

Char Development and Settlement Project Phase IV

Land Settlement on Coastal Chars

Settling on new land

On average 1.1 billion tons of sediment are carried down by the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system, the largest sediment load in any river system in the world. Much of it forms the raw mass for new developing land in the coastal areas, the *chars*, as this land is called in Bangla.

The newly accreted land becomes property of the government (*khas* land) and is transferred to the Forest Department to plant trees that help stabilizing the land. After 20 years, the land is considered as fit for settlement. But while land is accreting, it is also eroding in other places. It is estimated, that each year 26,000 people lose their land through erosion. Without anywhere else to go, many of them try to rebuild their lives on the newly emerged chars, often before the 20 years have expired. They occupy the land illegally and in some cases have to buy it from local power brokers.

Land settlement under CDSP IV

The land settlement process under the Char Development and Settlement Project IV (CDSP IV) follows the provisions of agricultural khas land management and settlement policy, and can be divided into the following broad stages:

1. Settlement surveys

During a plot-to-plot-survey (PTPS), cartographers, measure each and every plot on the respective char, draw an exact map of the land based on cadastral surveys and note down the details on the inhabitants. The maps and the information about the families are then deposited and published in the Upazila (sub-district) Land Office. Complaints against the findings can be submitted within 30 days.



2. Kabuliat signing

While in standard land settlement processes the settlers are requested to travel to the Upazila Land Office to look into the files, CDSP IV organizes public hearings at the village level. During these hearings, each case is called out to confirm that the family and all listed members are living on the plot. Other participants can object, for example if they know that an applicant owns a plot of land somewhere else. Once the hearing is concluded, the list with the identified landless households is transferred to the Upazila Land Office which prepares the official resolution of the meeting as well as the settlement record for every family. After receiving approval from the district level, the *kabuliat* (deed of agreement) has to be signed by both the selected landless households and the

land authority. Under CDSP, the deed is registered at the village level due to a special arrangement (in other cases this is done at the Upazila Offices), which again saves the families time and costs for the often difficult travel to the Upazila Office.

3. Khatian distribution

Once registered, the details of the settlement cases are entered into the land database of CDSP IV. The project has developed a Land Records Management System (LRMS), which allows record keeping of every land attribution and helps to prevent double assignments. The LRMS produces computerized *khatians* (final records of right). As the last step in the process, this document is handed over to the beneficiary family, making them the owner of the respective plot on a permanent base. *Khas* land, once allocated, cannot be sold and only be transferred by heritage.

Process innovations

Under CDSP, a number of innovations, such as to the PTPS, information dissemination meetings, the public hearings, the *kabuliat* signing and registration of deeds on village basis, and the LRMS, have been introduced to the land settlement process. These elements are unique to land settlement under CDSP and strengthen the impact for rural women and men. Over the years of CDSP implementation the process has been streamlined from 26 official stages to 8, making it faster and more accessible for the char settlers.

Women empowerment

Another change that CDSP introduced to the process is improving the position of women regarding to land rights. The wife's name is now written first in the legal document. As a result she is legally entitled to 50 percent of the owned land. This strengthens her position in the family, provides her uninterrupted access to the land and a legal position in many decision making processes. For example if the family wants to use the land as a collateral for credit. Also, if the husband should abuse his wife or it is proven that he is involved in illegal activities, legal steps against him can now result in him losing his share of land.

Innovation scale-up

Under CDSP III an internalization process was started to encourage other institutions to utilize our learning's and innovative activities in land management systems. This transforms the titling of land into a more open, transparent and hassle free process. These activities, including the development of training manuals and organization of seminars, are continued under CDSP IV.

Latest information and contact details

If interested in the latest CDSP IV news and progress updates, please visit our website on www.cdsp.org.bd.

For questions or comments please contact us directly through:

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