

## Statement

As filmmakers, scholars or as community workers we closely witnessed the helplessness of the people of char-chapori areas of Assam. Every year Assam is hit by floods and it takes a lot of people's lives, crops, houses etc. Erosion is also a major problem of the people who live in char-chapori area. Last two years we worked in the char chapori areas of western Assam and experienced how those people face flood, erosion and also how some people face citizenship contestation. Sometimes it becomes a chronic problem like if someone lost his/her home in flood or erosion, then he/she shifted to another place and also their voting centre. Because of this shifting they came into the eyes of doubt and this way they became doubtful in the eyes of the state and often marked as D voters or border police files cases against them. Most of the people who live in the riverine area are shifting their home because of the erosion and because of the constant displacement and historic discrimination their citizenship and belonging is contested. They are the victims of both climate induced displacement as well as state sponsored structural violence.

The char-chapori areas of western Assam is mostly inhabited by the people from Miya community. The ancestors of Miya people migrated from the Bengal province of British India. They were brought to Assam to engage in agricultural work under a colonial project called grow more food. They were settled mostly in river island and river bank areas of either Brahmaputra or its tributaries as the land in these areas were very fertile and good for agricultural production. These people used their traditional knowledge and expertise to produce multiple crops in the same plot of land.

However, over the years because of climate change, deforestation and construction of dams and dykes every monsoon the intensity of flood and erosion has increased many folds and affected the lives of millions of people. According to the NESAC report Brahmaputra expanded its area to 6,080 km in 2006 from 4,850 km in (1963-75). Another study conducted by IIT Roorkee, estimates that around in fifty years 7 percent of Assam's total land mass has been eroded. These figures only tell how devastating the effects of climate change has caused on the lives of ordinary people.

Moreover, the construction of dams of Kurishu in Bhutan has further worsened the flood situation downstream of Beki and Manas. Beki and Manas river come from the Himalaya from the Bhutan side, both of the rivers have different courses but now both of them have expanded and joined on Mathanguri. In 2004, Kurishu dam released excess water and created havoc in the downstream areas. Now, almost every year three to four waves of flood ravage these areas, many of these are actually flash floods. Last year in Jania, BARPETA district, Beki took a new side course and it took a village into the river.

In this project, we proposed to document the story of a woman who was living in a char called Takakata on the river Beki. The erosion took away her home and she moved to another char chapped Monir char. When she moved to a new char, the State doubted her to be a foreigner and marked her as a D voter. She was asked to appear before the tribunal. Though she appeared and submitted all her documents, she was arbitrarily declared as a foreigner and sent to detention. She was pregnant and she had a miscarriage while being in the detention. On the other hand her husband couldn't cope with trauma and died by heart

attack. She spent 10 years and 6 months in the detention centre. Now she lives in Takakata char with her two sons. She works as a daily wage labour to run her house and also save some money for every week police station attendance. Through a short documentary we want to share the story of the struggle and resilience of a woman. She is not just fighting the adverse impact of climate change but also the mighty State which made her stateless in her own land.

Project Team:

Wahida Parveez: Direction, research, editing

Amin Nozmul: Camera, cinematography, editing

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We will make a documentary of between 8 to 10 minutes. Language will be in Miya, there will be english subtitles. The story will be based on the interview. We will use an extremely wide view of char. Through closeup visuals of erosion and flood visuals we will try to recreate her story. We will use ambient sound, sad vocals and folk instrumental music.