

## **Caritas Bangladesh beats moneylenders**

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Caritas Bangladesh's Land Retention and Development department is helping tribal people in the Mymensingh region to prevent mortgaged ancestral lands from being seized by moneylenders.

In most cases, efforts by local Garo tribespeople proved fruitless until a Caritas project in Mymensingh gave them hope, UCA News reports.

Marcel Mankhin, 40, is one of those who has lost land to money lenders and through government requisitions.



He claims his land was taken because he had no documents to support ownership.

A few years ago, the government took an acre (0.4 hectares) of land from me and gave it to someone else because the land was not registered. I went to the land office and tried to register the land but it was never given back to me” said, Mankhin, a Catholic Garo.

Most Garo people are Catholics.

“More recently, I risked losing my house as I know nothing about land rights and registration,” said Mankhin.

However, Caritas, through its Land Retention and Development (LRD) department in Mymensingh, helped him apply for land registration on his remaining property with the deputy commissioner in the district.

Mankhin, a laborer from Dighalbagh in Bhalukapara parish, holds out little hope of reclaiming the land he lost to the government, but he now looks forward to getting his legal documents on his house.

Since 2007, LRD has been helping tribal Garos, regardless of religious affiliation, to retain their lands mortgaged to moneylenders as well as have their lands registered.

Under the Mymensingh project, about 100 people whose lands are not registered but whose families have been living on them for centuries have now applied for land registration through Caritas.

Anupoma Rongdi, 32, a Garo Catholic schoolteacher from Bhuiyan Para also applied for land legalization through Caritas.

“Some Muslims have a constant yearning for tribal land,” she alleged. “As a result they have taken so much because we didn’t know how to go about defending what is ours.”

According to Biplob Ghagra, Community Development Officer for the Mymensingh ICDP, Caritas has also provided about 2.88 million taka (US\$41,528) in interest-free loans to help keep 193 acres of mortgaged lands from moneylenders. The 400 borrowers pay the money back in monthly installments.

**Source:**[http://www.cathnewsasia.com/2009/08/11/caritas-bangladesh-beats-moneylenders/?awt\\_l=Oifml&awt\\_m=1c88KmBNVwYDL0](http://www.cathnewsasia.com/2009/08/11/caritas-bangladesh-beats-moneylenders/?awt_l=Oifml&awt_m=1c88KmBNVwYDL0)