

IM4DC

Action Research Report

SUMMARY

Researcher:

Muhammad Makki – PhD candidate

School/Centre:

School of Journalism and Communication &
Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining

University/ Institutions:

Sustainable Mineral Institute
The University of Queensland

Key themes:

Governance and Regulation
Community and Environmental Sustainability

Key countries:

Pakistan

Completion:

August 2013

Research aims:

This research investigated the complex relationship between resource development, land attachment and conflict by examining the role of religious identity in the context of a coal development project in District Tharparkar in Pakistan. This was achieved through field visits to conduct:

- A survey with 121 respondents
- 10 focus group discussions with 129 participants

For further information on this action research:

Contact person: Muhammad Makki

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Papers:

Muhammad Makki, Saleem, H. Ali and Kitty Van Vuuren (2014). 'Religious Identity and Coal Development in Pakistan': Ecology, Land Rights and the Politics of Exclusion. CSRSM Occasional Series.

<https://www.csrsm.uq.edu.au/publications/religious-identity-and-coal-development-in-pakistan-ecology-land-rights-and-the-politics-of-exclusion>

National Geographic (News Watch) article:

<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2013/05/02/pakistan-coal/>

CSRSM paper available on request from:

admin@im4dc.org

Identity and Coal Development in Pakistan: Ecology, Land Rights and the Politics of Exclusion

This PhD research discusses the complex relationship between resource development, land attachment and conflict by examining the role of religious identity in the context of a coal development project in District Tharparkar in Pakistan. Research was conducted in six rural communities lying in the vicinity of the coal project, through surveys and focused group discussions.

The results obtained are important for two reasons:

- They provide insights into the heterogeneous composition of communities based on religious identity, which explain contrasting perceptions towards project development
- They entail a practical dimension that suggests that in the process of assessment, development and management of coal resources, differences related to religious and community identity must be recognised and taken into account to minimise community conflict

The research reveals that the difference in views towards resource development between Hindus and Muslims in Tharparkar is best explained by the eco-regional identity that is linked to a fear of exclusion within the broader national fabric of Pakistan; a fear that migration into the area spurred on by resource development will dilute the Hindu community. However, the ultimate root of such fears may be that the Hindu community has gained an ecological identity from the Tharparkar desert, in a country in which they are otherwise a persecuted minority. The environment has thus given them a feeling of authenticity, which has allowed for positive relations to develop with their Muslim co-inhabitants of the desert. Ecology has thus provided a bonding force in an otherwise fractured ethno-religious national state of affairs.