

Access to Land for Climate Goals in South Asia Region

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SUMMARY

The globe is witnessing an unprecedented demand for land, driven by climate change impacts on land suitability, climate actions requiring large land areas, and demographic changes that increase our area needs. This demand is further fueled by rapid urbanization, which boosts land use conversion. Growing and aging populations, along with climate and economic factors driving migration, and the trend towards smaller household sizes due to increased wealth, further increase pressure on land. According to the 2023 Land Gap Report, governments have pledged 1 billion hectares of land (corresponding to the land area of the USA) for carbon removal, including land and forest restoration, reforestation, and bioenergy investments. Additionally, transitioning to renewable energy from coal, establishing green transit corridors, and developing resilient infrastructure all necessitate extensive land utilization. Securing access to land is a key factor in any infrastructure project. It determines whether developments designed to preserve nature or build sustainable cities and improve citizens' quality of life can move forward, and impacts the size, cost, and schedule of these projects, and whether they can be completed at all. But in South Asia, access to land is more commonly an obstacle rather than an opportunity for infrastructure investments. A recent review of World Bank Group (WBG)-supported investments in transmission lines, solar parks, hydroelectric power projects, road and railway corridors, and urban transformation identified inability to access land as a major reason that projects are canceled or delayed. The talk centers to an initiative to improve land access in urban development, public land management, transit oriented development, affordable housing, RE, and infrastructure investments in the South Asia region. The land administration system should be capable of providing accurate information on titles and land rights for the lands needed for these projects.

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