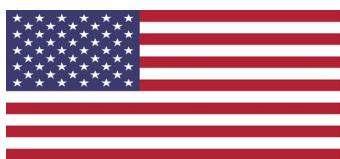




Country Strategy and Action Plan

Bangladesh Stand for Her Land Coalition



STAND FOR HER LAND
HER RIGHTS. HER LAND. A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL.

 **ALRD**
Association for Land Reform
and Development

Background

Around the world, land is foundational for security, shelter, income, and livelihoods. But rights to land are not equitably held. This is especially true for women. Women still encounter persistent barriers to securing land, property, and housing rights—despite laws that enshrine rights and promise equality. Weak implementation, a lack of understanding and awareness, and discriminatory social norms and practices all counter women’s ability to assert and exercise their land rights. Non-existent and/or insecure land, property, and housing rights significantly harm women’s economic opportunities by denying them secure access to rights that are primary for livelihood building, business investment, credit access, income, and savings. Governments, despite high-level commitments and legal frameworks supporting gender equity, lack the political will to recognize and support women’s land rights (WLR) in practice.

Women in Bangladesh have limited opportunities to access and control land and other natural resources. Women constitute 72.6 percent of total working farmers in Bangladesh, even though they are not actually recognized as farmers. Because of their lack of formal recognition, they are deprived of government programs and benefits. Fewer than 13 percent of women in rural land-owning households have formal title deeds and only four to five percent have effective control over land, particularly agricultural land.¹

The “Equal Stake in the Soil” Project

The central aim of this Country Strategy and Action Plan is to catalyze the efforts of national and local civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bangladesh in order to create the enabling environment necessary to realize WLR by shifting public attitudes to recognize the legitimacy and importance of WLR; increasing the commitment and ability of government service providers to recognize, protect, and promote WLR; and increasing the knowledge, agency, and social recognition of women so that they can claim, protect, and exercise their land rights.

The work of the Bangladesh Stand for Her Land (S4HL) Coalition is supported by the four-year, US Department of State-funded “Equal Stake in the Soil” project, which is taking place in Bangladesh and Colombia.² Globally, the project is headed by Landesa with the support and cooperation of the International Land Coalition (ILC). In Bangladesh, the work is headed by the Association for Land and Rural Development (ALRD).³

Project Objectives. The project’s first year focused on foundational initiation activities, which included a background assessment and activation of the County Coalition. The assessment was used by the Bangladesh Country Coalition to create this three-year Country Strategy and Action

¹ See the Bangladesh Coalition Background Analysis Report (2022) for further details on the statistics in this introductory section. Available at: [An analysis on women's land rights in the rural communities of Bangladesh - Stand For Her Land Campaign \(stand4herland.org\)](https://stand4herland.org/)

² Additional S4HL Coalitions are working in Ethiopia, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda, under separate project funding.

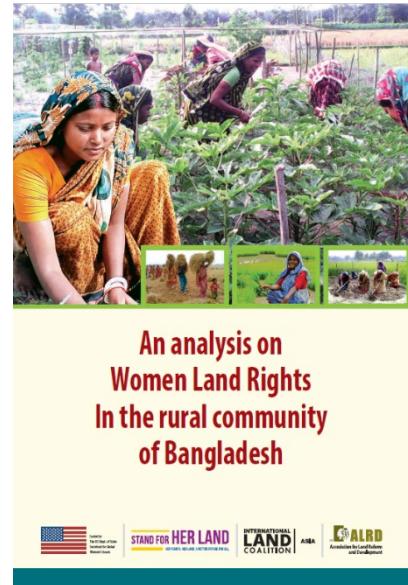
³ Please see the full list of CSO Country Coalition members at the end of this document.

Plan. The action plan focuses on three objectives (1) generating demand and building political will for stronger WLR; (2) increasing social recognition by the public at large of the legitimacy and importance of WLR, measurably reducing social and cultural barriers to WLR; and (3) deepening local CSO's experience and learning in innovative approaches to directly address social norms and legal literacy to spur local implementation of and accountability for WLR.

Bangladesh Coalition Background Analysis

The Coalition's background analysis included desk research, community dialogues with separate groups of women and men in three diverse locations, and key informant interviews with local leaders and government officials.⁴ This assessment had the following objectives:

- Identifying relevant laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices regarding women's land rights (WLR).
- Identifying key problems and messages that can be used for advocacy towards WLR.
- Identifying barriers to WLR and other power minority groups and policy recommendations on how to change them.
- Supporting the development of pilots on social norms and behavioral change and land law literacy.



Key findings on laws and policies regarding WLR

Most of the land laws, policies, and regulations governing Bangladesh's land sector are not adequate to ensure the land rights and access of marginalized people, including especially women. Women's *inheritance rights* are based on religious personal law, which grant women a lesser share than that of men. Though inequitable, even these laws are not followed in practice due to gendered norms of the society ("women do not need land," "they will be taken care of by father, husband and son one after another," etc.). Women, irrespective of religion or ethnicity, try to be "good sisters" by not taking their portion of property. Women who are single, divorced, or household heads are also deprived of inheritance property. In terms of *purchased land*, there is a strong tendency for households to not put women's names on the deed. Landless families can gain land through the *distribution of government khas land*.⁵ However, very few women have received *khas land*. The major constraints women face to access *khas land* include lack of resources and lack of connections with the local political elite, among others. Further, most women have never received information on *khas land distribution*. Women also face a variety of *tenure insecurity* issues, such as land grabbing by the influential or well-connected, river erosion, climate change induced natural disasters, etc. *Land administration* and *dispute resolution* systems are not easily accessible to women and other marginalized groups. Women

⁴ Available on line: [An analysis on women's land rights in the rural communities of Bangladesh - Stand For Her Land Campaign \(stand4herland.org\)](http://stand4herland.org)

⁵ Khas land is land that is deemed to be owned by the government and available for allocation according to government priorities.

are only very *infrequently recognized as farmers formally* and this seriously disadvantages them in terms of access to a variety of farmer support services.

Key findings on women's land literacy

Women remain largely land illiterate. They are not aware of their rights to inheritance, right to *khas* land, and other land rights. They rarely go to land offices and are rarely able to access land rights training. They only infrequently access the services of land offices, which in turn contributes to their lower level of land literacy. In addition to their lack of formal education, mobility limitations and other social norms also reinforce women's limited land rights awareness.

Key findings on social norms

Women's land rights are heavily influenced by social norms and religious beliefs. The attitude that "women cannot do what men can do" and *purdah* (veil/confinement) practices from religious beliefs, among others, limit women's participation in land-based activities. *Care work obligations* and *household responsibilities* take a great deal of women's time and leave women a step behind men in fostering their own livelihood activities. Because of their double responsibilities, women cannot fully access, use, and control natural resources compared to their male counterparts. Men dominate in *decision making* in households as well as in communities and at the national level.

Coalition's WLR Priorities

Based on the existing knowledge and experience of Coalition members as well as the specific findings from the background assessment, the Coalition met in late July 2022 to identify the priority topics on WLR. They agreed to the following WLR priorities:

Policy advocacy

- Revision of *Khas* (public) Land Management and Distribution Policy to ensure women's condition-free equal access
- Recognition of women as farmers in National Agricultural Policy and sub-district lists making them eligible for government agricultural services and subsidies
- Adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Act
- Full ratification of CEDAW, including withdrawal of reservations from Articles 2, 16(a), and (c)

Social norms and behavior change (SNBC) / land literacy

- Women are recognized by communities, households, and themselves as people who can and should own land
- Local government services, including from land and agricultural offices as well as union council, are made available to women
- Local women advocates teach women land literacy topics and provide support to exercise their land rights

Capacity building for CSOs

- Enhanced land literacy awareness and ability to support women
- Strengthened local advocacy, dispute resolution, and media skills
- Increased understanding of social norms and implementation of interventions to change norms and behaviors.

The Coalition subsequently developed these points into the following Strategy and Activity Plan.

Strategy and Activity Plan

Objective 1: Generate demand and build political will for stronger WLR tenure and governance.	
1.1 Strategy meeting of the Country Coalition	
Purpose	The purpose of these meetings is to discuss progress of activities and future planning of the Coalition.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Country Coalition was formed based on the criteria set by the S4HL campaign. An expert group (consisting of academics, land right activists, women rights activists, media personnel, etc.) of Country Coalition was also formed and advises the Coalition as needed. The meetings are organized at the S4HL secretariat (ALRD) and discuss the status of implementation against planning, identify and utilize scope of work, identify challenges, and undertake mitigation strategy. The members will contribute to adopting a yearly plan.
Targets	Members of the Country Coalition and expert group
Verification	Attendance sheets, meeting minutes, progress reports, photographs, planning documents
Timing	Quarterly, or additionally as needed
1.2 Support to partners to implement the community-based initiatives (coordination, communication with community and local gov.)	
Purpose	The purpose of this activity is to support the implementing partners (3 CSO partners: Beneficiary Friends Forum (BFF) in Faridpur, Community Development Association (CDA) in Dinajpur, and Speed Trust in Patuakhali) to implement pilot activities at local level including monitoring, communication with stakeholders and contribute to expected outcomes (as described in MEL guideline). Linked activities for the community-based pilots are listed under Objective 3.
Process	The implementing partners will engage with the community, connect the priority groups with the reference group and service holders for enabling access to land, agriculture services, and other rights, organize awareness and advocacy activities at local level, identify khas land, agriculture support and other opportunities. The implementing CSOs will organize monthly monitoring meetings to assess the progress as well as identify opportunities and report to the S4HL secretariat.
Targets	Implementing partners' project team, paralegals, women leaders
Verification	Attendance sheet, meeting minutes, photographs, list of women applying for khas land, women received agriculture materials, training and other supports
Timing	Work is on-going from November 2022 through the project. Monthly financial support is provided to the 3 local partners through ALRD.
1.3 Annual Learning & Sharing Meeting	
Purpose	The purpose of the meeting is to learn from the implementing partners' experience as well as from the Coalition members and assess the progress of the S4HL activities annually by the Coalition members. The meeting will include participation from academics, activists, and CSOs in addition to the Coalition who can contribute /advise to accelerate the campaign.

Process	The meeting will be organized annually at the Coalition's secretariat or at field level where Coalition members will participate, share, and learn from one another directly. A yearly progress report (overview, outcomes, challenges, and opportunities) will be presented and next year's plan will be developed and presented in the meeting.
Targets	Country Coalition members, expert group, academics, activists and CSOs
Verification	Annual report, attendance sheet, meeting minutes, photographs
Timing	Annually in the period between July and September in 2023 and 2024
1.4 Days of Observation	
Rural Women Day (15 Oct), International Women Day (8 Mar), International Human Rights Day/Land Day (10 Dec)	
Purpose	The purpose of each day of observation is to popularize WLR issues at the local level and connect the government offices (land office, agriculture office, Dept. of Women & Children Affairs, Dept. of Social Welfare, Upazila and union councils) media, CSOs, and others with the WLR activities at the local level.
Process	The implementing partners will observe International Rural Women's Day (15 October), International Day for Women (8 March), and International Human Rights Day/Land Day (10 December and the "16 Days' of Activism leading up to it) at the local level. They will organize rallies and discussion meetings to celebrate the day with participation of the target stakeholders.
Targets	Community women, government officials (land office, agriculture office, department of women affairs, department of social welfare), Upazila and union council, CSOs, media
Verification	Attendance sheet, meeting minutes, photographs, poster, briefing paper, list of women applying for khas land, women received agriculture and other support etc.
Timing	15 October, 8 March, and 10 December each year. 2022=2 2023=3 2024=3 2025=1
1.5 Participation, prepare and submit shadow report to CEDAW / IESCR and other relevant human rights mechanism	
Purpose	The purpose is to create pressure on the government for withdrawal of reservations from CEDAW and to comply with the recommendations on IESCR and other human rights instruments (relevant to WLR).
Process	The project will prepare alternative reports (when CEDW review is listed by the committee of UN) through local and national consultation and organize meetings or submit memorandum to the concerned ministry (Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs), legislative committees.
Targets	Concerned ministries (Ministry of law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Land etc.), policy makers, legislators, CSOs, media, Coalition members, academics, researchers, alliances and platforms working for women rights, land rights

Verification	Alternative/thematic report, attendance sheets, meeting minutes, photographs, recordings, memorandum, alternative report.
Timing	Dependent on Bangladesh's CEDAW review timing, but likely two strong efforts during the life of the project, once in 2023 and once in 2024.
1.6 Policy dialogue/roundtable with the government (with participation of other platforms/forums etc.).	
Purpose	Purpose of the policy dialogue/round table is to influence the government to amend policies or change implementation on WLR issues- khas land management policy, equal wage, women's recognition as farmers, adoption of Anti-Discrimination Act, implementation of CEDAW, and other international commitment and obligation.
Process	The Coalition will organize meetings at national level and share a report on the relevant issues with recommendations that need to be addressed by the government.
Targets	Concerned ministries, policy makers, legislators, CSOs, media, Coalition members, academicians, researchers, alliance and platform working for women rights, land rights
Verification	Briefing paper, attendance sheets, meeting minutes, photographs, recording, memorandum, keynote paper/briefing note
Timing	As windows of opportunity present themselves, roughly: 2023=2 2024=2 2025=2 In the 1 st and 3 rd quarter of the year
1.7 Publication of background analysis report and dissemination	
Purpose	To inform the different level stakeholders (policymakers, CSOs, media, activists, academics) on WLR situation and put pressure on them to be responsive to the issues.
Process	Publication of background analysis report and dissemination through the National Launch of the S4HL Bangladesh Campaign.
Targets	Policymakers, CSOs, media, activists, academics, government, local government, CSOs, media
Verification	Background analysis report, attendance sheet, photographs
Timing	December 2022
1.8 National Launch of the S4HL campaign	
Purpose	To disseminate aims and objective of the project among wider people through formal launch of the project.
Process	Organized formal launching event along with thematic seminar on WLR issues at national level.
Targets	Policy makers, CSOs, academics, network and platform on land rights, media, activists
Verification	Attendance sheet, proceedings, photos, paper clippings, keynote papers
Timing	December 2022

Objective 2: Increase social recognition by the public at large of the legitimacy and importance of WLR, measurably reducing social and cultural barriers to WLR

2.1 Fact finding and investigation of WLR issues and highlighted/ published / broadcast in the media

Purpose	To broaden the public's support for WLR by bringing change to the social and cultural barriers impacting WLR
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists from national and local media visit the community-based project areas, select stories (through fact finding/investigation) focused on the social and cultural barriers to WLR for publication in national newspapers. Follow up news/stories published in the media. Wider circulation of published news and stories among different level stakeholders
Targets	General public with special emphasis on community men and women, local government representatives, local administration, land office, agriculture office, social welfare office, office of women and children affairs, CSOs, policy makers, reference group, journalists, land rights activists, academics
Verification	Published news, stories, fact finding report, photographs, video clips
Timing	One per year, based on the need and availability of the media

2.2 TV Talk Show/Round table, jointly with print media

Purpose	To raise WLRs issues (khas land management policy, women inheritance rights, women right to agricultural support, equal wages, CEDAW, Anti-Discrimination Act) in the national media for wider awareness as well as to influence policy makers to take positive action in favor of WLR.
Process	Joint seminar with national media houses and supplementary page will be brought out by the media; organize TV talk show with participation by land rights activists, women rights activists, policy makers.
Targets	Policy makers, academics, activists, CSOs, community men and women, media etc.
Verification	Keynote/briefing note, supplementary page, photographs, attendance sheets, video recording, case stories
Timing	Three times during the project 2023=1 2024=1 2025=1

2.3 Production and publication of information and communication materials for mass awareness on WLR (Issue based poster, leaflet, sticker, booklet containing land laws, inheritance rights, khas land application process)

Purpose	To popularize the issue of WLR through different forms of communication
Process	Printing and dissemination of issue-based posters, leaflets, stickers, booklets containing land laws, inheritance rights, khas land application process, SNBC
Targets	Community men and women, local government representatives, local administration, land office, agriculture office, social welfare office, office of women and children affairs, CSOs, policy makers, reference group, journalists, land rights activists, academics

Verification	Poster, leaflet, sticker, photographs, progress report, case stories
Timing	Produced and distributed in conjunction with Days of Observation
2.4 Production of WLR messaging and communications materials for social media, television, radio, SMS, print media as relevant	
Purpose	To popularize the issue of WLR through different forms of communication
Process	Development of simplified, contextually appropriate messages on WLR that are targeted to different profiles of women and men. Sharing messages through social media, blog, and website.
Targets	Policy makers, academics, activists, CSOs, Community men and women, media etc.
Verification	Social media page, blog, website visitors and response/comments
Timing	All the year round as well as event based
2.5 Popular folk song/play on WLR developed and screened at the community level	
Purpose	To create awareness among community men and women on SNBC relating to WLR
Process	Recorded 'Pot Song' performance will be shown at the community level
Targets	Community women and men
Verification	Report, photos
Timing	Monthly at pilot areas
Objective 3: Deepen local CSOs' experience and learning in innovative approaches to directly address social norms and legal literacy to spur local implementation of and accountability for WLR.	
3.1 Training for CSOs on WLR issues and SNBC	
Purpose	The purpose of the training is to capacitate the CSOs on WLR and social norms and behavior change.
Process	ALRD will provide all Coalition members with 2 days training on the issues of land literacy, advocacy and SNBC. ALRD will develop a training curriculum/module for the training.
Targets	Country Coalition members
Verification	Attendance sheets, photographs, training report, training module
Timing	March- April 2023
3.2 Paralegal Training (training of the trainers--ToT) on land literacy/SNBC	
Purpose	Engage trained paralegals to change social norms and behaviors among the priority and reference group regarding WLR; trained paralegals can also share basic land law related information
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected volunteers of CSOs will be provided ToT by the secretariat. At least 12-15 participants from the pilot implementers will attend the training in early 2023. The refresher will be organized at the end of 2023. The content of the training will be land laws, khas land management policies, women rights, and facilitation skills.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training curriculum/module will be developed and used for the training.
Targets	Community volunteers of the implementing partners
Verification	Attendance sheets, photographs, training report, training module
Timing	Initial training in early 2023; refresher training in late 2023
3.3 Community dialogue/roundtable with SNBC reference groups	
Purpose	To influence SNBC reference groups to change social norms and behavior and to provide support to community women access to land rights, inheritance rights, and agriculture rights
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize meetings at the union/Upazila level with the SNBC reference groups. • Informal meeting with the reference group to discuss with specific issues e.g., to provide the list of landless women (for purposes of khas land eligibility), lists of women farmers to include in upcoming training on farming etc., and generally engage with the land and agricultural officers to provide support to community women.
Targets	Union Council Chairman, union council members, secretary; block supervisors of union agriculture office, staff of union land office, staff of Upazila land office, Upazila office of women and children's officers, Upazila office of social services, political leaders, CSOs, media
Verification	Attendance sheets, photographs, event report, list of landless women, list of women need agriculture support, women received land and agriculture support
Timing	Once per year in each of the 3 pilot locations
3.4 Awareness meeting with priority groups. (Conducted by the paralegals)	
Purpose	To create awareness among community women about laws and social norms relating to land rights, inheritance right, right to agriculture and enable them to claim their rights.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At organized courtyard meeting at the village level, paralegals will discuss different issues of women land rights, agriculture, social norms, and behavior issues etc. • Paralegals will visit the community at their homes and make them aware and understand social norms and behavior and pursue them to claim inheritance rights, applying for khas land, support from the agriculture office etc.
Targets	Community women (priority group), women leaders, male members of the family
Verification	Attendance sheets, photographs, report
Timing	Once per quarter in each of the 3 pilot locations
3.5 Advocacy training for CSOs and Community Leaders	
Purpose	To capacitate CSOs to conduct community mobilization and local level advocacy relevant to WLR and SNBC
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected staff implementing partners and community women leaders will attend the training. • A training curriculum/module will be developed and used for the training.

Targets	Implementing CSOs and community women leaders
Verification	Attendance sheets, photographs, training report, training module
Timing	May 2023, once in the whole project years

Bangladesh Coalition Membership

Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD)—Coalition Coordinator
 Association for the Realisation of Basic Needs (ARBAN)
 Badabon Sangho
 Beneficiary's Friendship Forum (BFF)
 Community Development Association (CDA)
 Kapaeeng Foundation (KF)
 Nagorik Uddyog (Nu)
 Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangstha (SAMS)
 Society for People's Education, Empowerment and Development Trust (Speed Trust)

The Coalition also includes many individuals, such as academics, lawyers, journalists, researchers, and activists.

More Information

For queries or more information on this project, please contact:

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