

Abstract:

Raising the Bar: Towards a more coherent private sector framework on land governance in conflict and fragile areas

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For years, natural resource governance has been viewed using the lens of political ecology. This has enabled researchers and scholars to look into new phenomenon that has emerged in land grabbing literature: entanglements of land and water grabbing towards food-feed-fuel (McMichael 2011), the emergence of new power hubs (i.e. BRICS) and the subsequent shift in power relations; and the differentiated reactions from below (Borras and Franco 2013).

However, the lack of scholarly work on natural resource governance in conflict and fragile settings is problematic in the sense that in these areas, a whole new dynamics and power relations are seen to be emerging which necessitates further analysis. Using the lens of agrarian political economy (Bernstein, 2009) and state-society interaction (Fox, 1992) while zooming on the Oxfam Novib's work on two fragile and conflict areas Myanmar and Pakistan, this paper argues that civil society actors cannot do business-as-usual approach anymore in dealing with natural resource conflicts in conflict and fragile states. Instead, stakeholders must consider the differentiated contexts of conflict and fragile states. In the case of Myanmar, for example, it was only recently where land governance and private investments policies are being drafted by the State.

Although principles like free prior and informed consent (FPIC), FAIR, conflict sensitivity, Do No Harm principles, and the New Deal which calls for private sector to contribute to peacebuilding and state building goals in conflict and fragile states are established and are used as governing framework, this paper calls for more coherent private sector engagement framework in conflict and fragile settings - one which will find a balance between state and peace building initiatives and human security and empowerment principles. It calls for a cohesive framework which will ensure land and water resources are governed properly and no one is left behind as the Sustainable Development Goals is trying to achieve. #