

Factsheet – Bangladesh

4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review, UPR 44 – 2023

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN BANGLADESH

Key Information

- The Constitution of Bangladesh does not explicitly recognize *'indigenous peoples'*.
- According to the 2022 census, the country's Indigenous population is approximately 1.6 million or 1% of the total population. However, Indigenous communities claim that the number is under enumerated.
- Human rights violations against the indigenous peoples include arbitrary arrest, criminalization of the people from Indigenous communities, sexual harassment including rape of indigenous women and girls and other violence are happening.

Challenges, Issues and Impacts

Alongside express prohibitions on discrimination, the Constitution identifies all citizens as *'Bangalees'* and does not explicitly recognize *'indigenous peoples'*. The rights of the indigenous people are reflected in some of the state policies and documents such as 8th five-year plan, National Social Security Strategy, National Health Policy, and National Education Policy. However, special attention is required to translate the policy commitment into action.

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Indigenous peoples in the plain lands face serious threats to ancestral land rights, especially in the northern and eastern parts of Bangladesh. Land grabbing and associated violence are routine on the pretext of development and security. There are frequent reports of human rights violations against the indigenous peoples including arbitrary arrest, criminalization of the people from Indigenous communities, sexual harassment including rape of indigenous women and girls and other violence. In many cases, perpetrators remain unaccountable.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord lacks full implementation to date, despite the lapse of 26 years, and repeated government commitments, including in previous UPR sessions. Implementation challenges include activating the CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission, withdrawing military camps, ensuring rehabilitation of internally displaced persons and repatriated tribal refugees' from the neighboring country, and holding Hill District Council elections, among others.

Recommendations

1. Ensure express constitutional recognition of the identity of Indigenous Peoples with dignity while promoting and protecting their distinct languages, cultures, and traditions.
2. Implement ILO Convention No. 107, ratified by Bangladesh in 1972.
3. Ratify ILO Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples.
4. Address discrimination and violence against Indigenous Peoples by including special provisions in the draft Anti-Discrimination Act.
5. End all forms of violence against indigenous people, including women and girls.
6. Establish quotas for Indigenous People in first and second class government jobs.
7. Ensure full implementation of the CHT Accord of 1997.
8. Establish a separate Land Commission for Plain lands Indigenous Peoples.
9. Establish and activate a Minority Rights and Protection Commission.

Human Rights Forum, Bangladesh (HRF, B), a coalition of 20 human rights and development. The members are: 1. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), 2. Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), 3. Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), 4. Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS), 5. Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, 6. Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM), 7. Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies (BILS), 8. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), 9. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), 10. Fair, 11. Kapaeeng Foundation, 12. Karmojibi Nari (KN), 13. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), 14. Naripokkho, 15. National Alliance of Disabled Peoples Organizations (NADPO), 16. Nagorik Uddyog 17. Nijera Kori, 18. Steps Towards Development (Steps), 19. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and 20. Women Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF).

Nagorik Uddyog (NU) is a non-governmental Bangladeshi human rights and development organization that promotes access to justice, rights and entitlements for disadvantaged and socially excluded communities. NU has special consultative status at UN ECOSOC. To know more about NU, please visit: <https://nuhr.org/>