

## **Abstract**

### **Group 2.6**

#### **Is Equality Fair? Perceptions of Land Distribution in New Padampur**

Studies have shown that people tend to favour equality of resource distribution in laboratory environments. But, as Amartya Sen has noted, equality in one dimension tends to go with inequality in another. This leads us to believe that equality is not an end in itself, and rather fairness is the fundamental parameter in evaluating the consequences of a distribution. In this context, this study examines the resettlement of the village of Old Padampur from RCNP, Nepal to New Padampur. We explored whether the relocated citizens perceive the changes in land distribution resulting from the resettlement policy, aiming at a more equal land allocation, as fair. The definition of fairness stems from our respondents' own perception of an ideal distribution. Based on a literature review on the area of resettlement, we chose a theoretical lens that informs how forms of inequality can be possibly fair and justifiable in society. Our methodological point of departure is a paper by Starbans which claims that people prefer fair inequality over unfair equality.

Using a sequential explanatory design, the first phase consisted of an interactive experiment that allowed participants to visualize and express their perceived and ideal land distribution through the allocation of beans. In the second phase of the study, we investigated the drivers of the distribution found during the initial phase by conducting semi-structured interviews. Further, we mapped the actual distribution of land in the study area to compare it with people's perception of the actual changes, and their ideal distribution. The results suggest that people do value fair inequality over unfair equality in terms of land distribution. In note of this, a majority of our research participants attached more value to achieving a fair redistribution of land than a purely equal one. Moreover, our results reflect that the resettled citizens are generally perceiving the distribution of land as being fairer after the resettlement.