

Making a Case for Climate Responsive Land Administration

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SUMMARY

Land administration has seen transformative changes globally, driven by policy reforms, institutional restructuring, and technical innovations, triggered through donors, by the state and non-state actors, as well as in response to social movements. While, gaps still remain in achieving the aimed social justice, food security, poverty reduction, shelter and inclusive growth outcomes, poly-crisis, fuelled by climate change and action, pose new challenges to be addressed.

There is need to address changing tenure realities as a result of loss and damages, because of climate change and also fixing tenure gaps of vulnerable communities to assist adaptation. Along with this, massive mitigation efforts, launched recently, esp post Paris and Glasgow COPs, make adding climate agenda to land administration highly imperative. According to the Land Gap Report (2023), nearly 1 billion hectares of land is required for climate mitigation efforts. Addressing vulnerability, adaptation and Mitigation efforts, warrant change in tenure and existing use, making it critical for land administration to be responsive and resilient to handle the dynamism, while ensuring just and equitable arrangements.

Increasing focus on land as a resource has to match with the competing needs of climate change and action as well as of well-being of communities living in vulnerable and also destination habitats of mitigation efforts. Substantive climate finance and carbon money have started moving to the regions of IPLC, following recognition of their role and contribution in effectively conserving biodiversity and sequestering carbon. A massive green grab, similar to global land grab in early 2000, is already being witnessed, with tenures and uses transforming fast in their abodes.

That, the land tenure and administration in these vulnerable, adaptation and mitigation habitat have remained largely plural, often informal and customary, present a unique proposition to land

administration. It challenges the dominant formalisation and individualisation and a linear – ownership tenure as an all pervasive solution. It also poses a question around if and how digitisation or technology as a tool, will address the administration realities which are decentralised, tacit, informal and uncodified, yet proven to sustain climate resilient landscapes.

Given the critical role of land tenure, there is an urgent need to think what and how of climate-responsive land administration system? How land administration will address the vulnerability as well as adaptation and mitigation challenges and opportunities, esp. among marginalized communities and IPLCs? Whether a more flexible, bottom-up, localised land administration is required that addresses legal pluralism, tenure continuum as well as tacit yet credible land relations/institutions?

This presentation proposes to address these and similar questions while arguing for the imperative of adding climate lens to the land administration and for exploring an alternative and localised approach matching the need of climate communities – those living in the margins affected by climate change and those who are providing climate solutions, esp. the IPLCs living in a different land administration regime. Drawing from global insights and local experiences, including those from India, this presentation seeks to help reimagine and rethink land administration and how can it be made climate responsive and resilient.

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