

Bangladesh: «Alusama Froi» Project

Vocational courses for young people and mothers from ethnic minorities



Project location
District of Bandarban

Project duration
Phase I: 01.01.2012–31.12.2014
Phase II: 01.01.2015–31.12.2017
Phase III: 01.01.2018–31.12.2020

Project budget 2018–2020
CHF 680'000

Background

The ethnic minorities in the Bandarban Hill Tracts, on Bangladesh's border with Myanmar and India, are a population group who are both discriminated against and among the poorest in the country. Most of these indigenous people have no possessions. Their claim to the land on which their families have lived for generations is not recognised. The slash-and-burn agriculture from which they have lived until now is unproductive and has become ever more difficult due to increasingly dense settlement. Only minimal government services, including education, are provided for the hill tribes. In the project area, the sub-district of Thanchi, literacy has increased from 15% (2001) to 27% (2013), thanks to the work of NGOs. The people live from hand to mouth: they are day labourers or collect wood in the forest to sell as firewood in the market. Many young people also earn a livelihood this way. Many of them attended primary school but were not able to continue their education because there are hardly any schools in the region. They have no opportunity to find a job in the public or private sector or to become successful as independent professionals because they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills. In response to this situation, CO-OPERAID and its local partner organisation Humanitarian Foundation built up a vocational school in Thanchi from 2012 to 2014. During this project phase until the end of 2020 the aim is to carry out the training courses and to make the vocational school even more self-sustainable.

Goals

- Market-adapted vocational trainings are operated and carried out
- Business skills and business support is given
- Complete training centre facilities and provide sustainable income generating schemes for the vocational school

Beneficiaries

- 550 young people attending vocational courses
- 1 vocational school with 9 instructors and 4 staff
- Indirect beneficiaries: About 3'600 family members

Partner organisation

Humanitarian Foundation (HF) was founded in 1999 by members of the hill tribes.

Vision: Positive change for the indigenous population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Thematic focus: Poverty reduction, basic and professional education, women's and children's health, strengthening of civil society, protection of natural resources.

www.hf-cht.org

Activities

- Running a vocational school in Thanchi with courses in tailoring, block-batik, carpentry, bricklaying, electrical, mobile repair, computing, driving school, as well as hotel management and hospitality (duration 3-4 months). Additionally an alphabetisation course is offered at the training centre that is free to attend for all trainees (evening course). In order to offer good quality education, instructors are given further training by external trainers and learning visits to other schools or production sites are organised.
- Business training is conducted via the curricula (create a business plan, profit and loss calculation, etc.) and through learning visits to existing businesses (meeting entrepreneurs). The most venerable graduates receive tools of their trade so that they can start working. A start-up fund also supports graduates who plan to start their own business/shop but do not have the necessary capital (repayable).
- For the increased revenue for the vocational school a cattle rearing farm and a guesthouse for the growing inland tourism will be realised. The guesthouse will also act as a training centre for the hotel management course.



Vocational school in Thanchi



A student doing carpentry

Results of previous activities project phase I and II (until 2017)

- Construction of the vocational school in May 2013. Complete facilities for vocational courses and administration. By the end of 2017 additional buildings for accommodation and an external weaving workshop. Setting up courses, development the curriculum and employment of instructors.
- 911 trainees graduated from the centre (2012-2017). Today 34% of them are self-employed (257 persons) and 26% are employed (226 persons).
- There are already several successful small business owners among the graduates, acting as role models for others. Graduates of the weaving course have organised themselves into four working groups, set up workshops, and launched a joint production facility.
- The vocational school has aroused great interest. Demand from young people is high. Officials, opinion leaders and NGO representative have repeatedly visited the school and are actively involved in the project.



During the computer-course

Sustainability

The aim of the project is to build a vocational school that is social self-sustainable and in this way can serve as a social institution to many more generations in future. Since the beginning of the project in 2012 this goal has been pursued and the school already made good progress. Currently 30% of the costs is covered:

- Students pay training fees and dormitory fees
- The centre produces and sells products: weaving products, cloths, furniture. It runs a production unit in Thanchi and a sales shop in Bandarban for that purpose. In the production unit, already 10 graduates have been employed. The production unit and the sales shop are profitable.
- The centre has a large fruit and vegetable garden to sell on the market. Besides the instructors, 2 more persons are employed for the maintenance of the garden.
- The profit from a deposit account for the support the teachers & instructors salaries (high interest)

In the current phase three, additional income generating activities (IGA) are included: a cattle rearing farm, a guesthouse (for upcoming inland tourism and for training purposes) as well as a sustainability-fund for future investments.

CO-OPERAID is engaged in the international children's right to education in East Africa and South Asia. The association was founded in 1981, is politically and denominationally independent and ZEW0 certified since 1998.

Vision: Qualitative good education for children and youths as a basis for a self-determined and dignified life.

Thematic Focus: Basic education and vocation training with complementary elements such as fighting poverty, farming income projects, furthering girls, Aids prevention, health.

www.co-operaid.ch