

RURAL LAND MARKET IN BANGLADESH

**An Exploratory Study with the
Poor and Marginalized People**

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মানুষের জন্য
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Amid a plethora of studies on rural economy in Bangladesh, pragmatic research on rural land market, in its broad and unified spectrum, is rare. In this context, an attempt is made in this book to critically examine various dimensions of rural land market including

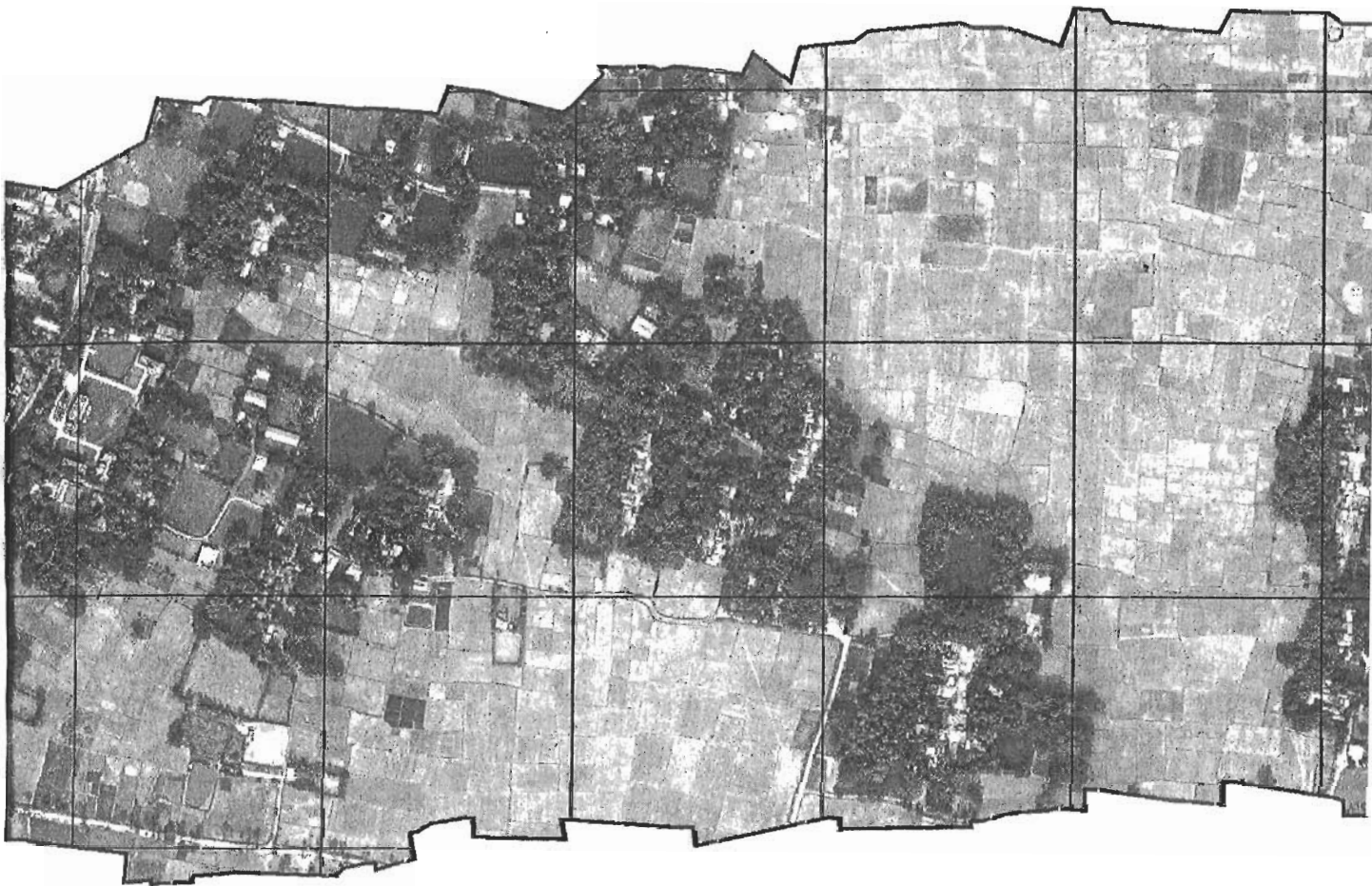
how dominant players function in the market, play their role of motivations, market access, and access barriers. The underlying household level analysis emphasizes the poor and marginalized people. Market inter-linkages as well as the non-competitive and non-inclusive nature of land market are reviewed afresh.

The substantive analysis presented, is likely to shape many of the pertinent issues centered on the rural land market. It provides a careful and detailed analysis of causes and consequences of imperfections prevailing in both land sales and rental market in rural Bangladesh.

This study is a meaningful departure from traditional views on land market and a journey to a new destination implying that a sound land market is indeed central to human life and livelihood in rural Bangladesh.

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PREFACE

The relationship between people and land is deep and profound in Bangladesh society, but many millions of poor, especially landless families are deprived of this relationship. Nothing perhaps is closer and more fundamental to the requirements of human survival than land. Fundamentally land provides food and shelter and by utilising land people can meet other basic needs like health, education and clothing.

Statistics show that at present 22 per cent rural agri-dependent families are landless, meaning having no land at all and more than 40 per cent are landless as per government definition, meaning having 50 decimals or less. In terms of absolute number of persons, the landless people have increased 3 times after independence. One of the main reasons for landlessness is that day by day the agricultural land is going into the hands of the elites, in other words, neo-feudalists, who are not farmers and do not live in the villages but keep huge amount of land under their control sitting in the big cities. Therefore, a large number of the landless people are forced to migrate to the big cities for alternative employment. In rural economic structure only 17 per cent rich families possess more than 67 per cent of agriculture land.

The government has so far taken a number of reform measures to curb the growing trend of landlessness, but no improvement has been found as yet. Much has been talked about land reform but nothing concrete so far been achieved. One of the most important but sensitive areas of land reform remains the acquisition and distribution of public land to the landless poor, but due to mismanagement and mal-governance nothing much is happening.

In Bangladesh, NGO and civil society movement for claiming rights of people is getting momentum. Among the leading national NGOs, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is critically engaged in claiming rights of the poor and marginalised people in different arenas of rights violation in partnership with local and national NGOs. MJF provides intellectual, financial and technical guidance to its partners for implementing rights-based projects. MJF is also involved in some major policy advocacy and law reforms at the national level. A number of MJF partner NGOs are also working for the landless people by addressing the issue of land rights through people's movement.

MJF is also jointly implementing Sustainable Access to Land Equality (SALE) with Uttaran and CARE Bangladesh to promote digitalisation of land records and survey in Bangladesh in collaboration with the Ministry of Land. SALE receives financial support from European Union (EU). The project has been designed to address “Access to Land” issue in a sustainable manner by introducing digitalised land survey and records – a contribution towards Government’s vision of achieving “Digital Bangladesh”.

It is expected that the digitalised survey and record process will reduce difficulties in accessing to land and property rights, especially by the poor and marginalised. In addition, the process facilitation approach in land governance system will identify landless people and establish equitable distribution of public land among them.

As part of the SALE project a study was commissioned by MJF in 2015 to explore the nature of rural land market system and dynamics in Bangladesh and its relationship to poor and marginalised landholders. It was also expected that the study would look at the policy gaps in the land market dynamics and provide recommendations to the government. The study was conducted by HDRC (Human Development Research Centre) under the leadership of Prof. Dr Abul Barkat.

This publication titled “Rural Land Market in Bangladesh an Exploratory Study with the Poor and Marginalized People ” is an output of the study findings and recommendations. Jointly carried out by MJF and HDRC, this publication bears the characteristics of a study done first of its kind in Bangladesh. Notably, land market is different from other conventional markets and its malfunctioning makes poor people more poor. In this publication the reflection of this reality has been portrayed and some possible solutions furnished, so that poor and marginalised people get their due property rights.

I hope the publication will be of worth-using to the government and to those who are working for ensuring the rights of the poor and marginalised in the field of equitable distribution of land property rights.

Shaheen Anam

Executive Director

Manusher Jonno Foundation

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ABBREVIATIONS

AACP	Annual Agricultural Credit Program
ABL	Agrani Bank Limited
ABT	Ansarullah Bangla Team
AC	Assistance Commissioner
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
BB	The Bangladesh Bank
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BKB	Bangladesh Krishi Bank
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CoA	Commercialization of Agriculture
CS	Case Studies (also, Cadastral Survey: land record)
DAP	Detailed Area Plan
DCI	Data Collection Instrument
DCI	Direct Calorie Intake (Method of poverty measure)
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EPA	Enemy Property Act
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GD	General Diary
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GR	Green Revolution
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HH	Household
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HL	Hosmer-Lemeshow
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
HUJI-B	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh
HYV	High Yielding Variety
IIS	International Institution for Strategic Studies
IT	Information Technology
JASAD	Jatiyo Somajtantrik Dal
JBL	Janata Bank Limited
JMB	Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh

KII	Key Informant Interview
LDT	Land Development Tax
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoL	Ministry of Land
MSS	Master of Social Science
MV	Modern Variety
NCB	National Commercial Bank
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NR	Not Reported
NSB	National Specialized Bank
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PKSF	Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
RAKUB	Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank
RLM	Rural Land Market
RLRM	Rural Land Rental Market
RLSM	Rural Land Sales Market
RMG	Ready Made Garments
RNF	Rural Non-Farm
RS	Revisional Survey
SAAO	Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer
SALE	Sustainable Access to Land Equality
SBL	Sonali Bank Limited
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
Tk	Taka
UP	Union Parishad
USA	United States of America
US\$	United States Dollar
VPA	Vested Property Act

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The manifold use of land, particularly in a rural setting, has many impacts on life and livelihood of the people. Undeniably, common perception is that local influentials in Bangladesh dominate rural land market. Furthermore, it is also assumed that rural poor and marginalized households in this country have no or very little access to the land market to establish their inseparable rights over land.

Comprehending these realities, increasing poor people's access to land has now become a major concern for policy makers and those interested in development alike. In Bangladesh, with a predominantly rural and agrarian structure this involves ownership and access to land and appropriate measures to improve the proper functioning of land markets which have figured high on the development agenda, and more importantly, for inequality reducing growth.

Viewing from the above standpoint, the underlying study was conducted to deeply understand the awful status of rural poor households in the local land market and the appalling conditions which they constantly face to have to have an access therein.

This book, to the best of our knowledge, is the first of its kind, which endeavors to study the nature of rural land market, though in a smaller geographical extent of only three upazilas of the country, in terms of market factors and subjective as well as objective motivations, actors and their functions, access issues, access avenues of the marginalized households as well as their access constraints, and inter-linkages of the land sales and land rental markets with other rural markets in a unified spectrum. The book is an outcome of continuous and committed contribution of a number of individuals for around two years. They were involved from the conceptualization of the study to the end of publishing the book. All of them deserve our heartfelt thanks, though we have to be unwillingly selective.

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Finally, we believe, the commitment and efforts put in the production of this book would be significant to eradicate the disparity in accessing rural land market by poor people and would help to turn it into an efficient and inclusive market.

Prof. Abul Barkat, PhD
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