zones		
Conflicting claims between communities/sectors over land and resource		
Overlapping tenure and use		
Encroachment (e.g., migrants, settlers, refugees)		
Incidents of human rights violations	Forms of Violence Affecting Individuals <i>(Incidents or human rights violations (HRVs) serve as markers for ongoing conflicts. These are violations committed against individuals. The most observable forms of HRVs are physical [killings, injuries, arrests, evictions, demolitions, and destruction]. Other forms of HRVs are equally destructive, yet are often unseen and unreported [threats, accusations, discrimination, and psychological abuse])</i>	Killing
		Assault/Physical injury
		Torture
		Sexual assault
		Disappearance, abduction
		Eviction, displacement
		Detainment/legal arrest or illegal detention
		Physical threat and other forms of intimidation
Labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, criminalization		

Parameters	Indicators	Categories
Incidents of human rights violations	Forms of violence affecting communities <i>(Incidents or HRVs serve as markers for ongoing conflicts. These are violations committed against communities. The most observable forms of HRVs are physical — such as killings, injuries, arrests, evictions and demolitions of houses and crops. Other forms of HRVs are equally destructive and have long-term effects, yet these are often unseen and unreported [threats, accusations, discrimination, psychological abuse])</i>	Eviction, displacement, work termination
		Destruction of crops, homes, property
		Destruction of habitats, pollution
		Forcible entry/encroachment, entry without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)
		Physical threat and other forms of intimidation
		Labelling, branding, “red-tagging”, criminalization
	Perpetrators of Violence – Both for Individuals and Communities <i>(Actors who committed violence against rights holders and land rights defenders, as identified by affected communities.)</i>	State security agents
		Government agencies <i>(to specify)</i>
		Local government
		Powerful individuals, authorities (e.g., politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-military, landlords, etc.)
		Private companies, private armed groups
		Non-State group, insurgent group
		Unidentified assailants
Responses to address land conflict	Action(s) Taken by the Community to Address the Land/Resource Conflict <i>(Actions taken by different stakeholders to address or to respond to the land/resource conflict. They may be informal [e.g., direct negotiation between parties], legal [e.g., filing of administrative and judicial cases], extra-legal [e.g., petitions and public protests], or no response.)</i>	Seek conflict resolution
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through local or direct negotiations through government administrative mechanism (including alternative dispute resolution)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> through courts and/or quasi-judicial bodies
		Peaceful demonstrations/non-violent acts
		Withdrawal/escape
		Retaliation
		No response
		No information available
	Corrective Responses or Corrective Actions Taken to Address the Land/Resource Conflict <i>(Actions taken by the non-community party [either by the State, the adversarial party, or other third party] aimed to rectify or address the land or resource conflict.)</i>	Yes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by the Government/State by agreement with the adversarial party by third party, specify
		No / Not yet
		No information available

Land is fundamental to human rights — from food and shelter to dignity and security — yet across Asia, persistent land and resource conflicts driven by historical injustices, weak governance, and unequal access continue to displace communities, undermine livelihoods, and deepen poverty, especially among smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples. Intensified by climate change, urbanization, and large-scale land investments, these conflicts often lead to serious human rights violations. ANGOC and Land Watch Asia use a structured monitoring framework — analyzing cases, relationships, and incidents — to generate evidence that informs policy and advocacy toward transparent land governance, effective tenure reforms, timely conflict resolution, and stronger monitoring systems.

