



SAAPE WORKING PAPER SERIES

Working Paper 3.1 | December 2019

Land and Resource Grabbing in Bangladesh *An Analysis of their Present Status*

AUTHOR

AKM Mustaque Ali

STATUS OF LAND AND RESOURCE GRABBING IN BANGLADESH

This paper is published on the responsibility of the SAAPE Secretariat. The opinions expressed and the reflections on the paper are that of the respective country author and do not necessarily reflect the views of our partners.

Materials from this Working Paper may be reproduced, republished and circulated for non-commercial and educational purposes, with due acknowledgement of the source. We appreciate being informed of the use of material and receiving a copy of the published document whenever possible.

No use of this publication may be made for resale or other commercial purpose in whole or in parts, without prior written consent of SAAPE.

Comments on SAAPE working papers are welcome and can be sent to: saape@saape.org

SAAPE Working Papers are online published on 31 December 2019 in SAAPE Website: www.saape.org

Author's Introduction

AKM Mustaque Ali

A.K.M. Mustaque Ali is the Executive Director of INCIDIN Bangladesh, a non-profit advocacy and research based organisation. His work focuses on Rights issues like Worker's Rights, Peasant Rights, and Rights of Indigenous People. His work also encompass child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. He is also involved in various rights related researches at regional level.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh has a long history of unequal ownership of land. In rural areas, one percent of landowners own more than 7.5 acres, 10 percent of landowners own between 2.5 and 7.5 acres and 89 percent of landowners own less than 2.5 acres. The number of landless households is growing in a fast pace; 13 percent of rural households in Bangladesh own absolutely no type of land, including for housing. A recent study on rural land has estimated that 69.5 percent rural households lost their land in the past 10 years for various reasons among which grabbing and acquisition were two major contributors.¹ Bangladesh is under the spell of neo-liberal growth model for development. Industrialization is considered as panacea of higher growth. In order to accelerate the pace of industrialization of the country the government announced the 'National Industrial Policy-2016' where land is considered as an in-put for industrialization and backward linkage. The land transferred to non-agriculture is derived mainly from the land-poor (up to 2.49 acres) constituting 88 per cent of total farm holdings. The next two important uses were in the construction of roads and business establishments covering 10 and 8 per cent, respectively. Market economy also has defined land as convertible commodity which has given rise of thousands of unregulated real estate companies who are building apartments for urban elites and middleclass. More than 55 per cent of the converted land are used in housing predominantly in metro villages (60 per cent).



¹Prof AbulBarkat, Rural Land Market in Bangladesh: A Situation Analysis, Human Development Research Centre (HDRC).

1.1. Description of Land and Major Natural Resource

Description of land and major natural resource available and their conditions, use pattern Land is considered as the most valuable asset in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has the lowest land-man ratio in the world, which was estimated by the FAO in 2013 to be 0.06 hectares per person. Recently in both rural and urban areas land price is skyrocketing due to land scarcity relative to its demand.

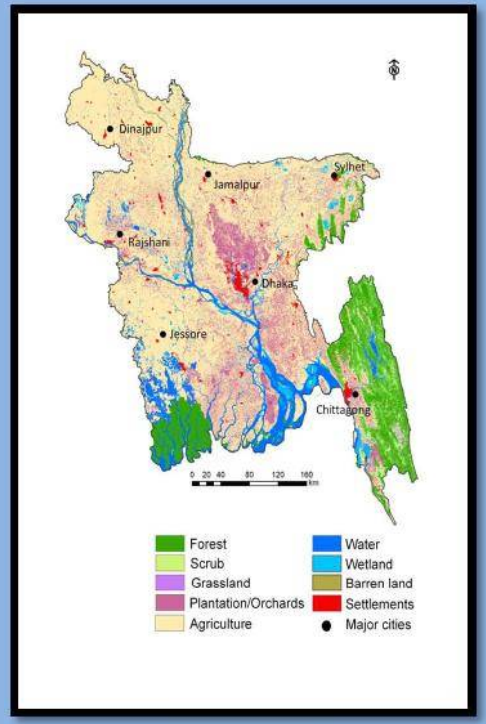
The number of landless households is growing in a fast pace; 13 percent of rural households in Bangladesh own absolutely no type of land, including for housing. It is estimated that the country has approximately nine million hectares of cultivable land but population pressure suggests that by 2025 as much as 50 percent of that land will be taken over by human settlement.

Bangladesh is a land scarce country where per capita cultivated land is only 12.5 decimals. According to the data of Planning Commission, every year over 80 thousand hectares of agricultural land (nearly one percent of the total agricultural land) is being converted to non-agricultural uses.² Such high rate of conversion will not only hamper agricultural production but will have adverse impact on food security. The converted land is predominantly used for construction of houses, followed by roads and establishment of business enterprises. The estimated amount of total identified khas land in Bangladesh is 3.3 million acres with 0.8 million acres of agricultural khas land, 1.7 million acres of nonagricultural khas land, and 0.8 million acres of khas water bodies.³ Total amount of non-agricultural

Fig 2: Facts on Natural Resources in Bangladesh

- Facts on Natural Resources in Bangladesh
- Since 1970, Bangladesh has continuously produced natural gas in large quantities. Bangladesh is the 7th-largest natural gas producer in Asia.
- Bangladesh is also endowed with extensive forest resources. The Sundarbans, along with its buffer zone is one of the richest areas for natural areas of Bangladesh
- Bangladesh is one of the world's leading fisheries producers with an annual production exceeding 2.8

Figure 1: Natural Resource



² Planning commission 2009

³ Distribution and Retention of Khas Land in Bangladesh: Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)

land in Bangladesh is 2.4 million hectares which is about 16.5 percent of the total land. Among the non-agricultural land, total amount of urban and industrial zone is 87,616 hectare.⁴ The country contains about 24140 km of river length for about 700 rivers. About 7 percent of the total area of Bangladesh is covered with rivers and inland water bodies and these areas are routinely flooded during the monsoon.⁵

Around 71.80% indigenous people have no agricultural land. 24. percent of the tribal households are small farm holders (less than 2.5 acres of land), 3.60% are medium farm holders (between 2.5 and 7.5 acres of land) , and 0.60% are large farm holders (more than 7.5 acres of land) respectively.⁶ In Bangladesh,

Total amount of land owned by women is very little. According to the 2016 Report of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), women control as little as 2 percent of the land in Bangladesh. Women are being deprived from land rights in society and family levels due to socio-cultural constructs in the patriarchal mind-set up society. Consequently, policy and laws are not gender-sensitive and failed to take initiative for ensuring women land rights.⁷

- **Other Natural Resources**

In Bangladesh, there are many natural resources such as: water, fish, forest coal, petroleum, oil, sand etc. Energy is the main source to fuel the economic development of the country. Natural gas is the most prominent source of energy for Bangladesh. Since 1970, Bangladesh has continuously harnessing natural gas in large quantities.

Bangladesh is also endowed with extensive forest resources. Mainly the Sundarbans makes up Bangladesh's forest resources. The Sundarbans accounts for 40 percent of Bangladesh's forest land. Bangladesh's one of the most diverse and abundant areas of natural resources is based on the Sundarbans Reserved Forest and its adjacent buffer zone.

Majority rural poor of Bangladesh depend on Natural Resources for their livelihoods. The rural economy depends on mainly on natural resources. Small trade and manufacturing process cannot replace dependency over agricultural and natural resources. However, the absence of institutional framework for Natural Resource Management (NRM) has resulted chaos and conflict over Natural Resources. People have been losing their entitlement to these resources. On the other hand, degradation of land and other resources along with bio-diversity and eco-system are the prime concern for the entire population in Bangladesh.

⁴ Ministry of Land 2017

⁵ Water Resources in Bangladesh, BBS Data 2017

⁶ Land Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

⁷ Property Rights and Women's Economic Participation in Bangladesh

- **Land Tenure System in Bangladesh**

The table below summarizes the main forms of tenure in Bangladesh.

| Tenure Type | Registration Required | Description |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Common law freehold | Yes | Exclusive ownership of land for an indefinite period |
| 'Permanent' lease / khas | Yes | The right to use a plot of government land (khas) ranging between one and three acres for a period of 99-years at no cost. |
| Leasehold | Only if greater than 1 year | The right to use land or housing owned by another for a fixed period in exchange for payment of rent. Leases of more than one year must be registered. Leases of one year or less do not need to be in writing. |
| Sharecropping Agreement | No | An agreement whereby a sharecropper and landowner each receive one-third of the crop, and the remaining third is allocated based on their contribution to the costs of growing the crops. Sharecropper contracts must be for a minimum of five years and are heritable |
| Customary ownership | No | In the CHT region, which is home to the majority of Bangladesh' indigenous people, land use and ownership is governed by customary law. |
| Co-operative ownership | No | Using land and/or housing as a member of a registered co-cooperative society which owns the land. |

| Tenure Type | Registration Required | Description |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Tied tenancy | No | Occupying housing as an employee of a government agency or private Organization, or as a labourer on agricultural land. |
| Bed or room rental | No | Renting a bed or room, usually on a short-term basis |
| Informal tenure types | No | Tenure which does not comply with registration requirements, such as leasing for more than a year without a registered lease, or owning freehold land which has not been correctly registered |
| Squatting | No | Illegally living on land which is not one's own, including either public or private land |

The most secure forms of tenure are common law freehold. Where Government land (khas) land is registered to leases. However, even persons with these types of tenure may face difficulty maintaining their land due to widespread land grabbing.

The first three types of tenure in the table are required to be registered. In practice, due to serious corruption in Bangladesh's land registration process land record certificates (khatians) couldn't be relied as proof of land ownership.

Leasing system of water body - So far, management of water body in Bangladesh focused mainly on the economic aspect to collect revenue through leasing of Jalmohals to fishing communities/ fishers cooperatives. The tenure of lease varies according to three categories of leasing systems.⁸

For the water bodies (Jalmohal), the lease is given for a period of 3 years as general rule and lease is usually given for a period of 6 years under the “development schemes” where the fisher society applies for lease of particular Jalmohal directly to the Ministry of Land (MoL) mentioning various activities for the development of Jalmohal. Leasing of Jalmohals under development projects of other ministries. The Jalmohal policy-2009 approves hand over to the project organized fishers/wetland user groups with a condition that the groups manage the Jalmohals sustainably. In this case, the lease period can be further extended upon conducting a field assessment by the district and upazila Jalmohal committees for another term of 6 years if they find satisfactory management of Jalmohals under the project.

| Tenure Type | Description | Time Period |
|--|---|-------------|
| Lease for 3 year | Under this system, lease is given for a period of 3 years as general | 3 years |
| Leasing of Jalmohals under the “development schemes” | Under this system, the fisher society applies for lease of particular Jalmohal directly to the Ministry mentioning various activities for the development of Jalmohal | 6 years |

| Tenure Type | Description | Time Period |
|---|---|---|
| leasing of Jalmohals under development projects of other ministries | Under this system, lease was given for 5-10 years (in the past) and now is given for 6 years. . In this case, the lease period can be further extended upon conducting a field assessment by the district and upazila Jalmohal committees for another term of 6 years if they find satisfactory management of Jalmohals under the project | 5-10 years (in the past) and at present 6 years |

⁸ Strengthening Governance in Wetlands and Water Bodies Management Policies in Bangladesh

1.2. Nature of the Problems in relation to Land and Natural Resource Grab

1.2.1. Trends, Extent and Impact of Land Grabbing

Cultivable land is shrinking very fast. Bangladesh had 9 million hectares of farmland in 1980, which has come down to about 6 million hectares in 2012. The country's current population growth rate is 1.42 per cent as against the decline in agricultural land area by 1 per cent annually. It is estimated that the country has approximately nine million hectares of cultivable land but population pressure suggests that by 2025 as much as 50 percent of that land will be taken over by human settlement.

The land transferred to non-agriculture is derived mainly from the land-poor (up to 2.49 acres) constituting 88 percent of total farm holdings. More than 55 percent of the converted land was used in housing predominantly in metro villages (60 percent). The next two important uses were in the construction of roads and business establishments covering 10 and 8 per cent, respectively. It has been gathered from sources and by talking to concerned officials that real estate companies coax poor farmers to sell their land with lure of high price - though they are often below the actual market rate - for money to pay back debts and set up small business to keep their families going after losing the land. There is no strict law to control the abuses in real estate business or law does not strictly apply to offenders as money (kickback) plays a big role in this sector. The real estate builders and companies are still unscathed while buying and selling agricultural plots for non-farm purposes. The illegal land grabbers are often aided by corrupt and political influential persons or cartels that derive handsome commission and bribe for backing up the illegal land business. A large section of real estate companies are illegal and unregistered. As a result, many farmers across the country, especially in districts surrounding capital Dhaka, are being made landless or pushed into a life-long struggle for survival.

Multifarious interests may be at work in grabbing lands. Different types of accumulation processes are involved in it that uphold the interests of various classes, communities and groups in society. Land grabbing can be categorized into four types. These are: (1) Land grabbing by applying direct force; (2) Indirect land grabbing by applying force; (3) Direct land grabbing without applying force; and (4) Indirect land grabbing without applying force.

Box 1: Land grabbing for establishing the Coal-fired power plant in Banskhali of Chittagong.

Coal-fired power plant in Banskhali was a joint venture of Bangladesh's S Alam Group, and China's SEPCO-3 Electric Power Constitution Corporation and HTG Group will build the thermal power plant with a net capacity of 1,224MW at a cost of \$2.4bn. But as reported in the Dhaka Times on 13 May 2016, the Gondamara union (ward) in Chittagong's Banskhali has become a prison as the police continue to lay siege and cordon off the area. This project started with fraud, falsity and criminal activities against the Banskhali people, while the local conglomerate S Alam group started grabbing 1,700 acres of government khash (public) land in the name of the project.

Panic has gripped the locals of Gondamara union in Banskhali upazila as police continued to raid the area in May 2016. On 4th April 2016 at least four people were killed at the time of protest. Locals claimed that the raids were being conducted to foil their movement against the move to install a coal-fired power plant there. Police have turned the whole union into a jail. Now, no one can go outside the union. There were several hundred homesteads in the area where S Alam Group was trying to set up the coal-fired power plant. Local people will not be able to live there if the power plant is set up. Their household, arable land and salt processing fields would be damaged due to the pollution if the plant was set up.

- **Land Grabbing by Applying Direct Force**

Box 2: Last six Marma families evicted

The indigenous communities of Bandarban live on in fear as their ancestral land continues to be grabbed by influential people. Once inhabited by 42 families, the Saingya Marma Para of Bandarban in southeast Bangladesh has been subject to land grabbing for long. There were only six families remaining till middle of last year when they began receiving death threats to leave their homes and their government-allocated jhum lands. The last of the inhabitants finally moved out in January, said Paincha Thoai Marma, headman of the affected para. He has currently taken shelter at his father-in-law's house at Dalu para. The land and approximately 100 acres of jhum land are now under the control of Jasim Uddin Mantu, chairman of Sylvan Wye Resort and Spa Ltd. After the protest, the grabbers lodged a false case at Bandarban Police Station against the victims. Later, the police picked up the victims. The other victims include the families of Mong Kya Prue, Ani Mong, Mong Yoi, Mong Ba U and Fow Sha Ching. They are now dispersed and have taken shelter in Joutokamar Para, TNT and Bakichhara area, about 12 to 15 kilometres away from their homes. Since the 1997 signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace agreement, around 180 indigenous families have been evicted from their ancestral land in Bandarban, grabbed by Bangalee settlers, private rubber plantation owners and horticulturists.

Refuting the allegation, the land grabber Jasim told that he bought these lands to build a five-star hotel. He also claimed that he gave a good sum of money to the six indigenous families while they transferred their land to me willingly. On receiving payment for the land, Mong Ba U, one of the victims, said, "I borrowed money from Jasim on several occasions for my wife's treatment. But I am not able to repay him." In addition Jasim donated 0.1837 acres of this grabbed land to an individual – Bandarban Superintendent of Police Md Jaker Hossain Majumdar. When asked, Jaker said, "We only took the land to set up a police camp in the area." Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council member KS Mong Marma said, "Our investigation is going on. Primarily, we found the involvement of local leaders in this case." He also added that the grabbers will not stop unless the authorities concerned take stern action. According to the information of Birendro Tripura, headman of Saingya Tripura Para, 22 Tripura families of Saingya Tripura Para are also facing threat near the Saingya Marma Para area.

State land acquisitions, grabbing by the state for securitization and land grabbing by private organizations fall into this category. The Bangladeshi government is particularly well-known for its aggressive land-grabbing policies. At least 431,000 people continue to live in displacement as a result of past conflict and ongoing violence in Bangladesh. Most belong to minority groups and some have been displaced for over 40 years.⁹

The Ministry of Land is entrusted with the management of all land in Bangladesh. Different government agencies are also bestowed with land for their respective development projects. The Ministry of Land has the legal right to acquire land on behalf of an implementing agency (requiring body) and the use of that piece of land lies within the terrains of the implementing agencies¹⁰.

The 1982 Land Acquisition Ordinance is the only legal instrument for obtaining land for infrastructure development. Currently there is no cohesive resettlement policy in effect. It is estimated that an average 20,000 to 30,000 people are affected on a yearly basis by infrastructure development projects in Bangladesh. Sometime land acquisition takes place at the name of establishing Export Processing Zones. Around 30000 hectares of land is grabbed by state for establishing Special Economic Zones (SEPZ)¹¹

⁹ Ministry of Land

¹⁰ Improving land administration and land management in Bangladesh

¹¹ Special Economic Zone: Unlocking the Comparative Advantage of Bangladesh

- **Indirect Land Grabbing by Applying Force**

The perpetrators of this category include commercial firms engaged in agribusiness and agro-fisheries. Creating a sense of insecurity and alarm among the socially weak communities and classes as well as religious or ethnic minorities through conflicts, violence and riots also give rise to this type of land grabbing. The grabbing of public land by commercial firms engaged in agribusiness is a persistent problem in Bangladesh. Large scale land acquisition took place by hundreds of commercial firms. These firms use local musclemen with guns and with support from local administrations, including the police. Most of the time, land owners feel forced to sell their productive resources to the companies at a price inferior to market value. According to the data of 2016 of Ministry of Land, a total of 1.3 million acres of public land has been grabbed by these companies. Further, a significant portion of the 3.3 million acres of khas land is not within the control of the government due to illegal occupation and encroachments. The Land grabbing culture has increased due to the non-transparent land administration system¹².

Box 3: Tk 1,500 crore khas land grabbed in five northern districts

The influential people have turned the government land into their personal property and use the khas land in agriculture and business through forgery. The authorities have not yet taken any step to recover the khas land from the possession of influential locals. With the help of a group of corrupt officers these powerful locals occupied the khas land in their relative's name. These powerful locals made a fake certificate to occupy the land. On the other hand, with the help of some fraudulent administrative officers powerful locals built market, buildings etc on khas land.

In Lalmonirhat and Rangpur the total area of khas land is almost 20,485 acre. Among the khas land the government allocated 6,936 acre by 2004 and about 13,849 acre has been occupied illegally by the powerful locals. In Kurigram district the total khas land is 15,148 acre. Only 2,375 acre khas land has been allocated by the government and 12,725 acre khas land has been grabbed by the influential quarters. In Nilphamari district the total khas land is 7,552 acre. Only 3,551 acre khas land has been allocated by the government and 4,000 acre area has been occupied illegally. In Lalmonirhat district the total khas land is 14,130 acre, only 4,877 acre has been allocated and illegally occupied 9,199 acre. In all the five northern districts- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari- the total khas land is 65,248 acre, only 22,499 acre khas land has been distributed by the government by 2004. The larger part of the khas land- about 37,455 acre- worth about Tk 15 crore have been occupied illegally by the influential people through forgery. It becomes extremely difficult to recover the illegally occupied khas land as the grabbers have liaison with a section of corrupt officials and employees of the administration.¹

- **Direct Land Grabbing without Applying Force**

This category includes taking possession of land without the knowledge of the owner, or through reaching settlements; examples include taking lease or the right of possession as well through fraudulent registration. Fake documents, coupled with muscle or money power, have played a dominant role in land grabbing offences reported across the State. In a majority of cases in different cities and districts, it is found that bogus documents were used to register property or create an encumbrance in revenue records. People in the administration who are responsible for creating and maintaining land records often prepare incorrect records intentionally.

Officials and surveyors are often in cahoots with touts and land sharks. According the 2017 report of TIB, around 40 % of total lands are being grabbed by the powerful locals through forgery across

¹² Study report on land acquisition for climate displaced communities of Bangladesh

the country. At present, over 3.2 million land-related cases are pending before the judiciary in Bangladesh. This huge figure does not take into account the large number of the aggrieved who do not feel empowered enough to approach the courts for litigation. Land disputes often lead to violence and criminal offenses. It is said that 80 percent of criminal offenses today stem from land disputes¹³

- **Indirect Land Grabbing without Applying Force**

This category emanates from various natural and man-made disasters, where crises erupt due to damages caused as well as the acute problem of livelihood; the affected people are forced to sell off their homesteads and land for the sake of their survival. Bangladesh is a country of low-lying deltaic floodplain with a coastline of about 710km.

The coastal areas of the country are exposed to various natural hazards such as cyclones, storm surges, sea level rise, floods and droughts due to its vulnerable topography and geographical location. The Natural Disasters Risk Index (NDRI 2010) ranked Bangladesh as the country

most vulnerable to natural disasters. These natural disasters are liable for large scale land acquisitions in coastal area. In addition these disasters damage ecosystem and hamper the economy, livelihoods and development of the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Around one million people are displaced by riverbank erosion each year.

It is estimated that 15 million people in Bangladesh could be displaced from farms and villages by 2050 because of climate change, causing the worst migration in human history.

1.2.2. Trends, Extent and Impact of Water Body Grabbing

The issue of water body grabbing has emerged as a great problem in the country in the last few

Box 4: Buriganga grabbing continues

Grabbing, filling up and building establishments on different points of once mighty river Buriganga are continuing despite different preventive measures of the concerned authorities. Six Km of the Buriganga flowed to Basila in the city through Hazaribag and Kamrangir Char has turned into almost dead-river after its course change. Therefore, the real sign of the river is going to be wiped out from the map of Bangladesh day by day. The sign of the river may disappear few years later, if it is not restored immediately by digging. If so, Dhaka dwellers will lose its previous tradition and natural beauty of the city will be destroyed drastically. On the other hand, concerned authorities have claimed that one embankment and 22 bridges, set up on the river, have now become prime obstruction to restoring the river by digging. An embankment (Beriband) was set up on 12.76 acres of land in the Buriganga river, also western angle of Dhaka city in 1985 in a bid to save it from floods. Besides, around 22 bridges were constructed on different points of the Buriganga in several times to develop road communication in the city. But now, the embankment and bridges have become cause of the river grabbing and polluting.

Around 2,000 illegal installations including different industries, bits of sand, mosque, temple, madrasah and medical college etc have been established on different places of the river bank in 32 years since 1985 to 2017. But no necessary step to check the river was taken in the mentioned period; even no boundary pillar was set up there to locate the jurisdiction of the river. Several parts of the river's both sides have already been grabbed by the vested quarters. As a result, the flow of the river is being hampered seriously and the course is being changed that turning the river into a dry patch of landmass. It is also endangering the biodiversity of the riverbed.

¹³ Land Management and services in Bangladesh: Transparency International Bangladesh

decades. Conservation and restoration of water bodies became an elusive task in the country as there seems to be none to stop the greedy land grabbers.

Allegation of river grabbing against influential and powerful people is a common scenario in Bangladesh. Disappointingly, the authorities are not willing to do anything about it. Meanwhile, countless numbers of people whose livelihoods depend on our rivers have been negatively affected. With the help of dishonest government officials influential persons grabbed and filled up riverbanks and wetlands. The land records were forged for grabbing the water bodies and the riverbanks during the recent surveys. According to the study of BUET, at least 45 per cent of the country's natural wetlands disappeared. Bangladesh had 40,47,000 hectares of open water bodies, as the rivers are called and 3,51,000 hectares of closed water bodies including ponds, beels and coastal polders, according to Cadastral Survey Records, better known as CS Records and Revisional Settlement Records, commonly called RS Records.

According to the data of National River Conservation Commission, most of the country's 405 rivers remain targets of encroachment and pollution. Natural flows fell in 16 rivers flowing through the east-hill tracts zone and 24 rivers flowing through the country's south-west zones due to unabated encroachments. The natural flows of Surma, Kushiara and 85 rivers flowing through the country's north-east zone fell due to illegal sand mining.

Due to encroachments by powerful people the Baral River is on the brink of disappearance. Mayur, Chitra, Mathabhanga, Kapataksha, Atharabaki and 97 other rivers flowing through the south-west zone narrowed down due to encroachments by powerful people as well as government agencies. In the north-central zone, grabbers swallowed several sections of the Banshi and the Chilai. Free dumping of factory wastes polluted the Buriganga, Shitalaksha, Turag, Dhaleshwari and 57 other rivers flowing through the north-central zone. Real estate companies swallowed the Balu River at Gazipur, Narayanganj and Dhaka district.

According to the data of ministry encroachment and pollution adversely affected at least 29 rivers in recent years. Corrupt government officials helped powerful wealthy persons forge land records in grabbing water bodies to turn them into highland.

1.2.3. Trends, Extent and Impact of Forest Grabbing

The total area of forest land is 2.53 million hectares representing about 17.5% of the country's area. Forests of the country are shrinking due to illegal grabbing and the leasing of its lands, leaving the country's fight against climate change in a great challenge. The natural ecosystem is being destroyed as different structures have been set up in and around forest lands, affecting their wildlife and biodiversity. A total of 158,031.61 acres of forest land have been leasing out while 268,265.07 acres grabbed by unscrupulous people,¹⁴ according to the 2017 data of Bangladesh Forest Department. Around 65,000 hectares of forest land has been reduced in the last 25 years, according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

¹⁴ Bangladesh Forest Department, 2017 Data

Nations. An annual gross rate of deforestation has been computed as 0.74% between 1930 and 1975, 0.53% during 1995-2006 and 0.75% during 2006-2014. The highest rate of deforestation was 0.75% during 2006-2014. To protect environmental balance, a country needs 25 percent forest land of its total area while Bangladesh has only 17.5 percent. Over 65.8 percent of country's forest is facing a risk of high destruction.

Leasing out forest land is destructive for natural forest. The forest department does not have the right to leasing out forest land. Different natural forests have already been destroyed by illegal grabbing and setting up of different structures and industries in and around forest areas. Due to the continuous pressure over the forest, its ecosystem has been modified and its land has been transforming into farmland.

According to the 2015 report of Bangladesh Forest Department, destruction of natural forests is one of major causes for wildlife extinction. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List 2015, categorized 390 threatened species. Of them, 56 are critically endangered, 181 are endangered, 153 are vulnerable and sadly, 31 species have been classified as regionally extinct. They conduct their assessment of 1,619 species under seven groups of wildlife — mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, freshwater fish, crustaceans, and butterflies — in Bangladesh.

Box 5: Rampal plant to doom Sundarban

The Rampal power station is a proposed 1320 megawatt coal-fired power station at Rampal Upazila of Bagerhat District. The proposed project, on an area of over 1834 acres of land, is situated 14 kilometres north of the world's largest mangrove forest. The independent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted by Khulna University indicated that the proposed Rampal power plant project will do the country more harm than good, destroying the Sundarban. The climate, topography, land use pattern, wetlands, floral and faunal diversity, capture fisheries tourism and the quality of air and water – both on the surface and underground – in the Sundarban will be affected permanently due to the proposed coal-fired power plant.

The environmental impact of the Rampal power plant on the Sundarbans and surrounding areas was studied from August 2011 to July 2012 in Rampal, Mongla and the Sundarbans. The physico-chemical conditions of air, water and soil, and biological conditions of the areas were also studied. Increased water-logging, river erosion, noise pollution, health hazards, decreasing of the ground water table, loss of culture fisheries and social forestry, and major destruction of agriculture will take place due to the Rampal Power Plant, the assessment says. These problems, with the exception of the agricultural impacts, may be reversible after long mitigation processes. Mitigation of agricultural loss will be very difficult and many people will be rendered landless. By establishing the coal-fired power plant, only electrification in the rural area, and a very few job and localised business facilities will be increased. But, the benefits of power plant is very poor than that of negative irreversible impact.

The power plant will generate 0.7m tonnes of sky ash and 0.2m tonnes of bottom ash per year. As the ashes contain sulphur, carbon dioxide, arsenic, mercury, lead, chromium, and cadmium, it will bring a serious damage for the environment. The groundwater of the Pashur would be polluted by the huge amount of waste produced due to burning of the coal and the toxic substances can contaminate drinking water supplies and damage vital organs and the nervous system of people living around the place and the natural resources of the Sundarbans.

• Land-grabbing in the Indigenous-inhabited Regions

Discrimination and human rights violation is evident in the indigenous-inhabited regions, where the indigenous people have continued to suffer from violent land-grabbing and other forms of land alienation. The indigenous peoples have been evicted or threatened with eviction, from their traditional homes and lands in the name of development projects, such as dams, eco-parks,

national parks, protected forest and even the establishment of military bases on their ancestral and community land.

At least 431,000 people continue to live in displacement as a result of past conflict and ongoing violence in Bangladesh. Most belong to minority groups and some have been displaced for over 40 years. Around 71.80% indigenous people have no agricultural land. 24.00% of the tribal households are small farm holders (less than 2.5 acres of land), 3.60% are medium farm holders (between 2.5 and 7.5 acres of land) , and 0.60% are large farm holders (more than 7.5 acres of land) respectively

- **Impacts of Land Grabbing towards Common People**

Rural displacement: Land grabbing is closely linked to rural displacement and forced migration of rural populations to the city. Due to the land grabbing, many people involved in agriculture are gradually being displaced from their land and forced into non-farming activities like services, trading and commercial activities. Inequality of the ownership of land plays a crucial role in this rural displacement.

Poverty: People who are displaced are not always able to secure a job, and often end up living on the margins of society. As a result poverty is accelerated. In addition local communities often recount that the most painful thing for them is the loss of the land of their ancestors and of some sites with a strong spiritual connotation where they perform traditional ceremonies.

Violation of human rights: Land grabbing constitutes a violation of international human rights law through forced evictions, the prevention of meaningful local participation of communities in political decisions that affect their lives, the flagrant denial of information to those affected, the silencing and imprisonment of critics, the introduction of non-sustainable models of land use and agriculture that destroy natural environments and deplete natural resources. Every government is responsible for the respect of the human and socio-economic rights of its population and no public policy that disregards them is justifiable even if presented as public policy or state regulation.

Violation of livelihood: In rural area local people are engaged in subsistence farming and fishing as their primary occupation. Aside farming and fishing, others were also involved in livelihood activities such as livestock rearing, hunting, charcoal production and gathering of forest products. This is an indication that the livelihoods of the people living in the rural area largely dependent on the land and other natural resources. Large-scale land acquisitions are liable for the deprivation of local people's right to access their traditional sources of livelihoods. Due to the large -scale land acquisitions, rural people are forced to involve into non-farming activities like services, trading and commercial activities.

Impact on food and nutritional security: Large-scale land grabbing seriously threatens the food and nutritional security of local people who depend on those natural resources for survival. As a consequence of and grabbing, it becomes extremely hard for local communities and countries to

feed themselves because of the diversion of the food produced at industrial level to foreign countries. Added to that is the fact that the governments of many countries suffering from food insecurity are leasing or selling their land without mechanisms to ensure that the investments contribute to improved food security for their population.

2. Policies and Laws

Around 59 percent of the country's population is landless. It has been highlighted in numerous studies that land related disputes and failure of existing land laws to protect marginalized people from eviction are one of the major reasons to lose land. The country now has 146 land-related laws. Due to their complexity or contradictory nature land laws cause endless sufferings to people. Till 2015 GoB has drafted nine new laws and reforms 11 laws but failed to establish people's land rights.

| |
|--|
| 146 land-related laws |
| 80% cases over land |
| 25 lakh cases pending |
| 9.5 yrs on average for disposal of a case |
| 23.5 lakh acres of land are disputed |
| Annual household losses Tk 11,520 crore |
| Tk 24,860 crore spent on land cases a yr |

The existing land related laws failed to provide safeguard to the marginal people to uphold their land rights and/or protect their land from land grabbers. A research conducted and published in collaboration between Netherlands based nonprofit The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL), the Government of Netherlands, and BRAC highlighted that 31 million people face legal dilemmas every year. Among them 29 percent are entangled by land related disputes. People have to spend around Tk 24,860 crore a year to resolve these cases. Disposal of a case takes nine and a half years on average, meaning it would require 2.70 crore years to dispose of the 25 lakh pending cases.¹⁵

Current structure of land administration is based on following three core functions:

1. Record keeping
2. Registration and
3. Settlement.

Each of these functions is handled by different offices. At the lowest tier, the function of record keeping is the jurisdiction of the Tahsil office while that of registration is of the office of the sub-registrar and there is a different office that handles the function of settlement. The major problem here is that ownership rights are being recorded in two different offices each of which follows completely different executive jurisdiction process. Tahsil office has a chain of command distending from the Ministry of Law. Similar is the cases with settlement.¹⁶

Legal regime related with land rights in Bangladesh is extremely anti-poor. The language of land laws are written in equivocal language making sense of the land laws by the mass people almost impossible. Majority of the land laws carry the legacy of the colonial legacy and serve strong

¹⁵ <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/land-rights-lost-so-many-laws-191188>

¹⁶ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/problems-and-solutions-of-land-management-role-of-ngos>

market players. As a result, land right of the common mass is often left at the mercy of a feudal and discriminatory system.¹⁷

The following Acts/Ordinances/Policies govern land issues and land related disagreements¹⁸:

- Land Acquisition Act of 2017
- Economic Zone Act, 2010
- National Land Use Policy, 2001
- Khas Land Settlement Policy, 1997
- Non-agricultural khas Land Settlement Policy, 1995
- Khas Land Settlement Policy for Hotel Motel, 1998
- Balu Mohal and Sand Management Rules, 2011
- Chringri Mohal Management Policy, 1998
- Jal Mohal Management Policy, 2009
- Salt Mohal Management Policy, 1992
- Vested Property (Amendment) Law 2011
- The Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Properties Ordinance, 1982
- The Land Development Tax Ordinance, 1976
- The Registration Act, 1908
- The Land Reform Board Act, 1989
- The Land Appeal Board Act, 1989
- The Transfer of Property Act, 1882
- The Stamp Act, 1899
- The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

2.1. Major Acts and Policies that influence Land Rights of Marginalized People

• Khash Land Distribution and Entitlement

Khas land is legally reserved for distribution to landless households, with priority being given as follows:

1. Diluviated tenant's family
2. Martyred or crippled freedom fighter's family
3. Widowed or divorced lady with working son
4. Family without a homestead and agricultural land
5. Landless family with homestead land only
6. Family with homestead land and less than 0.5 acres agricultural land

In the late 1990s, the government of Bangladesh started to distribute khash land to destitute workers, widows and landless families, in accordance with the corresponding legislation bringing

¹⁷ <https://archive.thedailystar.net/law/2011/10/05/index.htm>

¹⁸ Land Rights, Land Disputes and Land Administration in Bangladesh—A Critical Study, Shahidul Islam, Golam Moula, Mominul Islam, Beijing Law Review, 2015, 6, 193-198

the khash land into a process of social distribution. The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950, a collection of Presidential orders in 1972, and the Land Reforms Ordinance, Bangladesh in 1984 are major tools for khash land distribution. Still today, the actual extent of land redistributed to the landless is negligible, as most redistributed areas get into the hands of powerful elites who have benefited from the policy initiatives to strengthen their socio-economic and political position.¹⁹ Regarding distribution of *khas* land, the official records (unpublished) provide status on agricultural *khas* land only, which constitutes one-fourth of the total identified *khas* land. According to official source, about 44 percent of the 0.8 million acres of (identified) agricultural *khas* land has already been distributed amongst the poor, landless and destitute. The rest are illegally occupied by rich and powerful people in the society. A study suggests that of the amount of *khas* land distributed so far, about 56 percent could not be retained by the poor people as it was engulfed by the local influential. As a result of combined effect of the above two estimates, it can be concluded that only 11.5 percent of the agricultural *khas* land has been effectively distributed to the landless and poor, and the rest 88.5 percent is illegally occupied by the rich and powerful.²⁰

- **Land Acquisition Law**

The previous legal instrument for expropriating lands for public purposes was the Land Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Property Ordinance, 1982. The 1982 Ordinance has roots in the British colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 that laid the basis for the practice of land acquisition in South Asia during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The 1982 Ordinance presented significant challenges in its application, as it was based on compensation rationale only. The ordinance was totally inadequate to deal with the consequences of development projects and to safeguard those affected by this draconian 1982 Ordinance. People forced from their lands and homes without adequate, timely and fair compensation were made vulnerable to impoverishment. The compensation paid under the Ordinance was less than replacement value for assets acquired for project construction. There was no provision for relocation and resettlement of the affected and displaced people. The extreme hardships of relocation were not recognized. There was no provision for income or livelihood support in it despite the loss of some and/or all of their sources of income and livelihood.

To overcome the shortfall the Act of 2017 is enacted but fails to focus on project-affected persons and repeats the same old flaws. The newly adopted law is tilted against the landowners and other affected people and clearly omits any reference to resettlement needs and income and livelihood support and restoration. . It is vitally important to recognize that land and resettlement are two sides of the same coin. Thus, it is not possible to de-link resettlement from land acquisition. The Act of 2017 focuses on expropriation only and does not at all address resettlement needs of people displaced by acquisition for domestically-funded development projects²¹.

¹⁹ Social Process Analysis in Poverty Alleviation Program: A Study of Khas-Land Distribution in Rural Bangladesh, Dipika Das, Bishawjit Mallick, Joachim Vogt, Vol. 5, December 2012, Journal of Bangladesh Institute of Planner

²⁰ Improving Land Administration and Management in Bangladesh, Monzur Hossain, BIDS, 2015

²¹ Ibid.

- **Economic Zone Act, 2010**

The Act promotes Economic Zones in the Private sector, Government led EZs or in a combination. To implement the objective Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has been established. The mandate of the BEZA is to identify local potential zones, acquire lands and build the zones with necessary facilities. BEZA may seek public- Private Partnership (PPP) to build and effective utilization of such zones. For establishing Economic Zones, The Act of 2017 is the vehicle of acquiring land. But through the process of establishing Economic Zone, the Act de-link resettlement from land acquisition and thus does not at all address resettlement needs of people displaced by acquisition.

- **Rights on Charland**

According to various sources, the amount of charland due to alluvion is more than two thousand square kilometres in the country. But unfortunately, most of this huge amount of charland is in grab of so-called political leaders and activists, local landlords and land grabbers.

The legal literature has addressed the issue as 'shikasti' and 'pawsti' of land or alluvion and diluvion law. These laws have failed to ensure the restoration of the ownership of the original owner. Actual char dwellers are marginalized and vulnerable on their own land. According to various sources, 70 to 75 lakh people dwell on different chars in the country now. Sixty percent of these people are absolutely landless having neither agricultural nor homestead. The char dwellers complain that there being no policy for proper utilisation of charland and the Alluvion-Diluvium Act being too complex to comprehend, the absolute right of landless farmers and fishermen could not be established on charland.²² Continuation of an improper land administration for decade after decade has just not brought any ease and affluence in the lives of millions of charland dwellers.

- **Water Act 2013²³**

The Water Act 2013 is based on the National Water Policy, and designed for integrated development, management, extraction, distribution, usage, protection and conservation of water resources in Bangladesh.

As per this Act:

- All forms of water (e.g., surface water, ground water, sea water, rain water and atmospheric water) within the territory of Bangladesh belong to the government on behalf of the people.
- The private landowners will be able to use the surface water inside their property for all purposes in accordance with the Act.

²² <https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-9034>

²³ <https://opinion.bdnews24.com/2013/07/14/review-of-the-water-act-2013/>

- A worthwhile initiative is the requirement for permits/licenses for large scale water withdrawal by individuals and organizations beyond domestic use.
- Without prior permission issued by the Executive Committee, no individuals or organizations will be allowed to extract, distribute, use, develop, protect, and conserve water resources, nor they will be allowed to build any structure that impede the natural flow of rivers and creeks.
- The Act provides provisions for punishment and financial penalty for non-compliance with the Act, including negligence to abide by government policy, ordinance, non-cooperation with government officials, refusal to present necessary documents, providing false information, affiliation with perpetrators, and protection measures for water resources management.

The Act recognizes the significance for managing all forms of water resources in the context of natural flow of surface water and recharge of groundwater. The Act provides the legal framework for development, management, extraction, distribution, usage, protection, and conservation of water resources. However, the Act falls short in making a commitment by the government to ensure the quality of water for various beneficial uses. The lack of clear directives that will facilitate recovery of the flood flow zone by evicting land grabbers and encroachers remains as a serious weakness of the Act. The maximum penalty for violations is set to five years of imprisonment and/or monetary penalty of Tk.10, 000 which was set to be Tk. 500,000 in the draft proposal of the Act in 2012. This drastic reduction in monetary penalty may encourage many people to pay the penalty instead of abiding by the law.

- **The Draft Law titled "Agricultural Land Protection and Land Use Act 2016"**

According to the Bureau of Statistics (2007–08), the nation had only 77.65 crore hectares of farmlands, and farmlands were being reduced at the rate of 0.66 per cent annually across the country because of non-agricultural use. Taking advantage of the absence of any arable land protection act, most of the multi-crop farmlands around different cities and district towns, such as Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Bogra, Barisal, Comilla, Khulna, Tangail and Manikganj, are being filled up with sand for housing projects and industrial units by a section of unscrupulous people. This is endangering the environment, including food security.

the government has the draft of a new law titled "Agricultural Land Protection and Land Use Act 2016" with the provision for three years imprisonment or Tk 3 lakh fine or both to protect the country's cropland from grabbers. According to the proposed law, no one will be able to change the classification of agricultural land without prior permission of the proper authorities; any violation of the rule would be a punishable offence.

3. Recommendations²⁴:

3.1. Transformation of Agricultural Land for Commercial Purpose

- The National Land Use Policy should be finalized to stop transforming of agricultural land for other uses.
- Installation of effective reporting system engaging all local authorities should identify and report illegal use of agricultural land, khash land and water-bodies for commercial purpose in the their respective areas.
- Government should uphold court verdicts and reclaim the khash lands and water-bodies from land grabbers and distribute among the landless.
- Government should take effective steps to execute the High Court directives for protecting the rivers, canals and wetlands across the country.
- The parliamentary committee should take advise the appropriate authorities for recovering the huge quantity of lands from the possession of illegal grabbers and ensure exemplary punishment to the grabbers.
- Mis-classification of Kash land should be stopped. Transformation of agricultural land into water bodies for shrimp cultivation in the coastal areas should be prohibited.
- If a project takes more land than is needed, the remainder should be returned to the original owner.

3.2. Khash Land

- Political parties should clearly clarify their positions in their election manifesto about the whole range of issues pertaining to the khas land.
- Effective implementation of Khas Land Settlement Policy, 1997, Non-agricultural khas Land Settlement Policy, 1995 and Khas Land Settlement Policy for Hotel Motel,1998
- The committee for the identification of khas land should be reorganized and the representatives of peasants' organization, khetmajur (agricultural labor), political parties and members of civil society should be included in the committees at all levels.
- The land reform policy should permit immediate distribution of khas land among the genuine landless.
- All khas land distributed should be recovered from the illegal occupants, as soon as possible.
- Providing the legal aid and advice to the poor people who wish to contest their claims and could build better ability to realize and deal with land related issues easily.
- Campaigning for an effective Khas Land distribution policy based on land rights of marginalized people where destitute women should be given preferences.
- Government should provide price- support system, so that poor landless owner of khas land do not fall into the trap of "free market" and forced to go for "distress sale of assets".

²⁴ Compiled from various reports and advocacy reports.

- Khas waterbodies should be distributed based on principle “waterbody to the fishermen”: Land use policy should assign high priority in identification and regular updating of information about khas water-bodies by geographical area.

3.3. Laws and Policies

- A combined or integrated land acquisition and resettlement law is very urgently required. A displaced owner should be provided with resettlement and livelihood support, and alternative provisions for housing and resettlement.
- The effectiveness and jurisdiction of Land Tribunal should be increased and implemented with high hand to reduce land disputes.
- Land reform should be considered as agrarian reform and it is not simply land distribution and should involve the cooperation and participation of all sectors i.e. other government line agencies, the civil society, the private sector, and the landowners.
- Land related laws and policies should minimize asset accumulation of certain segments of political and economic elite who are closer to or part of the governing political regime.

3.4. Charland

- All char lands that are still under occupation of land grabbers should be recovered immediately and distributed among landless households;
- Land policy towards chars should give high priority that all accreted new chars are undertaken by the government and protected from illegal occupation of land grabbers;
- Time limit for claiming ownership to alluvion land should be reduced subject to the majority opinion of charland dwellers. All confusions about Alluvion-Diluvium Act should be removed and the Act made the landless friendly.
- The poor marginal charland dwellers should be imparted training on land laws and rules and these also improved to avoid bureaucratic dilly-dallying in matters of charland allotment.

3.5. Indigenous People

- Government should cancel Gazette Notification of 1984 to ensure control over the forest land and natural resources.
- Government should recognize and formalize customary community land rights, including clearly established rights to forest land and resources of indigenous people.
- The land rights of indigenous people of plain should be respected and should not be acquired by government for projects and treated their land as khas land in north Bengal.
- Land commission for the indigenous people living on plain lands and also reserved seats for indigenous people in union, upazila, and zilla parishads

3.6. Women

- Improve legal protections for women's land rights, such as joint title on land certificates.
- Amendment of inheritance laws to ensure greater equity and social security for the women as well as Universal family laws as well as universal inheritance laws to be incorporated and enacted immediately.

Lists of Resistance movements against the land and natural resource grabbing in the country.

| Name | Organizer | Issue | Place | Time line |
|--|--|--|--|-----------|
| Movement Against establishment of Hobiganj Special Economic Zone (SEZ). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea Garden worker. • Villagers. | Land Accusation for developing SEZ. | Chunarughat, Hobigonj, Sylhet | On-going |
| Movement Against Setup Power Plant. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-stead and Grave yard Protection Committee. • Villagers | Land Accusation for developing Coal based power plant | Gandamara, Bashkhali, Chittagong. | On-going |
| Movement Against Establishing Special Tourism Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tripura Students Forum (TSF). | Land Accusation from 600 Tripura Families for Establishing Special Tourism Area. | Khagrachori Sadar and Matiranga. Chittagong Hill Tracts. | On-going |

| Name | Organizer | Issue | Place | Time line |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| Movement Against Establishing Coal Based Power Plant in Sundarban. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil-Gas-Natural Resource and Electricity-Port Protection National Committee | Establishing Power Plan in Rampal, Sundarban by destroying the ecosystem of world's biggest Mangrove Forest. | All over Bangladesh. | On-going |
| Movement Against Land Grabbing of Orao Community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orao Community People. • Left Political Parties. • Human Rights Organisation. | Land Grabbing and Eviction of Orao Community People from their traditionally owned homestead and cultivable land by real-estate companies. | Sylhet City Corporation. | On-going |
| Stop Encroachment and Polluting river, riverine, canals and wetland of Bangladesh. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (BAPA). • Buriganga Bachao Andolon. • Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association. • Left Political Parties. | Continues grabbing the land of the river, riverine, canals and wetland with assistance of a section of government employees. The demands also included eviction of permanent and temporary establishments from both sides of the rivers. Stop dumping of wastes there and placement of demarcation pillars at right places. | All over Bangladesh. | On-going |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------|----------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Rights Organisation. | | | |
| Movement of Plain Land Garo Against establishing eco-park within the Madhupur National Park (Madhupur sal forest). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Madhupur Land Management Committee, Tangail | The Forest Department had fenced an area with concrete walls to demarcate the eco-park which the Garos consider as a threat to restrict their free movement in the forest which they consider as their ancestral land. | Madhupur, Sal Forest, Tangail. | On-going |

| Name | Organizer | Issue | Place | Time line |
|--|---|---|---|--------------------|
| Bagda Firm Movement: Santal Struggle for Getting Back Their Ancestral Land. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jatyo Adibashi Porishad. Shahebgonj Bagda Firm Bhumi Uddar Shongram Committee. | The Santals had owned most of the land which was accured by the government at the 50s in Gobindaganj of Gaibandha for Rangpur Sugar Mills Ltd. As the sugar mill had liquidated, as per agreement the owner of the land and supposed to surrender to the government. In this situation Santal Community wanted their land back from government. Not heeding to the demand, moreover till today, 6 eviction of 1,500 families which including 1,200 of Santals happened. Local lawmaker Abul Kalam Azad and Industries Ministry Secretary Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan claims that the Santals never owned the land. "That land never belonged to Santals; it was owned by Bangalees," | Gobindaganj, Gaibanda. | On-going |
| Vested Property Return Act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen Cell, Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddhha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Nijera Kori, Ain O Salish Kendra BNPS | Returning the property to the real owner. Because A section of communal & corrupt officials with ulterior motives are blocking implementation of the Vested Property Return Act 2001 | All over in Bangladesh | On-going |
| Seven Demands of Indigenous | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jatiyo Adibasi Porishod | Ensure land rights and different Ministry for flat land Indigenous | Rajshahi | On-going |
| The demand for amendment of the River Commission Act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALRD, Water Rights Forum | Due to the harsh Punishment of river grabbers and polluters | All over Bangladesh. | On-going |
| Santals wants Justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santal People from Santal Villages | The Santals are yet to receive any justice after one year of the killings in the name of eviction as they are from a minority ethnic community | Joypurpara village and Madarpur village | 7th November, 2017 |