



NPA Policy:

# Land and natural resources

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*Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) works for a more just distribution of power and resources. We believe that this is a condition for a development that benefits oppressed and/or marginalized people in a society, women as well as men. NPA maintains that **natural resources** belong to the people and should therefore benefit the common good. An adequate policy framework and mechanisms for participation must be in place to achieve this. A fair distribution of ownership and access to **land** favours a more just development for those who depend on land as a resource for production (e.g. agriculture, pastoralism, small businesses). This is crucial for marginalised groups' access to housing. This is also crucial for food security and economic development. In addition access to land is fundamental for the identity of social groups and people.*

Currently there is an increasing competition as regards access and control of natural resources. There is also a tendency to increased conflict related to investments in these resources. Thus, a just distribution of land and the benefits of natural resource extraction will also in the long run reduce the level of conflict in society.

This policy outlines NPA's approach to the promotion of a more just distribution of land and resources. The policy is relevant in countries where land rights and natural resource

management is an issue and for NPA's own advocacy work. NPA works with organizations and social movements in programme countries to support their agenda and strengthen their capability to be heard in political decision making processes, both on a local and national government level and to inform public opinion. In Norway and internationally, NPA works to influence policies regarding natural resources and land.

## Land rights and usage of land

In many countries the best land has historically been in the hands of a few national or international elites. Some form of land reform processes have been undertaken in most, though not all, developing countries with variable degree of success or inclusion of marginalised groups. With the neo liberal policies over the last twenty years the focus has been on market-based, not redistributive reform, also encouraging privatization of communal land. State technical and economic support to small farmers has tended to be withdrawn. Large scale farming has been encouraged. National and multinational agribusiness elites have strengthened their position. In recent years, there is again increased pressure on land in the global south amongst other driven by the competition for access and control over natural resources in rural areas, large scale export oriented food production, tree planting or bio-fuel production. Land has also been given or leased to national and international actors, creating new forms of conflicts and insecurity for farmers and other traditional users of the land. With the migration to the cities there is increased demand for land for housing and economic activities by urban poor often in conflict with stronger economic interests.

The struggles over land are commonly linked to areas such as multiple claims to land (e.g. agriculturalists vs. pastoralists), women's land rights, privatization, urban territorial use, communal ownership and user rights, traditional vs. statutory laws and practices, redistribution and indigenous people's

*Taking into consideration the need to adapt to the specific issues in each country and agendas of partners, NPA will support;*

- A participatory development of legislation and policies related to land and natural resources, and partners' engagement in such processes.
- Access to information and debate as input for strategy development of peasant, indigenous or urban dwellers organisations.
- Initiatives to raise awareness on relevant legislation, including both statutory and customary land law.
- The implementation of land- and resource legislation. Promoting that all those affected participate in this process and that mechanisms for handling potential conflicts are developed.
- Marginalised people's right to land and restoration of land. When this is not possible, a just compensation when livelihoods and access to land are affected.
- The efforts to achieve just distribution of land, land reform or recognition of indigenous peoples territories.
- Women's access and ownership to land, including inheritance rights.
- That the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent is adhered to in relation to issues of utilization of land and natural resources.
- Displaced people's right to their land when lost due to war or illegally confiscated due to occupation.

claims to their own territories. Displacement due to war or occupation also contributes to loss of access to land and conflicts over land rights.

In many of the NPA programme countries the access, use and ownership to land is of concern. Organisations and social movements of peasants, indigenous people or urban dwellers are active defending the right to land or territories or the equal rights of women and men in the access and ownership of land. These actors can be found at local and national levels as well as in some international networks and many are a reference for NPAs work.

### **Natural resource management**

The quest for control over natural resources is increasing. In many countries, international enterprises obtain large profits from extraction of hydrocarbons, minerals or water. At the same time, the extraction of oil, gas and minerals and the development of energy sources have been and is a crucial factor for economic growth in many countries. However, the effects of such economic activities may also be damaging.

Negative developmental effects from natural resource extraction are often seen locally, through dispossession and evictions of people and communities, reduced access to the resources they depend on (water, land, fishing, etc.), environmental degradation and social impacts. Nationally, the concentration of revenues in the hands of a few, increased corruption or that a major part of revenues are taken out of the country, may impede a positive developmental effect and have a negative political impact.

In indigenous people's territories the extractive industries also affect negatively their authority, their right to self-determination and their way of living. In many cases, the state promotes extractive activities without prior consultation, even when the countries have signed the ILO 169.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is promoted internationally as a tool for economic growth. Therefore many countries offer unnecessary favourable conditions such as access to take over the control or even ownership of natural resources and/or tax exemption to attract investments. Another consequence of FDI is the identification of large tracts of land for bio fuel, tree planting, agriculture, and/or extractive industries. As a response to the climate crisis and the need for new energy sources there is a new and increasing interest in investment in clean energy sources, including hydroelectric power.

Norwegian enterprises, many of them state owned or receiving state funding, are also increasingly investing in natural resources. The Norwegian Government states that it will promote investments in clean energy. At the same time, through the Norwegian Government Pension Fund Global, Norway also plays a large role in investments in a large variety of foreign enterprises, including enterprises that invest in natural resources.

FDI, including Norwegian investments, may open up for industrial and economic development. However, with inadequate policy framework and mechanisms in place, FDI may also negatively affect distribution, undermine human rights and cause further oppression.

A large number of organisations are promoting measures to regulate and establish norms for the behaviour of enterprises that invest in natural resources. In many programme countries there are communities, organisations and social movements that demand to be consulted. These may in addition mobilise against the negative effects of investments in natural resources or demand transparency in the use of revenues.

Some key questions to ask are: Who will benefit and who will suffer the consequences of the investments in natural resources? What is the distributional effect of the investment? What is the role of the state? Are legal frameworks and proper consultation processes in place? Whose power does the investment strengthen?

*Taking into consideration the need to adapt to the specific issues in each country and partners agendas, NPA will support;*

- Partners' mobilization and policy work regarding a proper natural resource management.
- National frameworks that secure democratic control of natural resources and a fair distribution of the revenues.
- Partners work to lobby and monitor the implementation of such frameworks.
- Transparency regarding revenues and the use of revenues.
- The states' responsibility for proper consultation and information with constituencies concerned and especially the right to free prior informed consent of indigenous peoples as established in the UN declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights in 2007 and the ILO Convention 169.
- Partner's monitoring of national and foreign companies investing in natural resources and its effect on the livelihood for e.g. peasants and indigenous peoples.
- Monitor Norwegian investments in natural resources (enterprises or investments of the Norwegian Government Pension Fund Global) when these take place in programme countries and particularly if constituencies of partner organizations are involved. When relevant, raise issues of concern with Norwegian authorities.
- Use concrete experiences in recommendations to Norwegian development policies.



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