



PRESS RELEASE

Seven years on, Tharis continue bearing the brunt of coal projects in Thar: Study

KARACHI, LAHORE and ISLAMABAD, September 15, 2021: The hardships of local communities in Thar persist due to the ongoing coal projects in the region, as Tharis continue to deal with the immediate adverse impacts of these projects and put up with the enforced shifts in land use, livelihood and socio-ecological patterns.

These revelations were made in a recent research study conducted by Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI) and launched by Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy (ACJCE), a civil society group endeavoring for a transition in Pakistan's energy sector. The research titled "Coal Rush: The Impacts of Coal Power Generation on Tharis' Land Rights" was launched in a webinar on Wednesday and was attended by experts and activists.

Lead author of the research, Lecturer, Quaid-i-Azam University, Dr. Ahsan Kamal discussed the key findings of the study and shared an analysis of the land and coal-related issues caused by the coal power projects. He pointed out that Tharis are absent from debates on Thar coal, despite their numerous protests. He added that research shows Thari's land use is dynamic and environmentally friendly, and local culture and economy depends on historic access to private, public and common land for grazing and cropping.

Dr. Kamal further said that coal projects are increasing land and water insecurity, which will have long term impacts for current and future generations. "We cannot sacrifice our people for profit. Thari voices must be central to all conversations on Pakistan's energy future," he urged.

Discussing the legal and policy gaps in land acquisition for coal power projects in Thar, Associate at Alternative Law Collective, Mr. Zain Moulvi said that Thar's experience with coal projects has unveiled the flawed and draconian colonial era land acquisition laws and procedures in Pakistan. "Legal and regulatory reforms are long overdue and a comprehensive rehabilitation and resettlement policy at federal and provincial levels is an urgent need of the hour," he said.

Mr. Moulvi urged that the Thari people's historical traditions of land use, particularly their system of collective rights in grazing land, discloses a uniquely intimate, sustainable and mutually respectful relationship between human communities, animals, land and natural resources. "These customs serve both as a reminder of how misguided our present developmental practices have been and a source of guidance for imagining a more ecologically responsible future," he added.

Sharing experiences of communities regarding land acquisition and displacement, Mr. Abdul Aziz from Thar Samaji Tehreek, Islamkot, expressed his concerns of Thar coal companies causing devastating impacts on the locals by making anti-people land policies. He said that as per law, the locals should get survey lands (privately owned land), but the coal companies don't abide by



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it. They don't pay if any mistake or complication is found in the survey land and they are grabbing lands based on the Land Acquisition Act 1894, he added.

Mr. Muhammad Aslam from Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) discussed broader issues of land dispossession and details of irregularities in Thar lands. He revealed that after completing all the formalities, the survey lands are fully legal in all means based on government documents. However, he said, even in survey lands, they create irregularities by changing survey numbers, changing the actual names and replacing/displacing survey numbers. Mr. Aslam added that various tactics such as non-payment, prolonged office visits, police action and deductions in compensations, are used to make to cause trouble to the locals to make them abandon their lands so that the companies can occupy them.

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