Bangladesh Land Status Report 2017

Land Grabbing in a Rent Seeking Society



Editor

Abul Barkat

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Bangladesh Land Status Report 2017:
Land Grabbing in a Rent Seeking Society

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Dedicated
to

The Landless and Marginalized People and
The Land Rights Defenders

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Programme
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AIIB	Asia Infrastructure Improvement Bank
AL	Awami League
ALRD	Association for Land Reform and Development
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
ARB	Agrarian Reform Budget
ASK	Ain O Salish Kendra
BAPA	Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BELA	Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association
BFD	Bangladesh Forest Department
BFF	Bangladesh Freedom Foundation
BGB	Border Guard Bangladesh
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BLF	Bangladesh Liberation Force
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BNPS	Bangladesh Nari Progati Shango
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
BTA	Bengal Tenacy Act
CBO	Community-based Organization
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CDA	Chattogram Development Authority
CEDAW	Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations)

CEGIS	Bangladesh Center for Environment and Geographical Information Services
CHT	Chattogram Hill Tracts
CHTRC	CHT Regional Council
CNRS	Centre for Natural Resource Studies
CPW	Common Property Water Bodies
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Children
CS	Case Studies / Civil Society (as appropriate)
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DFID	Department for International Development
DLRS	Department of Land Record and Survey
DP	Development Partners
EBSATA	East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act
EC	European Commission
EPA	Enemy Property Act
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FY	Fiscal (Financial) Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLII	Global Land Indicators Initiative
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GP	Government Pleader
HDC	Hill District Council
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HH	Household
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDA	International Development Association

IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILC	International Land Coalition
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Indigenous Peoples
ISPAN	Irrigation Support Project for Asia and Near East
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LDO	Land Development Organization
LG	Local Government
LIS	Land Information System
LRDI	Land Reform Development Index
LRMF	Land Reform Monitoring Framework
LRMI	Land Reform Monitoring Index
LRMR	Land Reform Monitoring Report
LRMT	Land Reform Monitoring Tool
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoDM	Ministry of Disaster Management
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
MoFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
MoL	Ministry of Land
MoWR	Ministry of Water Resources
MP	Member of the Parliament
MT	Master Trainers
NGO	Non Government Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCLG	People Centered Land Governance
PCJSS	Parbattya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti
PF	Protected Forests
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PMO	Prime Minister Office
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
R&D	Research and Development
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (Bangladesh)

RF	Reserved Forests
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SB	Shanti Bahini
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFF	Special Frontier Force
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SOUHARDO	Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities
TOT	Training of Trainers
UK	United Kindom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programs
UNPFII	UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
UPR	Universal Periodic Report
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollar
USF	Unclassed State Forest
VfM	Value for Money
VP	Vested Property
VPA	Vested Property Act
VPRA	Vested Property Return Act
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
YPSA	Young Power in Social Action

FOREWORD

"Bangladesh Land Status Report 2017: *Land Grabbing in a Rent-Seeking Society*" is the second land status report of the country. This is basically a follow-up of "Bangladesh Land Status Report 2015". The idea of producing this Report was developed for serving at least two-fold utility. First, it will create knowledge and learning value on a development issue ignored by many since 1980s. And second, it will bear policy implications at least in terms of monitoring the progress of agrarian and land reforms in Bangladesh.

This Report highlights and proposes that we should look at the land issues entirely in a new way from the perspective of the poor and marginal communities who have 'NO' or 'LEAST ACCESS' to and 'RIGHTS' over land. The Report contains fourteen (14) independent but interrelated articles which are coalescence of various land access issues and related ideas. Experience unravels that many researchers on land, oftentimes, try to comprehend land status in almost perfect ignorance of real history of mass landlessness in this country and cogent reasons embedded therein. The authors in this Report asks the most fundamental questions about land access, rights, reforms and proceeds to answer them with a sweeping grasp of our history and political economy. The Report lands powerful punches on stunning failures of land policies adored and implemented at different times by governments of Bangladesh.

The first article in the Report by Rahman and Suhrawardy, titled as 'Land Scenario: River System as Determinant', classified the land scenario of the country into three categories: 1) hills, 2) terraces, and 3) riverside areas. The authors have properly informed that rivers have played the central role in the formation of land in this country. Bangladesh is predominantly known as a sedimentary plain, and she owes this identity to her Southern and Southwestern region. On the other hand, her terraces are limited mostly to Northern and hills to Eastern region. *Madhupur Gor*, located in the middle region, added rich diversity in the land scenario of the country.

In 'Land Grabbing: A Quest for the Loopholes in Land Laws'; Barkat, Islam, Ahsan and Osman have mouse out the deep-rooted flaws in the land laws, with a sharp focus on land grabbing from the perspectives of women, poor, marginal, landless and ethnic communities. The East Bengal State

Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950, known as EBSATA 1950, has been the mainframe legal document of agricultural Khas land. Despite its success in abolishing the Zamindari system, the EBSATA 1950 has always remained vulnerable because of repeated changes made in the definitions of beneficiary families and landless in the interest of the politically powerful.

The Policy on Management and Settlement of Agricultural Khas land, 1997 mainly suffers from imprecise definition of agricultural Khas land, while the non-agricultural Khas Land Management and Settlement Policy, 1995 lacks appropriate identification of non-agricultural Khas land. Char lands are regulated under sections 86 and 87 of EBSATA 1950, and the major stints in these sections are: failure to deal with issues like river erosion from a legal perspective, the irrational time limit set by Section 86 for claiming the ownership of any alluvium land, and lack of any provision for ensuring accountability and punishing those engaged in corrupt practices. The main problem with the JolMohal Management Policy is the abnormally high lease value of the JolMohal which, in effect, excludes the poor fishermen. Bangladesh Water Act, 2013 does not attach any importance to the necessity of addressing the blazing issue of land grabbing and section 32 of this Act it treats the punishable offences as bailable, and this attitude undoubtedly obstructs ensuring rule of law.

Overall, the authors have keenly noticed a deliberate denial of justice in the legal outlook of Bangladesh land regime which facilitates land grabbing in the country. Lack of transparency in the land administration adds to this problem. The authors have opined that the traditional land laws are mostly extraneous, while on the other, comparatively new laws do not consider, and in many cases, rather intentionally ignore the interests of the poorer sections of society. The authors prudently observed that land grabbing is totally injudicious and a transgression of land rights that oftentimes elbows the poor and marginalized sections of society in an unyielding situation. The loopholes in the land related laws of Bangladesh have sustained land grabbing as a malpractice which goes against the greater interest of society.

Barkat, Suhrawardy and Rahman, in their paper ‘Khas Land: The Denial of Access’, have clearly discussed the political economy of khas land with a particular focus on land grabbing. The British colonial rulers laid the foundations of a notorious Zamindary system which created a span-new landowning class. It was the EBSATA 1950 that abolished this colonial-feudal system and legally acknowledged the tenuriul rights of farmers over their lands. Fixing the land ceiling is central for khas land (re)distribution and

the maximum ceiling of land had been different under different rules due to the otherness in their views. The authors have noticed that there is an expansive gap between the official claims about the amount of khas land and independent research findings in this regard.

Similar contradictions are found to prevail regarding khas land distribution. The government claims that 40 percent of khas land has been distributed so far. However, independent studies have mentioned/evidenced an embarrassingly low percentage: only 11.5 percent. The acute problems ingrained with khas land distribution, among many others, include administrative sluggishness, high level of corruption, bribe etc. The rate of retention of khas land, notwithstanding, is modest (45.3%), keeping more than half of the khas lands either non-retained or only partially retained.

Land grabbing usually outweigh/crowd out the benefits of redistributive land reform. The redistribution aims to reduce inequality whereas grabbing increases the already existing inequality. Research has shown that government agencies and private organizations both are active in grabbing khas land. However, the authors are optimistic and they have cited the case of Mahalbari, Chirirbandar, Dinajpur to demonstrate what can be achieved from/by reducing land grabbing provided the landless peasants fight for their rights and get backing from responsible CSOs. They have drawn somewhat paradoxical conclusion that khas land is a curse in the present order of things.

Barkat, Suhrawardy and Rahman, in the paper ‘Char Land: Paradise of Land Grabbing’, have focused on the institutional, legal and administrative setting and practices that make land grabbing a lustful play in the char region of the country, and led to the marginalization and landlessness of the char people. The authors’ most curious observation is that, though char land amounts for a tiny 1.2 percent of total land area of Bangladesh, separately it is greater than the land area of 74 countries in the world! Albeit, articles 86 and 87 of the aforementioned EBSATA 1950 theoretically provided the char people with exclusive rights over government khas land, they get almost nothing in reality, and landlessness is one of the cogent reasons for their marginalization. This marginalization is not the result of poverty only as conventional wisdom would phrase it; another aspect of this marginalization is insecurity. The case of Char Bhatia, Sariakandi Upazila, Bagura district has been cited to exemplify this marginalization and its negative impact on the people living in the char land.

The authors concluded that, mixed type of direct land grab –forced and unforced – take place in the region. Existing legal and administrative apparatus only contributes to this endemic form of land grabbing, as the laws and the administration do not comply with the interest of the people, rather they serve vested interests like land grabbers who are politically well connected.

In 'Status and Problems of Implementing Vested Property Return Act', Barkat, Rafique and Suhrawardy have critically examined the legal framework and process which have been set to be followed for returning vested properties to their lawful owners and found some inbuilt obstacles like bribery, practice of delay, and other harassments. The authors have also identified the causes of delay in disposal of tribunal cases.

The paper has categorically exposed the principal delay actors in the disposal cases into two categories: (a) pre-court delays and (b) in-court delays. They have found that pre-court delays are related to the corrupt practices of local land officials, namely the Tahsildar and AC land. The in-court delays occur mostly due to the small number of courts or judges in comparison to the large number of cases. This delay has been observed as one of the key factors behind the unsatisfactory status of implementation of Vested Property Return Act (VPRA). The enactment and partial implementation of the VPRA has created opportunities for the victim households to establish their legal rights over their properties. It has created the scope for them to get out of the deprivation trap where they had been forced to live because of the notorious Enemy Property Act (EPA) and Vested Property Act (VPA).

In his illumining article 'Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Plain Land', Sanjeeb Drong has asserted that indigenous peoples consider land as a universal object of nature. It is not a mere resource to be extracted unendingly. Historically, their land rights have been collectively held; they thought themselves as the custodian of these lands, not owners. This is the major antecedent that demonstrates why indigenous peoples all over the world have never used to register their land. This created an opportunity for the land robbers to grab this invaluable asset easily without any resistance. The author explored that 3 million indigenous peoples of Bangladesh have some constitutional rights which have never been properly implemented. Particularly, the condition of plain land indigenous peoples who live in Bangladesh is more vulnerable. Unlike the indigenous peoples of the Chattogram Hill Tracts region (CHT) they do not enjoy any rights and legal protection.

More striking, the plain indigenous peoples, over centuries, have been victims of population transfer and migration which resulted into massive land loss. Drong authoritatively cited some recent evidence of land-related oppression by the rich and politically powerful: eviction of Santals in Gaibandha and North-Bengal, threatening Khasi villages of Moulvibazar, keeping the Garos of Modhupur forest in fear of eviction etc. This paper, fairly mentioned some incidents of bloodshed that happened to secure land grabbing interest of the rich and politically powerful. The author also unraveled the reasons behind land loss of plain land indigenous peoples. Finally, the author forwarded some recommendations which will help to stop further land grabbing and ensure access to land rights of the plain land indigenous people.

Barkat, Osman and Rahman, in their paper 'Beyond Ethnicity: Land Grabbing in the Chattogram Hill Tracts', delved into the real politico-economic reasons behind land grabbing in the Chattogram Hill Tracts. They have noticed that the seeds of apparently ethnic but essentially class conflicts between the Bangalee and the Indigenous Peoples (IP) were sown through this historical periods. The authors briefly discussed the notorious population transfer programme taken in the 1980s by the military regime that marginalized the IP and severely curtailed their traditional land rights. They explicated the ethnic conflict which resulted into a full-fledged regional civil war between Bangladesh armed forces and PCJSS Shanti Bahini, at least 11 genocides, and which seemed to ravage the area in relation to inter-communal relations. They have also discoursed the class dimension of the land dispute which is usually ignored in the existing literature on the subject.

The authors argued that land grabbing in the CHT can be grouped into four broad categories: (a) state acquisition of the private and common lands of the IPs, (b) forcible occupation of the private and common lands of the IPs by dominant Bangalee private interest, (c) privatization of the common land of the IPs by the elite IPs themselves, and (d) acquisition of the titles of lands given to the Bangalee settlers during the counter-insurgency period. The authors observed that there are actors — both state and non-state — involved in land grabbing in the CHT: the forest department of Bangladesh government, security forces, commercial plantations, big businesses, NGOs, land dealers etc. Moreover, land grabbing was used as a strategy of demographic engineering in the counter-insurgency whose legacy can be traced even in this nominally peaceful time. Last but not the least, the authors noticed with unease that, the Rohingyas - an ethnic group of Myanmar who

are themselves persecuted in their country and seek refuge to Bangladesh for their lives in thousands - has become another potential actor of land grabbing in the CHT.

In 'Women: Silent Victims of Land Grabbing', Barkat, Shawaly and Osman have analyzed the impacts of land grabbing on Bangladeshi women as perceived from a gendered perspective. The authors argued that due to systematic political, legal and social discrimination, women are much more vulnerable to land grabbing than their male counterparts. The laws of inheritance in Bangladesh are religion-based Personnel laws. The Sharia law related to land inheritance is discriminatory against women.

The situation of Hindu women is worse, because as per the Daybhag School of Thought, they do not inherit their father's property except for some special cases when they get property from their father in the form of gift. Chakma inheritance system is no less discriminatory. Bangladeshi women face another kind of land grabbing: such as, their name not to be mentioned in the deed at the time of land purchase, and indicated the deep-rooted patriarchal tendencies of the broader society. Even if women inherit some land, they are denied of taking any decision related to the utilization of land, which makes their inheritance of land meaningless. Male members of the families usually believe that women should get some land, as an expression of sympathy, but the very idea of gender equality is never respected or given any importance in this regard. Another reason, which makes women more vulnerable to land grabbing, is their lack of knowledge about inheritance rights. The authors in congruence with the spirit of the Constitution — have argued in favor of institutionalizing equal rights of women in inherited property and accordingly enact uniform family code.

But inheritance is not the only factor in curbing women's land rights, as has been revealed in the article ‘Women's Land Rights: Beyond Inheritance’ by Moni, Rafique and Rahman. A deeper reason is the marginalization of women which begins inside the mother's womb and continues in case of food allocation, vaccinations, access to healthcare, access to education, and household healthcare expenditure as they grow up.

The authors discussed women's land rights in relation to public and private domain. Regarding ownership of agricultural land, they argue that, there is a direct relationship between individual liberty and private property as understood by classical liberal school of economic thought. Referring to the works of prominent scientist and activist Vandana Shiva, the authors

mentioned that industrialization of agriculture has been a disaster for ensuring food safety and sustainable land management, where women always took a lead prior to modernization. They argued that the empowerment of women cannot be done effectively if land and agricultural rights of women are not taken into consideration.

Fixed Rent Leasing and Contract Farming are two of the most prominent forms of commercialization of Bangladesh agricultural land, which brought both the benefits and misfortunes to the farmers. These dual impacts are assessed by Barkat and Suhrawardy in their paper 'Fixed Rent Leasing and Contract Farming: Potentials and Risks'. The authors argued that, though Fixed Rent Leasing co-existed with Sharecropping for a long time, the growing tendency towards it is a recent phenomenon. Landlessness is the main reason (38.1%) behind practicing Fixed Rent Leasing which is followed by freedom to keep all the harvest by the farmer himself (28.6%) and making profit (25.4%). Fixed Rent Leasing leads to loss of farmer's rights and control over agriculture (A 71.7% fixed rent leasing households have suffered due to the practice as per 2017 estimate), increasing loss of land fertility, small and marginal farmers' tendency of leaving agriculture due to their financial inability to pay high rent and failure to cope with ever-increasing competition.

Historically, Contract Farming is a recent practice. Input support by the contract farm is the main reason (44.1%) of practicing this type of farming, followed by profit making (23.7%) and sale security (20.3%). It leads to greater loss of control over agriculture (56.4% households have already lost their control over land due to the practice), increasing barrenness of land, and above all, small and marginal farmers' leaving agriculture for non-farm activities. Last but not the least, the authors have claimed that, both Fixed Rent Leasing and Contract Farming make rural household's food security over-dependent on the market.

Sohel Ibn Ali, in his paper 'Role of NGOs in Land Rights Movements and Agrarian Reform', explored the role of civil society organizations — mainly NGOs — in ensuring the land rights of the powerless and the marginal. As Bangladesh has more NGOs than any other country in the world, the NGOs play a vital role in the overall development of the country, and since late 1990s some NGOs have taken a more rights-based than profit-driven approach regarding land and other human rights.

Advocacy and campaigning are two strong features of these NGOs' strategy on various issues of and agrarian reform. Key issues of land and water right movements where NGOs usually get involved are: The VP rights movement, the CHT land rights movement, khas land and water body movements, and water rights and river protection movement. The author claimed that the CSOs and NGOs continuously play a very significant role in stopping encroachment of river, recovering land from illegal occupation, and create open access for all citizens. NGOs also influence policy dialogues on issues ranging from implementation of VP to ensuring the land rights of the indigenous people of the CHT. In another paper, 'Role of Development Partners in Land and Agrarian Reforms', Sohel Ibn Ali explored the role of Development Partners in advancing land rights of the poor and marginalized section of society.

In 'Land Reform: Perspectives, Issues and Policies', Barkat and Sengupta critically analyzed the politico-economic aspects of different issues related with the agrarian-land-aquarian reform. They defined land reform as the remodeling of tenure rights and the redistribution of land, in directions consistent with the political imperatives underlying the reform. The authors argued poor people can have access to land through: (a) State-led land distribution programme, (b) intra-family transfer, (c) access through community or group membership, and (d) land buy-sale market, as well as rental markets.

While the state-led land redistribution, the authors pondered, is statist-centrist, coercive, costly, have low level of transparency and accountability, and have no exit option; the market-led land redistribution is privatized-decentralized, voluntary, cheap, have a high level of transparency and accountability and ample exit options. This comparison makes it distinct that market-led land distribution is much more effective and flexible in terms of benefitting the poor. The authors have noticed that land distribution is a major concern wherever land rights are highly polarized and access is very unequal, land is underused by large owners, or historical injustices are to be addressed. As a consequence, land redistribution has long since been seen as a key issue for fighting extreme poverty and ensuring social justice. The authors have claimed that redistribution is a goal in-itself, which is quite apart from any efficiency gains that might result from a more equitable land distribution. They have argued that land reform is an inevitable need not only for the land-poor, marginal, and excluded people but also it is a way to ensure development by enriching human life.

However, there are challenges to be faced in the process of this land redistribution. These challenges come from the officials of government land office, local public representatives, and local influential who have formed a powerful gang of land grabbers. This is a structural problem of a rent-seeking economy, where land is not only the source of socio-economic and political power, but also the source of mental and psychological power. The authors have observed that in present Bangladesh, there is a growing trend of 'class-neutral economic thought' which holds the view that agrarian reform or land reform is superfluous. However, they denounced this trend and strongly defended the idea of redistributive land reform.

Land Reform Monitoring Index (LRMI)/Land Reform Development Index (LRDI) is an innovative and practically useful tool, developed by Abul Barkat in 2010 for the first Land Reform Monitoring Report 2010. In his paper, 'Land Reform Monitoring Index 2017', Barkat updated the data and information of the LRMI of the previous reports. In designing the LRMI/LRDI, the issue of land reform has been envisaged by the author in two broad blocks as follows: (a) input block (budget and land policies), and (b) outcomes block (land tenure and access to land). The author has claimed that the land policies concerning land reform – notably National Land Use Policy 2011 – are weak in ensuring both policy diversity and implementation mechanisms. He analyzed land tenure using two broad variables as follows: land disputes and evictions.

The land disputes indicators used by the author include people killed per 100,000 populations, people detained per 100,000 populations, persons harassed per 100,000 populations, land-related cases received per 100,000 populations, land-related cases investigated per 100,000 populations, land-related cases adjudicated per 100,000 populations, cases of land grabbing, percentage area of land grabbed, average time in years for land dispute resolution, annual loss of time due to disputes, annual monetary loss associated with land dispute/litigation, and annual loss of asset due to land disputes/litigation.

Eviction indicators used by the author include household evicted/displaced from farms per 100,000 populations and households becoming totally homeless due to eviction. The author analyzed access to land using three variables: land ownership, tenancy rights, and landlessness. The indicators used for land ownership include ownership by category according to size of landholdings and income, percentage of farmers having effective ownership of government distributed khas land, and percentage of total khas land

distributed among landless farmers/cultivators/peasantry. The indicators used for tenancy rights include sharecroppers, percentage of sharecroppers with legal documents, and percentage of contract farmers' area in relation to total agricultural area.

Beyond any doubt, the incidences of land grabbing as pointed above is a lurid tale of inhuman persecution that 'apolitical' hard-core poor and marginal people in rural Bangladesh are constantly facing till today. Many ideas expressed in this Report, we believe, will mount a strong challenge and open up the debate on why an easy access to and ownership of land is not the best answer for realizing aspirations of millions land-poor and nationwide prosperity. In these slim articles, the authors argued that agrarian-land-aquarian reform requires the bedrock of the rule of law, beginning with property law, since the land system is much more than ownership. We have a firm conviction that land provides alimony to the vast rural mass in Bangladesh. In that sense, this Report has been prepared to advance the land rights of the poor and marginalized of the country. They are the ones who suffer most because of the existing socio-economic and political order.

Finally, the "Bangladesh Land Status Report 2017: *Land Grabbing in a Rent Seeking Society*" upholds that a rational distributive or redistributive land reform is a sin qua non for broad-based development in Bangladesh.

Abul Barkat, *PhD* Dhaka: March 8, 2019

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"Bangladesh Land Status Report 2017: *Land Grabbing in a Rent-Seeking Society"* is a sequel of "Bangladesh Land Status Report 2015". Like the first Report, this Report is also produced by the writings of some veteran and young land researchers and activists of the country. In this regard, we highly appreciate Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) and its researchers for their outstanding contribution and commitment in producing the Report.

The authors of the papers of the Report namely: Abul Barkat, Asmar Osman, Gazi Mohammad Suhrawardy Hasna Hena Shawaly, Manzuma Ahsan, Md. Waliul Islam, Muhammad Irfanur Rahman, Rahinur Bintey Rafique, Rowshan Jahan Moni, Sanjeeb Drong, Sohel Ibn Ali and Subhash Kumar Sengupta devotedly explored the areas for future policy research and interventions concerning land. We are grateful for their substantive ideas and insights that immeasurably improved the quality of this Report. We hope, the findings of the papers will surely deter us from walking on the colorful mosaic of crippled ideas on land issues and policies, and instead guide to evolve and work on new ones. In preparing this Report, the authors have extensively drawn invaluable ideas from the writings of many enlightened researchers, academicians, journalists and land rights activists. We acknowledge and express our gratitude to all of them.

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Finally, we are grateful to the Editorial Committee for their tremendous support, cooperation and advice and especially indebted to the Editor Professor Dr. Abul Barkat for the intensive editing work which has undoubtedly contributed to and ensured the quality of the entire work.

Our efforts would be fruitful if the findings provide all relevant authorities with the glowing picture of the land situation in Bangladesh, so that they can bring an expected positive change in it.

Shamsul Huda
Executive Director, ALRD

Dhaka: March 9, 2019

This book is a comprehensive political economy treatise providing substantial evidences and arguments on various dimensions of land grabbing in a rent seeking society. The broad themes of analysis include areas, such as Khas land, Char land, Enemy and Vested Property, land of indigenous peoples, land under fixed rent leasing and contract farming, women's inheritance of land, role of civil society and development partners on issues related to land-interest.

It is argued that in order to ensure rights of the poor, landless, marginal, women, and indigenous peoples in the ownership of and access to land—a necessary precondition for true human development in congruence with the spirit of our Constitution—agrarian-land-aquarian reform is a must. This reform will certainly imply undertaking best endeavors like: distribution of Khas land and Char land to the poor and marginalized people; returning back enemy and vested property; addressing the rightful interest of the indigenous peoples; ensuring women's right to land; closing the loopholes in land laws to serve the deprived mass and so on.

It is suggested that in order to monitor the status of such reform, among others, a Land Reform Monitoring Mechanism is warranted, for which a Land Reform Development Index has been proposed. This book is a must read for all who wants to learn the *essence of things* related to Land and Development and are ready to participate in the process of progress mediated through agrarian reform in Bangladesh.

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