

Project «Rowa Kyang III» in Bangladesh

Primary and secondary education for children in the Bandarban Hill Tracts



Background

The political and economic situation in Bangladesh is unstable and has been deteriorating since the fall of government in August 2024. After the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country, Dr Mohammed Yunus was sworn in as interim Prime Minister. Elections are announced for February 2026. The current political vacuum is leading to frequent clashes between political groups and government troops, disrupting the daily lives of people. The economy declines and freedom of expression is further limited as conflicts arise also at local level.

Bandarban district is part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), a hilly region in south-eastern Bangladesh. The CHT is home to around 1 million indigenous people, including the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Mro and other groups. In a recently published multidimensional poverty index report, Bandarban is ranked the poorest of Bangladesh's 64 states. According to the 2022 census, the literacy rate in Bandarban district is still only 64 per cent, compared to 76 per cent nationally.

For decades, the government has been settling Bengali farmers in the CHT to bring about demographic change: displacing indigenous ethnic minorities from the better agricultural areas to more remote regions. Additionally, the influx of Rohingya refugees to Bandarban is leading to increasing land expropriation and social unrest in the region. The Bandarban Hill District remains a military-controlled area, making it almost impossible for foreign actors to gain access to this area.



Project site:

Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Project phase:

January 2026 – December 2027

Overall budget: CHF:557'100

Local partner organisation

Humanitarian Foundation

(HF) founded in 1999 by members of local indigenous minorities.

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

Thematic focus: Poverty reduction, education, women's and children's health, strengthening civil society, ecology.

www.hf-cht.org

Objectives

Overall Goal: «Sustainable access to primary and secondary education for children and youth in Bandarban district»

- Regular operation of 20 primary schools and final handover to local communities
- Operation of two boarding homes to house secondary school pupils
- Strengthening of local communities

Beneficiaries

- 1000 primary school pupils annually
- 70 secondary school pupils annually
- 1000+ families affected by poverty

Activities

- Operation and maintenance of 20 primary schools, recruitment, training and professional support of teachers
- Provision of necessary teaching materials and establishment of school libraries
- Operation of two residential homes for 70 secondary school pupils, provision of everything necessary for school attendance. Supplementary courses such as remedial teaching or computer skills
- Training of mothers' groups and school management committees in local communities
- Establishment of rice banks and training of community committees in administration
- Training to improve income at household and dormitory level. This involves livestock breeding, agriculture and horticulture.

Sustainability and impact

Rowa Kyang III project (2026-2027) is designed as a final phase and aims to ensure the operation of the village schools and dormitories.

CO-OPERAID selected a project approach focussing on a high degree of local responsibility in the respective communities to eventually develop financial sustainability. Earlier phases of the project proved this approach right as poor communities were witnessed making remarkable contributions to their village schools.

Success to date includes:

- 14 village schools sustainably run by respective communities – despite poverty
- Contributions from families: small school fees, sometimes also in kind. Funding of the village schools is gradually reduced, while at the same time training courses are intensified to improve income and reduce risk, particularly at household level.
- 34 primary schools in 46 villages enable around 1,400 children to attend primary school
- Functional rice banks effectively bridge the lean seasons at all village schools
- 98 secondary school diplomas
- 21 completed university degrees



CO-OPERAID

Engages in structurally weak contexts with high multi-dimensional poverty rates and weak governmental presence. CO-OPERAID is a registered Swiss NGO, ZEWO-certified, politically and denominationally independent. The association has been active for 45 years.

Vision: Quality education for children and adolescents as the foundations of a self-determined life.

Thematic focus: primary education and vocational training with complementary elements such as poverty reduction and basic health support.

www.co-operaid.ch