



Name of Project: Promotion of Confidence Building in CHT through Empowering Communities and Institutions

Supported by: European Union

Location of the action: Chittagong Hill Tracts (Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban), Bangladesh

Background of Project

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is populated by ethnic groups as well as by Bengalis. It comprising three Hill districts (Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban) in the southeast of Bangladesh and occupying nearly one sixth of its total landmass. The CHT Peace Accord of 1997 signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) has ended the protracted armed conflict (1975-1997), but an environment conducive to real peace, development and security is yet to be fully created in the area. Consequently, there is a trust deficit between communities and various institutions. CHT has further been characterised by a fractured social and political life, a non-conducive political environment, by internal migration of the Bengali population over the years, by disputes over resources (incl. ownership of land) as well as by a relatively slow pace of economic development.

Moreover, the Hill people perceive that the successive Bangladesh Governments and the political elite have adopted an approach to assimilate – instead of integrate – them, thereby pursuing a common “Bangali” identity irrespective of the existence of multi-ethnic identities and diversities in CHT. The Government and military establishment see security tension rather through the prism of a law and order problem, which could be mitigated through economic development.

A large part of the youth in CHT – approximately 58 percent of the total population in CHT are under the age of 24 – do not have proper knowledge and experience of the process that led to the 1997 Peace Accord and of the preceding difficulties. This lack of awareness and a minimum of general education deprive many young people of the opportunity to make proactive contributions to confidence building and therefore play a role as agents for change. Being generally more vulnerable and fragile, they may, instead, be more easily influenced by negative narratives and take more radical positions. Among other groups, hill women in particular are in a very delicate situation in CHT. They are largely excluded from participation in public life and decision-making; face multiple challenges in the form of discrimination and violence in their own societies; and have little or no access to justice and social security. In addition, the growing number of Rohingya population crossing the border into CHT poses further challenges to the stability, peace and security in the CHT and in Bangladesh. Finally, the escalation of radical attacks in Bangladesh has led to concerns that CHT may also become vulnerable to extremist influences.

All these above-mentioned factors have contributed to a lack of confidence specifically between communities and institutions but also between the Bengali and the traditional communities in this region. There is no denying that lack of trust is both a cause and an effect of the inter-ethnic, developmental and security dynamics in CHT. Durable and sustainable peace in CHT can only be obtained through undertaking an inclusive and pluralistic approach to address the concerns and tensions prevalent in CHT. Therefore, confidence building between Hill people, the Bengali community and local and central institutions (i.e. the government, the military, etc.) is essential to ensure security, stability and development in CHT.

Overall Objective:

To contribute to peace building through prevention of conflict and violence, accelerate process of socio-economic development in CHT, deepen the engagement among communities and institutions, as well as processes under the leadership of the youth.

Specific Objective

1. To empower the youth in CHT to contribute to increase confidence among communities and between communities and institutions in CHT;
2. To encourage initiatives at the national level that would benefit from confidence-building measures in the CHT between official institutions and local communities.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders of this project include the youth in general, Hill people, the Bengali people, governmental and security institutions at the local and central level (in particular the Ministry of CHT Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the CHT Regional Council and the three Hill District Councils, the military and the police), the traditional institutions of CHT (Karbari, Mousa Headmen and Circle Chiefs), teachers and students, journalists, religious and community leaders as well as the civil society in CHT.

Target Group and Beneficiaries

Youth people young men and women (between 18 and 35 years of age) from the six Upazillas of the three districts in CHT, **Local and central authorities:** Government officials and civil servants, at the local level of CHT, and relevant political leaders and key civil servants, associated with the central authorities in Dhaka, responsible for dealing with CHT affairs will be the target group of this project, **young Journalists Teachers**, 48 teachers, 16 from each district, **students (12-15 years)**, 360 students, 120 in each district and 90 religious leaders of different communities have target group and beneficiaries of project.

Result 1: Increased willingness among communities, local authorities and institutions to involve young people in conflict resolution and decision-making. Activities of under the result-1

- Eight Inception Meetings in Dhaka and CHT

- Meetings for the Formation of Youth Forums, Young Journalist Groups, and Formation of Teachers Group and Establishment of 3 Local Advocacy Groups at the Community Level
- Formation of Young Journalist Groups
- Formation of Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs)
- Selection of Schools and Teachers:
- Wrap-Up Events for Earning Commitment from the Target Groups

Result 2: Increased skills of young people, including of young women, and other community representatives in mediation, reconciliation and confidence-building with a focus on inter-community tensions in order to promote social resilience against radicalization and violent extremism.

- Revision and Customization of Training Manuals
- Six Three-day Trainings for the Members of Youth Forum Activity
- Three 3-day Trainings for Young Journalists Activity
- Three 3-day Trainings for the members of the three Local Advocacy Groups
- Three 3-day Trainings with the selected Teachers of secondary level schools in the three districts
- Two-Day Twelve Trainings for the Students at Secondary Level Schools on Peace Education

Result 3: Enhanced dialogue and increased confidence between communities in CHT – especially among the youth – through improved understanding of perceptions, interests and needs of all communities present in the region, and better awareness of conflict drivers.

- Thirty Dialogues at the Community Level by the Trained Youth
- Awareness-Building Programmes through Wall Poster and Debate Competition in 12 Educational Institutions
- Promoting tolerance and pluralism through 12 Sports and 6 Cultural events

Result 4: Established or enhanced dialogue between communities and institutions for mutual engagement on local issues.

- Two-day Participatory Workshops on Citizen Journalism for the Trained Youth (male and female) by the Trained Young Journalists
- 30 Peace Dialogues with Women to Promote Gender Issues, Values of Communal Harmony and Peace:
- Two Two-Day Visits of National Level Delegation in CHT

Result 5: Enhanced interaction and cooperation between communities and authorities through established platforms of communication between local advocacy groups of CHT and relevant national authorities and institutions.

- 12 Consultation Meetings by the LAGs
- Organization of 15 Local Advocacy Dialogues with a Range of Stakeholders at the District Level to be organized by LAGs
- Formation of a CHT Discussion Group (CDG)
- Organization of Four One-Day Advocacy Meetings at the National Level:
- Preparation and dissemination of a Publication on CHT



