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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# **An Overview of the 3 'T's**

**Presenter: Chris Huggins**

**Treasure, Turf and Turmoil: The Dirty Dynamics  
of Land and Natural Resource Conflict**

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# Multiple meanings of land and natural resources

Land and natural resources are important to local communities in many different ways:

- As a basis of **group identity**
- As a symbol of local **political autonomy**
- As an **asset** for economic and social security
- As a source of direct and indirect **economic benefits**

# Multiple meanings of land and natural resources

Important to the state as well:

- Economic assets
- Administrative territories
- National image
- Areas of geo-political importance
- Possible importance at the regional or global level, particularly if they are home to rare species



# Struggle and conflict over access to resources

- Because land and NR have multiple roles, its not surprising that there are struggles to control them
- Governing land and natural resources is an essential part of 'good governance'
- Poor governance of resources leads to disputes
- Left to fester, or in a context of wider problems, *disputes over resources will lead to violence*

# Land and natural resources and large-scale conflict

- Many large-scale conflicts linked to grievances (access to land, forests, minerals etc)
- During large-scale conflict, access to resources changes and the 'war economy' sustains violence
- Population displacement leads to overlapping claims and disputes over land and property
- Therefore virtually all conflicts include contested rights to land and NR

***What examples of these factors do you see in countries that you work in?***

# A rapidly changing world

- Climate change
- Global reach of firms under WTO frameworks
- Urbanization
- Rising food prices
- Changing consumer appetites in China, India...
- Accelerating enclosure of the commons
- 'Green Revolution for Africa', biotech...



*... How are communities, governments and aid agencies responding to these dynamic trends?*

# Vulnerability and control over land and natural resources

- Climate change and other threats to the environment impact vulnerable people severely
- The poor, landless, women and indigenous peoples may be displaced during struggles over resources
- Subsidiary rights to resources are often critical to vulnerable groups.
- When these rights are abrogated, low level but devastating conflict can erupt that often involves environmental damage.





# Vulnerability and control over land and natural resources

- On the other hand, “vulnerable” groups can demonstrate amazing resilience. Poor farmers in Niger fostered the regeneration of millions of hectares of semi-arid lands, assisted by new policies that assured them rights to trees.





# The good news...

- Interventions to reform governance of land and NR can make rapid and substantial improvements to people's lives
- In states which are resistant to the vocabulary and practice of inclusive democratic politics, interventions in the management of land and NR can represent concrete forms of participatory governance
- Land and NR are therefore entry points with great potential for progressive change



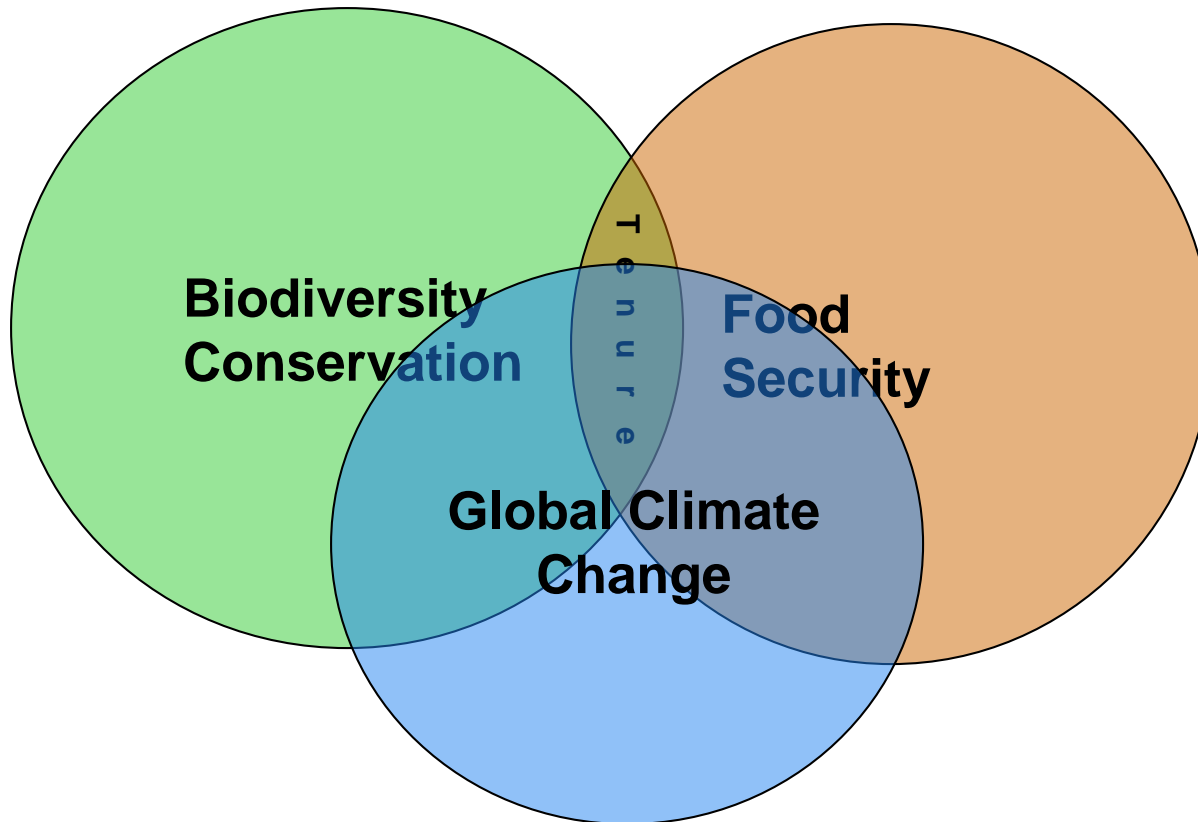
# Costs of ignoring rights to land and natural resources

Projects which don't account for all potential claims to resources and social tensions risk causing violence:

- E.g. Water schemes which do not take downstream users into account may be destroyed
- E.g. Trees planted to reduce erosion may be uprooted if they are planted on contested land
- Demarcation of rights can either improve the situation of vulnerable groups, or 'shut them out' completely
- Ignoring rights to resources can provoke violence

# Madagascar: Policy imperatives between biodiversity conservation, climate change, food security

Forests represent: ecotourism, secondary forest products, hydro-electric power, mineral resources, bioprospecting, ecoagriculture zone, carbon sinks and sources of payments for avoided deforestation



# Madagascar: Conservation, development, and dispossession

- Tensions around conservation measures were exacerbated following introduction of carbon credits for conservation and reforestation (REDD)
- Decision to lease 1.3m hectares of land to South Korean firm Daewoo led to protests
- The land issue was key to the resignation of the President and ongoing political instability



# Contested spaces, contested resources



**The Ranomafana – Andringitra forest corridor, Madagascar, is a contested space. Its future will be shaped by global and national policy decisions around the crises of food security, conservation priorities, and now, global climate change. Biodiversity conservation and food security can be compatible goals but depend upon the governance structures in place.**

# Learning points from this presentation

- Land and natural resources have multiple meanings for local people and the state
- Unfair or unsustainable governance of land and natural resources is a major source of conflict
- Environmental changes, as mentioned in the distance learning course, make governance more challenging
- Improving governance of resources can reduce conflict, secure livelihoods, and protect the environment

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**Questions?**

