Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB  Asian Development Bank
ALRD  Association for Land Reform & Development
BAFLF  Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labor Federation
BBS  Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS  Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BIHS  Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey
BKMS  Bangladesh Khet Majur Samity
BLF  Bangladesh Labor Welfare Foundation
CPB  Communist Party of Bangladesh
CSO  Civil Society Organization
EGPP  Employment Generation Program for the Poorest
EP  Essential Priorities
FDI  Foreign Direct Investment
FGD  Focus Group Discussion
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GED  General Economic Division
HDRC  Human Development Research Centre
HIES  Household Income and Expenditure Survey
LE  Large Employers
IFI  International Financial Institute
IFPRI  International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO  International Labor Organization
KN  Karojibi Nari
LFS  Labor Force Survey
MJF  Manusher Jonno Foundation
NGO  Non-Government Organization
NK  Nijera Kori
OMS  Open Market Sale
OP  Other Priorities
OSHE  Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation
PFDS  Public Food Distribution System
ToR  Terms of Reference
TR  Test Relief
UP  Union Parishad
VGD  Vulnerable Group Development
VGF  Vulnerable Group Feeding
WHO  World Health Organization
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background
Agriculture is the largest sector of employment in Bangladesh. Although the share of agriculture in gross domestic product (GDP) has declined from over half at the time of independence to around one fifth currently, it remains the predominant sector in terms of employment and livelihood, with about half of Bangladesh’s workforce engaged in it as the principal occupation. One of the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector is the lack of clear-cut distinctions between different categories of workers, farmers, tenant and sharecroppers. Besides, there is a wide range of landownership patterns and methods of cultivation related with livelihoods of agriculture workers. Consequently, there are numerous types of labor relations and different forms of labor force participation are in practice in agriculture.

It is difficult to define agriculture labor like industrial labor. Difficulties in defining agricultural labor are compounded by the fact that many small and marginal farmers also work partly on the farms of others to supplement their income. They are comprised from landless, functional landless, sharecropper and marginal farmers and constitute the majority of the rural population.

With rapid rural to urban migration, absentee land ownership has been growing. The medium and large land owners are leaving farming as agriculture is not profitable due to high cost of input and low cost of crops. Consequently, tenancy markets are increasing and agriculture laborers are becoming share croppers. The sharecropping is unfeasible, but the agriculture laborers are choice-less, entrapped in loss making agriculture to ensure food security of the household for certain months of the year. They are also deprived from government services in agriculture due to policy and practice gaps.

Besides, majority of the agriculture laborers have secondary occupation, and majority of them are pulling van/rickshaw¹. In addition with seasonal migration for agriculture work, the agriculture laborers migrate in off season to towns/cities and engage in different informal sectors like rickshaw pulling, construction work.

The agriculture laborers of Bangladesh are most neglected in society; seasonal unemployment, underemployment, irregular employment, low wage, seasonal hunger and poverty are manifested in the daily lives and livings of the agriculture laborers. They are deprived and neglected section in the rural power structure; they are excluded from labor rights, education, health and basic social services. They are trapped in unequal social relation that there is no or very limited opportunity for upward social and economic mobility. The agricultural laborers are both extreme and chronic poor.

¹ Information generated from field interview
So far no successful initiatives taken at national level towards organizing the workers in this sector or engaged on an dedicated policy advocacy campaign at national level on promotion of rights and social protection of agriculture workers through the collective initiative of Labor NGOs and national trade unions. There is a need for an integrated organizing initiative and policy advocacy actions for having special policy measures and legal framework of protecting workplace rights and minimum social protection measures for workers at agriculture sector of Bangladesh, and building capacity of trade unions integrating the agriculture workers under the umbrella of union.

FNV through its two partners BLF and OSHE, is planning to support a program (pilot) to initiate organizing of agricultural workers and has commissioned This study to explore the status of agriculture workers of Bangladesh in a view to developing formative information base of this program.

This study is to explore the status of agriculture workers of Bangladesh for promotion of rights and social protection of agriculture workers through collective initiatives

1.2 Objectives of the study
The objective of the study is to provide insight into current status of agriculture workers and their organization in Bangladesh, and is covering the following:

- Definition of agriculture workers (laws, practice.);
- Issues of agriculture workers in general and specific as a worker;
- Women agriculture workers –issues/problems;
- Their organization across Bangladesh (various forms);
- Political, legal and other challenges for organizing;
- Government and other initiatives (existing and future) focusing agriculture workers;
- Public policy focusing them including land reforms; and
- Challenges/contribution to food security

The ToR of the study is attached as annex-1

1.3 Methodology
The study design was exploratory; it utilized the qualitative approaches of data collection. The study used primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary sources of data were relevant books, journals, articles on agriculture workers. The primary data were collected through utilizing the qualitative approaches of data collection like unstructured interview, in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD). In addition, case stories on critical issues were collected.
FGD and unstructured interview were conducted with farmers and agriculture workers from four upazilas under four districts. FGD and interview were also conducted with the officials of agriculture extension services at upazila level.

In-depth interview were conducted with the representatives of Union Parishad, leaders and field level organizers of agriculture workers organizations, and NGOs working on land and agriculture issues.

The no. of respondents, upazila and districts is attached as annex-2.

1.4 Organization of the Report
The report is organized into six chapters.

Chapter one describes the background, objectives and methodology of the study.

Chapter two presents the agrarian structure, mode of tenancy and explains the challenges of agriculture; it also describes the characteristics of agriculture labor in Bangladesh, it no., geographic distribution and shows the differences in agrarian structure in terms of labor deficit and labor surplus issue and explains the causes behind this.

Chapter three explains the problems of agriculture in Bangladesh focusing the labor surplus and labor deficit areas.

Chapter four describes the challenges of food security of agriculture laborers of Bangladesh, problems of safety net programs and limitations of Public Food Distribution System.

Chapter five analyses the issue of land reform, its policy and practice gap in Bangladesh describing the major demands of NGOs and agriculture labor organizations on land reform.

Finally, chapter six discusses the issue of organizing the agriculture laborers, its definition and legal status, International Labor Organization Conventions and its status in Bangladesh. It also focuses the organizing practices of NGO, People Organization, Trade Union, and under party line; and provides a comparative scenario about it with major demands and challenges. Finally it presents the right based framework of organizing the agriculture labor in Bangladesh with description of strategies and activities.
CHAPTER TWO: AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURE LABORERS OF BANGLADESH

2.1 Agriculture is the largest sector of employment in Bangladesh
According to Labor Force Survey (LFS) 2010, among the employed population in Bangladesh, about 48% of employed person are employed in agriculture sector. The LFS 2010 estimated that of the total employed person as high as 47.56% was engaged in agriculture sector followed by service (35.35%) and industry sector (17.52%). In the industry sector 12.44% was in the manufacturing sector and the rest in other industries (Table 1).

Majority of the female are employed in agriculture sector, about 69% (Table 1). For the females, the highest 64.84% was engaged in agriculture sector followed by service sector (21.89%) and industry sector (13.32%). For the males, the highest 41.11% was engaged in the service sector followed by agriculture (40.18%) and industry (19.60%). The majority of the people are living in rural areas and women are mainly employed in home-based agricultural activities. Women have increased their labor substantially for poultry raising, homestead gardening and non-farm services. It should be noted that structural changes and modernization of the economy have affected men and women differently. Women continue to work in home-based farm activities while men work in non-farm activities like business and transport.

Table 1: Employed Person Aged 15+ by Economic Sector - No. & Percentage (No.000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Economic Sector</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>15221 (40.18%)</td>
<td>10506 (64.84%)</td>
<td>25727 (47.56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>15572 (41.11%)</td>
<td>3546 (21.89%)</td>
<td>19119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4824 (12.73%)</td>
<td>1907 (11.77%)</td>
<td>6731 (12.44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Industries</td>
<td>2604 (6.87%)</td>
<td>251 (1.55%)</td>
<td>2855 (5.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total13</td>
<td>37882 (100%)</td>
<td>16202 (100.0%)</td>
<td>54084 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.2 Agriculture’s Share in GDP
The share of agriculture in GDP has declined from one third to around one fifth over three decades: In the sectoral composition of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the last three decades, agriculture shrank as a share of GDP, whereas the industry sector grew and service sector remains same as share of GDP (Figure-1). From 1980 to 2011, the share of agriculture

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3 Component may not add to total as some employed are working in more than one sector

_Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations_
sector in GDP shrank 33.07% to 19.29% and the share of industry increased 17.31% to 31.26%. Although the share of agriculture in GDP has declined from one third to around one fifth over three decades, from 80s to 2011; it remains the predominant sector in terms of employment and livelihood, with about half of Bangladesh’s workforce engaged in it as the principal occupation. The importance of agriculture sector in generating employment, alleviating poverty and fostering growth is needless to mention.

*Figure 1: Structural Change of Broad Sectors of Share in GDP*

![Diagram showing structural change of broad sectors of share in GDP](chart)

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review 2012, June 2012, Ministry of Finance, Gov. of Bangladesh

### 2.3 Changes in Sectoral Composition of Employment: gradual decline of agriculture and a rise of services

According to Labor Force Survey Reports, the share of agriculture in total employment declined from 51 percent to 48 percent between 2000 and 2005, and dropped to 47 percent in 2010 (Figure 2). The industry sector’s share grew from 14 percent to 18 percent of total employment between 2000 and 2010, while the share of employment in the service sector remained constant at about 35 percent (Figure 2).

Consistent with the growing industry and service sectors, several important structural changes occurred in the labor market between 2000 and 2010. The main processes were:

i. A gradual decline of agriculture and a rise of services;

ii. Employment growth in urban areas; and

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4 Bangladesh Economic Review 2012, June 2012, Ministry of Finance, Gov. of Bangladesh

iii. A movement away from agriculture, toward industry and services⁶. Agricultural growth has accelerated from less than 2.0% per year during the first two decades after independence to around 3.0% during the last decade. Despite such a steady growth in agriculture as well as in food production, Bangladesh has been facing persistent challenges in achieving food security. This is mainly due to natural disasters and fluctuations in food prices from the influence of volatile international market for basic food items.⁷

**Figure 2: Sectoral Composition of Employment**

![Bar chart showing sectoral composition of employment](image)

*Source: Labor Force Surveys, BBS*

### 2.4 Agriculture in Bangladesh: Climate and Physiography

Bangladesh forms the largest delta in the world and is situated between 88°10’ and 92°41’ East longitudes and between 20°34’ and 26°38’ North latitudes. The great delta is flat throughout and stretches from near the foot-hills of the Himalayan Mountains in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. The vast plain is washed by mighty rivers—the Meghna, the Padma, the Jamuna and the Karnafuli and their numerous tributaries. Tropical monsoon rains drench the land and the rivers. Onrush of rain waters in summer overflows their banks flooding low and outlying areas every year.

The monotony of flatness has been relieved inland by two elevated tracts—the Modhupur and the Barind tracts, and on the north-east and south-east by rows of hilly forests. The great plain lies almost at sea level along the southern coast and rises gradually towards north. The maximum

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elevation above the mean sea level is 4034 feet at Keocradang Hill in Rangamati Hill district. The topography, however, variable and can be divided into the following five classes:

1. **High Land**: The area is relatively high and cannot hold waters during monsoon. Some waters are retained by raising "bandhs" around fields. The area spreads over Modhupur Garh in Tangail and Mymensingh district, Bhaola’s Garh in Gazipur and Dhaka district, Barind tract in Rajshahi Division, Lalmai area in Comilla and "Tilla" areas in Sylhet, Moulvi Bazar and Habiganj district.

2. **Medium Highland**: The land which is normally flooded up to about 90 cm. depth during the rainy season for more than two weeks continuously. The area spreads over Barisal division, major parts of Khulna division, northern part of Rajshahi division and parts of Gazipur, Narsindi, Noakhali, Fenil, Lakshmipur, Comilla and Habiganj district.

3. **Medium Lowland and Low land**: Medium Lowland is normally flooded between 90 cm. and 180 cm. depth and low land is normally flooded between 180 cm. and 275 cm. depth during the monsoon season. The area spreads over major parts of Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Gopalganj district and parts of Lakshmipur, Noakhali, Seraiganj, Natore and Naogaon district, northern parts of Khulna and Bagherhat district, minor of Jessore, Kishorganj and Habiganj district.

4. **Very Low Land**: The land consists of haors, bills, canals and other low lying areas which looks like large lakes during rainy season. Depth of water may rise as high as 30 feet. In winter, waters dry up except in the Centre. Most of the haors and bills lie in Sylhet division and in Kisoreganj and Netrokona district.

5. **Hilly Land**: The land spreads over Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari Hill Districts, parts of Chittagong, northern parts of Mymensingh, north and southern parts of Sylhet division, eastern border of Comilla and north eastern strip of Feni district.

Bangladesh has a tropical monsoon climate characterized by wide seasonal variations in rainfall, high temperatures, and high humidity. Regional climatic differences in this flat country are minor. Three seasons are generally recognized: a hot, muggy summer from March to June; a hot, humid and rainy monsoon season from June to November; and a warm-hot, dry winter from December to February. In general, maximum summer temperatures range between 38 and 41 °C (100.4 and 105.8 °F). April is the hottest month in most parts of the country. January is the coolest month, when the average temperature for most of the country is 16–20 °C (61–68 °F) during the day and around 10 °C (50 °F) at night. The climate characterized by heavy seasonal rainfall, high temperatures, and high humidity. The rainfall ranges from 1500mm in the northwest to 5000mm in the northeast. The rainfall along with depth and duration of flooding is the main critical factor for agriculture in Bangladesh. The critical aspects of rainfall in relation to the use of land for

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8. 2011 Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh
agriculture are related to the uncertainty of the onset and departure of the monsoon as well as occurrence of droughts. 

Map 1: Bangladesh Administrative Map

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9 S.M. Imamul Huq, Professor, Department of Soil, Water and Environment, University of Dhaka, and A.F.M. Manzurul Hoque, Senior Scientific Officer, Soil Resource Development Institute, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh.
Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations
Map 2: Bangladesh Land Type in terms of inundation
2.5 KEY CHALLENGES IN AGRICULTURE OF BANGLADESH
The major characteristics of agriculture are different. The agriculture sector in Bangladesh is facing different challenges. The key challenges are:

i. Concentration of land in the hand of the absentee landowners: The rapid migration to urban areas and overseas and an inactive land market lead to increasing concentration of land in the hand of the absentee landowners. The large and middle farmers are increasingly leaving farm in favor of non-farm activities in rural and urban areas and getting the land cultivated by agricultural laborers and marginal landowners with unviable tiny holdings.

ii. Agriculture is dominated by marginal, small and tenant farmers and scattered holdings
The agriculture of Bangladesh is dominated by marginal and small farmers; their proportions are more than 80% and operate 47.4% of total operated land (Figure 3). 36.3% farmers are marginal farmers who operate only about 9.6% of total operated land. At the other extreme, only 7.3% of all farmers are large farmers who operate about 31% of total operated land and 44.6% small farmers operate 37.8% of land (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Distribution of operated land farm size groups: Rural Bangladesh

iii. Pattern of tenure: Sharecropping is the dominant arrangement: The proportion of pure-tenant farmers is 34 percent in overall rural Bangladesh, that is, they do not own any cultivable land. About 37 percent of farmers at the national level cultivate only their own land. The

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10 Compiled from findings of field interview, FGD and Sixth Five Year Planning, Government of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2010-11
proportion of mixed-tenant farmers—those who cultivate their own land and also take land in as sharecroppers and/or leaseholders—are 29 percent in entire rural Bangladesh (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Land Tenure Patterns in Bangladesh**

![Circle diagram showing land tenure patterns in Bangladesh]

Source: *Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) 2011-12, IFPRI*

The dominant tenurial arrangement in Bangladesh is sharecropping, where the produce is shared between the cultivator and the landowner in different proportions that have been agreed upon prior to cultivation. At the national level about 40 percent of the farmers are sharecroppers. This group of sharecroppers includes those who do not own any cultivable land (that is, pure tenant), as well as those who own land and sharecrop other people’s land. About 13 percent of the farmers in overall rural Bangladesh have cash-lease arrangements, either as pure tenants or as those with their own land plus cash-leased land. The proportion of farmers with mixed-tenancy arrangements (operating sharecropped plus cash-leased land, either as pure tenants or landowners) is 10 percent at the national level (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Mode of tenancy in rural Bangladesh**

![Circle diagram showing mode of tenancy in rural Bangladesh]

Source: *Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) 2011-12, IFPRI*
Approximately one-half of all marginal farmers do not have any land lease arrangements; they cultivate only their own land. This is perhaps a manifestation of their risk aversion. For the marginal farmers who are pure tenants, the sharecropping arrangements represent an overwhelming majority—almost three-fourths of all pure-tenant farmers are sharecroppers. Only about 17% of the large farmers are pure tenants, and the majority of them opt for sharecropping as the mode of renting land. It is interesting to note that the majority of the large farmers supplement their own land with some form of sharecropping and/or cash leasing.\(^{11}\)

**iv. Exploitative rental arrangement and unfeasible agriculture for small and marginal farmers:** The exploitative rental arrangements, the inability to mobilize savings and credit to finance working capital needs, and lack of information and knowledge may act as constraints to adoption of improved technologies and investment in agriculture. As individualistic production system, agriculture is becoming economically and technically unfeasible for increasingly large number of small and marginal farmers.\(^{12}\)

**v. Farmers are not getting fair price:** Farmers continue to face large fluctuations in farm gate prices. The price of most farm produce remains low at harvest that helps market intermediaries and large farmers to mobilize most of the farm surplus.

**vi. Declining crop-land:** The natural resources, land and water and soil fertility, available for agricultural production has however been declining. It is reported that cultivated land has been declining by almost one percent per year due to its demand for increased habitation, industrial and commercial establishment, transport infrastructure, river erosion, and intrusion of saline water in the coastal areas. Therefore the land available for crop production has been declining and the trend will continue.\(^{13}\)

### 2.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURE LABORERS IN BANGLADESH

Agricultural laborers are deprived and neglected section in the rural power structure; they are excluded from labor right, education, health and basic social services. They are trapped in unequal social relation that there is no or very limited opportunity for upward social and economic mobility. The agricultural laborers are both extreme and chronic poor. They are comprised from landless, functional landless, sharecropper and marginal farmers and constitute the majority of the rural population.

One of the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector is the lack of clear-cut distinctions between different categories of workers, farmers, tenant and sharecroppers. Besides, there is a

\(^{11}\) Source: Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) 2011-12, IFPRI


\(^{13}\) 6th Five Year Plan, FY2011-FY2015, GED, Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh, 2011
wide range of landownership patterns and methods of cultivation related with livelihoods of agriculture workers. Consequently, there are numerous types of labor relations and different forms of labor force participation are in practice in agriculture. A single farmer may be grouped in more than one category and many smallholders supplement their subsistence farming income with wages earned by working on medium and large farms holdings during harvesting periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Waged and non-waged workers in agriculture sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non Waged</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landless Tenants-leaseholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner cum-sharecropper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid family workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The landless, functionally landless and sharecropper constitute the majority of the agricultural laborers. The majority of these agriculture laborers are landless; they diversify their occupation by resorting to non-agricultural activities as laborers, rickshaw-pullers, van-pullers small businessman, craftsman etc as a survival strategy. The colored part of the Table-1 comprises the agriculture laborers in rural Bangladesh and constitutes the production relations in agriculture.

From the findings of BIDS survey, it has been found that that sharecroppers, agriculture laborers and non-agricultural laborers belong to separate occupation groups, but their activities are supplementary to one another so much so that they diversify their occupations along these lines of activities. Thus, this type of occupational diversification of agricultural laborers and sharecroppers not only increases their income and employment, but also acts as the poverty reducing mechanism as well as crisis coping strategy (or survival strategy) of rural livelihood. According to findings of the survey, the majority (51.9%) of the agriculture laborers secondary occupation is non-agriculture labor; in the absence of agricultural equipment, it is obvious for the
agricultural laborers not to resort to the occupation of sharecropping and thus they mostly resort to the activities of non-agricultural laborers as secondary occupation. Majority (66.7%) of the non-agriculture labors secondary occupation is agriculture labor and most of the sharecropper’s secondary occupation is agriculture labor. The major secondary occupation of farmers and fishermen’s is agriculture labor 14. Agriculture sector is the main source of income for rural laborers as primary or secondary occupation; they are from agriculture labor and non-agriculture labor, sharecropper, small and marginal farmers, fisher-folk and adivasi (ethnic) community.

2.6.1 NO. OF AGRICULTURE LABORERS IN BANGLADESH

About 35% rural households are agricultural laborers: According to Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh 2011, it has been found that about 35% rural households are agricultural laborers; in urban area it has been found 3.4%. About one third households at national level are agriculture households (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Holdings</td>
<td>25351506 (100.0%)</td>
<td>3344257 (100.0%)</td>
<td>28695763 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labor Households</td>
<td>8732259 (34.4%)</td>
<td>112143 (3.4%)</td>
<td>8844402 (31.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh

Main source of income of 26% rural household is day labor in agriculture: According to Labor Force Survey 2010, main source of income of 26% rural household is day labor in agriculture and 14% in non-agriculture. 31% of rural household is self employment in agriculture. Considering the main and secondary sources of income, majority of the rural households depends on agriculture labor (Figure 6).

Figure 6: HH main source of income in rural Bangladesh

Half of the population of Bangladesh is rural workers including their family members: According to estimation of Bangladesh Agriculture Workers Association (Bangladesh Khetmajur

Samity), half of the population of Bangladesh is rural workers including their family members and their no. is more than seven crore\textsuperscript{15}. According to the estimation of the organization, the 70\% of total population (about 16 crore) is living in rural areas and it is about 11 crore 20 Lac. The agriculture workers comprised from the household of landless and marginal farmers and half of the rural households are landless, which is 35\% of total population and it is half of 11 crore 20 Lac people i.e. 5 crore 67 lac 50 thousand landless people. But all landless people in rural area are not poor, 67 lac 50 thousand people could be deducted from the landless people, then the 5 crore landless people could be agriculture worker. And the rest 50\% of landowners of total rural people (5 crore 67 lac people ), the small amount of land owners, who can’t survive on their land, the sharecroppers and leaseholders also works as day laborer both in agriculture and non-agriculture sector and their no. could be half of them, i.e. 2 crore 83 lac. Adding this 2 crore 83 lac with 5 crore landless agriculture workers we get the total no. of agriculture workers/rural workers including their family members, which is 7 crore 83.

2.6.2 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE LABORERS IN BANGLADESH

Geographic Distribution of agricultural labor households in terms total households
In terms of geographic distribution of agricultural laborers, it has been found that highest no. of agricultural households are located at Rajshahi division followed by Dhaka division. Of the total, more than one third (34\%) agriculture labor households are situated in Rajshahi division and more than one fourth (25\%) are in Dhaka division. In Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal division, it has been found 14.4\%, 15.2\% and 5.42\% respectively. In Sylhet division, it has been found lowest, 5.15\% (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Distribution of agri.labor HH in rural area by administrative division\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{Distribution of agri.labor HH in rural area by administrative division}
\end{figure}

Map 1: Distribution of agri.labor HH in rural area by administrative division

\textsuperscript{15} Source: Akash, M.M., July 2013, National Budget 2013-14 for Agriculture and Rural Workers, Khetmajur Khabar (Agriculture Workers News), Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity, (In Bengali) Dhaka

\textsuperscript{16} Rangpur is newly declared division, here included under Rajshahi
Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations

Distribution of agri. labor HH in rural area by administrative division

- Rajshahi: 34%
- Dhaka: 26%
- Khulna: 15%
- Barisal: 6%
- Chittagong: 14%
- Sylhet: 5%
**Distribution of agri. labor household in terms of all holdings**

In terms of all holdings, it has been found that in rural area, Khulna and Rajshahi division has highest percentage of agricultural laborers, 42.3% and 41.5% respectively, followed by Sylhet division (31.5%). The percentage of agriculture labor household in rural area is same in Barisal, Chittagong and Dhaka division, i.e. 29.2% (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Distribution of agri. labor household in terms of all holdings by division**¹⁷

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>31.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
<td>41.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>42.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>29.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>29.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barisal</td>
<td>29.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>34.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2011 Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh*

¹⁷ Rangpur is a newly declared division, here Rangpur division is included under Rajshahi division
Map 2: Distribution of agri. labor HH in terms of all holdings by divisions

Distribution of agri. labor household in terms of all holdings by division

RAJSHAHI 41.50%

SYLHET 31.50%

DHAKA 29.20%

KHULNA 42.30%

CHITTAGONG 29.20%

BARISAL 29.20%
Distribution of agri. labor household in terms of all holdings by district: The highest no. of agriculture household is concentrated in Satkhira district and lowest no. in Dhaka district, 52% and 4% respectively (Figure 3.4). It has been found that the highest no. of agriculture labor households are concentrated in Kurigram (49%), Natore and Gaibandha (46%), Meherpur (45%) and Netrakon (44%) district and the lowest no. of agriculture labor are in Dhaka (4%), Narayanganj (8%), Chittagong (14%), Gazipur (15%), Jhalokati (16%), Narshingdi (18%) and Sylhet (19%) and Feni (21%) district (Figure 9).

In terms of concentration of agri. labor household, there is difference within the district and upazila in terms of rate of urbanization and distance from town. The no. of agri. labor household is low in Sadar Upazila of district and highest in the remote area; which is similar in the nearest unions of upazila. Accordingly, the average no. of agriculture labor households is 33% in terms of all holdings in district. Here the scope of working in non-agricultural sector have major role.

Figure 9: Distribution of agri. labor household by district in terms of all holdings in %

-Source: 2011 Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh

2.7 Labor deficit and labor surplus districts in agriculture

Agriculture generates seasonal employment for labors. From Interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), it has been found that in some districts of the country, there happens shortages labor for agriculture and depends mostly on migrated agricultural labor. In general, the districts having less than 25% of agriculture labor households, faces deficit of labor generally in the whole
season and particularly in peak season, it last 25 to 30 days as huge labor requires at a time. These districts are highly labor deficits area. Generally, these districts depend totally on migrated labor supplied mostly from the districts where agriculture labor household is above 36%. These districts are labor surplus area and are mostly from Rangpur division. There is no updated information about internal agriculture labor migration in Bangladesh containing the whole scenario. In general, agricultural labor migrates seasonally from Rangpur division to other parts of the country, especially Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet division.

From field interview, it has been found that the districts where agriculture labor households contain 26-30% are also moderately labor deficits area in general, where migrated seasonal labor comes from nearer districts. But in some Upazila of Tangail district where agriculture depends on migrated labor of Rangpur division. In terms of availability of labor, some districts are self sufficient, these districts comprises 31-35% labor households, but in peak season labor migrates from high concentrated areas to low concentrated areas within the upazila and nearer upazilas within the districts.

**Table 4: Distribution of agri. labor household by district in percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of agriculture labor household</th>
<th>Name of District</th>
<th>Characteristics in terms of surplus and deficits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20%</td>
<td>Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Gazipur, Narshingdhi, Jhalokhati, Sylhet</td>
<td>Highly deficit districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25%</td>
<td>Feni, Munshiganj, Brahmanbari, Patuakhali,</td>
<td>Deficit districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30%</td>
<td>Tangail, Manikganj, Rangamati, Moulavibazar, Cox’s Bazar, Barisal, Barguna, Pirojpur, Khulna, Bandarban, Comilla, Chapai Nawabganj</td>
<td>Moderately deficit in some area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35%</td>
<td>Bhola, Bogra, Noakhali, Lakshipur, Pabna, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Magura, Kushtia, Narail, Sirajganj, Panchagarh, Khagrachari, Chandpur,</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40%</td>
<td>Rajshahi, Jenaidah, Chuadanga, Sunamganj, Joypurhat, Sariatpur, Kishoreganj, Mymensingh, Habiganj, Rangpur, Nilphamari,</td>
<td>Surplus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% and above</td>
<td>Thakurgaon, Jessore, Netrakona, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Natore, Lalmunirhat, Gaibandha, Meherpur, Kurigram, Satkhira</td>
<td>Highly Surplus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.8  **Factors behind labor surplus and labor deficit districts in agriculture**
The major factors behind the surplus labor in agriculture sector are high prevalence of poverty, limited scope to diversify the scope of income from non-agriculture and low-rate of international labor migration.

**High prevalence of poverty:** The Rangpur division continues to exhibit high prevalence of poverty as well as marked seasonality of income and consumption. In 2010, Rangpur division had the highest prevalence of poverty (42 percent) and extreme poverty (28 percent) relative to other divisions, exceeding the rest of the country by more than 12 percentage points in both categories (Table?). Rangpur division is five years behind in poverty reduction relative the rest of the country. Moreover, Rangpur also suffers from persistence seasonal shocks. The austere seasonal poverty and hunger observed in Rangpur is known as *Monga* which lasts about three months, from September to November. In that period declines the farm wage employment.\(^{18}\)

**Table 5: Comparison of poverty between Rangpur and Rest of the Country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rangpur</th>
<th>All Division except Rangpur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Limited scope of diversify the source of income:** To cope with the problems of landlessness and poverty, the agriculture labor diversify their occupation by resorting to non-agricultural activities. The income source of landless households from agriculture declined over the period of 1988 to 2008 from 49.9% to 34.2% and increased from non-agriculture 50.1%

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**Box 1: Rangpur – Distinct Feature of a Lagging Regions**

Some of the major reasons for Rangpur’s comparative disadvantage are:

- Inadequate investment
  - in infrastructure, including electricity, resulting in a non-diversified rural economy and limited opportunities for off-farm employment;
  - Low crop yields due to poor soil quality;
  - A high proportion of landless that depend on wage-labor income;
  - Low wage rates for both male and female agricultural day laborers;
  - Risk of floods and river erosion;
  - Vulnerability of the livelihood of people living in char areas, consisting of reclaimed land from rivers, including tiny islands like fragments; and
  - Poor inflows of remittances from migrant family members working in the country or abroad.


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to 65.8%\textsuperscript{19}. In Rangpur division, the scope for diversification of occupation is low compare to other region due to non-diversified rural economy. Secondly, in Rangpur division, daily wage rate of agriculture laborers are low compare to other divisions.

\textsuperscript{19} Abdul Bayes and Mahbub Hossein, 2013, \textit{Tinbigha Jami}, AH Development Publishing House Dhaka
Disparity in access to international migration among labor surplus and labor deficit districts: Third and most important issue is that there are geographical disparities in access to migration. Over 82 percent of migrants abroad come from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet; and another 7 percent from Rajshahi (Figure 3.5). Barisal, Khulna’s share in total migrants are 6% and 4% respectively; the share of Rangpur is very low; only 1% though Rangpur’s share of population from total is 11% (Figure 10 and 11). The explanation for such geographical disparities can perhaps be found in the “new economics of migration” which postulates that household, families, or other groups of related people operate collectively to maximize income and minimize risks by sending one or more family members abroad to increase overall family income while others remain behind earning lower but more stable incomes. These “network effects” suggest that migration will tend to be high from regions from where the stock of migrants is already high. Survey evidence suggests that transnational migration networks provide prospective migrants with information about economic conditions in destination countries, support in managing the immigration process, and help in obtaining housing and finding a job\(^20\).

Private Transfers and Remittances in labor surplus and labor deficit divisions: The national rural average size of international remittance (Tk 12,999 per year) is 2.8 times the average size of private transfers received from within the country, Tk 4,715 per year (Figure 3.7). It has been found that Chittagong division received highest amount of international remittance followed by Sylhet division and Rangpur division received lowest amount of remittance, which is less than ten times compare to Chittagong division. In terms of private domestic transfers, Rangpur division

received more money than Sylhet, Khulna and Rajshahi. It is notable that only the Rangpur region received more domestic transfer than international remittance (Figure 12).

Moreover, in many areas of rural Bangladesh, remittance income from family members working abroad represents a significant proportion of household income as well as a substantial source of fund inflows into the local economy. However, the exception to this pattern is Rangpur, where remittances comprised only 4.7 percent of total household income, compared to 14.8 percent for rural households in other regions in 2010\(^2\).

*Figure 12: Average size of private transfers and international remittances received by division*

![Average size of private transfers and international remittances received by division](image)

*Source: Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2011-12, IFRI, Dhaka*

### 2.9 General trend and characteristics of agriculture in surplus and deficit districts

In terms of availability of daily labor, agriculture is divided into two types; labor deficit and labor surplus area. In labor deficit area agriculture depends on seasonally migrated labor; Dhaka, Chittagong and some parts of Sylhet division, agriculture depends on mostly seasonally migrated labor. In Khulna division, agriculture labor migrates seasonally from Satkhira to Khulna district.

Consequently, there are differences in production relations, characteristics of labor market and the problems of agriculture labor among the labor deficits and labor surplus areas. Due to shortage of waged workers in labor deficit districts, the workers became sharecroppers, which increase more dependency on migrant workers. Secondly, in some areas, cash leasing became

\(^2\) *Bangladesh Poverty Assessment: Assessing a Decade of Progress in Reducing Poverty 2000-2010*
popular practice instead of sharecropping in tenancy market. The comparative changes among the two areas are presented in the table 6.

**Table 6: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN high SURPLUS & DEFICIT AREA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Surplus agri. labor districts</th>
<th>High deficit agri. labor districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Poverty rate is high and prevalence of seasonal hunger <em>(manga)</em></td>
<td>Poverty rate is low and there is no seasonal hunger <em>(manga)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Wage rate of agri. labor is low</td>
<td>Wage rate of agri. labor is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Rate of international migration of labor is very low</td>
<td>Rate of international migration of labor is high; agri. labor HH became sharecroppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Opportunity of non-farm activity, small business, transport, job in manufacturing is low</td>
<td>Opportunity of non-farm activity, small business, transport, job in manufacturing is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Sharecropping is dominant mode, also there is the practice of contract sharing <em>(chukti barga)</em></td>
<td>Cash leasing is dominant mode, in general no contract sharing <em>(chukti barga)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi.</td>
<td>Sharecroppers are in weak condition in-terms of bargaining with land owners</td>
<td>Sharecroppers are in favorable condition in-terms of bargaining with land owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii.</td>
<td>Land owners dominates in decision making</td>
<td>Tensions prevailing over sharing the input cost in sharecropping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii.</td>
<td>Owners are big farmers</td>
<td>In some cases tenants are big farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix.</td>
<td>Women are wage laborers</td>
<td>In general, women laborers does not work in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x.</td>
<td>Condition of agri. labor is comparatively bad</td>
<td>Condition of agri. labor comparatively good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi.</td>
<td>Mostly Rangpur division</td>
<td>Mostly Dhaka and Chittagong division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xii.</td>
<td>[Here critical issue here is workers right &amp; sharecropping]</td>
<td>[Here critical issue here is land rights/tenancy right/sharecroppers right]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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22 Findings generated from field visit, interview and FGD
CHAPTER 3: PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE LABORERS IN BANGLADESH

The agriculture laborers of Bangladesh are most neglected in society; seasonal unemployment, underemployment, irregular employment, low wage, seasonal hunger and poverty are manifested in the daily lives and livings of the agriculture laborers.

It is difficult to define agriculture labor like industrial labor. Difficulties in defining agricultural labour are compounded by the fact that many small and marginal farmers also work partly on the farms of others to supplement their income. With rapid rural to urban migration, absentee land ownership has been growing. The medium and large land owners leave farming. Consequently, tenancy markets are increasing and agriculture laborers are becoming sharecropper. Besides, most of the agriculture laborers have secondary occupation, mostly van/rickshaw pulling. In addition with seasonal migration for agriculture work, the agriculture laborers migrate in off season to towns/cities and engage in different informal sectors like rickshaw pulling, construction work. Many rickshaw pullers of Dhaka city are agriculture workers in the rural area. In both rural and urban area their social status is very low.

The major problems of agriculture laborers are mentioned below23.

Box 2: Due to soaring price hike of essential goods, it is difficult to survive and we have no future

Manik Sardar, Rickshaw puller cum-agriculture worker
Akkelpur, Joypurhat

Manik Sadar (47) is a Rickshaw puller cum-agriculture worker; he is from Akkelpur, Joypurhat. Manik Sardar lives half of the year in Dhaka city and half of the year in his village. In the winter season, he lives 4 to 5 months continuously in the village and works as day labor in agriculture and rest of the year he pulls rickshaw in Mohmmadpur area of Dhaka city. Manik Sardar is completely landless; he has no homestead land and living in the land of other people. He don’t cultivate land as sharecropper as it is difficult for him to arrange all the equipment for cultivation, he lives only on wage labor in agriculture. As wage labor in agriculture, it is difficult to survive in the village. The winter is a peak season in agriculture in his area; the wage rate is TK. 350 to TK.400 per day with food, the employers provide biri (Cigarette) also. There is also scope of work in the rural area, but the wage rate is low; for the landless like him, it is difficult to survive at that time in rural area, said Mr. Sardar. His family members are four; one son, one daughter, he and his wife. His daughter got married last month. His family is living in village.

He says it is difficult now to maintain livelihood in Dhaka city by pulling rickshaw. He has to pay to TK.200 to rickshaw owner TK 200/per day as rent of rickshaw (including food cost), and needs another TK 50 for other cost in the road. Now days there is huge traffic jam in the road; it’s a barrier for smooth earning for the rickshaw pullers. His son is reading in class five; his dreams to provide education to his children. He says, we have no future, due to soaring price hike of essential goods, it is difficult to survive.

23 Findings generated from field visit, interview and FGD
• Seasonal unemployment and irregular;
• Segmented labor market and inequality in wage;
• Patron-client relationship;
• Landlessness and poverty among agri.labors;
• Government services are denied to sharecroppers;
• Unfavorable sharecropping in loss-making agriculture;
• Low Social Status.

The nature of these problems is different in labor surplus and labor deficit areas in terms of intensity and rate. This chapter discusses the problems of agriculture laborers of Bangladesh having some comparison with labor surplus and labor deficit areas.

3.1 Seasonal Employment and Irregular
The major problem of agriculture worker is that they have to remain unemployed half of the year in agriculture sector. The agricultural season in Bangladesh is 5-6 months. In the season 30 to 45 days is peak season round the year; peak season is the main income period of an agriculture worker. Agricultural workers migrate at that time from surplus areas to deficit areas, especially from poverty prone Rangpur region to other parts of the country to get better wage; women and family members take care of their own agriculture, there is no difference of agricultural season among the regions. Within the 6-month season, it is not possible for a worker to sell labor whole the month; usually it is 10 to 20 days per month, it varies person to person.

There is no update statistics about the days of employment of an agriculture worker in a year. According to agriculture workers, they have no work in agriculture 5 to 6 months in a year in their area; it is off season to them. According to Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity the agriculture workers remain unemployed more than 150 days per year.

According to BIDS survey in 2005, an agricultural laborer, on an average, is engaged annually for 162 days in agricultural activities and for 94 days in non-agricultural activities. This indicates that an agricultural laborer remains unemployed/underemployed for a substantial period in a year. At the period of unemployment, majority of agriculture workers pull van/rickshaw in their area, works in government schemes and other non-farm activities in rural areas. Some agriculture workers migrate to nearer town or cities and work as day laborer in different informal sector like rickshaw pulling, loader, hawker, construction work, and also in hotel and restaurant. There is difference between male and female workers; the female workers can’t migrate like male workers.

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Majority of the households (sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and all types of households) search for work in their own and neighboring villages and nearly 30-40 percent of them migrate to various towns (including Dhaka city) for their work. This indicates that labor mobility is also significant in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Box3: We have no any demand. There is no authority to consider the problems of agriculture laborers.

Sadekul Islam, agriculture laborer cum rickshaw-puller, Gangachara Upazila, Rangpur

Sadekul Islam (28), is an agriculture laborer cum rickshaw-puller in Dhaka city; from Gangachara Upazila of Rangpur District, one of the poverty prone upazila of Bangladesh. He is from small farmer household, has 66 decimal of agriculture land, in addition his family take land for sharecropping. The quality of land belongs to his family is less fertile. About half of the year, Sadekul lives in village and work as wage labor in agriculture and half of the pulls rickshaw in Dhaka city.

In the peak season, he lives in village continuously and works on contract basis in agriculture, earns TK. 400 to 500/day. It last 25 to 30 days in the month of Baishak and Jaistha. The other time the wage is Tk. 250 to Tk. 300. It is not possible to work 30 days in a month. On an average a labor can save labor 10-15 days; it varies person to person. The rest of months, sadekul pulls rickshaw in Dhaka city to increase the household income 15 to 20 days in a round and go back to village and work as day laborer in agriculture, generally 8 to 10 days in a month. By pulling rickshaw, he can save Tk. 400 to TK. 500 per day. According to Sadekul, Most of the rickshaw-pullers of Dhaka city are agriculture labor, migrates seasonally from Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari. He says Dhaka city saved us. Besides rickshaw pulling, the rural workers also work in construction sector and restaurants as day labor.

Sadekul said, agriculture laborers have three major problems, when farmer don’t get fair price or when crop damages, the scope of daily wage labor in agriculture reduces. The potato farmers facing loss this year, some of them stopped harvesting from field, it reduces the opportunity of work for daily laborers. Secondly, the price of rice is high, it is big problem for the rural wage laborers; thirdly, we have no education and skill, can’t change the occupation, we are trapped in agriculture and rickshaw-pulling; and finally there is no authority to consider the problems of agriculture laborers.

The agriculture workers in Chunaroghat said they migrate to Moulovibazar town, Sylhet, Chittagong and Dhaka city. In Sylhet they work as stone loading/collection, ship breaking industry in Chittagong and in some areas they work as earth breaking (mati kata) worker. Mr. Sadekul, a Rickshaw puller of Dhaka city said, the majority of rickshaw pullers of Dhaka city are agriculture worker, in the off season they migrate to Dhaka city for better earning. According to them there is scope of work in the off season and they earn TK. 300 to 400 per day in the town or city. The problem is that it is mostly daily basis and irregular.

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The women worker can’t migrate in the off season. Ms. Sakina Khtun, A woman worker in Nilphamari district “(Meye Manush, amra kajer Sandane Alakar Baire Jete Pari Na”) “as women, we can’t move from our village like men, we have no security and protection”.

3.2 SEGMENTED LABOR MARKET AND INEQUALITY IN WAGE
Due to predominance of family-based holdings, the agricultural labor market in Bangladesh is small and fragmented. The agricultural labor market in most districts of Bangladesh is very complex. Even within a village, the labor market is segmented by the variety of considerations including gender differences and type of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The laborers are not homogenous. Labor is transacted in the market under three major arrangements:

- hiring on a seasonal or annual contract (attached workers);
- hiring on a daily contract (casual work); and
- hiring on a piece-rate contract (contract workers).

Attached workers almost disappeared but there is practice of patron-client relationship:
The attached workers, or bandha majur, usually live with the farm household and are paid wages on a monthly/seasonal/yearly basis and provided with free meals and clothing. The working conditions for attached workers are precarious and considered of low social esteem. However, their participation in labor market is on the decline and almost disappeared.

According to findings from repeated sample survey that labour transactions on a seasonal or annual basis have waned. In 1988, bandha majur were kept on 16 percent of the farm households; the average number of such workers per farm household was 0.27. During 2000, only 8 percent of farm households hired this category of workers and the average number of workers was only 0.14.

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26 Mahbub Hossain and Abdul Bayes, 2009, “Progress in Rural Economy in Bangladesh: Insight from Repeat Sample Surveys” in Development Experience and Emerging Challenges edited by Quazi Shahabuddin & Rushidan Islam Rahman, BIDS & UPL, Dhaka
From our field visit, it has been found that it is not in practice to hire attached labor; in Chunarughat, the agriculture laborers informed that there a system of seasonal contract of workers with farm household for 8 months and the wage is between 30-35 mond paddy or 20,000 to 25000 taka per season with food, accommodation and clothing. The system is diminishing. The workers are not interested to be attached with household as it is low social status and some time have listen illogical comments from employers. The big farmers told that it is not profitable now to employ attached labor. But the woman in some area works as attached labor in the agriculture season, the no. is very few. The wage rate is in kind not in cash; 3-4 mand paddy with one saree in a one/two month per season; the employer provide food and accommodation if needed. The woman workers support in cooking and agriculture related activities. This practice is also declining. It has also found that women migrate seasonally as attached labor within the district,

**Box4: No end yet to wage discrimination**

When the country observed the International Women’s Day yesterday, the female labourers in rural areas of five upazilas under the district continued to tolerate serious wage discrimination compared to their male counterparts.

These women engaged in crop fields, brickfields, hotels and restaurants, houses, small industrial units, bidi factories, construction sites and other places are given as less as one third of the wage received by males for the same amount of work, said the discrimination victims at different places. Taking the advantage of their poverty, middlemen hire them for meagre wages to work in crop fields and other places, they said.

"The demand for women labourers is considerably high as they are usually more sincere to work than the males. But their employers exploit them, taking the advantage of their simplicity, while the male labourers are paid higher and treated better," said Shamsunnar Mili, a NGO worker at Bhadail village in Lalmonirhat upazila.

Several female labourers working for road construction at Bhelabari village in Aditmari upazila said they are hired for daily wage of Tk 80 to 100 each, while a male labourer gets Tk 250 to 300 a day for the same work.

"I am working at Bhelabari road construction site for Tk 100 a day as there is no alternative employment opportunity. We are well aware of the deception by the middlemen but we cannot bargain due to lack of unity among the women labourers," said Meherun Begum, 33, a divorcee at Sindurna village of Hatibandha upazila.

"Depending on opportunity, I work at mills, crop fields and other places. But middlemen give me less wage than the male workers although I am able to work the same," said Nusrat Banu, 35, at Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

Ashraful Islam, a contractor of road construction at Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, claimed that women labourers remain satisfied with Tk 100 as daily wage and they never expressed any demand.

Source: [http://www.thedailystar.net/no-end-yet-to-wage-discrimination-14675](http://www.thedailystar.net/no-end-yet-to-wage-discrimination-14675), 9 March 2014

Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in viable production relations
from one upazila to another upazila and within the known network. It has also been found that in some remote coastal areas like Hatiya upazila of Noakhali, attached labor also in practice, and the trend is declining.

ii. Casual workers, known as *din majur* or *kamla* are employed on a daily basis, depending on the need and/or opportunity of work. In 1988, 29 percent of all rural households and 42 of functionally landless households supplied labour under this arrangements. In 2000, the number was 12 percent and 20 percent respectively. Their work as agricultural wage-labourers has also declined and they are now absorbed largely in rural non-farm sectors (Hossain and Bayes 2007, Saha 2001b).

iii. Contract workers, or *chukti* or *thika majur*, are hired to complete a specific operation for a piece-rated wage, depending on the size of the parcel of land on which the work has to be done. It is emerging trend. During weeding and harvesting periods, contract laborers are gaining importance due to increasing scarcity and the problem of supervision of casual laborers. Thus the piece-rated work is more remunerative. The labourer works more intensively, and the employer can get the work done with less workers. It is a win-win situation for both the employer and the employee.

**Inequality of wage in terms of gender**

Due to wide fluctuations in seasonal and regional wages, it is difficult to estimate wages for country as a whole. Despite these difficulties, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics publishes monthly wage of industry and agricultural laborers wage. It has been found the wage of agriculture laborers is highest in the month of April and May and in the month of May the wage is highest; the wage is lowest in the month of January (Table?). In terms of wage, there is a difference between women (Taka 236) and man (Taka311); it is about 80 taka to 100 taka.

**Table 7: Average daily wage rate of Agri. labor without food and with food by sex in TK.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Without Food</th>
<th>With Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2013</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2013</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2013</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin, Bangladesh, June-2013*

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27 Findings generated from Interview and FGD with agri. laborers in Hobiganj
28 Mahbub Hossain and Abdul Bayes, 2009, “Progress in Rural Economy in Bangladesh: Insight from Repeat Sample Surveys” in Development Experience and Emerging Challenges edited by Quazi Shahabuddin & Rushidan Islam Rahman, BIDS & UPL, Dhaka
In terms of geographic distribution of wage without food, it has been found that Dhaka division is highest (356 Taka) followed by Chittagong division (333.5 Taka) and Rajshahi division is lowest (260.6). The Rangpur region is included in the Rajshahi division, where national averages were Taka 311 for male and Taka 236 for female.

Table 8: Average daily wage rate of Agri. Labor by division and sex in May’13 without food(in TK.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barisal</td>
<td>293.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>333.5</td>
<td>237.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>356.1</td>
<td>258.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>287.5</td>
<td>196.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
<td>260.6</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin, Bangladesh, June-2013

From field visit, it has been found that there are differences of wage in terms of gender and ethnicity. The table 9 shows the inequality of wages.

Table 9: Daily wage rate of agricultural workers in TK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normal season</td>
<td>Peak season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domar, Nilphamari</td>
<td>150-200</td>
<td>250-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chunarughat, Habiganj</td>
<td>200-250</td>
<td>300-350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In contract, 400-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonagaji, Feni</td>
<td>200-250</td>
<td>300-350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In contract, 400-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirsarai, Chittagong</td>
<td>300-350</td>
<td>300-350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In contract, 400-500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interview, FGD

According to Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2011-12 prepared by IFRI, it has been found that the daily wage rate at the national rural level for males (Tk 222.5) was 16.0 percent higher than the rate for females (Tk 191.8). The gender gap in wage rates was biggest in Barisal division—the male wage was 31.4 percent higher than the female wage and smallest in Rangpur division—the male wage was only 3.8 percent higher than the female wage.
The agricultural wages for both males and females were the highest in Chittagong division. The lowest wage for males was recorded in Rangpur division, and for females in Rajshahi division (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Average daily wage rates of agri. laborers by divisions

![Bar graph showing average daily wage rates by division for males and females.](image)

Source: BIHH Survey 2011-12, IFRI, Dhaka

Inequality of wage in terms of ethnicity

Majority of the plain land indigenous people are involved with agricultural day labor, which is higher than the national level; however, only 0.5% people have own land for cultivation or farming. As compared with Bengali people, those, who are engaged in wage labor, are mostly discriminated. There is a large variation in daily wage in the different plain land indigenous groups. Santal community gets relatively more daily wage than the other communities.

Bengali laborers have a fixed time to work whereas adivasi laborer works 2-4 hours more than the Bengalis. Though the type of work and the load of the work is same. They are paid fewer wages for their labor compared with the non-adivasi laborers. This situation has been observed in Chunarughat of Habiganj district, that the wage rate of workers living in the tea garden area- an ethnic minority is low compare to Bengali workers having same work and they work more in terms of hour. Whole the year their wage is 150 Taka, irrespective of peak and lean season (Table 3.5). In the labor market in agriculture, they work as a group under a Sardar (group leader) and

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Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations
male, female works together in the field. It also has been found that they don’t migrate to distance areas like Bengali laborers; which also reduces their bargaining capacity in labor market.

**Child Labor in Agriculture**
Children as wage labor in crop sector of agriculture has already been disappeared; it has not been found in our field visit; but it is common practice that children is working as unpaid family worker as aid or helper in all activities at all levels from seed preservation to marketing. In some remote areas, there might be children working as attached labor in the rural household doing household work with field work in agriculture.

### 3.3 Patron-client relationship

Though attached labor is not in practice, but there is some sort of patron client relationship prevailing especially in Rangpur region. Though the labor is almost free, but in some areas where rental market of agricultural land is competitive, the bargaining power of tenants is reduced to a great extent. The landlord can exploit the tenants’ cheap family labour and also can use them (patron-client relation) in village politics and local conflicts (Hossain 1981). The word “Proja”, “Adhiar” is also in practice now, though the trend is declining. The patron-client relationship also ensures an assured supply of labour required to satisfy the timely demand of agricultural operation.

From BIDS survey data it has been found that the work attachment of the tenants to the landowners appears to be very low. It has been found that nearly 5 percent of tenants have work attachment to the landowners. These attached tenants usually provide farm (wage) and domestic labor to the landowners. According to the findings of the survey, it has been found that that while most of the tenants (58 percent) sell their labor to the landowners at the market rate, a significant portion of them (36 percent) sell their labor at less than market rate as well. Sometime they also sell at more than the market rate and also under free (unpaid) market arrangements. In such circumstances, patron-client relationships appear to be prevalent, but not to a significant extent.

From interview with the worker-cum tenants of Domar Upazila of Nilphamri, it has been found that they get market price from the land owners, but some time they get 15-20 Taka less than the market price and it is in very few cases; they mostly works in land owners field and sometimes do small work without payment; ‘We eat their salt, we have to admire them’ (in Bangla ‘Noon khai, gun gaite hobe’). One farmer of the area said, in the peak season,

“I pay 20 to 30 taka less than the market rate being them pressurized. Generally, the Adhiar (sharecropper) or Proja work in their land lord’s field. The workers don’t move to other landlord’s field without completing the work. It’s a tradition, but it is declining. Workers are free to move and sell their labor”.

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Other absentee landowners said, “Everything is changing rapidly, people are becoming urban centered, when I visit my village; the old tenants come forward and take my bags; but their children don’t care it and even they are not interested with agriculture; the primordial relationship is breaking down”

The patron-client relation is still in practice particularly in Rangpur region, where tenancy market is competitive, but not a significant extent.

3.4 Landlessness and poverty among agri.labor;
Agricultural wage laborers are among the poorest in rural Bangladesh. It has been found that the rate of poverty reduction was slowest for agriculture laborer, who has experienced the smallest decline in poverty among all occupational groups. The wage labor in rural area still remains the poorest group of all both in agriculture and non-agriculture.34

Land is the most important factor of agricultural production. Most of the agricultural laborers belong to group of landless. It is remarkable that Chittagong division (labor deficit area) has highest percentage of incidence landlessness followed Sylhet and Rangpur, respectively 67.30%, 60.70% and 57.80% (Figure 14). The Khulna division has lowest percentage of landlessness.

Figure 14: Incidence of landlessness by administrative division in percentage

Source: BIHH Survey 2011-12, IFRI, Dhaka

The Rangpur division continues to exhibit high prevalence of poverty. Rangpur division is five years behind in poverty reduction relative the rest of the country. Moreover, Rangpur also suffers from persistence seasonal shocks. The austere seasonal poverty and hunger observed in Rangpur is known as Monga which lasts about three months, from September to November. In that period declines the farm wage employment (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Incidence of Poverty by division**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barisal</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangpur</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HIES 2010

### 3.5 Government services are denied to agriculture laborers and sharecroppers

*There is policy gap to provide Input assistance for sharecroppers:* Government provided Agriculture Input Assistance Service Card and Bank Account for farmers is a good initiative; it's a fulfillment of long demands farmers organizations. Government policy did not consider the actual situation of the tenancy arrangement in the field; in the policy there is no direction for sharecroppers to provide the input assistance. The absentee land owners and land owners involved with non-agricultural activity should not be treated as farmers.

**Structural Constraint to provide support to sharecroppers:** According to Agriculture Extension Officials, it is difficult to identify the real sharecroppers as there is three types of sharecropper—Permanent, Seasonal/Yearly and Temporary; though they are trying to find out who is permanent. This difficulty created space for corruption and nepotism. Sharecropping is a structural constraint for technological promotion in agriculture; the sharecroppers are reluctant to new technology as there is no ownership in tenancy;

**Outreach to agricultural extension services to small and marginal farmers is low:** According to BIH survey 2011-12, Marginal and small farmers constitute the largest share of farmers in Bangladesh. However, the outreach of agricultural extension services to these two groups of farmers is very low in absolute terms and considerably less than the service provided to medium and large farmers.
The agriculture laborers and extension officials identified the following problems in extension services:\(^{35}\):

- Government support is inadequate in terms of no. and quantity of assistance in most of the cases it is one third of demand;
- The extension officers faces pressure from political leaders, UP Chairman and farmers; it is difficult to mange the program;
- There is constraints also in the demands side; lack of information and awareness also create obstacles. The farmers are not adequately informed about the card, subsidy and bank account;
- The farmers blamed that government input assistance is being used as a tool for vote banking and patron-client relationship;
- It has been found that there is corruption and in distribution of subsidized fertilizer to farmers; farmers paid TK.400 to the agent of leaders/elected representative to get the fertilizer. In employment generation program, the landless poor woman blamed that elected representative in local government takes bribe TK. 500 to 1000 to provide employment; and there is systematic (Open-Secret) corruption in safety net programs of food security under Public Food Distribution System; the dealers/intermediaries are the main beneficiary;
- There is no control mechanism to check the corruption of elected representatives by the extension officials/ block supervisors

3.6 Unfavorable sharecropping in loss-making agriculture

The practice of sharecropping as a dominant tenancy arrangement in Bangladesh is spreading for the last couple of years. Under the system, the harvest and certain input costs are shared between the landowner and tenants. According to the findings of field visit it has been found that there are two types of share cropping, Adi Barga (Sharing Half) and Chukti Barga(Sharing fixed amount of crops). In both cases Contracts are made on a seasonal or annual basis. In Adi Barga system, the tenants have to provide half of the harvest to landowners generally for paddy cultivation. In terms of sharing the input cost, there are differences among labor surplus and labor deficit areas.

\(^{35}\) Findings generated from field visit, interview and FGD
In *Chukti Barga* system, the tenants have to provide fixed amount of crops to landowners, the landowners don’t share input cost in this system. It has been found that most of the agriculture laborers are sharecroppers and they prefer *adi barga* system.

Besides the sharecropping system, there is also a practice of yearly/season basis fixed rent contract (cash lease) system, under which the tenant enjoy the cultivation right of land. The absentee land owners prefer this system for unearned income from agriculture land without investment which creates burden of rent on small farmers\(^{36}\). Usually the land owner takes money from tenant annually and has no interest about land, tenant and agriculture.

There are some differences in labor surplus and labor deficit areas in terms of rate, input sharing and extent of share cropping. It has been found that, the land for cash crop, commercial vegetable cultivation, potato, onion, nut cultivation; the predominant practice is seasonal basis or yearly basis fixed rent; for example in Narshingdi area where commercial vegetable is being cultivated, the popular practice is seasonal basis fixed rent system for leasing the agriculture land. Fixed-rent tenancy has been observed to be crop-specific and season-specific and has been confined to the cultivation of high yielding varieties of rice in the *aman* and *boro* seasons (Zohir and Sen 1999).

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\(^{36}\) Swapan Adnan, 2008.”*Peasant Question and Khas Land Movement in Bangladesh*” (in Bengali), Natun Diganta, 6 (4), Samaj Rupantar Adyan Kendra, Dhaka

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In paddy cultivation, generally the dominant practice is *adibargah*, there is also the practice of *chuki barga* depending on quality of land. The tenant prefers to take the risk if the quality of land is good. It has been found that chuki barga is being practiced in Nilphamari for HYV (china) cultivation; the tenants have to provide 4-4.5 mand dry good quality paddy for per bigha land. The tenants informed that the owners of land don’t share the cost of input, but share the cost of fertilizer in *aman* season. In Chunrughat, there is also few practices of *chuki bargah*, but dominant mode is *adhi barga*. In adibigha, the general practice is that the land owner doesn’t share the cost of input, but take the half of the crops.

In some areas, the share cropper get two thirds of the crops and land owners owner gets one third. It has been observed that in Mirsarai, Chittagong, there is conflict between tenants and landowners over the issue of cost sharing. The land owners get one third of the crops. Some time land owners commit about sharing the cost in order to get half of the crops, sometime violate the contract and takes away forcefully half of the crops. It has been observed that the tenants are in bargaining position in this labor deficit area and established tebagha; i.e. one third for land owners, one third for tenants and one third for sharing of input cost. In most of the areas of the country including labor surplus areas, the position of sharecroppers are weak in terms of bargaining about the sharing of harvest.

The sharecropping arrangements are exclusively verbal agreement in rural Bangladesh; tenants have no security of tenure. Both management and risk are assumed by the tenant. The tenant has thus little interest in making long term investment in the land.\(^{37}\)

Most share cropper are small holders do not generate a marketable surplus and are generally net byres of food grains. Where the crop is sold after harvest by small holders, it is sold at sub-

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Box6: Potato this year: Bane for farmers, boon for traders

The prices of potato at the farmers end now stand TK. 1.76/kg, which is far below the production cost of around Tk. 6, according to estimates by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute. In a novel protest against falling prices, farmers in the northern districts are dumping potatoes on highways, while policy makers are looking to boost exports as a way out.

Sultan Ali Sarker, a small farmer from Dupachia in Bogra, said he had taken half a n acre of land on lease to cultivate potato. He had delayed harvest because of hartals, but when the political situation improved, he found the prices falling. “I can neither harvest potato nor cultivate Boro paddy since I run short of cash. I can’t even pay off my loans, “ he said over phone.

Traders continue to make huge profits in the absence of government monitoring. Potato prices hover around Tk. 15 a kilogram in city markets though the Trading Corporations of Bangladesh puts the rate at Tk 8-10. The government should set up small cold storages across the country and explore the African markets to increase exports, said Mahbub Hossain, former Executive Director of BRAC a noted economist of the country.

*Source: The Daily Star, Dhaka, Feb 17, 2014*
market prices. Later in the year the same farmer bye food in the market at above market prices so that the market serves to further impoverish the tenant farmers.38

The sharecropping is not viable. It's net loss, but the agriculture laborers are helpless. Evidence indicates that, absentee land ownership has been growing. More and more people are getting access to land through the tenancy market, as medium and large land owners leave farming due to high cost of inputs and low cost of crops. Sometimes, the farmers have to sell their product below the cost of product. Consequently, larger no. of holdings and area of land is sharecropped by tenant farmers.

In the field visit, it has been found that the sharecroppers are increasing; the land is rented out by large and medium landowners. In general it is above the 60%; lowest in Rangpur region (50%), and highest in Chittagong region, above 70%. In Chittagong region cash leasing is an emerging trend. In Habiganj and Feni it is above 60% and the mode of sharecropping is dominant in all the areas.

About one-third of the farmers do not own any cultivable land. Therefore, they have insecure, prohibitive, and unstable access to land through sharecropping or land-leasing arrangements, which reduce the impact of agricultural development interventions on their livelihoods. These farmers must pay rent for the land they cultivate, which makes farming a low-profit enterprise for them.

The Land Reforms Ordinance of 1984 had provided one-third share of the produce of sharecropping land for the owner and two-thirds for the sharecropper. But no measure was ever taken to implement the law at village level. As a result, the sharecropping system had been operating in the villages according to market forces.

38 Mahbub Hossain and Abdul Bayes, 2009, “Progress in Rural Economy in Bangladesh: Insight from Repeat Sample Surveys” in Development Experience and Emerging Challenges edited by Quazi Shahabuddin & Rushidan Islam Rahman, BIDS & UPL, Dhaka
Box 7: Sharecropping is not profitable, it is totally loss making
Mojibul Rahman, Domar, Nilphamari

Mojibul Rahman (43) is a agriculture worker living in Kektibari, P.S. Chilahati in Domar Upazila under Nilphamari district, the extreme northern point of Bangladesh. He is living in own homestead land (16 decimal) and have no cultivable land. He got 25 decimal khas land from government and sold 9 decimal for treatment of his mother to the neighbor. In addition with this land he is cultivating 7 bighas land as sharecropper. He is a agriculture worker. As a secondary occupation he rides van regularly to supplement daily family expenses. His wife and children also work in field to reduce the cost of agriculture. Mojibar does not hire labor, his wife works with him in the field and she does not work in others field; he thinks it is very low status of work and don’t permit his wife though women in the area works in the field as worker. To reduce the cost Mojibor do hard work, for two times of ploughing, he rent tractor for one time after one time ploughing by cow. He said sharecropping is not profitable at all. If his family labor included with other cost of inputs, it is totally loss-making and uneconomical; he is doing it as he has no other option. He gets rice for 5-6 months for family consumption and some vegetable items; he has not to purchase it from market. He said, the operated land for sharecropping under his household is low, he is not getting good yield. The landowners don’t share the cost of production. The chinsa (boro) cultivation is very expensive and requires hard work. According to contract, he has to provide 4.5 mand dry paddy to land owners is not sharing any cost in boro, but in Aman, the land owners provide fertilizer cost. According to Mojibar, in an the landless peasant have to purchase food for 4-5 months. The price of rice is TK. 36/kg; its difficult to bear. The income from van pulling is not regular. Sometime they take loan locally TK. 1000 against of interest of TK.100 /monthly.

In the peak season of agriculture, he migrates to Shantahar and Joypurhat for 20 to 25 days. They start journey from Chilahati by train comprising a group of 8 to 10 people on 15 Boishak. At that time the agriculture worker of Chiltahati migrates to Tangail, Dhaka and Noakhali. Agriculture worker from Syedpur, Rangpur also migrate in these areas. In these districts, the wage rate is higher TK.100 to TK. 150. At that time, the wage in Chilahati per day TK. 250 to TK. 300 with food; in Shantahar the rate is TK. 400 with food. The employer arranges accommodation and food. He is satisfied about food but not accommodation. He told that accommodation is not good, they stay there only to pass the time and have to remain in safe especially the money what they gets as wage.

Migration of agriculture workers creates labor shortage in his area and it raises the wage, usually the per day wage is TK. 200 to TK. 250; it goes up to TK. 300 to TK.350 in the peak season. In the lean season, the workers also migrate to Dhaka for Rickshaw pulling and come back in the peak season of agriculture, he said. When he migrates to other districts his wife takes care of agriculture. In general, the workers sell their labor in the field of land owners which they take for share cropping and lease, but they are free to work anywhere. The landowners pay the market rate, some time they gets less money TK.10 to 20; this is very rare. When the land owner request them they feel moral obligation to work in the owners land as at this time there remains shortage of labor in the area. There remains kind of Patron-client relationship. They feel dependency on land owners, “Nun khai, gun gaite hobe” if you take support from someone, you have to pay for it. We are getting land from landlord; we have to pay for this, he said. He also said when landlord calls us for any work, we try to fulfill it. His one child is working as domestic worker in the residence of landlord’s sister house in Dhaka city.
3.7 Low Social Status
The agricultural laborers of Bangladesh are most neglected section of society. They are socially handicapped; they don’t assert themselves as important to materialize their demands. In Rangpur region, the landlord/jotdar treats them as Adhiair and Praja. The very derogatory word Chasa, Aill, Kamla, Gabur has been used for agricultural laborers; though they doubled the production of agriculture in Bangladesh. The bhadrook class (educated middle class) used these words as slang and treats them as lower class having low intellectual capacity. They don’t get good place for sleeping when they migrate for searching of jobs; sometime they rent room in market and sleep 6 to 10 people in a room. They are called as mafiz (having low status and low intellectual capacity). These created frustration and low confidence among the agriculture workers.

In the FGD and Interview most of the agriculture worker said, we have nothing to say, we have no demand to government. Is there any authority to listen our demands? They never heard the very word ‘Rights’. They lost their confidence. They don’t consider themselves as part of society, Mohammad Shameem, an agriculture labor of Habiganj said, we have no way, we have to work hard to survive and we are entrapped in loss-making agriculture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 8: We need employment opportunity whole the year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raju Raju Mian, a migrant agriculture worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raju Mian (48), Abdullahpur, Mithapukur, Rangpur is an owner-cum–tenant has 25 decimal of cultivable land. His is a agriculture worker and has no secondary occupation. In addition with his own land, he cultivates another 50 decimal land as sharecropper and works as agriculture worker in the locality. He has no secondary occupation. Raju Mian has five family members.

As an agriculture worker in the locality, it is difficult for him to maintain livelihood. For better income he migrates from Rangpur to Comilla and Noakhali in the peak season of agriculture. The wage per-day in his area is TK.200 and in the Comilla and Nokhali; it is TK.300 with food and accommodation. He told that he can earn more if work as contract basis and every year he work 15 to 20 days. This is the only opportunity for him to save money. He goes there with group of agriculture workers comprising 8 to 10 members. The employer farmer call them over cell phone, when he needs migrant workers especially to cut paddy from the field as at this time there needs more workers which is lacking in that area. After completing work under one farmer, sometimes they wait in Majurer Hat (Labor Market) usually certain point of local market in the destination area. He expects from government to arrange whole year employment opportunity for agriculture worker to maintain their livelihood.
CHAPTER FOUR: FOOD SECURITY OF AGRICULTURE LABORERS

4.1 Food security of agriculture labor

Food security is broadly defined as access by all people at all times to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a healthy and productive life. It depends on availability of food, access to food and utilization of food at national, household and individual level.

Food availability at the national level is determined by domestic food production; public and private food stockholding; food imports, including food aid; and food exports. With the liberalization of international trade, global availability of food is of increasing importance for national food security. Availability of food at the household level depends on the household’s own capacity to produce food, household food stockholding, and availability of food in the local markets. These factors, in turn, are a function of market operations, infrastructure, flow of information, and seasonal variations in domestic food production.

From the field information, it has been found that more than half of the year, agriculture laborers purchase food from market; depending on family size and operated land under cultivation. According to statement of sharecropper-cum agriculture labor, in an average, they purchase food from market 5-6 months. The rural wage in agriculture and non-agriculture sector, those who are not involved in cultivation either in sharecropping or in cash lease basis, have to purchase food whole the year; are most vulnerable to price hike of food items. Majority of them are mostly absolute landless and some of them have no homestead land. The price hike of food items since 2008; affected the consumption pattern of poor people, it is like meal rationing and reducing the nutritious item like meat and fish in food item\(^\text{39}\).

It has been found that in an average they sell 50% of produce within a week after the harvest to pay the loan, irrigation and cost of other inputs; at that time the price remains low in the market. There is intermediary between mill owner and sharecropper; the landless sharecroppers informed that they sell it to local bepary (traders); bepary sells it to mill owners. Generally they don’t sell directly to mill owners as some times the mill owners don’t pay the price immediately after the supplying the paddy.\(^\text{40}\) The Public procurement system does not support the small farmers; the mill owners receiving the price support of public procurement as an intermediary.\(^\text{41}\) The agriculture workers organizations demanding to government to procure rice directly from farmers at union level, not from rice mill owners.

There are variations in problem of food security in Rangpur division and rest of the country; in Rangpur region agriculture laborer face seasonal hunger called Manga in Ashwin/Kartic month; though it is reduced in great extent but extreme poverty still high in this region. The workers

\(^{39}\) Interview with agriculture labor in Domar, Nilphamari

\(^{40}\) Findings from interview with agrilabor cum sharecroppers at Domar, Nilphamari

\(^{41}\) M. M. Akash, Budget 2013-14: Perspective of Agriculture Labor and Rural Workers (in Bengali), July 2013, Khetmajour Khabar, Dhaka
take loan from informal sources in taka and paddy with high interest rate; it is TK. 100 interest per month against TK. 1000; in case of paddy, the interest rate is higher and it varies from area to area.

4.2 Food security and safety net program
To address the problems of poverty and food insecurity, government implementing different food- and cash-based social safety net programs. Currently, there are more than 90 such programs. It is five types, (i) public works program; (ii) Training programs; (iii) Education programs; (iv) Relief programs; and (v) Programs for disadvantaged groups. The characteristics of key safety net programs according to its type are described in the box no.4.

Box-9: Characteristics of key safety net programs
PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMS: The Food for Work (FFW) and Test Relief (TR) programs distribute food grain (rice and wheat) as wage payment to both male and female workers in labor-intensive public works programs. The Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Asset (REOPA) program, a follow-up to the Rural Maintenance Program (RMP), provides cash wages and training for income-generation activities to participating female beneficiaries. In 2008, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the Employment Generation for Hard Core Poor program (later known as the Employment Generation Program for the Poorest). All these programs require participants to do physical work for building and maintaining rural infrastructure. They are generally self-targeted because the poor are typically the only people willing to take on onerous, low-paying jobs requiring manual labor.

TRAINING PROGRAMS: The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) program exclusively targets poor women and provides a monthly food ration for 24 months. Although it was introduced as a relief program in the mid-1970s, VGD has evolved over time to integrate food security with development objectives. The development package includes training on income-generating activities; awareness-raising for social, legal, health, and nutrition issues; and basic literacy and innumeracy. Beneficiaries of VGD programs are selected by the government administrative structures.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS: The Food for Education (FFE) program, established in early 1990s, distributed monthly foodgrain rations to poor households if they sent their children to primary schools. Due to governance concerns, FFE was terminated in 2002 and has been replaced by the cash-based Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP). The School Feeding (SF) program distributes micronutrient-fortified energy biscuits to primary school children. The Government of Bangladesh also pioneered conditional cash transfers and provided cash assistance to girls in secondary schools through the Female Secondary School Assistance Program (FSSAP) conditional on their attendance. The program was redesigned in 2008 and renamed the Secondary Education Access and Quality Enhancement Program, and now includes boys from poor families as well as girls.

RELIEF PROGRAMS: These programs are designed as a mechanism for mitigating the consequences of natural disasters like floods and cyclones. There are currently only two such programs: Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Gratuitous Relief (GR) programs. Unlike other programs, these programs have no preset criteria or conditionality for participation. They are relief programs that try to help the poor cope during times of natural disaster and smooth their consumption.

PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS: These programs are essentially unconditional cash transfers and include the Old-Age Allowance Scheme; the Allowance for Widowed, Deserted, and Destitute Women; the Honorarium Program for Insolvent Freedom Fighters; the Fund for Housing for the Distressed; the Fund for Rehabilitation of Acid Burnt Women and Physically Handicapped; and the Allowance for the Distressed and Disabled Persons.

Source: Ahmed et al. 2010.
4.3 Budgetary allocation for food security under social safety net programs

The safety net programs for food security are Open Marketing Sale (OMS), VGD, VGF, TR, GR, and food for works program for the rural and urban poor. The allocation for the food security has been declining under social safety net programs. The allocation has been declining from 47.5% to 40.5% for the year of 2012 and 2013 respectively. It is 35.3% in 2014 (Table 10).

### Table 10: Budgetary allocation for food security under social safety net programs (in crore TK)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allowance programs under safety net</td>
<td>7139.74</td>
<td>7631.41</td>
<td>8989.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(50.1%)</td>
<td>(43.7%)</td>
<td>(45.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security programs under safety net</td>
<td>6758.09</td>
<td>7072.55</td>
<td>6998.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(47.5%)</td>
<td>(40.5%)</td>
<td>(35.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different fund and programs under safety net</td>
<td>339.64</td>
<td>2776.02</td>
<td>3850.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.39%)</td>
<td>(15.9%)</td>
<td>(19.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14237.47</td>
<td>17479.98</td>
<td>19837.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Documents, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh

4.4 Problems in safety net program

The major problems of safety net programs are low coverage in terms of quantity and quality, not well coordinated, not well targeted, corruption and leakages. According to BIH survey 2011-12, it excludes many poor and includes many non-poor households, while 61 percent of the households in the poorest income quintile are beneficiaries of at least one safety net program, 22 percent of the households in the highest income group also receive benefits from the system in rural Bangladesh.

The Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP) targets the poorest most effectively. Both male and female beneficiaries do physical work in the program that mainly involves earth moving. About half (49 percent) of the total EGPP participants belong to the poorest 20 percent of the households. However, around 29 percent of the EGPP participants were in the top three income quintiles in 2011.

4.4 Public Food Distribution System, Food Security and agriculture labor

Historically, Bangladesh inherited a large program of public food grain distribution that expanded further during the post-independence turmoil and the 1974 famine. The public food grain distribution and most associated regulations were, however gradually reduced during decades following early 1990.

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42 Calculated from Seminar Paper on National Budget and Women Empowerment by Samunnay at CIRDAP auditorium, Dhaka on 10 March 2014
43 Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2011-12, IFRI, Dhaka
The objectives of the Public Food grain Distribution System (PFDS) are: supply of subsidized/free food grains to vulnerable groups of the population, particularly during the times of economic stress and calamitous conditions, and (b) maintain stability in market prices. Government maintains a stock of food grains through imports from abroad and occasional procurement from domestic market.

**Table 11: Public Food Distribution System through Sales and Non-sales Channel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Total Distribution in current year (01 July 13 to 13 Feb. 2014) in Metric Ton</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>191383</td>
<td>201550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>104799</td>
<td>67328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>8165</td>
<td>2061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMS</td>
<td>71635</td>
<td>121835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Price</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th class employee</td>
<td>6341</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Fighter</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non Sale</strong></td>
<td><strong>526696</strong></td>
<td><strong>371451</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFW</td>
<td>1165</td>
<td>92592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>192148</td>
<td>140192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VGF</td>
<td>209307</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VGD</td>
<td>51296</td>
<td>107448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - feeding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>31574</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>41206</td>
<td>21035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PFDS Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>718079</strong></td>
<td><strong>573001</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Food, Government of Bangladesh.

Table 11 shows that government distributing food under 12 programs in two channels- price or sales channel and non-sales/non-price channel. About 70% of public food grain is distributed through non-sale/non-priced channels under different safety net programs; the remaining 30% is distributed through sale channel. The amount of PFDS through sales channel is decreasing due to reforms programs prescribed by the International Financial Institutes (IFIs); from 1991 to 2006, it decreased 63% to 34%\(^{44}\). In 20014, the percentage of sales channel is 30% (Table 4.2).

\(^{44}\) M. M. Akash, *Right to Food and Political Economy of Food* (in Bengali), Campaign for Right to Food & Social Security, July 2012, Dhaka

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*Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations*
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) organized a food policy research program in Bangladesh which was instrumental in causing a series of reforms in the PFDS. The significant reforms are abolition of rationing system, deregulation of numerous restrictions on domestic trade, induction of a larger role of private sector in the agricultural input markets, and most importantly, the opening up the external trade in food grains to private traders, have resulted in fundamental changes in the operation of food grain market. The onus of stabilization of food grain supply and prices has shifted to the market forces and traders.\(^{45}\)

Among price channels, open market operation (15%) and subsidized supply to police and defense forces account for the largest share (13%). Among non-priced channels, Test Relief and vulnerable group feeding constitute the largest components, 25% and 16% respectively (Table 4.2). The target group of PFDS is not poor people under all the programs of sale channel. The non-sale channels are mostly corrupted.

**The target group of PFDS is not poor people under sale channels:** The target group of PFDS is not poor people under sale channel; through ration card system police and armed forces, government employees are the target group under sale channels; there is no provision for ration card system for rural labor and poor people. After independence, there was a rationing system

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**Box 10: My husband is suffering in epilepsy; we always remain in fear about it.**

Latifa Khatun, landless agriculture labor

Chilahati, Domar, Nilphamari

Latifa Khatun (48), Chilahati, Domar, Nilphamari, is a landless agriculture labor. She has four family member, her husband and two sons. She is landless, her family has no cultivable land; only have 25 decimal of homestead land got from government khas land in 1990s. Both husband and wife work as day labor in agriculture. He gets 70 Taka per day, in peak season it goes up TK.80 to TK.100. It is only for 25 to 30 days. The agriculture season is only 5 to 6 months in a year and in an average she works 10 to 12 days as wage labor per month. She took loan from BRAC and purchased a cow, sells 1 kg milk per day at the rate of TK.40 almost half of the year. She says her family doesn’t get cultivable land from land owners for sharecropping as her husband is sick and it is also not profitable. She has to purchase food whole the year. The price of rice is very high; it is difficult for the household like her. She blames that she don’t get any support from union parishad, only got 10 kg rice in last year. The UP members take bribe to provide job in earth removing and she is not interested to take job by paying money. She has no demand to government and she doesn’t believe that there is no authority to listen her problem.

From last two years, her older son (19) working in construction sector in Dhaka city. He sends money per month TK. 4000 to 5000; it covers her family expenses. Her husband is suffering in epilepsy; she always remains in fear about it, when he sinks in water. The rural health care practitioners can’t heal this disease. She says there is no good health care facility in rural area. We have not enough courage to go to city for better treatment from good government hospital in Rangpur city as doctors don’t care the poor people.
for the poor; government gradually abolished the system. But the rationing system is in practice for armed forces, police and government employees; these are clearly not a poverty reducing program. The agriculture workers organizations are demanding Rationing System for the agriculture workers; rice and wheat at the rate of 5 taka/kg, oil, dal at the rate of 30 taka/kg and sugar kerosene at the rate of 15 taka/kg.\textsuperscript{46}

Government stopped food support through “Fair Price Card/rationing system” after introduction of 3 months which was targeted 80 lacs poor household in rural and urban areas at 20 kg rice/month for the poor households at rural and urban areas; which was the election commitment of government in previous term. \textsuperscript{47}

The poor household is supported by OMS and it also helps to stabilize the price of rice; but the rich households also taking advantage of it; it was found that sometimes quality of rice and wheat is not good. \textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{The non-sale channels are highly corrupted}: The agriculture workers organization demanding revival of the 100 days employment guarantee project introduced by the last caretaker government in 2008 under non sale channel; government made downsize the 100 days employment guarantee project in 40 days under EGPP. The non-sale channels are highly corrupted. The findings of the Campaign for the Right to Food and Social Security\textsuperscript{49} a civil society network are mentioned below (Table12). These findings compiled from newspaper reports.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|p{0.7\textwidth}|}
\hline
\textbf{Test Relief (TR)} & • Distribution among the ruling party members and selling the wheat  
\hline & • Selling the wheat  
\hline & • False allocation  
\hline & • False signature and taking away the allotted rice and wheat  
\hline & • Taking forced signature by the political leaders from chief of the allotted institute  
\hline & • Allotted against the false institute  
\hline
\textbf{Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)} & • Distributed card among the 3/ 4 family members of a households  
\hline & • Distribution of one member rice to two members  
\hline & • Non participatory decision of UP chairman; chairman took decision alone  
\hline & • Manipulation by the political leaders  
\hline & • Plundering of wheat and selling it in market  
\hline & • Distribution among the rich households  
\hline & • Distribution of card by the ruling party leaders violating the guideline  
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Corruption and leakages in PFDS}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{46} Interview with the Leaders of Agriculture Laborers Association  
\textsuperscript{47} Prothom Alo  
\textsuperscript{48} Press Brief, 8 May 2012, held at Dhaka Reporters Unity, Campaign for Right to Food & Social Security  
\textsuperscript{49} Press Briefing of Campaign for the Right to Food and Social Security held on 8 May 2012 at Dhaka Reporters Unity
Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)  
| Distribution of low quality of wheat  |
| Distribution of less amount  |
| Taking bribe  |
| Selling the VGD wheat in open market  |

Source: Press Brief, 8 May 2012, held at Dhaka Reporters Unity, Campaign for Right to Food & Social Security

For food security, the CSO campaigners and agriculture workers organizations have following demands.

- **Setting up central data base for 25% extreme poor and reaching food to them without leakage and corruption;**
- **Coordination among safety net program under one umbrella program and the approach should be based on rights not as charity;**
- **Elimination of corruption and leakages in safety net programs; there should have participation of agriculture labor in distribution of card and support services;**
- **Establishing rationing system for the poor in a view to protecting the poor people from market fluctuation of food items; the proposed rate are: Rice, wheat at 5 Taka/kg, Dal at 30 Taka/kg, Sugar and Kerosene at 15 Taka/kg or liter ;**
- **Ensuring profitable price of agriculture products;**
- **Reform in the public food procurement system and purchasing directly from farmers;**
- **Adequate credit support for sharecroppers with low interest rate;**
- **Revival of 100 days employment guarantee schemes for all the agri. labor households;**
- **Formation of cooperatives of the producers.**
CHAPTER FIVE: THE AGENDA OF LAND REFORM

5.1 Debate about land reform

The land reform is a marginal issue in the policy agendas of Bangladesh government. There is debate among academia and policy makers whether distributive land reform is feasible in Bangladesh or not. Nearly 55% of the households are now functionally landless, a small fraction of land is controlled by households in holdings of over three hectares and the average size of holdings has declined to 0.6 hectare. How much land we can get with a ceiling on ownership at a reasonable level for distribution to 10 million rural households who own little or no land? Rather computerization of land records for ownership security is more important to reduce incidence of litigation around land disputes; land management is more important and viable than land reform. The government of Bangladesh is aligned with this position.

There is inconsistency with this position. Is there any assurance of improving livelihoods of landless agriculture laborers if recording system will be computerized and increased the tenancy market? Does it discard the justification of distributive land reform in Bangladesh? The rich and powerful are getting settlement of khas land in the char area of Noakhali. The role of state machinery and power

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Box 11: Love for land knows no bound

i. Former state minister for water resource Mahbubur Rahman Talukder had only 20 acres of agricultural land prior to his becoming a lawmaker in 2008. But in five years, he has come to own 2,865 acres of agricultural land, an astounding 143 times rise. His land ownership beats even the biggest housing projects, which had resorted to illegal means to grab land or had filled up rivers and water bodies. The size of his land even dwarfs the country's largest 2,500-acre Korean EPZ. In the affidavit, he claimed that his 2,865 acres of agricultural land was worth only Tk 70.14 lakh while independent sources with their most conservative estimates put the value around Tk 1,000 crore.

ii. Back in 2008, Bir Bahadur had 45 acres of arable land, which have now become 99 acres. Apart from those, he also got a 0.245-acre (24.5 decimal) plot in the last five years. Independent sources said Bahadur, also organising secretary of AL, owns vast tracts of land in Bandarban Sadar upazila, Rajbila, Kuhalong and Tonkaboti unions and in Lama and Naikkhangchhari upazilas.

Source: The Daily Star, Feb. 8, 2014

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50 Mahbub Hossain and Abdul Bayes, 2009, “Progress in Rural Economy in Bangladesh: Insight from Repeat Sample Surveys” in Development Experience and Emerging Challenges edited by Quazi Shahabuddin & Rushidan Islam Rahman, BIDS & UPL, Dhaka

51 Khas land is a large category of land that includes surplus land above the land ceiling law; land owned historically by the state throughout the colonial period and under Pakistani rule; alluvial land; land without an owner; surplus or unused land; land acquired for the public interest; or auctioned land that has been distributed to landless families for 99 year use rights. The Ministry of Land is responsible for allocating khas land to the landless; however, corruption and bad motives have limited land allocations to the poor or landless.

Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations
structure is more important than so called invisible market power; it is evident from the case of Char in Noakhali.\textsuperscript{52} A significant part of the khas land is not within the custody of the government due to illegal occupation and encroachments. Besides, there is ceiling surplus land under the control/ownership powerful sections. According to a statement in Parliament by the Minister for Land on 4 February, 2010, a total of 1.3 million acres of public land has been grabbed\textsuperscript{53}.

Further, a significant portion of the 3.3 million acres of khas land is not within the control of the government due to illegal occupation and encroachments\textsuperscript{54}. The Land grabbing culture has increased due to the non-transparent land administration system\textsuperscript{55}. The land grabbing is acute in the charland, where most of the landless agriculture workers are living. According to the findings of a study conducted by ALRD found that 93% of charland are in the possession of landgrabbers. “The amount of charland is approximately 1723 square k.m. which constitute 1.2% of the country’s total land. Charland is primarily khasland. Only 7% of charland are in possession of 77% of the population and 23% of population who are primarily land grabbers, are in possession of 93% of charland. This signifies extreme disparity in the ownership of charland, which causes, amount others, extreme poverty among most people in the chars.”\textsuperscript{56}

The other alarming issues are declining crop-land and conversion of khas land for public purposes and commercial use. It is reported that cultivated land has been declining by almost one percent per year due to its demand for increased habitation, industrial and commercial establishment, transport infrastructure, river erosion, and intrusion of saline water in the coastal areas.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{itemize}
\item Swapan Adnan, 2008. “Peasant Question and Khas Land Movement in Bangladesh” (in Bengali), Natun Diganta, 6 (4), Samaj Rupantar Adyan Kendra, Dhaka
\item Bangladesh: Food Security and Land Governance Factsheet; 2012, IS Academia, The Royal Tropical Institute, Netherlands
\item Saha, B.K., 2010, Promoting Agrarian Reform in Rehman Sobhan (ed.) Challenging the Injustice of Poverty: Agendas for Inclusive Development in South Asia, Sage, Delhi
\item Bangladesh: Food Security and Land Governance Factsheet; 2012, IS Academia, The Royal Tropical Institute, Netherlands
\item 6th Five Year Plan, FY2011-FY2015, GED, Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh, 2011
\end{itemize}
Internationally, Bangladesh is considered as an economically viable investment destination, attracting FDIs and remittances. Foreign investments are often in collaboration with the government as well as the private sector\(^{58}\). Steady economic growth over the past few years has likewise posed its own challenges on land rights in Bangladesh. Agricultural land is being diminished due to conversion into export processing zones, residential developments, and other developments. The then Government of Pakistan purchased the lands (through requisition) during 1947-1952 for sheltering people who migrated from India in the face of communal riots there. Of the lands, 3,031.83 acres are in Dimla upazila, 543.10 acres in Sadar upazila, 22.50 acres in Jaldhaka upazila, and 4.41 acres in Saidpur upazila, said sources of the Department concerned.

"A good number of Indian refugees were sheltered in small portions of those lands but most of it remained unutilised until the independence of Bangladesh," said Aftabuddin Ahmed, upazila chairman of Dimla. "After 1971, a section of unscrupulous people gradually encroached upon those lands and started handing over the 'possession' to others in exchange for money. For this, buyers and sellers usually make unregistered deeds on government stamps, which have no legal value," he informed. A number of people in collusion with a section of dishonest land officials even made false land ownership documents and sold those lands through registration in local upazila land registry offices. During the last land survey, some people allegedly got large areas of the government lands recorded as private property through bribing a section of land officials but no action was taken although several written allegations were submitted to the higher authorities in this regard.

Project implementation officers (PIO) of the upazilas concerned are responsible for looking after the lands under the Government's relief department. But they remain busy mostly in implementing different Government projects and due to a manpower shortage, they have very little capacity to do anything about the lands, sources said. Several attempts by the district administration to recover the occupied lands saw little result due to various reasons while a section of local political leaders back the illegal occupiers. Authorities during the last caretaker government in 2007-2008 took drastic steps to recover the encroached lands but the initiative later discontinued. According to the present market value, the price of the 3,602 acres of government land would be at least Tk 500 crore, land department sources said. Sadar upazila Vice Chairman Shahid Mahmud suggested that the government fix up the value of those lands and release it from the occupiers to hand it over to them through deeds. A seven-member committee has been formed with the ADC (Revenue) as president and the DRRO as member secretary to recover the occupied lands. As per direction of the ministry concerned, the committee, which is obliged to hold a meeting every month, is collecting all the particulars of every plot of land belonging to the relief department and recording them in registers to take further course of action, he added.

**Box 12: Grabbers Feast on Relief and Rehabilitation Department Lands in Nilphamari**

A considerable portion of 3,602 acres of land owned by government's Relief and Rehabilitation Department in four upazilas of the District has gone into the hands of illegal occupiers due to a lack of proper monitoring. The then Government of Pakistan purchased the lands (through requisition) during 1947-1952 for sheltering people who migrated from India in the face of communal riots there. Of the lands, 3,031.83 acres are in Dimla upazila, 543.10 acres in Sadar upazila, 22.50 acres in Jaldhaka upazila, and 4.41 acres in Saidpur upazila, said sources of the Department concerned.

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**Source:** The Daily Star, 11 June 2012, Dhaka;

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infrastructure development and other government projects. Much of the converted land is khas land, which the government ought to be distributing to landless persons.\(^{59}\)

5.2 DISTRIBUTING STATE OWNED LAND TO THE LANDLESS AGRICULTURE WORKERS

Ownership of land in Bangladesh is vested in either private individuals or entities of the State. Khas land is government owned land, which applies to agricultural, non-agricultural and water bodies. There is no update data about the amount of khas land in Bangladesh. The estimates of khas land are open to contestation since land records are poor and open to legal challenge.\(^{60}\)

According to report (2005) of parliamentary standing committee on land there is 50, 00,000 (50 lac) acre khas land in the country; a major portion of landless family can get settlement of this land.\(^{61}\)

The estimated amount of total identified (based on official sources) khas land in Bangladesh is 3.3 million acres with 0.8 million acres of agricultural khas land, 1.7 million acres of non-agricultural khas land, and 0.8 million acres of khas water bodies.\(^{62}\) Of immediate relevance to agrarian reform, 0.8 million acres of agricultural land (4% of the total agricultural land) and 0.8 million acres of water bodies, an important economic resource, can be put at the service of the resource poor.\(^{63}\)

In a campaign brief, Land Watch Asia states that Khas land and khas water bodies cover some 2.1 million hectares, 24% of which are agricultural. Agricultural khas land covers some 321,323 ha, of which 43.47% has reportedly been distributed to landless households.\(^{64}\)

5.3 Policy to Distribute Agricultural Khas Land

The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950, which abolished the Zamindari System (Permanent Settlement of 1793) provided the basis for all subsequent laws relating to khas land.\(^{65}\) Attempts at re-distributive reform through the establishment of land ceilings have been a feature of both the Pakistan and Bangladesh periods. However, whilst ostensibly designed to place land in the hands of the tiller and to return water bodies to those who fish them, these have largely been circumvented by the wealthy and powerful.\(^{66}\)


\(^{61}\) Akash


\(^{64}\) Land Watch Asia, Campaign Update 2011, ALRD & SHED, Dhaka


\(^{66}\) *Land Policy and Administration in Bangladesh: A Literature Review*, 2003, CARE Rural Livelihood Program

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*Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations*
After independence, the instruments of khas land distribution became the Bangladesh State Acquisition and Tenancy (Fourth Amendment) Order 1972, the Bangladesh Landholding Limitation Order 1972, President’s Order LXI 1975 and the 1984 Land Reform Ordinance. The most important Government notifications relating to the settlement of khas land are the Land Reform Action Program 1987 and the Agricultural Khas Land and Settlement Policy 1997.

To assist the process of Khas land identification and its equitable distribution, government policies and the regulatory framework - especially the 1984 Land Reform Ordinance and the khas land management and distribution policies of 1987 and 1997 - provided concrete directions towards establishing national and local level committees for overseeing khas land identification and distribution, identification of landless persons and a prioritization process as well as a procedure for raising public support for securing access to khas land. One enabling law was the policy instituted in 1997 to distribute khas land to landless peasants, defined as landless families dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. This also prioritized certain groups, such as families of freedom fighters, families that had lost their land to erosion, and families whose lands were expropriated by the government.

5.4 Ownership Ceiling of Agricultural Land
The ownership ceiling of agricultural land per family had been changed many times: from 33.3 acres (100 bighas) in 1950, 125 acres (375 bighas) in 1961, then again 33.3 acres (100bighas) in 1972 and 20 acres (60 bighsa) in 1984.

However, a significant quantity of land could not be recovered because local and national land administration and wider legal and political bodies were often tightly under the grip of the landowning classes. Ironically only an insignificant portion of cultivable land (under 1%) could be redistributed through these ownership ceilings. The land ceilings should be further lowered considering the increase of population, the scarcity of land and the need for distributive justice. If the land ceiling is lowered to 30-35 bighas for each family and if there is strong political and administrative will on the part of the Government, the ceiling surplus land can be distributed amongst the landless and poor displaced people.

Table 13: Land Policy and Administrative Timeline in Bangladesh

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68 Bangladesh: The Fight for Land Rights Moves Forward, Land Watch Asia, Campaign Update 2011, ALRD & SHED, Dhaka
70 1 Acre=3 Bigha
71 Land Rights and Poverty Alleviation, 2005. Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST), Dhaka
72 Land Policy and Administration in Bangladesh: A Literature Review; 2003, CARE Rural Livelihood Program

Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>A land ceiling of 33.3 acres is re-established and various presidential orders provide for the distribution of khas land amongst the landless. Expected that 2.5 million acres of excess land will be released, but in reality there is far less. Newly formed land vested in government, becoming a second type of khas land. Exemption from land tax granted for families owning less than 8.33 acres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>A variety of land related charges are consolidated into the Land Development Tax (LDT), which covers the whole country except the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), but deficiencies in the record system mean individual holdings cannot be checked and switches to more heavily taxed non-agricultural uses frequently go unrecorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>The Land Reform Ordinance limits future land acquisitions to 21 acres whilst retaining present ceilings. Benami (transferring to others for ceiling avoiding) transfers to relations are outlawed, but again evasion is easy. Legal recognition of the rights of share-croppers is given for the first time and share-cropping is established as the only admissible form of tenancy contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1980s</td>
<td>Only 0.2% of value added in agriculture collected as LDT revenue, of which collection cost is two-thirds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1980s</td>
<td>The Muyeed Committee recommends that the functions of land registration (Sub-Registrar) and records (tehsil) be brought together in a single office at the field level, but this is ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Cluster village programme resettle landless people on State land, but only 800 villages, with some 32,000 households, have been formed by 1996.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Board of Land Administration is split into the Land Appeals Board and the Land Reforms Board to deal with the ever-increasing volume of quasi-judicial appeals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>A survey shows that 90% of the rural population is unaware of the 1984 reforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>A land administration manual lays down detailed instructions regarding the inspection and supervision of Union and Thana land offices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Farms of up to 8.33 acres are exempted from LDT. 8.33 – 10 acres are charged at BDT 0.5 per acre, and larger holdings at BDT 2 per acre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>New Agricultural Khas Land Management and Settlement Policy introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>The total khas land is found to be 750,000 acres (or 3% of the arable land area). But the actual amount remains unclear as a result of de facto private control arising from informal local settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-20</td>
<td>Estimated date for the completion of a survey of land rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.5 Process of Accessing Khas Land

_Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations_
According to AKLMSP'97, for the purpose of the settlement of Khas land the landless family will be considered as

“The family which has neither homestead nor agricultural land, but family as dependent on agriculture”

All applications received within the fixed time limit were suggested to be scrutinized and all eligible applications are arranged in order to priority as follows:

1. Destitute freedom fighter’s family
2. Victim of river erosion (lost total land due to river erosion
3. Widowed or divorced woman with workable son
4. Family without a homestead and agriculture land
5. Became landless due to government acquisition of land
6. The family which has 10 decimal homestead, but not agricultural land yet dependent on agriculture

According to the Agricultural Khas Land and Management Policies- AKLMSP 97, the highest priority is said to be given to the destitute freedom fighter’s family (It was on the second priority in the Land Reforms Action Program-LRAP’87. The highest amount of Khas land to be given will be 1.5 acres.

The transfer of khas land from the Government to an individual is a complex, lengthy and non-transparent process. According to relevant provisions, 5 months is needed to complete the process. Currently an application passes through several Government offices including the Union and Thana level land offices along with the Sub-Registrar’s office and usually takes up to 6 to 8 months. A lack of coordination (and motivation) between these offices and their staff create delays.

5.6 PROMOTING TENANCY REFORM

Available evidence suggest that The large and middle farmers are increasingly leaving farm in favor of non-farm activities in rural and urban areas and getting the land cultivated by agricultural laborers and marginal landowners with unviable tiny holdings. The rapid migration to urban areas and oversees and an inactive land market lead to increasing concentration of land in the hand of the absentee landowners. The land is rented out mostly by the bigger farmers who account for 43 percent of the land in the tenancy market (Hossain and Bayes 2008).

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76 Khasland for the Poorest - Simplify the Process, October 2011, Shiree Policy Brief, Dhaka

Agriculture laborers of Bangladesh: Entrapped in unviable production relations
The dominant tenurial arrangement in Bangladesh is sharecropping, where the produce is shared between the cultivator and the landowner in different proportions that have been agreed upon prior to cultivation. At the national level about 37 percent of farmers cultivate only their own land. About 40 percent of the farmers are sharecroppers; this group of sharecroppers includes those who do not own any cultivable land (that is, pure tenant), as well as those who own land and sharecrop other people’s land. About 13 percent of the farmers in overall rural Bangladesh have cash-lease arrangements, either as pure tenants or as those with their own land plus cash-leased land. The proportion of farmers with mixed-tenancy arrangements (operating sharecropped plus cash-leased land, either as pure tenants or landowners) is 10 percent at the national level. Sharecropping arrangement ensure little or no supervision over the land so that both management and risk are assumed by the tenant. The tenant, thus, has little interest in making long term investment in the land. In terms of both efficiency and justice, at least it needs to ensure that those who rent in land are given to right to own the land they actually cultivate.

5.6.1 Establishing rights of sharecroppers

Evidence indicates that absentee land ownership has been growing. More and more people are getting access to land through the tenancy market, as medium and large land owners leave farming. Consequently, larger no. of holdings and area of land is sharecropped by tenant farmers. It has been found that operated land and no. of farm holdings of tenant have increased 41.49% to 45.25% and 37.42% to 43.3% respectively over the period of 1983 to 2006. This is due to increasing no. of absentee land owners in rural areas. In the field visit, it has been found that the sharecroppers are increasing; the land is rented out by large and medium landowners. In general it is above the 50%; lowest in Rangpur region (50%) comparing other areas. In Chittagong region, the mode of cash leasing is highest. According to land owners, agriculture is not profitable by the wage labor; they are cultivating limited portion of land for yearly family consumption.

Most share cropper are small holders do not generate a marketable surplus and are generally net-byres of food grains. Where the crop is sold after harvest by small holders, it is sold at sub-market prices. Later in the year the same farmer bye food in the market at above market prices so that the market serves to further impoverish the tenant farmers. By providing tenurial rights to the sharecropper, the problems of providing government assistance will be eliminated.

Did the government procurement price cover the cost of production of pure tenants who must pay rent for the land they cultivate (either in cash or in terms of crop share)? According to BIH survey 2010-11, when the imputed values of land rent and family labor are considered in the cost calculations, only HYV boro cultivation registers a small profit margin (about 6 percent of full cost). Local and HYV aman farmers appear to incur considerable loss when the profitability is calculated on a full-
cost basis. According to landless laborers, they are trapped in sharecropping; if they calculate the cost of family labor it is net loss. The sharecroppers are helpless, have no way out. They are doing it only to ensure food security of few months.

5.6.2 Land Reform Ordinance 1984 and Rights of Sharecroppers

In the Land Reform Ordinance 1984, legal recognition of the rights of share-croppers is given for the first time and share-cropping is established as the only admissible form of tenancy contract; but the ordinance has not been implemented.

Recognizing the rights of sharecroppers, the ordinance mentioned the issues:

- Limitation on acquisition of agricultural land as 60 bigha;
- No benami transaction;
- No eviction, etc, from homestead;
- Settlement of khas land for homestead;
- Cultivation under barga contract
- Recognition of existing bargadars
- Cultivation of barga land after bargadar’s death;
- Termination of barga contract;
- Division of produce of barga land;
- Bargadar’s right to purchase;
- Ceiling of barga land; and
- Restriction of cultivation

In the section 8 and 9 of the ordinance, it recognized the rights of sharecropper as:

“Subject to the other provisions of this Ordinance, no person shall allow another person to cultivate his land and no person shall cultivate the land of another person on condition of sharing the produce of such land between them unless they execute a contract for such cultivation in such form and manner as may be prescribed.”

“A barga contract shall be valid for a period of five years commencing from such date as may be specified in the barga contract.”

Any person cultivating the land of another person as a bargadar immediately before the commencement of this Ordinance shall be deemed to be a bargadar in respect of such land under this Ordinance.

The owner and the bargadar of any land referred to in sub-section (1) shall execute a contract as required under section 8 within ninety days from the date of commencement of this Ordinance.

About the Division of produce of barga land, it mentioned clearly (section 12)
The produce of any barga land shall be divided in the following manner, namely:-
(a) one-third shall be received by the owner for the land;
(b) one third shall be received by bargadar for the labour;
(c) one-third shall be received by the owner or the bargadar or by both in proportion to the cost of cultivation, other than the cost of labour, borne by them.

5.7 Major demands for land reform
For land reform, the agriculture workers organizations have the following major demands:

- Stop transformation of agricultural land for other uses; the national land use policy needs to be finalized upholding the rights of agriculture laborers. First and foremost, in zoning of land, National Agricultural Policy should be followed. Land in the rural area under agriculture should not be used for any other purpose;
- Government should establish a land commission to identify the accurate amount of khas land;
- Land policy towards chars should give high priority that all accreted new chars are undertaken by the government and protected from illegal occupation of land grabbers;
- All char lands that are still under occupation of land grabbers should be recovered immediately and distributed among landless households;
- The committee for the identification of khas land should be reorganized. The representatives of peasants’ organization, khetmajur (agricultural labor), political parties, NGOs, school teachers should be included in the committees at all levels.
- The land reform policy should be on the basis of land for the tenants; policy should permit immediate distribution of khas land among the genuine landless.
- Eviction of slum dwellers and the rural landless from khas land should be stopped and they should be fast rehabilitated as promised.
- List of grabbers of khas land and khas waterbodies should be regularly updated and published; Occupation and filling of khas land, water body, jalmahal in the name of real estate business or housing should be strictly prohibited.
- Provisions should be made permitting regular publishing of information pertaining to the problems of identification of khas land in the daily Bangla Newspapers, TV, Radio and the same should be disseminated up to the grassroots level.
- All khas land distributed should be recovered from the illegal occupants, as soon as possible.
- Measures should be taken to minimize the influence of the local influential and officials in the committee who exercise corrupt practice.
- Reduce the amount of ceiling of land up to 35 bighas;
- Khas waterbodies should be distributed based on principle “waterbody to the fishermen”: Land use policy should assign high priority in identification and regular updating of information about khas water-bodies by geographical areas;

CHAPTER SIX: ORGANIZING AGRICULTURE LABORERS OF BANGLADESH

6.1 Agriculture laborers: definition and legal status

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81 Based on the interview with organizers and leaders of landless and agriculture workers organizations
Defining agriculture and agriculture workers: On the basis of reviewing different national instruments, International Labor Organization (ILO) tentatively defines agriculture as "Agriculture" includes the cultivation and harvesting of crops, generally includes the breeding of animals and shepherding, horticultural activities, and generally excludes forestry work unless it is incidental to farming, such as isolated tree-felling".\(^2\)

In 1962, at its Fourth Session, the joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health discussed occupational health problems in agriculture and developed two relevant definitions to assist the Committee in its work; these are still valid in the context of ILO’s activities. The Committee agreed that agriculture should mean:

“all forms of activities connected with growing, harvesting and primary processing of all types of crops, with the breeding, raising and caring for animals, and with tending gardens and nurseries”.

It also settled upon a definition of agricultural worker:

“any person engaged either permanently or temporarily, irrespective of his legal status, in activities related to agriculture as defined above”.\(^3\)

The agricultural worker was included under rural workers in the ILO Convention 141 “Rural Workers’ Organization Convention, 1975 (No.-141)” under article two as:

1. the term rural workers means any person engaged in agriculture, handicrafts or a related occupation in a rural area, whether as a wage earner or, subject to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Article, as a self-employed person such as a tenant, sharecropper or small owner-occupier.

2. This Convention applies only to those tenants, sharecroppers or small owner-occupiers who derive their main income from agriculture, who work the land themselves, with the help only of their family or with the help of occasional outside labor and who do not--
   (a) Permanently employ workers; or
   (b) Employ a substantial number of seasonal workers; or
   (c) Have any land cultivated by sharecroppers or tenants.

6.2 Rights of agriculture laborers of Bangladesh

6.2.1 Rights of agriculture laborers and ILO Conventions

\(^{82}\) ILO, 88th Session, 30 May-15 June 2000, Safety and health in agriculture, Sixth item on the agenda, International Labor Office, Geneva

Bangladesh only ratified “ILO Convention 11: The Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921”. It was ratified by the then British-India government. Though the convention is ratified, no provision regarding the same has been made in labor law.

After the adoption by the International Labor Conference in June 1975 “Convention 141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975”, the agriculture workers organizations demanding to government for ratify the convention, the effort was limited in seminars and symposia in early 90s. This convention defined the term “rural workers”, affirmed the rights of workers and emphasized the organizations of rural Workers and their role in economic and social Development. This convention identified the issue of land reform is an essential factor in the improvement of the conditions of work and life of rural workers; organizations of such workers should accordingly co-operate and participate actively in the implementation of such reform. Since it’s not ratified and there is no intention for ratification in near future no law can be expected in the near future.  

ILO Conventions related with agriculture worker and its status of Bangladesh in terms of ratification is shown in Table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL #</th>
<th>ILO Conventions</th>
<th>Key issues</th>
<th>Status of Bangladesh-ratified/not ratified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | C141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141) | • Organisations of Rural Workers and Their Role in Economic and Social Development;  
• Land reform is an essential factor in the improvement of the conditions of work and life of rural workers; organizations of such workers should accordingly co-operate and participate actively in the implementation of such reform | Not ratified                                                                                                                               |
| 2    | C184 - Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) | • Safety and health in agriculture                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Not ratified                                                                 |
| 3    | CO11 - The Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 | • The rights of association and combination of agricultural workers  
• This Convention undertakes to secure to all those engaged in agriculture the same rights of association and combination as to industrial workers, and to repeal any statutory or other | • Ratified;  
• Not made comprehensive law accordingly                                                                                                           |

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84 Nirmalendu Dhar, Legal Status of the Rural and Agriculture Workers in Bangladesh


| 4 | C107 - Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) | • The protection and integration of indigenous and other tribal and semi-tribal;  
• To assure the protection of the populations concerned, their progressive integration into their respective national communities, and the improvement of their living and working conditions. | • Ratified;  
• Not made comprehensive law accordingly |

### 6.2.2 Rights of agriculture laborer: national instrument

The agriculture workers organizations are demanding comprehensive law for agriculture workers. Government only recognized agriculture worker as labor in the amended labor law 2013 as “any person employed by wage in agriculture on the basis of daily, monthly or yearly contract or to be hired on contract to accomplish certain work”.

The above table indicates that Bangladesh ratified only one ILO convention related with agriculture workers; but did not made any comprehensive law accordingly.

The only labor law in Bangladesh regarding agricultural workers is the Agricultural Labor (Minimum Wages) Ordinance, 1984. It defines ‘agriculture labor’ as follows:

**“agricultural labourer”** means any person employed in agricultural crop production, but does not include-

(i) a person employed by the Government;

(ii) a person employed in a plantation as defined in clause (iii) of section 2 of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 (IV of 1936);

(iii) a person who works as a family labourer on monthly wages;

(iv) a person employed by a company registered under the Companies Act, 1913 (VII of 1913), engaged in production and sale of fish or livestock of any kind;

(v) a bargadar as defined in the Land Reforms Ordinance, 1984 (X of 1984);

**“wages”** means all remuneration which would, if the terms of contract of employment, express or implied, were fulfilled, be payable to a person in respect of his employment or work done in such employment, but does not include any sum paid to such person to defray special expenses incurred by him in respect of his employment.

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85 Nirmalendu Dhar, _Legal Status of the Rural and Agriculture Workers in Bangladesh_
According to Section 3 of the ordinance minimum wage for agriculture labor is fixed.

3.1 The minimum rate of wages for agricultural labor per day shall be 3.27 kilograms of rice or such amount of money as is equal to the price of this quantity of rice in the local market.

3.2 The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, review from time to time the minimum rate of wages fixed under sub-section (1), on the recommendation of the Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labor constituted under section 4.

3.3 The Government may, on review of the minimum rate of wages under sub-section (2), fix different rates of minimum wages for different areas, for different classes of agricultural laborer or different kinds of agricultural laborer.

3.4 Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, no rate of minimum wages shall be reviewed earlier than three years from the date on which it was fixed, unless special circumstances so require.

According to Section 4 of the Ordinance:

4.1 The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, constitutes a Council to be called the Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labor for the purposes of this Ordinance.

4.2 The Council shall consist of a Chairman and such number of other members as the Government may deem fit to appoint.

4.3 The Council shall, upon a reference made to it by the Government, recommend to the Government, after such enquiry as the Council thinks fit and after consideration of the economic conditions, costs of living and other relevant factors, the minimum rates of wages for agricultural laborer.

4.4 The Council may, if the circumstances so demand, recommend different rates of minimum wages for different areas, for different classes of agricultural labourer or for different kinds of agricultural labour.

4.5 In making its recommendations, the Council shall take into consideration the views of the Upazila Parishads, if any.

It is noted that about 30 years has already been passed, no council has been formed and the rate of minimum wages has not yet been reviewed.

6.3 Organizations of agriculture laborers in Bangladesh: Issues and Demands
There are many successful cases of peasant movement in the history of Bangladesh; especially the “Tebagha” movement is well known to all\textsuperscript{86}. The Tebhaga movement is probably the greatest peasant movement in the history of Bangladesh in the colonial period 1946-47. The Tebhaga movement was a movement of the sharecroppers of Bengal demanding two-thirds instead of half as their produce. Basically from this principle demand the name ‘Tebhaga’ movement comes. The peasant organizations were developed following the continuity of this movement.

At present, there are farmers’ organizations under all major political parties of Bangladesh; it is debatable how the farmers are represented in these organizations in terms of leadership, participation and decision making. There is no visible activity of these organizations for the interest of farmers. The framers have their own struggle for the profitable price of their products and agricultural inputs; these are sporadic, spontaneous and localized. There are few organizations of agriculture workers, started mobilizing and organizing the rural and agriculture workers since 1980’s by the left political parties demanding legal and trade union rights of agriculture workers, minimum wage, right to food, right to land and elimination of corruption in the rural employment projects. The movement was mostly concentrated in the northern region of Bangladesh. The organizations have some successful cases in recovery of khas land for the landless rural workers. These organizations became fragile/slow-moving since 2000 onwards.\textsuperscript{87}

The trade union federations were also not interested to organize the agriculture workers. Besides the political parties, some NGOs are organizing and mobilizing the landless agriculture workers for land rights, access to natural resources and labor rights.

The major weakness/limitations of organizing the agriculture workers are:\textsuperscript{88}

- The labor movement in Bangladesh was focused mainly on factory and industrial area;
- The labor law was also institute (protisthan) based; it is difficult to recognize institute for agriculture workers;

\textsuperscript{86} Tebhaga literally means three shares of harvests. Traditionally, sharecroppers used to hold their tenancy on fifty-fifty share of the produce. In land control parlance such crop sharing system was known as barga, adhi, bhagi, etc. The sharecroppers were commonly called bargadars or adhiares, who had seriously challenged the custom of sharing crops between the bargadar and the landlord on fifty-fifty basis. During aman harvest of 1946, sharecroppers of some north and northeastern districts of Bengal and their supporters had gone to fields and cut down crops and thrashed them at their own khalan (harvest processing field). The movement has mainly two demands: First, they demanded that the half-sharing system was unjust. Since all the labor and other investment were made by the tenants and since the landowner had least participation in the production process in terms of capital input, labor and infrastructure, the latter should get one-third of the crops, not the traditional one half. Second, the tenants were traditionally required to stack the harvests at the owner's khalan and share the straw and other by-products on half-sharing basis. The tenants refused to obey this. They argued that the harvests would be stacked at the tenant's compound and the landlord would not get any share from the by-products.

\textsuperscript{87} Source: Interview with the organizers and leaders of landless and agriculture workers organizations

\textsuperscript{88} Findings generated from interview with the leaders/organizers of agriculture workers associations and trade union leaders
• The government recognized the agri. workers as labor in amended labor law 2013; There should have complete labor law for agriculture workers; only recognizing as labor is not sufficient;
• It is also complicated to identify industrial/labor relation in terms agriculture as agriculture worker is also self-employed farmer and sharecropper;
• There is no scope to form trade union in agriculture under the labor law;
• There was debate among the left parties whether they form farmers organizations or workers organizations;
• Failure to mainstream the demands /movements at national level and lack of united movement by the organization of agriculture workers.

The following table describes goal/objectives, working area of the organizations of agriculture laborers in Bangladesh.89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Yr of establishment</th>
<th>Goal/Objectives</th>
<th>Working area/districts &amp; No. of members</th>
<th>Source of income/funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation (BAFLF) | 30th July, 1978 | **Vision:** an exploitation free society based on justice, food sovereignty, environmental sustainability, equality and peace.  
**Mission:** To promote workers rights as well as human rights, sustainable development of agriculture workers and rural life. | BAFLF has been working in Agricultural Workers, Research Farm Workers, Sericulture Farm, Sugarcane Farm, Seed-processing Center, Live-stock Farm. Mostly in Gazipur and Pabna; BAFLF is now engaged with 155 agricultural farms. | -Members subscription  
-Local contribution  
-No external donors fund |
| Bangladesh Kheet Majour Samitee (BKMS); -Aligned with Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) | 18 March 1981 | To unite, sensitize, and organize the rural workers including agriculture; workers and build up movement on the basis of organizational | -35 districts; mostly in Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions.  
The name of the 35 districts are: angpur, Kurigram, hakurgaon, Pachagar, Lamonirhat, Nilphamary, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, | -Members subscription,  
-Local contribution  
-No external donors fund |

89 Findings generated from interview with the leaders/organizers of agriculture workers associations and trade union leaders
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Yr of establishment</th>
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<th>Working area/districts &amp; No. of members</th>
<th>Source of income/funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Bhumihin Samity - People’s Organization</td>
<td>22 March 1982</td>
<td>To establish rights of workers; To establish rights to land, right to food, right to land and elimination of all kinds of discrimination.</td>
<td>Pabna, Bogra, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Sariatpur, Manikganj, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Netrakona, Tangail, Jamalpur, Bhs, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Barguna, Jalukathi, Khulna, Kushita, Chuadanga, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Joypurhat, Pabna, Bogra, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Moulovibazar, Suamganj, Habiganj, Noakhali, Lakhipur, Feni</td>
<td>Members subscription, local contribution, No external donors fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samajtantrik krishak khetmajur front - Aligned with Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The no. of members is 140,000 (approx.).</td>
<td>Members subscription, local contribution, No external donors fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Yr of establishment</td>
<td>Goal/Objectives</td>
<td>Working area/districts &amp; No. of members</td>
<td>Source of income/funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijra Kori (NGO)</td>
<td>1980; facilitating landless organization</td>
<td>To unite people, both women and men, who have long been the victims of exploitation, social marginalisation, oppression and poverty. It works with wage labourers, sharecroppers, small and marginal farmers etc</td>
<td>172 Unions, 40 Upazilas under 17 districts Most of these working areas fall in close vicinity of the seacoasts and river basins. Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Meherpur, Bogra, Tangail, Nator, Tangail, Comilla, Chittagong, Noakhail, Lakhsmipur, Chandpur, Khulna, Kushtia, Dhaka No. of members: 350,000</td>
<td>Manusher Jonno Fondation (MJF), EED-Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamjojibi Nari (NGO)</td>
<td>Organizing agri. workers since 2005</td>
<td>To establish rights of agriculture workers especially women workers in agriculture sector; Organizing and mobilizing women agriculture workers and demanding complete labor law for agriculture workers</td>
<td>4 districts : Rangpur, Rajshahi, Manikganj, Narshingdi 7000; 80% women agriculture workers</td>
<td>Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), OXFAM GB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16: Demands/issues of agriculture the organizations of agriculture workers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the organization</th>
<th>Major demands/issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation (BAFLF)</td>
<td>- -BAFLF have demand for land and agrarian reform under the principle ‘Farmers are owners of Land’; - fixing land ceiling in the urban areas;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Bangladesh Kheet Majour Samitee (BKMS)

- Ensuring work whole the year, living wage, land reform, eviction of landless, trade union rights, registration of agri. workers, rights of women agri. workers, ensuring transparency and participation of agri. labor in employment generation projects, right to food, rationing for the poor, equal rights for women, right to health, education, democracy, peace and environment

### Bangladesh Bhumihin Samity

- Right to work: ensuring work/employment in lean season or support/honorarium, living wage for agri. labor, separate directorate for agri. labor, right to land, khas land, land reform, identify above ceiling land and reduce the ceiling up to 35 bigha, distribute agri. inputs to agri. laborers/sharecroppers, trade union rights for agri. workers, equal rights for women, right to health and education, elimination of corruption in safety net programs

### Nijera Kori

- Right to resources, such as land and water; Accountability of the local, Rights of indigenous peoples, fisher folk, Industrial shrimp aquaculture, Commercialisation of agriculture, and women’s rights and empowerment

### Kamjojibi Nari (NGO)

- Campaign and advocacy for formulation of labor law for agri. workers; wage discrimination, accountability and transparency of government services for agri. workers

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**6.4 Organizing agriculture laborers: membership criteria and structure**

One of the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector is the lack of clear-cut distinctions between different categories of workers, farmers, tenant and sharecroppers. Besides, there is a wide range of landownership patterns and methods of cultivation related with livelihoods of agriculture workers. Consequently, there are numerous types of labor relations and different forms of labor force participation are in practice in agriculture. The landless, functionally landless and sharecropper constitute the majority of the agricultural laborers. The majority of these agriculture laborers are landless; they diversify their occupation by resorting to non-agricultural activities as laborers, rickshaw-pullers, van-pullers small businessman, craftsman etc as a survival
strategy. Due to shortage of waged workers in labor deficit areas, the workers became sharecroppers and agriculture depends mostly on migrant workers. The sharecroppers, agricultural laborers and non-agricultural laborers belong to separate occupation groups, but their activities are supplementary to one another so much so that they diversify their occupations along these lines of activities. Considering this context, the definition under ILO convention C141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141) is relevant to be included as a member of agriculture workers organizations; and it has been found as a membership criteria of the existing organizations. The following table 5.4 shows membership criteria, organizational structure and challenges.\(^9\)

**Table 17: Membership criteria and organizational structure, achievement and challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the organization</th>
<th>Membership criteria</th>
<th>Organizational structure</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges &amp; Strategies to overcome challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation (BAFLF)</td>
<td>Agricultural Workers, Agricultural Farm Workers and also Research Farms, Sericulture Farm, Sugar-cane Farm, Seed-processing Center, Live-stock Farm</td>
<td>Village Committee -25 members Union Committee-25 members Upazila Committee-31 members Dist. Committee-41 members Central Committee-101 members</td>
<td>Successful movement in 80s for khas land; Facilitated landless agri. labor to get khas land; and declaration 1984 land reform ordinance</td>
<td>Shortage of motivated organizer imbued with the spirit class consciousness and class struggle; and rise of fundamentalist forces -Developing leadership among the agri. workers; the literate and educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Kheet Majour Samitee (BKMS)</td>
<td>-Wage labor in agriculture; -Rural workers; -Sharecropper; and -Marginal farmer</td>
<td>Village Committee -25 members Union Committee-25 members Upazila Committee-31 members Dist. Committee-41 members Central Committee-101 members</td>
<td>Successful movement in 80s for khas land; Facilitated landless agri. labor to get khas land; and declaration 1984 land reform ordinance</td>
<td>Shortage of motivated organizer imbued with the spirit class consciousness and class struggle; and rise of fundamentalist forces -Developing leadership among the agri. workers; the literate and educated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) Findings generated from interview with the leaders/organizers of agriculture workers associations and trade union leaders
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the organization</th>
<th>Membership criteria</th>
<th>Organizational structure</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges &amp; Strategies to overcome challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Bhumihin Samity</td>
<td>Landless, agriculture worker, sharecropper, marginal farmer, rural workers &amp; occupation group</td>
<td>Village Committee - 20 members Union Committee - 11 members Upazila Committee - 13 members Dist. Committee - 15 members National Executive Council - 19 members</td>
<td>Many success cases in acquiring khas land for landless workers coming forward</td>
<td>After getting khas-land members leaves the organization NGO relief support Rural elites/rich people - Have to revise the strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijera Kori</td>
<td>Wage labourers, sharecroppers, small /marginal farmers, indigenous communities, fisher folk, weavers, blacksmiths, barbers, cobblers, potters, small traders</td>
<td>Group - 16-30 members Village Committee - 7 members Union Committee - 11 members Thana Committee - 21 members</td>
<td>Many success cases in acquiring khas land for landless and ensuring accountability of local government bodies; raising peoples leadership - Biased policy of government for the rich - Corrupted political leaders - Rise of fundamentalist forces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamjojibi Nari (NGO)</td>
<td>Women worker, Wage labourers, sharecroppers, small /marginal farmers</td>
<td>Cell/Primary Group - 20-25 Union Committee Upazila Committee Dist. Committee</td>
<td>Success cases in raising wages and accountability of government services for women workers, the old members are frustrated as they don’t find expected changes; - the big farmers and gov. officials categorize our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Name of the organization

**Member**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership criteria</th>
<th>Organizational structure</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges &amp; Strategies to overcome challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Coordinating &amp; facilitating Agriculture Workers Rights Alliance</strong></td>
<td>women leadership development and mobilization for equal wage for equal work</td>
<td>activity as dividing among the peasants -rise of fundamentalism -recent political unrest and loss of farmer and agri. laborers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.5: Organizing agriculture workers: Towards Rights Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>How (strategy and activities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to work</strong></td>
<td>To ensure work/employment whole the year or getting benefit from gov.</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To eliminate inequality in wages in terms of gender and ethnicity/equal wage for equal work</td>
<td>ii. Capacity building of agriculture workers, agriculture worker organizations, organizers through training and workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To revise /update and implement the Agriculture Labor (Minimum Wages) Ordinance 1984</td>
<td>iii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ensure safety (physical) and security (social) in case of internal migrant worker in agri. sector</td>
<td>iv. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To have access to information in terms of wage and demands of labor in different part of country</td>
<td>v. Media advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Registration of agriculture workers /providing ID card</td>
<td>vi. Budget analysis &amp; public expenditure tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ratify ILO Convention 141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 and formulation of law accordingly</td>
<td>vii. Perspective building &amp; strategic planning for sustainable organization development of agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to Association</strong></td>
<td>To formulate comprehensive labor law for agri. workers’</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To have trade union rights</td>
<td>ii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ratify ILO Convention 141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 and formulation of law accordingly</td>
<td>iii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Media advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>How (strategy and activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Land &amp; Access to Natural Resources</td>
<td>To set up separate directory for rural workers under Ministry of Labor</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To set up National Land Commission for land zoning, protection of agricultural land and to identify the Khas land and its proper distribution</td>
<td>ii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To formulate national land use policy</td>
<td>iii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To implement Land Reform Ordinance 1984</td>
<td>iv. Media advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ratify ILO Convention 141 - Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 and formulation of law accordingly</td>
<td>v. Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To initiate land reform on the basis of “Land for the Peasants/Tenants”</td>
<td>vi. Development of strategic planning for right to land and access to natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To distribution of Khas land for agri. labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ensure tenancy right of sharecroppers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reorganize the committee for the identification of khas land; The representatives of peasants’ organization, agricultural labor, political parties, NGOs, school teachers should be included in the committees at all levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To distribute Khas water-bodies on principle of “waterbody to the fishermen”: Land use policy should assign high priority in identification and regular updating of information about khas waterbodies by geographical areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Food</td>
<td>To establish rationing system for agriculture workers</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get profitable price of agri. products</td>
<td>ii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To formulate right to food bill</td>
<td>iii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To eliminate corruption in food security projects (employment generation projects) and ensuring participation of agri. workers in decision making</td>
<td>iv. Media advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ensure adequate budgetary allocation for food security</td>
<td>v. Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get soft loan in order to cope with market fluctuation and distress selling</td>
<td>vi. Budget Analysis &amp; Public Expenditure Tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reform National Food Policy</td>
<td>vii. Development of strategic planning for right to food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reform Public Food Distribution System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reform Public Food Procurement System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to services(assistance in getting inputs in agriculture.)</td>
<td>To reform the National Agriculture Extension Policy</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To eliminate corruption in agriculture extension services nd ensuring participation of agri. workers in decision making</td>
<td>ii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate budgetary allocation</td>
<td>iii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy formulation for sharecroppers</td>
<td>iv. Media advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To have information about the services</td>
<td>v. Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>How (strategy and activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to education &amp; skill</td>
<td>To have scope for skill development and have opportunity for international migration</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get government support for international migration and soft bank loan</td>
<td>ii. Networking &amp; alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reform national the strategy of national youth development to be included the agri. labor in skill development training</td>
<td>iii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get quality education for the children of agri. laborers</td>
<td>iv. Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to health</td>
<td>To establish quality public health services in rural areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ensure responsiveness and accountability of public health officials/doctors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate budgetary allocation for rural health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Better Life</td>
<td>To achieve right to inclusive development</td>
<td>i. Organizing &amp; mobilizing the agriculture laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To eliminate inequality among the districts</td>
<td>ii. Campaign &amp; advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To ensure participation of agri. laborers in development policy and planning</td>
<td>iii. Budget Analysis and Public Expenditure Tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on a labor force survey conducted in 2010, informal employment in Bangladesh is estimated at about 89% of the total number of jobs in the labor market. It is more prevalent in the rural areas than in urban areas.\(^\text{91}\) The share of agricultural sector in informal economic activity in Bangladesh is very high\(^\text{92}\). The agriculture of Bangladesh has some distinct characteristics: concentration of land in the hand of the absentee landowners dominated by marginal, small and tenant farmers having scattered holdings where sharecropping is the dominant arrangement and agriculture is not profitable for the marginal holders as they are not getting the fair price. For commercial cultivation of cash crops, seasonal cash leasing is increasing. The expansion of non-farm sector in rural areas, rapid urbanization and rural urban migration have effect on character of agriculture labor in Bangladesh. Besides, the international labor migration is high in some region especially in Chittagong region also have effects on the character of agriculture labor market in Bangladesh. These caused shortage of labor in the peak season in all over the country. In terms of labor in agriculture sector, the region of the country is divided into labor surplus and labor shortage areas. The character of agriculture laborers of these two regions is different; in labor deficit area the wage rate is high. The labor migrates seasonally from northern especially Rangpur region to other areas. This report explores the causes behind shortage and surplus of labor in different areas.

About wage rate; there is differences in terms of gender and ethnicity; women and Adivasi are getting less wage compare to others. In labor force, women have more contribution than men; but in labor market, the participation of women in labor market is low. Women working as agriculture labor only in northern region. In the other region, women from ethnic minority (low caste fisher folk community) have started joining in agriculture labor market.

The work in agriculture is daily basis and seasonal; rest of the time the workers remain unemployed. At that time, majority of them pull van/rickshaw in their locality especially in the northern region; some of them migrate to cities- Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Sylhet; they work in the different informal sector. In general, agriculture laborers are the source of labor in informal sector. The organizing of agriculture laborers is the core to organize the labors in informal sector in Bangladesh.

Despite having large no. of laborers in agriculture sector, the trade union movement was not focused to organize the agriculture laborers as labor movement in Bangladesh was focused mainly on factory and industrial areas. Secondly, there was no trade union right for the agriculture laborers.

workers. The organizing of agriculture laborers stared since 1980s by the left parties and they have some remarkable successes in terms of land reform and fighting against corruption in government schemes. At present there are few initiatives from NGO and left parties to organize the agriculture laborers in Bangladesh.

The growth obsessed neoliberal development model followed by successive regimes in Bangladesh ignores the rights of agriculture laborers of Bangladesh. At present, the distributive land reform is not the agenda of policy makers, the target group under public food distribution system is not poor in sale channels and non sale channels are highly corrupted, the outreach to agriculture services to small and marginal farmers is low.

The agriculture laborers organizations have to demand and struggle for comprehensive law for safety and security of agriculture laborers and also have to struggle for comprehensive land and agrarian reform; have to demand to ratify the ILO conventions 141, 184, 107 and have to make national laws accordingly. In order to materialize these, organization of agriculture laborers needs to be organized and mobilized on rights based framework described above (section 6.5).
Annex 1: ToR of the Study

Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)
Study on Agriculture workers in Bangladesh
October 2013

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the important sectors of the Bangladesh economy providing the major source of livelihood in the rural areas where about large part of the population lives. The sector accounts for nearly two third of employment and contribution to GDP is high. Participation of women workers in the agriculture sector of Bangladesh is also increasing. The workers in this sector form part of the large informal workforce with characteristics of: no policy and legal frame-work; absence of employer-employee relationship; poor wage; long working hour; high occupational health and safety risks; no social protection/safety-net and lack of fundamental rights of the workers at workplaces, low organizing capacity and initiatives by trade unions etc.

The current amendments to labour law in 2013 do permit the agriculture worker rights to form trade union, and the country has ratified ILO Convention 87 & 98. So far no successful initiatives taken at national level towards organizing the workers in this sector or engaged on an dedicated policy advocacy campaign at national level on promotion of rights and social protection of agriculture workers through the collective initiative of Labour NGOs and national trade unions. There is a need for an integrated organizing initiative and policy advocacy actions for having special policy measures and legal framework of protecting workplace rights and minimum social protection measures for workers at agriculture sector of bangladesh, and building capacity of trade unions integrating the agriculture workers under the umbrella of union.

FNV through its two partners is planning to support a programme (pilot) to initiate organizing of agricultural workers and the envisaged study will form the basis of this programme.

Objectives & scope

The objective of the study is to provide insight into current status of agriculture workers and their organization in Bangladesh, and can cover the following:
- definition of agriculture workers (laws, practice..)
- issues of agriculture workers in general and specific as a worker
- Women agriculture workers – issues/problems
- their organisation across Bangladesh (various forms)
- political, legal and other challenges for organizing
- government and other initiatives (existing and future) focusing agriculture workers
- public policy focusing them including land reforms and
- challenges/contribution to food security

The study can focus on the above aspects, but can also include other aspects that the researchers deems important to overall study and its contribution to envisaged programme.
Methodology
The study design will be exploratory. The study will utilize the qualitative approaches but quantitative data will be used for analysis the problems. The study data will be generated from primary and secondary sources. Relevant books, journals, articles on agriculture workers will be reviewed. To collect data, unstructured interview, in-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD) will be carried out. In addition, case stories on critical issues will be collected.

- FGD and unstructured interview will be conducted with agriculture workers
- In-depth interview will be conducted with the leaders of agriculture workers organizations, and NGO representatives working on land and agriculture issues.

Time Frame, schedule and budget

The time frame for the assignment will be two months, starting from the time of signing of the contract(s) with the consultant.

The budget for study is EUR 5,000

Expected output

A report of not more than 50 pages with the following chapters:

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Methodology
- seven plus aspects as detailed under objective & scope
- Conclusion
- Annexures (if any)
Annex 2:

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR (MINIMUM WAGES) ORDINANCE, 1984
(ORDINANCE NO. XVII OF 1984).

22nd February, 1984

An Ordinance to provide for fixation of minimum rates of wages for agricultural labourers.

WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for fixation of minimum rates of wages for agricultural labourers and for matters ancillary thereto;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the Proclamation of the 24th March, 1982, and in exercise of all powers enabling him in that behalf, the President is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance:-

Short title

1. This Ordinance may be called the Agricultural Labour (Minimum Wages) Ordinance, 1984.

Definitions

2. In this Ordinance, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,-

(a) “agricultural labourer” means any person employed in agricultural crop production, but does not include-

(i) a person employed by the Government;

(ii) a person employed in a plantation as defined in clause (iii) of section 2 of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 (IV of 1936);

(iii) a person who works as a family labourer on monthly wages;

(iv) a person employed by a company registered under the Companies Act, 1913 (VII of 1913), engaged in production and sale of fish or livestock of any kind;

(v) a bargadar as defined in the Land Reforms Ordinance, 1984 (X of 1984);
(b) “wages” means all remuneration which would, if the terms of contract of employment, express or implied, were fulfilled, be payable to a person in respect of his employment or work done in such employment, but does not include any sum paid to such person to defray special expenses incurred by him in respect of his employment.

Minimum wages for agricultural labour

3. (1) The minimum rate of wages for agricultural labour per day shall be 3.27 kilograms of rice or such amount of money as is equal to the price of this quantity of rice in the local market.

(2) The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, review from time to time the minimum rate of wages fixed under sub-section (1), on the recommendation of the Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labour constituted under section 4.

(3) The Government may, on review of the minimum rate of wages under sub-section (2), fix different rates of minimum wages for different areas, for different classes of agricultural labourer or different kinds of agricultural labourer.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, no rate of minimum wages shall be reviewed earlier than three years from the date on which it was fixed, unless special circumstances so require.

Constitution of Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labour

4. (1) The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, constitute a Council to be called the Council of Minimum Wages and Prices for Agricultural Labour for the purposes of this Ordinance.

(2) The Council shall consist of a Chairman and such number of other members as the Government may deem fit to appoint.

(3) The Council shall, upon a reference made to it by the Government, recommend to the Government, after such enquiry as the Council thinks fit and after consideration of the economic conditions, costs of living and other relevant factors, the minimum rates of wages for
agricultural labour.

(4) The Council may, if the circumstances so demand, recommend different rates of minimum wages for different areas, for different classes of agricultural labourer or for different kinds of agricultural labour.

(5) In making its recommendations, the Council shall take into consideration the views of the Upazila Parishads, if any.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment of minimum wages</th>
<th>5. (1) No person shall pay any agricultural labourer wages at a rate lower than the rate fixed by or under this Ordinance to be the minimum wages for such labourer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Nothing in sub-section (1) shall be deemed to affect, in any way, the right of an agricultural labourer to continue to receive wages at a rate higher than the minimum rate fixed by or under this Ordinance, if under any agreement or contract or otherwise, he is entitled to receive wages at such higher rate, or to continue to enjoy such amenities and other advantages as are customary for such labourer to enjoy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensation and recovery procedure</th>
<th>6. (1) Any person who contravenes the provision of section 5 shall be liable to pay to the aggrieved person compensation of an amount not exceeding two times the amount which would have been paid to him had there been no such contravention.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, a suit for recovery of the wages and compensation payable to an agricultural labourer shall lie to a Village Court.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Protection of minimum wage | 7. The minimum rates of wages fixed by or under this Ordinance shall not be called in question in or before any Court or authority. |
Amendment of Ordinance LXI of 1976

8. In the Village Courts Ordinance, 1976 (LXI of 1976), in the Schedule, in Part II, after item 5, the following new item shall be added, namely:-

“6. Suit for recovery of wages and compensation payable to agricultural labourers.”
Annex 3: The Land Reform Ordinance 1984

THE LAND REFORMS ORDINANCE, 1984
(ORDINANCE NO. X OF 1984).
[26th January, 1984]

An Ordinance to reform the law relating to land tenure, land holding and land transfer with a view to maximising production and ensuring a better relationship between land owners and bargadars.

WHEREAS it is expedient to reform the law relating to land tenure, land holding and land transfer with a view to maximising production and ensuring a better relationship between land owners and bargadars;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the Proclamation of the 24th March, 1982, and in exercise of all powers enabling him in that behalf, the President is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance:-

CHAPTER I
PRELIMINARY

Short title and commencement
1. (1) This Ordinance may be called the Land Reforms Ordinance, 1984.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, specify.

Definitions
2. In this Ordinance, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,-

(a) “bargadar” means a person who under the system generally known as adhi, barga or bhag cultivates the land of another person on condition of delivering a share of produce of such land to that person;

(b) “barga contract” means the contract under which any land is cultivated by a person as a bargadar;

(c) “barga land” means any land under cultivation of any person as a bargadar;

(d) “family”, in relation to a person, includes such person and his wife, son, unmarried daughter, son’s wife, son’s son and son’s unmarried daughter:
Provided that an adult or married son who has been living in a separate mess independent of his parents and pays union rate in his own name and his wife, son and unmarried daughter shall be deemed to constitute a separate family;

(e) “homestead” means a dwelling house with out-houses, tanks and enclosures immediately connected with it covering an area of not more than one standard bigha:

Provided that where such area exceeds one standard bigha, the excess land shall not be deemed to be homestead;

(f) “malik” means a person or an organisation, body or authority holding agricultural land;

(g) “owner” in relation to a barga land, means the person from whom the bargadar gets the land for cultivation under a barga contract;

(h) “personal cultivation” means cultivation by a person of his own land or barga land on his own account-

(i) by his own labour, or

(ii) by the labour of any member of his family, or

(iii) by the labour of any servant or labourer employed on wages to supplement his own labour or labour of any member of his family;

(i) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Ordinance;

(j) “prescribed appellate authority” means an authority appointed by the Government, by notification in the official Gazette, for the purpose of hearing all or any of the appeals under this Ordinance, or an authority specified in the rules for such purpose;

(k) “prescribed authority” means an authority appointed by the Government, by notification in the official Gazette, for all or any of the purpose of this Ordinance, except for the purpose of hearing appeals, or an authority specified in the rules for such purposes;

(l) “produce” includes straw, stalk of any crop and any other crop residue;

(m) “rules” means rules made under this Ordinance;

(n) “rural area” means any area which is not included within a municipality.

3. The provisions of this Ordinance shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force or in any custom or usage or in any contract or instrument.
CHAPTER II

LIMITATION ON ACQUISITION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

4. (1) No malik who or whose family owns more than sixty standard bighas of agricultural land shall acquire any new agricultural land by transfer, inheritance, gift or any other means.

(2) A malik who or whose family owns less than sixty standard bighas of agricultural land may acquire new agricultural land by any means, but such new land, together with the agricultural land owned by him, shall not exceed sixty standard bighas.

(3) If any malik acquires any new agricultural land in contravention of the provisions of this section, the area of land which is in excess of sixty standard bighas shall vest in the Government and no compensation shall be payable to him for the land so vested, except in the case where the excess land is acquired by inheritance, gift or will.

(4) Compensation for the excess land payable under sub-section (3) shall be assessed and paid in such manner as may be prescribed:

Provided that where such compensation is payable only for a portion of the excess land, the assessment and payment of compensation shall be made for such portion of the excess land as the malik may specify in this behalf.

CHAPTER III

PROHIBITION OF BENAMI TRANSACTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

5. (1) No person shall purchase any immovable property for his own benefit in the name of another person.

(2) Where the owner of any immovable property transfers or bequeaths it by a registered deed, it shall be presumed that he has disposed of his beneficial interest therein as specified in the deed and the transferee or legatee shall be deemed to hold the property for his own benefit, and no evidence, oral or documentary, to show that the owner did not intend to dispose of his beneficial interest therein or that the transferee or legatee holds the property for the benefit of the owner, shall be admissible in any proceeding before any Court or authority.

(3) Where any immovable property is transferred to a person by a registered deed, it shall be presumed that such person has acquired the property for his own benefit, and where consideration for such transfer is paid or provided by another person it shall be presumed that such other person intended to pay or provide such consideration for the benefit of the transferee, and no evidence, oral or documentary, to show that the transferee holds the property for the benefit of any other person or for the benefit of the person paying or providing the consideration shall be admissible in any proceeding before any Court or authority.
CHAPTER IV

HOMESTEADS

No eviction, etc, from homestead

6. Any land used as a homestead by its owner in the rural area shall be exempted from all legal processes, including seizure, distress, attachment or sale by any officer, Court or any other authority and the owner of such land shall not be divested or dispossessed of the land or evicted therefrom by any means: Provided that nothing in this section shall apply to the acquisition of such homestead under any law.

Settlement of khas land for homestead

7. (1) Where in the rural areas any khas land fit for being used as homestead is available, the Government shall, in setting such land, give preference to landless farmers and labourers:

Provided that not more than five kathas of such land shall be allotted for such purpose to any individual.

(2) Any land settled under sub-section (1) shall be heritable but not transferable.

CHAPTER V

BARGADARS

Cultivation under barga contract

8. (1) Subject to the other provisions of this Ordinance, no person shall allow another person to cultivate his land and no person shall cultivate the land of another person on condition of sharing the produce of such land between them unless they execute a contract for such cultivation in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

(2) A barga contract shall be valid for a period of five years commencing from such date as may be specified in the barga contract.

Recognition of existing bargadars

9. (1) Any person cultivating the land of another person as a bargadar immediately before the commencement of this Ordinance shall be deemed to be a bargadar in respect of such land under this Ordinance.

(2) The owner and the bargadar of any land referred to in sub-section (1) shall execute a contract as required under section 8 within ninety days from the date of commencement of this Ordinance.

(3) If the parties fail to execute the contract within the specified period, any of them may make an application to the prescribed authority for getting a contract executed.
(4) The prescribed authority shall, after making such enquiry as it deems fit, within sixty days of receipt of the application, decide whether or not the applicant is entitled to get such contract executed.

(5) If the prescribed authority decides that the applicant is entitled to get a contract executed in respect of any property mentioned in the application, it shall direct the opposite party to execute the contract within two weeks from the date of receipt of the direction and, if such party fails to execute, the authority shall execute it on behalf of such party.

(6) A barga contract executed under this section shall be deemed to be effective from the date of commencement of this Ordinance, and shall be valid for a period of five years from that date.

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**Cultivation of barga land after bargadar’s death**

10. (1) Where a bargadar dies before the expiry of the period of barga contract, the cultivation of the barga land may be continued by the surviving members of the family of the deceased bargadar till such expiry or till the barga contract is terminated under this Ordinance.

(2) Where the bargadar dies without leaving any person in his family who is in a position to cultivate the land, the owner of the land may bring the land under his personal cultivation or allow such land to be cultivated by another bargadar.

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**Termination of barga contract**

11. (1) No owner shall be entitled to terminate a barga contract except in execution of an order, made by the prescribed authority, on the ground that-

(a) the bargadar has, without any reasonable cause, failed to cultivate the barga land;

(b) the bargadar has, without any reasonable cause, failed to produce any crop equal to the average output of such crop in any land similar to the barga land in the locality;

(c) the bargadar has used the barga land wholly or partly for any purpose other than agriculture;

(d) the bargadar has contravened any provision of this Ordinance or the rules or orders made thereunder;

(e) the bargadar has surrendered or voluntarily abandoned his right of cultivation;

(f) the barga land is not under personal cultivation of the bargadar; or

(g) the owner requires the barga land bona fide for personal cultivation.

(2) If the owner, without reasonable cause, fails to bring under personal cultivation any land on termination of a barga contract under sub-section (1)(g) or allows such land to be cultivated by some other bargadar within twenty four months of the date...
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12. (1) The produce of any bargad land shall be divided in the following manner, namely:-

(a) one-third shall be received by the owner for the land;

(b) one third shall be received by bargadar for the labour;

(c) one-third shall be received by the owner or the bargadar or by both in proportion to the cost of cultivation, other than the cost of labour, borne by them.

(2) The harvested crop of any bargad land shall be stored for thrashing and division either at any place belonging to the bargadar or any place belonging to the owner, whichever is nearer to the bargad land, or at any other place agreed upon between the parties.

(3) The bargadar shall tender to the owner the share of the produce due to him immediately after harvesting of the crop and when the tendered share is accepted by the owner, each party shall give to the other a receipt in such form as may be prescribed for the quantity of the produce received by him.

(4) If the owner refuses to accept the share of the produce tendered to him by the bargadar or to give a receipt therefore, the bargadar shall give intimation of such fact in writing to the prescribed authority.

(5) The prescribed authority shall, on receipt of such intimation, serve a notice upon the owner, in such form and manner as may be prescribed, asking him to take delivery of the produce within seven days from the date of service of the notice.

(6) If the owner fails to take delivery of the produce within seven days from the date of service of the notice, the prescribed authority shall permit the bargadar to sell the produce to any Government purchasing agency or, in the absence of such agency, in the local market.

(7) If the bargadar sells the produce, he shall deposit the proceeds of such sale with the prescribed authority within seven days from the date of sale.

(8) The prescribed authority shall give to the bargadar a receipt, in such form as may be prescribed, stating therein the amount of money deposited with him and the quantity of produce sold by the bargadar and such receipt shall discharge the bargadar from his obligation to deliver the share of the produce to the owner:

Provided that the quantity of the produce due to the owner, the obligation of the bargadar with regard to the delivery of the quantity of the produce not tendered or sold shall continue.

(9) Where a deposit is made under sub-section (7), the prescribed authority shall
give intimation of such deposit to the owner in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

(10) If the owner does not receive the money in deposit from the prescribed authority within one month from the date of receipt of intimation of such deposit, the prescribed authority may deposit the money in the treasury in revenue deposit to the credit of the owner and give intimation of such deposit to the owner in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

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### Bargadar's right to purchase

13. (1) Where the owner intends to sell the barga land, he shall ask the bargadar in writing if he is willing to purchase the land:

Provided that this provision shall not apply where the owner sells the land to a co-sharer or to his parent, wife, son, daughter or son's son or to any other member of his family.

(2) The bargadar shall, within fifteen days from the date of receipt of the offer, inform the owner in writing of his decision to purchase or not to purchase the land.

(3) If the bargadar agrees to purchase the land, he shall negotiate the price of the land with the owner and purchase the land on such terms as may be agreed upon between them.

(4) If the owner does not receive any intimation from the bargadar regarding his decision either to purchase or not to purchase the land within the specified time or if the bargadar informs the owner of his decision not to purchase the land or if the bargadar does not agree to pay the price demanded by the owner, the owner may sell the land to any person he deems fit:

Provided that the owner shall not sell the land to such person at a price which is lower than the price offered by the bargadar.

(5) Where the barga land is purchased by a person other than the bargadar, the barga contract in respect of the land shall be binding upon the purchaser as if the purchaser were a party to the contract.

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### Ceiling of barga land

14. (1) No bargadar shall be entitled to cultivate more than fifteen standard bighas of land.

**Explanation.** - In computing this ceiling, area of any land owned by the bargadar as well as the land cultivated by him as a bargadar and held by him under a complete usufructuary mortgage shall be taken into account.

(2) If a bargadar cultivates land in excess of fifteen standard bighas, the share of the produce due to him as a bargadar in respect of the excess land may be compulsorily
procured by the Government by order made in this behalf by the prescribed authority.

**Restriction of cultivation**

15. (1) No person shall cultivate the land of another person except under a barga contract or complete usufructuary mortgage or as a servant or labourer.

(2) If a person cultivates the land of another person in violation of the provisions of this section, the produce of the land may be compulsorily procured by the Government by order made in this behalf by the prescribed authority.

**Disputes**

16. (1) Every disputes between a bargadar and the owner in respect of-

(a) division or delivery of the produce,

(b) termination of barga contract,

(c) place of storing and thrashing of the produce,

shall be decided by the prescribed authority.

(2) If in deciding any dispute referred to in sub-section (1), any question arises as to whether a person is a bargadar or not or to whom the share of the produce is deliverable, such question shall be determined by the prescribed authority.

(3) The prescribed authority shall not entertain any dispute if it is not referred to it by an application praying for its decision thereon within three months from the date on which the dispute arose.

(4) The prescribed authority shall, after giving the parties an opportunity of being heard and adducing evidence and making such enquiry as it deems necessary, give its decision within three months from the date of receipt of the application.

**Appeals**

17. (1) An appeal shall lie to the prescribed appellate authority against any order, decision or action made or taken by the prescribed authority under any provision of this Ordinance.

(2) An appeal under sub-section (1) shall be filed within thirty days from the date of receipt or knowledge of the order, decision or action appealed against.

(3) The decision of the prescribed appellate authority shall be final.
### Procedure

18. (1) The prescribed authority and the prescribed appellate authority shall, in deciding any matter, dispute or appeal, follow such procedure as may be prescribed.

(2) Any person filing any application to the prescribed authority or any appeal to the prescribed appellate authority shall pay such fees as may be prescribed.

### Execution

19. Any decision or order of the prescribed authority or of the prescribed appellate authority shall be executed or enforced in such manner as may be prescribed.

### CHAPTER VI

**MISCELLANEOUS**

### Bar of jurisdiction

20. No order, decision, action or proceedings made or taken by any authority under this Ordinance shall be called in question in any Court and no Court shall entertain any suit or proceeding in respect of any such order, decision, action or proceedings.

### Penalty

21. Any person who violates any provision of this Ordinance or the rules or any order of any authority made under this Ordinance or the rules shall be punishable with fine which may extend to two thousand Taka.

### Power to make rules

22. The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Ordinance.

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**Annex 4: CI41 - Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141)**

Preamble

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,

Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Sixtieth Session on 4 June 1975, and

Recognising that the importance of rural workers in the world makes it urgent to associate them with economic and social development action if their conditions of work and life are to be permanently and effectively improved, and

Noting that in many countries of the world and particularly in developing countries there is massive under-utilisation of land and labour and that this makes it imperative for rural workers to be given every encouragement to develop free and viable organisations capable of protecting and furthering the interests of their members and ensuring their effective contribution to economic and social development, and

Considering that such organisations can and should contribute to the alleviation of the persistent scarcity of food products in various regions of the world, and

Recognising that land reform is in many developing countries an essential factor in the improvement of the conditions of work and life of rural workers and that organisations of such workers should accordingly co-operate and participate actively in the implementation of such reform, and

Recalling the terms of existing international labour Conventions and Recommendations--in particular the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949--which affirm the right of all workers, including rural workers, to establish free and independent organisations, and the provisions of numerous international labour Conventions and Recommendations applicable to rural workers which call for the participation, inter alia, of workers’ organisations in their implementation, and

Noting the joint concern of the United Nations and the specialised agencies, in particular the International Labour Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, with land reform and rural development, and

Noting that the following standards have been framed in co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and that, with a view to avoiding duplication, there will be continuing co-operation with that Organisation and with the United Nations in promoting and securing the application of these standards, and
Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to organisations of rural workers and their role in economic and social development, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention,

adopts this twenty-third day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy-five the following Convention, which may be cited as the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975:

**Article 1**

This Convention applies to all types of organisations of rural workers, including organisations not restricted to but representative of rural workers.

**Article 2**

1. For the purposes of this Convention, the term **rural workers** means any person engaged in agriculture, handicrafts or a related occupation in a rural area, whether as a wage earner or, subject to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Article, as a self-employed person such as a tenant, sharecropper or small owner-occupier.

2. This Convention applies only to those tenants, sharecroppers or small owner-occupiers who derive their main income from agriculture, who work the land themselves, with the help only of their family or with the help of occasional outside labour and who do not--
   - (a) permanently employ workers; or
   - (b) employ a substantial number of seasonal workers; or
   - (c) have any land cultivated by sharecroppers or tenants.

**Article 3**

1. All categories of rural workers, whether they are wage earners or self-employed, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations, of their own choosing without previous authorisation.

2. The principles of freedom of association shall be fully respected; rural workers' organisations shall be independent and voluntary in character and shall remain free from all interference, coercion or repression.

3. The acquisition of legal personality by organisations of rural workers shall not be made subject to conditions of such a character as to restrict the application of the provisions of the preceding paragraphs of this Article.

4. In exercising the rights provided for in this Article rural workers and their respective organisations, like other persons or organised collectivities, shall respect the law of the land.

5. The law of the land shall not be such as to impair, nor shall it be so applied as to impair, the guarantees provided for in this Article.

**Article 4**
It shall be an objective of national policy concerning rural development to facilitate the establishment and growth, on a voluntary basis, of strong and independent organisations of rural workers as an effective means of ensuring the participation of rural workers, without discrimination as defined in the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, in economic and social development and in the benefits resulting therefrom.

Article 5

1. In order to enable organisations of rural workers to play their role in economic and social development, each Member which ratifies this Convention shall adopt and carry out a policy of active encouragement to these organisations, particularly with a view to eliminating obstacles to their establishment, their growth and the pursuit of their lawful activities, as well as such legislative and administrative discrimination against rural workers' organisations and their members as may exist.

2. Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall ensure that national laws or regulations do not, given the special circumstances of the rural sector, inhibit the establishment and growth of rural workers' organisations.

Article 6

Steps shall be taken to promote the widest possible understanding of the need to further the development of rural workers' organisations and of the contribution they can make to improving employment opportunities and general conditions of work and life in rural areas as well as to increasing the national income and achieving a better distribution thereof.

Article 7

The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

Article 8

1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organisation whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General.

2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.

3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratification has been registered.

Article 9

1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation shall not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.
2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention at the expiration of each period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

Article 10

1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organisation of the registration of all ratifications and denunciations communicated to him by the Members of the Organisation.

2. When notifying the Members of the Organisation of the registration of the second ratification communicated to him, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organisation to the date upon which the Convention will come into force.

Article 11

The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations full particulars of all ratifications and acts of denunciation registered by him in accordance with the provisions of the preceding Articles.

Article 12

At such times as it may consider necessary the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

Article 13

1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention in whole or in part, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides:
   o (a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 9 above, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;
   o (b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.

2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

Article 14

The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.
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