



Study on
**The Land Dispossession and
Alienation of Adibashis in the
Plain Districts of Bangladesh**

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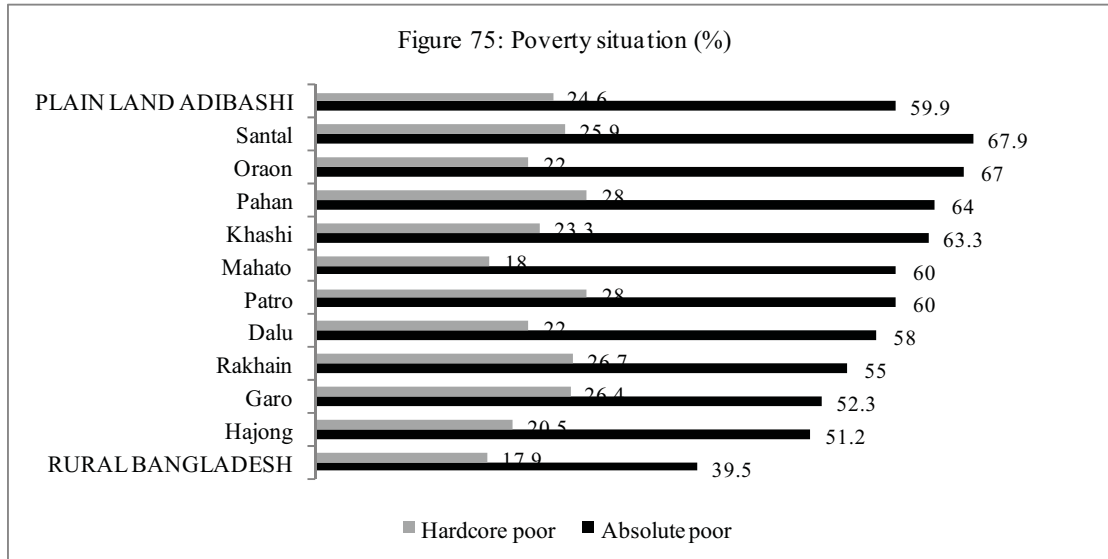
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Chapter 14

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT? WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**ECONOMIC SITUATION AND POVERTY**

Economic situation of the plainland adibashis in Bangladesh is significantly worse than that of the overall Bangladesh scenario. A 60 percent of the plainland adibashi people in Bangladesh are absolute poor, whereas 39.5 percent people in rural Bangladesh are absolute poor. Hardcore poverty is also more pronounced among the plainland adibashis than that among the rural Bangladeshis. A 24.6 percent of the plainland adibashis are hardcore poor which is 7 percentage-points higher than the hardcore poverty in rural Bangladesh. Poverty situation is worse among all the plainland adibashi groups in Bangladesh than the overall rural scenario shows. However, there are variations in prevalence of poverty in the adibashi groups. Poverty situation is much worse among the Oraon, Santal, Pahan and Khashi communities than among the other plainland adibashi communities of Bangladesh. Poverty situation is relatively less formidable among the Hajong, Garo and Rakhain communities.

Food poverty is highly pronounced among the adibashi people in Bangladesh. They basically consume rice as their staple food. In addition, they can afford only small amounts of vegetables and potatoes. They rarely consume fish or meat. Their intake of pulse is infrequent. These facts altogether hypothetically indicate a high probability of protein-energy malnutrition among the plainland adibashis in Bangladesh.



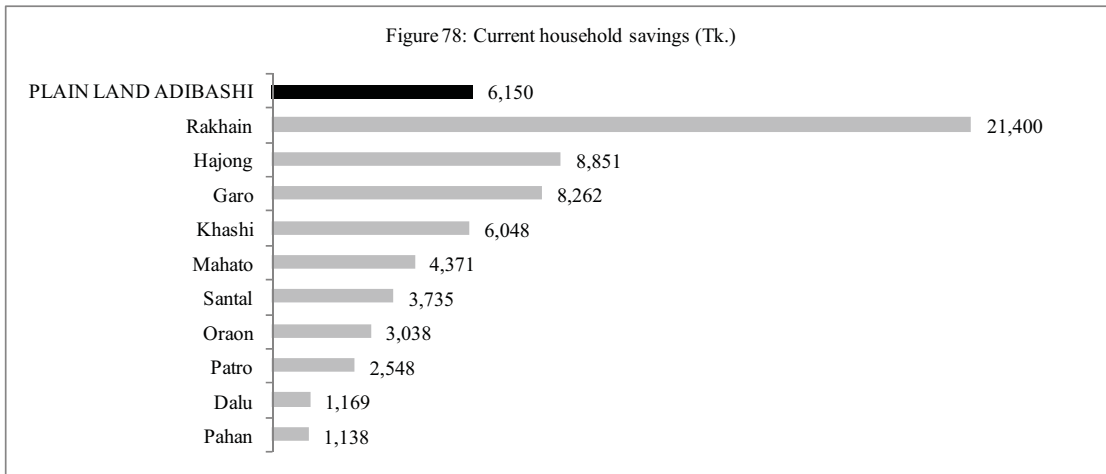
Annual average household income among the plainland adibashi communities varies significantly. A Pahan household's net annual income is Tk. 34,946, as against Tk. 65,967 in a Khashi household. In terms of household net income, the status is relatively better among the Khashi, Rakhain, Patro, and Garo communities. Compared to these four communities, the income situation is much worse among the Pahan, Hajong, Santal, Oraon and Mahato communities. On average, a plainland adibashi household of Bangladesh earns Tk. 49,748 a year

(that is, Tk. 4,146 in a month). It is to be noted that the Bangladeshi adibashi people earn Tk. 29.6 only per day on average.

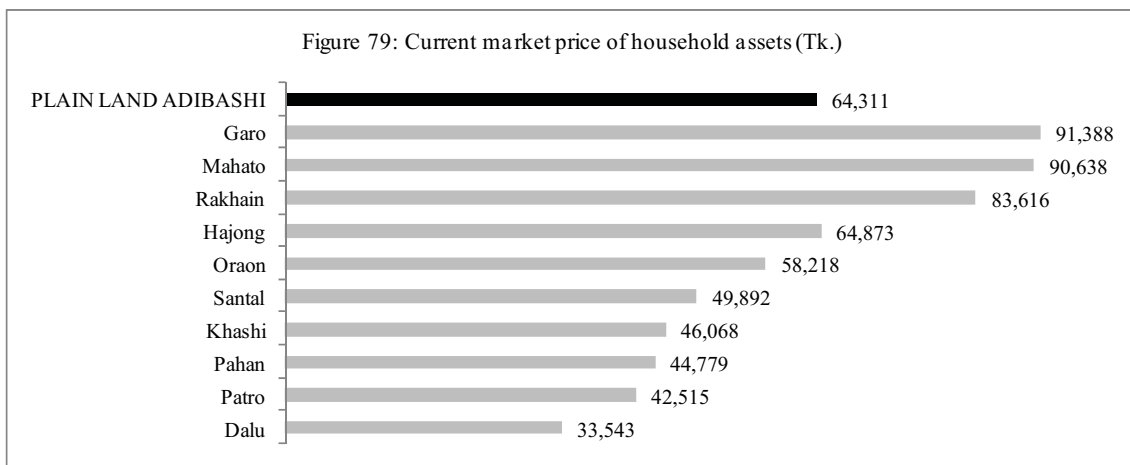
More than thirty percent of the plainland adibashi people have reported agriculture related activities (farming and farm labor) as their primary occupation. Around a half of the household income of the plainland adibashis come from agriculture related activities, followed by livestock. A negligible portion of the income comes from salaried jobs or business. Both male and female adibashi people work as daily wage labourers. Those who are engaged in wage labour are mostly discriminated against as compared to the Bangalees in the adibashis' localities. In addition, there is huge difference in the daily wage for male and female wage labor. While a male plainland adibashi earns on average Tk. 101 daily as wage labor, as female earns Tk. 75. There is large variation in daily wage in the different adibash groups. Khashi, Patro, Santal, and Rakhain community get relatively more daily wage than the other communities. Hajong, Garo, and Dalu community people receive much less wage compared to other plainland adibashi groups.



Generally, income is low among the plainland adibashi communities in Bangladesh. Thus, they cannot obviously make savings from their incomes. On average, the household savings among the plainland adibashis of Bangladesh is Tk. 6,150. However, there are large variations in household savings among the adibashi communities. Among the plainland adibashi communities, the Rakhains possess significantly larger amounts of household savings (Tk. 21,400/Rakhain household) than the other adibashi communities. Pahan and Dalu people have smallest amounts of household savings, i.e., Tk. 1,138 and Tk. 1,169 respectively. In most cases, the savings are kept in the form of cash. Besides, they also maintain their savings with NGOs and non-NGO samitis.



As the overall economic situation is poor among the plainland adibashi people, they possess small assets at their households. On average, the current market price of household assets of the plainland adibashis is Tk. 64,311. The Garo, Mahato and Rakhain communities possess relatively more household assets than the other plainland adibashi communities. The Dalu, Patro, Pahan and Khashi communities possess fewer household assets (in terms of current market price) than the other plainland adibashi communities do. It is to be noted that, in most cases, around a half of the amount of current market price of household assets comprises of the current market price of the homestead only. Thus, the ‘real’ possession of household assets is very small among the plainland adibashis in Bangladesh.

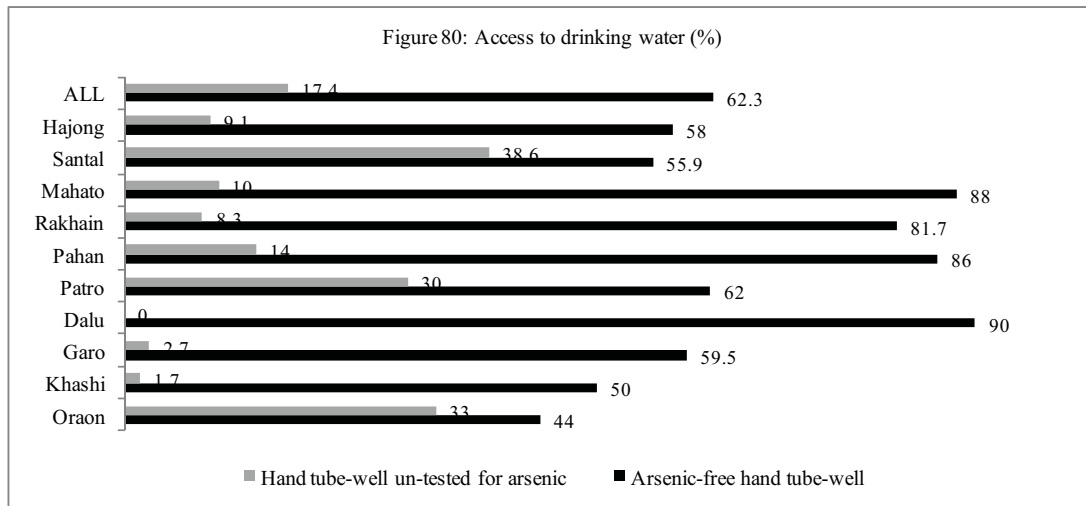


Ownership and status of housing is also an indicator of economic well-being. The majority of the adibashi households do possess homesteads to live in. However, the status of the homesteads, in most cases, is not satisfactory. In most of the cases, the homesteads are *kutchha*.

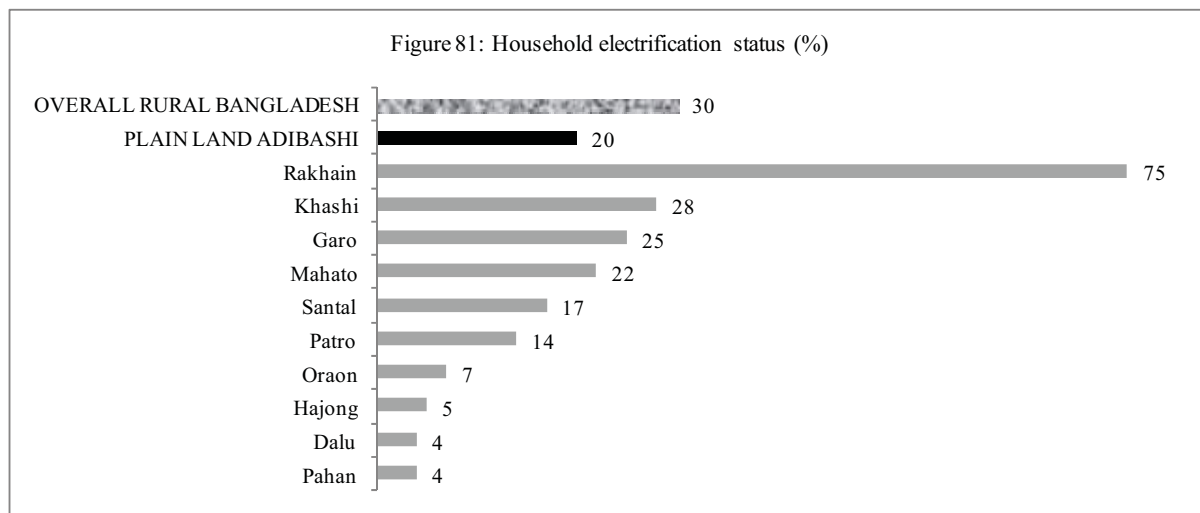
ACCESS SCENARIO

The major portion of plainland adibashi people in Bangladesh use hand tube-wells as the source of their drinking water. However, a large portion of them use hand tube-wells which are untested for contamination with arsenic. Use of arsenic-untested hand tube-wells is highly pronounced

among the Santal, Patro, and Oraon communities. Those households that use hand tube-wells for drinking water do not preserve adequate water to ensure supply of safe, clean drinking water. In most cases, this takes place due to poverty and lack of awareness. One point to note is that the use of un-boiled water irrespective of sources (river, canal, pond) is a rare phenomenon, except among the Hajong community (a 31% Hajong households use un-boiled water from canals/streams).



Electrification status among the adibashi households is bleak. Whereas in rural Bangladesh, 30 percent of the households are electrified- a 20 percent of the plainland adibashi peoples' households are electrified. Insignificant portion of Pahan, Dalu, Hajong, and Oraon households are electrified. Among the other communities the scenario is worse than the overall rural scenario of Bangladesh. However, a 75 percent of the Rakhain households are electrified.



Plainland adibashi people in Bangladesh generally do have access to information mainly through *adda*/community gatherings. A significant portion of the adibashi people have reported TVs as their source of information, followed by radio. Those who do not possess TVs and/or radios at

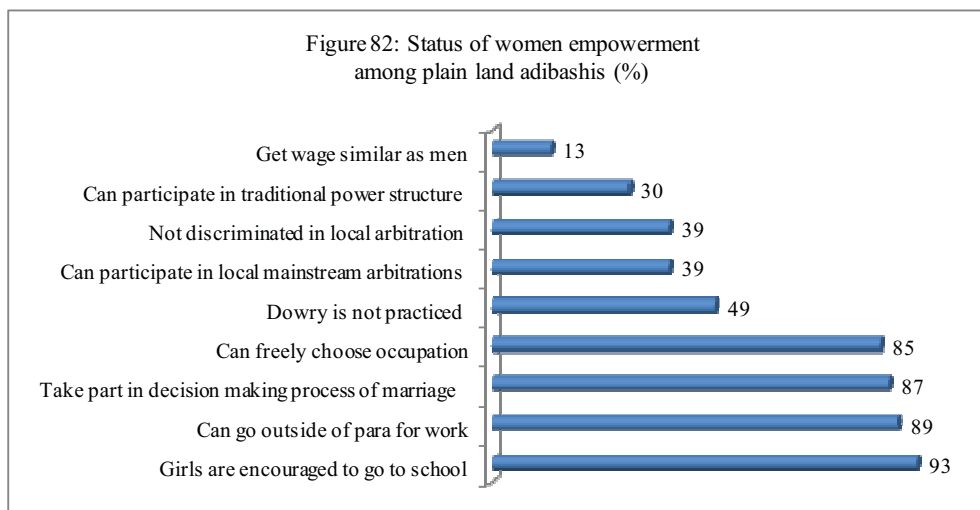
their residences go to neighbour's house or gather at market place where TVs and/or radios are found. Male adibashis are predominantly found at market places/tea-stalls at evening-watching TVs. Newspaper/magazines are reported rarely as source of information, probably a reflection of their relatively lower literacy. It should be noted that Bangla is reported as medium of instruction in respect of all four information sources (i.e., *adda*, radio, TV and newspapers/magazines).

The plainland adibashis of Bangladesh have reported their access to some types of service provider institutions (e.g., Union Parishads, NGOs, Local Adibashi Organizations etc.). But, in most cases, they have reported that they have to pay extra money to these institutions in order to expedite their receipt of services, often coupled with low-quality services and embedded discrimination against them.

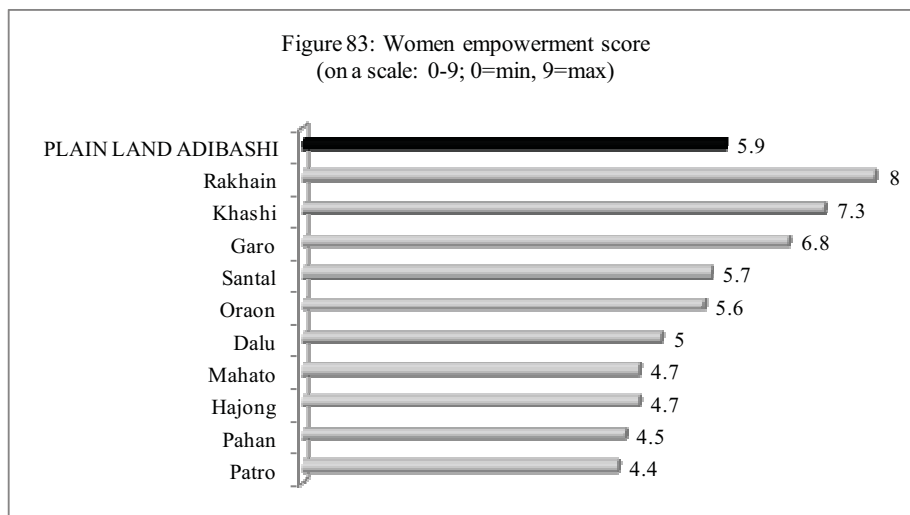
SITUATION OF WOMEN

Development, be it economic or socio-cultural, must recognize women as one of the crucial agents of development. But the overall status of women empowerment in Bangladesh is not at all satisfactory. This gloomy picture of women empowerment is also found among the adibashi women of Bangladesh. Adibashi women are deprived and discriminated in all the phases of life. Even in the matrilineal system of Garos and Khashis of Bangladesh, the women are deprived and discriminated only because of they are female.

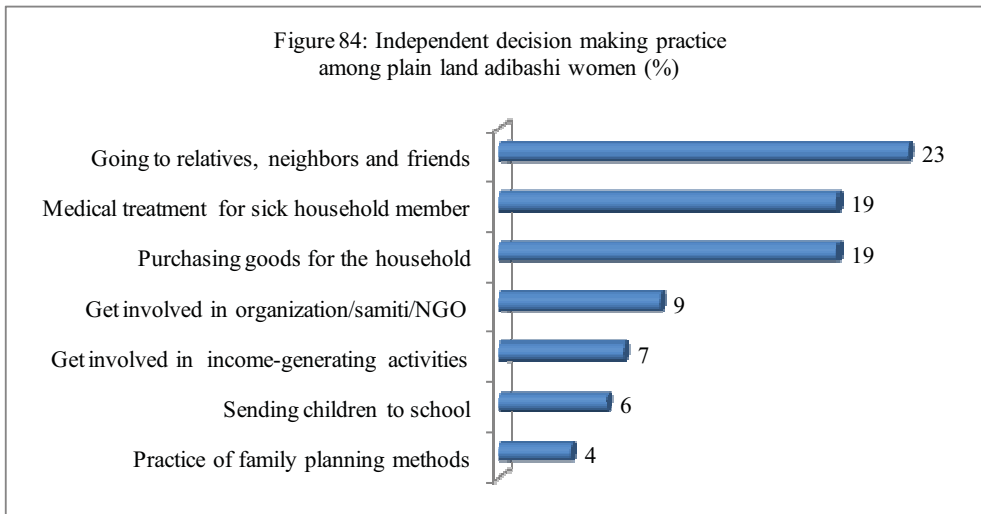
Almost in all the cases, plainland adibashi women get lower wages than males do. Only around a one-third of the plainland adibashi women of Bangladesh can participate in local mainstream arbitrations and in their traditional power structures. Two-thirds of them are discriminated in local arbitrations. Still in more than a half of the plainland adibashi households, dowry is practiced. However, it has been found that plainland adibashi women freely choose occupation and can go outside of para for work. It is also found that plainland women adibashi can take part in decision making process of marriage. One important point to note is that despite all odds, the adibashi girls are encouraged to go to schools.



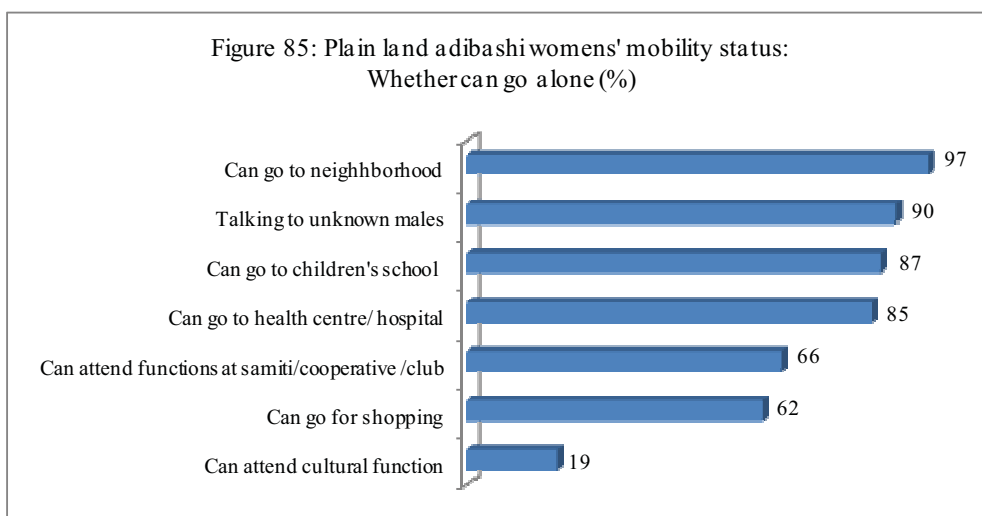
The overall trend of women empowerment among the plainland adibashi communities shows similarity to the average countrywide scenario. However, there are some variations regarding women empowerment in different plainland adibashi groups. Though around one-third of the plainland adibashi women can participate in local mainstream arbitrations, this practice is almost absent among the Dalu and Hajong community. Rakhain women have reported that they are less discriminated against in the local arbitrations as compared to the other plainland adibashi groups. The practice of dowry is relatively high among the Khashi, Garo, Patro and Rakhain communities than among other plainland adibashi groups. In this backdrop of differences, when women empowerment is scored in this accompanying research by different adibashi communities, then Patro, Pahan, Mahato and Hajong community scores less compared to other communities. The score on women empowerment is high among the Rakhain, Khashi and Garo communities.



Independent decision-making practice by women on various socio-economic issues is indeed a crucial part of women empowerment. It has been reported that, in most cases, plainland adibashi women can not take decision independently on various household issue; the decisions are dominated by the male household members. Plainland adibashi women are barred from taking independent decisions over their children's education. Almost no adibashi women can independently decide on adoption of any family planning methods. A negligible portion of plainland adibashi women can independently decide to get involved in any income-generating activity. Most of them cannot take independent decisions over getting involved in any organization/samiti with some exceptions. The trend is similar in various plainland adibashi communities in Bangladesh.



Participation of women in socio-economic and cultural activities requires frequent movements to different places which are considered as socio-economic and cultural hubs. In a country like Bangladesh where traditional social norms are highly pronounced, women’s mobility is a crucial empowerment indicator. It has been found that mobility status of plainland adibashi women appears to be moderately positive. Almost all plainland adibashi women can go un-attended to various places in their respective para. Majority of them can go to health centres independently. Majority plainland adibashi women can independently attend children’s school. However, it has been found that major portion of the plainland adibashi women independently can not attend cultural functions. This trend of mobility is more or less similar in the different plainland adibashi groups of Bangladesh. Despite of this similarity, there is some difference among the adibashi groups in Bangladesh. A significant portion of Rakhain, Patro and Khashi women have reported that they can attend cultural functions independently, which practice is found less frequently among other adibashi groups.



Various forms of violence like domestic violence, acid throwing, sexual harassment at workplaces, trafficking, child abuse, rape etc. are highly pronounced in Bangladesh. Similarly, violence against women is also highly pronounced among the plainland adibashi groups of Bangladesh at both family and society levels. In most of the adibashi households, women are frequently victims to verbal abuse. A majority of the adibashi women are manhandled. Dowry-related torture is also pronounced among the adibashi households. Violence at society level like sexual abuse, workplace harassment etc. has also been reported to be prevalent among the respondent plainland adibashi communities. The Rakhain women have reported lesser violence against themselves than by other adibashi groups.

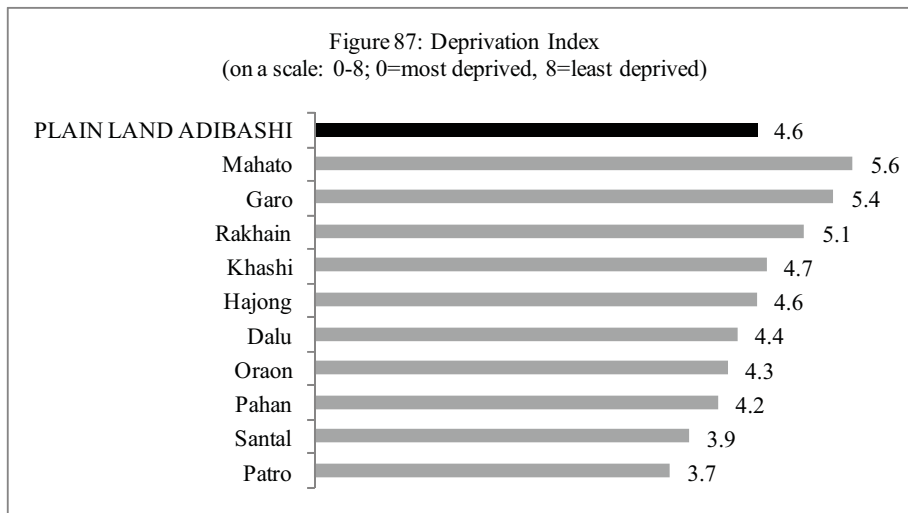
Issues	Adibashi groups										
	Oraon	Khashi	Garo	Dalu	Patro	Pahan	Rakhain	Mahato	Santal	Hajong	ALL
Violence at family level											
1. Verbal abuse	70.0	90.0	64.1	72.0	86.0	78.0	60.0	50.0	73.2	75.0	70.8
2. Manhandling	67.0	45.0	56.4	70.0	54.0	86.0	3.3	60.0	76.8	67.0	61.5
3. Abuse of girl child	19.0	11.7	19.5	14.0	6.0	24.0	1.7	28.0	29.1	28.4	20.6
4. Torture on issues of dowry	14.0	13.3	7.8	14.0	4.0	8.0		34.0	7.3	17.0	10.6
5. Compelling one to commit suicide	2.0	5.0	1.4	2.0		2.0		4.0	3.6		2.1
Violence at society											
1. Kidnapping	2.0	2.3	2.7	2.0		4.0	3.3	6.0	3.7		3.1
2. Rape	6.0	1.7	3.2	2.0	2.0	6.0		8.0	3.6		3.9
3. Sexual abuse	8.0	6.7	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.0		12.0	5.0		3.9
4. Workplace harassment	7.0	16.7	5.5	2.0	24.0	18.0		10.0	14.1	3.4	9.5
5. Acid throwing	2.0	3.3	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.0			0.9		1.4
6. Trafficking in women	3.0	3.3	1.8	2.0					1.4		1.4
7. Forced prostitution	2.0	3.3	1.4	2.0		2.0			0.9		1.2
8. Murder	2.0	3.3	1.4	2.0			1.7		3.6		1.8
N	100	60	220	50	50	50	60	50	220	88	948

WELL-BEING AND ILL-BEING

A Deprivation Index based on eight indicators¹ was constructed for its application on the plainland adibashi communities in Bangladesh. It has been found that the plainland adibashis of Bangladesh are deprived of many basic necessities for life. In a one-fourth of the plainland adibashi households in Bangladesh, all household members do not regularly drink arsenic-free water. In around one-third plainland adibashi households, all children are immunized. In two-fifths of the households, there are no hygienic latrines. In 44 percent adibashi households, all

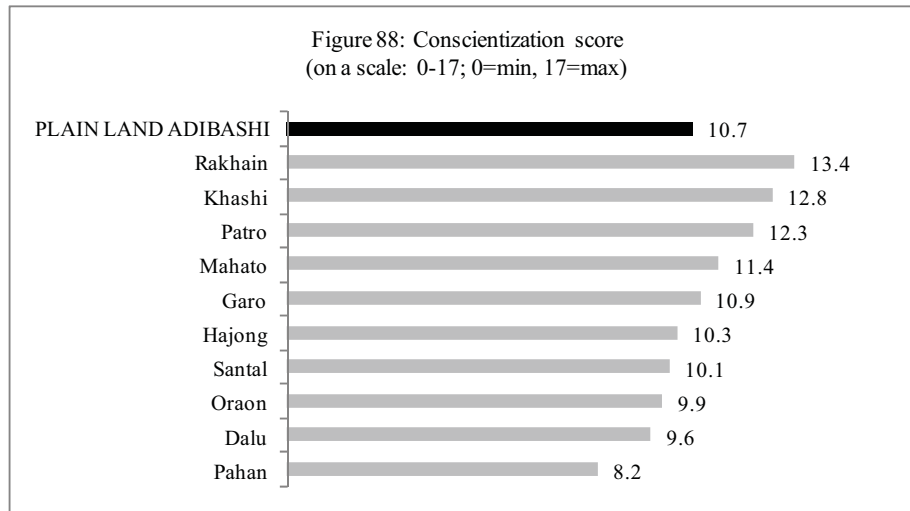
¹ Indicators of Deprivation Index includes five or more household members do not live in one room, all household members sleep on a cot/bed at night, presence of hygienic latrine in household, household's access to information (Radio/TV/Newspaper), all household members have three square meals all the year round, all the children of 6 years or above go to school, all the children have completed the doses of vaccination, and all the household members regularly drink arsenic-free water.

children (aged 6 years or more) do not go to school. Only a one-third of the adibashi households have access to information (Radio/TV/Newspaper). On a scale of 0-8 (where '0' indicates the most deprived and '8' indicates the least deprived), an average adibashi household scored only 4.6 (ranging between 3.7 and 5.6 in different adibashi communities). The Patro community scores only 3.7, which is the least among the plainland adibashi groups, followed by 'Santal' (3.9). The score on deprivation index is the highest among the Mahato community (5.6), followed by 'Garo' (5.4) and Rakhain' (5.1).



Development is a right- both constitutional and justiciable. It is about both knowledge about these human rights as well as about means and ways to apply these rights or realization of these rights by the poor and marginalized people for whom, under the class society, consistent denial of these rights is a rule. As individual consciousness on various rights issues is a necessity for development, some indicators² related to conscientization has been designed and surveyed among the adibashi people to assess their conscientization scenario. On a scale of 0-17 (where '0' is minimum and '17' is maximum), an average adibashi households scored only 10.7 (ranging between 8.2 and 13.4 in different adibashi communities). The Pahan community scored merely 8.2, which is the least conscientization score among the plainland adibashi groups, followed by Dalu community (9.6) and Oraon community (9.9). The conscientization score is highest among the Rakhain community (13.4), followed by the Khashi (12.8) and the Patro (12.3).

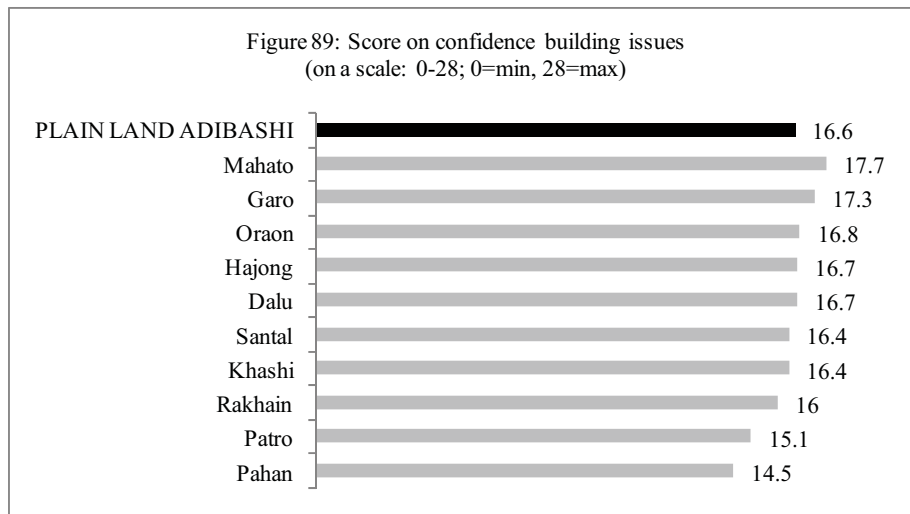
² Indicators of conscientization includes *right to get VGF Cards, right to get relief during disasters, right to get crop-seeds from the local agriculture office, State's responsibility to keep prices within purchasing power of the citizens, State's responsibility to ensure shelter to the citizens, right to study at school, State's responsibility to provide stipends to girl students, right to get health services from the local public hospital, right of mothers and children to get vaccination, right to vote without interruption, right to get allocation of khas land/water-bodies, State's responsibility to ensure adibashi quota for employment, State's responsibility to ensure adibashi quota for education, legal age at marriage for boys is 21 years, legal age at marriage for girls is 18 years, responsibility of law-enforcing agencies (Police, BDR Ansar-VDP etc), and right to get organized and form Clubs/NGOs etc. for ensuring security.*



It has been found that, among the adibashi groups, knowledge about the right to get VGF cards is high, while knowledge about right to get relief during disasters is significantly low. It has been found that the knowledge about legal age at marriage for boys is relatively low among the adibashi communities.

Confidence status among the adibashi people has been assessed using a number of indicators³. In this regard, the adibashi people's perception about confidence in the governmental services and perception about various freedom has been assessed. It has been found that the confidence level is somewhat moderate among the adibashi groups with some relatively bad perception about some services and rights. On a scale of 0-28 (where '0' indicates least confidence and '28' indicates highest level of confidence), on average adibashi households scored 16.6 (ranging between 14.5 and 16.6 in different adibashi groups). The Pahan scored 14.5, followed by Patro (15.1). The confidence score is highest among the Mahato community (17.7), followed by the Garó (17.7), Oraon (16.8) and the Hajong (16.7) communities.

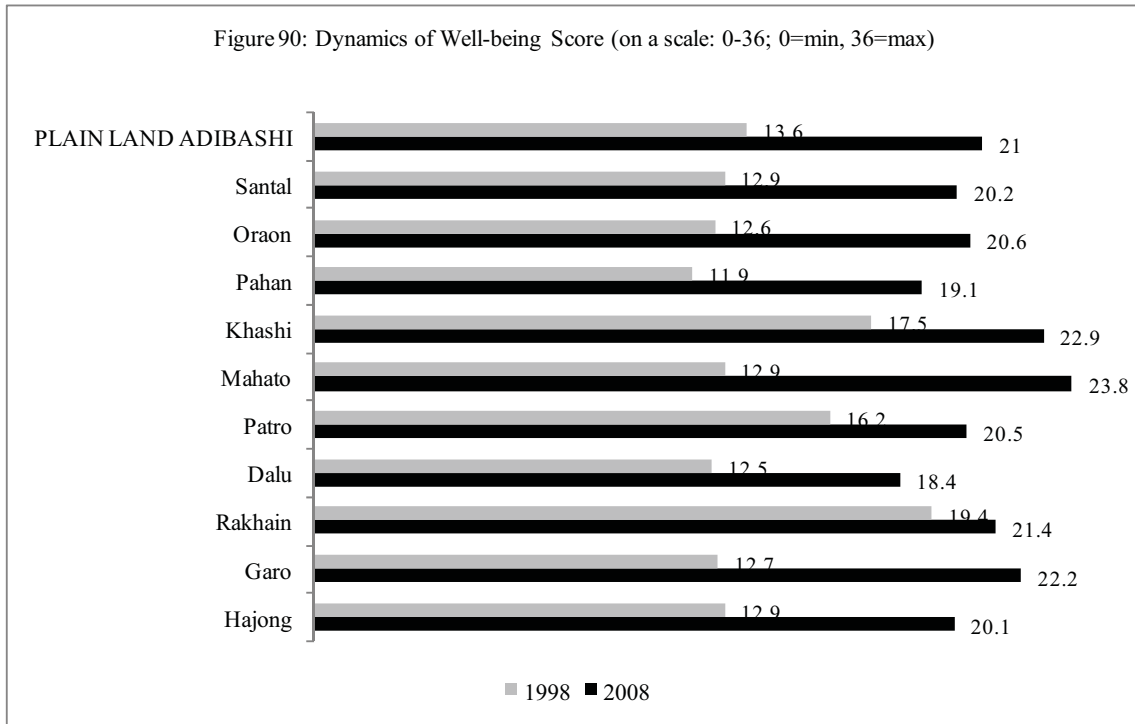
³ Indicators used for assessing confidence status includes *perception about proactive support from the local government (Union Parishad) at times of need, perception about security forces (police, BDR, Ansar, and VDP), perception about proactive support from the local traditional organizations (e.g., Mantree, Punji Prodhan etc), perception about enjoyment of cultural freedom, perception about enjoyment of religious freedom, and perception about the freedom to participate peacefully in various celebrations of own community and other.*



The level of confidence among the Garo, Hajong and Santal communities on the governmental services is relatively low. The Mahato people are discriminated against in many ways; besides, being a more indigenous community- they have considered it obvious that they will not get any recognition or can exercise only a few of the necessary rights-based services. The Oraon people feel that their basic rights are not at all recognized in the existing system. The confidence level of the Patro and Pahan community people over the existing social-structure is significantly low. Confidence of the Rakhain people over the existing power structure is low. Almost none among the adibashi communities have reported that everybody is equally well-treated by the governmental service-providing agencies.

Well-being status of the adibashi communities and the dynamics of their well-being has been assessed using various indicators⁴. Majority of the adibashi people have reported that their well-being status has improved during the last ten years (1998-2008). On a scale of 0-36 (where '0' indicates minimum level of well-being and '36' indicates maximum level of well-being), on average adibashi household currently scores 21, which was 13.6 in 1998. This trend is more or less similar in all the plainland adibashi communities. However, this perceived well-being status does not necessarily indicate overall mainstream development in the plainland adibashi communities, because it indicates only a normal process of change in the feelings of the adibashi people; in-fact, it merely reflects an indication of absolute development, rather than relative development or mainstream development process.

⁴ Indicators of well-being includes *well being regarding economic, social, shelter, health, education, household asset, clothing, food, and security.*



LAND DISPOSSESSION AND ALIENATION

Denial of the land rights of indigenous peoples of Bangladesh has a long historical background. The instances of land dispossession suffered by the indigenous peoples of the plainland are perhaps even more widespread than among the indigenous communities inhabiting the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. Numerous land laws were enacted over time keeping special provisions for the protection of “tribal” land. But the special provisions in these laws were never secured for the minorities including the indigenous peoples. In practice, land alienation goes on unabated.

How the Lands are Disposessed?

Major reasons, process and periods of land dispossession reported by the adibashi communities are as follows:

- ✓ Undue political influence and local class-based hegemonic culture in addition to simplicity and ignorance of the adibashi people in Bangladesh had been the major reasons for their land dispossession.
- ✓ The criminalized political-economy in this region is the key reason behind this inhuman act of forced land dispossession against humanity itself. In addition, historical class structure in this region played a major role in creating huge disparities among different classes of people.

- ✓ Grabbing land by influential Bangalee with political back up has been reported as major actor in grabbing land of the plainland adibashis of Bangladesh.
- ✓ Though the adibashis live in Bangladesh on specific areas for generations, many of them do not possess proper legal documents on their ownership of these lands- no government has properly acknowledged the traditional land rights system of the adibashi communities in Bangladesh.
- ✓ Due to this problem, the adibashis have always been facing serious problems in retaining possession of their lands.
- ✓ Majority of the adibashi people are still illiterate. Thus, they are often victims to frauds. In many instances, differences between the verbal agreements and the written ones about the sale-and-purchase of their lands occurred. Reportedly, some of the government officials in the Department of Land are accomplices in this kind of fraudulent documentations. Land grabbing through forged documents and Forgery during land survey or recording has been reported in many instances.
- ✓ There are *khas* lands in areas where the adibashi people live, but no *khas* land has been allotted to the adibashis who is landless or a marginal landowner- and the influential Bangalees have rather taken possession of such *khas* lands in most cases.
- ✓ Most cases of land dispossession among the plainland adibashi people took place in 1964/65 when a riot between Hindu and Muslims broke out. At that time, a number of adibashi people fled to India to save their lives. When they returned, many of them found that their lands were grabbed by local influential Bangalees. In addition, huge amounts of their lands were declared as 'enemy property'. Later, the 'enemy property' was renamed as 'vested property', but the process of their marginalization continued.
- ✓ Following independence of Bangladesh in the year 1971, the adibashis who had left for India for shelter and security returned, but many of them could not get back their lands. The Government declared their lands as enemy/vested property and men with power and muscle literally grabbed huge amounts of their lands. Even during the Liberation War in 1971, some local influential Bangalees grabbed lands of the adibashis.
- ✓ During the India-Pakistan war in the year 1965, land-grabbing against some adibashi communities increased.
- ✓ Governmental acquisition in the name of arrangements for a 'reserve forest' and an 'eco-park' government sponsored land dispossession has been taking places in places where the adibashi people reside with.

Land possession scenario among the **Dalu** people is bleak. A 60 percent of the Dalu households are *functionally landless*⁵. Land dispossession among the Dalu community has been a major issue for a long time. The poverty status of this adibashi community deteriorated over time basically for their land dispossession. Undue political influence and local class-based hegemonic culture in addition to simplicity and ignorance of the Dalu people had been the major reasons for their land dispossession. The land dispossession phenomenon among the Dalu community reached its peak in 1964/65 when riot between Hindu and Muslims broke out. At that time, a number of Dalus fled to India to save their lives. When they returned, many of them found that their lands were grabbed by local influential Bangalees. In addition, huge amounts of their lands were declared as ‘enemy property’. Later, the ‘enemy property’ was renamed as ‘vested property’, but the process of their marginalization continued. Currently, the major reasons for land dispossession among the Dalu households are *grabbing by local influential persons from other communities* and *grabbing through forged documentation*. For the parents of the first generation Dalus *grabbing by local influential persons from other community* and *grabbing through forged documentation* were the major reasons for land dispossession. For the generation of the grandparents of the current generation, the major reasons for land dispossession were: *governmental acquisition* and *forgery during land record*. After independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Dalus who had left for India for shelter and security returned, but many of them could not get back their lands. The Government declared their lands as enemy/vested property, and men with power and muscle literally grabbed huge amounts of their lands. Even during the Liberation War in 1971, some local influential Bangalees grabbed lands of the Dalus. They are often victims to frauds. Reportedly, some of the government officials in the Department of Land are accomplices in this kind of fraudulent documentations. There are some *khas* lands in areas where the Dalus live, but no *khas* land has ever been allotted to any Dalu who is landless or a marginal landowner. Though the Dalus live in Bangladesh on specific areas for generations, many of them do not possess proper legal documents on their ownership of these lands- no government has properly acknowledged the traditional land rights system of the adibashi communities in Bangladesh.

A **Garo** household, on average, possesses 153 decimals of land. Two-thirds of the Garo households are *functionally landless*. Forced eviction of the Garo community from their lands is not at all a new phenomenon, which has been rather continuing historically. The criminalized political-economy in this region is the key reason behind this inhuman act against humanity itself. In addition, historical class structure in this region played a major role in creating huge disparities among different classes of people. The process of land dispossession and alienation of the Garo community varies from place to place. In the Madhupur upazila in Tangail district the Garos have been exploited historically. In 1962, the forest was declared as a National Park without any consultation with the local Garo. The incidence of dispossession of land increased during 1960s in Garo community. Following the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country, the rate of incidence of land dispossession increased more than in the previous decade. It is to be noted that three-fourths of the total dispossession has occurred after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The Garos thus became alienated from their own land. In 1977-78, a bombing range for the Bangladesh Air Force was formed which acquired around 1,000 acres of land, evicting 29 Garo households from a village called Rajbari without having paid any type of

⁵ If a household's owned land is less than 50 decimals (excluding the land for the homestead), then the household is considered as functionally landless.

compensation. In 1984, the Government of Bangladesh classified major areas of the Madhupur forest and stopped taking tax from the adibashis by way of a Gazette Notification. When this issue was raised in the Court, the Land Settlement Office refused to legally recognize the occupancy documents regarding their lands in possession of the Garos. Most regrettably, the land on which the Garos were living for generations were outright declared as *khas* lands. In the name of social forestry, the Government, supported by the Asian Development Bank, has been acquiring lands of the Garos, and affecting the total eco-system. In addition to this, trees are being felled everyday with the unholy support of the Forest Department and the law-enforcing agencies- which is destroying the traditional nature-based livelihood of the Garos. There is a governmental plan for construction of a wall beside the 3,000-acre area earmarked for social forestry which is planned to be a continuous process. According to the local Garos in this region, the proposed “eco-park” concept is nothing but a blueprint to grab lands from the Garos and further marginalizing them. In 1986, rubber plantation was initiated on a total area of 700 acres without consultation with the local Garo community. There is also another project plan for establishment of an 8,000-acre rubber plantation at Pirgachha in the local Garo neighbourhood. This land-grabbing phenomenon against the Garo community increased during the *Tebhaga Movement* in the 1950s. Later in the Pakistan period, the lands of the Garos were acquired by tainting them as communists. During the India-Pakistan war in the year 1965, land-grabbing against the Garo community regained pace. During the Independence War in 1971, the local influential Bangalees grabbed significant areas of Garos’ lands. The household heads of the Garo community has reported the following as the major causes of dispossession of their lands: *Governmental acquisition, Grabbing by local influential from other community, Grabbing through forged documents, Grabbing by settlers, and Grabbing by influential people of own community*. Garos are often victims to frauds. Some of the officials in the Government’s Land Offices are also accomplices in such frauds. In many instances, the Garos take high-interest loans from the *mahajans*. Failure to repay such loans has often given rise to usurpation of the borrower Garos’ lands by the lender *mahajans*. Among the Garo community, a group of deceivers exists as reported by themselves. These deceivers, in collaboration with some of the Bangalees, are playing an active role in the evil process of land-dispossession of the Garos.

The mean amount of land possessed by the **Hajong** households is only 66 decimals where 65 percent of the households are *functionally landless*. The phenomenon of forced dispossession and alienation of the Hajong community from their land, on which they had been living since long, has become a protracted truth. The extent of land dispossession has been severe throughout the British, Pakistani and Bangladesh periods. They have been repeatedly displaced from their homes and from their agricultural lands. The deep-rooted land-related problems among the Hajong people have a number of dimensions. The criminalization of political economy in this region along with religious riots and class conflicts has contributed significantly to the rise of this inhuman problem. Negative political influence has been considered as the major reason for land dispossession of the Hajong people. During all the past governments, the adibashis have always been exploited. This land-grabbing in the guise of politics started at around 1946 and has continued till date. During the riot between the Hindus and the Muslims, a huge amount of lands of the Hajongs was declared ‘enemy property’, and the Hajongs thereby became landless and marginalized. Later, the ‘enemy property’ was renamed as ‘vested property’, but the marginalization process continued. This phenomenon started in 1965 immediately from the stage of the then Indo-Pak War. A number of Hajongs contributed their lands for the *Tebhaga*

Movement or the Communist Movement between 1946 and 1952. During this period, lands of the adibashis related to the movements were confiscated by the Government and also the influential criminalized quarters by way of filing forged legal suits. During 1962-65, the lands on which the Hajongs had been living on for generations together were declared 'forestland'. This not only threatened the livelihoods of the Hajongs, but also challenged their very existence. Hajongs, who went to India to seek shelter and security during the Liberation War in 1971, did not get back their homesteads and lands on their return from India. The Government declared their land as 'enemy property', and people having strong access to power and ability to use physical intimidation literally grabbed huge amounts of land of the Hajongs. According to the Hindu law, if one has no children, then the nephew will inherit his or her land property- but lack of practice or application of this law among the Hajongs has played a significant role in distraction of land ownerships from the legal heirs to others, resulting to dispossession of lands of a number of such legal heirs in this community. Reportedly, the '*Kaderia Bahini*', a military outfit and a part of the liberation fighters' army during the year 1971, also filed false court cases in 1975 against the Hajongs' ownership of their lands and forcibly dispossessed them from their lands. In several instances, the Hajongs are forced to take high-interest loans from the *mahajans*. In such a process, when a marginalized *Hajong* fails to repay the loans as per his contract with the *mahajan*, the land of the borrower is occupied by the lender *mahajan*. This phenomenon reportedly started in around 1920, reached its peak during Pakistan regime, and still continues today. They are often victims to frauds. The government officials are reportedly linked with this kind of frauds in many instances. This phenomenon peaked during the Pakistani regime and continued till the year 1980. The Hajongs believe that there is also group of fraudulent people among themselves who, under the influence of and in connivance with the Bangalees, are dispossessing them. Most of such cases of land dispossession of the Hajongs were politically influenced with the back-up of the Government. The local elite and the officials in the country's administrative structure thus acted against the interests of this adibashi community. The household survey reflects that most of the cases of land dispossession among the Hajong households have taken place after the independence of Bangladesh. In almost all cases, the victims of land dispossession in the Hajong community have reported that their lands were grabbed by local influential persons of other communities- mostly Bangalees.

The mean amount of land possessed by an average **Khashi** household is 219 decimals- but if the amount of homestead land is deducted from it, then a 12 percent of Khashi households becomes *functionally landless*. This seemingly larger land possession among the Khashi households is simply because of hilly geographical nature of area where Khashis live- where usage value of land is much lower than that in the plain-land areas of Bangladesh. Land dispossession among the Khashi community has continued throughout history- both in the Pakistan period, and now in the Bangladesh period since independence. The Bangalees, by taking advantage of the fear-factor among the adibashis who are a minority, forcibly grabbed their lands. Lands were sold at very low prices by these adibashis- which was a kind of distress sale. By taking advantage of illiteracy and simplicity of the Khashi community in liaison with local land officials- the Bangalees grabbed lands of adibashis through fraud. *Khas* lands have not been distributed properly among them. It should be noted that it has been almost impossible for anyone in this locality to get possession of *khas* lands without any monetary and political influence. Almost all land dispossessions in the Khashi community has occurred after the independence of Bangladesh. In the 1970s the incidence of land dispossession increased alarmingly. The major ways through

which the lands of the Khashis have been dispossessed are as follows: *Land grabbing by local influential Bangalees, Grabbing through forgery during land record, Grabbing through forged documents, Lack of proper land-right documents, and Possession of lands by Bangalees through frauds by taking advantage of simplicity and illiteracy of the Khashi people.*

A **Mahato** household, on average, possesses 130 decimals of land. A quarter of the Mahato households are *functionally landless*. The land possession by Mahato people seems relatively high, but conflict around it and lack of proper ownership on the lands have played negative role maximizing the benefits from it. Landlessness-mediated poverty of the Mahato households is the key reason for their manifold deprivations. Land dispossession among the Mahato community has continued throughout history- both during the Pakistan period and the Bangladesh period. Major ways through which the lands of Mahato have been dispossessed are: *Land-grabbing by local influential Bangalees, Lack of proper land-right documents, Grabbing through forged documents, Possession of lands through frauds by the Bangalees, taking advantage of simplicity of the Mahato people, and Forgery during land record.* The Bangalees, by taking advantage of fear-factors among the adibashis as they are a minority, forcibly grabbed land of the adibashis. Lands were sold at a very low price by the adibashis - which is one kind of distress-sale. By taking advantage of illiteracy of the Mahato community in liaison with the local land officials- the Bangalees, through fraud, grabbed lands of adibashis. *Khas* lands are not distributed properly among the Mahatos. Land dispossession in the Mahato community has been taking into place since long ago. This had been increasing from the 1960s- and in between 1971 and 1980, a 28 percent of all dispossessions took place. In 1981-1990, the rate of dispossession decreased then increased again. Between 1991 and 2000, almost one-third of all dispossessions occurred.

On average, an **Oraon** household possesses 85 decimals of land. But more than half of the households are functionally *landless*. There are instances of land-dispossession among the Oraon community in Bangladesh. In many cases, they consider this process as an 'inevitable fate'. Currently, as majority of Oraon households are landless, the present status of land-dispossession among them is relatively less frequent- because they have almost no more land to lose. In the Pakistan period, and more specifically in 1965, there was a threat-and-rumor that the Hindus will not be allowed to stay in the then Pakistan. As a result, many of the Oraons in their fears left their homesteads. In addition, the Bangalees, by taking advantage of this fear-factor forcibly grabbed lands of these adibashis. In that period, lands were being sold at very low prices by the adibashis- which was a kind of distress sale. This is one of the major reasons for which the marginalization process of the Oraon community got aggravated. It has been a common phenomenon that the Bangalees, through fraud, grab lands of the Oraons by taking advantage of their simplicity and illiteracy in liaison with the local land officials. Though the marginalized sections of the community, by law of the land, possess the right to get entitled to *khas* lands, the richer class actually gets the possession, as the Oraons cannot influence the process of entitlement through bribes and political pressure in which they (the Oraons) are deficient. Even those Oraons, who have been living on particular plots of land for generations together without proper legal documents, do not currently get any support of the local government or the land officials to get entitled to their otherwise legally owned lands. Major portion of the land-dispossessions have occurred after the independence of Bangladesh, though the process started in the 1940s. This process of dispossession reached its peak during the period between 1971 and 1980 when one-third of all the dispossessions occurred. This evil process still continues. The major causes for land dispossession were reported as below: *Grabbing by local influential*

Bangalees, Grabbing through forged documents, and Government acquisition. Other reasons, as reported, are: *Khas lands are grabbed by powerful local people, Lack of proper land-right documents, and Taking possession of lands through frauds by taking the advantage of simplicity of the Oraon people.*

Land possession status of the **Patro** community is extremely deplorable and distressful. On average, a Patro household possesses 34 decimals of land. Almost all Patro households are indeed *functionally landless*. There are manifold land-related problems among the Patros. Land dispossession and alienation has become a bare truth and an almost inevitable reality for the Patros. Land dispossession among the Patro community has continued throughout history- during the British regime, Pakistan period, and the Bangladesh period alike. The degree of land dispossession and alienation of the Patros increased in 1947, 1964-1965, and after 1971. After abolition of the Zamindari System in 1951, the lands of the Patros were handed over to their religious leaders- *Purohit*, as *debottor* properties in the name of God. The lands were being used like the *khas* lands by the Patros; but they had no legal land-rights documents. The Bangalees, by taking advantage of a fear-factor among the adibashis as they were a minority, forcibly grabbed lands of these adibashis. Consequently, a major portion of the Patro households became landless. Lands were also sold at very low prices by Patros- which was a kind of distress sale. The Patros thus became alienated from their own lands. During 1964-65, when a riot broke out between the Hindus and Muslims, a large amount of lands of the Patros was grabbed by the Bangalee Muslims. Around 1947, land dispossession among the Patro community was also visible, which peaked in 1971. Even during the liberation war in 1971, the local influential Bangalees grabbed lands of Patros. After the independence of Bangladesh, land dispossession through fraud and forgery increased manifold. In the late 1970s, this kind of land dispossession through land grabbing and forced sales at very low prices got amplified. No *khas* lands have been distributed among the landless Patro community people. Forgery during the land records has been reported by a major portion of households in Patro community as the reason behind land dispossession. In most cases, this evil process was backed up by the local influential persons (mostly with political background) in the alliance with the Government's land officials. Many of the Patros living on specific plots of land for generations together do not possess proper land-right documents. Due to this problem, the Patros have been facing many serious problems finally causing their land-dispossession. They are often victims to frauds. Even some Bangalees also use the intricacies in meanings or interpretations of many words in Bangla language as the ploys for land-grabbing. As for instance, in Bangla 'half' (*adh*), and eight (*aat*), sound similar having different meanings- such Bangla words are sometimes used by the Bangalees to cheat the Patros while the latter sell lands to them (the Bangalees). The government officials are also allegedly involved in assisting such fraudulent activities. Most of the land-dispossessions in the Patro community took place after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. This got momentum during the period between 1971 and 1980. The pace of land dispossession in the Patro community slowed down after this period, but still continues. Besides, though incidence of cases of land-grabbing prior to the independence of Bangladesh (in 1971) was at a relatively less frequent level, there are instances of some large amounts of land being grabbed during those days. In fact, this evil process in the pre-1971 had been a mere sequel to the incidences left especially during the years 1941-1950. The major ways through which the lands of the Patros have been dispossessed are reported as follows: *Forgery during land record, Land grabbing by local influential Bangalees, Grabbing through forged documentations, and Land grabbing by settlers.* It is to be noted that the Patros

have reported 'grabbing by influential people of own community' as the reason in 10 percent cases of total land-grabbing

The mean amount of land possessed by a **Pahan** household is meager- on average, they possess only 20 decimals of land. Besides, most of the households are *functionally landless*. Land-related problems are deep-rooted in the Pahan community of Bangladesh. The major problems related to land among the Pahans are reportedly: land-grabbing, taking possession of lands through forgery, and not getting possession of *khas* land by those who are entitled to them. Land grabbing by the influential local Bangalees is a typical phenomenon among the Pahans. They often fall victims to frauds and forgery. The Bangalees, by taking advantage of fear-factors among the Pahans as a minority, are forcibly grabbing their lands. Lands of the Pahans are forced sold to the Bangalees at very low prices- which is nothing but distress sale. Even those Pahans who do not agree to sell lands are threatened and forced to sell their lands. In many instances, the *Pahans* take high-interest loans from local *mahajans*. When a poor Pahan borrower fails to repay the loan as per the contract, the land of the borrower is taken by the *mahajan*. There are instances when Bangalees offer alcohol-based drinks to the Pahan landowner and by making use of the Pahan's dizziness, take thumb impression of the Pahan landowner to take possession of the land. Later, the victim comes to learn everything of the reality, but can do nothing as they are poor, and thus voiceless. During 1946-1952, lands of Pahans had been taken over by the Government. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Government declared their lands as 'enemy property' and men with power and muscle literally grabbed huge amounts of land of the Pahan community. Even during the liberation war in 1971, local influential Bangalees grabbed lands of the Pahans. After the independence of Bangladesh, the lands of the Pahans were grabbed by Bangalees through forgery at the time of land survey. No *khas* lands have been distributed among them. The dispossession of land in the Pahan community has been a continuous process for last hundred years. The rate of dispossession had been relatively low before the 1930s. Thereafter, it started increasing after 1960s. It reached its highest level in the 1970s. After the independence of Bangladesh till 1990, the land dispossession rate among this community was high. Then it slowed down a bit during the period between 1991 and 2000. Major reasons reported as causes of dispossession of land in the Pahan community are as follows: *Grabbing by settlers, Grabbing by local influential from other community, namely- Bangalees, and Forgery during land record*. Other reasons reported as causes of dispossession are: *Governmental acquisition and Grabbing through forged documents*.

The mean amount of land possessed by a **Rakhain** household is 167 decimals. However, in reality two-thirds of the Rakhain households are *functionally landless*. The Rakhain adibashi community is historically facing the deep-rooted problem of land dispossession and alienation. Their ancestors had vast areas of land- but as they were fewer in number, they were deprived in every aspect of life. The Rakhains are becoming marginalized everyday through land-dispossession. They pass their routine life in agony and in fear from land-dispossession. In the recent days, it seems that the extent of land dispossession has declined, and increased in a few scattered cases. This is due to the bare truth that by now, most of the lands of the major portion of Rakhain households has become dispossessed; and they currently have almost no land to further lose. According to the Rakhains, land-related difficulties are their major current problems. Their livelihood and existence are being threatened by dispossession of land. The lands of the Rakhain community are being grabbed by the powerful people, basically Bangalees,

for decades together. When these Rakhains' ancestors arrived at the location where they stay at present hundreds of years ago, they basically found just vast tracts of forestland. In the forests, they built their houses and started farming. Though they basically were the owners of the lands, they did not have any type of legal documents in most of the cases. In addition, even those among them who had some kind of documents, could not preserve them properly due to ignorance and for natural calamities. The local Bangalees had been grabbing their lands historically simply because they are few in number. In addition, the Government did not put in any significant efforts to secure the land rights of the Rakhain community. In many instances, it has been observed that a number of houses have been erected overnight on the land of a Rakhain household. In most cases, the Rakhain household could do nothing against the powerful land grabber. Most of the incidents of land-grabbing is assisted by the Government's land officials and law-enforcing agencies. The land-dispossession phenomenon among the Rakhain community started at a large scale in the year 1965. Unfortunately, no government has yet taken any materialistic initiatives to eliminate or mitigate the problem. Taking possession of land through preparation and use of fake ownership documents is also a common phenomenon. By taking bribes from the land-grabbers, the Government's administrative personnel and even the courts of law act in favor of the grabbers. The simplicity of the Rakhain people has also been exploited. No *khas* lands have been distributed among the landless Rakhain people, and the Government's land officials have rather distributed these among the influential Bangalees by taking bribes from them in exchange. The land dispossession phenomenon among the Rakhain community started at a large scale in 1960s, which has increased and continued so far after the independence of Bangladesh. In the period between 1991 and 2000, this process of land dispossession reached its peak. The major reasons reported in the survey as causes of dispossession of land in Rakhain community are as follows: *Grabbing by local influential from other community, namely- Bangalees* and *Grabbing through forged documents*. Other reasons reported in the survey as causes of dispossession were *Governmental acquisition* and *Forgery during land record*.

On average, a **Santal** household possesses 63 decimals of land. But, three-fourths of the Santal households are *functionally landless*. There are a number of land-related problems among the Santals. The Santals, over time, have lost their lands. The major reason for the marginalization and pauperization of the Santals is their land dispossession. Undue political influence and local class-based hegemonic culture, in addition to the simplicity and ignorance of the Santal people have been considered as the reasons for land dispossession of the Santals. Though the Santals have been living in Bangladesh on specific areas and lands for a long time, many of them do not possess proper land-right documents. No government has properly acknowledged the traditional land right system of the adibashi communities in Bangladesh. Due to this problem, the Santals have always been facing serious problems in continuing possession of their lands. The land dispossession phenomenon among the Santal community started basically in the year of 1947. Next, a number of Santals had to go to India to save their lives during the period of increasing tension ensuing from riots between the Hindus and Muslims (1962-65) in this region. When some of them eventually returned home, many of them found that their lands were grabbed by the local influential Bangalees. After independence of Bangladesh in 1971, those Santals who went to India for shelter and security returned home. Then many of them could not get back their lands. Even during the Liberation War in 1971, the local influential Bangalees grabbed lands of the Santals. At that time, the occurrences of land dispossession among the Santals reached its

peak. Majority of the Santals are illiterate. Thus, they are often victims to frauds. The government officials are reportedly often instrumental in the rise of this kind of frauds. No *khas* land has been distributed among the landless Santals. Land dispossession had been increasing from the 1950s; and around 23 percent of all dispossessions took place in between 1961 and 1970. In the 1970s, 23 percent of all dispossessions took place. After the 1980s, this rate of land dispossession decreased. However, dispossession of land has been continuing till day. The major ways through which the lands of the Santals have been dispossessed are as follows: *Land grabbing by local influential Bangalees, Land grabbing through forged documents, and Forgery during land survey or recording.*

How Much Land is Dispossessed?

Extent of land dispossession among the adibashi communities has been revealed in this study through survey. As land is not a typical household asset, the household dispossession of land has been found out for last three generations including the current generation of adibashi households. This has been done in such a way as land is special type of property which is used for generations and the loss and cost of the dispossession continues through generations. The amount of dispossessed land by type in adibashi households has been revealed. The current market price of the dispossessed land has also been found out. Using the survey data an extrapolation of total dispossessed land in an adibashi community and current market price of that dispossessed land has been ascertained.

In this process for collection of data, all-out efforts were made in order to elicit information from the past as much as possible by tracking down history based on the memories of the household heads. Certain very old household heads obviously had difficulties in responding. With regard to the amounts of lands being described, they sometimes took help of qualitative expressions, especially when recalling the amounts of lands from the past became extremely difficult.

Our estimate shows that a 202,164 acres of land has been dispossessed among the surveyed ten plain land adibashi groups of Bangladesh. The current market price of total dispossessed land would be Tk 62.7 billion (US\$ 0.9 billion). This amount is around 2 percent of the GDP of Bangladesh⁶. It is to be noted that the monetary value of the sufferings due to dispossession and alienation (including economic loss, feeling of insecurity etc.) have not been considered which would might increase the loss from land dispossession many a time.

Table 28: The physical amount of dispossessed land and their money value by adibashi groups

Adibashi group	Amount of land dispossession		
	Physical amount (decimal)	Money value (at current market price)	
		Tk	US\$ (1\$= Tk 70)
Dalu	18,800	55,742,000	796,314
Garo	1,364,000	3,838,296,000	54,832,800
Hajong	273,000	832,650,000	11,895,000
Khashi	140,000	446,600,000	6,380,000
Mahato	204,000	890,868,000	12,726,686
Oraon	3,045,000	9,040,605,000	129,151,500
Patro	217,100	894,234,900	12,774,784
Pahan	1,942,500	8,030,295,000	114,718,500
Rakhain	1,372,000	3,457,440,000	49,392,000
Santal	11,640,000	35,199,360,000	502,848,000
Total	20,216,400	62,686,090,900	895,515,584

⁶ The GDP of Bangladesh at constant price for 2007-08 (provisional) is Tk 3,217.555 billion (US\$ 45.96 billion)

How They Tried to Regain Their Lost Land?

Almost all the plainland adibashis whose lands are lost attempted to recover their dispossessed land. They went for land litigations and went to the local elite for support in this direction. In addition, adibashis went for *shalish*/arbitration as an attempt to recover the dispossessed lands. In the process of regaining of the lost land they required money for *litigation costs* and *related conveyance*. Some of them did not attempt to recover their lost lands because of *lack of security of life* and *lack of money for litigation*. Despite their efforts to recover the dispossessed lands, almost no piece of land could be recovered.

The adibasi households who lost their lands, in many cases, could not even think of going to file court cases due to financial insolvency, lack of security, and lack of knowledge. Most of those who went to the court did not get any justice. The local government, MPs, DCs and the Land Offices did not play any active role in solving their land-related problems.

The adibashis need to pay bribe at every step in the struggle to regain their lost lands. Even after paying bribes, they do not get the services as they are a voiceless and powerless portion of the population.

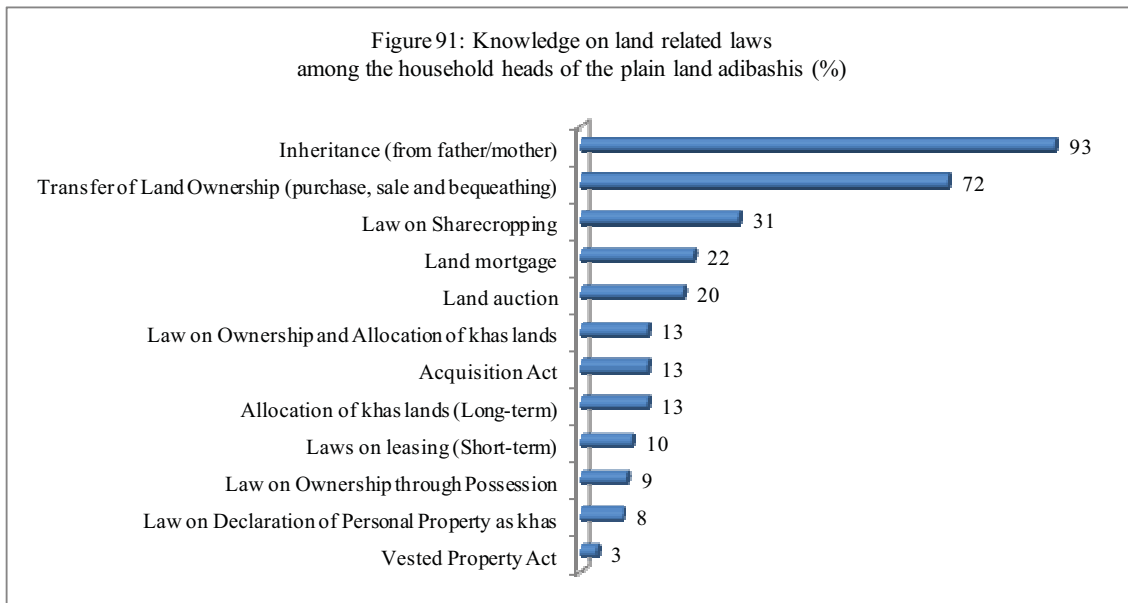
Some NGOs are working on this issue within a limited scale. A very limited portion of the adibashis is getting some benefits from these initiatives, but the Government's support is the precondition to maximize these benefits- which is always absent.

Knowledge on Land Related Laws

In spite of large-scale phenomenon of land dispossession and alienation even among the victims of the plain land adibashi Dalu communities in Bangladesh, knowledge level on various land-related laws is still very low.

A major portion of the adibashi household heads are aware only about the *law of inheritance* and *law on transfer of land ownership*- which are very basic knowledge. A smaller portion of them have limited knowledge about laws on mortgaging, law on sharecropping, and law on land auction.

But their knowledge level is very poor about other relevant laws such as land laws on: *declaration of personal property as khas*, *acquisition act*, *ownership and allocation of khas land*, *Vested Property Act*, *ownership through possession*, *allocation of khas land*, and *leasing*.



Suggestions from the Adibashis

In this accompanying research, suggestions made by adibashi communities were sought to solve the deep-rooted land related problems. The suggestions which came from various groups of plain land adibashis in Bangladesh are as follows:

DALU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An active Adibashi Land Commission and its regional wing is a necessity. Laws about the adivashis should be addressed by the Commission. Thana-based and village-based adibashi committees should have a proper liaison with the Commission. ✓ Adibashi people should be trained on land-related issues. ✓ At the local level, Action Committees should be formed, in order to overcome the land-related problems with proper liaison with the AC (Assistant Commissioner) Land. ✓ Special courts should be established, which will need relatively lesser time and lesser cost to pursue the land-related cases.
GARO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A Garo who has been living on a plot of land for generations should be provided with legal land-right documents. ✓ An Adibashi Land Commission should be formed for it to work actively on the issue. ✓ A Special Court may be established, where it will require shorter time and lower cost to fight for the land-related cases. ✓ Shelters should be provided to the Garos whose lands got dispossessed. ✓ Financial support for litigation should be provided to those Garo people who are financially insolvent.

HAJONG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Hajongs who are living on particular plots of land for generations together even without proper documents should be provided with legal land-rights through a properly designed mechanism. ✓ An active Adibashi Land Commission and its regional wing is a necessity. In this commission, laws related to adibashis should be enacted. Thana-based and village-based adibashi committees should have proper liaison with the Commission. ✓ A Special Court should be established in a way that it needs relatively less time and less cost to deal with the adibashis' land-related cases. ✓ Adibashis should be imparted training on the required land-related issues. ✓ At the local level, Action Committees having proper liaison with the AC Land (Assistant Commissioner Land) should be formed to overcome the local land-related problems.
KHASHI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An active Adibashi Land Commission is a necessity. Thana-based Adibashi Committees should have proper liaison with the Commission ✓ Adibashi community people should be imparted training on land-related issues ✓ At the local level, an Action Committee can be formed to overcome the land-related problems ✓ A Special Court should be established, which may need a shorter timeframe and lower cost to pursue the land-related cases ✓ At the national level, advocacy and lobbying are required to build a consensus to resolve the land-related issues.
MAHATO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An active Adibashi Land Commission should be enacted for plainland adibashis ✓ Financial support for litigation should be provided to those Mahato people who are financially insolvent ✓ Adibashi community people should be trained on land-related issues.
ORAON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An active Adibashi Land Commission should be enacted for plainland adibashis ✓ Those who have been living on a particular plot of land for generations together should be provided with legal land-right documents ✓ Financial support for litigation should be provided to those Oraons who are financially insolvent ✓ Adibashi people should be provided with necessary training on land-related issues.
PATRO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Patro people who are living on particular plots of land for generations together should be provided with legal land-right documents. ✓ An Adibashi Land Commission should be formed for it work actively on the issue. ✓ If the grabbed lands cannot be regained for practical reasons (e.g., an infrastructure is to built on a land-plot) the current market price of land should be paid to the victim or ancestors of the victim- with governmental support. ✓ A Special Court should be established, where it will need less time and less cost to fight for the land-related cases. ✓ NGOs should work on this issue; but a proper coordination between the Government and the NGOs should be established over this issue.
PAHAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adibashi community people should receive training on land-related issues. ✓ Financial support for litigation should be provided to the Pahans who are not financially sound. ✓ A Special Court should be established, which may need a shorter timeframe and lower cost to fight for the land-related cases in favour of the Pahans.
RAKAHIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The 1997 Act needs to be activated. ✓ An Adibashi Land Commission should be enacted. ✓ In many instances, the verdict related to land litigation has gone in favour of adibashi victim, but the victim's family could not regain the land from the powerful land grabbers. The Government should solve this problem immediately. ✓ The Rakhain people who are living on a particular plot of land for generations together should be provided with legal land right documents.

SANTAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An Adibashi Land Commission should be enacted. ✓ The Santals who are living on particular plots of land for a long time together should be provided with legal land-right documents. ✓ Financial support for litigation should be provided to those Santals who are financially insolvent. ✓ A Special Court should be established, which may need a shorter timeframe and lower costs to fight for pursuing the land-related court cases. ✓ Adibashi community people should be imparted training on land-related issues. ✓ At the national level, advocacy and lobbying are required to build a consensus to resolve the land-related problems.

Historically, the land right of the adibashi peoples of Bangladesh has been denied. No government has properly acknowledged the land right of the adibashis in this country. All the plain-land adibashi communities- such as the Dalu, Garo, Hajong, Khashi, Mahato, Oraon, Patro, Pahan, Rakhain and Santal- have been severely affected by land dispossession. In addition to the undue political influence and local class-based hegemonic culture, government-connived initiatives have also been considered as major reasons for land dispossession of the plain-land adibashis. Laws apparently in order to stop such processes of land dispossession of the indigenous communities has also been enacted- but in practice, land dispossession goes on unabated. Various issues related to such traumatic incidents in the past- such as the Partition of India in 1947, the Indo-Pak War in 1965, the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 etc.- have supported and encouraged the land-grabbers to surreptitiously grab the lands of the plain-land adibashis in Bangladesh. The respondent plain-land adibashis have reported the following as the major reasons for land dispossession: *grabbing by local influential persons from other community mostly Banglaee, grabbing through forged documents, governmental acquisition, forgery during land record, lack of proper land documents, and land grabbing by settler Bangalees*. The plain-land adibashi people have suggested various ways and means to mitigate their land dispossession and alienation. A consideration of viability and the hierarchy of prioritization suggests that the following steps should be taken by the concerned agencies in order to solve the issue of alienation and dispossession of land among the plain-land adibashis in Bangladesh:

1. Establishing a pro-active Adibashi Land Reform Commission.
2. Ensuring the adibashi people's representation and active participation in the proposed Adibashi Land Reform Commission.
3. Assigning of adequate emphasis on the land and life of adibashi people by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Land.
4. Adequate advocacy efforts by the Government and the civil society toward improving the plain-land adibashi peoples' life and livelihood.