

INSTITUTION
BUILDING
FOR LAND RIGHTS

Participatory Khasland Identification Process



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11



Uttaran

INSTITUTION BUILDING FOR LAND RIGHTS

Participatory Khasland Identification Process

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Credits

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Introduction: Uttaran on khasland

Uttaran has been working on khasland issues almost since its foundation in 1985. It is widely recognised to be one of the few NGOs meaningfully facilitating the redistribution of khasland among the resource poor groups in Bangladesh, in cooperation with union parishads, public administration at upazila and district levels, and civil society including media, intelligentsia and the wider communities. Uttaran is helping to implement the khasland redistribution policy, whereas other NGOs only advocate for land rights.

“Uttaran is more than an NGO. We are a people-centred organisation and we are very popular because the people know Uttaran is taking direct action to fight for them. If we see there is injustice, we act.”

Shahidul Islam, Uttaran Director



Uttaran began work on the Sustainable Access to Land Equality (SALE) project to ensure transparency and accountability in land governance in December 2012, in partnership with CARE International UK and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). The project engaged communities in three pilot upazilas - Amtali Upazila of Barguna District, Mohanpur of Rajshahi, and Sadar of Jamalpur-to raise the awareness of vulnerable landowners about land administration, and to effect transparent processes for selecting landless people and for khasland settlement.

This booklet – the 11th in a series of 12 - uses case studies from Jamalpur Sadar to highlight how Uttaran through the SALE project adopted a participatory approach to the identification of khasland.

Keywords for this booklet

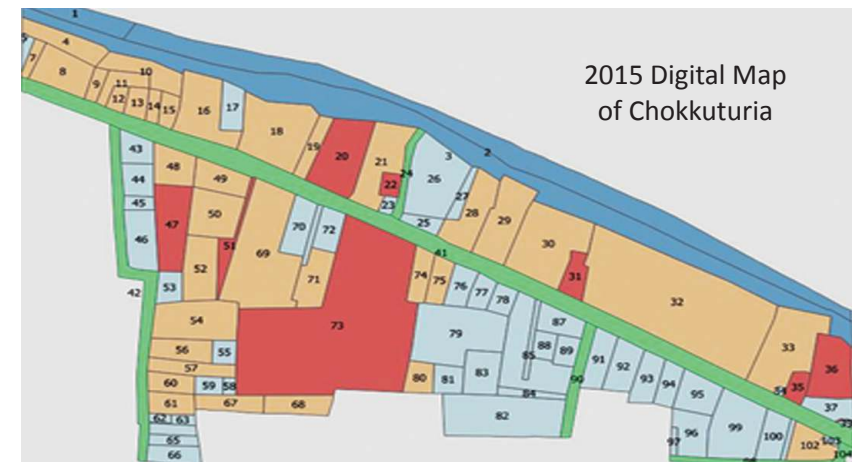
Khatian= the document held by the government office which proves land ownership
Warish/an= inheritance / Warishnama = inheritance certificate
Porcha= the document detailing the ownership of land, size of land, classification of land and total area
Baya Dolil= previous deeds of land transfer

Participatory Khasland Identification Process

The identification and verification of the state land in the three project areas was one of the main targets of the SALE project. The fair distribution of the identified ‘khasland’ among the actual landless people was also a cornerstone of the project’s success. Uttaran established a useful and impartial way to identify and verify the khasland of an area using digital survey equipment and a small army of young volunteers for identifying the exact locations of the state land.

Selection and Training of Youth Volunteers

A team of 12 youth volunteers aged between 20 and 22 were selected by the SALE project to develop the Open Street Map of Chokkutura mouza of Jamalpur district, and verify the exact locations of khasland in the two existing maps of Chokkutura: the Revisional Survey (RS) Map 1984; and the Digital Survey Map 2015. The youth volunteer group was given two hands-on training sessions on how to use the GPS machine and upload the geographical coordinates to open street map. The group was also trained in collecting the qualitative data of the existing landowners and residents of the identified khasland (see also pages 15-16).



Field Survey by the Youth Volunteer Group

The Revisional Survey (RS) Map 1984 and the Digital Survey Map 2015 were first compared to identify discrepancies in the plot numbers and size of khaslands, as there was not much differences in the ownership of khasland. Six volunteers were then chosen to visit Chokkutura and identify the locations of the 39 plots showed in the two maps, to recognise the khasland of the mouza and to check if it was illegally occupied. The volunteers were divided into two groups which began the field survey from opposite ends of the mouza, covering the left side of the road only in their direction of travel. Thus, they surveyed the whole area by coming back to the starting point. They were instructed to use the GPS machine to determine the exact areas of the 39 plots. The teams also determined the road area and khasland such as that belonging to the forestry department. The total determined land area of the mouza was then compared with the land areas of the existing two maps.

Collection and Digitisation of Area Map

Collection: In addition to the Revisional Survey (RS) Map and Digital Map, the SALE project also collected the Cadastral Survey (CS) Map from the DC office. However, this was not used in the Khasland identification process, as it lacked detail. Other relevant land information was also collected; for example the Khatians, names of landowners, and plot sizes.

Digitisation: The digitisation process focused on how changes in land demarcation could be identified by comparing both maps. Khatians were used to identify the Khasland in the maps, and a thorough consultation was carried out with the community and a former local surveyor. To compare the land information included in the two maps, it was necessary to convert them both to digital. Both maps were scanned and inserted into a software system named QGIS (Quantum Geographic Information System) to produce a digital version of the maps of Chokkutura in which features like land ownership, parcel size and grabbed land were all easily identifiable.

However, there was a complimentary thought to acquire a better knowledge of the traditional formula of land demarcation-that is, scale and chain-so that the digitalised formula for the RS Map could be verified.

This SALE project activity was able to identify:

- a) increment of plot numbers,
- b) identification of mouza areas in both maps,
- c) identification of total khasland,
- d) identification of public land,
- e) understanding of how khasland had been grabbed,
- f) a raised awareness of identified khasland so that land grabbing activities can be monitored in future.

Consultation with Former Government Surveyor

The SALE project then consulted a public surveyor who had years of experience and knowledge of traditional map preparation using scale and chain. The surveyor shared his experience in how to demarcate the land boundaries and prepare the maps manually. He also shared his deep understanding of the land survey system of Bangladesh.

Interviewing the landowners and residents of the khasland

Another group of youth volunteers collected data of the identified khasland through household visits, asking the following questions:

1. What is your plot ID number? Is it individually or jointly owned?
2. What is/are the name(s) of the landowners?
3. Do you face any dispute regarding your land ownership documentation?
4. How did you become the landowner? Was it:
a) government allocation, b) purchase, c) inheritance or d) others
5. If answers (a), then please ask: when do you get allocation and type of allocation? How many years, how many decimals?
6. If answers (b), then please ask: when and from whom you purchase the land?
7. If answers (c), then please ask: how you get this land from your family? How much?
8. If answers (d), then please ask: what is the other form you become owner of the land?
9. Did you face any difficulties in this ongoing survey and settlement?

Key Informant Interviews with the Public Land Authority

The youth volunteer group in assistance with the SALE project's staff also conducted four of Key Informant Interviews (KII) with the government land authorities including:

- ✓ Assistant Commissioner (land)
- ✓ Deputy Commissioner
- ✓ Local landowner
- ✓ Union Land Assistant Officer

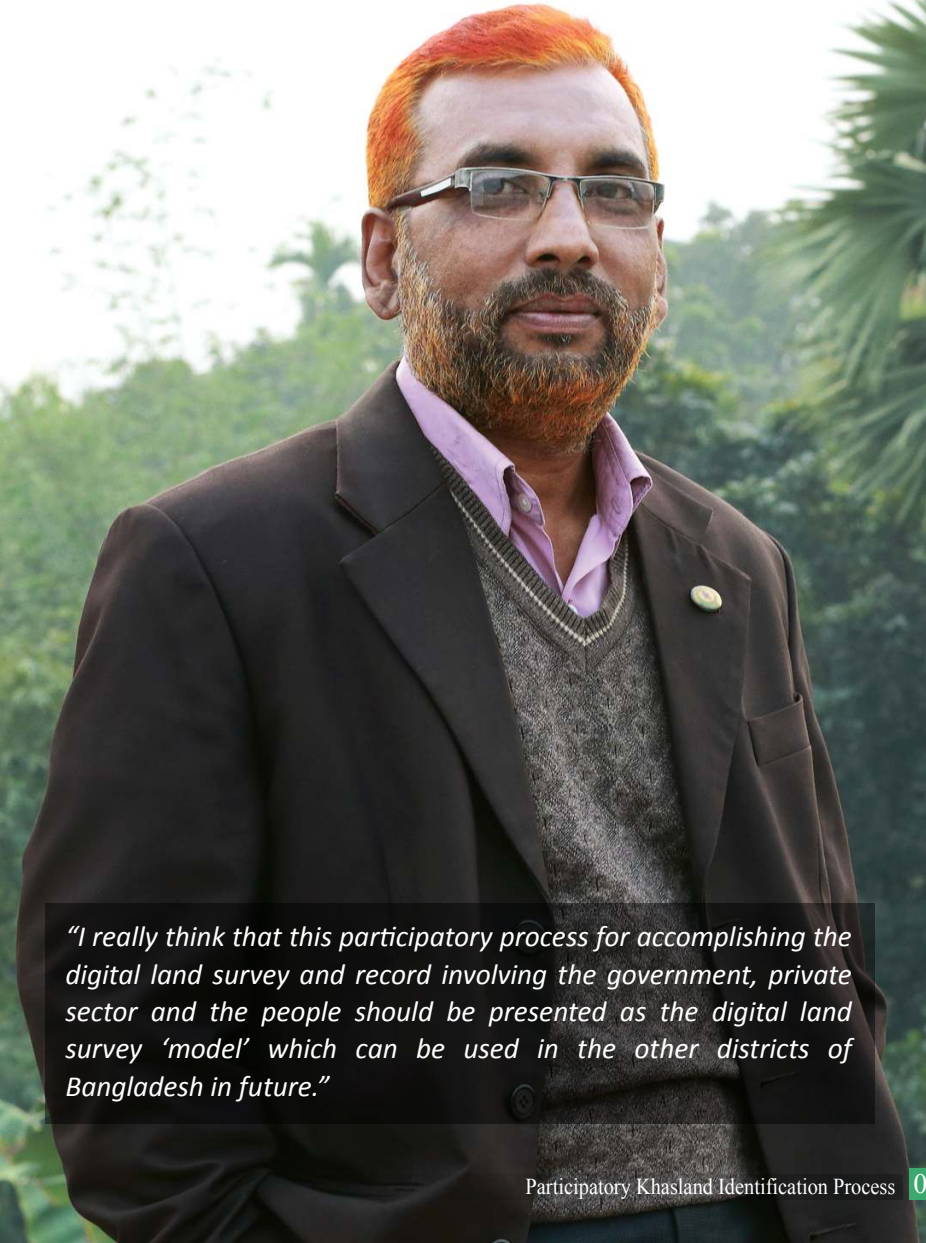


Focus Group Discussions

The youth volunteer group also conducted four FGDs with the landowners who are currently residing on the state land of this mouza. The FGDs mainly focused on the following topics:

- a. What has been your experience in receiving an allocation of khasland from the land administration?
- b. How are you utilising the land?
- c. Do you have any experiences of transferring the allocated land?

Md. Abdul Bari Bhuiyan, 50, is a sub-assistant settlement officer who joined the digital land survey and record as a survey supervisor in Jamalpur in 2014. He has years of experience in using the modern equipment needed for the digital survey and is highly knowledgeable about the process. This was his second land management project to be funded by the European Union.



"I really think that this participatory process for accomplishing the digital land survey and record involving the government, private sector and the people should be presented as the digital land survey 'model' which can be used in the other districts of Bangladesh in future."

How did Uttaran help the government during the digital land survey?

“Uttaran made this digital land survey successful. The government could never have reached this close to the local people as they don’t have the capacity. On the day of map preparation, for example, when we saw that there were not as many landowners present as expected, Uttaran started calling people by mobile and knocking on their doors. They ensured that each landowner remained present on their land to show us the exact boundary.

“If I divide the activities for accomplishing the digital land survey into 40 percent by public awareness and 60 percent by technical and logistics implementation, then Uttaran has fulfilled the public awareness aspect by 100 percent. Without them, I am not sure that we could have reached even 50 percent public awareness. The digital land survey would not have been so participatory and interactive, that’s for sure.

“They have done the public awareness widely using innovative communication approaches such as showing a video documentary on the activities of the digital land survey, scrolling on local TV channels, mobile alters and self-cell calls.

“Uttaran established a link between public officers and local people. People in this area started asking questions and raising their disputes, and got the courage to communicate with us.”



“During the land survey, Uttaran staff supported us remarkably. I only had to advise them on what to do and they then made it happen in the field.”

Jamalpur model for Digital Land Survey

1. Establish two or more identification pillars in the mouza using GPS



Mass public awareness of map preparation by door-to-door visit, yard meeting, posters and leaflet distribution, mobile alert, miking, TV scrolling, interactive public theatre, video shows

2. Preparation of maps of the land (kistoyer)



Ensuring presence of all land owners in respective land with available land documents

3. Conduction of Khanapuri cum Bujarot and attestation of land maps and plot numbers (3 levels at a time in the field)



Mass public awareness on public display of draft publication by door-to-door visit, yard meeting, posters and leaflet distribution, mobile alert, miking, TV scrolling, interactive public theatre, video shows

4. Public Display or Display of Draft Publication



5. Dispute, if any → 6. Appeal, if any



7. Documentation of final land record



8. Final land record made available online

The digital land survey also depends on logistics supplies. For instance, a dedicated car, modern high resolution scanners and plotters, trainer manpower, and troubleshooting of the digital machines must all be available to smoothly run the digital survey.

Suraiya Begum, 61, is an elected ward member of Shabazpur union and a national of Pakistan. She married a Bangladeshi citizen who used to work in her home country over 40 years ago. Suraiya and her husband came to Bangladesh in 1968 and never returned to Pakistan.



What do you hope to achieve by working with the SALE project?

“I have recently been selected as the women ward member and will shortly be introduced to the SALE project actively. I heard from the former ward members and neighbours how Uttaran has been working here on land issues and the digital land survey.

“I know Uttaran helped the Atabari people during the digital survey and has been doing their work effectively. I also worked with the NGO named Nur Alam (Field Facilitator).



Mosharef Hosan Musa, 40, is a former ward member in Atabari, Jamalpur.

How did Uttaran involve people in the khasland identification process?

“Uttaran staff member, Noor Alam, started working in this area before the land survey. He first came to inform us about Uttaran’s activity and what the SALE project was going to do. This was the first time I had heard of the digital land survey and record.

“Noor Alam vai said he wanted to conduct a meeting with the heads and respected persons of this area to make people aware about land rights and the upcoming survey. With my consent and at the agreed time and place, Uttaran held a meeting and formed a primary organisation involving the women villagers. Before every meeting, Noor Alam vai came to check the time and place before reaching out to every person to ensure their presence. Sometimes we sat at a tea stall, sometimes the meetings happened on my land.

“Uttaran also gave me another learning opportunity by taking me to a training session on landless identification in Tangail district. I learned the actual process of landless identification and also applied the learning to identify the landless and allocate the state land to them.

“Prior to the survey, Noor Alam vai and other staff visited this area frequently. They distributed posters of digital land survey and leaflets. They announced the survey date using loudspeakers, and sent the mobile messages notifying the upcoming digital survey in our area.”

What would you have done without Uttaran?

“I should say that Uttaran made our knowledge so strong and enlightened us on land related matters in such a way that now we feel confident at dealing with the land issues. Uttaran was a big help for me and the mouza residents, and we are really grateful to them.”

Meeting objectives

- how to mark our land boundaries
- how female family members were sharers in inherited land by warish
- how to raise a dispute
- what is khasland
- who are shareholders in the khasland
- who are the landless
- what is the digital survey and record
- what must landowners do during the survey

Bikram Robi Das, 45, owns five decimals of land and lives in a combined family with his brother in Nasirpur, Jamalpur. He is a barber and father of two children.



How did Uttaran help you?

“I am an illiterate person and I didn’t know anything about the land records and registration. When (Uttaran staff member) Nur Alam vai first visited me, I could not even tell him which one was the land deeds and what papers I have. Nur Alam met me several times to explain the papers and my land rights. I did not know anything about the new digital survey and record. Nur Alam vai took me to the surveyors and showed them my land records. He is the person who did the record of my land.

“I am a simple person and I don’t understand all these things, so without Uttaran my land would not be included in the new survey record, that’s for sure. I have relied on Uttaran and now, thanks to them, I have a plan to renovate my house and make it bigger.”

Kazi Faysal Islam was one of several youth volunteers who worked on the khasland identification process in Chokkuturia mouza of Jamalpur in 2015. He went on to study social sciences at the local university college.



What was your role in the khasland identification?

“Our role was to identify the location of state land using GPS in Chokkuturia mouza of Jamalpur, and verify the conditions of the landless people. Twelve of us received two day-long technical inductions and hands-on training on using the GPS machines and on how to identify the state land.

“We worked a total of three days in Chokkuturia to identify the state land. On the first two days we visited the whole mouza plot by plot, inserting each land boundary and identifying the location of the state land. We used google earth and open street map to

insert the exact locations of the state land. Uttaran also gave us the digital map of the mouza (see page 5) to verify the locations of the identified land. We identified the state land like that of the forestry department. We were very careful to get the exact location of each plot and land boundary.”

“On the third day, we visited the people residing on the land to discuss with them about their livelihood conditions and verify whether they were actually landless or not. We had a structured questionnaire to help us with the interviews. We asked the people questions like: How did you become the owner of this land? How long have you been residing here? Do you have any land records, deeds or other documents? Such sorts of queries. We then submitted the completed interview questionnaires to the SALE project partner, Uttaran.”



An interview with Monowara Begum, 44, in Dubaria of Jamalpur

Other booklets in this series from Uttaran

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