

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND LAND RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: The concerns of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) for the rights of ‘*adivasi*’ people (the Bengali word for indigenous people) are reflected through the ratification of different International Conventions and Agreements. Though, Bangladesh is legally bound to comply with these International Human Rights Treaties, considering the reported incidences facing the indigenous people in Bangladesh, situation of implementation of the provisions of the aforesaid Treaties and Conventions can easily be questioned. *Adivasi* people are often reported to become the victims of social, racial, religious, cultural and linguistic discrimination. In this context, the present study attempted to provide a picture of the prevailing situation relevant to overall socio-economic condition to 1) determine the social problems; 2) reveal existing situation on land rights of *adivasi* people and identify the overall awareness on rights; and 3) to propose necessary recommendations. Data had been collected through questionnaire survey, consultations, group discussions, (uncontrolled) observations, and interviews. A sample consisting of 239 households from Dhobaura, Durgapur, and Kalmakanda *upazilas* participated in the survey. Lack of employment, income generating activities, security, morale for savings, necessary legal support and economic sufficiency along with land mortgage, discontinued education, early marriage, conspiracy, injustice, diseases, etc. were found to be the major social problems. Moreover, issues like- lack of land related knowledge, legal knowledge and support, land related training, right to protest against injustice, awareness in preserving and updating legal land documents, along with political influence, government’s negligence, inaccurate land

demarcation, allotment of *khas* (public) lands, etc. were the factors identified to explain the existing situation on land rights. The major recommendations on the basis of the findings include the necessity for accurate land related data and information; accessibility to market information; consideration of *adivasi* cultural practices and mind set; necessity for linking local government to *adivasi* people.

Keywords: Adivasi; land right; plain land *adivasis*; social problems and needs.

INTRODUCTION

All Indigenous Peoples have one thing in common – they all share a history of injustice. Indigenous Peoples have been killed, tortured and enslaved. In many cases, they have been the victims of genocide. They have been denied the right to participate in governing processes of the current state systems. (The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Minnesota Human Rights Center, Study Guide: The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, University of Minnesota Human Rights Center. Retrieved on 21st April 2010. Retrieved from <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/studyguides/indigenous.html>

The UN declared 1993 ‘The International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples’ (U.N. Doc. ECN.4Sub.21989L.46 at 2 in Researching Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Under International Law. Retrieved on 1st October 2009. Retrieved from <http://intelligent-internet.info/law/ipr2.html#note3>). Again, the decade from 1995 to 2004 was declared the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. It was further recognized that there was no alternative but to pay continuous attention to indigenous peoples’

needs. This understanding is once more reflected in the fact that the decade from 2006 through 2015 has been declared the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (Researching Indigenous Peoples' Rights Under International Law. Retrieved on 1st October 2009. Retrieved from <http://intelligent-internet.info/law/ipr2.html#note3>).

In Bangladesh, different terms are used to indicate the indigenous groups. But the term, *adivasi* is considered to be the most appropriate by the indigenous people of Indian subcontinent and this is also true for the indigenous groups in Bangladesh. *Adivasis* represent a wide category consisting of no less than twenty-seven different indigenous groups of people in Bangladesh (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Bangladesh: *Adivasis*. Retrieved on 1st October 2009.

Retrieved from

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,463af2212,469f2ca62,49749d5841,0.html>). These groups live not only in the hilly parts of Bangladesh but also in the plain. Despite many differences among these groups, Bangladeshi *adivasis* are distinct in terms of their major ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic dimensions from the majority 'Bangalis' (Except themselves, the *adivasis* in Bangladesh refer to all Bangladeshi people as 'Bangalis').

Interestingly, a government representative of Bangladesh (the first secretary of the Bangladesh Mission in New York) although denied at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues session held on 25th May 2011 the existence of indigenous people in Bangladesh, according to the Population Census of Bangladesh 2001, about 1.14 million indigenous people, in 52 groups, live in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, somewhat two-thirds of the *adivasi* (*adivasi* is the Bengali term synonymous to indigenous) people live in the plains (mainly in Mymensingh, Rajshahi and greater Sylhet) (Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from

http://www.askbd.org/hr_report2008/16_Indiginious.pdf). Historically, the *adivasi* people of Bangladesh are one of the most deprived groups in many aspects of economic, social, cultural and political rights mainly due to their status of ethnic minority. Moreover, evidences show that the indigenous people of Bangladesh have very limited access to basic human rights which include right to basic public services (Submission of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Foundation on Human Rights Situation of the Indigenous Peoples (*Adivasi*) in Bangladesh to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Concerning the universal periodic review of the government of Bangladesh at the UN Human Rights Council in 2009. Retrieved on

28.08.09. Retrieved from

http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Sessi on4/BD/AIPP_BGD_UPR_S4_2009_AsiaIndigenousPeoplesPactFoundation_upr.pdf). *Adivasis* in both hilly parts and plains are frequently reported to become victim of land and resource grabbing, as well as endangerment of their mother tongues and culture (Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from

http://www.askbd.org/hr_report2008/16_Indiginious.pdf). *Adivasi* people are also repeatedly reported to become persistent victims of social, racial, religious, cultural and linguistic discrimination. In spite of several demands that had been raised by the *adivasis*, absence of any significant response from the government is claimed. In reality, periodic incidents of land-grabbing and events which raise insecurity are continually being reported (Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.askbd.org/hr_report2008/16_Indiginious.pdf). Such claims in favor of rights violation of the *adivasis* are reported through the newspaper reports. In literature, any academic research on the field level realities in terms of the social problems facing these people, their level of overall awareness and existing situation on land rights is scarce, if not totally absent.

The government is also concerned about the rights of the *adivasi* people and the concern is reflected through the ratification of different International Conventions and Agreements. Under Article 28 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, and place of birth prohibited. But, the *adivasi* people of the country are frequently reported to be the victim of social, racial, religious, cultural and linguistic discrimination. The concerns of the government for the rights of *adivasis* are reflected through the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) along with the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Populations (Convention No. 107 of 1957) and the Convention on Biological Diversity and several international human rights treaties. Moreover, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development recognizes the "vital role of the indigenous peoples in sustainable development" (The Kimberly Declaration: Indigenous Peoples' Voice at the WSSD, A message by Indigenous Peoples to the Governments and the world during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from

<http://www.indigenous-info-kenya.org/images/issue%205/The%20Kimberly%20Declaration.pdf>). Though, Bangladesh is legally bound to comply with these International Human Rights Treaties, considering the reported incidences facing the *adivasi* people in Bangladesh, situation of implementation of the provisions of the aforesaid Treaties and Conventions can easily be questioned. In particular, the non-implementation of various important provisions of the ILO Convention No. 107 that says, "The right of ownership, collective or individual, of the members of the populations concerned over the lands which these populations traditionally occupy shall be recognized."- can be questioned with different reported incidents (Submission of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Foundation on Human Rights Situation of the Indigenous Peoples (Adivasi) in Bangladesh to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Concerning the universal periodic review of the government of Bangladesh at the UN Human Rights Council in 2009. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session4/BD/AIPP_BGD_UPR_S4_2009_AsiaIndigenousPeoplesPactFoundation_upr.pdf).

The above discussion sets the scene for the present study. The present study was thus attempted to provide a picture of the prevailing situation relevant to overall socio-economic condition to 1) determine the social problems; 2) reveal existing situation on land rights of *adivasi* people and identify the overall awareness on rights; and 3) to propose necessary recommendations.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study Area: The study was conducted in three *upazilas* (sub-districts), Dhobaura, Durgapur and Kalmakanda. These all are plain lands where *adivasis* along with the Bangalis live.

A brief description (based on information from 'Banglapedia' [1] which is the national encyclopedia of Bangladesh) of the three *upazilas*: Dhobaura, Durgapur and Kalmakanda, including information on area, location and some demographic information and the *unions* (*Union Parishad*, or in other words local government is the lowest tier of administrative unit in Bangladesh) under the present study is given below.

Dhobaura upazila: Dhobaura is located in Mymensingh district. It covers an area of 251.05 sq km. Dhobaura is bordered by Meghalaya of Indian on the north, Phulpur and Purbadhala *upazilas* on the south, Durgapur *upazila* on the east, Haluaghat *upazila* on the west. All these surrounding *upazilas* are of Mymensingh district. Main rivers are Nitai

and Kangsha. There are many hillocks on the north region of the *upazila*.

Population of Dhobaura *upazila* is 157027; male 50.52%, female 49.48%; Muslim 88.73%; Hindu 4.49%, Christian 6.36%, Buddhist 0.15% and others 0.27%. Average literacy is 18.7% with 23.6% male and 13.6% female. Main occupations include agriculture 52.6%, agricultural labourer 27.84%, commerce 6.14%, service 1.65%, wage labourer 2.29%, livestock, forestry and fishery 1.84% and others 7.64% (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 29.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/D_0198.HTM).

The *unions* of Dhobaura *upazila* included in the study were, Ghosegoan, Beghber, Gamaritola, Dokhin Maizpara and Dhobaura.

Durgapur upazila: Durgapur is a *upazila* in Netrokona district. It covers an area of 293.42 sq km. Alike Dhobaura, Durgapur is also surrounded by Meghalaya of India on the north. Netrokona Sadar and Purbadhala *upazilas* are on the south of Durgapur. Kalmakanda *upazila* is on the east and Dhobaura *upazila* is on the west of Durgapur. The Garo hills and valleys are on the northern part of the *upazila*. Main rivers are Someshwari, Kangsha and Old Someshwari.

Population of Durgapur *upazila* is 169135. Of the total population, male is 50.49% and female is 49.51% there. Muslims constitute 80%; Hindus 12% and Christians 8%. Around 850 Garo and Hajong families live in Durgapur. Average literacy is 23%; male 18.1% and female 17.8% (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 30.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/D_0309.HTM). Main occupations include agriculture 46.73%, fishing 1.77%, agricultural labourer 25.17%, wage labourer 4.29% commerce 8.96%, service 2.91%, and others 10.17% (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/D_0309.HTM).

The *unions* of Durgapur *upazila* included in the study were, Birishiri, Durgapur and Kullaura.

Kalmakanda upazila: Kalmakanda is located in Netrokona district. The area it covers is of 377.41 sq km. Kalmakanda is bordered by West Bengal of India on the north, Barhatta *upazila* on the south, Dharmpasha on the east, Durgapur and Netrokona Sadar *upazilas* on the west (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/K_0049.HTM). Main rivers are Someshwari, Gunai; Pakata and Urdha along with the rivers, Bahar Beel is notable. Population of Kalmakanda *upazila* as reported in Banglapedia is 209360. Of the total population, males

constitute 50.99% and female 49.01%. Of them, Muslim 90%, Hindu 8.95%, Christian 0.8% and others 0.25%. Around 525 Hajong, Garo and Hodi families live in Kalmakanda (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 29.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/K_0049.HTM). Banglapedia also provides information on Average literacy as 21.4%; male 26.3% and female 16.2%; Main occupations Agriculture 50.21%, fishing 1.59%, agricultural labourer 25.59%, wage labourer 4.26% commerce 7.82%, service 1.52% and others 9.01% (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/K_0049.HTM).

Rongchati, Kharnoi, Lengura and Nazirpur *unions* of Kalmakanda *upazila* were included in the study.

A total of 86 households from Dhobaura, 89 from Durgapur and 64 from Kalmakanda *upazila* were taken for the questionnaire survey.

For the Qualitative information consultations with key informants, group discussions (separate groups of male, female and adolescent girls) in different villages of all three *upazilas*, (uncontrolled) observation and interviews were accomplished. The key informants included 10 project staffs, 2 TNOs, Director of Upojati Cultural Centre and 20 knowledgeable persons from the participating villages. Interviews were conducted to get information more informally from respondents.

Study Tools: Many researchers share the concern about how to judiciously balance diverse information and methods, and to suit them to the demands of a particular study [2], [3], [4], [5]. In line with 'methodological pluralism' as deployed by many other researchers, here also both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used.

A structured questionnaire consisting of all the relevant questions on the specific information needed was used. The group discussions conducted in different villages of the three *upazila* enriched the understanding developed through questionnaire survey and provided with in-depth information. Everything that I learnt through the group discussions were further deepened through meetings with or interviews of selected stakeholders and experience sharing meeting with project staffs during the rest of the field visits.

Data Processing: The data collected from 239 households, was fed into a computer and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer data processing program version 12.0.

Sample: A sample consisting of 239 *adivasi* households was chosen from the purposively selected three *upazilas* for the present study. The sample distribution (number of households surveyed and the respective percentage) in the 12 *unions* of the studied *upazilas* is given below.

RESULTS

Findings of the study are presented in the following section in accordance with the specified objectives of the study.

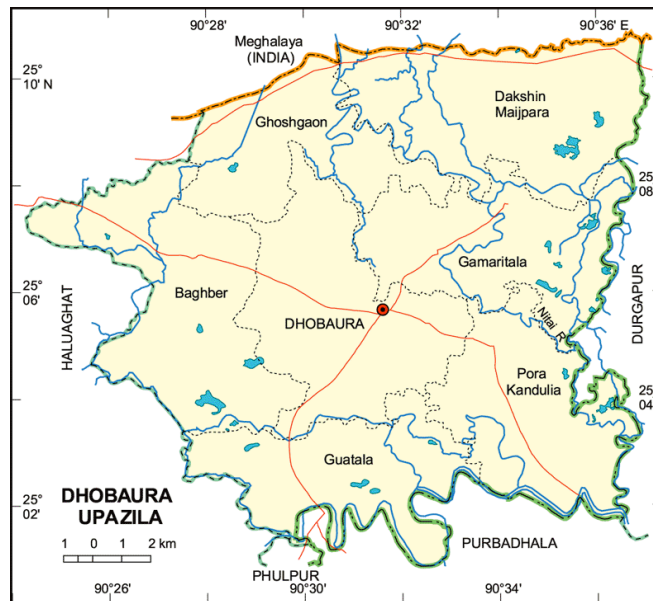
Social Problems and relevant needs of the study participants: The respondents of the FGDs identified specific social problems and also explained how those are interlinked. The identified social problems were common for all respondents of the studies three *upazilas*.

Lack of employment, income generating activities and job during lean seasons- lead to economic insufficiency. Economic insufficiency leads to land mortgage, discontinued education, early marriage, lack of morale for savings, lack of security, conspiracy, and injustice. Lack of money hamper all necessary activities i.e. education, treatment of diseases, necessary legal support, home stead repairing, pure drinking water, hygienic sanitation system, etc.

Lack of land related knowledge, legal knowledge, land related training, along with political influence and government's negligence and lack of legal support lead to loosing land, property and rights. Lack of awareness in preserving and updating legal land documents, lack of right to protest against injustice, not getting lended money back, lack of security, inaccurate land demarcation, land occupying through giving loan, ensuring allotment of khas lands (public lands), etc.

Lack of security is a serious social problem i.e. lack of security in free movement, for girls and women (violence against girl children and young women), with poultry, cattle, fishes in the pond, with crops/ trees in fields.

As *adivasis*, they are subject to different type of discrimination i.e. unfair price in product selling, not getting fair wage, children and adolescents are victims of different violence, discrimination in the classroom, they are asked to give higher rate for land tax and mutation than others, the receive low government and other facilities, money lenders take very high interest, face problems in processing and updating the land papers, their lands are declared vested property, their lands are forcibly occupied, they become subjects of the sufferings caused by forest department, they are evicting for ceramic mining.



Map 1: Dhobaura upazila

Source: Banglapedia, 2004(Banglapedia. Retrieved on 30.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/D_0198.HTM)



Map 2: Durgapur upazila

Source: Banglapedia, 2004(Banglapedia. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/D_0309.HTM)



Map 3: Kalmakanda upazila

Source: Banglapedia, 2004 (Banglapedia. Retrieved on 28.08.09. Retrieved from http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/K_0049.HTM)

	Upazila						Total	
	Dhobaura		Durgapur		Kalmakanda			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Beghber	3	3.5	0	.0	0	.0	3	1.3
Birishiri	0	.0	20	22.5	0	.0	20	8.4
Dokhin Maijpara	11	12.8	0	.0	0	.0	11	4.6
Durgapur	0	.0	16	18.0	0	.0	16	6.7
Gamaritola	16	18.6	0	.0	0	.0	16	6.7
Ghoshgaon	27	31.4	0	.0	0	.0	27	11.3
Kharnoi	0	.0	0	.0	14	21.9	14	5.9
Kullaura	0	.0	53	59.6	0	.0	53	22.2
Lengura	0	.0	0	.0	23	35.9	23	9.6
Nazirpur	0	.0	0	.0	14	21.9	14	5.9
Rongchati	0	.0	0	.0	13	20.3	13	5.4
Dhobaura	29	33.7	0	.0	0	.0	29	12.1
Total	86	100.0	89	100.0	64	100.0	239	100.0

Table 1: Number of households and respective % union-wise in the three upazilas

Ensuring government health facilities, availability of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards and old age stipend for the *adivasis*, ensuring *upazila* level facilities, legal support, ensuring participation in election, electricity facilities, bank loan facilities, good and timely fertilizer seed may help. Public, private, and non-government educational facilities; public, private, and non-government health facilities; infrastructural improvement; available sources of pure drinking water, and hygienic sanitation system; financial support for releasing the mortgaged land, and land mutation are among the frequently mentioned ways toward solution.

Adivasi cultural practices, wine business, security problem of young women, advance selling of labour, costly social festivals, attitude of high expenditure not toward savings, lack of unity, lack of political participation, lack of awareness and long term vision, familial conflicts among *adivasis*, behaviour pattern of avoiding complex situation, not claiming rights, mind set, etc. are among the unique factors contributing to persist some of their problems.

Snow melts from the mountains, overflow of the rivers and flood, river erosion and very deep water level and lean seasons are among the natural problems along with natural disasters. With these natural vulnerabilities, all the above mentioned social disasters interact and bring severe consequences. All their problems are related to nature and social life; land retention and rights protection along with livelihoods promotion is the best combination as was understood through the overall discussion as the best possible solution.

Land related vulnerability: Of the respondent households, 181 have own land with legal papers. 9 families have taken land on lease from the government. Interestingly, in all the three *upazilas*, number of mortgager households is pretty high 81, 85 and 53 in Dhobaura, Durgapur and Kalmakanda respectively. In total 219 households that represent 91.6% of the 239 surveyed households, were found to be mortgagers. Number of households having land under different categories in different *upazilas* is shown with percentage below.

Considering the data row wise, it is found that of the land under different categories mortgager families are highest in number (219) followed by families having own land with legal papers (181). In terms of land possession of the household, it is found that own land having legal papers and land given mortgage are the

two categories having highest amount of land (35260 and 20607 decimals respectively). Own land having legal papers is more in Dhobaura (16835 decimals) than in Kalmakanda (11864 decimals) and Durgapur (6561 decimals).

If farmland is especially considered for the surveyed households (as *adivasis* mainly depend on agriculture), a total of 20015 decimal land is found given mortgage.

Table 5 shows the reasons for giving land mortgage. Among the major causes are : 38 cases for meeting daily family expenditures, 59 cases for meeting health expenditures, 35 cases for educational expenditures and 55 cases to meet the economic crisis faced the family. Marrying *Mandi (Garos)* girls (matrilineal system) for their land is still prevailing but group discussions revealed lack of awareness among the *adivasi* people about the actual causes behind losing land. Of the total 239 households, 40 households got land forcibly occupied. For them in 77.5% cases, the land was agricultural land.

Among the surveyed households, the 43 reported to have problems of forcibly occupied. The major causes include, 13 cases where producing false document land was occupied, 15 cases where land was grabbed for different reasons and 5 cases where land was forcibly occupied using political influence. All the above mentioned findings on land reveal mortgaging land and getting own land forcibly occupied to be the main source of land related vulnerability.

Moreover, issues like- lack of land related knowledge, legal knowledge and support, land related training, right to protest against injustice, awareness in preserving and updating legal land documents, along with political influence, government's negligence, inaccurate land demarcation, allotment of *khas* (public) lands, etc. were found to explain the existing situation on land rights.

Awareness on rights: In all three *upazilas* all the respondents (with below 3% non-response cases) confirmed to know that they are entitled to have legal, land related and human rights. To name the legal rights most of the respondents mentioned about right to vote (114 respondents), right to life and free living (93), right to education (75), right to move freely (72), right to justice (60), right to security (54), right to have health facilities (54), right to give free opinion (33) and right to have legal support (33).

	Dhobaura (no. & %)	Durgapur (no. & %)	Kalmakanda (no. & %)	Total & %
Own Land	78 43.1	45 24.9	58 32.0	181 75.7
Taken lease	2 22.2	5 55.6	2 22.2	9 3.8
Given mortgage	81 37.0	85 38.8	53 24.2	219 91.6
Inherited land	20 27.0	43 58.1	11 14.9	74 31.0
Khas land	6 42.9	3 21.4	5 35.7	14 5.9
Vested property	3 23.1	2 15.4	8 61.5	13 5.4
Other's land without pay	0 .0	6 100.0	0 .0	6 2.5
Other's with pay	1 33.3	2 66.7	0 .0	3 1.3
Column total	86 36.0	89 37.2	64 26.8	239 100.0

Table 2: Number and % of households having land in different categories by *upazila*

	<i>Upazila</i>							
	Dhobaura		Durgapur		Kalmakanda		Total	
	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum
Own land	196	16835	74	6561	185	11864	148	35260
Taking lease	3	225	9	786	3	216	5	1227
Giving mortgage	87	7458	83	7369	90	5780	86	20607
Inherited land	38	3236	33	2905	22	1399	32	7540
Khas land	23	1945	1	86	1	48	9	2079
Vested property	7	644	0	14	10	619	5	1277
Other's land without pay	0	0	2	148	0	0	1	148
Other's land with pay	1	80	1	116	0	0	1	196

Table 3: Average and total amount of land (decimal) the surveyed households possess

<i>Upazila</i>	Farm land given mortgage (decimal)
Dhobaura	7196
Durgapur	7139
Kalmakanda	5680
Total	20015

Table 4: Farmland given mortgage

	<i>Upazila</i>							
	Dhobaura		Durgapur		Kalmakanda		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cost of marriage	8	9.9	5	6.3	4	6.9	17	7.8
Land related legal costs	7	8.6	3	3.8	3	5.2	13	5.9
Expenditures of social activities	2	2.5	3	3.8	2	3.4	7	3.2
Daily family expenditures	14	17.3	15	18.8	9	15.5	38	17.4
Treatment costs	19	23.5	22	27.5	18	31	59	26.9
Disaster mitigation	5	6.2	0	0	3	5.2	8	3.7
Educational expenditures	14	17.3	14	17.5	7	12.1	35	16
Economic crises	23	28.4	25	31.3	7	12.1	55	25.1
Being victim of conspiracy	1	1.2	2	2.5	1	1.7	4	1.8
Others	6	7.4	12	15	8	13.8	26	11.9

Table 5: Number and % showing reasons behind mortgaging land

	<i>Upazila</i>							
	Dhobaura		Durgapur		Kalmakanda		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Homestead	3	17.6	0	0	1	9.1	4	10
Agricultural Land	12	70.6	11	91.7	8	72.7	31	77.5
Pond/ Water body	3	17.6	0	0	3	27.3	6	15
Hilly land	1	5.9	0	0	0	0	1	2.5
Other	0	0	1	8.3	0	0	1	2.5

Table 6: No. and % of households got land forcibly occupied

Among different land related legal rights, land buying , selling and hand over rights (210 respondents), right to use the land for living and other purposes (123), right to farming on the land (111), right to registry and getting the land recorded (96) and right to getting allotment of the khas land (57) were the mostly mentioned.

Right to life and free living (138), right to education (81), right to have health facilities (51), right to have food security (48), right to give free opinion (45) and right to security (45) were the mostly mentioned human rights.

There are different rights that are violated for different reasons. To the question, “Why have you become victim of the right violence? (Because you are a male/female/ *adivasi*)”- the respondents who faced incidences of rights violence reported to have faced those primarily because they are *adivasis*. In the questionnaire survey the fact was reflected through the responses in 221 cases of rights violation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Consultation meetings with TNOs of Dhobaura and Durgapur revealed that because of simplicity of their character the *adivasis* don't engage in any conflict and always try to avoid conflicting situation. Both of them confirmed that no specific complain related to forcibly occupied or any other land related complains are reported. The TNO of Dhobaura mentioned about the citizens charter and ensured support for any complain or land and right related problem. Through literature and news the incidences of rights violation of the *adivasis* are asserted strongly. However, the discussion with *adivasi* communities and key informants revealed that the *adivasis* feel shy and distresses to talk about these sensitive issues because of their behavioural nature.

The Director of Birishiri Upojatyo Cultural Academy was consulted to discuss the maintenance of cultural practices among the *adivasis*. His initiatives through the club seemed to be useful but due to bureaucratic processes seemed to be slow in action. He raised concern about the changing society and our cultural practices including agricultural practices and use of traditional instruments.

During the group discussion in different villages, key informants were identified and discussions with them revealed that the legal and financial supports are essential for land retention and of course, engaging in different income generating activities using land is to be initiated. For rights awareness, they think relatively longer time is required. Mind set needs to be changed, one key informant (school teacher) said. “If *adivasis* don't start accepting new practices and

don't become aware of the necessary changes to match with the need of the time they won't be able to survive well”- he said. They proposed that the NGOs can get their mortgaged land released and they then can get the land back from the NGO with their own earnings through income generating activities.

The findings of this study will enable rights promoters, *adivasi* welfare promoters, and professionals and all agencies concerned to guide their interventions based on current level of socio-economic and demographic status, knowledge, awareness and land use and other practices on issues regarding rights in general and land rights in particular.

Moreover, the experiences gained in this study and its findings would also serve for replication in other regions. Therefore, the study will have a significant contribution to future rights promotion initiatives, studies on *adivasis*, socio-economic baseline data collection initiatives and qualitative data collection initiatives in current operational regions and elsewhere in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

The interlinked social problems facing the *adivasis* get expedited with the land related vulnerabilities and other vulnerabilities related to security, discrimination and services from different services. Along with many factors revealed as solutions to these problems, change in mind set of both *adivasis* and *bangalis* seemed to be the most vital and thus require further validation through further studies to be addressed.

All the problems of *adivasis* are related to nature and social life. In this context, land retention and rights protection along with livelihoods promotion could be the best combination as was understood through the overall discussion to be the best possible solution.

Adivasis are honoured for their simplicity, honesty and good souls. To get started with their social problems, land related matters, and rights issues will cause huge mental stress and pressure on them. The researchers and NGO employees and others who work with them on such issues need to be aware of the matter. Especial training to handle the possible situations that may come up during work with them seemed to be essential for efficient manage.

Through linking local government to *adivasi* people and vis-a-vis will ensure services along with maintaining data base at the *upazila* level and this linkage will enable *adivasis* to get information on services as well.

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