



Rules of Water Act,
Government inclusion of
Women's Land Rights in
the 7th 5-Year Plan of
Bangladesh

CHANGES IN
PRACTICES



UNITING FOR LAND RIGHTS
IN

BANGLADESH

HOW OUR MEMBERS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE



NES BANGLADESH, works towards the realisation
of the following ILC commitments for People-Centred
Land Governance:



» **Commitment 4:** *Equal Land Rights for Women*



» **Commitment 5:** *Secure Territorial Rights for Indigenous People*



» **Commitment 7:** *Inclusive Decision-Making*



» **Commitment 8:** *Transparent and Accountable Information*

» **Commitment 9:** *Effective Actions Against Land Grabbing*

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION

5 ILC members and
60 non members



agencies of the govt
academics, CSOs, CBOs
communities



lobbying and mobilisation
Roundtable meetings
actions, CEDAW report



This Contribution Analysis provides an overview of the progress and achievements of the **Bangladesh Land Rights Network (BLRN)**, ILC's National Engagement Strategy (NES) platform (National Land Coalition or "NLC" under the new strategy) in Bangladesh. Since 2012, NES Bangladesh has contributed to changes in policies, such as the Revisions of the KHAS Land Management and Distribution Policy, and the amendment and activation of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Land Dispute Resolution Commission, which are enabling citizens of Bangladesh to reclaim the land that was – or is – illegitimately grabbed from them. The modus operandi and achievements of BLRN show the Platform's commitment in securing land rights for women and Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh, as well as its work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). NES Bangladesh consists of five ILC members, namely Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Association for Realisation of Basic Needs (ARBAN), Community Development Association (CDA), Kapaeeng Foundation (KF), and Nagorik Uddyog (NU). Their work is supported by over 60 non-ILC members, composed of a variety of stakeholders, including ministries and agencies of the Bangladesh government, local authorities, academics, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Constituency Based Organisations (CBOs), and local communities.

Since 2012, the Platform has worked towards equitable land governance for all; and on improving access and control over land, water, and forest by the landless Indigenous Peoples, women and other marginalised communities. NES Bangladesh developed its action plan to focus on six thematic areas, in line with the ILC 10 commitments. These are, land and water grabbing; Land Reform/Zoning Act for effective land use, and laws to protect agricultural and forest land; women's access to state-owned land and natural resources; Indigenous Peoples and land rights; and amendment and enforcement of Vested Property Return Act for the religious minorities.

THE LAND GOVERNANCE CONTEXT IN BANGLADESH

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT IN BANGLADESH

2021 marks the golden jubilee of fifty years of independence in Bangladesh. The anniversary exemplifies the numerous achievements that have shaped Bangladesh in the past five decades, including a drop in food poverty and a rise in income and agricultural and industrial production. Despite the country's continuous progress, the golden jubilee also highlights the numerous challenges, at the social and economic level, obstructing growth in Bangladesh. The rapid urbanisation of the country since the 1980s has led to the privatisation of basic services and to the exponential growth of the informal sector in the economy. Marginalised groups continue facing discrimination and exclusion from the social, economic and political life of the country. Women and children are highly vulnerable groups of the population, as violence against them still registers a growing trend on a societal level.

THE LAND CONTEXT IN BANGLADESH

Nearly 160 million people live in Bangladesh, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Land is consequently subject to significant pressure, and access to natural resources is hindered by the legacy of the colonial era, a lack of adequate land reforms, and shortcomings in land governance. 80% of land is owned by around 20% of the population, and the country registers a substantial number of landless citizens - approximately 8% of the population.



NOTABLE OUTCOMES

AMENDMENT OF VESTED PROPERTY RETURN ACT (VPRA, 2013)

In 2013, a **revision of the Vested Property Return Act (VPRA)** was achieved through the introduction of four amendments facilitated by the BLRN platform's lobbying and mobilisation activities. The Vested Property Act dates back to the 17-day conflict between India and Pakistan, and the promulgation of the Enemy Property Act of 1965, which used to allow for the appropriation of land in India owned by Pakistani citizens. With the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, this Act was maintained, and its name was changed to the Vested Property Act (VPA). It enabled the continuation of discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities and fuelled communal hatred by allowing the government to confiscate the land of those considered as enemies of the state.

Along with exponents of the "Arpita Sampotti Protyarpon Ain Bastobayon Jatiyo Nagorik Somonnoy Cell" (National Citizens Coordination Cell for Vested Property Return Act Implementation), the NES Platform conducted a series of investigations, documenting land dispossession of some 6 million marginalised peoples and minority groups. Their outcome of the fact-finding mission drove BLRN to organise numerous workshops, and seminars at the national level on the need to amend the VPA, also by sensitising district lawyers to support victims' cases. The ILC member and NES host, ALRD held a series of roundtable meetings with policy makers, Ministry of Land and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, sharing the alarming evidence on the VPA. Mobilisation activities of BLRN raised public demand and attention by the media, which contributed to the successful achievement of four amendments of the Act (from 2011 to 2013), the last being the Vested Property Return (Second amendment) Bill in 2013. These **allowed access to about 0.5 million acres of ancestral land by the people that were deprived by it**. Between 2017 and 2018, 15,224 applications to ancestral land were successfully processed, of 118,173 demands for the release of vested property. **26,224.195 acres were returned out of 220,191.742 acres that are still held as vested property**. While demands for vested property are still submitted, through the adoption of the four Amendments **confiscated land was returned to approximately 100,000 people in the country**.

An estimated 90% of landowners in Bangladesh do not think that its land rights are secure, while around 33% of landowners lack official documents and certificates over their land. The lack of documentation and the feeling of unsafety are contributing to the growth of land grabbing, characterising Bangladesh's rent-seeking society. The highly unequal distribution of land and episodes of land grabbing are facilitated through the corruption of government officials by societal elites, who bribe and coerce land administrative officials to obtain land titles.

Over 54 Indigenous Peoples groups live in Bangladesh, constituting over 18% of the country's population. While legal and administrative protection of indigenous land are formally acknowledged, Bangladesh registers high violations and abuses in the enforcement of these rights by the state. The rights of religious minorities and women are likewise hindered.

The Hindus, who represent the largest religious minority in the country, are subject to a systematic denial of their land rights. Between 1947 and 2011, the percentage of the Hindu population dropped from 33% to 9% as a direct consequence of the 1.65 million acres of land confiscated by the state under the VP/ Enemy Property Act of 1965.

While women make-up an estimated 73% of the country's agricultural labour force, only 18% hold legal titles over land and only 5% have actual control over their land. Patriarchal and religious values, which greatly influence the land governance context, particularly prevent rural women from accessing and owning land. In conclusion, the land context in Bangladesh is characterised by administrative deficiencies and legal barriers, which prevent land access by the most marginalised groups of the society.

AMENDMENT OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS LAND DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMISSION

After the colonial era, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), located in South-Eastern Bangladesh, has been home to 11 minority groups of Indigenous Peoples and a contended arena of long-lasting conflicts. In 1997, the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) – representing Indigenous peoples living in the CHT region – signed the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord, marking the end of a bitter conflict. However, the failure to implement crucial provisions of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord – protecting and empowering IPs in the region and their governing bodies – has been undermining IPs’ right to land. With the aim of resolving land disputes in the region, the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission was created in 2001, as part of the CHT Peace Accord, but its work never initiated. This enforcement gap amplified phenomena of commercialisation and privatisation of land and the numerous abuses suffered by IPs in Bangladesh. Since 2016, along with its partners and stakeholders, BLRN has actively been pushing for the activation of the Commission. Numerous advocacy actions, meetings, and trainings have led to the Amendment of the CHT Land Commission Act that now holds the authority to annul the rights ownership of illegal settlers or those who have illegally dispossessed others of their land. BLRN contributed in providing legal assistance, financial support to IPs victims of land grabbing, capacity building sessions, mobilisation and knowledge sharing activities, which encouraged IPs to submit applications to the Land Dispute Resolution Commission. The initiatives of the platform aimed at overcoming language, communication and educational barriers, and local threats faced by IPs living in remote areas of the country. Between 2016 and 2018, the Indigenous communities living in the CHT region filed 32,789 applications to the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission. While the Commission keeps on receiving applications, hearings have not started yet. At present, ALRD and Kapaeeng Foundation are monitoring the protection of human rights and the implementation of the Peace Accord in the region in close cooperation with the Commission, while also continuing their advocacy campaigns to begin the hearing processes.

NATIONAL SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT ON DECLARING RIVERS AS LIVING ENTITY (2019)

On 1 July 2019, the High Court Division of the National Supreme Court took an exemplary standby defining rivers as “living entities” and as “persons”, and acknowledged the systematic grabbing and pollution of their waters. The Court’s verdict was the outcome of a series of advocacy actions of a nation-wide movement BLRN is part of. The significance of this judgment is evident when

considering that 18% of the country’s population relies on rivers for drinking water, and more than half of the population uses rivers for herding purposes. In light of this critical dependence of Bangladesh from its rivers, the High Court Division identified the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) as the legal guardian of the country’s rivers. The High Court Division also amended the NRCC Law to include fines and clauses for imprisonments on criminal offences.

BLRN’s mobilisation initiatives not only aimed at the realisation of its strategic objectives on water grabbing, but further solidified a common vision together with its members and partners (including the Water Rights Forum, BELA, and PNGOs at the local level). As part of this annual campaign, BLRN advocacy actions on World Water Day, World Environment Day, and World River Day. BLRN’s sustained efforts in preserving these water bodies included removal of constructions altering the natural flow of the rivers, including illegal bridges, faulty roads, dams, and commercial buildings.

AMENDMENT OF BRICK MANUFACTURING AND BRICK KILN ESTABLISHMENT (CONTROL) BILL (2019)

Historically, brick kilns were established next to agricultural areas to benefit from the organic topsoil concentration, despite being a highly polluting activity, often characterised by power abuses. For several years, BLRN advocated for more sustainable bricks through its support of the Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kiln Establishment (Control) Amendment Bill, which was ultimately adopted by the Parliament of Bangladesh, on 26 February 2019. The Bill substitutes the 2013 Act, and prohibits the creation of brick fields in residential, protected, commercial and agricultural areas, as well as in forests, sanctuaries, and wetlands. The substitution of soil bricks with block bricks became mandatory and is being functional to prevent a substantive proportion of air pollution in Bangladesh. The Amendment Bill has made it mandatory to conduct renovations and roadworks that comply with the newly introduced and sustainable construction criterion.

In the progress of achieving this outcome, BLRN was crucial in organising local and national level programmes to raise awareness on the effects of soil bricks and to advocate for the introduction of alternative, more sustainable bricks. In 2017 and 2018, ALRD and BELA attended a series of meetings with the Honourable Minister of Land Ministry, Housing and Building Research Institute, and with the director of the Environment Department. These events were parallely accompanied by numerous seminars and knowledge sharing events on the protection of agricultural land, aimed at engaging local actors and advancing demands to the government.



CHANGES IN PRACTICES

RULES OF WATER ACT (ACT NO. 14 OF 2013)

BLRN, engages in water rights advocacy, especially through the work of ALRD – that forms part of the Secretariat of the Water Rights Forum – a network consisting of seven organisations concerned with water issues in the country. The Rules of Water Act was approved in 2013, providing measures to coordinate and integrate the governance of water resources. Its provisions include the safeguard of water rights, the creation of National Water Policy and National Water Resources Plan, Water resource protection and pollution control and the adoption of water quality standards. Over the years, BLRN and its members have organised a series of seminars, mobilisation to monitor and ensure its enforcement.

GOVERNMENT INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN THE 7TH 5-YEAR PLAN OF BANGLADESH (2016-2020)

The 5-Year Plan is the most important macroeconomic document in Bangladesh, outlining the country's development and growth targets. NES Bangladesh, along with its individual members and local partners, successfully influenced the inclusion of women's rights issues in the 7th edition of the country's 5-Year Plan. On many occasions, ALRD, CDA, ARBAN organised a number of advocacy initiatives engaging policy makers both at the local and national levels. A memorandum was sent to the District Commissioner, along with recommendations to members of the parliaments demanding for the inclusion of women's land rights in the national agenda. The document acknowledges the need for women's access to employment and the removal of gender disparities. The Plan commits the Government to increase social spending for marginalised women and widows, increase women's representation in parliament, and facilitate women's access to the judicial system. In line with this significant progress, the newly approved 8th 5-Year Plan (2020 - 2024) includes issues and commitments related to women's land rights.



WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

In Bangladesh, the systematic discrimination and marginalisation of women is a cultural condition, strengthened and legitimised by the legal system determining Khas Land (state-owned land) Distribution Policy. In relation to women's land rights, the platform focuses on the lack of recognition of women as farmers, and the discriminatory nature of the Khas Land Settlement and Distribution Policy (1987). The latter affirms that women can only receive government-owned land if they have an able-bodied son, or Khas land is allocated in the name of both husband and wife. As a result, women do not have decision-making power, authority, or legal land titles. These provisions make this policy particularly discriminatory against widows and unmarried women. BLRN, along with ILC's Commitment-Based Initiative (CBI 4) on women's land rights, has been acting on two different fronts. On the one hand, it has worked to raise awareness of the discriminatory nature of public land allocation; on the other hand, it has been pressuring relevant stakeholders to modify the Khas Land Settlement and Distribution Policy. The coordinated work of the two Platforms included several trainings for women activists, NGOs, and journalists.

In 2016, BLRN and produced the first **CEDAW Alternative Report** to offer an overview of the state of women's land rights in Bangladesh. To formulate the Report, BLRN gathered and analysed data and inputs from 96 organisations – representing the civil society, grassroots women, human and land rights defenders, lawyers, public and media representatives, political activists, and marginalised communities. In the context of land governance, achieving gender justice include the formal acknowledgement of the role of women as 'farmers', and the removal of the clause of "women with able son" as a prerequisite for women to claim Khas land. More generally, the Report urged the government to change the country's family laws to implement a uniform civil code, and to include women in its development plans. The CEDAW Alternative Report is currently used to train 200+ partners and to advance advocacy activities. The suggestions of the CEDAW Report on the urgency to improve women's land rights in Bangladesh influenced the government in approving 150 applications for Khas Land by landless families – including women.

Despite a policy change has not been achieved, BLRN made further steps in securing women's access to public land, by implementing a series of different activities. It submitted a Memorandum to the government to formulate a new act and revision of discriminatory policies against women. Moreover, in 2019, BLRN sent 3000 postcards to the Prime Minister signed by rural women demanding their right to be formally recognised as farmers. In 2020 alone, 530 women participated in dedicated sessions on women's leadership, equal opportunities, women's security and access to land, indigenous women's leadership. To ensure continuous research on women-related topics, CDA is currently conducting a Gender Audit and past studies extended to various topics, such as Women's Inheritance Rights in Muslim Societies.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

BLRN has been actively committed to indigenous people's rights, and land grabbing issues, of which they are often victims. While 1.8% of the country's population consists of Indigenous Peoples, the latter are often classified as one of Bangladesh's most oppressed minorities. Land disputes and consequent food crises are among the most common struggles they face.

CHT COMMISSION RULING AGAINST CONFISCATION OF INDIGENOUS' LANDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HOTEL

In 2020, a private company grabbed the land that belonged to the Mro indigenous community in the Chittagong Hill Tract-CHT was destined to be confiscated for the construction of a 5-star hotel. While the government has not abandoned the project yet, BLRN organised a mobilisation that finally contributed to the CHT Commission advising the government to abandon the realisation of this project. The Platform organised marches with more than 1000 participating people from the Mro Community, offered financial and technical assistance to indigenous communities to halt the 1000 acres construction, and engaged Human Rights organisations and activists.

COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WORD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The joint work of 21 human rights and supporting organisations, which included four BLRN members (ALRD, ARBN, CDA and Kapaeeng Foundation) whose committee was led by ALRD was essential in marking the International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples on 9 August as a commemoration of the lives, culture, and rights of the Indigenous Peoples in the country. This achievement was not only successful in creating strong partnerships and connections, but also in advancing IPs rights: on March 23rd, 2019, the government officially recognised fifty indigenous communities in the country (the Ethnic Group Cultural Institution Act of 2010 used to formally acknowledge 27).



Preliminary LANDex data in Bangladesh mirrors the concerns and priorities of members in the country. Political commitment to family farming appears quite high, effective decision-making around land fails to be inclusive in practice. Despite strong policies and programs to assist small-scale farmers, providing credit loans and technical assistance, a lack of data makes it difficult to determine the extent to which these programs are reaching farmers. The legal framework in Bangladesh fails to provide sufficient grounds to secure diverse tenure rights and existing laws fail to grant equal access to and control over land and related processes to women, who generally feel less secure in their rights than rural men. Decision-making processes around land are not sufficiently participatory and mandated by law and in practice. The land registry is comprehensive, but not all data is accessible to the public. Safeguards to protect against land grabs are rather weak, and principles of free, prior, and informed consent are not clearly outlined, respected, and enforced in transactions. Human rights defenders, including land and environmental defenders, enjoy relatively strong protections in the law but the state does not regularly monitor or report on their situation.



TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

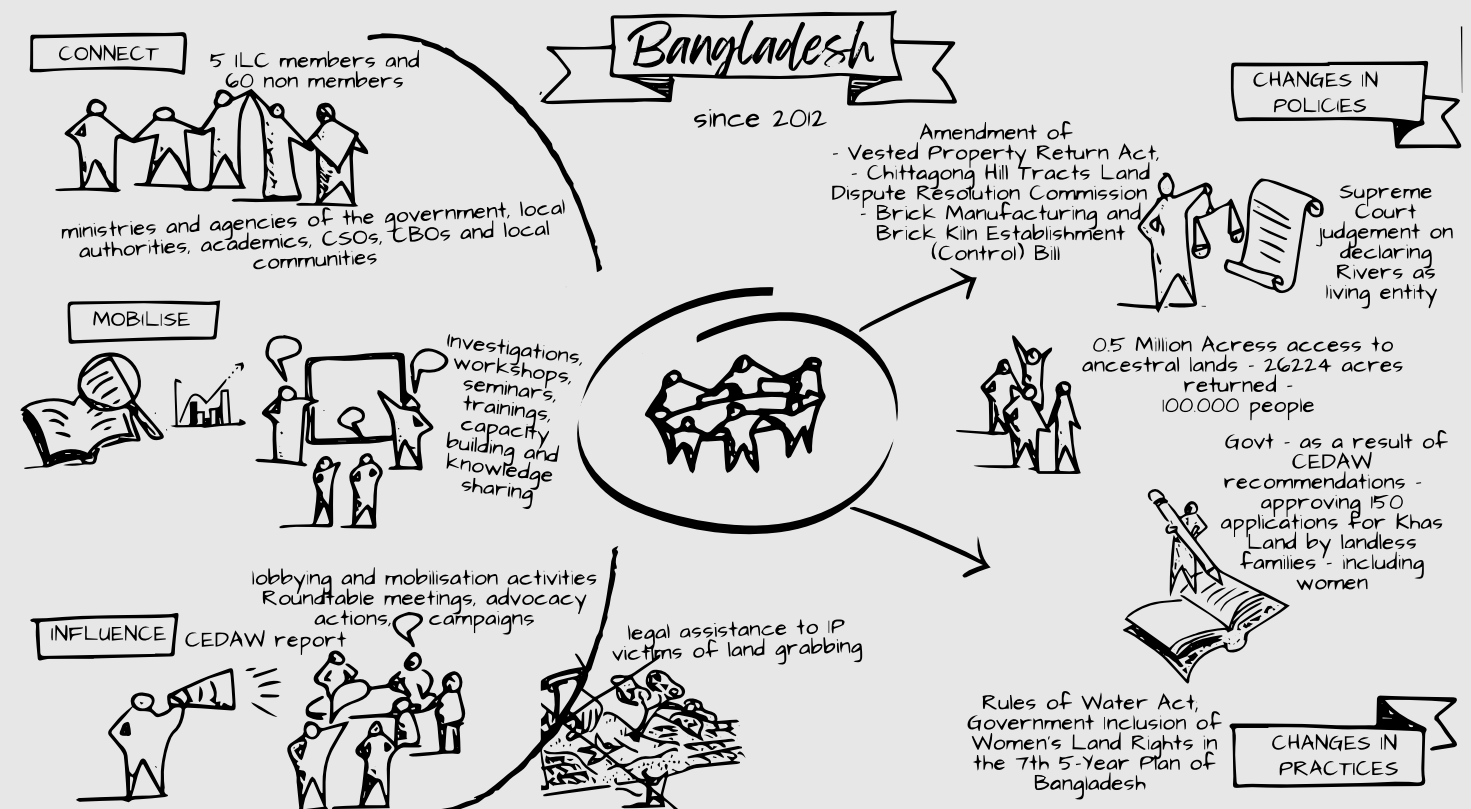
Since the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016, Bangladesh has committed to the realisation of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To evaluate the country's performance in working towards land rights, in compliance with the 2030 Agenda, BLRN formulated a report entitled **"Towards Sustainable Shared Prosperity: SDGs through the Lens of Access to Land and Natural Resources"**. The document provides an exhaustive overview on three major topics: namely, (1) Land rights and access to forests and natural resources, (2) Human rights and human security, and (3) Partnerships and cooperation. The report argues that, despite the notable reduction of extreme poverty, child and maternal mortality, and the increased literacy rates the achievement of the SDGs are hindered by the rising income disparity, poor access to land and unsustainable management of natural resources. Around half of the country's water bodies are polluted, and approximately 43% of Bangladesh's geographical area suffers from land degradation leading to 1.4% of the overall agricultural land becoming infertile.

The document incorporates 27 recommendations for achieving the targets of the 17 SDGs, and to stimulate the debate with state and non-state actors, as well as with the international community. Among the several proposals, the study highlighted the significance of adopting and enforcing a policy framework to protect the environment, Indigenous Peoples, women, and ethnic and religious minorities. It identified the implementation of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission, the VP (amendment) Act, compliance with the CEDAW Report, and establishing commissions to protect land rights of Indigenous Peoples as key measures to preserve vulnerable groups. In relation to the environment, the document suggested several measures, such as the amendment of the Forest Act, the implementation of the High Court's judgement declaring Rivers as living entity, the limiting of commercial use of agricultural land and opposition to land grabbing.

THEORY OF CHANGE

ILC's theory of change, the principle behind of the Platforms' initiatives, is realised by the platform. BLRN has worked from sub-national to national level and connected ILC members to key partners and change makers at all levels, building crucial partnerships to contribute to relevant changes on issues such as WLRs, IPs, Water pollution etc. It has further done so by producing and sharing knowledge and information inside and outside of the platform by undertaking extensive research on, among others, the state of SDGs in the country and strengthened the capacities of women and IPs, especially to claim their rights. Among the several activities, many trainings focused on Adivasi Land Law, Land Management of Plain Lands IP; Leadership Development of IPs; Women's Land Rights and Access to Khas Land. Only in 2020, these events counted more than a thousand participants, the majority of which were women (CONNECT). Over the course of 2020 and 2021, BLRN has undertaken numerous campaigns, rallies, advocacy actions joining hands with different organisations to make the voice of the Mro Indigenous community heard (INFLUENCE). Overall, the entirety of BLRN's activities and the divergence, yet, complementarity of its work have strengthened the Platform and contributed to key collaborations in order to influence important changes in policy and practice. Even momentous achievements, such as the Amendment of the Vested Property Return Act (VPRA, 2013), allowing for more than 100,000 people to reclaim their land, did not stop the platform from helping return the relevant land to the families who had owned it. Over the course of 2020, indeed, BLRN successfully assisted nine families in the process of applying for land under the VPRA .



TIMELINE



2020

- » CHT Commission verdict against the confiscation of Indigenous Peoples' land for the construction of a 5-star hotel

2019

- » Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kiln Establishment (Control) Amendment Bill
- » The government acknowledges fifty indigenous communities
- » The High Court Division of the National Supreme Court released a judgement declaring River as living entity

2013-18

- » Rules of Water Act (Act No 14 of 2013)

2016

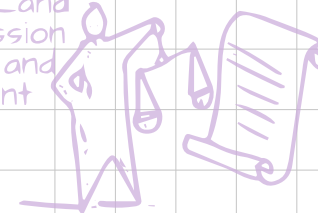
- » Amendment of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Land Dispute Resolution Commission in the region for its effective activation.
- » Celebration of World's Indigenous Day in Bangladesh
- » Inclusion of the issue of the women's rights to land in the 7th 5-Year Country's Plan

2011-13

- » Amendment of Vested Property Return Act

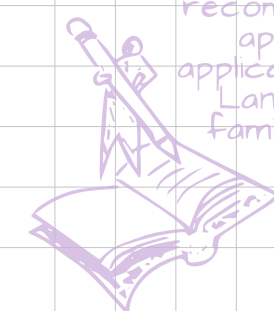
CHANGES IN POLICIES

Land Dispute Resolution Commission and Vested Property Return Act



Supreme Court judgement on declaring Rivers as living entity

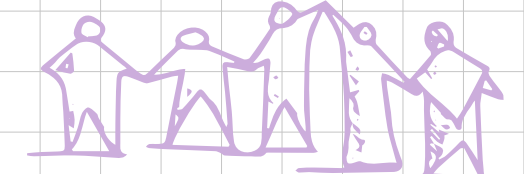
0.5 Million Acres access to ancestral lands - 26224 acres returned - 100,000 people



Govt - as a result of CEDAW recommendations - approving 150 applications for Khas Land by landless families - including women

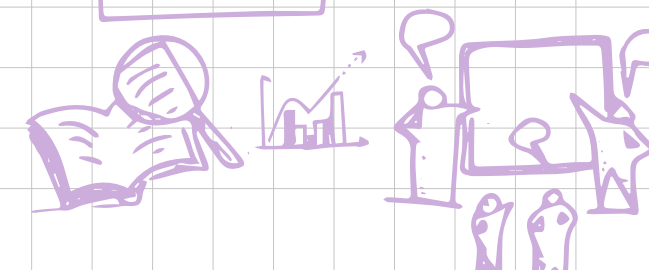
CONNECT

5 ILC members and 60 non members



ministries and agencies of the government, authorities, academics, CSOs, TBC communities

MOBILISE



LESSONS LEARNED

The BLRN platform has demonstrated that the mobilisation of civil society and sustained activism are key enablers of changes in policies and practices - an approach that has guided the actions and objectives of the platform since its formulation.

In the case of BLRN, the significant obstacle posed by the Covid-19 global pandemic turned into the opportunity to further explore the strength of online mobilisation. Throughout 2020, the ILC supported BLRN in refining the platform's communications strategy, which has now defined its targeted audience and assimilated the communication do and don'ts. BLRN relies on a website, an active Facebook page, and a bilingual newsletter – published in Bengali and English. These powerful tools support its relationship with several media outlets, some of which became its partners over the years.

The work of ILC members and their partners demonstrated that real change in gaining effective control over land, as well as financial control, is greatly facilitated when women organise themselves and umbrella organisations incorporate the voices of landless and marginalised women. The synergies and systematic working modalities between the NES and CBI platforms engaging the ILC members and their partners have allowed for greater impact and stronger advocacy as well as visibility on women's issues at the local and national levels.

The several years of activities of BLRN additionally evidenced that accomplishing change at the national level is not a fight against the public and private sectors; rather, it is a transformation that actively engages them. As it happened with the Amendment of the Vested Property Return Act, BLRN held a series of meetings and roundtables to inform government representatives on the need for policy change. Similarly, the Amendment of the Vested Property Return Act evidences the importance of sharing and advising decision-making bodies and expresses the significance of cultivating relationships with representatives of the public sector.



KEY CHALLENGES

- » One key challenge in Bangladesh is the policy enforcement gap: even when the desired change takes place, the implementation of such transformation is often obstructed by administrative barriers and bottlenecks. The several years that took for the Vested Property Return Act to be amended are linked to the high rate of land grabbing and lease practices, which occurred in favour of the country's most influential individuals and of political elites.
- » An additional challenge to the work of BLRN is the reluctance of the state in activating services in defence of victims, such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Land Dispute Resolution Commission. Land governance and management are severely subject to corruption.
- » The strategic objectives of BLRN face additional obstacles when the premise of their attainment is the abatement of cultural barriers. As in the case of women's and landless people's access to state-owned land, intrinsic and systematic societal marginalisation of these categories legitimised a discriminatory criterion for land access.
- » Finally, since the breakout of Covid-19, the Platform has been facing severe challenges. The global pandemic has significantly altered NES Bangladesh's annual work plan. The limitations imposed on opportunities for advocacy actions, capacity building sessions, and mobilisation activities are delaying the path to the achievement of its targeted goals.

WE COULDN'T DO IT ALONE!

Since its establishment, BLRN has been embracing opportunities for cooperation with parallel initiatives focused on related subjects in Bangladesh. Numerous synergies and shared objectives have been identified in the following platforms operating at the national level, which are directly and indirectly concerned with land issues, and to some of which BLRN members play an active role in.

- » **Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum:** focuses on the rights of indigenous people at the national level
- » **Jatiyo Adivasi Parisad:** mainly operates in Northern Bangladesh, and addresses several issues, including indigenous people's access to land
- » **Arpito Sampotti Protyarpon Jatiyo Nagorik Somonnoy Cell (National Coordination Cell for Implementation of Vested Property Return Act):** monitors and supports the correct implementation of the Vested Property Return Act in Bangladesh led by ALRD.
- » **PLANET:** Peoples Land and Agrarian Reform in Northern Ecological Territory (PLANET) operates at the local/regional level in the defence of people's land rights led by CDA.
- » **CHT-LDRC Watch Forum (CHT Forest and Land Protection Movement):** CHT-Land Dispute Resolution Commission-Watch Forum (CHT-LDRC-WF) is a joint CSO, which was established to monitor the implementation of CHT Accord and activating Land Dispute Resolution Commission
- » **Water Rights Forum:** focuses on different aspects of water rights.
- » **Human Rights Forum Bangladesh:** is committed to the systematic evaluation of the respect and defense of human rights in Bangladesh, as well as to the sensibilisation of the civil society on human rights-related issues.
- » **Coalition for Protection of Agricultural Land, Lands of IPs and Forest:** focuses on the protection of lands and forests from grabbing. Its functions range from spot fact finding visit, media mobilisation, and legal support and public interest litigation.
- » **Bangladesh Krishok Federation (Bangladesh Farmer's Federation):** is committed to the rights of landless peasants through occupations, public demonstrations, and legal support services.
- » **Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (Bangladesh Women's Farmer's Association):** focuses on women's land rights, especially to capacity building, mobilisation and advocacy activities at the national level.
- » **Campaign for Right to Food and Social Security (RTF &SS):** is a network working on human rights and access to food.
- » **Trinomul Nari Netri Network:** operates at the national level to secure land rights of women and of marginalised communities.
- » **Southern Land Rights Coalition (SLRC):** is representative of six districts and works on ensuring and promoting people land rights.

MEET THE PLATFORM

ILC IN BANGLADESH

The ILC members ARBAN, CDA, ALRD, KF AND NU and their partners are all engaged with and responsible for the implementation of the NES activities. The platform's Steering Committee consists of the five ILC members that formulate and monitor the progress of its activities.

its provincial, district, and village land rights forums. Women and the youth represent over 50% of NLRP's membership.

CSOs

- » Association for Land Reform and Development (**ALRD**)
- » Association for Realization of Basic Needs (**ARBAN**)
- » Community Development Association (**CDA**)
- » Kapaeeng Foundation (**KF**)
- » Nagorik Uddyog (**NU**)

NON ILC MEMBERS

Public Sector

- | | |
|--|--|
| » Ministry of Land | » Political Parties |
| » Department of Land Record and Survey | » CHT Regional Council |
| » Ministry of CHT Affairs | » Hill District Council (Ragamati, Bandarban, and Khargachari) |
| » Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs | » CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission |
| » Parliamentary Standing Committees | » Deputy Commissioner – DC |
| » National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh | » Upazilla Nirbahi Officer and Assistant Commissioner (Land) |
| » The Water Development Board | » Local government institutions (Upazilla Parishads) |

CHANGES POLICIES

CSOs

- » Nijera Kori
- » Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA)
- » Incidin Bangladesh
- » ANGOC

CSOs alliance at national level

- » PLANet Network Members
- » Water Rights Forum (WRF)
- » VPRA Implementation Coordination Cell
- » Human Rights Forum Bangladesh – HRFB

Research organization

- » Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)

Media

- » Nari Sangbadik Kendra (Women Journalist Centre)

UN Agency

- » Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
- » International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- » United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

INGOs

- » Action Aid
- » Transparency International
- » Campaign for Right to Food and Social Security

Farmers' Federations

- » Bangladesh Krishok Federation
- » Bangladesh Kishani Sabha

IP organizations

- » Bangladesh Adivasi Forum
- » Jatiyo Adivasi Parishad
- » Tribal Welfare Association
- » Circle Chiefs
- » Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples and Minorities
- » Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network (IWN)
- » Bangladesh Indigenous Youth Network (BIYN)
- » CHT Headmen Network
- » International CHT Commission
- » CHT-LDRC Watch Forum

CHANGES POLICIES



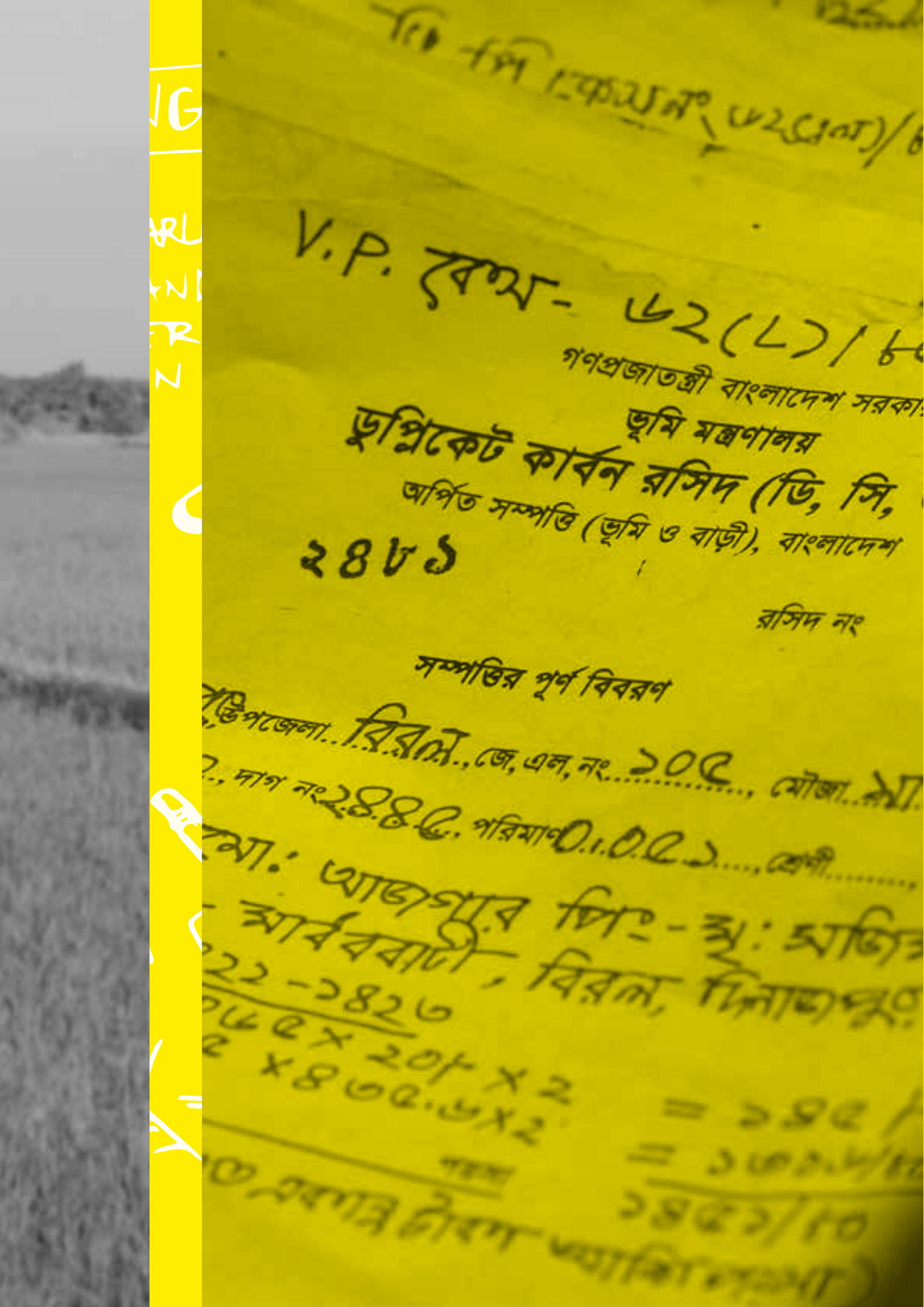
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CHANGES PRACTICE



CHANGE PRACTICE



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NLC

NATIONAL
LAND
COALITIONS

National Land Coalitions - often referred to as “**NLCs**” – are multi-stakeholder platforms set in motion by the

International Land Coalition (ILC).

They are led by ILC members and include both members and non-members, to realise the Coalition’s joint goal of people-centred land governance and to push forward national land reform and agendas.

NLC’s are helping to simplify and unpack land governance complexities by setting priorities and designing legitimate solutions to the most challenging land-related issues in a country.

NLCs are promoting collaboration and bridging the gap between government, the private sector, civil society including grassroots organisations, international agencies, traditional authorities and academia.

All ILC members have the opportunity to set up national platforms with the technical and financial support of the ILC.

These platforms use ILC’s 10 commitments to people-centred land governance as their compass, while promoting the Voluntary Guidelines for Land Tenure (VGGTs) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa.

Photos: ©ILC/ Andrea Fiorenza



ILC ASIA REGIONAL OFFICE C/O CIFOR

Jalan CIFOR, Situ Gede, Bogor Barat, Bogor 16115, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
asia@landcoalition.info

INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION SECRETARIAT c/o IFAD

Via Paolo di Dono 44 , 00142–Rome, Italy tel. +39 06 5459 2445
fax +39 06 5459 3445 info@landcoalition.org | www.landcoalition.org

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