Initiatives to Reform Tenure in India

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Bio-diversity in India

• 45000 Plant Species
• 81000 Animal Species
• 1228 Identified birds (14% of World)
• 446 Reptile Species
• 204 Amphibians
• Includes 60% of Tigers of the World
Anthropic Diversity

- 91 Eco-cultural Zones
- 4635 Communities
- 325 Languages
- 80 m Tribal People
- Studies suggest that the two diversities are linked
Forest Tribal Poverty Nexus

- 67% forest in North East, Central Belt, Eastern India and Western Ghats
- Almost similar % of tribal people reside there
- Almost similar % of poor people are found there
- 170000 villages (Pop.: 146m) account for 32.2 m ha forests
Four phases of Indian Forestry

• Colonial period from 1857 – 1947: Eminent Domain and Revenue
• Post-Independence 1947 – 1976: Colonial continuum and Industrial Influence
• Confused period 1976 – 1988: Perversion of Public Policy and new environmentalism
• New National Forest Policy 1988 onwards: Promise and lack of performance
Consequences

- Transition from Centralization to Co-management has not resolved forest land tenure problem
- Unrest among forest dependent communities
- Industry increasingly relying on supply from outside forests and outside country
- Government revenue decreasing, low investment
- Emergence of Active Green judiciary
Competing Claims

- Rights on Forest land and forests as a livelihood resource (poverty reduction and human rights)
- Forest as a revenue resource (economic benefits)
- Forest as a biodiversity resource (environmental services)
Emerging Lessons

• Resolve land claims of Tribal and other forest-dependent Communities as guaranteed by constitution and policy
• Forests offer a huge potential for poverty reduction and economic growth but require market, institutional and regulatory reforms
• Without resolving property claims, none of the forestry objectives can be achieved
Some tentative steps

- Government agreeing in principle to settle forest land right claims but facing judicial obstacles
- Setting up of NFC
- Political acceptance and huge grassroots support
- Community mobilisation
Agenda for Reforms

• Reform JFM to secure full property rights
• Conservation essential but builds on security of tenure
• Legalistic and exclusion solutions not feasible: Rethink PPA and remove threat of evictions
• Reform markets to achieve (a) higher income opportunities for people (b) trade in environmental services and © higher revenue for government and forest product supply for industry
• Reform forest institutions and regulations