



**Feminist Participatory Action Research
ON
CLAIMING WOMEN'S LAND OWNERSHIP**



বাদাবন সংঘ
Budabon Sangho
(A Women's Rights Organisation)



Feminist Participatory Action Research on CLAIMING WOMEN'S LAND OWNERSHIP

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since 2015, Sadabon Sangho has started its journey for the land and property rights of women particularly widow, separated, divorce, never married, religious minority, indigenous and women with disabilities. The way of our journey was not smooth. We faced huge number of challenges, threat and pressure from vested-interest groups. We found that work for the women and with the women is not easy.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) supported the feminist participatory action research (FPAR) initiative and FPAR is one of the means to continue our walk against all kind of limitations. We are really grateful to APWLD, for supporting us with an appropriate research that is relevant with issues in our context. We got light in the cave and started our journey with the by the way of research. Our team learned and receive capacity to deal with women landowners who are vulnerable in public and private land investment.

Sadabon Sangho has an extremely focused, has a strong understanding of the local needs and the kind of women's land rights abuse. Most importantly team has tested tools and methods to assist women in relation to land and water-bodies rights. The process helped a bit to promote women's control over land and access to water-bodies.

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Ms. Naïma Jahan
Young Researcher
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Land investment for economic development has become a critical issue in Bangladesh. Many people have already been affected in terms of losing assets, livelihoods, emotions and dignity, due to the impact of public and private land investments. It is estimated that an average of 20,000 to 30,000 people have recently been affected annually in Bangladesh by infrastructure development projects (The Daily Star, July 13, 2020). While estimating the effective ownership of women over land, a conservative estimate reveals that not more than 4 percent (ranging between 2% and 4%) of land in rural Bangladesh is owned by women¹. Especially women are often affected of violence by far-in-laws, brothers, other successors and land brokers. However, inheritance laws in Bangladesh are governed by family code which are then governed by religious laws which are different for different religions.

The research took place in Rampal and Mongla upazila under Rajshahi District. Two unions namely Rajnagar and Burindanga under two upazilas. Five villages namely Salekharber, Rajnagar, Modhora, Burindanga and Joymoni. The action research produced data particularly names of women landowners/fisher folks, types of land/water bodies, types of livelihoods, classification of land/water bodies, types of land succession, name of villages, number of household members, size of lands, documents of land ownership, types of land literacy, types of succession certificate, types of water bodies permission cards, as well as economic use of lands and water-bodies, amount of income, sources of alternative income etc. In addition, information of land prices and compensation resulting of land transfer, types of complexity they faced, nature of harassment etc have come up from research.

Baidyan Sangha implements a feminist action research titled, 'Claiming Women's land ownership in Rampal and Sundarban' since Oct 2018. The action research significantly achieved in relation to the impact on the lives of the women landowners. The research created number of milestones such as increase in women's land literacy, capacity development of women leaders, interaction with local elected bodies and land officials for land documentation. Furthermore, women landowners are supported with legal assistance, documents and counseling, that is another aspect of the initiative.

The mobilisation, organisation and education on land literacy is the main achievement of the research that led to future advocacy. Based on the research report, we have three recommendations: a) any public and/or private investments shall engage and obtain free, prior, informed and continuous consent of women in the local community. Fair compensation shall be given to women landowners. b) single daughters should have 100% equal inheritance rights as brothers in parental property. c) Government should approve the drafted uniform family code in 2006, in order to contest the pitting of the 'rights of equality' against the 'rights to religion'. This uniform family code will replace the individual religion based 'Family Code'.

¹ Please visit Bangladesh country profile - <https://landportal.org/regions/bangladesh>

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a densely populated country with a population of 144,043 thousands¹ having 147,570 km² total area. Arable land (hectares per person) in Bangladesh was last measured at 0.05 in 2011². The complexity and magnitude of issues pertaining to land administration and management in Bangladesh cannot be overstated.

The drawing a thumbnail sketch of the complex land administration in Bangladesh, it has been found that property requires eight procedures and costs 6.7% of the property value. In addition, reportedly only 30-35% of land transfers are found to be officially registered whereas the rest occur informally. Additionally 2.5 million operating land litigation including 1.4 million pending cases clogged the courts annually³.

The factors that deter Bangladeshi women from enjoying and exercising full and effective ownership and rights on land are nuanced by diverse factors ranging from laws, policies, social, cultural norms, customary practices, religious doctrines to lack of education, awareness and unfavorable institutions and implementation practices and so on. However, inheritance laws in Bangladesh are governed by family laws which are then governed by gender discriminatory religious laws which are different for different religions. In that case, Uniform Family Code following the strong demand of varied women's organizations of the country in order to ensure treatment of all women equally as citizens of the country.⁴

Since 2012, the government started to establish thermal power plants in coastal belt of Bangladesh. One of the thermal plants called Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Ltd⁵ which is a huge public investment on land in Barisal and Mangla under Sagerhat district. Targeting the power plant, a good number of private companies are also invested on land⁷ and establishing their manufacturing factories and plant particularly LPG⁸ landing station. About 750 acres of lands are taken over by thermal power plant. About 700 acres of lands are taken over for Economic Processing Zone. About 3,000 acres of lands are taken over by the private investors for factories and LPG landing stations.

In addition, huge acres of land is under the process of acquisition for airport and railway establishment. Within the acquired lands and water-bodies, a percentage was state and open owned land and water-bodies. Local people used the lands and water-bodies for shrimp and rice cultivation. Government's Land Acquisition (LA) dept. targeted the state lands and water-bodies for acquisition, then gradually targeted the private owned. Both state and private lands and water-bodies acquisition affecting the women who were dependent on land and water-bodies for fishing and farming. In addition, water and soil of this area (near the bay of Bengal) have been adversely affected by the huge saline intrusion, water logging, cyclone and storm resulting from climate crisis. Local landowners are selling their lands to private investors through land brokers.

¹ Population Census of Bangladesh 2011.

² World Bank Data, 2011

³ Barakat, Abdul "Political Economy of Land Litigation in Bangladesh: A case of Colonial National Wastage; Barakat, Abdul: RURAL LAND MARKET IN BANGLADESH: An Exploratory Study with the Poor and Marginalized People

⁴ Barakat, Abdul "Political Economy of Land Litigation in Bangladesh: A case of Colonial National Wastage;

⁵ <http://www.bfpc.com/>

⁷ <https://www.google.com.bd/maps/@22.328822,89.3894754,3882m/data=!3m1!1e3>

⁸ Liquefied petroleum Gas

⁹ http://www.reflexes.com/2014/05/29/world/asia/facing-rising-seas-bangladesh-confronts-the-consequences-of-climate-change.html?_r=6

State land and water-bodies have been grabbed by private sectors which were the only source of income for men and women fisherfolks. During the public and private land transfer, especially women are often losing her land by her in-laws, brothers, other successors and land brokers. In the worst case scenario, she could be put to harassment. Women land-owners do not have awareness on land accountability and ownership documentation. Women do not keeping ownership documents such as deed, record, map, mutation, succession certificate to claim their rights. Traditionally women pay no attention to land documentation because they are not usually involved in land disputes/conflicts. Due to lack of awareness and documents, women landowners now facing huge disputes, they cannot present their rights against fake documents and owners. Women grieved, communicated with different actors, requesting to get price, but mostly unsettled. Women landowners do not have an awareness of how to get price of acquired lands. They were contacted with brokers and local elected bodies to get the price of their lands.

At present, marriage registration, rights to earned resources and properties, guardianship and adoption are defined under separate family laws followed by separate religious communities. For example, Muslim women are entitled to inheritance, though not equally as their male counterparts are, while Hindu women do not have any right to inheritance. Challenges of applying Bangladesh inheritance law for women when it comes under Bangladesh Muslim inheritance law:

- 1) If the property is in father's name, and he doesn't have a son, a portion can be legally claimed by paternal cousin brothers if they wish;
- 2) If the property is in mother's name, and she doesn't have a son, a portion can be legally claimed by mother's brothers if they wish;
- 3) Muslim inheritance law in Bangladesh allows property owners to make a "will" but only up to 30% of their current assets.

As per the current Bangladesh inheritance law, women's inheritance is determined by the law set by her religion. As per family law, daughters have difficulties in acquiring 100% of her father's property. Example, if a daughter doesn't have a brother, her paternal cousins can put a large legal claim to her father's property if they wish. And the list goes on.



Along with the Bangladesh inheritance law, some laws like the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950 and The Land Acquisition Act 2015 pose severe challenges on women's property rights. The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950, described women's inheritance land rights according to the Family code, however, the issue of succession certificate to women is not systematic and mostly depend on local elected body's willingness. Local elected body doesn't maintain database of a family member that would ensure the correct succession certificate. In that case, uniform Family Code¹² following the strong demand of varied women's organizations are coming up in order to ensure treatment of all women equally as citizens of the country. The Law Commission in 2013 suggested that the withdrawal of the reservations, which are coming in the way for equality for women, should be considered positively. But no initiative has been taken since in 2019.

The process of land acquisition is related with State Land Management and Settlement Policy 1997 and The Land Acquisition Act 2017.

Out of the country's existing set of rules for land under the legal system, the major laws are:

- 1) The Survey Act, 1875
- 2) The Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885.
- 3) The Registration Act, 1908
- 4) The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950
- 5) The Tenancy Rules, 1954
- 6) The Land Appeal Board Act, 1989
- 7) The Land Reforms Board Act, 1989
- 8) Land Administration Manuals (Volumes 1 & 2), 2003.

In order to handover the religious minority (hindu) people's land, government revised The Vested Property Return Act 2001 on 2013.

Due to economic growth of the country, the private sector came forward particularly in land investment. The private corporations are investing in the land sector to build factories and other infrastructures. Similarly, Bangladesh government has been establishing number of infrastructure projects such as four line road, railway, sea port, cantonment, bridge, export processing zone, private industrial zone and airport where land acquisition is going on. Small landowners particularly women are extremely vulnerable in such kind of acquisition. In most cases, they are not getting proper compensation for such kind of land acquisition. Considering the private and public land investments, the research topic: **"the impact of public and private land investment on the lives of women landowners and their folks in Bangal and Jharkhand area"** is important.

¹² Bangladesh Law Commission Report July 08, 2005 on a Reference by the Government towards the possibility of framing out of a uniform Family Code for all Communities of Bangladesh relating the Marriage, Divorce, Guardianship, inheritance etc.

BUILDING YOUR FPAR WITH THE COMMUNITY

As part of Badalon Sangho's Land FPAR, we implemented the following activities:

Facilitated pre-research consultations:

Badalon Sangho team has facilitated two pre-research consultations with women landowners dated on 19 October and 20 November 2018. The pre-consultation dated on 19 Oct, 2018 organised with 15 women landowners and 20 Nov, 2018 with 9 women landowners. The pre-consultation on 19 Oct 2018 organised at Badalon Sangho's training room. The pre-consultation on 20 Nov 2018 was organised at field level, Kalkharbar village. Both of the pre-consultations scheduled with number of sessions that include introduction, situation analysis, power mapping, theory of change and expectations sharing. The end of the pre-consultations, we documented following findings:

- 80% of women do not know about the inheritance land accountability
- 80% of women are now facing disputes with their ownership, types of disputes i.e. authenticity of documents, boundary of lands, proper share of inheritance lands, error in land registration/record/deed, etc.;
- 75% of women are of the view that they deprived or cheated in terms of land price and compensation;
- Most women are of the view that loss of land result in disempowerment in family and society levels;
- Most women are of the view that they need trusted women leaders. They believe that women leaders can assist them in presenting documents and for rights claim;



Mobilised, organised and formed six (6) women organisations consisting of 210 women:

The underlying reasons of the women inability to bargain land ownership are i.e. women are not aware in land literacy, they don't have any organisation or collective platform for voice raise and action. Considering the constraints Balaban Sangha has mobilised and organised women landowner in organisations. Organisations give them opportunity to learn together, share problems, make decisions and take actions collectively. Thus organisations formation and facilitation contributing to impact objective. We formed six (6) women organisations with 210 women landowners. Co-researchers conducted household survey to identify and select women for the 6 organisations. The data collection includes household information, monthly income, degree of poverty, marital status, owning properties, number of children, other dependents etc. Based on the survey, a total of 210 women are selected. A total of 30 women leaders are selected as President, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Secretary and Income generation Secretary for each of six (6) groups, which continuously supported by Balaban Sangha. We conducted a number of courtyard meetings/sessions with group members on women's rights, land disputes and other issues. Women leaders are supported with training, mentoring and coaching so that they can facilitate organisations on long term basis. Balaban Sangha already has a plan to continue to work with them as land ownership claim is a long term issue.

Facilitated training to women leaders on 'Women's Leadership in Land and Water-Bodies':

A training was delivered to 12 women leaders (from five villages namely Kalesharbet, Rajnagar, Modhana, Buridanga and Jaymoni) on 04-05 April 2019 at Balaban Sangha's office. Objectives of the training:

- Women participants will gain the confidence and information to be leaders;
- Women Participants will have knowledge regarding land ownership in land and water-bodies;
- Women participants would have minimum perception of feminism and women's rights;

The two days long training was consisted with eight (8) sessions are as follows:

- Inauguration and Introduction Session, Discussion of the outcomes and models of the Training
- Women Rights
- Discussion on my life, my realities, my life-cycle (Mandala Drawing)
- Discussion of the equal rights of men and women, the importance of land and water bodies in women's life
- Introduction/get acquainted with the different Land offices and land related documents
- Discussions on "Who is a leader?" The status/state of men and women's leadership of men and women in the society
- Find the subject while perceiving feminism
- Evaluation and Assessment of the training session

At the end of the training participants received information of leadership, organisation, movement creation, importance of feminism. They are confident to deal with the patriarchal society particularly in the situation of public and private land investments. The training was facilitated by Mentor Ms. Fatema Kabir, Young researcher Ms. Naima Jahan and Executive Director Ms. Lipi Rahman.

Facilitated five (5) coordination meetings with women leaders:

The Balaban Sangha's team has facilitated three (3) coordination meetings with women leaders on 12 April, 16 May, 17 June, 29 July and 27 August 2019. A total number of 16 women leaders (two leaders from each of the six women organisations and additional 4 members) were participated in the meetings and shared challenges and risks that are faced the women landowners at community level. They also shared what are benefit women are getting due to group and courtyard meetings. They also discussed about individual woman facing the land rights abuse. The meeting talked about the strategies to assist women who are facing land rights abuse. Meetings were facilitated by Young Researcher Ms. Naima Jahan and Mentor Ms. Fatema Kabir. Women leaders are now willing to come to the office and discuss openly.

Facilitated weekly courtyard meetings with women landowners:

A total of six (6) women organisations are formed with 210 women landowners. 114 married women directly owning land and water-bodies, 70 widow owning land, 22 divorce owning, 1 single woman, 3 separated women. A total of 96 weekly courtyard meetings by six women organisations across target villages were organised. Meetings shared the information of land documentation, registration, succession certificate, mutation and compensation claiming, etc. The groups are now functioning with their own leadership. Co-researchers, young researcher and programme manager facilitated the courtyard meetings on a weekly basis. In addition, women leaders are also shared the information they received from the previous trainings.

Facilitated women's land tenure documentation process support:

During the time of the research, we supported 29 women landowners with their ownership documents i.e. land registration document collection, succession certificate collection, parcel map preparation. The ownership documents preparation and finalisation takes a long time. So Badabon Sangho continue to work with the 29 women landowners as well as extend their supports to other affected women after the FFR. Particularly one woman i.e. Helena is supported lives on the state land and is at risk of eviction by the private company (grabber of state land). FFR supported to submit all the land ownership documents to local elected bodies and land offices. Badabon Sangho continuing to support these women after the FFR project. The Helena's story is added in page # 25.

Facilitated interview with women landowners:

As part of the action research, we interviewed 210 landowners and fisher-folks with selected questions. The interviews were conducted during the period of April-June 2018. Prior to the interview, we oriented co-researcher about the FFR principles, safety, confidentiality and ethics. We covering following ethics and principles in orientation:

- Women's consent is a must prior to interview as well as use of their picture, video and quotes.
- Content and data of women landowners should be kept confidential. Share only with young researcher.
- Video and photos of women landowners and fisher-folks is not allowed without approval of Young Researcher. Young Researcher decide about the video interview that may be without name and face or include.
- Pay full respect to women interviewees during rapport/ trust building. Don't create high expectations.
- Respect to response of women landowners- if it is wrong answer or against your choice, never interpreted in line with your views.
- Interviewees have freedom to choose any question respond or not to respond.

Young researcher analysis the collected data and prepared a database. In addition to the data collection, Young researcher selected four (4) women landowners for in-depth interview (audio recording) who lost their land due to private investments i.e. Orion Group (thermal power plant), Indus Power (IPG), Badkundhwa Group (IPG) and public investments (i.e. thermal power plant, railway land investments).

Facilitated two (2) consultations with two (2) union parishad's Local Elected Bodies:

As part of the action research, we consulted with 26 local elected bodies of union parishad i.e. two (2) Chairpersons (Mr. Sardar Abdul Hannan in Rapsagar and Ms. Nitai Kumar Mondal in Burnidanga), 18 general members and six (6) women members. Consultation in Burnidanga union conducted on 28 March and Rajnagar union conducted on 27 March 2018. Both consultations were much participatory and open in terms of discussion and question answer on the issue of women's access and control over land and water-bodies. The objective of the consultation was to understand the roles of local elected bodies in

protecting women landowner's rights; for awareness and capacity development activities regarding women's land rights. Local elected bodies mentioned in the meeting that women organisation's members becoming aware of inheritance land ownership documentation.

Local elected bodies acknowledged that impact of land disputes, land grabbing and land displacement is huge on women. The local elected bodies admitted that women face huge barriers from community and family to move from one land office to another office frequently. They also agreed that number of brokers are provoking land disputes and conflicts. Chairperson disagreed that local elected bodies are favouring influential landowners and private companies in case of land disputes/conflicts. However women landowner expressed that Chairperson himself worked as a broker in some cases.

"When land broker came to my house and evicting me from my land I asked support from Chairman but he remained silent." - woman landowner from Modura village

Facilitated women leaders visit to two (2) union land offices:

The action research facilitated women leaders visit to union land offices on 23 April 2019 at Hurka and 04 May at Mongla. Both of the consultations were tool for women's capacity development. The objective of the visit is to introduce women leaders with land officials and build their confidence. A total of six (6) government officials participated in the meeting along with 12 women leaders. Land officials were pointed out the needs and constraints that women landowners are facing. The land officials mentioned that women landowners mostly don't know the location of land and size of land. Land officials mentioned that women don't have information and knowledge on the landownership documentation and they are depending on the land brokers. Land brokers are taking money in the name of land offices.

Team questioned that why don't you check the succession certificate more carefully while any application is submitted for inheritance land mutation. Land officials responded they rely on the succession certificate issued by the Chairman. The Chairperson may issue fake certificate but they couldn't do a lot. The land officials also mentioned in some cases public land acquisition, notice 7¹¹ is issued ignoring women landowners. Then women landowners are deprived from the compensation and fall into long standing land disputes and conflicts. We are trying to inform landowners both women and men if we know some heirs are ignored by the succession certificate. In the case of map preparation, the upazila settlement office is responsible and that maps are not updated. However the changes on land size and ownership taking place each and every day. Landowners are suffering a lot due to conflict on land boundary.

Then women leaders questioned how they can get updated land registration and mutation information from union land office. Women leaders also questioned, if land is purchased but registration is not taking place due to lack of mutation, how they can get mutation easily. The land officials responded that mutation is a process of land registration. Each landowner requires to get mutation first prior to transfer deed. Union Assistant Land Officer Mr. Bipul Mondal and Mr. Pobitra Biswas willing to extend their support to women leaders if they come to the office for any assistance.

Impact Objective - 'Women landowners and fisher folks are empowered to claim ownership and control over land and water bodies in Rampal and Sundarban areas'.

In order to achieve the impact objective, Badabon Sangho identified the **Research Topic** - 'Impact of public and private land investments on the lives of women landowners and fisher folks in Rampal and Sundarban areas'.

Research Question - "What are the impacts of public and private land investment on the lives of women landowners and fisher folks in Rampal and Sundarban areas?"

The questions in the interviews for women landowners were designed aligned with the impact objective. Most importantly understanding on 'who', 'how' and 'what' were the key focus of the research. All of the questions were designed, asked and analysed how women land rights is abuse, who are the actors, what is the result of lands rights abuse.

¹¹ Notice-7 is the final proclamation to inform landowners for land acquisition and compensation payment.

Power Map – The action research project designed a power map considering the local context in relation to women’s land rights. Women landowners, leaders and other like minded stakeholders provided suggestions and guidance to develop the power map.



Description of Power Map:

Within the land investment, local stakeholders e.g. local elected bodies of union parishad, political leaders, land officials are playing most influential roles as they have legal and obligatory responsibilities with land administration. Chairperson of union parishad is responsible for issuing the inheritance certificate to successors. Political leaders have the capacity and power to influence both local elected bodies and land administration officials. Land officials have roles in land record, land identification, compensation setting and payment. Other public agencies like forest and coast guard have roles in water-bodies management. The targeted villages are adjacent of Sundarban and Bay of Bengal, so both departmental officials playing roles to give access to women fisher-folks in state water-bodies. It is mentionable that these stakeholders are strongly oppose and/or influence to expel and abuse women’s land rights. In current power structure, land brokers and private investors playing roles. Land investors asking clearance from elected bodies prior to purchase land. Even local land offices are influenced by the local elected bodies and money.

In terms of influence, youths, women landowners and women fisher-folks don’t have strong roles in land investment. However these groups are supporting to protect the women’s land rights. Youths would have roles in public education and awareness. Women landowners and women fisher-folks are themselves are important to mobilize, organize and join in the women’s organization for movement building.

Groups like male family members and male relatives women landowners are opposed women’s land rights in different ways. They disowning the women’s rights on inherited land through preparing disputed inheritance certificate. They have less influences in the land administration but they are key actors who are working against women’s land rights. The union parishad’s women members are in between of supporting or not supporting women landowners.

Within the land investment, media and NGOs have less influential roles but they are supporting the women’s land rights. They can provide information, reports to women landowners as well as external community on women’s land rights abuse that helpful to prepare public opinion. Women, men and youths in community are supportive to women’s land rights and movement building.

Theory of Change -



Critical Pathway -



Activities to achieve milestone 1:

- Formation of five (5) women groups with 105 women landowner and fisher folks
- Facilitated 30 courtyard sessions for 105 landowner and fisher folks
- Selection of 10 women leaders (two (2) leaders from each of five groups)

Changes achieve for milestone 1:

The targeted milestones of the project was to form five (5) women organisations with 100 women landowners and fisher-folks. However the project achieved more i.e. total of 210 women are mobilised and organised in six (6) women organisations. As well as a total of 30 courtyard sessions were planned. The project facilitated 96 courtyard sessions across the six (6) women organisations on a weekly basis. The FPAR selected 12 leaders from six women organisations against the target of 10 women leaders selection.

Activities to achieve milestone 2:

- Facilitate two days long one batch training for 10 women leader
- Facilitate 4 of visit to land office for women leaders
- Organize bi-monthly six (6) meetings within 10 women leader

Changes achieve for milestone 2:

The FPAR facilitated two days long training to 12 women leaders in two times -whereas the targeted trainees were 10 women leaders. A total of two visits were facilitated by the FPAR project -where women leaders and land officials talked about the process of land documentation. Women leaders conducted a total of ten (10) meetings to share stories with each other.

Activities to achieve milestone 3:

- Organize one day long orientation for local elected bodies, govt. land officials, forest dept, media and private sectors (showing documentary & video clip on how women facing vulnerability after losing land and water-bodies)
- Organize quarterly four (4) meetings with women leaders and Govt. Officials.

Changes achieve for milestone 3:

The targeted milestones under -3 is already achieved i.e. one day long orientation for two local government institutions (Union Parishad) are delivered in two union parishads i.e. Rajnagar and Bursitanga. During facilitation of orientation, the team showed testimony of number of women who are expelled from land. Three meetings were facilitated at Huka and Mongla union land offices with participation of local land officials and 12 women leaders.



Activities to achieve milestone 4:

- a) Provide documentation support to vulnerable women landowners (succession certificate/record/seed collection, mutation, allocation of water-bodies, etc)
- b) Organise # of rallies, protest
- c) Submission of memorandum to Deputy Commissioner, Bagmati

Changes achieve for milestone 4:

In order to achieve the milestone-4, the team supported 28 women landowners with ownership documentation. A total of seven women landowners assisted with mutation records, 17 women landowners are supported with unambiguous succession certificates and three women assisted with record correction cases and appeal file. In addition, women landowners facilitated two rallies and protest meetings in case of women rights violation. Women leaders also submitted a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner on the issue of women rights violation.

Activities to achieve milestone 5:

- a) Prepare video clips with impact story
- b) Women leaders prepare the memorandum for sharing with local and national policy actors.

Changes achieve for milestone 5:

The targeted milestone -5 was preparation of video documentary with women landowner's stories who expelled from land and to be. Under the FPAR programme, documentary has already prepared with stories of women landowners how are supported by the action research. The project will prepare the memorandum and will share with local and national level policy actors.

Activities to achieve milestone 6:

- a) Share the women's land ownership losing stories with journalists
- b) Share the women's fisher folk stories with relevance dept and ministries
- c) Share the report with Association of Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Ministry of Land, APWLD

Changes achieve for milestone 6:

Under targeted milestones, most of the activities are designed in the advocacy stage. We already documented women landowner's stories in video documentary. We planned to share the stories (both in video and printed brochure) with local and national level policy actors, journalists, human rights activists and researchers through a workshop and meetings.

FPAR Principles

Yes, we considered the FPAR principles particularly Feminism during interviewing and discussion with participants. We designed the schedule and question considering the women sensitivity. We considered security, confidentiality and privacy of women landowners during consultation. We took consent letter from the participants who were given in-depth interview. For example, we are maintaining the privacy (separate room) when we interviewed women. We interview with individual level after rapport building so that women feel trust and comfortable with the interviewer. In most cases, we keep the interview process confidential so that local broker syndicate do not understand about the purpose of the interview.

Moreover, we are keeping women interview process private so that male members of the family would not influence the interview answers. We are not pressuring any woman if she isn't willing to answer any specific questions. We expunged answers to any questions if women respondent/interviewee asked to ignore duly said answers. The questions and session plans also considered the policy and structural acts that are currently affecting women landowners. We discussed in detail about the current power structure in order to under the actor's roles.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

• **Description/Profile of the Community** - Describe the women in the community that you're working with. If you have women as local researchers include their profile (a picture and a short bio).

The FPAR project covered women landowners and fisher-folks who are affected by the public and private land investment in Mongla and Rampal under Bagmati. A total of 210 women particularly vulnerable sections are supported by the project.



Ms. Naima Jahan worked as a Young Researcher in the FPAR project. She has good knowledge on community mobilisation, group formation, awareness building, courtyard meeting/session facilitation and stakeholder's communication, etc. She was born, brought up and presence in the targeted area i.e. Rampal and Bagmati. Ms. Naima did a Masters degree in Management. She has strong emotional understanding about the vulnerable women landowners and fisher-folks. Ms. Naima visited field each and every day and monitored the ongoing research activities. She guided co-researcher on ethical, safety and confidentiality principals during interviewing. She shared her learning with team members that she received from FPAR's trainings. She facilitates consultations with local elected bodies, land officials and monthly women leaders meetings.

Ms. Gayatri Biswas has been working with Basabon Sangho since 2016. She is responsible for public awareness on violence against women, rights of women fisher folk and girl child abuse. She has strong capacity in group mobilisation, public awareness, networking and stakeholder mobilisation. She was born and brought up in local community i.e. Burundanga village one of the villages where landowners are affected by the land investment and industrialization. Presently she is supporting the FPAR as Co-researcher.



Ms. Nurun Nahar has been working with Basabon Sangho since 2016. She is responsible for public awareness on women's land rights and access to water-bodies. She has strong capacity in group mobilisation, public awareness, networking and stakeholder mobilisation. She was born and brought up from local communities. Since the FPAR programme, she assigned as Co-researcher. It is nice to mention that most of the interview with women landowners were conducted by her.

• Research Sites – where are the sites of the research?

The research took place in Rampal and Mongla upazila under Bagerhat District. Two unions namely Rajnagar and Burindanga under two upazilas. Five villages namely Kajekbarbari, Rajnagar, Mochhara, Burindanga and Joyram. More than 100 industries including private thermal power plants, cement factories, LPG plants and grain silos are setting up. Furthermore, roads, airport and railway going to establish with new and huge land acquisition in order connect Mongla sea port with throughout the country. All of the villages are adjacent areas. Private and public land investments are going on these villages. Total 17,300 villagers including 8,575 women and 7,125 men living in targeted villages. Most of the households are affected by land ownership dispute. Most of them are involved in agriculture activities such as shrimp farming and paddy cultivation.

The literacy rate in the community is about 65%. The poverty level of household is about 41%. The average household size is 4.5 persons. Male members of the family are migrating to town for job and involving in the second or third marriage. As a result the rate of broken family is increasing. The rate of single mothers, widows and separated women is increasing. Within the five villages, there are five primary schools, two big market place, two local government institutions such as union parishad and two land offices. A total of 26 elected bodies including two chairpersons, 18 ward members and six women members of two union parishad.

Scope of the research and research questions –

Main Research Questions: What are the impacts of public and private land investments on the lives of women landowners and fisher folks in Rampal and Sundarban areas?

Sub-questions:

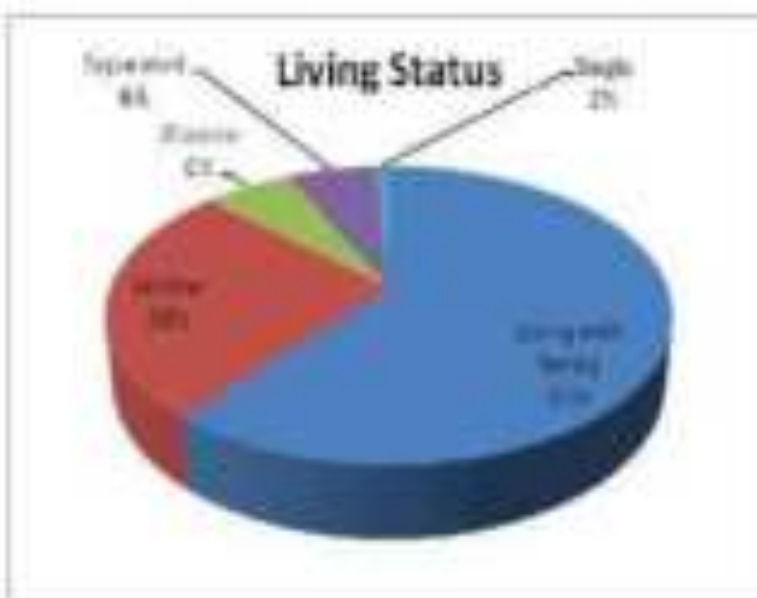
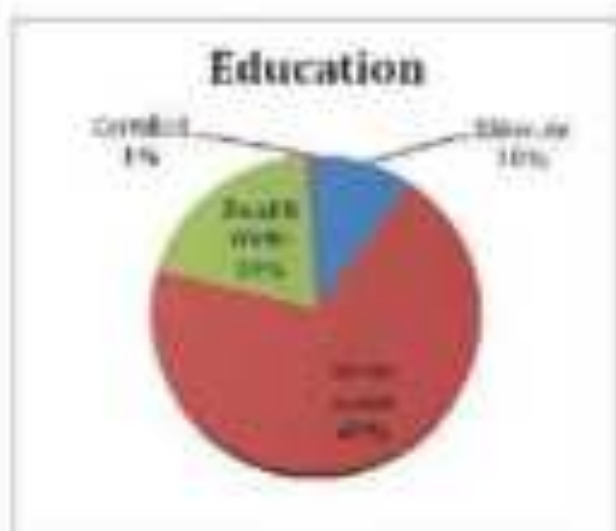
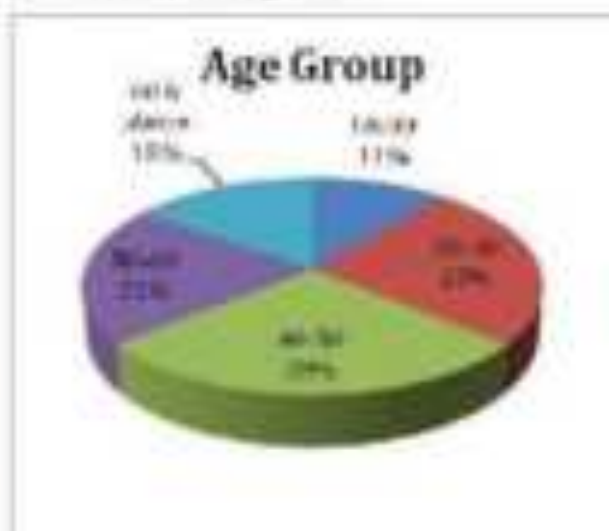
- Do you know the rules and laws of land ownership and water-bodies? How much do you know? Do you need to know more about land ownership?
- Did you get any support or challenges from actors (brokers/chairman/member/woman member/political leader/surveyor/private company/relative/male members)
- Do they support or ignore you as a woman?
- How do you communicate with government and land officials?
- Do you get any support from organisation/woman leader?
- What kind of problem you faced after losing the land and water-bodies as a woman?
- What is your income loss due to land and water-bodies loss?
- What were your roles in family decision before and after the land loss?
- How you deprived from land transfer?
- What kind of initiatives do you take to protect your land and water-bodies?

Data

The action research produced data particularly name of women landowners/fisher folks, types of lands/water-bodies, types of livelihoods, classification of land/water-bodies, types of land succession, name of villages, number of household members, size of lands, documents of land ownership, types of land literacy, types of succession certificates, types of water-bodies permission cards, etc. As well as research produced economic use of lands and water-bodies, amount of income, sources of alternative income etc. In addition, information of land prices and compensation resulting of land transfer, types of complexity they faced, nature of harassment etc have come up from research.

It is notable that private land investment is going on with number of companies (i.e. Orion Group planned to set up power plant, Inlex Power planned to set up Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) landing station, Bashundhara Group planned to set up LPG landing station. In terms of public investment, most of the lands are acquired by thermal power plant, connect four lanes road to thermal power plant, railway to connect Mongla sea-port.

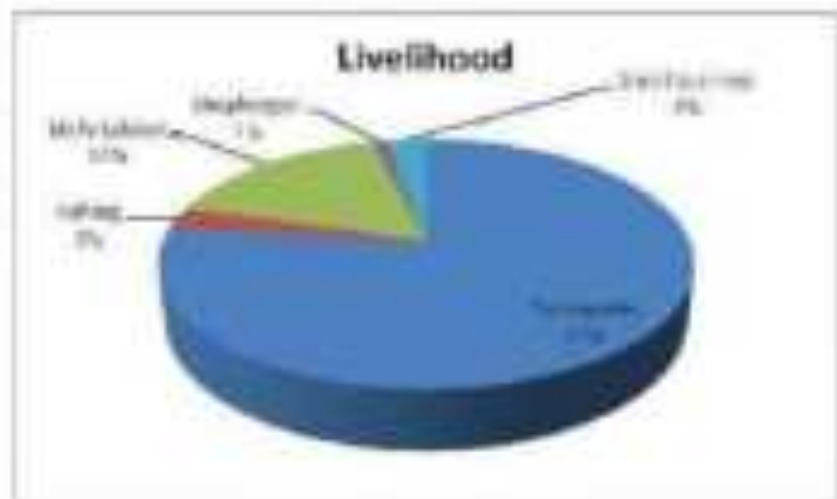
At the same time, data from stakeholders included, types of support they received from local elected bodies, male members of the family and other actors, etc. Please find the findings of the action research stated in the following charts.



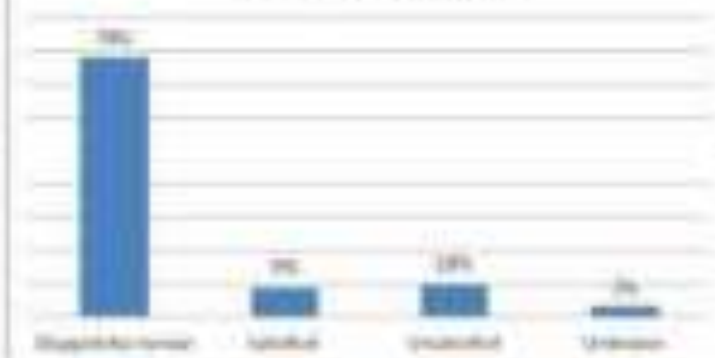
A total of 126 women respondents i.e. 11% of women are aged 18-30 years, 25% of women are within 30-40 yrs, 28% of women are aged 40-50 years, 22% of women are aged in 50-60 years and 15% of women are above 60 years. A 10% of women are illiterate, 69% of women can write their name only, 20% of women can read and write and 1% of women have formal education certificate.

Within the FPAR research, the team conducted interviews with 210 women. Amongst 62% of women have family and husband, 26% of women are widowed, 6% of women are divorced, 6% of women are separated, 1% of women never married.

A 77% of women are engaged in household chores and homestead on-farm work (i.e. rice and fish cultivation), 3% of women are engaged in fishing, 10% of women are daily laborers, 1% of women are operating shops, 3% of women are doing small business.



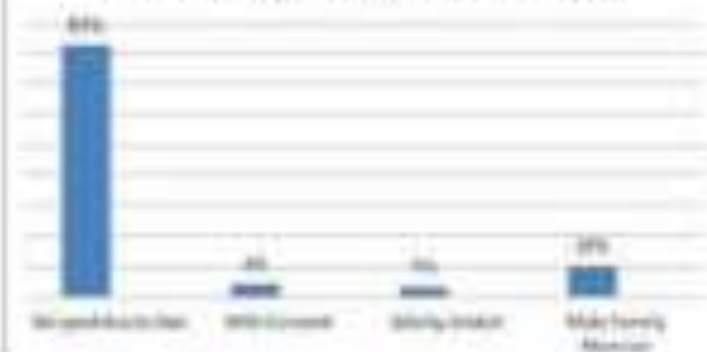
Fair prices of land



Question regarding fair prices of lands and water-bodies from private land investors, 78% of women expressed their fear to answer the question due to previous experiences facing harassment and violence (i.e. beaten, threat, mental pressure of divorce/separation) from family members, land brokers among others. It is notable that if women mention about dissatisfaction compensation or price, it might be reported to local brokers, male family members, local political leaders or govt. officials. Women not willing to share the details of dissatisfaction, that might be reasons for further harassment and violence on her. Only 8% of women are satisfied with the prices that they received, only 2% of women said they are not satisfied with the prices and compensation money what they received, 2% of women said that they don't know.

Question regarding land sold to private or public investor, 83% of the women are expressed their fear to answer the question due to previous experiences facing harassment and violence (i.e. beaten, threat, mental pressure of divorce/separation) from family members and land brokers among others. Only 4% of the women are sold the land and water-bodies with their verbal consent but it is not clear that whether it is free and informed or not. 2% of the women said that they sold the lands and water-bodies with the assistance of brokers. 10% of the women sold their lands and water-bodies with the assistance of male family members. The price of lands vary from each of the landowners particularly considering the location, size, conflicts in ownership documentation, and finally bargaining capacity. Mostly women don't have the capacity to bargain. Women landowners took assistance from male family members mostly in bargaining the price of lands. Most of the women are unable to bargain with brokers and they took support from male members, relatives and close person. We found that land price is higher if male members of family is powerful to bargain, on the other hand land price is low, if a woman doesn't have male members to bargain.

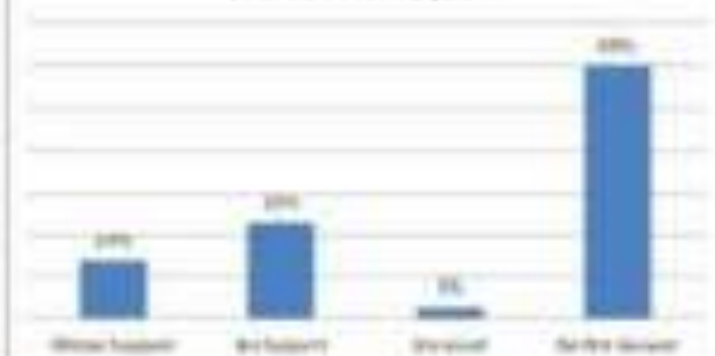
land sell to private/public investor



Question regarding land sold to private or public investor, 83% of the women are expressed their fear to answer the question due to previous experiences facing harassment and violence (i.e. beaten, threat, mental pressure of divorce/separation) from family members and land brokers among others. Only 4% of the women are sold the land and water-bodies with their verbal consent but it is not clear that whether it is free and informed or not. 2% of the women said that they sold the lands and water-bodies with the assistance of brokers. 10% of the women sold their lands and water-bodies with the assistance of male family members. The price of lands vary from each of the landowners particularly considering the location, size, conflicts in ownership documentation, and finally bargaining capacity. Mostly women don't have the capacity to bargain. Women landowners took assistance from male family members mostly in bargaining the price of lands. Most of the women are unable to bargain with brokers and they took support from male members, relatives and close person. We found that land price is higher if male members of family is powerful to bargain, on the other hand land price is low, if a woman doesn't have male members to bargain.

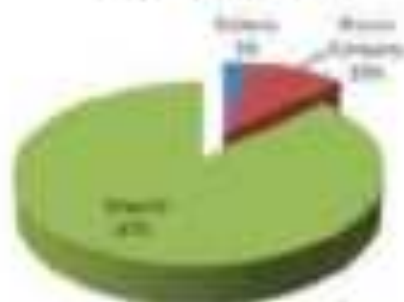
In terms of receive assistance in case of land disputes/conflicts, only 14% of the women received support (from local elected bodies and male family members on the issue of conflicts between successor or inherited property, most of the cases support was provided to explain shares between successors through alternative dispute resolution: ADR (SALJAH), women were also received succession certification from Union Parshad (local elected bodies)). 23% of the women don't receive any support, 3% of the women are experienced of harassment in two ways i.e. a) women landowners who have disputes are often harassed by male villagers, brokers, as well as land offices when they have to move

Received Support



Question regarding received support in case of land disputes/conflicts, only 14% of the women received support (from local elected bodies and male family members on the issue of conflicts between successor or inherited property, most of the cases support was provided to explain shares between successors through alternative dispute resolution: ADR (SALJAH), women were also received succession certification from Union Parshad (local elected bodies)). 23% of the women don't receive any support, 3% of the women are experienced of harassment in two ways i.e. a) women landowners who have disputes are often harassed by male villagers, brokers, as well as land offices when they have to move

Land Acquisition



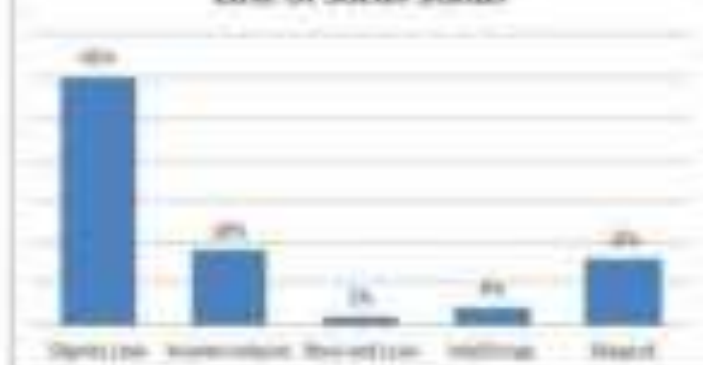
from one office to another office, b) pressure from male members of the family to sell the land immediately and handover money to husband/son/brother/daughter-in-law. 60% of the women skipped to response the question.

In terms of public and private land acquisition, 71% of the lands and water-bodies are acquired by railway, 28% of the lands captured by the private companies operating in the target villages,

and remain 87% of the women respondents skipped to answer the question due to fear.

A 60% of the women believed that their social status and dignity has lost due to loss of lands and water-bodies e.g. working as maid servant, living in other's land, elderly women neglected by sons, sisters are not getting entertainment from brother-in-law, wife beaten by husband without reasons as she don't have any option fly-away, 18% of women thought that their income has reduced (less purchase capacity in personal needs, less capacity to fulfil demand of children's mostly stationery, tuition fees, clothes and snacks, seek health supports, less capacity to provide support to elderly parents, 2% of the women received loan but handover to male family members due to loss of land, 4% of the women changed their jobs, and remained 16% of the women skipped to answer the question.

Loss of Social Status



1. Timeframe of the research:

The project period of the action research is August 2018 to Dec 2018.

2. Ethical and safety strategies:

The action research has maintained following strategies. The consent were taken from women landowners prior to interview. The content and data of the land owners kept confidentially particularly in locality. The video and photos of women landowners and Fisher-folks kept confidentially. In some cases, video interview used without the face of interviewee and names.

The project also ensured the ethical, safety and confidentiality aspect during data collection and interviewing i.e. a) pay respect to women interviewees, b) respect to response of women land owners, c) stop interview if the interviewee does not want to continue, d) don't pressure to respond on any question, e) interviewee would have freedom to choose any question respond or not respond.

3. Limitation of the research:

The impact and result of women's land rights abuse on livelihoods is not fully covered under the action research. Particularly the impact on the lives of children, elderly women, persons with disabilities are not covered. Schooling, feeding and clothing of children due to women's land rights abuse has not come out.

An estimate shows a total of 2,600 women are impacted with the public and private land investment in the targeted areas, who have expelled from their land rights and potential to be. However the FWR has covered only 210 women landowners and Fisher-folks in five villages closer to thermal power plant. Furthermore, a significant number of women are living far from father's house are mostly unaware on land literacy. The FWR's research could not able to cover these absent women.

The land administration completed the Revisional Survey - 83 record i.e. survey and settlement (including map preparation) in this area in 2006. However the final publication and gazette of the record is still pending. Support to women and legally ownership finalization is long-term activities in Bangladesh. The FPAR's research duration was one year, so the final result of women's land ownership was limited.

One of the limitations of the action research is lack of comparative analysis on women and men in relation on how land governance is working in context of gender difference. The impact on men due to land investment hasn't cover. However the report described gender based analysis in few section briefly. These findings are came out from the informal discussion with women leaders and observation of research team.

4. Obstacles/difficulties faced in conducting research:

Challenges faced by research	Mitigation strategies that taken by team
Opposition political parties mobilised several activities such as rally, shut, gathering to stop the thermal power plant project which makes Govt. more careful about the project.	Badabon Sangho team and research team were sensitive about the political environment. Team manages to keep relation with all political actors in a neutral views. They met with the women landowners at safe space where brokers cannot find out. Such strategy used for one case, which worked well.
Local elected bodies are dominated by political parties, most of them are directly involved in political party. So non-partisan attitude and behaviour hardly found within the local government.	The team generally avoid to use the sensitive words (e.g. public land acquisition, land grabbing, forced land ownership transfer, land displacement, corruption, etc.) while speaking with land officials, local elected bodies and political actors. In these instances, generally talked about the less sensitive issues i.e. alternative income generation, livelihoods options, capacity development etc. In that way, FPAR protect confidentiality is essential to ensure both women's and co-researcher's safety.
Involvement of women landowners and leaders within the project taking time and frequent communication	Badabon Sangho's researcher and co-researchers both are from local. They received enabling environment to implement activities within the community. However rapport building with women landowners and leaders taken good time and continuous communication. Finally since May 2019, the women landowners and leaders are actively attending activities.
Land literacy for women landowner and women leaders took time and coaching	The team coach and discuss with women in courtyard sessions on step by step basis. Team assisted them to find out the jurisdiction list - J.L. number of land record, record no. parcel number etc. By the way of discussion, the women landowners learned about the land literacy. Particularly what are the main features of lands documentation etc.
Private land brokers were suspicious about the awareness programme of action research	The team found that brokers are trying to understand what are describing in the courtyard meetings. Even some brokers mentioned the name of Badabon Sangho's team members and said who are they coming here. The team didn't go directly to that women considering her safety and confidentiality. The team went to the relative of women landowners and ask her to communicate suggestions with women landowners.

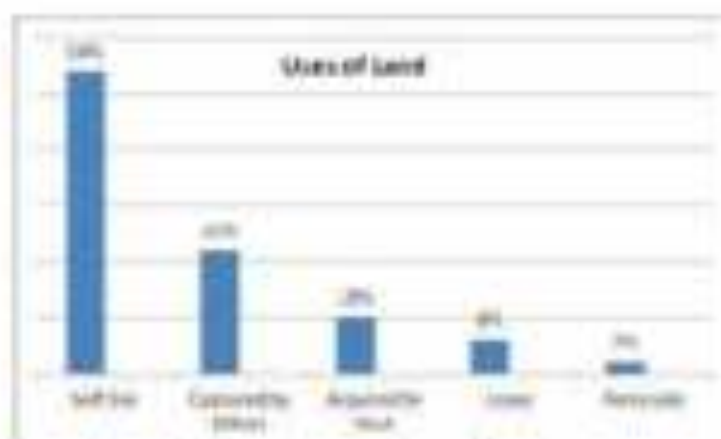
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

During the research period the construction of the thermal power plant is going slowly. Private companies establishing manufacturing factories and plants particularly LPG¹² landing station. Recently members of local parliaments are not encouraging landowners to sell their lands to private companies, however, they cannot prevent landowners from lawfully selling their lands. There are informal complaints by landowners against compensation payment in relation to land acquisition. The local land brokers are active and provoking women to sell their lands, especially women experiencing land conflicts and disputes. In most cases, this is so the land can be sold at lower prices.

One of the changes is coming slowly that women are feeling non-threatening environment to encourage others to share their challenges with land ownership. This is happened due to implementation of action research. Union Parishad's local elected bodies particularly chairperson trying to assist women landowners.

"Previously I know that my land is recorded in other names. The local land broker told me, I don't have land now. Even they evicted me from my land as I don't have a record. Now I know that anyone can file a case against error of land record to correct. I filed cases at district civil court with the assistance of FPAR project" - Calvera Begum, a woman of Kalikharber village.

I lived on the state land and that land acquired by the Thermal power plant, I didn't receive any compensation. Now I'm an orphan. I received training from FPAR and educating other women landowners for their correct documentation and movement creation - Rabana Begum woman in Rajnagar village.



In terms of land use, 54% of the women able to use the land for income generation (most of them are doing fish farming by herself or with support of male members), 6% of the women provided lease to others with a small amount of money on a yearly basis, 2% of the women forced to sell their land and water bodies, 20% of the women's land and water-bodies are acquired by government, 22% of the women's lands and water-bodies are captured by others due to disputes and conflicts. Some of the lands

are captured by the male members of the family, some are captured by neighbours in name of boundary conflicts.

Even though we found that women are not supported by the male members of the family in case of land disputes and conflicts. In order to get assistance in land disputes/conflicts, 35% of the women went to local elected bodies, 4% of the women went to influential leaders, only 2% of the women communicated with local land offices, 5% of the women communicated with police station, 10% of the women contacted with male family members and remain 43% of the women expressed fear to answer the question.



¹² Liquid Petroleum Gas

In details the research has feminist focus analysis of how women landowners are facing challenges to claim rights, how brokers are controlling the women's land transfer deeds, how land investors are involved in neighbour's conflict/disputes, how women leaders are supporting vulnerable landowners, how can women landowners are communicating with land offices, what are limitations with women landowners, etc.

A total of 29 Muslim women amongst 210 women received landownership documents, through assistance from sub-assistant land office, chairpersons, ward members. A total of 210 women respondents i.e. 11% of the women are aged 18-30 years, 25% of the women are within 30-40 yrs, 28% of the women are aged 40-50 years, 21% of the women are aged in 50-60 years and 15% of the women are above 60 years. A 60% of the women are non-literate, 60% of the women can write their name only, 20% of the women can read and write and 1% of women have formal education certificate. We found that 62% of the women have family and husband, 26% of the women are widows, 8% of the women are divorcees, 6% of the women are separated, 1% of the women single. It is notable that only Muslim women has inherited land ownership and other religion doesn't allow women formal land ownership.

As a result of the action research, the poor women have comparatively more information, mobility and communication with land office. They are getting more services to resolve the land conflicts/disputes. Weekly courtyard sessions provides information, facilitate questions-answer and build ideas for further action of how to claim their rights. In addition, visit and meeting with local elected bodies and land officials i.e. chairperson, ward members, sub-assistant land office, etc. made them confident to communicate with stakeholders. Training on leadership has given women leaders more information, knowhow, confident to deal with land stakeholders. They are also punctual and timely in meeting attendance regularly.

The participation of the middle and rich family's women was limited since they have less mobility. Women leaders communicated with them at household level and shared the land rights information. So that middle and rich women landowners can participate in the household level meetings.

In terms of religious diversity, Hindu women asked support to FRAR for their male member owned land and water bodies, as very few women have land ownership. Hindu women who are widows and separated are more vulnerable in the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as they don't have legal inherited land ownership. FRAR supported them in VAW particularly divorce and separation that is not directly linked with land ownership. The team assisted two Hindu women and three women under the action research project.

The impact of the land library mostly found within the Muslim women as they are entitled of ownership. Women who are directly engaged with father's day to day activities- comparatively more aware on lands transfer/public land acquisition. Muslim women are facing more tension and struggle in order to get the ownership as they have share in inheritance lands and water-bodies.

Inheritance law work under Bangladesh Muslim inheritance law which is gender discriminatory and currently challenged by the implementation and practices. FRAR's finding contribute to reduce gender discrimination in two ways. Firstly, the action research documented the challenges of current laws and practices at grass-roots level. Especially how women landowners are facing challenge to get fair proportion of inherited properties, how much more difficult to prove the land ownership for women, how much time/money/labour she has to provide for proving land ownership, etc. The research also give understanding and knowledge on how much bureaucratic the land administration process is, how the struggle of land administration is provoking the corruption etc.

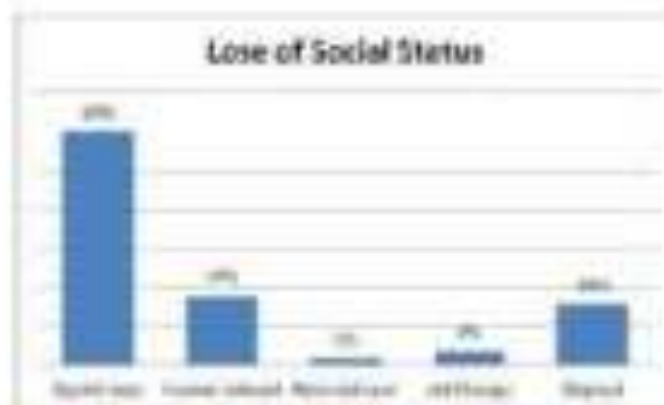
Secondly, the action research developed an awareness on women's land rights. Especially how women are vulnerable for land rights abuse. The increased awareness helped to develop the women leadership and organise women organisation at community level. The improved awareness created an improved demand for women's equal share in inheritance properties rights. As well as improved demand resulting in women's movement on the issue of land rights. This demand is not only equal share but also improved services from land administration. Though the demand is in small areas of Bangladesh but it can be replicated in other areas in the country where public and private land investment is going on.

Thus, the action research project contributed to long term advocacy in order to revise existing gender injustice and inequalities in relation to inherited property between women and men.

Landowners particularly men (in-law, brothers, other male successors) are selling lands to investors/buyers and also collecting compensation ignoring women successors. Women are in the dark about the family land transfer. While women come to know about the land transfer, she moving one land office to another office to collect her ownership documents. It is so late as well as surrounded with huge land disputes, conflicts and violence. Land brokers and investors creating a violent environment, where women cannot claim their land and property. If women stand alone and tried to get land rights, then she becomes victim of violence. Women who are claiming land (aged 38-48 yrs) are experienced of sexual harassment (mainly beat, physical violence, sexual comments/taunting/racist rumours, psychological pressure for forced marriage, stalking/following or staring/ogling) and intimidation at community. Widow, divorce, single mother, separated women are more vulnerable and living with the house of father, brothers and other relative's houses as modern sabb. Violence against women and girls is increasing day by day, about 75% are victims of violence while they asked for their ownership.

Within the situation, women themselves accepted violence as normal. Women beat by her family members for land disputes, inheritance land share. Women know the hidden cause of this torture. But male members are generally said that this abuse/ torture is happening due to bad attitude or inability of women in household tasks. Finally women are accepting the unfair deal of land and become displaced. If they report to police station, most of the cases are not filed. In some extend, police station transferred the report to local elected bodies for alternative dispute resolution. The local elected bodies normally neglected these report and worked in against of survivors. Because women don't have money and influence in the vote. In addition, brokers are providing VAW/G in order to expel women from land ownership. If local elected bodies work for dispute resolution, the way women are ill-treated, socially nasty rumours and psychological pressure, she wants to get rid of the situation without any result. The local people are blaming women for such situation and pressuring for signing on land transfer deed. Women cried and stopped to claim their rights. Then women are not free these abusive relationships due to lack of money, shelter, identity. Generally women only coping mechanism was to keep quiet and not argue.

Loss of Social Status



In terms of social status, 60% of the women believed that their social status and dignity has lost due to loss of lands and water-bodies, 18% of women thought that their income has reduced, 2% of the women are received loan due to loss of land, 4% of the women changed their jobs, and remained 16% of the women are skipped to answer the question.

Analysis of specific local and national laws, policies and programmes - Land acquisition for various development projects has become a critical issue in Bangladesh. Article-42 of our Constitution provides the fundamental right for right to Property. Article-42(1) provides some privileges but 42(2) impose some restrictions. Acquisition of private land by the government for the public purpose is the first condition for infrastructural development. The newly enactment Act, The Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Property Act, 2017, Section 2(1) defines the term as follows: "Acquisition means acquiring the ownership and possession of any immovable property for any requiring a person or organization in exchange for compensation or rehabilitation or both."

Once compensation has been paid there remains no right in any person to get back the land acquired. However, in practice the scenario is quite different as various irregularities are happening in the process. The land acquisition process don't have any kind of assessment of the condition of the women or the owner of the land whose land is acquired. On the other side if we look upon the process of Land Acquisition, the owner of the land doesn't get the proper compensation. And the huge bureaucratic

problems are also available here to prove the land ownership. Women are twice as vulnerable in this situation because of unequal share on inherited lands.

Decision and consent of landowners particularly women is important to design and develop the use of lands and water-bodies. In addition, water and soil of this area (near the bay of Bengal¹³) have been adversely affected by the huge saline intrusion, water logging, cyclone and storms resulting from climate crisis. Communities are using selected number of pond's water as drinking water (comparatively sweeter than the other sources of water). They believe this water is safe and hygienic, however it is unsafe. Women and girls are responsible for collecting water spending 3-4 hours a day. Males are migrated to cities for livelihoods and getting married again and again. As a result, a huge number of women became divorced and vulnerable with such situation on day by day.

The Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Property Act, 2017 operates the functions regarding land acquisition in Bangladesh. This Article finds that in most of the acquisition, the rights of the land owner are violated and neglected. Practice is far different and many important duties and responsibilities are not prescribed by this Act. There is no mechanism for prevention and response in case of violence against women resulting of land acquisition. Especially women are often affected of violence by her in-law, brothers, other successors and land brokers.

In that case, uniform Family Code¹⁴ could be one of the key tools to protect the women's land rights within land investment.

Women's initiatives - As a result of the action research, women landowners mobilised and organised via (6) women organisations. A total of 156 women landowners amongst 210 women are learned on ownership documentation. The women landowners are selected women leaders two (2) leaders from each of six (6) women organisations. A total of 12 women leaders are selected by women organisation of landowners and fisher-folks. Women leaders are selected and supported with coaching, training, mentoring and time to time communication.

Women leaders share these information on the land literacy in weekly courtyard sessions with women landowners. They are consulting with each of the land abuse case. Leaders communicating with Baridban Sangha and other stakeholders i.e. local elected bodies, land officials in order to assist vulnerable women. Leaders are mobilising women in order to make women feel safer and gaining more confidence in speaking out about their land rights. The meetings discuss on land literacy i.e. documentation, registration, succession, taxation etc.

Seven (7) landowners who don't have mutation of land record, have applied for mutation to Mungla land offices with assistance of Baridban Sangha. Previously they tried to apply but brokers asked a huge amount of money to them. IFAR facilitated women's visit to land offices. During the visit, women leaders and land officials were talking to each other and discussed about the process of land documentation. After the visit women became hopeful to apply to get mutation records.

"I know that mutation of land record is essential. In order to get the mutation, lots of documents, money and assistance of broker are required. So I was afraid to apply for mutation. I heard some women applied and running to offices and brokers. That made us more reluctant. Finally we applied really and received the mutation with the assistance of Baridban Sangha. This story make other women in our village hopeful to prepare ownership documents - Fusla Begum a women in Buridanga village"

¹³ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/13/world/asia/facing-rising-sea-bangladesh-confronts-the-consequences-of-climate-change.html?_r=1

¹⁴ Bangladesh Law Commission Report July 28, 2005 on a Reference by the Government towards the possibility of framing out of a uniform Family Code for all Communities of Bangladesh relating the Marriage, Divorce, Guardianship, Inheritance etc.

A total of 17 women are supported to get correct succession certificate from union parishad. Previously these women are suffering with wrong/fake certificate - which were collected by their other successors. With assistance of FPAR, women leaders initiated interaction with local elected bodies of union parishad. The women leaders and co-researchers suggested these women to apply further for undisputed succession certificate. Chairperson issued succession certificates to them.

Due to the fake and incorrect succession certificate, I was vulnerable to claim my inherited land. Now I received the undisputed succession certificate that help me to get proper portion of my inherited land - women who received succession certificate in Rajnagar and Bairdanga unions. Now a day brothers are denying sister's rights on the inherited lands. If father give (by legal registration) fair share to daughter and sister during his life - then brother cannot forfeit sister's share - Hena Begum, a woman in Kalikarber village.

Three (3) women landowners are filed charges at civil court for land record correction with assistance of FPAR. Prior to the FPAR, there was a misunderstanding that court will not file a charge against land record. The team checked with court and finally supported women to file charges to correct land records. These court cases are going on - women will get legal entitlement through the court decision. Badatan Sangha continue to support women to get undisputed land records.

I disagreed with the court judgment, I lost my possession on my land for land brokers. I again filed appeal to get my land back with the assistance of FPAR- Tulse, Woman in Rajnagar village in Rampal.

Women leaders developed 'Household visit' tool for assisting vulnerable women in relation to lands rights abuse. If women leaders came to know, any women require assistance in order to claim their lands and facing challenges in relation to land rights and VWI. The leaders and volunteers visited the household and understood what is the exact issue, what needed to do, where to go, how assistance will come, etc. Then they fix dates for engaging with local elected bodies, Badatan Sangha office and land office. This approach build the confidence of the individual women landowner. Vulnerable landowners know that women organization and their leader will come forward to support her. Similarly we consider the safety and confidentiality aspects of women landowners. If leaders think that visit will make women more vulnerable, then they drop the plan.

Helena (45yrs) has a 17 decimals of homestead land in Modara village under Mongla upazila. Amongst 17 decimals land, 07 decimal land with her private ownership and 10 decimals - with state land. She got the state land allocation from land administration 10 years before. Remain 07 decimals, she got from his father. Once a private company i.e. Orion Group start to acquire the land, she was being threatened by brokers to evict. The private company acquired 300 acres of lands adjacent to her homestead since 2013. Since then investor's brokers pressuring to handover land to company. Sometimes they are also offering various types in lieu of her land. Helena don't have any other land to live.

In course of time, brokers influenced the local police in order to evict her. Police came to her house, threaten her and instructed to leave the land within a short time. Even they create a rumor that Helena is bad woman - she is selling drug and doing sex work. Community people are discussing on the rumor. Helena did quarrel with brokers when they come to her house. Brokers make rumors that Helena is mental patient. Even brokers tried to evict her from land by damaging her home.

The FPAR supported to organise her documents and to submit to local union parishad and land office. FPAR's team, women leaders and volunteers visited her house, and also communicate with Chairperson and Murgla land office. As a result of these activities, brokers stopped to threat for evicting her.

"The land brokers know that Badabon Sangho is supporting me in terms of preparing my ownership documents. Brokers saying me that Badabon Sangho will leave after months then we will see who will help you" - Helena

FPAR research has build the capacity and confidence of the women leaders to take voice against violence. In the meantime, a girl (12 years) was raped and murdered in Baharbunia in Morroigory in Sagarhat. Young researcher and Badabon Sangho's Programme Officer visited the girl's house and talked with relatives. At this point, women leaders and local communities organised a rally on 22 June 2018. The protest rally with participation of local journalists, women activists and lawyers to demand the early arrest and punishment of perpetrators. Women leaders also submitted a memorandum on violence against women to Deputy Commissioner and Police Super, Sagarhat.

Successful/best practices of women initiatives that empowered women - During the data collection, co-researcher interviewed individual women landowners at day time. Generally male members are absent during the day time at household level. Women are free to talk and give proper time for interview.

It should mention one instance that happened during data collection in women interview. While co-researcher interviewing one woman landowner, a male member of family come forward and asked co-researcher about the purpose of the interview. He was suspected the FPAR team campaigning against the thermal power plant. He was annoyed and start to shout that co-researcher trying to mobilise people against government's development plan. In fact, this male is a land broker and he is keeping communication with political leaders. The co-researcher technically escape the situation explaining the research's purpose such as the women's response will give analysis on the women's alternative income generation and capacity development. However man were not satisfied with the explanation. He asked further asked questions regarding the executive board of the organisation. Co-researcher replied with the name of reputed board members. Then man were silent. The interviewing process was stopped for that day only. Again the team started interviewing with additional household level questions. For example, how many times you went to the clinic for health services, how much amount you spent for clothing and food for each month. Then, the research went well without any kind of challenge.

Are women's leadership and their role in the community socially accepted? - The patriarchy practice strong in community. Women's leadership roles are not accepted. At the local government institution, three women members are elected within 12 members (as per local government act) by the direct voter of voters. Government made it compulsory to bring women in leadership. The chairperson of the local government i.e. union parishad is mostly male. The male chairperson doesn't give scope of work to women members. Women members elected but they don't have roles and responsibilities. Due to lack of duties, women members are becoming disempowered. All of the development projects including infrastructure should have a 'Project Management Committee' where women members are included. However, it is hardly find that women members are in the decision making of the project management. Rather we found that women member's husband is playing a role in the committee.

The action research has considered existing practices and challenges for being a women leader. The research prioritises the roles of women's leadership. FPAR supported to form the women organisations where specific roles and responsibilities are given to the women leaders. Roles include: facilitate women's organisation meeting on a weekly basis, visit women's household, meeting with local elected bodies, meeting with land office, meeting with forest office and meeting themselves etc.

The FPAR team took the strategy to make functional women leadership - make them acceptable. The woman who received assistance from women leader, she is accepting and respecting women leaders. Women landowner asking leader to come with her to land/forest/local government office. As a result, the

local elected bodies giving importance to them at some degree. For instance, local elected bodies listen more to women landowner groups and giving them more space to put forward their concerns and issues. However, some elected women members are considering them as competitors. This is the normal scenario.

Ahna Begum, leader of our group helped me to go the Hurda land office. She influenced my husband that allow me to move outside of the house. I went to land office and understand that direct application process is the best to complete my land mutation- a woman living in Kalekher village, Rampal.

Lessons from failed practices that does not empower women -

Consultations with union Parishad at the beginning of the research were organised with purpose 'to know the views and understanding of Union Parishad regarding ongoing women's land rights abuse within the land investment'.

The consultations were organised with participation of local elected bodies, women leaders, researcher and co-researcher. It seems that local elected bodies were supportive regarding express their views and opinions. However, after the consultation, some elected body members asked questions to women leaders why they are with the such-kind of complicated issue. They remind them that land is a political issue. Some of the women leader's husbands also noticed to remind them in the same way.

Then the team changed the strategy of meetings and arranged several informal meetings with union parishad without participation of women leaders. Union parishad's chairperson understand the objective of the research and understood how women leaders can be supportive for community. The FFAR team arranged a meeting with all parties that was appreciated by the chairperson.

Do the initiatives bring about changes in the community? What is the impact? -

The impact of the action project is revealed in different levels. Firstly, the awareness of women is increased on land and water-bodies literacy. Women can describe the different types of land and water-bodies ownership documents. About 100+ of women landowners are able to recognize the land record documents (i.e. Cadastral Survey 1935, State Acquisition 1965 and Revisional Survey 1985 and onward), lands and water-bodies transfer deed, land mutation document, tax certificate, parcel map and succession certificate. Women landowners can recognize they own land parcel when they see the map. They can explain the roles of different government offices in relation to land and water-bodies administration and management.

One women Khadisa in Madara village said that 'Land is like a leg for women- we don't want to lose ownership'.

The team continue to transfer information on lands and water-bodies literacy for women's capacity development. The courtyard meetings will continue to disseminate public awareness on women's land and property rights.

Secondly the data collection of landowners using the Android mobile based application namely Geo-ODK (i.e. Survey 123 for ArcGIS). Basalam Sangho and Calarta Foundation team jointly deliver training sessions for volunteers. The training is not only on technical knowhow but also consult on ethics and confidentiality aspect of interviewing. Co-researchers and volunteers guided by Safeguard policy and child protection policy during the data collection.

Thirdly, women leaders assist women landowners to go to union parishad and land office in order to collect land record, mutation, land transfer deed documents. They also supported women to collect succession certificate from union parishad. One of the initiatives, chairperson has taken that all of the land parcel will be mapped and agreed with landowners and neighbors. This initiative is taken due to continuous public

awareness by action research. Recently local Member of Parliament informally asked people not to sell land to private investors, which is also a result of the continuous public awareness on land rights abuse.

Fourthly, the action research built the Badabon Sangho's organisational capacity through women's feedback in activity design, implementation and monitoring. Through the action research, Badabon Sangho improved feedback mechanism. Firstly, monthly courtyard meetings with primary beneficiary i.e. women. The key strategy of courtyard meeting is to bring out their feedback on activities. Secondly, the quarterly meetings of women leaders to get feedback on tools and methods. The women leaders listen to the members and share with Badabon Sangho's management in the quarterly meeting. Thirdly, team organise meeting with local elected bodies of union Parishad to get their views that is now built in the Badabon Sangho's core programme.

Fifthly the action research is initiated in a 'non-threatening environment' to encourage women to share their lands rights abuse experiences. The women leaders are getting time, space and environment for talking together. The leadership development clearly contributes to the movement building though it is a short period for organisation development. It was hardly found that women and men landowners are openly talking against land brokers and middle men before the action research.

Sixthly, women leaders are also becoming engaged with Badabon Sangho. They speak on organisational safeguard policy, anti-sexual harassment policy, child protection policy, etc. Women leaders are informed if any new team member/volunteer joined Badabon Sangho. They are also informed if Badabon Sangho plan to implement any event either internal or external.



CONCLUSIONS

The FPAR was started in July 2018 in five villages in Rampal and Merga Uparitas that are adjacent of public and private investment. The team collected data and found that only 30% of women are satisfied with the inherited land ownership in terms of share and location of lands, 56% of women are dissatisfied with the sown ground and 9% of women don't know about their satisfaction. The data analysis showed that 20% of women don't have any awareness on land documentation, 70% of women know what is document but they cannot understand what is written there, in detail they can recognise the transfer deed, record document but they don't know what is described there, most importantly they don't know the calculation of inherited property for son, daughter and other successors; they cannot understand what is C3 record document, what is SA record document and what is R3 record document, even if they don't know where the land on map, only 1% of women know about the map and remained 9% of women are stopped the question.

It showed that in order to get assistance in land disputes/conflicts, 15% of women went to local elected bodies, 4% of women went to influential leader, only 3% of women communicated with local land office, 3% of women communicated with police station, 10% of women contacted with male family members and remain 63% of women expressed that they didn't report and seek support to anybody (because they know that they will not get back the land due to complex system of land administration, powerful opponent and lack of money to recover the land)

Due to the FPAR, the situation has changed slowly i.e. 60% of women now understand the calculation of inherited property, they know the legal document and key features of deed, records and map. Most importantly they know where to go and what to do to claim the land rights. It is important to mention that 12% of the women are already started to claim their rights through collection of deeds, record documents, mutation, maps and filed court charge for record correction, 23% of the women are collected succession certificates from union parishad to claim their land rights. During the FPAR, 37% of the women received intensive support by the team in terms of information, legal advice, visits and communication aid to claim land rights. They are also received support i.e. advice, confidence, accompany during going to land office/union parishad from the women leaders and co-researchers.



The FFAR significantly achieved in relation to the impact on claiming women's land rights. More detail i.e. awareness, capacity development, interaction, collective action achieved milestones of the FFAR. Being a women's rights organisation, Bardabon Sangho will continue to mobilise, organise movement and advocacy on land rights. The needs are clearly come through the FFAR's finding in terms of future action, 88% of women believed that women should have land literacy, should have women organisation, have women leaders, should directly communicate with land officers, only 2% of women didn't reply.

The research is clearly linked with SDG indicator - 1.4 by 2030 'ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including microfinance'.

Advocacy and future Actions -

In the advocacy period, we would like to empower women landowners to claim land rights through organisation, movement and advocacy. Through advocacy, we will try to build up their networks amongst 11 women organisations and capacity to access to land administration. Our strategy is to involve more community volunteers, activists and like-minded CBOs at national level in advocacy period. They will lead activities in this period with facilitation support of Bardabon Sangho.

Based on the action research we identified few recommendations for advocacy:

- 1) any public and/or private investments shall engage and obtain continuous consent of women in the local community. fair compensation (i.e. consider the uncounted economic costs of women landowners, types of vulnerabilities, types of income options, types of land classification etc) shall be given to women landowners;
- 2) the decision of land acquisition should be informed the community with proper time period in order to prepare land documentation. Special land administration should be deployed prior to acquisition for participatory and women friendly landownership identification, recovery and compensation payment;
- 3) Bangladesh government shall approve the drafted uniform family code in 2006, in order to contest the pitting of the 'rights of equality' against the 'rights to religion'. This uniform family code will replace the individual religion based 'Family Code'. At present, marriage registration, rights to earned resources and inherited properties, guardianship and adoption are defined under separate family laws followed by separate religious communities. Muslim women are entitled to inheritance, though not equally as their male counterparts are, while Hindu women do not have any right to inheritance. The demand for a uniform family code not only challenged male privileges based on Shari'a law but also those based on religious laws of the minority communities.



ANNEXES

ANNEX I - RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION

The team consisted of young researcher, Mentor and two co-researchers who were directly involved in the FPAR. They were involved in such kind of work before involving in APWLD's action research. They learned how to know the different challenges of different types of women. They also learned how to prioritize specific problem of women amongst a huge number of problems. It led them to think and design specific activities for specific types of problem.

Finally they learned about tips and techniques regarding how to mobilise, organise and educate women landowners. It helps them to coach, mentor and coordinate with women leaders on a regular basis. Now they understood that women are victims of patriarchy society, all women are in the same condition.

FPAR is new to me. I, along with other girls went to technical training centre for admission in the technical training. I was involved in volunteering work during my student life. I used to work for the college club on a daily basis. I did a number of work for the benefit of women with my personal initiative prior to FPAR.

The FPAR opens my eyes and I can see the world with new thinking now. I believed in the principles of FPAR. I believed an open and non-threatening environment for each of the human beings including women. Prior to involve in the FPAR, I was limited within my personal believes. Before the research I haven't able to assist other women in community in collective way. I worked on my own without involving others. Now I'm empowering my believes in the works involving other in collective way.

- Naima, Young Researcher of FPAR

How this FPAR programme affected you personally and in your work -

The team learned what should work to find out the priority of problem/need/challenges/constraints of the women landowners. They know they cannot address all of the needs of women landowners in a one day at a time. Now they worked with women to facilitate them in discussion so that they can find out their problem/challenge in a priority basis. This also helped to transfer knowhow with the women leaders in the action research project.

FPAR project changed my thinking style - particularly the way I was taught before. The way of thinking is now changed. I understood that individual initiative for changing a problem is difficult. Rather first we need to work for awareness building on the challenges. Then mobilise and organise people to work together to find out solution of the challenges. The collaboration of people is much more strong and effective to come up with a solution. Now I believed in collective thinking, planning and working.

- Narun Nahar, Co-Researcher, FPAR

The lessons from a series of training we received from FPAR programme is new and innovative knowhow. In terms of personal level, now the team always trying to support vulnerable women considering their human rights. We never think this issue as charity, we think its their rights. In terms of family level, we are sensitive about the needs of girls and female members in the family discussions. We pointed out challenge and solution of women, when participate in decision making of family event.

At friendship level, we cascade our gained learning from FPAR with friends to make them more rationale in debate and discussion. We linked the discussion with the patriarchy's point of view. At social life, we consider neighbour's problem in light of women's rights which was not there before the FPAR project.

In addition, now I feel that I'm responsible and I have a duty to work for vulnerable women. I should work for them. I understood that only sensitive is not enough. I need to work for their betterment. I need to protest the unjust/violence against women and girls. Otherwise such kind of unjust will continue and that will affect me/sister/daughter.

- Gyetri Biswas, Co-Researcher of FPAR

Badebon Sanghi's values, knowledge, identity have been impacted by the FPAR training and action research. As a local, we the team found the needs and constraints of women landowners face to face. We found the suffering of the women landowners closely.

Our personal values regarding helping others really influenced to visit the field on a regular basis. We visited the women landowner's household and tried to understand their complex story of land rights abuse. Sometimes, we didn't understand the entire issue regarding land ownership documents, we came back to my office and consulted with team members who are good in lands legal issues. Again we went to the women and give her counseling. Thus our values, family and local presence helped in action research.

We faced challenges to be trusted by the women landowners. It took time to be trusted by them. Then women landowners took time to share their story of land rights abuse. Furthermore, we found that land brokers are describing the issue in a complex way. We thought that it is impossible to help the women. Finally we got support from other team members to understand the complex land ownership issue. We found that the women leaders collaboration and group is important and necessary for our impact of the FPAR.

Regarding APWLD FPAR programme – Concepts and Framework

We the team believe the FPAR principles are important. The change in the mindset of women leaders, matched with the structural change. The united voice of women landowners is created day by day by the research work. We transferred the goal of the research within the vision of women leaders, that is our success. The project explained the gender disparity between women and men, that is major change through the project. The research builds the capacity of women through awareness raising also important progress we made.

We always put the safety and confidentiality first during interviewing and data collection which is one of the key principles of FPAR. The project finally moving towards wider movement and national advocacy that is important result.

I'm from the village where the project is implementing. I always found myself as one of the community members. I always think about the women's need and tried to help them. All of the changes in my mind resulting from the action research project.

Nurun Nahar, Co-Researcher, FPAR

Women want to be independent in terms of income and decision. Women demand their rights and needs. Women don't want to continue within the violent society i.e. early marriage, land rights abuse, VAWG etc. Women want to be leader in their community. They got some leader who are listening to them. All of the initial changes, made me confident and more responsible for the community.

FWPR helped us to learn how to mobilise, organise and educate women on their rights. We the team believe to continue the work on women's land rights on long term basis.

ANNEX II – DATA COLLECTION

Note: There is no need to translate the data if they are in different languages. You only need to translate the parts you are including in your analysis. Some examples of possible data:

- List of interviews, FGDs, consultations with date and location
- Researcher's notes
- Transcript of interviews, FGDs etc.
- Survey questionnaire responses
- Pictures of social maps, power maps etc.
- Photos and videos



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