

Methodology

Definitions:

Land Conflict: We define land conflict as any situation in which public opposes change in the current use or ownership of land by government agencies or private parties. These conflicts can also be over naturally occurring land resources like forest, underground water, fish stock etc. Ongoing conflicts that have been recorded in a written or audio-visual format at any place from the level of *Gram Sabha* (village council) upto the national level are included in this study. These records could be news reports, gram sabha resolutions, public hearing records, memorandums submitted to authorities, police records or court documents.

Land conflicts between two private parties or between a private party and the government are excluded from the study unless the magnitude of the conflict is such that it affects a larger public interest.

People Affected: In case of conflict over private land, people who own the land are considered to be affected. In case of common land, people who have been traditionally using that land for livelihood are considered affected.

Area Affected: Land area on which the use and ownership is contested.

Investment Attached: In some cases, the investment data are the proposed investment in the development project that induces conflict. In other cases, it could be the actual investment in the project. In a few cases, the data are of investment that the project is expected to attract in future.

Identification of conflicts:

Over 25 researchers and journalists, who are spread across India, are part of Land Conflict Watch. They use multiple sources to find land conflicts, depending on where they are based and which source is accessible.

a. Regional newspapers:

Researchers choose at least three regional language newspapers based on their circulation and coverage in their state. As most of these newspapers have multiple editions in the state, the researchers choose a few main editions, including one coming out of state capital, in a way that the entire state is covered.

b. Documents/records:

Documented evidences such as court papers, police record, public hearing recording or transcript, pollution control board document, memorandums or petitions given by affected parties to local

authorities, resolutions passed by village councils, or any other such record that documents the conflict can be used as a source.

c. Database of conflicts reported in national media:

Rights and Resources Initiative prepared a database of land related conflicts that were reported in national media between 2014 and 2016. Researchers checked whether or not these conflicts were still alive. If they were, researchers collected data about these conflicts. We continue to maintain that database in New Delhi and inform the researchers about the reported conflicts from their region, so that they can follow up.

d. Google alerts:

Researchers' set-up Google Alerts using key words like land conflicts, name of their state or region to get information about land conflicts in their inbox.

e. Resource persons and local non-profits:

Researchers reach out to people and organizations that are directly associated with land conflicts or work on land conflicts in their region to find out about conflicts.

Data Collection:

Data about each conflict are collected on various points such as:

Number of people affected, area affected, investment affected, type of land, reason of conflict, industrial sector, start and end year of conflict, and names of government or private parties involved.

The numbers are taken from government records or from independent research studies. Wherever, such documentation is not available, the numbers are taken from the news reports or an estimate is made by talking to more than one affected parties. In case there are conflicting numbers, a conservative estimate is taken. (For the purpose of calculation, one family unit is considered equal to 4.8 people).

The data are reported, reviewed and published using a Conflict Reporting Software that is inbuilt in the Land Conflict Watch website.

Verification:

An important part of this exercise is to verify the existence of each conflict, and associated facts and figures using more than one source. Although most cases of conflicts are identified from media reports, they are verified by collecting additional documents which could be court papers, police records, public hearing recordings, EIA, petitions given by affected parties to local authorities,

resolutions passed by village councils, and other such reports that document land conflict or facts/figures associated with them.

In cases where documented evidence is unavailable, researchers reach out to people directly associated with the conflict for verification.

Right To Information (RTI) applications are being filed to get official responses and the data about each conflict.

Periodical analysis and update:

Data are periodically analyzed to look for emerging patterns. Last interim analysis was done in November 2016. We plan to revisit all the data, periodically, to check whether or not there has been any update in the conflicts in the database.

Caveats:

Numbers in each state partially represent the ground situation because data are still being collected.

The number of people affected, land area, and investment figures are indicative and based on the best available estimates.

In most cases, summaries of the conflicts are based on media reports.

Better picture about the patterns of conflicts will emerge as we gather more data.