

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 II: 01.01.2018–31.12.2020

Project budget 2018–2020
CHF 590'342

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. The project in its first and second phase from 2012-2014 and 2015-2017 constructed and equipped the training centre in Thanchi and customised the curricula. After the completion of the course self-employment was aided through setting up small shops or through mobile working groups (loose cooperation's for tenders for instance in carpentry etc.)

The third phase of the project from January 2018 to December 2020 aims to train another 600 youths. Their future success on the labour market will also be supported through business skills trainings, learning visits to successful businesses, distribution of 'tools of trade' and a business start-up fund where the trainees can apply for support.

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

Goals

- Implement nine vocational courses (duration 3-6 months)
- Support graduates in their transition to the world of work: business skills, start-up support, start-up fund, tools of trade
- The self-financing of the vocational school (currently covering already 30%). In the third phase a guest house (incl. a course in hotel management) and cattle-farm (life-stock rearing) are planned.

Beneficiaries

- 600 young people attending vocational courses
- 1 vocational school with 5 teachers and 4 other employees (shop with 2 employees)
- Indirect beneficiaries: around 3,600 individuals from 1,000 families

Activities

- Running a vocational school in Thanchi including employment of teachers and childcare. Purchase of additional land for the horticulture course and for a nursery (sales for re-forestation)
- Implementation of five vocational courses (duration 3-4 months): gardening, carpentry, tailoring, weaving, computer applications
- Teaching business skills for apprentices (lessons in addition to work experience in external companies); supporting graduates' independence through contribution of tools/machines. Setting up fund to provide start-up capital (refundable)
- Running a shop in Bandarban selling products from the school and graduates
- Development of the school to become self-sustaining and strengthening the local network of "stakeholders"

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
- 762 trainees graduated from the centre (until June 2017). Today 34% of them are self-employed (255 persons) and 26% are employed (196 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

Sustainability

The aim of project phase 3 is to ensure that the school gets one step closer to become partly self-sustaining. On the one hand, it should increase its revenue through course fees and product sales (products from the courses, jobs, income from the nursery). The shop in Bandarban should support sales and generate a small profit. With this economic mainstay, the school should develop into a social business. At the end of phase 2 the school covered 30% of its costs.

In the current phase three, additional income generating activities (IGA) are planned in order to increase the sustainability of the school. The school management identified cow rearing as a promising and thought after activity. Investments for this IGA contain land purchase, set-up of stable and fence, purchase of 30 animals, vaccination/medication, food supplement and the first 12-month salaries for the staff. The total amount to be invested is CHF 45'000.

At the same time, in the phase from 2018 to 2020 the local network should be further strengthened by the inclusion of stakeholders in planning for the future and a support committee of stakeholders will be set up. The local charity, HF, and the committee will form a trusteeship which can mobilise additional financial support if the project meets with difficulty in trying to achieve economic sustainability.



The vocational school in Thanchi It comprises three school buildings, a residential home and a workshop for the weaving course.



Participant in the carpentry course.

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 ZEWO 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