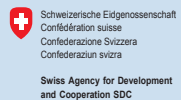


IMPACT

Case Studies and Media Coverage



Funded by:



8



IMPACT

Case Studies and Media Coverage

Disclaimer

This document has been produced with the financial assistance and technical support of the European Union, Manusher Jonno Foundation-MJF, Shiree, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Bangladesh Government. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Uttaran and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the positions of donors.

Credits

Published by : Uttaran
Flat # B1 (1st Floor), House # 32, Road # 10/A
Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh
Phone: 88-02-9122302
e-mail: uttaran.dhaka@gmail.com
Website: www.uttaran.net

Published : September 2015

Content edit / design : Philip Humphreys

Translation support : Farhana Khan

Photos by Rupal Shah : Cover, and pages 8, 9, 13, 15, 19, 21 and 22

*All other photographs are property of Phil Humphreys and/or
Uttaran, except where indicated and acknowledged*

Printers : Runic

Contents

Khasland utilisation	04
- A life transformed by khasland	04
- Microcredit success	05
- Enough rice for three months	06
- A new life through lobsters	08
Gender in land Governance	09
- Deserted by her husband but enriched through Uttaran and khasland	09
- Sketching out her own future	12
- Carried family-of-five through husband's illness thanks to khasland	13
Legal Support	15
- Successful claimant	15
- Wrongly accused of murder	16
- Fraud victim	17
- From destitution to prosperity	18
- Tortured by land grabbers	21
Media Coverage	22



Khasland Utilisation

A life transformed by khasland: Shukumar

Born: 1963

Lives: Kalabaria village, Bagatipara Upazila, Natore District, Rajshahi

“At the age of 11 I worked as a bonded day labourer for a well off family. At the age of 16 I got a monthly job as a fish farmer earning around 1,000 taka per month. The farm owner used to give me an additional 60 taka per week for daily expenses. I continued the job for eight years on the same remuneration and other benefits. Since I did not smoke or chew on betel leaves, I was able to save around 5,000 taka. With this money, I started a grocery shop in my village and began earning an average of 1,200 taka per month. Besides that I used to catch fish in the canal for about 10 days a month, gaining around another 700 taka, making my monthly income 1,900 taka.

“In 1998 I joined the landless movement being led by Uttaran and received one acre of khasland, on which I started cultivating shrimp. Four years later I leased a one quarter share of government waterbody of nine acres under the name of fisher folk association. At that time, the government lease money was 7,500 taka per acre. In 2004, I leased another fish farm of one acre from a neighbour who got sick and needed to lease his khasland to raise money for the costs of his treatment. Later I bought a water pump and bore pipe to reach underground water.

“My life is now transformed. I am now the owner of five acres of khasland, one acre of which is high land situated three kilometres away from my home. I use this to cultivate rice and crops. I have also made a brick house and have an account in the commercial bank. In any social event, if everybody contributes 50 taka, I now have to share 100 taka because of my well off status. People now call me to mediate social conflicts.”

Microcredit success: Ramesa



Lives: Patkelghata thana of Satkhira District, Khulna Division

“I used to live with my in-laws in Radipara village of Patkelghata thana. My husband Azizul Islam was a very poor man and our problems seemed to increase with every passing day. We soon had three daughters and one son, and this only aggravated our financial problems further. We had to move out of my in-laws house and return to my father’s. My father gave us a small piece of land on which we built a small hut. My husband began working as a day labourer. The money he earned was insufficient to run a family of six but it was very difficult to find work in the area. Our days continued to become tougher and tougher. I wanted to share the burden with my husband and so I looked for something I could do.

“During that time Uttaran had a Primary Organisation in our village, named ‘Badhan’. My mother introduced me and I became a member. Following her suggestion I took a loan of 3,000 taka and started rearing goats. A year later, I took another loan of 6,000 taka and gave it to my husband to set up a business of nuts in the local market. Slowly our fortunes have begun to change.”

Enough rice for three months: Shirina Begum

Born: 1972

Lives: Ramjan Nagar village in Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira District

"I was born and raised in Koikhali village in Satkhira. At the age of only 12 I was entered into marriage with a man named Samad Morol. He was a poor fisherman who had only received five decimals of homestead land by way of an inheritance. And as the fish in the river became scarcer, his income fell and we struggled to afford even food.

"As a result, my husband began looking into alternative professions merely to make ends meet. One day he found a job at Ramjan Nagar village near the Sundarbans forest reserve, performing Mati Kater Kaj (earth filling). While working there he noticed both sides of the Mader River were becoming alluvial, with the deposit of sediment levelling the land. He decided to occupy some alluvial khasland and stay there permanently for a better quality of livelihood, as he was inspired that many of landless people were doing the same.

"My husband was enjoying his new job, so he started to cut the forest beside the riverbank to make it suitable for a permanent living place. I also moved to Ramjan Nagar to be with my husband and work the domestic duties as we fought to lift ourselves out of poverty.

"One day, I met a local Uttaran organiser called Safia Khatun. I came to know through her that Uttaran was working in different unions of Shyamnagar Upazila and was lending support to the landless people. I agreed to be a group member of Uttaran (tagar group) in compliance with all terms and conditions alongside 21 other members.

"In line with the Uttaran's group management policy, I started to contribute to savings, sit in the weekly meetings and receive various types of training from Uttaran. They educated me on khasland issues and my rights, and with their help we got two thirds of one acre of khasland as duplicate carbon receipt (DCR). Now we are using that land for crop cultivation twice a year and we also excavated nine decimals for a pond for fish culture using Uttaran's capital support.



"Before the last monsoon we harvested 30 mounds rice – enough to give us food security for three months. I also cultivated seasonal vegetables on the dikes of the pond, which are helping to improve the nutritional diet of my family members.

"I have four children, two boys and two girls, named Shirajul Islam, Hafijur Rahman, Salma Khatun and Nasima Khatun. My youngest daughter, Nasima, is studying at the local school while my eldest son, Shirazul, is earning up to 120 taka a day as a van puller. Uttaran capital support is helping us to purchase a van.

"After getting the khasland, we found encouragement to live with dignity. Now, we are in a well off condition and have food security for three meals in a day, for three months. Now do not have to worry about starvation. Now we are almost OK."

A new life through lobsters: Md Manan Morol



Born: 1983 Lives: Ramnathpur village, Paikghacha Upazila, Khulna District, Khulna Division

"I have been living in this area since I was 14. I used to live on the other side of the river at Parramnathpur, but my land was washed away.

I lost all of my land records and documentation in the floods, making me landless. I had no choice but to live helplessly on the streets.

Then, in 2009 I was introduced to Uttaran through one of its field facilitators, as they were conducting their land distribution scheme. Later, when the government began conducting its land surveys, I applied for permanent settlement of my current land. Uttaran helped me in my mission and through its assistance I was successful in acquiring one acre of land as permanent settlement in 2013. I cultivate lobsters and vegetable in my land. I have a monthly income of around 2500-3000 taka from my cultivation and I also work as a day labourer to boost my earnings. Uttaran has looked after us very well by settling land disputes and providing us with permanent settlement. Its livelihood department has also given me training on cultivation techniques. My life is much better now after obtaining the permanent settlement. Thanks to Uttaran I feel secure and comfortable now on my own land."



Gender in Land Governance

Deserted by her husband but enriched through Uttaran and khasland: Purnima Roy

Lives: Hugolbunia village of Bathiaghata Upazila, Khulna District

"I live with my son, daughter-in-law and one granddaughter. But many years ago my situation was very different. I was living under extreme poverty with my children for almost 30 years.

"In 1973 my husband got married for a second time and deserted me. I left our place with our son and started living in my father's house. After six years my husband died. My son did not inherit any of his property and later we were also thrown out of my parents' place. We started living in an abandoned WAPDA house."

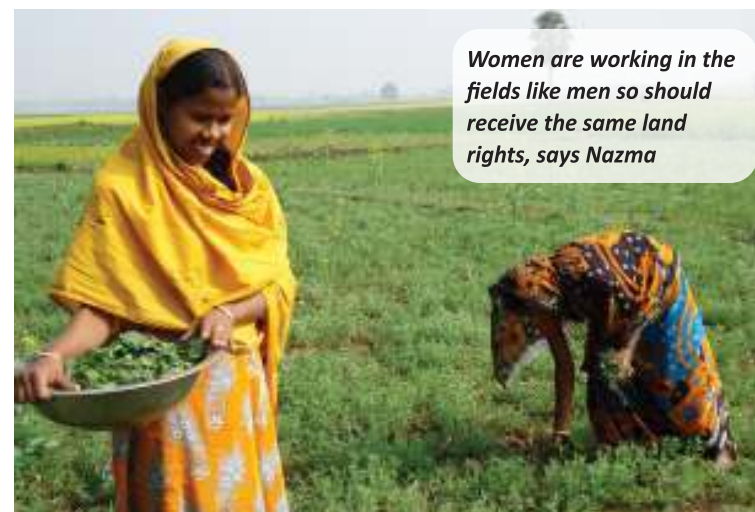
"In 2010 (under the SEMPTI project), Uttaran made a list of extreme poor households in my local area. I became a member of Uttaran's primary organisation called 'Asha'. Uttaran gave me a lot of support including two pigs and two goats worth a combined 15,745 taka and some training on homestead gardening. By using these assets and the training I became very successful in only two years. I sold my pigs and goats, bought a cow, and leased a waterbody. I made a total of 100,000 taka by selling fish from the waterbody in the first year I leased it.

“Only later did I come to know that the waterbody is actually Khasland, and with the help of Uttaran I applied for and received half an acre on a permanent basis. Now I am doing aquaculture and earning a lot of profit from it. Recalling my training from Uttaran, I have developed a homestead garden on my yards and the vegetables that I can cultivate – together with the fish – are acting as a main source of nutrition for my family. I have even opened a bank account.



“I have heard that the government possesses many public lands to distribute to the landless. If only the government wants, they can eradicate poverty from the lives of millions of landless people like me. But I have heard that the law states: ‘Widows or women who have been deserted by their husbands are entitled to the public land if only they have an able son, but are not entitled if they only have a daughter’. What kind of law is this? Girls are also working in the field. Thousand of penurious women like me are doing everything starting from planting crops to delivering crops to houses. Therefore in this case, it is not right to say that widows or women who have been deserted by their

husbands who only have daughters cannot make any use of public lands, because they are also running their families.



“I feel that if we are able, it should not matter if we have a son or not; all widows and women deserted by their husbands and the helpless, landless women should be entitled to public land first. In this way, they will be able to lead their lives with security and dignity and consequently the number of poor people in our country will reduce enormously.”

Sketching out her own future: Nargis Begum

Lives: Ramnathpur village in Paikghacha Upazila, Khulna District

"I live with my husband and our four-year-old daughter. I got my permanent settlement through Uttaran's assistance in 2013. My husband works as van driver while I work as a housewife. I have one acre of land now which we both work on, cultivating fish, paddy and vegetation. Before acquiring the permanent settlement, our lives were miserable. We could only manage to eat twice a day, wear torn and tatty clothes and had no hair oil or soaps. Now I have a roof on my head, I can have meals thrice a day and wear good clothes.

I had to work through the process of DCR for four years before getting permanent settlement. During this time I was trained on cultivation by Uttaran's livelihood department. Now my only dream is to get my daughter highly educated and to pursue an excellent career for her.



"This is my vision of my dreams and future plans. The sketch demonstrates my house surrounded by a vegetable plot, a tube well, ponds, and a toilet. My daughter's education is still a work in progress but other than that, my dreams have nearly all been translated into reality."

Carried her family-of-five through husband's illness thanks to khasland: Rahima

Lives: Ajijpur village, Paikgacha Upazila, Khulna District



"I was born in this village, the third child of five in my family. My father was a poor day labourer with no capacity to meet the food need of all his family members. We had no scope for education and I passed only class 3 from local primary school. When I reached 15 my father arranged my marriage to a man called Sattar Gazi in the same village. He was also landless, like my father.

"After one year our first child was born and by the time I was 20 we already had two daughters and a son. Then my husband contracted TB, and he lost his ability to work as a labourer. We fell into a deep and vulnerable situation. I took responsibility for all five of us at that time. I began labouring myself, for other land owners in the field or on shrimp farms. I worked hard for to pay for medical treatment of my husband and to keep my family afloat. At the same time, I was trying to educate our children but when my first daughter reached class 9 (aged 15-16) we decided to arrange her and her sister's marriages due to our financial crisis, social security and local cultural traditions. Within two years both were married.

"Thankfully, Uttaran came to our aid. I was chosen as a beneficiary of its land rights programme by a field facilitator from the Debhata centre. I enrolled in a landless group called 'Tagaor Bhumiheen Nari Shamity' (female landless group). I attended meetings regularly and learned about fighting against insufficiency, about how I could survive in our society, how I can take services from government hospitals, land offices and others departments. Because of this special initiative, my husband and I received better treatment and he was fully cured.

"In August 2013, with the help of Uttaran, I applied to the land office for 16 decimals of khasland. The upazila-level Gono Unnayan Federation and bhumi committee began communications with the Upazila Nirbahi Officer. Uttaran were also in contact with the DC office and finally on 17 November 2013 the land office handed over the ownership deed to my husband and me in the registry office.

"The khasland we received is in big shrimp farm, so we cannot use it independently and have to lease it to another shrimp farm owner through a deed of agreement. We received hari (lease) money of 4,000 taka a year from the shrimp farm owner and with this I bought three goats.



"We are living on another two decimals of khasland plot. The land office has said that it cannot be delivered yet as there is still some legal dispute over the land. Uttaran is trying to resolve the dispute and I hope that it will soon be handed over to us. I hope that if Uttaran continues its efforts and support to this landless area, then within a short time I can overcome and reduce my extreme poverty and travails, my son will be educated and we can all enjoy family happiness and affluence."

For more information on GUF and bhumi committees, please refer to booklets 2 in this series titled: 'Primary Organisation and GUF formation' and booklet 4 titled 'Bhumi Committee'

Legal Support

Successful claimant:
Dibakar Mondol

Born: 1984

Lives: Moznurkhali, Assasuni Upazila

"When my land was under the control of land grabbers, I received enormous help from the legal support department of Uttaran.

I did not have to pay a single fee as Uttaran bore all the expenses incurred from contesting the many cases filed against me. Uttaran helped me to receive permanent settlement despite the objection of the grabbers and they have also given us microcredit loans with negligible rates of interest. Using this, I am now working on fish cultivation on my land. I am very grateful to Uttaran for giving me a new life. Without their assistance, my life would have been total misery under the control of the powerful land grabbers."

Wrongly accused of murder: Wadud Golder

"I am very thankful to Uttaran and their projects, which are helping poor people like me to get justice in this country."



Wadud Golder spent time in jail

Born: 1962

Lives: Enayetpur village, Tala Upazila, Satkhira District.

"I am a farmer by trade. I have one son and two daughters. One of my daughters got married a few years back and my other daughter is doing her Bachelors degree. My son is an MBA student in Khulna BL College. In 2011, I broke my leg and ever since then I have been using crutch for walking. My life was still good but everything changed on 21 January 2014 when Shanara Begum, the wife of Shahidul Golder went missing.

"Later on, the police found her dead body in a latrine at the technical college two kilometres away. Even though I had nothing to do with this crime, I was dragged into the case because of enmity. Prosecutors they filed a murder case against me and 10 others. Neither I nor my family has ever faced such a situation in our lives. I was clueless about what I needed to do then. I gave a lot of money to brokers who promised me that they will get a bail from high court.

"I took loan and also sold some of my properties, but they could not get me bail from the High Court. Instead, on 23 April 2014 the court rejected my bail application and I was sent to jail. When my son came to visit me in the jail, I told him about Uttaran's legal aid programme and when he told Uttaran about my miseries, Uttaran came forward.

"Uttaran took over my responsibilities. They hired a Supreme Court lawyer for me, and filed a criminal miss case in the higher court. The honourable High Court approved my bail application and they released me. Uttaran has given me a lot of support. I am very thankful to them and their projects, which are helping poor people like me to get justice in this country."

Fraud victim:

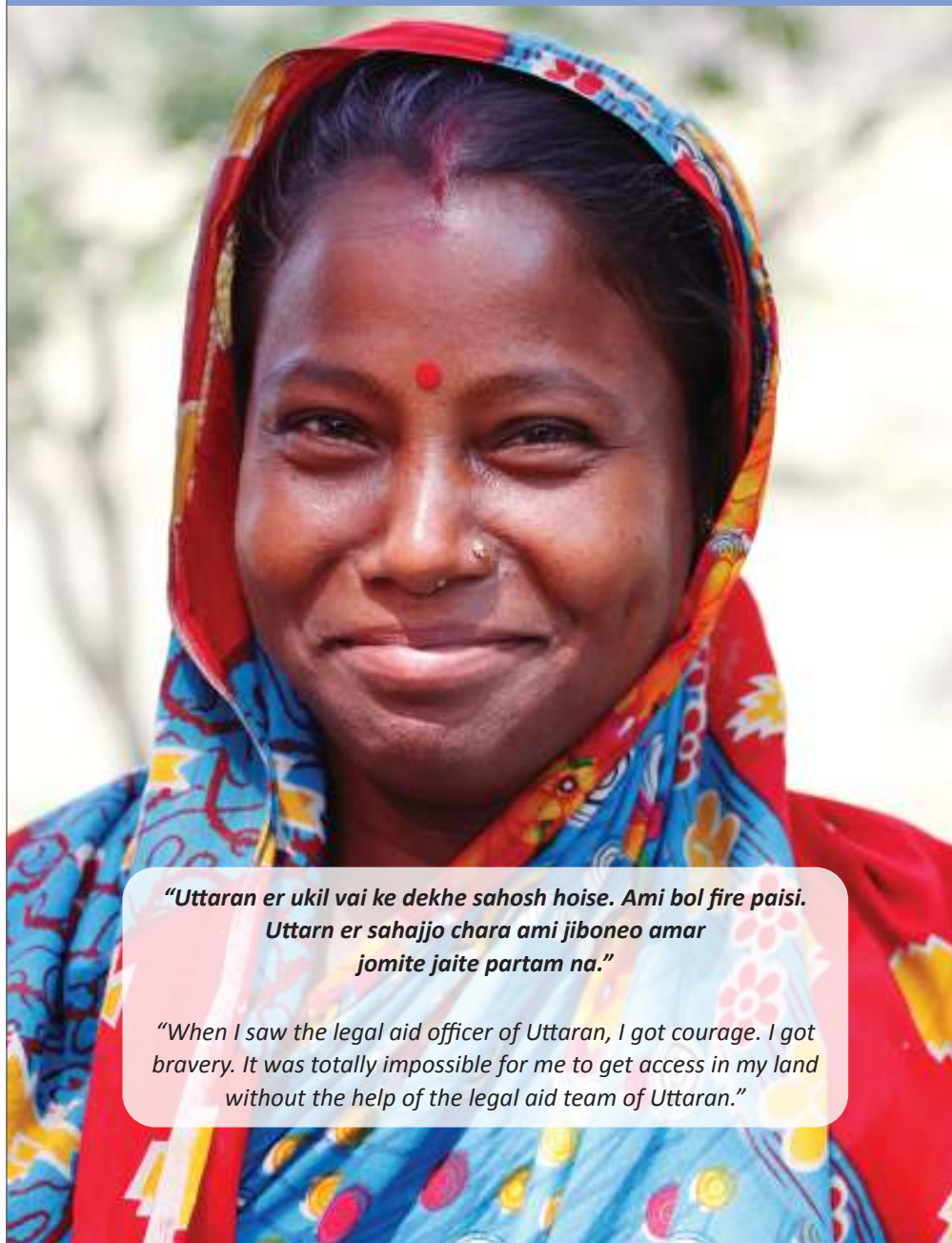
Md Abdul Sattar

School headmaster in West Keyabumia, Amtali, Barguna



"I inherited 20 decimals of land from my grandfather, but obtained incorrect documents related to the inheritance Certificate. The lives of me and my family were put at risk when someone wanted to take over my land using fraudulent means. I was accused of cheating and this all was done by the person who wanted to take over my land. The cheat was the local Member of Parliament belonging to the current ruling Awami League party. I did not want to file any complaint against the perpetrators through fear for my life, and because I wanted to avoid all sorts of conflict. Fortunately, the TNO of the area was cooperative and helped me to retrieve my original documents and other papers."

From destitution to prosperity: Khuku Mondol



***“Uttaran er ukil vai ke dekhe sahosh hoise. Ami bol fire paisi.
Uttarn er sahajjo chara ami jiboneo amar
jomite jaite partam na.”***

“When I saw the legal aid officer of Uttaran, I got courage. I got bravery. It was totally impossible for me to get access in my land without the help of the legal aid team of Uttaran.”

Lives: Panchu village, Gutudia Union, Dumuria Upazila, Khulna District

Uttaran started working in Panchu village through its EEP/Shiree project in April 2009. After a door-to-door survey the field staff of Uttaran found Khuku Mondol and listed her as a beneficiary of the project. They became informed about the khasland she had been allocated by the government land office - a canal which was being occupied illegally by others.

Uttaran started helping Khuku to renew the DCR from 2010. Its legal aid team arranged an ADR in the village in the presence of the occupiers, local elites, one local surveyor and the Uttaran centre manager for Dumuria. Finally a decision was made that two surveyors - one from the legal aid team and another representing the occupiers - would measure the land and both parties would accept cordially the result. Khuku and her husband, Ratan, finally received access to their land. They filled the canal with earth and started to cultivate with the transferred assets of the EEP/Shiree project. Here Khuku tells her story.

“There are four people in my family altogether, but back then we were destitute. We had only five decimals of uncultivated land in our homestead. In 2009 however we came to know about a piece of khasland of around 49 decimals in the village which was occupied by some local elites.

“The following year we collected a certificate from the union parishad classifying us as landless extreme poor people, and then we started to pay in the upazila land office for DCR against that piece of land. Even then, however, the canal remained in the possession of the land grabbers. We were given DCR but did not have any control over it.”

“We were afraid to claim direct to the occupant because we thought we are poor and no one will listen to us. My husband and I went door-to-door of the local elites in a search for solutions but nobody wanted to know. We also feared to move a case in court because of our poverty.”



"I felt poor and helpless with my voice unheard. I was beaten by the mighty people and had my possessions thrown away. It was then that I sought help from Uttaran. They called for a dispute resolution with the locals and brought in land surveyors. My land was surveyed, my entitled boundaries were demarcated and the dispute was resolved with Uttaran's legal assistance, after the majority of the ADR participants pressured the occupiers to accept the result.

"Now my husband and I work together to cultivate this land. We grow seasonal paddy and rice and earn approximately 20,000 taka per year from selling this. I also tried to cultivate sunflowers in order to generate more revenue, but it did not work because we cannot afford the necessary irrigation.

"Uttaran also has provided us with other facilities. They gave me three goats at a cost of 5,770 taka for income generating activities. I started rearing the goats until they became five. With the money I got from selling two goats and the earnings of my land I was able to buy a cow. The cow gave birth to two calves and I sold one of those for 21,000. I now sell their milk for 45 taka per day. Uttaran also funded a lease on another land, which I use for cultivating bitter gourd.

"Getting access to the khasland has been a turning point in my life; it has given my family a much improved situation."

Tortured by land grabbers: Abdul Jobbar Morol

Born: 1955

Lives: Ramnathpur village,
Manirampur Upazila, Jessore

"I was badly tortured and beaten up by the land grabbers. They made a big gash in my head. They filed cases against me and I was arrested".



Media coverage

A press conference with the journalist on khasland at Dumuria

With the initiative of Uttaran there was arranged a meeting on the rights of extreme poor people on khasland and Jola (waterbody).

-Dainik Purbanchal on 17 September, 2010

Khasland and the extreme poor landless people

There was arranged a meeting at Uttaran office on the rights of extreme poor landless people on khasland and jola (waterbody).

The meeting was organized by SEMPTI project.

-Dristipat on 17 September, 2010

The meeting of Bhumi committee at dumuria

There was arranged a meeting of bhumi committee in the local office of Uttaran at Dumuria. Advocate Pulin Bihari presided over the meeting.

-Dainik Janmobhumi on 23 October, 2011

Fanatic attack at Dumuria after revealing the news of the possession of the landowners on land

In the objection of grabbing land by the landless the local terrorist attacked with the permission of the local chairman. The president of Labubunia Telkamari landless cooperative committee, Md. Abdul Razzak Sardar accused in written form to the district Superintendent of Police.

-Somoyer Khobor on 2 November, 2012

Roundtable on “Land Digitalisation: Prospect for Land Equality in Bangladesh”

The Roundtable was arranged by Manusher Jonno Foundation, Uttaran, and CARE at Azimur Rahman Conference Hall of The Daily Star on 3 April, 2014. Shamsur Rahman Sherif, the land minister, and Abdul Mannan, the director general of the ‘Directorate of Land Records and Survey’ attended the discussion as the chief guest and special guest respectively. Shaheen Anam, the executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, chaired the discussion.

- The Daily Star on 4 April, 2014

The meeting of the Kaliganj bhumi committee was with the civil society-

The meeting was held for the rights of landless people on land under the presidency of the vice president of the bhumi committee with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation.

-Dainik Kafela on 10 April, 2014

The meeting on khasland settlement committee at Shayamnagar

In the Shayamnagar upazila Uttaran organized a meeting with the civil society with the presidency of the organizer of freedom fighter committee, Mr. Harun Ur Rashid. The meeting discussed how people can get khasland easily.

-Patradut on 28 May, 2014

Staged chorus and drama based on the project of Uttaran at Kapilmuni & Patkelghata

There was arranged cultural program which was organized by the APARAJEO project at Kapilmuni Haridashkathi government primary school with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation and Deepalok academy.

-Kaler Chitro on 30 June, 2014

Rural Land Market Study Report Sharing Workshop

A roundtable discussion on “Rural Land Market in Bangladesh: A Situation Analysis” was held on December 3, 2014 at the Daily Star Centre jointly organized by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Uttaran and CARE Bangladesh with financial support from European Union (EU). The purpose of the roundtable was to share the preliminary findings of the survey done to explore land market situation in Bangladesh. The survey was an output of EU's 'Access to Land Programme' in Bangladesh emphasizing 'land record digitalization' with the government and civil society. This supplement contains the summary of the survey findings, key discussions and debates generated in the roundtable.

-The Daily Star on 4 December, 2014