

TENURE  
SECURITY

# Public Awareness and Community Participation in Land Registration



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Uttaran

TENURE SECURITY

# Public Awareness and Community Participation in Land Registration

## Disclaimer

*This booklet has been produced with the financial assistance and technical support of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Uttaran and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the positions of the European Union.*

## Credits

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Published	: February 2017
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Printers	: Runic

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## Introduction: Uttaran on khasland

Uttaran has been working on khasland issues almost since its foundation in 1985. It is widely recognised to be one of the few NGOs meaningfully facilitating the redistribution of khasland among the resource poor groups in Bangladesh, in cooperation with union parishads, public administration at upazila and district levels, and civil society including media, intelligentsia and the wider communities. Uttaran is helping to implement the khasland redistribution policy, whereas other NGOs only advocate for land rights.

“Uttaran is more than an NGO. We are a people-centred organisation and we are very popular because the people know Uttaran is taking direct action to fight for them. If we see there is injustice, we act.”

Shahidul Islam, Uttaran Director



Uttaran began work on the Sustainable Access to Land Equality (SALE) project to ensure transparency and accountability in land governance in December 2012, in partnership with CARE International UK and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). The project engaged communities in three pilot upazilas - Amtali Upazila of Barguna District, Mohanpur of Rajshahi, and Sadar of Jamalpur - to raise the awareness of vulnerable landowners about land administration, and to effect transparent processes for a) selecting landless people and b) khasland settlement. This booklet uses case studies from Jamalpur Sadar to highlight the latest public awareness raising activities employed by Uttaran on top of those already detailed in the first booklet in this section: ‘Public Awareness Raising Activities’.

### Keywords for this booklet

Khatian= the document held by the government office which proves land ownership  
 Warish/an= inheritance / Warishnama = inheritance certificate  
 Porcha= the document detailing the ownership of land, size of land, classification of land and total area  
 Baya Dolil= previous deeds of land transfer

## Public Awareness and Community Participation in Land Registration

The Sustainable Access to Land Equality (SALE) project played a very significant role in raising public awareness and community participation during the Digital Land Survey and Settlement between 2013 and 2016. The communication approaches and tools used by Uttaran through this movement have proved to be very effective and are now widely accepted by the local government.



### NEW Public orientation

Public orientations are an effective way to reach a mass of people at a single source. They were convened in the SALE project to announce the upcoming ‘Digital Land Survey and Settlement’ in each area and associated issues: levels of land registration during the survey; how to demarcate the land boundaries; and what else the landowners should do during the survey. Representatives from the local administration (UNO) also attended the public orientations for answering the questions and concerns of the people gathered. The interactive public theatre (traditional folk song) also usually makes colourful performances to convey key messages around land registration in an entertaining and engaging way.

## NEW Tea-stall meetings

The SALE project penetrated to the very heart of village life in order to spread its messages to the community, by using the 'tea-stalls' for meetings. Most of the meetings with local elites and senior citizens were held in the tea-stalls with flexible timing. In these meetings, Uttaran discussed about the digital land registration process and the landowner's role in the process.

## NEW Cross-learning visits

The main purpose of the visit by the Upazilla Bhumi Committee of Jamalpur to Borguna District was to share learning experiences from the local level authorities, development practitioners and media, and to identify some key trans-boundary issues which had needed local level solutions. This exposure visit enabled the members of the bhumi committee to interact with, and learn from, other districts which were implementing the same activities, allowing them to observe other practical examples in the field.

*"This visit enhanced our understanding of local issues around the land record, I believe, by travelling the landscape and interacting with key stakeholders of land in Borguna district. This first-hand experience from the cross-learning visit also supported the participatory planning and development of programme activities in the later phase."*

*Bhumi Committee member, Shamima Begum Ruby. For more on her cross-learning visit to Borguna see pages 11-14*



## NEW All Landowner Training

Uttaran organised a day of 'All Landowner Training' for the poor landowners to help them understand the steps of the digital survey and settlement prior to the land survey, namely:

- Step-1: Map preparation using digital survey machines
- Step-2: Record preparation
- Step-3: Attestation of the record
- Step-4: Publication of the draft record for public display
- Step-5: Objection
- Step-6: Appeal
- Step-7: Final publication

The SALE project showed the participants a video documentary on the digital survey and record, and provided a leaflet, poster, and flipchart with activity sketches of the digital survey and record to the land owners in this training. A total of 27,078 landowners were trained by Uttaran at the mouza level in the three project areas.

## NEW Documentary Show

A video documentary creates a larger awareness of land registration at all levels of the community. The SALE project screened a documentary in meetings with Primary Organisations, Bhumi Committees, All Landowner Trainings, and other public gatherings. The documentary helped viewers to easily visualise the required actions during the digital survey and settlement, such as the landowners showing the surveyors the exact land boundaries, when to collect Khatians, how to attest land and what is a public display.

## NEW Self-Cell Alerts

The SALE project collected the contact numbers of available landowners through an ODK (open data kit) landowner identification survey prior to the digital survey and settlement. After the survey, the project developed an automated voice calls system and SMS (Short Message Service) to notify each stakeholder about the schedule of each step of the digital survey. All landowners received the automated alerts of voice calls and SMS on their mobiles during the digital survey and settlement.



## Billboard

Uttaran placed two billboards to deliver the core messages of how the digital survey and record should be enacted in the field: one in front of the Upazila Land Office and another near the rail station in Jamalpur District.

## TV News Scrolls (news ticker)

The horizontal display of news at the bottom of a television screen is known as a 'scroll' or 'ticker'. As a part of mass awareness campaign to ensure all landowners were present during the map and record preparation stage, the SALE project also paid for a news scroll on local television channels carrying the following message:

"This is to inform you that under the surveillance of Bangladesh Land Record and Survey office, Land Survey Authorities in digitalised method are being undertaken in your area. Please rightfully demarcate your land boundaries and preserve all documents related to land ownership."



*"The TV news scrolls were the most effective approach for informing the local people about the digital land survey."  
Sub Assistant Settlement Officer of Jamalpur District,  
Md. Abdul Bari Bhuiyan (see page 21-22).*

## NEW Vulnerable landowners survey

Once the Digital Land Survey and Settlement has started, a baseline survey of all landowners should be completed through household visits in order to identify the vulnerable landowners.



With an eye toward collecting specific, transparent, and flawless data on landowners, Uttaran developed a tailor-made data collection form and a smartphone/tablet based data collection application called GeoODK. This enabled information to be collected and stored on a three-dimensional map and provided a suite of tools that allowed that data to be visualised and analysed. Uttaran migrated the existing data to Cadasta Foundation platform and the data collected on paper by Uttaran over to the new platform, so that the organisation did not have to start from scratch with interviewing the same families all over again.

The survey found that 48 percent of landowners belonged to one or more of the following vulnerable groups: women, widows, disabled, religious minorities and/or indigenous people.

The Uttaran team was then easily able to identify and support these vulnerable landowners in a multitude of ways at different stages of the government-led land titling, including by placing voice calls and sending SMS messages, making further household visits, and through meetings, training sessions and legal support.

## NEW Public Display

A public display was organised at the community level in Bondokuturia and Chakkuturia mouzas of Jamalpur. These enabled the draft publication programme to display the maps prepared by the digital method alongside records of the landowners in the form of Khatians, which included detailed information of the landowners. These were the first ever public displays of a draft publication in the history of survey and settlement activities in Bangladesh.



To prepare for the public displays Uttaran staff supported the settlement office to enter the draft record information in the computer and then print this out on large format paper. Uttaran encouraged and supported the land survey and settlement department to organise the displays to make a participatory, transparent and accountable land survey and record.

Uttaran then oriented landowners on how they should find their plot numbers and the record information. We also mentioned that if any mismatches were found by the landowners, then they would be able to place a dispute to get solution.

On the day of the public displays Uttaran repeated this message: requesting the landowners to declare any mismatches between the map and record information, such as any errors in names or land sizes or any disputes regarding land ownership. The people were not required to provide any money to lodge an objection application, as Uttaran staff were on hand to provide assistance.

The programme was inaugurated by chief guest Alhaj Rejaul Karim Hira MP, the president of the parliamentary standing committee on land. Other special guests included Mr. Shamsul Alam, National Project director, Access to Land Programme; the local Deputy Commissioner (DC) and other land officials. The displays were presented for 30 working days in open areas in both mouzas where all landowners had access to join.

*“Our life cycle revolves with the land. We develop our dream with the land but where there is a dream, there is tension and insecurity. Thankfully there is always a ray of light at the end of a dark tunnel. The digital survey and settlement was that light.”*

*Zannat Ara Goni Soen, a GIS Associate for Uttaran who helped to organise the public displays (see page 23)*





Sazzad Ansari, 50, is a social activist who is also involved in cultural initiatives in Jamalpur District. Shamima Begum Ruby, 45, is a homemaker who is heavily involved in various development activities covering land, education, health and awareness building. They are both longstanding members of the Bhumi Committee created by the SALE project in their Upazila in Jamalpur.



*“When we visited the survey site, we asked people to show us their land documents. They knew which one was the land deeds, which was porcha and they could also show us their land boundaries. What I also realised was that now the people could tell us about any disputes and which public office deals with these. This change in public awareness is very much visible at the field level.” Shamima Begum Ruby*

## How have Uttaran raised public awareness through community participation in land registration?



*“Uttaran has been working very hard to raise public awareness about land rights, the digital land survey, and land registration by ensuring community participation at a local level. Uttaran has done well to reach all stakeholders in land issues: government, local administration, civil society, media, lawyers, and above all the local people, especially the women landowners.*

*Uttaran strengthened local people through awareness and knowledge building on land registration and related issues, and established the missing links between local governments and community people in Jamalpur. The public administration at district and upazila level has also recognised Uttaran’s achievements with the digital land survey and settlement.”*

*“Uttaran has gone deep into the details of land registration. They made local people aware about the land documents such as the khatian, baya dolil and so on, and about what to do if someone loses his or her papers, plus the process for dispute resolution and the different roles of government offices on land issues.*

*They reached out to the local people, made them come out with their land related issues and accompanied them to the government offices with their problems.”*







*“Uttaran went to the local people at the village level, targeting the poor landowners and landless people to help them become part of the land record process or to share their problems with land issues. They were very systematic and organised in how they created public awareness and community participation.”*

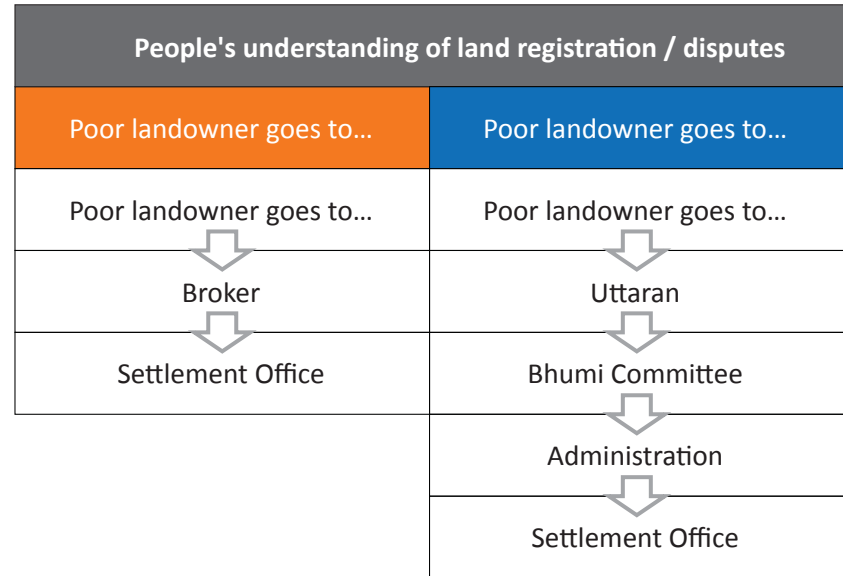
*They went door-to-door in every mouza of the target union to inform people and the local administration of why Uttaran was there and how they were going to work. They organised the women into a primary organisation at the village level. They also formed ward and upazila Bhumi Committees consisting of civil society representation from local level, including the local media.”*

### How did the Bhumi Committee contribute to awareness raising?

*“The Bhumi Committee was present on the day of the map preparation (Kistoyer) in Dubaria mouza. This gave us the opportunity to call upon the local people to see how far Uttaran has reached. Prior to the digital land survey, Uttaran published some learning and communications material like posters, leaflets, flipcharts etc, to not only tell people about the digital land survey but also to illustrate what the landowners must do during the digital land survey.”*



*Uttaran also took innovative initiatives of awareness building like cross-learning visits. They organised a cross-learning visit for the Upazila Bhumi Committee from Jamalpur to Barguna, one of the other pilot districts of the SALE project. This visit, I have to say, was an excellent learning exposure for me and us, as we observed how they were working there, what differences they have made from us and other real time practices on land issues. Uttaran also organized an awareness building workshop for the media on land issues.”*

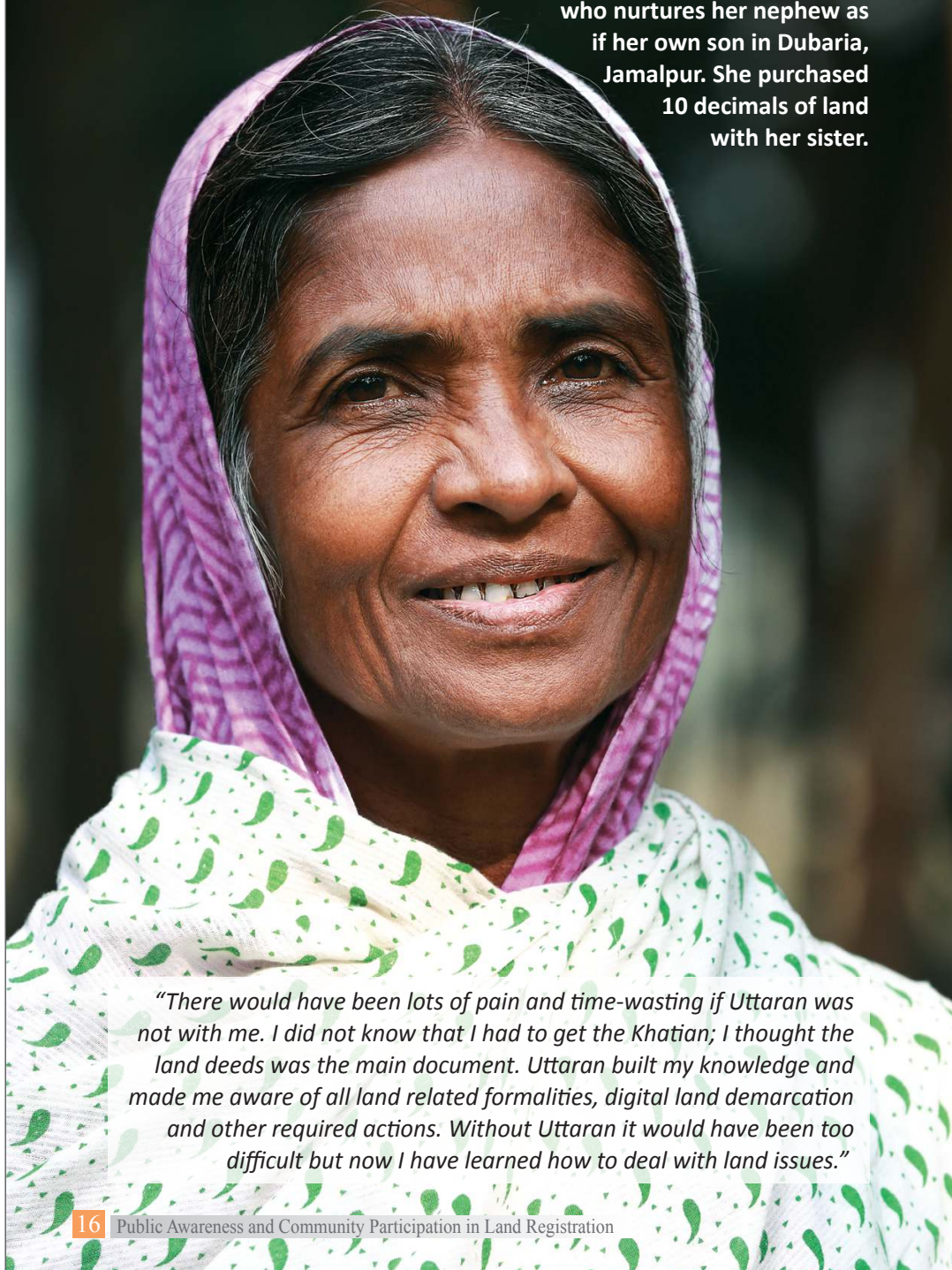


*“I must say that Uttaran has gone beyond and above its capacity. Uttaran has set a milestone in building relationships with the local administration. They established and maintained a very effective relationship with the district administration, settlement office and others to make sure that awareness happened at the government level, too.”*

*“I would also like to request that if there is any possibility please extend this SALE project, let us continue their good work in this area for poor people. If this is not possible, then I request that we can give more assistance - financial and institutional - to the Bhumi Committee so that we can continue our support to the affected people. Life and land are the basic rights of human beings.”*



Bokul Begum, 50, is a childless widow who nurtures her nephew as if her own son in Dubaria, Jamalpur. She purchased 10 decimals of land with her sister.



*“There would have been lots of pain and time-wasting if Uttaran was not with me. I did not know that I had to get the Khatian; I thought the land deeds was the main document. Uttaran built my knowledge and made me aware of all land related formalities, digital land demarcation and other required actions. Without Uttaran it would have been too difficult but now I have learned how to deal with land issues.”*

### How has the SALE project helped you?

“Uttaran organised the women of this area into a primary organisation to teach us about our land rights. Before this, I was not clear about the warish rules which state that the sisters-in-law should also hold a share in the in-laws’ land, along with my husband. Most of the women in this area did not know about such rules. Uttaran explained the rules and how to claim the land, and which government offices deals with the land.

“Uttaran staff also worked hard before the digital land survey and record, distributing posters containing sketches to explain the four stages. I pasted one on the wall of my house. One side of the poster shows the right way to do the survey and record, and other side shows the wrong way. I was able to explain the poster to other people in my area.”







*“Uttaran also distributed a one-page briefer, announced the survey date with miking and sat with the POs prior to this survey. They told us what we had to do on the survey day, how we should do the attestation and what to do in the public display (big meeting).”*

*“I did as per Uttaran’s suggestion. During the public display, I went to the meeting place, cross-checked the plot number between the provided Khatian and the displayed maps. I found everything was in order and the government officer marked the DP number in my Khatian. I also asked them whether the necessary formalities regarding the land record was finished for my land; the officers replied positively and said my land is okay.”*

**Halima Begum, 35, has three daughters and works as a teaching assistant for speech and hearing impaired children at a kindergarten in Chokkutura, Jamalpur. She owns five decimals of land, but had a dispute over its boundary with neighbours.**

### **How did the SALE project reach you?**

“Joy vai (Uttaran staff member) came to this area about a year ago and started talking to us - especially the women - about the digital land survey and our land rights, including the warish rules. He formed a group involving only the women called a primary organisation. In this group meeting, Joy vai also talked about land documents, what the landowners will do on the survey day, how to deal with any disputes, and how to collect the Khatian.

“Uttaran worked very hard to reach us mouza people. Joy vai spent days after days going door-to-door to inform us about the digital land survey. We sometimes offered him energisers or a glass of water, but he never took those! He walked the whole mouza to ensure that the message has been received by each and every villager.”

### **What information was given to you?**

“The whole process of the digital land survey and land registration was complex and time consuming. But Uttaran made this critical process so easy for us. The SALE project made us aware and built our knowledge of digital land registration. They met us one-to-one and distributed posters, notices and leaflets. They made public announcements by miking to tell us about the date of the big meeting (public display). They told us many times what to do during the big meeting but even then, on the day itself, we got lost and didn’t realise where we had to go to verify the Khatian. The staff of Uttaran were present at all corners of the field and showed us where the display boards were located and how to find our land.”



Before Uttaran came to us, I was not a part of the discussions on land issues, but now my opinion also matters.”

- Halima Begum

### How did the SALE project help you during the public display?

“The SALE project organised the public display to verify the maps and plot numbers of the Khatian we had with the displayed maps and plot numbers on the board. (Uttaran staff member) Mita apa anchored the meeting as the senior officers made their speeches. There was also a programme of ‘Jari Gaan’ (folk songs) and after that, it was announced we should go to the display board, find the respective map of our land and cross-check it with the Khatian we had. In my case, there was a dispute over the land boundary with our neighbour. We discussed this dispute with the government officer who said it would be solved during the attestation period. On attestation day, we discussed this dispute in the presence of both parties. After hearing our concerns, the officers mutually solved the dispute and drew our land boundary.”

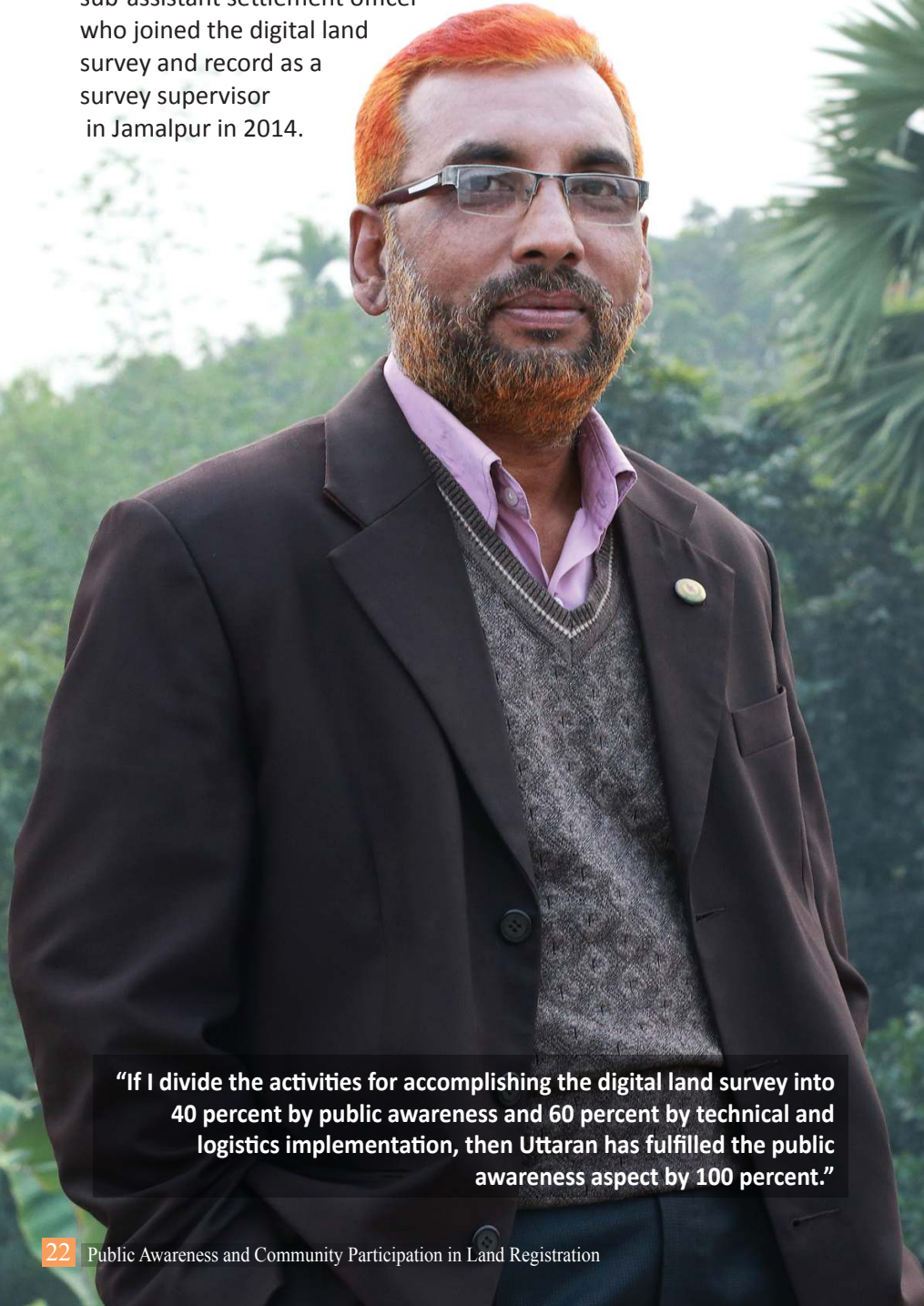
### What would you have done without the SALE project?

“The SALE project made us aware about the land registration and land rights issues. We had no idea about the land survey and mapping system before. Uttaran not only made us aware but also built our capacity on this issue. Now I ask questions of the government officers and related persons to know more about land issues.”





Md. Abdul Bari Bhuiyan, 50, is a sub-assistant settlement officer who joined the digital land survey and record as a survey supervisor in Jamalpur in 2014.



**“If I divide the activities for accomplishing the digital land survey into 40 percent by public awareness and 60 percent by technical and logistics implementation, then Uttaran has fulfilled the public awareness aspect by 100 percent.”**

### How did Uttaran help raise awareness of the digital land survey?

“Uttaran made this digital land survey successful. The government could never have reached this close to the local people as they don’t have the capacity. On the day of map preparation, for example, when we saw that there were not as many landowners present as expected, Uttaran started calling people by mobile and knocking on their doors. They ensured that each landowner remained present on their land to show us the exact boundary.

“They have done the public awareness widely using innovative communication approaches such as showing a video documentary on the activities of the digital land survey, scrolling on local TV channels, mobile alters and self-cell calls. They have also used public display, folk songs, courtyard meetings and house-to-house visits.

“People in this area are aware now. They started asking questions and raising their disputes, and got the courage to communicate with us. Without Uttaran, I am not sure that we could have reached even 50 percent public awareness. The digital land survey would not have been so participatory and interactive, that’s for sure.”



*“During the land survey, Uttaran staff supported us remarkably. I only had to advise them on what to do and they then made it happen in the field.”*

Zannat Ara Goni Soen is a GIS Associate of the Uttaran programme who helped to organise the public displays in Bondokuturia and Chakkuturia mouzas of Jamalpur



“The digital land survey and record was done in a participatory way with the support of the Government of Bangladesh and Uttaran. In this process, all the landowners - rich or poor – were to be heard, treated and supported equally. During the public display, all the landowners including those vulnerable such as women, widows, the poor, and minority and indigenous groups, were to be treated the same.



*“The public displays were the golden opportunity for landowners to go and check the preliminary records against the maps.*

“We also believed that people would be less willing to go to court if they saw the maps and information together. As a result, the corruption of land officials would reduce, and the people will have much more faith and trust in the land survey and settlement activities. The people were impressed; they believed in such a participatory and transparent process.”

Mojibor, 55, is a landowner in Bondhkuturia, Jamalpur

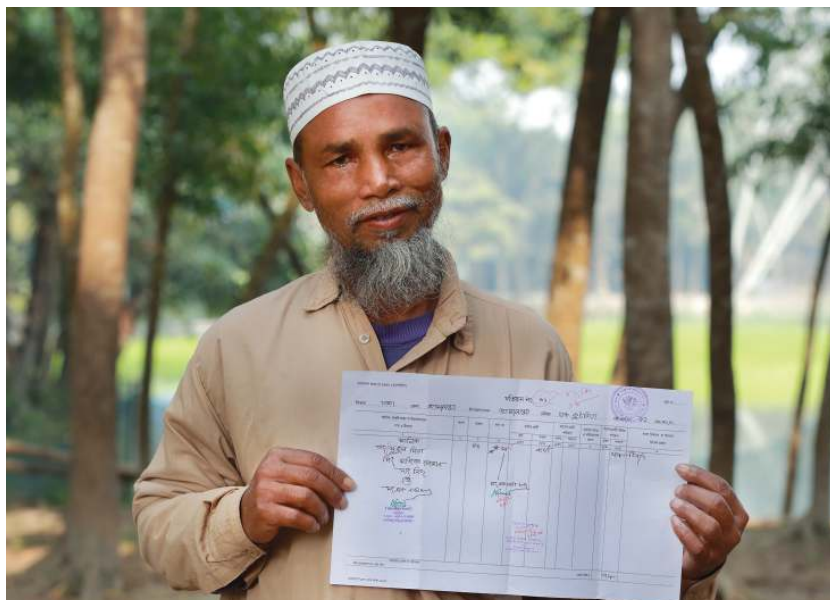


“Uttaran worked very hard to reach us. One staff member, Joy vai, came to this area before the digital land survey and informed us about our land rights. It is true that initially we were not interested about all that Joy vai was talking about, but he made us aware that Uttaran was working for our rights. He told us that if anybody had any dispute or land related issues, that this was the chance to solve it. He said nobody will take our land if we had the required land record and documents. He also showed us how to determine our land boundary and aisle, and insisted that we were present during the survey day to show the government officers the exact boundary of our land.”



## How did the SALE project help you?

“Uttaran staff visited us door-to-door, conducted yard meetings, distributed posters on the step-by-step activities of digital survey record and a one-page leaflet, and announced the date of land survey by miking. The SALE project announced the date of the big meeting (public display) for verifying the maps and plot numbers of the Khatian we had with the maps and plots number displayed on a board.



*“During the meeting day, I did not know how to verify my land records. The programme was going on and they were announcing that we had to go to the display boards, identify our plots and cross-check the maps and plot numbers. Besides this announcement, like most of the people I was bit lost about what I should do. Then I asked one of the SALE project staff to help me finding my plot in the display board. He showed me how to find my plot and verify the documents. This is actually the same case for everybody. Uttaran worked very hard and helped all of us to verify our land documents.”*

## Other booklets in this series from Uttaran

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	3	Landless identification
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	5/b	Public awareness and community participation in land registration
	6	Legal support
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SUPPORT	9	Advocacy and Research
	10	Training modules