

Conflict over Forest and Land in Asia

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The lives of the 450 million people living in and around Asia's 734 million ha forests are increasingly threatened by conflict over control and use of forest resources. Conflict can play out over decades and is often marked by violence and serious power imbalances.

Conflict results in financial losses for companies, and has devastating impacts on the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous peoples. Conflict takes a deep mental toll on those involved – leading to a breakdown of trust and relationships.

Communities often have the most to lose but the least power to "win." How can they protect their livelihoods, forests, and trust between neighbors?

Examining eight case-studies of communities in conflict with 'outsiders' our research set out to understand:

- ★ drivers of conflict
- ★ impacts on communities and other key actors
- ★ strategies for conflict management

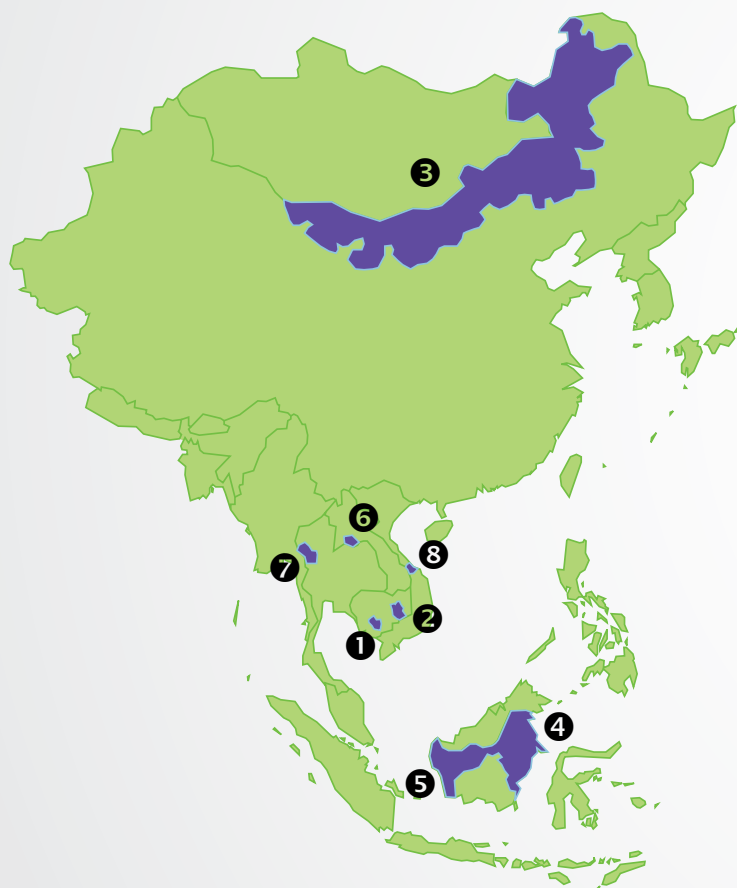
Key Findings

Conflicts should be addressed in a holistic and pre-emptive way, before they escalate and cause negative impacts. Impacts are closely related to the duration and severity of conflict.

Contested land rights are the most common underlying cause of conflict. Weak and unclear land tenure must be addressed to reduce instances of conflict.

Independent mediation processes can be effective for reaching long-term solutions. Mediation skills in Asia are weak and need to be strengthened.

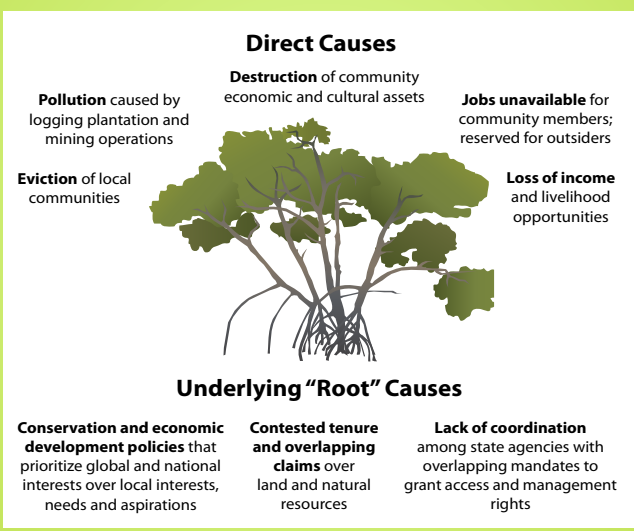




Case Studies

- 1 Cambodia, Kampong Speu**
Government allows mining company to operate in recognized community forest
- 2 Cambodia, Kbal Damrei**
Economic land concession concedes community land to rubber plantation
- 3 China, Inner Mongolia**
Herding ban damages local livelihoods, causing conflict with forestry administration officials
- 4 Indonesia, East Kalimantan**
Logging concession evicts indigenous peoples without compensation
- 5 Indonesia, West Kalimantan**
Oil palm companies clear communities' traditional land without consent
- 6 Lao PDR, Phou Gnai**
Community land designated as a conservation buffer zone
- 7 Thailand, Kanchanaburi**
National park creation designates local community as illegal encroachers
- 8 Vietnam, Hue**
Sand mining company operations damage Pho Trach community ancestral lands

What drives community-outsider conflict?



Strategies for conflict management: What works?

Conflict resolution can take years, and a mutual agreement may never be reached. Only 3 of 8 conflicts studied were resolved, but all cases shed light on common conditions for successful conflict management.

Conditions for successful conflict management

- ★ **Willingness to be flexible** in terms of each party's position and ability to compromise
- ★ **Involvement of a mediator** who is credible, neutral, and able to develop participatory processes
- ★ **No pressure to rush agreement or negotiations** and willingness of parties to provide time and effort to engage in discussion.

Solutions & key lessons for the future

Short Term

- ★ **Encourage early consultation** with resident local populations prior to making decisions about land-use changes
- ★ **Ensure coordination** between government agencies with overlapping mandates
- ★ **Promote co-management arrangements** where actors agree upon a strategy to fairly share management responsibilities
- ★ **Governments need to remain neutral** and avoid taking sides in conflicts between local communities and companies

Long Term

- ★ **Clarify tenure arrangements and land-use policies** to minimize the likelihood of resource conflict
- ★ **Strengthen mediation skills across Asia** to ensure local capacity to manage conflict
- ★ **Respect local resource management** and ensure economic development also benefits local communities
- ★ **Integrate local livelihood strategies into conservation policy**, as top-down processes and unilateral enforcement can lead to policy failure and can exacerbate conflict



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