



2016 Asia Regional Forum on
Business and Human Rights

Doha · 19-20 April 2016



Protecting and respecting human rights in the context of land acquisitions

Parallel session

Wednesday, 19 April, 14:30-16:00

Human rights impacts arising in the context of land acquisitions and use represent a major challenge across a number of countries in Asia. While economic activities based on the acquisition and use of land have contributed to the rapid growth and development in the region, too often they have resulted in adverse human rights impacts for local communities and other stakeholders. For example, a 2015 analysis by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre found that as many as 52 percent of alleged business-related human rights abuses in Southeast Asia involved issues relating to land.¹

Various sectors are at the core of the discussion, primarily agribusiness, hydropower, extractives and the development of special economic zones. Key human rights impacts include forced evictions, loss of livelihoods, impacts on indigenous rights, such as the right to free, prior and informed consent, and intimidation of land rights defenders. Underlying these challenges and the failures to protect land-related rights are endemic governance gaps linked to corruption, lack of transparency around the granting of land concessions, and access to remedy for affected communities. While some countries have taken steps to regulate the acquisition of land and land management overall, including provisions to prevent forced evictions and ensure fair and just compensation and resettlement, in other countries in the region rights related to land are being undermined. Advocacy efforts by community groups and civil society organizations have sought to leverage both public institutions, such as national human rights institutions, and investors and transnational corporations – as well as seek redress through both judicial and non-judicial grievance mechanisms. While some global companies have come forward and pledged zero land-grabs in their supply chains, understanding how this works in practice and how to effectively engage companies and investors in Asia to adopt similar commitments and practices merits greater attention.

The session will explore ways for advancing protection and respect of human rights in the context of large-scale land acquisitions in Asia and identifying good practice approaches for effective human rights impact assessments, community engagement and avoiding corruption and land grabs.

Multi-stakeholder panel followed by discussion with the audience

- *Bobbie Sta. Maria, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (moderator)*
- *Eang Vuthy, Equitable Cambodia*
- *Prabindra Shakya, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)*
- *Mark Grimsditch, Inclusive Development International*
- *Hidayat Alhamid, BP Indonesia*

¹ "Development for all, or a privileged few?: Business & human rights in Southeast Asia", Regional Briefing by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, April 2015, <http://business-humanrights.org/en/development-for-all-or-a-privileged-few-business-human-rights-in-southeast-asia>