



Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Community-based Digital Land Mapping

An Intervention of Caritas Bangladesh

21 November 2021

Presented by
Caritas Mymensingh Region
Caritas Bangladesh



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Caritas Bangladesh

Caritas Bangladesh (CB) is established by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) to carry out activities of integrated social welfare and development. CB is a Bangladeshi, local, national, non-profit, development organization. Caritas means “charity” or universal love. We prefer “LOVE” which includes all aspects of humanity.

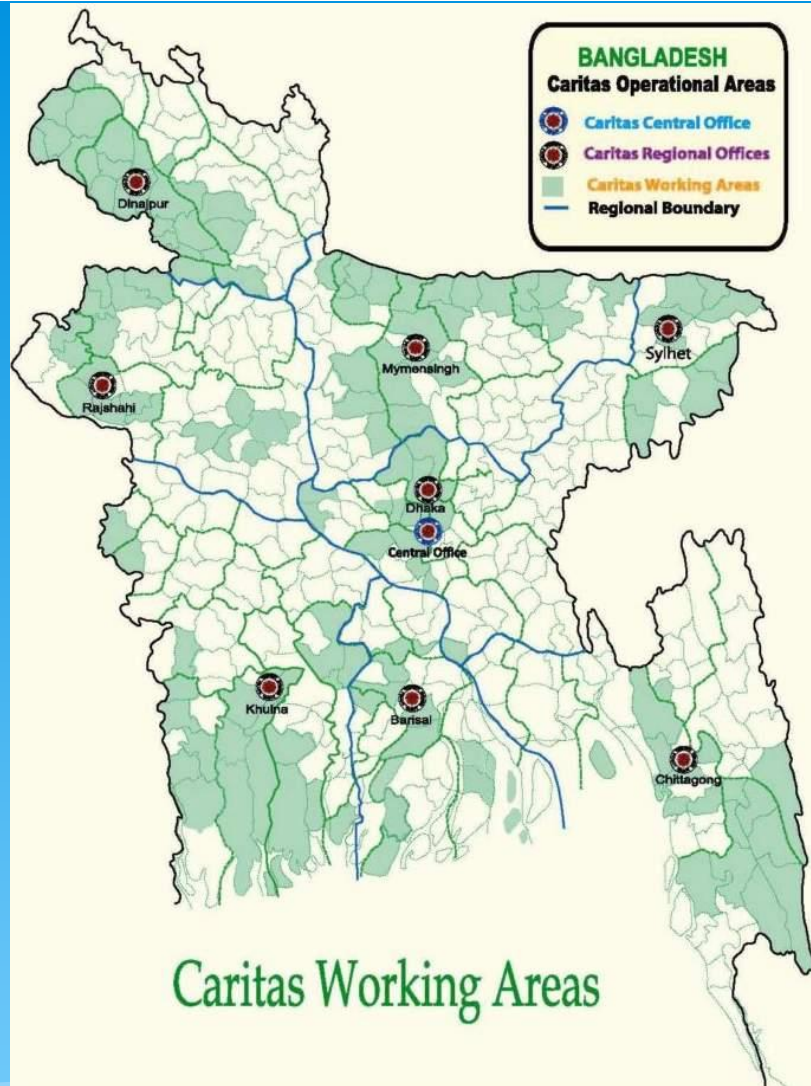
CB was founded in 1967 as the eastern branch of Caritas Pakistan. Following the cyclone of November 1070 it was re-organized and became known as CORR (Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation) and took on the character of a national organization on January 13, 1971. The name Caritas was re-introduced in 1976.



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CB has its
Central
Office in
Dhaka,
Bangladesh



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Goals of Caritas Bangladesh

Goal 1 : Social Welfare and Community Development

Goal 2 : Quality Education

Goal 3 : Health Care and Education

Goal 4 : Disaster Management

Goal 5 : Ecological Conservation and Development

Goal 6 : *Development of Indigenous Peoples (DIP)*



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Information on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Bangladesh

- Population : 1.7 to 3.7 million or 1.2 to 2.5% of total country population (IPs claim that their population is approximately 5 million)
- IP Groups : 54 (who speak 35 languages)
- IPs live in Plain-land/Flatland : 50%
- IPs live in CHT : 50%



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Major Challenges faced by IPs in Bangladesh

The government of Bangladesh does not recognize indigenous peoples as indigenous. In the constitutions, only cultural aspects are mentioned, while issues related to the economic and political rights of indigenous peoples, in particular their rights to land, continue to be ignored.

1. Identity of Indigenous Peoples
2. Implementation of CHT Accord
3. Political Participation of Indigenous Peoples
4. Indigenous People's Land Alienation
5. Deprivation of Basic Facilities
6. Indigenous Women, Children, Youth and Persons with Disabilities



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Challenges faced by the IPs in Land Management in Bangladesh

The situation of alienation of lands of indigenous peoples of the country, both in the CHT and in the plains, is alarming, and continues to deteriorate. The problems faced by the IPs vary community to community, region to region due to geographical settings.

1. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)
2. Plain Land:
 - a) Forest dwellers area
 - b) Border belt area



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Problems exceeding geographic settings

- Establishment of tourism centers
- Eco-park/national park
- Reserved forest
- Social forestry
- Incremental encroachments by individual (Bengali HHs)
- Large scale displacement by government projects
- Land-grabbing
- Violence against women and girls is considered to be a weapon used widely to evict ethnic, cultural and religious minorities from their ancestral land.



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Problems influenced by geographic settings

- Rubber plantation
- Air-force firing/bombing range
- Double locked (vested property and forest)
- Vested property
- Mortgaged land
- Lack of separate land commission for plain land
- Unidentified/un-demarcated IPs' land



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Movement for land rights in Madhupur

28-01-2004
Daily Star

MODHUPUR ECO-PARK

Hasina joins hands with Garos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday demanded land ownership right for indigenous people and threw her weight behind the Garos' demand for cancellation of the Modhupur eco-park that they fear will threaten their traditional lifestyle.

"Indigenous people have been deprived for years, as they are left out of land ownership," Hasina told a group of Garos from Modhupur at main opposition Awami League's

Dharamondi office.

Hasina, also AL president, asked the government to discuss with indigenous locals before going ahead with the Modhupur forest conservation project the forest department took up in 2000.

Her statement came a day after Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj said the project would continue without harming indigenous people, a common government promise caricatured by the killing of Piren Seal in forest

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4944, 8124955, 8124966, Fax: 8125155, 8126154, GPO Box No: 3257, www.thedailystar.net, E-mail:

Eco-park

FROM PAGE 12

guard and police fire during an anti-ecopark demonstration of Garos in Modhupur on January 3.

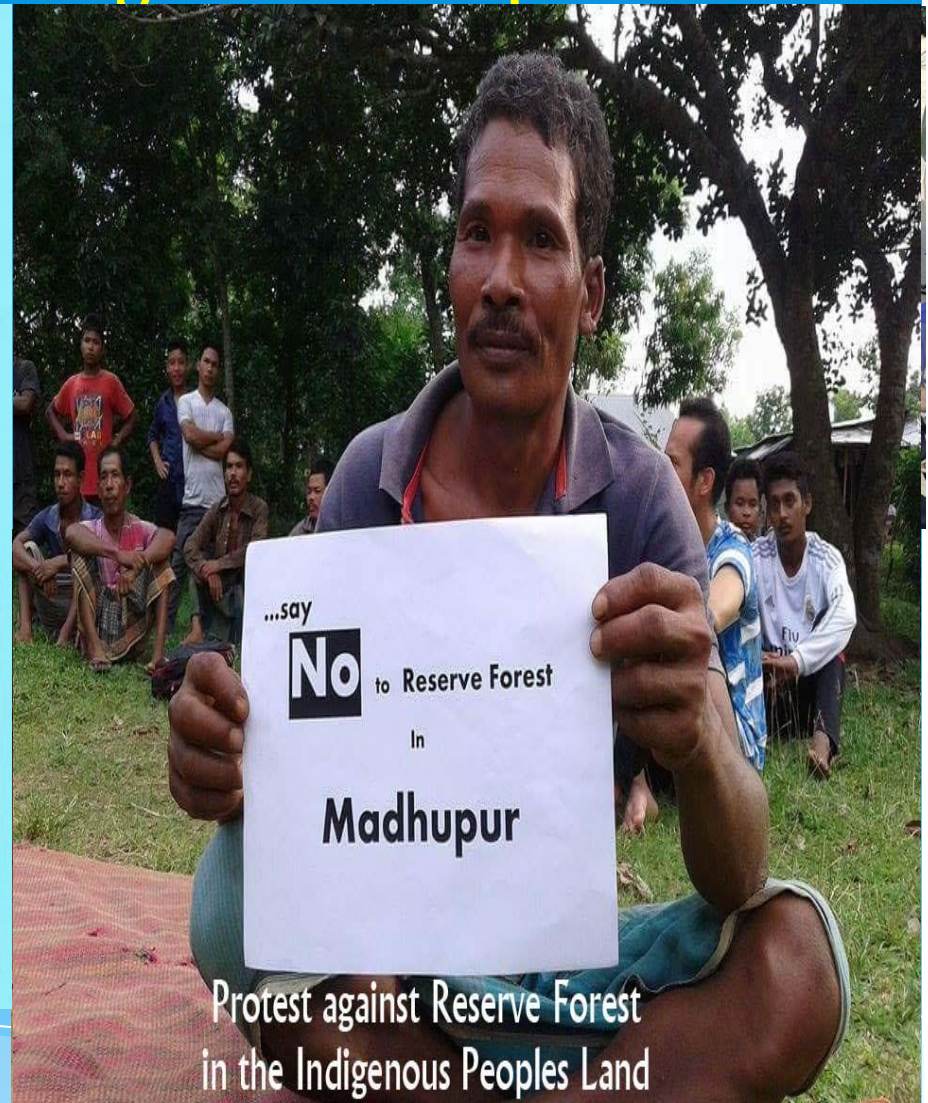
Referring to the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts peace agreement during the AL rule, the former prime minister said: "We had formed a land commission after the agreement and one of its objectives was to establish land right of indigenous people."

Hasina supported the Garos' seven-point demand, including land records for the indigenous people, withdrawal of false cases against them and a judicial probe into the killing of Piren.

Leaders of the indigenous people vowed resistance to the controversial eco-park project, echoing the anti-conservation plan stance of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum President Shantu Larma, who spoke on Sunday at a protest rally in Modhupur, 50 kilometres north of Tangail town.

Lawmaker Promod Mankhin, Sanjeeb Drong, Albert Mankhin and Shanti Sangma spoke at the programme also addressed by Dr Abdur Razzak, AL lawmaker from Modhupur.

The AL chief offered financial help to Piren's family and Utpal Nakrek, who suffered bullet wounds during the January 3 demonstration.



Protest against Reserve Forest in the Indigenous Peoples Land



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Protest against construction of Eco-tourism and Lake in IPs' land



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Types of interventions implemented by Caritas Bangladesh

- Awareness and sensitization programs
- Capacity building programs
- Strengthening Traditional Social Organizations (TSO)
- Financial Support
- Mobile land clinic (Legal and consultation services are provided)
- Population census
- Community-based digital land mapping

Caritas Bangladesh has been working with the IPs since 1990 in the greater Mymensingh area in 21 Upazilas (sub-district) under 6 Districts. IPs Groups: 8 (Garo, Hajong, Koch, Bormon, Hodi, Banai, Rajbongshi, Khotrio).
IPs Population: 1,35,000 (according to Indigenous Peoples' Population Census conducted by Caritas Mymensingh Region in 2019 - 2020 in greater Mymensingh area)



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Community-based Digital Land Mapping

Significance (Why the intervention required/problems existed):

- For resolution of land dispute (especially between IPs and FD)
- Unidentified/unmapped land of IPs (need of demarcating/mapping IPs' land)
- Prepare land related documents (maps and database)
- Declaration of reserved forest and eco-park
- Fear of eviction from their ancestral land
- Evidence for advocacy interventions for establishing land rights

One of the most vital points behind initiating community-based digital land mapping is to confront the “Reserved Forest” declaration (15-02-2016) by the FD through a final government gazette notification according to forest act 1927, section 20, surrounding 9,145 acres of land which includes IPs’ 2293.32 acres land, affecting 1026 HHs with a population of 5792 in 13 villages.



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Community-based Digital Land Mapping

Salient Features of the Intervention:

- Community led intervention
- Formation of Land Management Committee (LMC) & it's role
- Engagement of community youths/young population
- Role of “Song Nokma” (Head of Village) and villagers
- Involvement of different stakeholders at local/national level (advocacy and networking meeting at local/national level with GO/NGO/FD Officials/Civil Society/Political Leaders)
- Use of GNSS and GPS technology for geo-data collection (coordinates)



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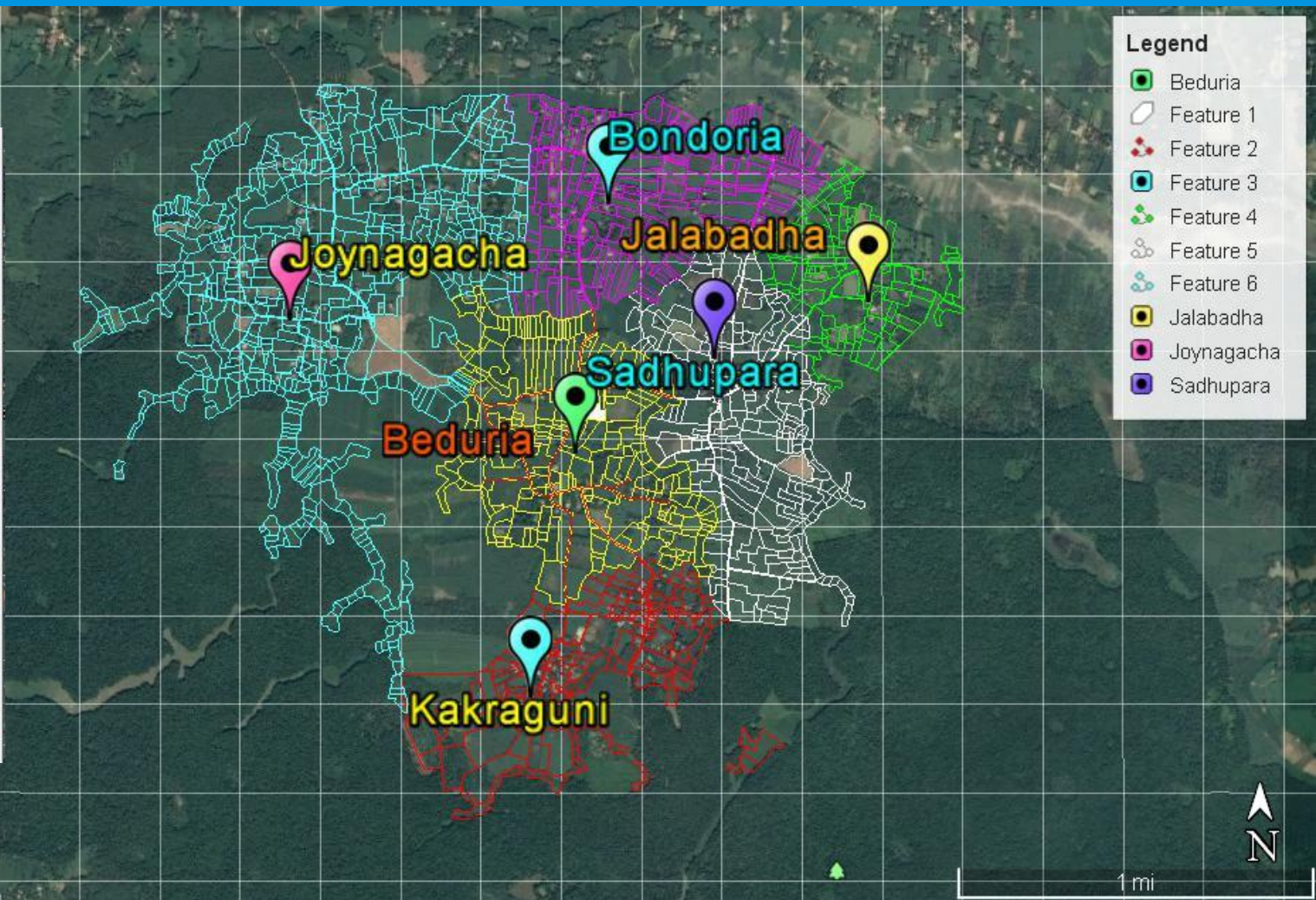
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IP Villages

Places

- Kakraguni_Rd_PM_Fina...
- Jalabadha_Rd_PM_Fina...
- Sadhupara_Rd_PM_Fin...
- Bondoria.kml
- Joynagacha_Final.kml
- Beduria_Final.kml
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Layers



Google Earth

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Land plots of some of the villages under Madhupur Sub-district

Success of Community-based Digital Land Mapping

- ❑ Conducted in 49 IPs' villages
- ❑ Maps and documents handed over to the community people/villagers
- ❑ Land plots demarcated/mapped (of 4694 HHs, Population: 22427, Nos. of land plots: 7887, Land areas: 8233.07 acres, Ancestral/unrecognized land: 7466.35 (91%) acres, Recognized land: 766.72 (9%) acres)
- ❑ **Maps and documents used in the High Court against the declared "Reserved Forest" as evidence of dwellers in the area.**



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**Maps handed over to the community
people of Madhupur Sub-district**

Challenges need to be addressed by IPs and development workers

- Indigenous Peoples' lack of awareness on their land and other human rights
- Indigenous Peoples' fragile organizational/institutional structure
- Government's forest department's obstinate development policy
- Political parties' political affairs/politics
- Indigenous Peoples' economic incapability
- Declaration of Bangladesh as a lower-middle-income country
- Lack of foreign donations



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Opportunities

- Digitalization in land management system (the government has started piloting digital land mapping in few districts)
- Establishment of separate land commission for the IPs of plain land
- Adequate budget allocation for the IPs
- Guarantee of full and effective participation of IPs in major decision-making processes in all development programs
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- ILO Convention 107 (article 11 – 14; specified on land rights)
- Effective advocacy and lobbying interventions by IPs' leaders for establishing land rights



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Thank you!



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