

United Centering Water

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Forward

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), one of the most beautiful places of the beautiful Bangladesh was lagging behind for a long time in basic services like education, health facilities, livelihood, etc. Some 25 years of conflict in the region left the region most vulnerable in the development context which the other parts of the country achieved about 25 years ago. The CHT Accord signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) created a scope for the development agencies to come with their development programmes in the CHT. NGO Forum, the umbrella organization in the WatSan sector has been implementing the programme in the CHT since the signing of the Peace Accord with a target to support the poor disadvantaged people of the CHT. The Forum stepped there to initiate development activities with its *Integrated Water and Sanitation Programme* through Partner Organizations in 1997. Since then the Forum has been successfully implementing a number of projects for the rural poor of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Currently the *Community-managed Water Supply and Sanitation Programme for the Rural Poor of Chittagong Hill Tracts*, is under implementation in partnership with 15 partners in 11 upazilas of three hill districts. The Programme focuses to partners' and community people's capacity building, provide supports and services in the form of WatSan technologies, operation and maintenance toolkits, communication materials and community mobilization for hygiene behavioral change of the people.

In close collaboration and cooperation with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), the CHT Regional Council (RC), the three Hill District Councils (HDCs), Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB), Local Government Institutions, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), international, national and CHT-based NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, local leaders and representatives from local community-based organizations, NGO Forum has already been able to put some effects on the life and livelihoods of the CHT people.

As an umbrella institution in the sector working in the CHT, the Forum has been able to touch the socio-economic conditions of the region. It stepped there with some development initiatives in order to improve the Public Health situation of the poor people of the CHT. Beside improvement of Public Health situation in the region, the WatSan programme of NGO Forum has also contributed beyond the WatSan boundary. The Forum has proved that water and sanitation programme can help eradicating economic emancipation, protecting the environment, promoting women empowerment and so on. Moreover, it was found that the water has become the symbol of unity and peace among the CHT people. This programme has been able to bring different communities including Bengali under same umbrella. Project activities created scope to increase interaction among the conflict-ridden communities, which is contributing to reduce tension and establish peace in hill tracts. It has certainly contributed and complemented to the CHT Accord. On the other hand, now the community people can avoid water-borne diseases by receiving services from the WatSan project and thus reducing expenditure for health. It is also reducing movement hassle and cost. The hilly people usually move from one place to another which claims a huge amount of money. They shift their homestead for want of water. They build up their homestead centering the water source. As

because NGO Forum has installed a number of technologies, they need not to move from one place to another. This has reduced their movement cost and enhanced community harmony.

This Publication portrays the GO, NGOs' initiatives to overall improvement of the hilly people, especially NGO Forum's activities undertaken in the CHT and the results achieved through its operation. We hope that the organizations and individuals with similar objectives and future generations of development activists will also be able to find some information & direction from the experience of NGO Forum.

S.M.A.Rashid

Preface

United Centering Water is an outcome of NGO Forum's programme intervention on 'Community-managed Water Supply and Sanitation Programme for the Rural Poor of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)'. This *Book* focuses on the success of NGO Forum's programme implementation relating to geophysical, political, cultural and health perspective of the CHT which certainly effect the overall socio-economic development in the region. The aim of this Publication is to develop an understanding of the region's distinctiveness and difficulties and thereby to identify some way out of more effective development interventions for targeting and reaching the poorest people in the CHT.

Promoting sustainable development in the uplands of Chittagong Hill Tracts poses important challenges. This region in Bangladesh is not easily accessible due to its geo-physical conditions. The *Book* describes about the geophysical challenges in terms of bringing the region under its services. On the other hand, culture of a particular society has both direct and indirect impacts on the development of a nation while the *Publication* gives a picture of 11 indigenous hill people's distinctiveness in respect to physical features, culture, religion, beliefs, etc. Their distinctive culture, religion and beliefs have some impacts on socio-economic development of the CHT region.

Poverty is not only due to lack of income or employment but also a complex syndrome manifested in a variety of dimensions. NGO Forum from its experience in the CHT found that there is a strong link between health and poverty. The chapter 'Economic Perspective' tries to illustrate various efforts undertaken through WatSan interventions to improve public health situation and thereby contributing to economic emancipation of the poor people of CHT. The chapter 'Political Situation' is about the three decades of conflict and insurgency stemming from tensions between the mainstream society and the indigenous population which severely affected the socio-economic development in the CHT. The water and sanitation programme of NGO Forum has been able to fix the gap among different communities centering its WatSan facilities. Generally, it is exposed that conflict among communities' remains in hill tracts but the WatSan programme has been able to increase interaction among them which in long run contributed to reduce tension and establish peace in hill tracts. Moreover, the *Publication* also depicts how gender focused development activities by the non-government organizations has lessened women's struggle and utilized their potentials in WatSan and health promotion. The final chapter outlined the importance of the sustainability of the development programmes. It showed that the full implementation of the Peace Accord is crucial for the region's development as it will make way for the inclusion of the hilly people in every sector of development.

The book *United Centering Water* is based on the study aiming at generating information and knowledge for understanding the problems relating to the CHT, the indigenous people, their culture, environment, etc, and so far progress in socio-economic development attained through interventions made into the region by development organizations including NGO Forum with its WatSan programme. It looks at national and international organizations and institutions to show how some people successfully made use of organizations to improve their socio-economic development. The *Book* highlights the importance of coordinated efforts of development

organizations for sustainable development in the CHT. It is expected that a real peace will persist all over the hill tracts by the coordinated efforts of development organizations.

During its journey towards a sustainable change within the society, NGO Forum has had its satisfaction as a markable number of the poor people of CHT have been able to improve their socio-economic conditions centering the WatSan programme and its facilities. Despite having challenges of geophysical, political, social and cultural distinctiveness, NGO Forum can take pride of successful accomplishment of WatSan programme implementation in the region. *United Centering Water* is a compilation of success stories on sufferings of the poor disadvantaged people of CHT in terms of availing themselves with water and sanitation facilities and how they became aware and made their lives more comfortable, sound and meaningful being provided with the supports and services, especially in the field of water supply & sanitation.

Joseph Halder

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) constitutes a geographically mountainous region in eastern Bangladesh, comprising approximately 5,000 square miles, or roughly 10% of the country's total land area. Originally populated by 11 independent, indigenous groups, each with a distinct culture and language, the CHT is one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in terms of various development indicators, including access to and ownership of land, income, employment opportunities, poverty, housing, health, water, sanitation, education, and inter-community confidence, etc.



CHT-the most disadvantaged & hard-to-reach region in Bangladesh

The unstable situation due to the issues like ethnicity, displacement, migration, environment, socio-economic backwardness, insurgency, military involvement, etc made the region as a crucial political and development discourse for a long time. The problems in this region had largely begun with the building of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam which displaced one-fifth of the indigenous population and abolished the special status of the area during Pakistan rule. Moreover, refusal of getting constitutional recognition as separate identity of the indigenous people in CHT after the independence of Bangladesh, resulted in conflict and alienation between the Bangalee majority in the plains and the indigenous people in CHT. Therefore,

the people of CHT areas were deprived of the basic services. The rights to the basic facilities and entitlements were scarcely ensured in the CHT over the period.

To end this long-term problem and violation in the CHT, after traveling a long process, *Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord*, 1997 was signed between the Government and the *Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity* (PCJSS). This Accord showed a ray of hope among the CHT people and after the Accord, focus was given on the improvement in livelihood of these marginalized and deprived people, especially the indigenous peoples (IPs) got a new dimension with development initiatives taken by the Government, and development partners. It is considered as a new step toward long-lasting peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts.



Another generation has grown up dreaming with a broken heart of development in CHT

However, several years after signing the Accord, development in the CHT is yet to be attained. Over 14 years on from the Accord signing a start has been made to the most of its proscribed actions, but their impact on the lives and livelihoods of the general population has been minimal. It is said that peace prevails when there is no poverty and hunger, there is no inequality & deprivation in the society, there is no more feeling of exclusion among the people, human development is accelerated and no more terrorism prevails in the society. But this multidimensional democratic approach is not visible in the CHT even after years of Peace Accord. Frustration is

running high among the CHT people due to slow state of implementation of the deal. Still 'Food Poverty' is widespread in CHT. Poverty in the rural CHT is highly pronounced as compared to rural Bangladesh. Though the Government and the development partners have engaged themselves for ensuring education for all in the CHT, issues like poverty, sorry state of public health, time spend for collecting drinking water instead of going to school, etc make the initiatives failure.

To complement and contribute to the Peace Accord in the CHT, a number of local, national & international development organizations came to the field with a view to changing the socio-economic condition of the indigenous people. NGO Forum for Public Health, a national organization has been implementing the WatSan programme with a target to support the development of sustainable community-managed and community-owned water and sanitation programmes; and strengthen the capacity of the local NGOs and member of the community groups in order to encourage their behavioural change especially in the field of health, hygiene & environment in the underserved & unserved rural areas of the CHT. This Study has been aimed at generating information and knowledge for understanding the problems relating to the CHT, the indigenous people, their culture, environment, etc, and so far progress in socio-economic development attained through interventions made into the region by development organizations including NGO Forum with its WatSan programme.

Chapter 2: Development Initiatives in the CHT

The Chittagong Hill Tracts remained outside the mainstream of development assistance for more than two decades due to the conflict and violence in the area. The Peace Accord made a space for initiating development programmes in this hilly areas. Following the CHT Peace Accord of 1997, both government and NGOs stepped there with some development initiatives in order to ensure the establishment of peace, settlement of the hilly people and taking the CHT people on the development route. Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, Hill Tracts Development Board, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Land Commission were formed to effect the Peace Accord and initiate the development activities.



Making way for development activists' vehicle, hilly people standing aside from the road

Under the supervision of the agencies, immunization campaign in the most inaccessible areas was launched. The Hill Tracts Development Board started running some residential schools in the hill districts to spread education among the indigenous minorities. National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP) identified the environmental areas to protect environment in the CHT. It identified the issues like deforestation, extinction of wildlife, “unplanned” *Jhum* (slash and burn) cultivation, scarcity of safe water and sanitation, malaria and other health hazards, agricultural and employment problems caused by high water level in Kaptai Lake, hill cutting and land erosion as the major consensus in relation to environment conservation.

UNDP's programme for the Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT through its Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) works for the overall development of opportunities for all peoples and communities resident in the CHT. The development purpose of the programme is to support the Government of Bangladesh and enable the institutions of the CHT and their constituent communities to pursue accelerated, sustainable socio-economic development and regional poverty reduction, based on the principles of self-reliance, local participation, and decentralized development. Asian Development Bank (ADB), German Embassy, International Development Agency, World Bank, UNDP and many other international development agencies have been supporting the Government and NGOs in accelerating socio-economic development in the CHT. The Water Development Board (WDB), Hill Tracts Development Board, the Hill District Councils have been implementing a number of projects.

Along with government agencies, a many of national and international NGOs have stepped there to complement government as well as creating the space of working of their own for the people in the CHT. Some local NGOs also have evolved to accelerate the process aiming at developing their communities utilizing their own capacities and potentials. Like many other drawbacks, the scarcity of safe water and lack of sanitation facilities have been hindering the development process in the CHT. The people have very limited traditional sources of safe water. Their perceptions about safe water, ability to create safe sources, government's attention to the scarcity, geophysical barriers i.e. rocky soil texture in ground and so on have kept people within the situation. The sanitation and hygiene situation is also very poor resulting in the

pitiable health status. After signing the Peace Accord, some NGOs have paid attention to the issues and started intervening with a view to making people aware about safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices, sensitizing the relevant stakeholders and identifying and demonstrating suitable alternative sources of safe water and creating sanitation facilities. This Chapter focuses on the government's and NGOs' development initiatives in the CHT, especially after the Peace Accord.

2.1 Development of NGOs in the CHT

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, some voluntary organizations and various type of NGOs were formed to complement the government in rebuilding the war-devastated country, and soon after, they started working for socio-economic development of the country. They started working all over the country except CHT areas. The Peace Accord created a scope of working in CHT for the NGOs. Some national NGOs stepped there to initiate development activities. A number of local NGOs based in CHT and developed by the indigenous volunteers and development visionaries came to the field with a view to changing the socio-economic condition of the indigenous people. Signing of the treaty sensitized the donors to support to the development programmes in the CHT.

At the very beginning, most of the newly established NGOs in the CHT started working to establish the rights of the indigenous people. The people who took shelter in the refugee camp



Peace Accord created a scope for NGOs to be beside this vulnerable community

in India during the turbulent situation got back to the CHT after signing of the Accord. The local NGOs at first tried to uphold the right-based issues. The national NGOs initiated the programmes in CHT areas on empowering the indigenous community initiating, health, education, income generating activities, tree plantation, gardening at homestead, water supply, sanitation, etc along with the government agencies and the newly established government institutions. The local NGOs adopted the programmes and started implementing jointly with government and national NGOs in partnership mode. The international development agencies also initiated their supports to the local NGOs in planning and implementing development programmes in the CHT.

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2.2 NGO Forum in the CHT



NGO Forum came in the CHT to keep this remote household within its services

Considering the safe water scarcity in CHT areas, adverse geo-physical condition, unlike condition for easy water technology installation, irregular terrain and scattered housing and living pattern, cultural and socio-economic situation among the indigenous community, very low sanitation coverage and minimal attention to the sector, NGO Forum has undertaken Community-managed Water and Sanitation

Programme in the CHT. The Forum has been implementing the programme since the signing of the Peace Accord with a target to support the development of sustainable community-managed and community-owned water and sanitation programmes, and strengthen the capacity of the local NGOs and member of the community groups in order to encourage the people for changing the health & hygiene practices and improving the environment in the underserved rural areas of the CHT. As the apex networking and service-delivery agency of the NGOs who are working for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene promotion all over the country, NGO Forum feels the necessity to address the issues in the CHT utilizing its specialized experiences and expertise. Since initiation, the Forum has undertaken the following programmes in the CHT:

NGO Forum with the support of Danida and SDC stepped in the CHT to initiate development activities with its “Integrated Water and Sanitation Programme through Partners Organizations”. The duration of the Programme was from May 1997 to December 1999. From January 2000 to June 2004, the Forum implemented Danida supported “NGO Forum Component Water Supply and Sanitation Sector” in the CHT as a part of its countrywide development initiatives. With the financial assistance of Danida, NGO Forum has successfully implemented a two-year project titled “Hygiene Promotion, Sanitation and Water Supply (HYSAWA) Project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”. The duration of the Project was from January 2004 to December 2005. Before starting long-term project NGO Forum initiated a small scale pilot initiative titled “Community-managed Water supply & Sanitation Programme for the Rural Poor of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CMWSP-CHT)” which was co-financed by Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and the European Commission (EC). The Project was implemented from July 2004 to December 2007. Meanwhile a Project titled “Community-managed Water & Sanitation Programme for the Chittagong Hill Tracts” was implemented during the period June 2008 to May 2010. Flora Family Foundation financed the Project. Presently, NGO Forum has been facilitating the implementation of the **Community-managed Water Supply and Sanitation Programme for the Rural Poor of Chittagong Hill Tracts, (CMWSP-CHT)**, with the resource sharing of the European Commission (EC).

As the networking body in WatSan sector, NGO Forum implements its projects in partnership approach. This CMWSP project has been implementing through 15 local partner organizations



Indigenous people use *Chhara* water unknowing its bad impacts on health

having organizational base and adequate knowledge and experience on geographical condition and communities of respective areas. It is being implemented in 11 Upazilas of three hill districts of CHT i.e. in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban. All the NGOs have been evolved in the hill districts within the CHT areas and started working in the areas targeting the disadvantaged communities. With technical and facilitation support from NGO Forum, the NGOs have been implementing the programmes efficiently and effectively. The Forum works closely with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), the CHT Regional Council (RC), the three Hill District Councils (HDCs), Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board

(CHTDB), Local Government Institutions, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), International, National and CHT based NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, local leaders and representatives from local community based organizations.

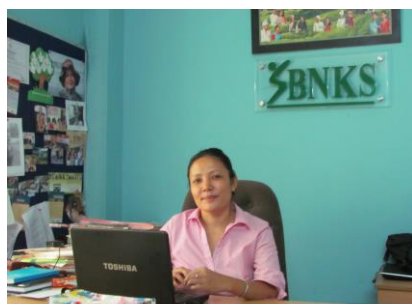
Capacity Building

NGO Forum often includes capacity building as a form of assistance for developing partner NGOs or community people in the working areas. The development initiative in the CHT area is relatively new in comparison with the other parts of the country. Most of the organizations have been established after the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997. The local organizations working in the CHT, therefore, lack of capacity in many aspects. With this regard, NGO Forum has focused on capacity building of implementing organizations, its staff and the community people as well. It focuses on partners and community people's capacity building that relates to leadership development, advocacy skills, training/communication skills, technical skills, organizing skills, and other areas of personal and professional development, supports & services in the form of WatSan technologies, operation and maintenance tool kits, communication materials and community mobilization for hygiene behavioural change of the community people.

The programme focuses on three-tier capacity building framework with long-term vision of institutional capacity building of partners, human resource development for running programme with sufficient managerial capacity at the staff level and community capacity building for enhancement of need assessment capacity, community mobilization and demand creation, management of community level WatSan resources, and establishment of communication with local government institution. One of the key focusing areas of the programmes is to strengthen capacity of partner organizations and community groups in order to provide and maintain safe water supply and sanitation facilities and encourage health & hygiene changes in the unserved, underserved, and marginalized rural communities.

Organizational Capacity Building:

Organizational Capacity Building of Partner NGOs is a way to strengthen an organization so that it can perform the specific mission it has set out to do and thus survive as an organization. One of the main strategies of NGO Forum's programme in CHT is to mobilizing the communities and developing local organizations to take the lead over the development activities in the community. Top level management staff of PNGOs enhanced the knowledge regarding organizational development and management, conflict management, evolution and growth of an organization, team building, leadership and development of external relationship, human and financial resource management, participatory WatSan planning, etc taking part in the capacity building trainings provided by NGO Forum. As because the most partners were small and had little management capacity these trainings & networking events Counting on Capacity effectively contributed in increasing efficiency of partners' management, planning and implementation of project activities.



HlaChing Nue takes great pride in her organization's present success

One of the main strategies of the NGO Forum's programme in CHT was to developing capacity of local organizations so that the organizations can take the lead over the development activities in the community. Bolipara Nari Kollayan Samity (BNKS) is one of them. Starting in 1991 in Thanchi upazila of

Bandarban district this organization has able to draw attention to the development actors. Despite being the member of the Marma Royal Family in the CHT, HlaChing Nue Marma, the present Executive Director of the organization cherished a hope to do something for the deprived communities of the CHT not confining herself within the four walls. After her masters degree from Eden Girls' College, Dhaka in 1999 she held the steering of the organization along with her mother. At the very initial stage, she had no idea about running an organization. She even didn't know what partnership is called. One day an executive of Oxfam Bd introduced her with a NGO Forum official. This was the turning point for the future development of her organization. She used to go to NGO Forum's Central Office and had a long chat there. When the Forum's representatives visited CHT, they used to introduce her with others as their partner. Interestingly, till then she had no idea about the partnership and how an organization becomes partner of another organization. Thus, in the course of time BNKS became partner of NGO Forum. "It might not be possible to see myself in today's position unless I got chance to be acquainted with NGO Forum. NGO Forum has strongly supported on how to run an organization, how to mobilize community, how to write report and how to manage office, staff and accounts" says a thankful HlaChing Nue. Therefore, the staff of these NGOs never missed any training programme offered by NGO Forum. Training from NGO Forum has capacitated the organization to great extent to implement water and sanitation programme and basic skill to implement other development programmes. Now they have been successfully implementing some other projects as well. The process has helped to build up their organizational capacity. Besides, it has started working on some particular programmes with supports from national and international development organizations. The partnership with NGO Forum in implementing water and sanitation programme in the CHT has capacitated them a lot in many dimensions.

Capacity Development of Field-level Staff:

NGO Forum has concentrated on building organizational capabilities through field-level staff development. As the Community Organizers (CO) of partner organizations are key to implement community mobilization activities in the field; so different types of training courses were imparted to them to enhance their rapport building and facilitation skills. The field-level staff have developed capacity on how to conduct and facilitate water, sanitation related issues, on how to raise awareness about the respective situation in the Chittagong Hill Tract, and how to promote safe water, hygienic sanitation and personal hygiene in the communities preserving the traditional natural sources and environment. The training has been effectively contributing to increase knowledge and skill of staff in various forms and as a result they are performing effectively to reach objectives of the Project. The PNGO staffs have become familiar with knowledge of hygiene education and promotion on safe water, sanitary latrines and personal hygiene issues after participation in these trainings. The Accounts related trainings have helped the partners to ensure the proper financial transparency and accountability of the organization while implementing the Project. Partner organizations have become aware about nuances of water and sanitation activities, which they lacked earlier. Interaction between local government and partners in relation to water and sanitation has increased substantially.

Ongsaing Chak (28) is a Community Organizer (CO) of Bolipara Nari Kalyan Samity (BNKS), a local partner of NGO Forum. He has been working in this organization for last two and half years. He did not have prior experience in water supply and sanitation programme implementation. He even did not have any experience as community worker. Therefore, his

employer was in confusion about his appointment in a position like CO while the CO should have good communication and motivational skills. In contrast, Onsaing was a man of very introvert and shy character. After joining, some training provided by NGO Forum like TOT, Hygiene Promotion, Gender, etc changed him totally. He has developed his skills in motivational activities and organizing meeting as consequence of imparted training by NGO Forum. Once he used to hesitate to communicate with people, especially local government representatives and other stakeholders. Now he became able to handle and communicate with them efficiently. His facilitation capacity has also improved. "Not only in official matters but my acceptance as a facilitator has increased among my community people. People invite me to conduct any social, cultural programmes. My family members and my employers are proud of this kind of my acceptance in the society," says a confident Community Organizer.

Community-level Capacity Development:

Finally, the PNGOs concentrated on capacity development of Village Development Groups, masons, caretakers, and community allies to implement the Community-managed Water & Sanitation Programme at the community level. The training course enabled VDG members to take proper decisions on overall development of the respective communities. It also enabled them to take proper decision to initiate WatSan programme at community level. On the other hand, the training enabled target communities to integrate message on safe water, hygienic sanitation and personal hygiene into the different means of traditional cultural performance.

Catalyzing the Community

NGO Forum has been implementing programmes through its network of partners in the CHT. It has also been mobilizing community people at different levels to act as catalysts and contributing towards realizing water and sanitation coverage. It has been providing supports in hard-to-reach and underserved CHT areas in a decentralized mechanism following the Community-managed WatSan Programme approach. The Community-managed approach has focused on community capacity building along with organization building of both NGO Forum and partners. Besides, NGO Forum has been catalyzing the community to form water-point maintenance groups mainstreaming gender and establishing community ownership over the set-ups.

NGO Forum's partner NGOs in CHT has been successfully mobilizing the community in their working areas towards using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene practices. The promotional messages have been being disseminated among every member of the community. They are now capable in following techniques of mobilizing the community people effectively. They first create close contact with the influential people in the community like UP member, community leaders i.e. Headman, *Karbari*, religious leader, school teacher, village doctor and so on. They treat the persons as community allies and utilize their influences in mobilizing target people towards using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene practices. The partner NGOs use the techniques of organizing and conducting courtyard meeting, community meeting, household visit, rally-miking, etc to mobilize the community. They have found the use of IEC and BCC materials, film-show and popular theatre effective in this regard.

Promotion of Alternative Technology

It is proven that combination of hardware and software services in WatSan programme always yield effective results. Therefore, this programme firstly has concentrated on software services like capacity building and community mobilization with a view to bringing in a positive change in people's behavior and in turn creating demand among the community people for the hardware facilities. The indigenous community people of the CHT have never been witnessed raising demand for safe water and sanitation facilities. It is because they have fewer ideas on safe water and sanitation, the necessity of those and their rights to safe water and sanitation facilities. Moreover, adverse geo-physical condition i.e. the rocky soil texture and irregular terrain is the reality in the CHT areas. And it tends to hinder the process of supplying safe water through low-cost technologies in the areas. Like other areas, government tried to provide safe water options in some areas in CHT through hand-pumped shallow Tubewells but adverse rocky ground hindered the process. Later they tried Ring-well in a few localities but improper installation and lack of orientation have made the technology unused. On the other hand, the NGOs those got allowed to anchor their programmes in the CHT after signing the Peace Accord, did not pay due emphasis on addressing WatSan issues in the CHT. NGO Forum as the apex non-government service-delivery agency in the field of WatSan feels the accountability to address the adversity in alternative mode. Although the alternative technologies are not low-cost, the local partner NGOs with technical assistance from NGO Forum have promoted different alternative technologies at community level with a view to establishing the right of the CHT people to safe water & sanitation.

Kapthliar Bawm, aged 55, is a internal displaced refugee. Being evicted from 20 km uphill, he along with other 15 families came to Shuanlu Para under Rowangchari union of sadar upazila of Bandarbands. This *para* is better than that of the previous one in respect of education facilities,



Kapthliar knows the value of alternative technologies

electricity and communication with Bandarbands town. But the water scarcity in both places is the same. The wife of Kapthliar used to collect water from wells dug beside the *Chharas* named 'Noting *Chhara*' even after settling in this *para*. She had to work in the garden regularly. After getting back from the garden, she used to go to the *Chharas* to take bath and collect water for drinking and other domestic uses. It took more than one hour to collect water from the source of one and half km away. At the same time, different NGOs were raising awareness among the community people to use safe drinking water and using hygienic sanitation to protect water-borne diseases. But inaccessibility of its main element – 'water' used to generate altercation between Kapthliar and his wife. "My wife could not cook in time due to the time she had to spend in fetching water. This was another cause of conjugal conflict," he says. In rainy season or during flash-flood the wells go under water. All the 40 families of this *para* had to collect *Chhara*-water finding no other alternative. One day, a local NGO Tajingdong visited our *para* and later they once again came with some officials of NGO Forum's Dhaka office. The Forum officials remembered 'Allah' watching their water collection struggle. Afterwards, Tajingdong installed 22 Rain-water Harvesting System for a total of 40 families. They use its water for drinking and cooking purposes. They are now getting safe water. Kapthliar knows the value of alternative water technologies in the region like CHT. He purchased a cleaning brush to clean the RWHS on his own initiative. The environmental degradation of CHT feels him bad. He encourages the

people to plant environment-friendly trees like Gorjon, Loha tree, etc. As an educated person and member of both VDG and CHTDF, he always disseminates health and hygiene messages among the community people. He finds similarity between the programmes of NGO Forum and CHTDF, i.e. both have health programme, community mobilization, capacity building, education and so on. He believes, both are complementary to each other. He further says, NGO Forum's WatSan programme is complementing to UNDP's health programme. Thus the objectives of Peace Accord will be achieved if there is a synergistic coordination among the development organizations working in the CHT like NGO Forum and UNDP.

Beyond the WatSan: Environment Conservation

Water and sanitation facilities can help protecting the environment. The partner NGOs strongly support the statement. Open defecation can pollute water sources and environment. Unsafe water is the serious cause of diarrhoea, dysentery and many other vector-borne diseases. In the CHT among the indigenous community people, the diseases are high. On the other hand, they defecate in open places. Thus it causes harm to the environment and health of people. The partner NGOs are now aware of this concern, and disseminate the messages among the community people in their working villages with a view to ensuring environmental sustainability.



**Pritimoy, the VDG president
is locally called Hygiene
Dada**

Pritimoy Dewan, aged 50, from Gamaridhala village under Kamalchhari union of Khagrachari is honoured by his fellow villagers now. He is a President of the Village Development Group (VDG). “The villagers honour me. They call me *Hygiene Dada* as I always try to make them aware on hygiene issues. They often listen to me patiently with respect. Because I have been able to make them understood, whatever I say is for their betterment,” says Pritimoy, the president of VDG. The involvement in the VDG has brought a change in his life and outlooks. The village has much improved in water, sanitation and hygiene issues. Water-borne diseases no more attack the villagers of this village. Pritimoy along with the other VDG members sits at VDG meetings 2-3 times a month and decides on the roles and responsibilities they have to bear to mobilize the community. Besides dissemination of WatSan messages, they mobilize the community in education, cultural development, environment conservation and other development of the village. Because of a recent bold step taken on environment protection, their acceptance in the village has increased manifold. A section on unscrupulous brick-Kiln owners had decided to set up their brick-kilns illegally in the residential area here. As the brick-field causes serious health hazards and environmental pollution, the VDG mobilized the villagers about its bad impacts on the residents. They all together submitted memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari. Finally the brick-kilns owners did not dare to come forward. Besides, “If the villagers cut one tree, at the same time they plant two. This is a big achievement of the VDG of Kamalchhari, beyond the WatSan programme,” says Pritimoy Dewan.

On the other hand, Access to clean water is important in daily life and impacts on community health. But the quality and quantity of water in the CHT is declining gradually. Declining of water quantity is caused by deforestation, unplanned plantation, unplanned cultivation, lifting

of stones, etc. Declining of water quality by several factors, including: the use of agro-chemicals, open defecation and unplanned sewage and sludge disposal, leakage of fuel from boats, soil erosion, seasoning of (hidden) timber in water bodies around the saw mills. Partner NGOs of NGO Forum while they are implementing the water and sanitation programme disseminate the messages among the community people. They disseminate awareness raising messages not to pollute water bodies as it causes environmental degradation and harmful impact on Public Health. As a result of their continuous awareness raising campaigns, the community people do not cut that tress which is useful for water-protection beside the *chhara* or *jhiri*. Thus the water and sanitation programme is helping protecting the environment as well.



**Julekha believes in the beauty
of her dreams-a safer
environment for her grandchild**

Bibi Julekha is 75 years old and lives in Kalampati union under kawkhali upazila of Rangamati district. She along with her family members migrated to Rangamati in 1989 from Panchagarh, a northern district of Bangladesh. It was a very poor *Bangalee* inhabited village in Rangamati. She remembers the time of her coming to this village 22 years ago and how she struggled for a living. She used to collect bamboo, timber and fuel wood for their livelihoods. Tree and bamboo were important items sold in large quantity by *Bangalee* people in that region. But she was unaware about the bad impacts of unplanned tree cutting on natural sources of water. In those days, there was no lack of water. There was plenty of water for drinking, cooking, bathing and so on. As the *Bangalee* community was dependent on tree and bamboo collection and selling as a source of income, their next generation has been suffering from severe water scarcity. Jungle has been depleted. The natural water bodies have been dead due to adverse interventions. Nobody made them aware of its bad environmental impacts. They came to know this information from the Community Organizer (CO) of PAHRA, a local partner of NGO Forum in 2009. The CO made them aware not to cut the trees beside the *chhara*, and jungle for environmental conservation, especially for water protection. Now they have engaged themselves in environmental conservation. "I may not be able to see its results, but future generation will enjoy the results of environmental protection," she believes.

Once there was no scope for development activities in the CHT. The CHT Peace Accord made the space for initiating activities in the hills. At present, a huge number of development organizations are working with an aim to ensure the establishment of peace. It is expected that a real peace will persists all over the hill tracts by the coordinated efforts of development organizations.

Chapter 3: Geophysical, Socio-economic, Cultural & Political Perspective

The CHT is geo-physically different from the rest of the country. This region in Bangladesh is not easily accessible due to its geo-physical conditions. On the other hand, CHT has its own system, norms and values which have become the guiding principle of participation in development actions. As the poor people of CHT are economically vulnerable, so ensuring participation of them sometimes become difficult. Moreover, three decades of conflict and insurgency stemming from tensions between the mainstream society and the indigenous population severely affected the socio-economic development situation in the CHT, exacerbated by its geo-physical characteristics vis-à-vis the rest of Bangladesh.

3.1 Geophysical Distinctiveness of CHT

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is an indisputable development challenge due to the region's pervasive poverty, its prolonged isolation from the rest of Bangladesh, its topography and its ethnic complexity. It is also a hard-to-reach area in respect of communication, moderate civil amenities and administrative barrier. People who live in CHT are culturally distinctive and the total area is hilly, and so retain a very distinctive geo-physical characteristics. In terms of geo-physical condition, racial, social, and cultural traits, CHT people are different from the other parts of the country. In spite of these difficulties and impediments to development, there is a strong common commitment on the part of both the people and the institutions of the Hill Tracts to see a full scale resumption of development assistance. The Chittagong Hill Tracts has remained more or less outside the mainstream of development aggravated by geo-physical characteristics. This chapter is about these geo-physical difficulties which affect the lives of the CHT people.

3.1.1 Topography

The CHT has an area of 13,180 km, making up approximately 10% of the total area of Bangladesh. Compared to the low-lying floodplains that characterize most of Bangladesh, the topography of the CHT is quite steep, with over 70% of the land at a slope greater than 40%. The soils are characterized by low fertility. Kyokra-Dong, the highest peak of Bangladesh (1,230 meter) is located in the southern tip of the Bandarban district, near the borders of India and Myanmar.

3.1.2 Rainfall

The CHT has a sub-tropical climate, with annual temperatures varying from 10° to 35° C. The annual rainfall ranges from 80 inches (2,000 mm) in the central north to 150 miles (3,750 mm) south-eastern border about 150 inches (3,750 mm) over 80% rainfall occurs between May and September pre-monsoon and monsoon rainfall typically in torrent downpours and flash of flood in the valleys.

3.1.3 Demography

Demographic changes have been considerable in the CHT in the recent past. For example, in 1901 the tribal people, or *Pahari*, made up 93% of the CHT population, while in 1991 they made up 51%. There are 12 distinct indigenous groups, consisting of Bengali (48% of total population), Chakma (25%), Marma (15%), Tripura (6%), Mru (2%), Tanchangya (2%), and others (2%) (Rafi and Chowdhury 2001).

3.1.4 Geology and land forms

The Chittagong Hill Tracts area is geologically of recent origin comprising old Pleistocene sediment deposits. The general land feature comprises of a series of anticline ridge lying parallel to one another and trending in roughly NW-SE direction. They are composed largely of consolidated sandstone's, sandy shale's and shale's of tertiary geological age. These have been subjected to considerable folding, faulting, tilting and dissection. The ridge crests reach heights of 100-3,000 feet (300-1,000 m) MSL. In the synclines between these main ridges, there are lower hills below 250 m generally the height ranges between 42 m to 80 m and formed mainly over unconsolidated sandstone of late Tertiary age. Some of these hills are leveled or of rounded summits, but most of them are closely dissected and sharp ridge. Almost everywhere in the Hill Tracts, slope is very steep.

3.1.5 Soil

Soil patterns often are complex due to rapid changes in the underlying lithology, differences in relief and the varying extent of soil erosion. The most extensive hill soils are brown, loamy and strongly acid, with rapid permeability and low moisture-holding capacity. Except over hard rocks, they are generally deep. Valley-soils include brown, loamy soils on well-drained terraces, grey and clays on poor valley-bottom sites. Eleven soil series were identified. One extensive series was divided into deep and shallow phases. Gently, moderately and steeply sloping phases were also identified.

3.1.6 Vegetation and Agricultural Food

The entire hill districts have typical vegetation and tropical evergreen and deciduous forest. There are trees like Sal, Teak, Chapalish, Mehagoni, Kari, Chambal, etc. In addition, there are plantation of Pine and other foreign trees in the reserved forest. The tribal people traditionally practice *Jhum* cultivation by clearing the natural vegetation and burning it during the dry season. These practices destroy the existing natural vegetation pattern in reserved forest.

Agriculture remains the main form of livelihood for CHT residents. Rice, with an agricultural yield of 0.90 Mt, is grown on 43.3% of the total cultivated land (0.19 M ha). A variety of fruits are grown with success, such as banana, pineapple, and jackfruit (Ullah 2002). Nowadays, a change from *Jhum* cultivation to cash-oriented production system is seen all over the hill tracts. Therefore, a bumper yield of orange in the hill districts was found over the last few years.



This orange orchard was called *Pagla Gachh* (Mad Tree) for its bumper yield

The people of Adapara of Thanchi upazila under Bandarban district achieved a bumper yield of orange this year. Almost all the wholesale markets have been stockpiled with orange in the district. There is a huge demand for orange all over the country. Wholesale dealers from Chittagong and other places of the country come to Bandarban to purchase hilly orange. It was totally unimaginable to the Ada Karbari of the village even few years back. With the technical support from the district Agriculture Extension Department (AED), the growers became interested in cash-oriented production instead of *Jhum* cultivation which is causing environmental

degradation in the CHT. The Ada Karbari sold orange worth Tk. two lakhs to a wholesaler from his two orange orchards this season and became economically benefited to a great extent.

3.1.7 Land Use

The land use in the CHT, especially the *Jhum* cultivation due to land degradation has become a serious concern in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. It is revealed that the process of degradation has started during the British colonial period with the nationalization of land and forest and large scale commercial logging. It was accelerated by the establishment of reserve forest which abolished tribal people's customary rights and forced them to reduce the fallow period. The construction of a hydroelectric dam and encouragement of migration of low-land people into CHT had created further pressure on land and forced farmers to bring more marginal lands under arable cultivation for growing food or annual cash crops and increase the cultivation frequency.

The Kaptai Dam on Karnafuli river inundated about 22,000 ha land (about 40% best arable land of CHT) and displaced about 100,000 people; 55% of them were plough-cultivators. Some of the displaced people, with permanent land titles, were rehabilitated in reserve forests. The majority of evacuees without permanent land title were neither resettled nor paid any compensation. Permanent cultivators, who were not properly resettled or not given adequate compensation were compelled to practice *jhum* fully or partly due to lack of alternative livelihood sources. Most of the displaced shifting cultivators moved to the upper parts of the hills and resumed *jhum* in fragile, marginal lands. Some of the shifting cultivators even encroached into the reserve forests, as they could not find other appropriate forest lands. In this process, major portions of Kasalong, Sitapahar, and Reinkhyong reserve forests were destroyed. It is reported that 65% of the Reinkhyong reserve forest was destroyed by shifting cultivators.

The pressure on land was further reinforced by the government policy of encouraging low-land people to migrate to the CHT. Some migrants from India were resettled in CHT during the early 1950s. On the other hand, within a decade between 1951 and 1961, the population of low-land Bengali in CHT had increased about five times, from 26,000 to 119,000. Besides, declaration of some forests as 'protected forest', where shifting cultivation and collection of forest products were prohibited, accelerated the pressure on agricultural land. As a result of the combined effects of the increased number of shifting cultivators, decreased area for *jhum* cultivation, and increased population contributed by mainly immigration, population pressure on land

increased significantly. This forced shifting cultivators to reduce the fallow period. As regards the use of forest resources, Pakistan Government started industrial use of forest products. To use forest products, paper, rayon, timber, pulp, plywood, and match manufacturing industries were established in the CHT (Rahman, 1998). As a result, the extraction of bamboo and soft wood, which were not extracted previously due to their low economic value, increased significantly. Realizing the adverse impact of shifting cultivation and necessity of rehabilitating degraded land, attempts were made by the government to promote horticulture based farming system in the late 1960s. Some of them successfully adopted banana, papaya, pineapple and other horticultural crops as cash crops, while others could not succeed due to lack of knowledge, marketing and credit facilities (Khisha, 1982; Roy, 1998). In some areas government agencies had established rubber plantation, the on trail basis, but this land-use could not expand as private entrepreneurs did not come forward due to lack of knowledge and marketing facilities.

After independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Government of Bangladesh implemented a resettlement programme to settle low-land people in CHT at the end of 1970s. It is estimated that 200,000 to 450,000 low-land people were resettled in CHT (Roy, 2002:29). Most migrants were resettled in *khas* land or government-owned fallow land, which was actually community-lands being utilized by indigenous people for generations (Barua, 2001). Indigenous people considered such land as their community property and, therefore, did not pay attention to securing land title from the government agency. Few indigenous people had land titles. As a result, many indigenous people were evicted from their ancestral land for the second time after their eviction by the construction of Kaptai reservoir during the Pakistan period. This undermined any investment in land development and management, and the indigenous people continued practicing *jhum*. Due to repeated slashing and burning, natural forest species were replaced by secondary vegetation such as shrub and hardy grasses (Arya, 2000). In 1992, government declared about 50,000 ha of forest land as reserve forest and 4,000 ha was leased out for rubber plantation (Mohsin, 1997). This combined with migration of low-land people further intensified pressure on land resources available for agriculture and forced shifting cultivators to shorten fallow period. Upland cultivation also further intensified, particularly near the roadside. Low-land settlers, who lacked the knowledge of upland cultivation started commercial cultivation of vegetables such as cucurbits, beans and leafy vegetables, and root crops like aroid, ginger, turmeric, *mishti-alu* (*Ipomea batatus*) and *simul-alu* (*Manihot esculenta*) (Uddin et al., 2000) even in the steep slopes due to high market value. Improved road conditions facilitated the transportation of these commodities to Chittagong and other cities. As a consequence, the area under these vegetables constantly increased.

Attractive profit provided a strong incentive to large-scale poaching and smuggling of forest products. Despite a ban on timber extraction, influential businessmen in collaboration with officials of the Forest Department and other agencies were primarily engaged in such activity (Master Plan, 1993; Huq, 2000:80). Due to illegal logging and expansion of agricultural lands, even reserve forests in CHT were steadily shrinking. In Kassalong reserve, forest area reduced to 89,000 ha in 1991 from 150,000 ha in 1963. Likewise, In Rankhiang reserve forest, forest area reduced from 382,000 ha to 251,000 ha between 1963 and 1991 (BFRI, 2000). To control illegal timber cutting, the government further tightened the punitive measures. In this regard, extraction and transit regulations concerning the transportation of timber from privately owned lands were also made stricter (Roy, 2002). Despite great potential of tree production in the CHT

(Forestal, 1966), no effective policy was pursued to increase timber production by encouraging tree plantation on private land. Contrarily, private tree plantation initiatives were discouraged by the complicated permit system imposed on the sales of timber extracted from private farms. The rules required farmers to submit forestry officials detailed specification of timber to be sold (Rasul, 2003)². Due to excessive cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, it is hardly possible for small farmers to obtain the permit for timber selling without bribing the officials (Huq, 2000). As a result, small tree growers are compelled to sell timber to local traders at a much lower price than the market price, which have discouraged them from large-scale tree plantation.

3.1.8 River system

The main rivers in the hill districts are: a) Karnafuli b) Halda c) Ichamoti d) Sangu e) Matamuhuri f) Kaselong and g) Franches Feni. In addition there are smaller streams and rivulets. They are tributaries to the main rivers. The Feni river originates in the northern part of Khagrachhari district and flows into the Bay of Bengal through the district of Feni. The Karnafuli River with its tributaries is the biggest and most important river. Hydro Electric Project was built on this river. As a result, Kaptai Reservoir Lake has been formed during next monsoon. The Halda and Ichamoti rivers fall into the Karnafuli below the Kaptai Dam. The Karnafuli flows into the Bay of Bengal. The Chittagong Sea port has been established on the outfall area of Karnafuli river. The Sangu river originates in the high hills of the Bandarban district and after passing through several valleys it takes a westerly direction and flows into the coastal plain of Chittagong and ultimately



Sangu is blowing for years being onlooker of CHT people's longstanding pains & sufferings

debauch into the Bay of Bengal. The Matamuhuri originates in the southern most part of the high hills of Bandarban and after flowing in northerly direction takes westerly turn and fall in the Bay of Bengal near Cox's Bazar. All the hilly rivers are subjected to flash flood during monsoon. Again during dry season tidal flow penetrates through the river outfall and proceeds up to considerable length of the channel upwards. In addition to the rivers and Khals, there a few springs of artesian and non-artesian native and water discharge hicuts from hills to plain called *Chhara*.

3.1.9 Land sliding

Land sliding is a problem associated with hill cutting. Hill cutting is a common phenomenon in Hill Tracts due to increased population rise. High rainfall and improper handling of hills intensities in these areas lead to sudden collapse of hills. In the recent time, land sliding in the CHT has increased manifold due to massive deforestation, hill cutting and unplanned human settlement under the hills, especially by the non-indigenous people.

3.1.10 Surface water

The Bay of Bengal lies in the south-west directions from the hill tracts districts. Bandarban district closes to the Bay of Bengal. The other two districts are little away of the Bay of Bengal.

Monsoon rain is the main source of surface water, which flows through the rivers in the form of excess run-off. During the monsoon the river-level remains high but during the dry period the level drops low. Being hilly streams the velocity of flow is considerably high. In the Kaptai Lake the difference of high and low-level is 113 m. The highest depth near the dam is about 50 m. Habitation settlements grow near to the river, lakes and spring, the reason is easy access to surface water stream, lakes and spring water are used for domestic and potable purposes during the dry periods. The monsoon water remains turbid and full of organic and inorganic material as such their use is restricted. There is no major specific source of surface water pollution. In rainy season rivers receive agro-chemical, domestic wastes and sand-mix and these contaminants pollute river water which is turned useless for domestic purposes. The drinking water supplied by the service providers in the CHT area contains much higher level of bacteria than the accepted health standard. Untreated human excrement and dumping of garbage into the surface water causing the water polluted. Fertilizers and pesticides used in the low-land agriculture around the water bodies are also polluting the water.

3.1.11 Groundwater

The geology of the area is complex and is characterized by a series of folded tertiary formations. The area is considered unfavorable for extensive groundwater development. The aquifer has low transmissible and intensive development, therefore, incur large draw-down. However, wells can be developed successfully on an individual basis.

Drilling of Tubewells for water supply is difficult because of presence of hard & rocky formation in the subsurface. Due to this, the water supply situation is very worse since, except few, most of the traditional water supply options are not feasible in hilly areas.



Like many other areas of CHT, 56 families of Jambura para of Dighinala upazilla of Khagrachhari district tried to install a Tubewell in their locality and dug 70m of the hill but found no water. They tried again and again over the years. But they failed repeatedly. They had to collect water from a well beside the *chhara*. Therefore, people of this village were having water-borne diseases as they were using water of this *Chhara* for drinking, cooking and other domestic purposes. Especially in the rainy season when the *chhara* water become muddy, most of the children used to become sick after drinking water from it. From an NGO Forum officer, many villagers for the first time heard that there are alternative water technologies which may be suitable for installing in their community where normal Tubewell doesn't work. NGO Forum installed an IFG (Infiltration Gravity) beside the *chhara* while a filter was set underground to purify water from the *chhara*. The filtered-water was collected by the people through a Tubewell. Geophysical characteristic of this hilly area is like that the groundwater is not found even after digging 70m of the hill.

3.1.12 Safe Water Sources

It is proved that the surface water sources in the CHT are not safe. The indigenous community people think that the well's water is safe since it is apparently clean. But it contains germs.

Moreover, the wells dug beside the *Chharas* go under water during rainy season or flash-flood situation. They then drink and use contaminated water of the *Chharas*. On the other hand, the geophysical condition of the CHT is not friendly to install easy and low-cost technologies. There are some state-of-the-art technologies those are suggested for the areas. But those are highly expensive and unaffordable for the poor indigenous community people. The operation and maintenance are also complicated. Without proper training on O&M and gaining people's acceptability, the technologies cannot exist and finally get left inoperative.

Among the safe water sources, Ring-well is the popular alternative in the CHT areas. But it costs high. It goes beyond the capacity of the poor people. Some rich people in the community have installed it. Government also has provided it to some communities. But the low quality installation and improper orientation and training on O&M have made it inoperative and unused. On the other hand, the poor indigenous community people have less access to the sources established by the rich people of their community. Government's supports which are entitled to the poor people are mostly mocked and manipulated by the rich and powerful people of the community.



**Jadukachhara-the village of role model
for community initiative**

The name of one of the extremely disadvantaged villages in the CHT in terms of accessibilities is Jadukachhara of Sabekhyong union under Naniarchar upazila of Rangamati district. It takes about 2 and half hours on foot to reach the village, the only way to reach the village. The people of this village are the most vulnerable in terms of road communication facilities. But the community people do not consider it as a problem, rather they consider it a privilege as they believe, Bangalee people could not come to the village crossing the arduous hilly paths to grab their lands. They

grow ginger, turmeric and rice and as a consequence, almost every family is economically solvent in this village. Their present challenge is the provision of water supply and sanitation facilities. They have to cross arduous hilly paths walking for miles to reach the sources to collect water for their everyday's uses. One can hardly run away from the blood-sucking leeches. This challenge became more acute when their recent project of orange garden was going to be failed due to water scarcity. But the community people of Sabekhyong have learned how to die for a cause. They sat together and decided to bring water from a distant source, about 8,500 feet away from the village. They agreed to contribute financially. They installed a plastic tank (500 ltr) at the point of water source. 1" pipe in every 500' distance was used to carry the water from the source to the reservoir. At the reservoir point, a total of 10 tanks were installed to contain the water. Every tank had been inter-linked. Community users use pipeline according to the distance. At present, a total of 60 families out of 80 are getting water from the source. They spent Tk. 8 lac 9 thousand for water so far. But the water from this source was not safe as there were no facilities of filtration of the water. NGO Forum just extended its hands to the community hands. The Forum came up with filtration facilities. Now they are getting safe water safely. "I will write down today's date in my diary. Because, today somebody have come to be beside us; to see our miseries; to see our initiative whether it is okay or not. It is a big achievement for us", said Ramani Ranjan Talukdar (55), ex UP member , president of local VDG and one of the main initiators of the scheme.

3.1.13 Traditional Practices on WatSan

The community people in the CHT do not have any idea about safe water, sanitation and hygiene. They are not also oriented to the necessity of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene behaviors. They suffer from many water-borne diseases but they do not know the link between the diseases and lack of knowledge and practices of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene principles.



Many indigenous people do not have any idea about the feeling of bathing dipping into water

The people, especially the women collect water for drinking and using for domestic purposes from the natural sources. For getting seemingly translucent water, they dug well beside the *chharas*. Water drops gather into the well and the women fill up their pitcher compromising with a lot of patience. They have to cross for miles paths to reach the sources to collect water for their everyday's uses. When the wells go under water in rainy season, they collect water from the *chhara*, *khal* or rivers and use or drink after getting it filtered with pieces of clothes. They take their baths and wash clothes in the water of *chhara*, *khal*, river, etc. The women use the same water in washing dishes and foodstuff before cooking.

The indigenous people of the CHT do not have idea about the system of defecating in a particular place. They usually defecate in open spaces beside the hills or in jungle. But they never defecate in or beside the natural water bodies. Their belief in *Jalodevis* has driven them practicing it. They traditionally use leafs only after defecation.

3.1.14 Sanitation Status

The indigenous people of the CHT who have been yet remaining far away of education facilities and awareness on sanitation do not have the idea about the system of defecating in a particular place or in a latrine that should be protected by a water-seal and some hygiene measures should be followed after using it. They usually defecate in open spaces beside the hills or in jungle. They have the practices of using leafs for cleanliness after defecation. Other than the traditional practices some people, who have been acquainted to the system of using latrine in different ways, have installed pit latrine, plastic pan and use it. But concrete made latrine because of its heavy weight and zigzag paths of hilly locality is very difficult to transport. Those who are using these latrines are very minimal in number in the CHT areas. The poverty-stricken indigenous community even cannot afford its costs. The road communication is inaccessible in many areas, so it is very hard to carry sanitation materials. Considering the remoteness, nowadays, sometime masons produce rings and slabs at the community level through mobile Village Sanitation Centers. This strategy has reduced carrying-cost and damage of material during carry.



Latrines used to break while carrying in the detached Keretkata village

Keretkata under Mogban upazila of Rangamati is situated at such a remote and detached location that it takes 20 minutes from Golachhari Bazar by engine boat. As a consequence of Kaptai Dam, this village has been remaining detached from the mainland of Rangamati. There is no other alternative options to go to Keretkata except using water ways. People of this village did not have scarcity of water, but they had acute scarcity of safe water. They used to install latrine on the bank of the lake. Therefore, the take-water became polluted. And the villagers used to drink this polluted water for drinking, cooking,

bathing and other domestic purposes. They suffered a lot from stomach problems, excreta and water-borne diseases but did not have any clear idea about the causes. NGO Forum in association with its local partner Strategic Actions Society (SAS) created demand among the community people for hygienic sanitation facilities. It was difficult to install the latrines due to geo-physical barriers of the area, scatted housing and detached by long water ways. The people did not agree to carry the concrete ring slabs of latrines as it was expensive and it was a breakable technology. So, SAS officials provided them with the alternative sanitation technology □ Plastic Ring Slab, an innovation by NGO Forum. Being very light technology, it was very easy to carry the plastic latrine from one place to another. Villagers became interested and at present a total of 14 households have been using this hygienic sanitation technology.

3.1.15 Communication

In respect to communication difficulties, the Chittagong Hill Tracts is considered one of the most distinct and difficult areas in the country. This region is extremely disadvantaged in terms of accessibilities. Maximum of CHT population are residing in the remote rural areas located about at 7-10 km distance from the district/upazila headquarter. Not only that but the indigenous people of CHT set-up their dwelling on the hilltop 500-2,500' up and down from the plain land. Transport and communication facilities to go to these villages is very poor. Therefore, the economic opportunities are less in the region due to this vulnerable communication system.

Roads are important for regional development. A road network exists up to the upazila level, but in maximum cases, it is not linked to the union level. Maintenance is poor. Rivers are also important for transportation, but access is limited in the dry season and permanent landing stations are absent. With the installation of permanent river landing stations, better access to markets is provided for agricultural goods.

Access to hospital is a necessity for improved Public Health situation. But it takes hours to go to hospital due to far distance of hospitals and poor transport and communication system. Access to telecommunication is also poor in the CHT, especially in the remote rural areas. There exists no TV, radio, land telephone, mobile network, and Internet network beyond the district headquarter. Every year, a huge quantity of seasonal fruits and other crops is damaged due to

poor communication facilities and the growers have to incur a huge loss. However, communication facilities should be improved, in order to favour the development process in the region.

Kisang Mru, 65, is living at Ada Para in Tindu under Thanchi upazila, Bandarban. Accompanied by his chronic joint pains Kisang is living there far from the madding crowd. Ada Para is out of any sort of civic facilities. So is Kisang, remaining out of modern medication for his joint pains. Kisang led a 12-member musical team in the night at his house. The team made the deep-dark rainy night so entertaining with their traditional flutes. But the bright morning next day, started with a pathetic note. As we were getting ready to depart for Bandarban, Kisang suddenly turned himself into begging for some medicine, if we have with us for his treatment. It was simply because of the remoteness of his living. Kisang has a little idea about the importance of modern medication, but the traders find it too difficult to reach Kisang due to absence of communication system.

3.1.16 Environmental Situation

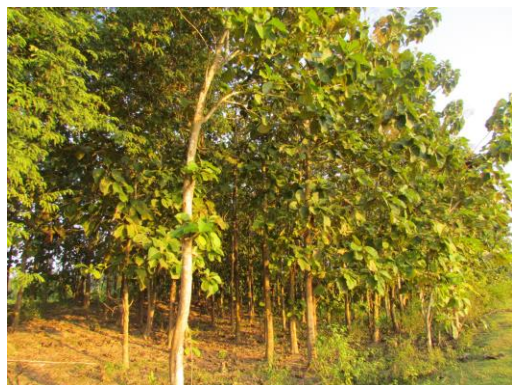
The CHT is also environmentally different from the rest of the country. The main environmental issues affecting the CHT include forests depletion, soil fertility decline, water level decline, soil erosion, landslides, flash flooding, sedimentation of reservoirs and lakes, loss of biodiversity, and fire spreading. These issues are caused by environmental stresses such as ecosystem fragility, increasing population pressure, encouraged encroachment of forest lands, increased use of wood for housing, furniture, and fuel wood for cooking, inadequate aftercare of planted forests, illegal felling of trees, monoculture plantation forestry, faster felling than plantation rate, unsustainable farming of marginal lands, lack of adoption of soil and water conservation, shortening of fallow period of *Jhum* cultivation, and uncontrolled burning.

Many of these issues and stresses are interrelated. For example, there has been a significant increase in population pressure in past decades, with an increase in population density from 29 person km in 1961 to 96 person km in 2001. This urbanization increase is correlated with pressure on land and forest resources. Increased pressure of human settlement on land is causing soil erosion. On the other hand, deforestation has been occurring on a large scale in the CHT, with forest extraction an important occupation for many of the illegal settlers. Most residents are dependent on wood for fuel and for livelihoods by selling the firewood. There is also a nationwide high and increasing demand for timber of CHT.

The environment and ecology in the CHT are being degraded gradually due to *Jhum* cultivation. Hill people have been practicing shifting cultivation (*Jhum*) from time immemorial. It is closely related with the socio-cultural settings of some hill communities. In the past, they practiced *Jhum* in the same area with a fallow period of 15-20 years, which ensured the long-term sustainability of soil fertility. But, with the rapid growth in population, the fallow period has been reduced to 3-4 years, allowing very little time for soil regeneration. Therefore, the productivity of hill soil is continuously reducing year after year. At least 1.21 lakh hectares of hilly land is used for *Jhum* cultivation every year which adds to massive soil erosion, depletion of forests including reserves ones and extinction of wild life in the CHT. According to the Forest Department and Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE, 2009), over 16 thousand hectares of different reserve forests have also been burnt for the same purpose.

A new threat to environment-- establishment of brick kilns is seen all over the hills that is resulting serious environmental degradation. The brick kilns are responsible for deforestation and land degradation, as about 33% of the fuel used in brick kilns comes from the wood fuel. Around 100 brick kilns in Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati hill districts use 5.40 lakh tones of loamy soil every year causing damage to hills, forest resources and environment. It was also found that 84 of the 100 brickfields in three hill districts have been set up very close to human habitations, educational institutions or health care facilities violating laws concerned. The situation has become a serious threat to environment and biodiversity while the people in the neighbouring areas face health hazards.

Tobacco cultivation in CHT is posing a threat to Public Health and the environment. According to environmentalists at least 60 to 70 thousand metric tones of firewood are being burnt in 2,000 tobacco processing kilns every year, causing depletion of reserves and natural forests, threatening the environment and ecology of the hills. Besides, it spoils the soil fertility almost totally and once tobacco is cultivated it is difficult to grow other crops on the same land. Some 7,000 farmers are involved with tobacco farming in the CHT according to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE, 2009). Most of the farmers in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari have been losing their interest in cultivating indigenous crops like paddy, banana, maize, cotton, etc. Moreover, the tobacco plants leave the nicotine here. It is burning lot of trees and gift black smoke to process the tobacco. So the green hills becoming as like a devil hill.



Greenery Segun turns its underneath neat & clean creating serious water scarcity in the area

Segun (Teak), though expensive and attractive, is injurious to the local environment and soil. It causes huge soil erosion and no other trees grow underneath a *segun* tree, especially if *segun* trees are grown in the hilly areas. Huge chunks of soil erode from the hills where *segun* gardens have been cultivated, especially during the rainy season. It is the soil erosion due to the *segun* cultivation that gathers silt in the Kaptai lake bed. *Segun*, is also susceptible to diseases and insects frequently. The rampant monoculture plantation that

ensued in the forests in the hilly areas have had manifold negative impacts. Apart from the destruction of the numerous native species and the towering

Garjan that was once synonymous with these forests, the lives of the indigenous people, who have been living in the slopes of the hills for years have been greatly upset. Moreover, The Bangladesh Government adopted the practice of monoculture that has devastated Bangladesh's forestlands. In Bangladesh the destruction of natural forests and practice of monoculture has been conducted under very misleading names such as "social forestry", "participatory" or "community forestry".

Erosion is also an increasing concern due to hill cutting from higher ground areas to fill low marshland areas for farming or development. Unplanned and poorly planned development of infrastructure and unrestricted 'free for all' type of tour operation are posing great threat for the ecosystem of one of the most attractive eco-tourism spots of the country like CHT. However,

tourism's relationship with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that have adverse environmental effects. Unplanned tourism posing threats to as soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into the water bodies, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and biodiversity of forest. Moreover, human excreta and discharged waste, fertilizers and pesticides used in the low-land agriculture around the lake are polluting the water bodies of CHT.

As trees are felled, there is an increase in erosion, landslides, and water scarcity. Animal habitats are destroyed. As sediment and other pollutants enter water bodies, there is a decline in water quality, and settling of sediment on the river bottom (sedimentation), which can lead to increased flooding. It was found that unplanned human settlement is one of the major causes of declining of natural water sources in the CHT.

Access to clean water is important in daily life and impacts on community health. Water quality decline is caused by several factors including: the use of agro-chemicals, open defecation and unplanned sewage and sludge disposal, leakage of fuel from boats, soil erosion, seasoning of (hidden) timber in water bodies around the saw mills. Increased enforcement and awareness creation was recommended to better control the open discharge to water bodies. Appropriate land management techniques applied in the sloping lands will contribute to improved water quality through reduced flows of sediment and agro-chemicals to the waterways. On the other hand, forests are important resources of the hills. Nowadays, in the name of 'Social Forestry' promotion of commercial and production oriented forestry is going on in swing in the CHT. Rubber plantation, *Segun* plantation and other harmful plantation damage the ecology of the region permanently. There are many mono-culture forests in the CHT which are harmful to the environment. These are posing threat to the natural forest and the environment that the region sustains. It is creating a bad impact on the water sector of the region.



Damrak Chhara still blowing because of local people's sense on environment conservation

NGO Forum has been facilitating water and sanitation programme at Ramju para, a much remote rural area in Tankabati union under Bandarban district. The Mru community who are lagging behind in all aspects compared to other communities of CHT reside in this *para*. They are inhabiting here for last 23 years. Water scarcity of their previous place forced them along with other families to start living at Ramju *para*. They selected the place to live getting ensured the availability of water from a *chhara* named 'Damrak Chhara' which had plenty of water in those days. But during the recent years, the community people noticed that they are not getting enough water from the *chhara* for their daily chores. With the time being, the *chhara*

was becoming dryer. NGO Forum's Community Organizer Bina Safek Bawm, as part of her water, sanitation and health hygiene message dissemination, used to make the community people aware about the water decline in the *Chhara*. Thus, the Community people made a linkage between the CO's information and their indigenous knowledge on water conservation. Indigenous people do not cut those trees like *Jarul*, Bamboo, *Badi* tree, *Painyatoiri*, *Bandarjhol*,

Chalta beside the *chhra* that are useful for water protection. Besides, they are planting more trees for avoiding land slides in the hills.

Climate change has been taking toll on CHT people. It is the new challenge to the environment of the CHT. The hilly people just cannot read the hills anymore. More than half of the total population of CHT has been suffering from extreme drinking water crisis during the dry season, when the springs dry up in the hills because of lack of rains caused by rampant deforestation and effects of the global warming. People have to shift their age old villages in case of the death of springs. All of the rivers and tributaries in the CHT are the confluence of hundreds of springs of this region. It is the bad news for the indigenous people of the CHT that the springs of this region are drying up day after day as consequences of climate change. Moreover, the slow change in the hill climate has taken its toll on their way of life, with most of them have been forced to drop *Jhum* cultivation. Strange things have been happening in the hills for last couple of years. They prepare the hills for *Jhum* but lack of timely rain makes it a futile practice. Therefore, the yield becomes so poor.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, with a population of 1.3 million, has remained more or less outside the mainstream of development aggravated by geo-physical characteristics and the indigenous communities of the CHT have excluded from the development efforts. As a consequence of signing 'CHT Treaty', very often called as 'Peace Treaty', two decade long insurgency came to an end and the people of CHT have entered into a new era of development opportunities. Now the situation is more favorable for carrying out development activities. People's enthusiasm and efforts have matched international donor community's support for recommencement of development in the region.

3.2 Cultural Diversity

Like the mass itself, its psyche has a tremendous power to change the patterns of a society. Seen from this angle, culture of a particular society has both direct and indirect impacts on the development of a nation. The CHT, with its mountains, lakes and natural beauty, has seemingly endless resources and a rich cultural heritage. There are 11 hill communities living in the CHT and they have their own language, culture and tradition. These people differ from the majority Bangalee population of Bangladesh in their physical features, culture and religion.

3.2.1 Population

Different terms are used by sections of the population throughout Bangladesh to refer to its indigenous peoples. These differences have sometimes led to sharp disagreements, particularly between government officials and members of the indigenous peoples. In referring to the peoples concerned, some officials of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) prefer the term '*upajati*' (literally 'subnation' and akin to the words 'tribe' or 'tribal' in English) and reject the use of the words '*Adibashi*' (equivalent to indigenous or aboriginal) and 'indigenous'. Vocal members of the indigenous peoples, in contrast, prefer the term 'indigenous' in English, and '*Adibashi*' in Bengali. They reject the term '*upajati*' (subnation) and, to a lesser extent, the English term 'tribe', both of which seem disparaging because of associated connotations of 'backwardness' and 'primitiveness'. Other terms acceptable to a large section of the indigenous population include '*Jumma*' (from the common heritage of '*Jhum*' or swidden cultivation) and

'*Pahari*' (hill people). There is a growing demand from the communities living in the CHT to be recognized as indigenous, though the Government of Bangladesh has not recognized these people as indigenous in the Constitution yet.

However, the population in this region according to the 2001 census, stands at 1.06 million, which is 0.14% of the national population of 129.25 million. Over a period of 50 years, the density of population in the area has gone up from 22 per sq. km in 1951 to 78 in 2001, marking an increase of 354.54%. In 1991, the CHT had a population of 0.97 million, of which the hill people constituted 0.50 million and the Bangalees 0.47 million (cited in Mohsin 2003).

Basic Demographic Indicators

Indicators	Bangladesh	CHT
Total Population (mio)	129.25	1.06
Density of Population/sq.km	876	78
Tribal People (mio)	1.20	0.51
Sex ratio (M/F)	106	112
Family size	5.6	5.2
Urban population (% of total)	19.6	33.3
Literacy Rate (both sexes)	32.4	29.9
Literacy: M/F	38.9/25.5	38.7/19.2

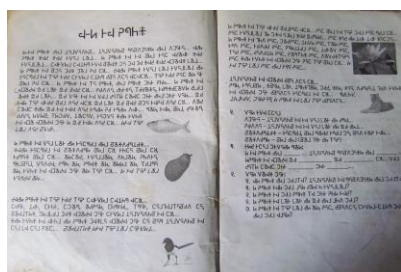
Until very recently, the majority of the population in the CHT have been tribal people that since British times, have been identified in three circles (i) the Chakma circle consists of most of Rangamati district and one or two Thana in Khagrachari (ii) the Bomang circle includes all of Bandarban and one Thana in Rangamati (iii) the Mong Circle includes the balance of the khagrachari district. The circles are divided into Mouzas and the Mouzas into hamlets.

In addition, the Chittagong Hill Tracts is also populated by a large number of Bangalee people who can be divided into two categories: the Adibashi Bangalees or old settlers and new settlers. The Adibashi settlers are those who have been settled in the CHT having obtaining permission from the then British authorities, and hence they are legal, bonafide and permanent residents of the CHT. The new settlers, on the other hand, represent those who have entered CHT after the partition of the Indian subcontinent on 14 August 1947. According to the Chittagong Hill Tracts Manual of 1900, they are all illegal outsiders in the CHT.

3.2.2 Language

The indigenous peoples have their own languages, both in written and oral forms, although many of the scripts, including that of the Chakmas, are in danger of being lost entirely due to disuse. Although the languages of the Chakma and the Tangchangya have close links with Bengali and Assamese, these languages have developed their own distinctive identity over the centuries. The languages spoken by most of the other indigenous peoples belong to what is known as the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Like other communities in the CHT, Mru community has their distinct language both in oral and written form. They practice it keeping the Bangladeshi notions uphold. However, the Chakma script is closer to the Khmer script than to the Burmese. The medium of instruction in Bangladesh is the Bengali language, and there is

no information available indicating any plans to include indigenous language instruction at educational institutions. The CHT Peace Accord gives an opportunity for imparting primary education in their mother tongues in the CHT region, which still remains unimplemented. There is no separate language policy for the hill people in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Constitution stipulates that the national language will be Bangla and it is to be followed everywhere in the country.



The hill children grow up learning the national values in their own language

Every community living in the CHT speaks in their own mother language. It looks like this is a bit problem in the region to communicate with each other. During the study it was found that it is a problem and barrier to development information dissemination. A union is inhabited by a number of communities. Information provider of one indigenous identity face problem to disseminate information. Students face this problem very accurately. As the education system is in Bengali, it takes time to understand *Bangla*, especially in understanding the question's papers in compare to students of other parts of Bangladesh. But the CHT people try to overcome this barrier.

Every hill people can speak more than 2 to 3 languages. They are very much interested to learn other community's language which creates some extra pressure on them. Besides, there is common language mixed of 'Chitagonian-Chakma' language what they very commonly understand.

Indigenous Group

Chakma

Marma

Tripura

Tanchangya

Khumi

Mrung

Bawm

Kheyang

Pankho

Chak

Lushai

Language Spoken

Variant of Bangalee, Indo-Aryan Group

Mixture of Burmese and Rakhaine, Tibeto-Burman group

Chokborok, Bodo group

Similar to Tanchangya- Indo-Aryan Group

Kuki-chin group

Tibeto-Burman group

Kuki-chin group

Kuki-chin group

kuki-chin group

Tobeto-Burman group

Kuki-chin group

Source: Amena Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: On the Difficult Road to Peace*, 2003



Bina has won language barrier & won other communities mind with her dedication

Bina Satek Bawm, aged 25, is the Community Organizer (CO) of Grause, a partner organization of NGO Forum. She holds Bawm identity, but her working area is Mru inhabited. Mru community is backward in compare to other communities living in the CHT in terms of dress-up, education, understanding other community's languages, WatSan practice, etc. This made Bina a bit worried about her successful accomplishment as the CO. From the commitment of doing something better for one of the most backward communities in the CHT, she learned Mru Community's language and adopted their culture, practice, etc. As a part of her job, she has to

mobilize the community towards using safe water, sanitary latrines, maintaining hygiene practice and environmental protection. She disseminates promotional messages among every member of the community through conducting courtyard meeting, community meeting, household visit, etc. But she never felt such kind of problem as she has learned the techniques of successful community mobilization in the Mru inhabited villages. Most importantly, the communication materials of NGO Forum helped her much in this regard. The participants, who do not understand Bina's language, can understand the pictorial messages of the materials. Both the community people and Bina found the IEC and BCC materials effective for the CHT.

3.2.3 Culture

Culturally diverse indigenous groups have been living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for years. The 11 different indigenous groups lack the common cultural and social denominators viz., common language, religion, culture, social norms and customs, history and so on that may mark them off as a single national or cultural entity. Despite different national, linguistic and religious identities, indigenous *Jumma* peoples share common cultural traits which manifest themselves in a healthy and harmonious racial environment in which they live. The root of their common culture is the system of *Jhum* cultivation, which every of these nationalities practice. Today, as a result of internal colonization and continuous marginalization, their common culture and identity are also facing extinction.



The rich indigenous culture in the CHT is under threat because of mixed culture practice

Their housing culture is also distinctive in nature. The traditional indigenous houses are made from bamboo and sun grass and are raised on stilts with a notched wooden ladder as a stairway. This began mainly as a safety precaution in earlier times when there were many wild animals wandering freely in the area including tigers, wild boars and elephants as well as poisonous snakes. The clothes of the indigenous peoples are hand-woven, and are distinctive because of their vibrant colours. They are still worn on a daily basis by many of the indigenous peoples, especially on ceremonial occasions such as weddings, feasts and religious events.



3.2.4 Religion/Beliefs

The indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are mostly of Mongolian stock, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family extraction, and are closer in appearance and culture to their neighbours in north-eastern India, Burma and Thailand than to the majority Bengali population. The dominant religion of the indigenous peoples is Buddhism (Chakmas, Marmas, Tanchangya, and partially the Mru). Some of them belong to the Hindu (Tripuras) and Christian faiths (Lushais, Pankho and Bawm and some Mru), while others have retained their

traditional religion. However, nearly all the indigenous peoples also include traditional indigenous elements in their formal religious beliefs and practices.

Anthropologists divide all these indigenous peoples into three groups based on their languages, customs, religious beliefs and patterns of social organization. The Bawm, Pangkhua, Lushai, Khumi, Mru and Khyang belong to the *Kuki-Chin or Kuki* group. The Tripura and Rieng belong to the *Tripura* group and the Chakma, Marma, Tangchangya and Chak belong to the *Arakanese* group. *Arakanese* group is numerically the most prominent group among the three. Tripura and Khumi are the second and third groups respectively in terms of numerical strength. Most indigenous people are Sino-Tibetan descent and have distinctive mongoloid features.

Indigenous Group	Religion
Chakma	Buddhism
Marma	Budhism
Tripura	Hinduism
Tanchangya	Budhism
Khumi	Budhism, but with some rites and beliefs of animism
Mrung	Animism
Bawm	Christianity
Kheyang	Budhism
Pankho	Christianity
Chak	Buddhism
Lushai	Christianity/ Animism

Source: Amena Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: On the Difficult Road to Peace*, 2003

The hilly people are accustomed with their beliefs and practices of hundred years. They have their own source and practice of medicine and healing art. They use trees, juices and extracts of various kinds as basic ingredients in their traditional healing art for curing most of the ailments. This is the way in which they also carry out various types of experiments, exercises and superstitious activities with water, oil, etc. When there is any probability of the outbreak of cholera and small pox in an epidemic form they kill rats, monkeys and dogs and bury them on both sides of the roads and hang the bones on bamboos for others to see. They believe that the evil powers and epidemics will not enter the village and their evil effects will be warded off. A seriously ill indigenous people will not be interested to go to hospital. After their death, the dead body is not allowed to enter their respective home. Therefore, they remain home even after they fall seriously ill. That is why, Mobilizing the community towards changing the behavioural pattern is very difficult in the perspectives of CHT. It is always difficult to bring about the changes in their behavioral pattern. The COs sometimes seem failed in mobilizing people to receive the messages. They then convince the influential people of the communities to utilize their influences. Beside the messages, they cite practical examples to make their sense. Considering the working hours of the indigenous people, they meet people at their convenient time.

3.3 Political Situation

The political situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the largest indigenous populated area in Bangladesh is quite different from the rest of the country. To know the present political situation and development scenario of the CHT, a brief historical political background of the region and people's resistance need to be narrated. Using the Peace Model of six mutually reinforcing multipliers i.e eradication of poverty and hunger, reduction of inequality, mitigation of deprivation, inclusion of excluded people, acceleration of human development and elimination of terrorism, the political situation of post treaty period is analyzed while GO and NGOs' contribution towards peace building is assessed through the window of Peace Model.

3.3.1 Political History of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

a. During British Colonial Period

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, prior to the advent of British rule, was an independent state free from outside control. In the pre-colonial period, the Chittagong Hill Tracts had not been part of any state, although they had long been influenced by waxing and waning of power centres in Tripura (to the north), Arakan (to the south) and Bengal (to the west). The powerful Mugal rulers tried unsuccessfully to bring the CHT into its full suzerainty, but they had to be content with a kind of trade relation, which was beneficial for both the CHT and the Mugal rulers. According to an agreement reached between them, the CHT *Rajas* (chiefs) used to pay some sort of a trade-tax in kind (Karpas or cotton) to the Mugs in exchange for trade facilities along the border areas of Chittagong, a part of greater Bengal. Because of this trade tax in cotton the Chittagong Hill Tracts came to be known as the Karpas Mahal or Land of Cotton during Mugal era.

The British annexed the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1860, more than a century after the battle of Palashy (in 1757) in which the Nawab of Bengal Siraj Uddollah was defeated in the hands of the British forces. During the early periods of its rule, the British refrained from interfering with the internal affairs of the CHT and though administered from Kolkata, the CHT was not a regular part of Bengal. Its administrative system, land rights, and closure to outside settlers all set it apart from the rest of Bengal. This status was reconfirmed in the 1930s when the region was declared an excluded area under the Government of India Act. Later the British enacted a legal instrument the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900, also known as CHT Manual, for the general administration of the area. Through this Regulation the British allowed the hill people to enjoy a limited measure of autonomy and banned permanent settlement of the outsiders.

b. Pakistan Period

In 1947 when the Indian subcontinent was de-colonized the Chittagong Hill Tracts was awarded to Pakistan. The Pakistani government viewed the hill people with suspicion and took measures to do away with the legal safeguards granted by the British. Outsiders were encouraged to settle in the CHT. In 1962s a dam was built over Karnaphuli river at a place called Kapati without any kind of prior consultation with the hill people. The dam, which had far-reaching socio-economic and political consequences for the CHT, submerged 54,000 acres of first class arable land and evicted 100,000 hill people from their homestead.

c. Bangladesh Period

In 1971 after nine months of bloody war against the Pakistani occupation forces Bangladesh came into being. The Chittagong Hill Tracts being a part of the then East Pakistan now became a part of the new state. The first blow to the hill people came from the new state when it tried to impose ultra-Bengali nationalism on them. After the political changeover of 1975, the military dictators embarked on a massive militarization programme, did away with protective provisions of the CHT Regulation and encouraged and sponsored settlement of outsiders in the CHT. The hill people reacted sharply to these measures of the successive governments of Bangladesh and resistant movement developed in the form of an armed struggle.

3.3.2 Conflict

Conflict and violence in the CHT has a long historical background that started with the construction of the Kaptai Dam in 1962. Adverse economic impact of the construction of Kaptai Dam and non-recognition of the indigenous identity by the constitution led to the formation of several insurgent groups in the CHT. To counter the insurgency, the government started militarization and sponsored transmigration programme by the plain land Bangalee settlers in the late seventy of the last century. The result of all these efforts has been that a course of prolonged battle has taken place between the Bangalee and the indigenous groups and the law and order situation of the CHT was deteriorating over time.

The modern conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts began when the political representatives of the CHT people protested against the government policy of recognizing only the Bangalee culture and language and designating all citizens of Bangladesh as Bangalee. On the eve of the formation of the Constitution of Bangladesh a delegation of CHT people headed by Manabendra Narayan Larma formally placed before the then government some demands for autonomy towards maintaining cultural and linguistic identity of the hill people. But the failure of the government to accommodate the demands of the hill people led Larma to form the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti in March 1973. Subsequently an armed wing called the *Shanti Bahini* (Peace Forces) was added to it. During the insurgency, the *Shanti Bahini*, the Bangladesh Army, police and gangs of Bangalee settlers were accused of perpetrating abuse of human rights and indigenous cleansing. On the other hand, the government failed to address the long-standing issue of the displacement of people caused by the construction of the Kaptai Dam. It devoured about 40% of their prime land. Many of them are said to have migrated to Arunachal Pradesh of India. The government failed to fully compensate the people for the land they had lost. Moreover, In the 1980s, the government began settling Bangalees in the region, causing the eviction of many natives and a significant alteration of demographics. Having constituted only 11.6% of the regional population in 1974, the number of Bangalees grew by 1991 to constitute 48.5% of the regional population. Many hill people along with Bangalee people were killed in the course of conflict and violence committed during 1976-1997 in the CHT.

3.3.3 Peace Accord

Peace negotiations were initiated after the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1991, but little progress was made during that period of time. Fresh rounds of talks began in 1996 and the Peace Accord was finalized and formally signed in 1997.



It was CHT people's expectation that the sun will shine behind the cloud

In December 2, 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord (often known as *Shanti Chukti*) was signed between the Government and the *Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity* (PCJSS) which stopped two and a half decades of insurgency and military operations that claimed thousands of lives. On behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity*, on behalf of the inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts, had reached the agreement of four parts.

The agreement recognized the distinct ethnicity and special status of the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and established a Regional Council consisting of the local government councils of the three districts of the Hill Tracts. The council was to be composed by men and women from the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Murang and Tanchangya tribes; the delegates would be elected by the district councils of the Hill Tracts. Elected for a five-year term, the council would have authority and responsibility to maintain law and order, social justice and tribal laws, oversee general administration, coordinate disaster relief and management, issue licenses for heavy industries and oversee other development projects. The central government would be required to consult the regional councils overall issues concerning the Hill Tracts. The agreement also provided for the setting up of a central Ministry of Tribal Affairs to be headed by a person of indigenous community to administer the affairs concerning the Hill Tracts. The agreement also laid out plans for the return of land to displaced natives and an elaborate land survey to be held in the Hill Tracts.

Both sides have reached the agreements to take programmes for restoring normal situation in Chittagong Hill Tracts area and to this end on the matters of rehabilitation, general amnesty and others related issues and activities. An agreement has been signed between the government and the refugee leaders on March 9, 1997 with an aim to take back the tribal refugees from India's Tripura State based on the 20-point Facilities Package. In accordance with the said agreement repatriation of the refugees started since March 28, 1997. It was agreed in the Accord that this process shall continue and with this in view, the *Jana Sanghati Samiti* shall provide all kinds of possible cooperation. The Task Force shall, after determination, rehabilitate the internally displaced tribal people of three districts.

The government shall declare amnesty for the members who shall deposit their arms and ammunition on the scheduled date. The government shall withdraw the cases against whom cases have been lodged. After signing and implementation of the agreement between the government and the *Jana Sanghati Samiti*, and after rehabilitation of the tribal refugees and

internally displaced tribal people, the government, in consultation with the Regional Council to be formed as per this agreement, shall start cadastral survey in CHT as soon as possible and after finalization of land ownership of tribal people by settlement of land dispute through proper verification, shall record their land and ensure their land rights. In order to provide rehabilitation to all returnee JSS members a lump sum of Taka 50,000/- shall be given to each family.

Educational facilities shall be provided for the children of the *Jana Sanghati Samity* members and the certificates obtained from foreign board and educational institutions shall be considered as valid. On education issue, both the sides have recognized the need for protecting the characteristics and attaining overall development of the region considering Chittagong Hill Tracts as a tribal inhabited region. Finally, the government and the elected representatives shall be active to preserve the distinctiveness of the tribal culture and heritage. The government in order to develop the tribal cultural activities at the national level shall provide necessary patronization and assistance.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 1997 has been regarded as a historical event for Bangladesh, because a two-decade insurgency came to an end as a result of this Accord. It has been viewed as the commencement of the process to get moving toward long-cherished development.

3.3.4 Implementation Status of the Peace Accord

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord steps into its 14th anniversary this year. As per the deal, the government formed the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Committee, established the CHT affairs ministry, CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission, 25-member CHT Regional Council for interim period, Task Force on Rehabilitation of Jumma Refugees Returnees and Internally Displaced Indigenous People. It has enacted CHTRC act-1998, amended the hill districts councils act (1989)-1998 and CHTLDRC act 2001, said the book published by the PCJSS. As per the agreement, some 683 members of PCJSS got jobs in the police department. The government is providing monthly rations to 1,966 families of PCJSS. They also got Tk. 50,000 in cash for each member as lump grant.

But according to the PCJSS, frustration is running high among the CHT people due to non implementation of the deal. The main problem in the CHT is land dispute. Though the current government reformed the Land Commission, the work of this Commission has almost been stymied by a number of limiting factors. The CHT leaders complains that new settlements of Bangla speaking people from the plains were still going on in the hills and grabbing of land owned by the indigenous community by the settlers was rampant. Therefore, the socio-economic conditions of the hill people had not improved as vital clauses of the Accord had not been implemented. Both Bangalees and indigenous people no more want such turmoil in the hills. They want an end to the problem.

Following the CHT Peace Accord of 1997, along side the government, some NGOs also stepped there with some development initiatives in order to ensure the establishment of peace, and taking the indigenous people on the development route. Meanwhile Peace Accord has signed and after the Accord much development activities have been undertaken and implemented as

well over the last 14 years. But the question is – “Is Peace Prevailing in the CHT?” Answer to this question could be found through analyzing the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared “Peace Model”, a peace-centric development model based on people’s empowerment. Peace can prevail under the multidimensional democratic approach with six mutually reinforcing multipliers as described below:

Eradication of Poverty and Hunger

Peace prevails when justice prevails. Justice prevails when one have enough to feed and clothing, have a school or clinic to go to, have the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, have access to credit. Justice prevails when one has basic capacity to eradicate poverty and hunger. It was found that the majority of CHT people live in chronic poverty; under-employment and illiteracy and an overall lack of economic opportunity is endemic; and the proper functioning of social services is inhibited, with serious consequences for all inhabitants. This is highlighted in the Social Economic Baseline Survey commissioned by UNDP, published in 2009.

Despite having approximately 3 million acres of land, the region is one of the most land scarce regions in Bangladesh in terms of availability of land for cultivation. Because of the steep and rugged terrain plough cultivation is extremely difficult except in flat valley bottoms. Moreover, the Kaptai Dam constructed in 1962, inundated more than two-fifths of the highly paddy land of the CHT. As a result, the CHT people have been suffering because they have lost their occupations or lands and do not have a reliable source of food or income. Indigenous communities, for example were dependent on the forest for their living in the past and as the forest disappeared so did their livelihoods pushed many people having experience of poverty.



Poverty barred this elderly woman of Ghagra union of Rangamati from her eye treatment

‘Food Poverty’ is widespread in CHT. A study of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reveals that the rate of poverty among the indigenous people of CHT is apparently more acute than that of the people in the munga-prone plain lands, one of the country’s poorest parts in the north. It said around 65% of population in CHT is living below the poverty line, compare to 60% of plain lands. And definitely this poverty is causing hunger in the hill districts. Thousands live with hunger and malnourishment because they simply cannot afford to buy enough food, cannot afford nutritious foods or cannot afford the farming supplies they need to grow enough good food of their own. Households change their eating patterns, eating

smaller meals less regularly, and moving from nutritious foods such as rice, to less nutritious forest foods, some of which are unfit for consumption. During the winter night, one can usually hear the weeping of hilly people. Breaking the silence of hills at night, their cry for want of a piece of warm cloth is heard from miles away. Woes of the poor indigenous people knew no bound due to the biting cold. But due to poverty they do not have enough winter cloths to protect the cold. As a result, asthma, diarrhoea, fever and flu is a common diseases during winter season in the hills.

Like other *paras* in the hill area, Alo Rani Chakma's family suffered a lot from water-borne diseases. Alo Rani had to collect water from a near-by *Jhiri* or Kaptai lake water directly for



fulfilling her family's drinking water demand. As a consequence, skin diseases, diarrhoea or dysentery used to affect her family and her school teacher husband spent a lot of money for treatment. For the medicine of Tk one, they had to spend Tk. 100 as conveyance to go to Golachhari Bazar (Awlad Bazar). All these things made her husband Niketon Chakma tired and being aware about the linkages between unsafe water and water-borne diseases he finally contacted to Strategic Actions Society (SAS) officials for an alternative water options in the locality. As

their *para* is situated on the bank of the lake, officials of NGO Forum's local partner SAS installed an innovative water technology-Lake Sand Filter at her courtyard. Using the water of Kaptai Lake, water of this technology is purified and rectified for drinking and cooking purposes. She uses its water for drinking, cooking and even for bathing. Not only Alo Rani's family but also a total of 20 family are now totally dependent on it for safe drinking water. Now the community people can avoid these diseases and thus can reduce expenditure for health. Water-borne diseases no more attack her family members and the members of 20 families of her *para*.

The Peace Treaty signed in 1997 created an opportunity to improve poverty and hunger situation in the CHT. The government and NGOs as per their mandate have been contributing social and economic support like promoting private entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, environmental protection, Public Health care, etc. There is a strong link between health and poverty. Ill-health reduces the productivity and income of a person while good health is the precondition of good productivity. The lack of safe water and sanitation causes water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, jaundice, etc, and it leads to ill-health and low productivity of a person. Water and sanitation programme of NGO Forum thus contributing to poverty alleviation process. As the safe water options were installed nearby, both time and energy is saved. The time and energy is utilized in other productive activities. The community people now understand about the link between health and poverty.

Sharat Chandra Chakma, aged 27 is a private producer of Village Sanitation Centre (VSC) situated at Panchhari bus stand under Khagrachhari district. He has been producing latrine materials since 1998. But once he did not have capital and that is why, he produced occasionally. NGO Forum trained him on techniques of quality latrine production. Besides, he got assistance of Tk. 25, 000 from the organization. After getting support he regularly produces and sale it to the community people. Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Bangalee, Saontal- all are beneficiary of his VSC. He maintains quality very strictly. Therefore, latrine materials of his VSC have huge demand among the local people. Now he produces a total of 100 latrine sets per month which he sells at the costs of Tk. 500 each. His core capital is protected in Banks and upon rolling over the years he has established the VSC on a stronger base. Along side, the prime mason Sharat, two other helpers work in this VSC. Amanullah (26) is one of them. He has been working in this VSC for last three years. He works here on per day basis while he receives Tk. 350 every day. Every body of this VSC is economically solvent. They support household

expenses and children's education cost by its income. And they are quite happy with its earnings.

Reduction of Inequality

Peace prevails when justice prevails. Justice prevails when one has equal opportunity to enjoy equal rights provided by the government. The Chittagong Hill Tracts is the largest indigenous populated area in Bangladesh. A large number of indigenous communities have been living in the CHT, but their indigenous identity does not get recognition in the national laws, in the Constitution of the country. Additionally, a large number of Bangalee settlements took place under the patronage of the military government. Justice ignored here.

The CHT also experienced inequality in terms of opportunities for development initiatives. Despite being a part of the country, the CHT could not enjoy equal opportunity in development. Existence and condition of infrastructures, especially the condition of roads in CHT was found very deplorable. Only 16% villages had access to roads. Education, Health, socio-economic and WatSan condition is far behind than the national average.



Inter-community confidence is a barrier towards peace building in CHT

The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken a project on development of peace and confidence-building among the communities to reduce inequality from the society. The water and sanitation programme of NGO Forum has also been able to bring different communities including Bengali under same umbrella. Generally, it is exposed that conflict among communities' prevails in hill tracts but project activities created scope to increase interaction among them, which is contributing to reduce tension and establish peace in hill tracts. Interaction between community people and local government representatives for water and sanitation purpose substantially

increased, which was absent earlier. It has created scope of interaction that is one-step forward towards the governance and building peace in the area along with building community level institutions to ensure water and sanitation for the community people.

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is a region of different communities. A large number of indigenous communities have been living in the CHT from unknown time. On the other hand, a large number of Bangalee settlements took place under the patronage of the then military government. As a result, an armed conflict between the Bangalee and indigenous people had lasted for more than 20 years. Still now the situation has not improved significantly. It is unimaginable to Pritimoy Dewan, president of Village Development Groups (VDG) of 50 years to make a friendly relation with Bangalee people. This VDG was formed in close supervision of Association of the Livelihood of Origins (ALO), a local partner of NGO Forum. As the president of the VDG, he is responsible for promoting WatSan activities in his territory-East Gamaripara, Kamalchhari, Sadar union of Khagrachari. The area under the VDG is Chakma inhabited and a total 86 families are in this area. Now the area is considered as a role model for hygiene

practices. It has much improved in water and sanitation affairs. Water-borne diseases no more attack their locality. They have become able to create such a demand among the community people that the local organizations are unable to provide WatSan options against their demand. But it was quite impossible for his VDG to gain such an achievements without the support of a Bangalee member of VDG. A large number of Bangalee settlers have been living in the locality. To reach the Bangalee community with WatSan messages, they have learned Bangalee language. On the other hand, the Bangalee member of the VDG does not feel any problem to communicate with the Chakma community. Thus a social harmony is prevailing in his region. All these have been possible because the water and sanitation programme of NGO Forum has brought all the communities under one umbrella.

Mitigation of Deprivation

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) differs from rest of the country both in physical characteristics and population. The people of this area were deprived of the basic services. The rights to the basic facilities and entitlements were scarcely ensured there. Construction of the Kaptai Dam for the first time deprived the indigenous people displacing one-fifth of its population and abolishing the special status of the area during Pakistan rule, refusal of getting constitutional recognition as separate identity of the indigenous people in CHT after the independence of Bangladesh, resulted in conflict and alienation between the Bangalee majority in the plains and the indigenous people in CHT.



Making no discrimination between his two wives, is of no guarantee for this hill man for not being a victim of deprivation in the society

Even though a large number of indigenous communities have been living in the CHT, but their indigenous identity does not get recognition in the national laws. In the 15th amendment to the constitution, it defined the 54 indigenous groups of the country as Bangalee in terms of nationality what the indigenous people consider the clear deprivation of recognition of their indigenous identity.

Traditional *Jhum* cultivation is the main source of bread of the hilly people. It is evident that they seek no help of others for ensuring their food security. But their right to food security and shelter faceted difficulties time to time due to the invasion of the Bangalee settlers. Education and health facilities did not touch the indigenous people especially of the remote hilly

communities. Development initiatives like developing transportation and communication facilities, electrification and other development indicators were ignored.

Following the changed atmosphere in the CHT a many of national and international NGOs have stepped there to complement government as well as creating the space of working of their own for the deprived indigenous people. Some local NGOs also have evolved to accelerate the process aiming at developing their own communities utilizing their own capacities and potentials. NGO Forum in partnership with some local NGOs have paid attention to the water and sanitation issues and started intervening with a view to making people aware about safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices, sensitizing the relevant stakeholders and identifying and demonstrating suitable alternative sources of safe water and creating sanitation facilities.

After the Peace Accord, Kamol Chakma, aged 35, like other returnee refugees, started living at Noapara, Gasban of Bhaibonchhara union in Khagrachari district since 1999. He was so happy coming back to the native country leaving 12 years of bitter refugee life in India. He set up an



abode buying a piece of land. But the water crisis made his life miserable from time to time. There was an acute water crisis in his new living place. He had no other options but collecting water from a *Chhara* blowing over the village or a Tubewell of half km distant. Like other users, his wife Shefali Talukdar (30) started fetching water from the well dug beside the *Chhara*. She had to face everyday the agony of passing a long distance for fetching water. CHT-Human Resource Development Organization (CHT HRDO), a local partner of NGO Forum visited the *para* to see the WatSan situation of the

refugee returnee. With an intention to be beside the refugee returnee, HRDO came up with alternative water supply options in the area. They installed a Rain-water Harvesting System at Kamal's courtyard. Like Kamol Chakma, Provat Chandra Chakma, Gyan Kumar Chakma, Suman Chakma, Stayajibon Chakma, Shova Rani Chakma and other returnee refugees contacted to HRDO to install same kind of technology at their respective household. Purnima Chakma quickly turned his house from hempen to tin-shed house as it did not fulfill the criterion for RWHS. The families of Kamol Chakma and others use water from this technology for drinking, cooking and washing. As a result, these families are now free from all kind of water-borne diseases. "In spite of hard life after coming back from India, I agreed to contribute with 10% of the total cost. It has created the feeling that the system is mine and I should take care of it. I am now in my country. I have got back the meaning of life," expresses Kamol Chakma.

Inclusion of Excluded People

Peace prevails when justice prevails. Justice prevails when any people remain outside the mainstream development process of the country. But the CHT region has remained outside the mainstream of development of Bangladesh more than 25 years due to the low level conflict in the area. The historic development of the CHT has marked it as 'other' and 'isolated' places since the colonial administration started from around 1860 to date. During the Pakistan period, the indigenous people were treated as 'uncivilized', Pakistan government did not consider them as 'human' or citizen of Pakistan, instead it adopted hostile attitude towards the hill people of CHT. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, some voluntary organizations and various type of NGOs started working all over the country except CHT areas. The Peace Accord created a scope of working in CHT for the NGOs. A number of local NGOs based in CHT and developed by the indigenous volunteers and development visionaries came to the field with a view to changing the socio-economic condition of the indigenous people. After the treaty the donors also became sensitized to support to the development programmes in the CHT.

But the fact that these development initiatives were implemented centering the main towns and its adjacent localities. Remoteness and inaccessibility of the area are major constraints for ensuring development programmes in the CHT. Due to poor infrastructure & communication

this region has been remaining as the unserved. Therefore, the organizations hesitate to go and serve in the difficult areas. NGO Forum from very first selected its working areas in the hard-to-reach localities to serve the genuine hard-to-reach people.



Having somebody beside them with services is a great surprise for this community

New Ramju para, a remote *para* of Tankabati union under the district Bandarban is situated at such a remote location where the general tourists will not be interested to visit. It takes one and half hour and trekking of three hills to reach the community. Since setting up of abode in Ramju para about 23 years ago, no government officer visited this *para* due to its remoteness. No locality is found from this *para*. There is no electricity facility. This community remained deprived of all necessary civic amenities from the unknown time. People of Mru community of Ramju para are different in appearance, dress-up and

behavioural conduction from the people, even people of same community who live concentrating the advantages of modern development opportunities in other places of the district. About 23 years ago, they built up their *para* centering a *chhara* named Damrak *Chhara*. They usually collect water from this natural source which takes more than 1 hour to come back from the source after collecting water. Over the past years, people of this *para* had been suffering from scarcity of water as the water flow of this distant source of water was decreasing. Moreover, with the gradual decreasing trend of water flow, water of this source was also becoming contaminated. People were suffering from different water-borne diseases drinking this contaminated water. A 80-year-old woman died of diarrhoea two years back as it take 3 hours to go to the nearest hospital of Bandarban sadar. NGO Forum from its commitment to be beside the excluded people, it has accomplished a tough task providing Gravity Flow System (GFS) water technology at their door-step. The most difficult task was to carry construction materials at this *para* because the only way of carrying the construction materials is walking 5 kilometers through three hills. At the construction stage, the community people were highly enthusiastic; they put their labour in carrying the construction materials. As a result, it was found that for two years viral fever, diarrhea, etc have been reduced remarkably.

Acceleration of Human Development

To ensure peace and its sustainability in the CHT along side the government, national and international NGOs engaged itself in true human development for the people of the CHT. All development initiatives will be failed unless the people of that region are capable to handle the development activities. To this end, different organizations adopted different plans & programmes to accelerate human development in the CHT. Some organizations focused on capacity building which often refers to strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and communities so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and sufferings.

NGO Forum often include capacity building as a form of assistance for developing partner NGOs or community people in the working areas. The development initiative in the CHT area is relatively new in comparison with the other parts of the country. Most of the organizations have been established after the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997. The local organizations working in the CHT therefore lack of capacity in many aspects. With this regard, NGO Forum

has focused on capacity building of implementing organizations, its staff and the community people as well. It focused on partners and community people's capacity building that relate to leadership development, advocacy skills, training/speaking abilities, technical skills, organizing skills, and other areas of personal and professional development, supports & services in the form of WatSan technologies, operation and maintenance toolkits, communication materials and community mobilization for hygiene behavioural change of the community people. The programme focuses on three-tier capacity building framework with long-term vision of institutional capacity building of partners, human resource development for running programme with sufficient managerial capacity at the staff level and community capacity building for enhancement of need assessment capacity, community mobilization and demand creation, management of community level WatSan resources, and establishment of communication with local government institution.

It is felt that the CHT people need their capacity be built for accelerating human development which will ultimately establish peace and confidence in the CHT. Alongside the enhancement of capacity of partner NGOs, other institutions like Village Development Groups, school teachers, cultural groups, and so on are covered under different trainings to supplement the activities. Such capacities ensured participation, increase efficiency of coordination and leadership and create pace for mutual understanding among different communities. These training courses have strengthened capacity of PNGOs, local elites, school teachers and cultural group member, which ultimately helped confidence building of the community people. It is noteworthy to mention that community actor's capacity building supplementing to the peace building process. The local PNGOs have been playing lead role in implementing CHT-based programmes. On the other hand, the community people have been substantially contributing in decision-making on respective development issues in favour of the CHT people.



**Surrendering arms, Arun Chakma
started new war of betterment of CHT**

In 1997 something happened which dramatically changed the life of Arun Kanti Chakma, Executive Director of *Association of the Livelihood of Origins (ALO)*. That year the historic Peace Accord was signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the *Parbottya Chattogram Jana Shanghati Samity (PCJSS)*. Arun Kanti Chakma (60) was one of the commanders of Jana Sanghati Samity and a close associate of Jotyrendro Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma, leader of the PCJSS. With the vision to establish hill people's rights he fought a long guerilla war against the Bangladesh Army. After the Accord, like other leaders of JSS Arun came out of jungle leaving his militant days behind. He along with his family came back to Bangladesh and surrendered arms and ammunitions to the government. After surrendering arms and coming back to the normal life, the war this time ended. But a new war for making a living started. The Accord gave him a room to think only for himself. He joined in a Khagrachari-based development organization. But from the commitment to do something more for the people of CHT, especially to establish their rights, he came out of that organization and formed a new organization named *Association of the Livelihood of Origins (ALO)* in 1998. ALO emerged in Khagrachhari with a vision of working for the poor disadvantaged indigenous people of the CHT. At that time, he did not know what is vision, mission or strategy. He even did not know how to operate a computer,

how to operate an organization. Throughout his life he only learnt how to operate a militant group—left, right, etc. However, ALO started right-based activities in the Khagrachhari. Today, he feels satisfaction that he might have contributed at least 1% to establish rights of the people of the CHT. He has a huge acceptance among those for whom he spoiled his younger days. On his way to this journey, many individuals and organizations have helped him. NGO Forum is among those organizations. ALO made partnership with NGO Forum in 2004 to implement Community-managed Water and Sanitation Programme in a union in Khagrachhari district. The Forum provided organizational capacity building training helped him much to come to this position. He received basic views of development and techniques of designing and conducting activities at community level. “I have been working towards establishing CHT people’s rights and activity of my organization is complementary to Peace Accord. My lifelong dream has come true. I want to live in my works even after my death”, says Arun Chakma, a friend of indigenous people of CHT.

Elimination of Terrorism

Peace and terrorism are two antonym words. Where terrorism prevails, peace cannot live there. A prolonged conflict between the Bangalee and indigenous community had interrupted ensuring peace in the hill tracts. This conflict and violence started with the construction of the Kaptai Dam in 1962. Adverse economic impact of the construction of Kaptai Dam and non-recognition of the indigenous identity by the constitution led to the formation of several insurgent groups in the CHT. To counter the insurgency, the government started militarization and sponsored transmigration programme by the plain land Bangalee settlers in the late seventy of the last century. The result of all these efforts has been that a course of prolonged battle has taken place between the Bangalee and the indigenous groups and the law and order situation of the CHT has been deteriorated over time.

However, since the enactment of the Peace Accord in 1997, the situation of the CHT has been improving. But the slow pace of implementation of the Accord causing violence between the Bangalee and indigenous people centering the land rights. Moreover, the terrorism in the CHT got multi-dimensional form. The clashes between the pro-Peace Accord- PCJSS and anti-Peace Accord-UPDF has become a daily affair.

Development of peace and confidence-building is not an easy task in a region like CHT where a number of indigenous communities live and have a long drawn history of insurgency. UNDP’s programme for the Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT through its Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) works for the overall development of opportunities for all peoples and communities resident in the CHT. The Government of Bangladesh has been implementing the project of Tk.1,200 crore namely “Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”. The water and sanitation programme of NGO Forum has been able to bring different communities including Bengali under same umbrella centring WatSan as a great achievement. Generally, it is exposed that conflict among communities’ remains in hill tracts but the Project has been able to increase interaction among them which in long run contributed to reduce tension and establish peace in hill tracts.



Despite being Bangalee, Jahangir receives respect of all indigenous communities

Jahangir Alam, aged 50, came from Hathazari of Chittagong to Chaheri Bazar of Betbunia under Kaukhali upazila of Rangamati in 1997 with a hope of bringing about a change in fortune. After working few days as hotel worker in Rangamati, he decided to change his profession. In those days, demand for WatSan materials was very high in the CHT. Just after the Peace Accord, GO and NGOs started working in this region with their WatSan programmes. Because of their continuous awareness programmes, demand for the water supply and sanitation materials was increasing gradually. But the producers for producing these materials were not enough against the demand.

Considering the demand, Jahangir decided to establish a Village Sanitation Centre (VSC) in his migrated area. But the problem was his Muslim-Bangalee identity. As the area was an indigenous inhabited area, it made him feeling tension whether the indigenous people will come to his VSC for receiving services. However, he started serving the area with his VSC in a very limited scale. He himself became the mason of the VSC and started producing good quality latrine materials. Due to his financial problem, he could not expand his dream any more. At this stage, Jahangir found Strategic Actions Society (SAS), a local partner of NGO Forum beside him. SAS encouraged him and provided loan of Tk. 2,500/-. “Though there was a conflict between Bangalee and indigenous people in the CHT, I never became the target of this conflict and war. Always I had well acceptance among all the communities living here. Even in future if the situation get worsen, I am not afraid of thinking about me and my family. The hill people recognize me as a change-maker of the society”, said a change-maker Jahangir. All the communities living in this area including Bangalee, Marma, Chakma, Barua have access in the VSC. If this Village Sanitation Centre (VSC) would not be established, people of this locality would have to go to Ranir hat which is 5 km away from Rangamati. That is why, every body is pleased on him.

The government consider the Treaty as a successful initiative of the then government. In fact, the CHT Accord was a ray of hope in the violence-ridden CHT. But in the course of time its implementation has become as difficult as the hills of CHT. It has a devastating impact on socio-economic activities of the region. Along side the government different local, national and international NGOs have been trying to narrow the gap between the hill tracts and the plain land of the country following the peace-centric development model.

3.4 Economic Perspective

The hilly community’s socio-economical advancement through development initiatives undertaken in the rural CHT after the Peace Accord. The potentials and prospects have been created through these initiatives as well as the unseen predicaments have still been persisting in these communities as a result of the troubled Bangali-indigenous kinship that went on for decades. Various efforts have been made to mainstream the refugee indigenous families as well as the migrated Banglai families in normal lives through WatSan interventions.

3.4.1 Economy of CHT

Blessed with the divine landscape and natural resources combining hills, sea, rivers, forests and plain land the Chittagong Hill Tracts holds a huge potential in the country's economy. Politically the region has been under control of the Government and its military forces, a drive that is also persuaded by the economic move to capture the natural resources. The history runs back from the time of Pakistan period when the state-patronized Bangali merchants to establish control over the economy in CHT. The process only continued after the 1971 independence resulting in Bangali-dominated and controlled trade, land management and overall economy and development in this area. The aggression of the Bangali merchants and military forces compelled the indigenous population to step aside from their age old dwelling lands that also was their main source of living as historically the indigenous people have been living on *Jhum* cultivation in the hills. More than three decades of such aggression giving rise to conflict and insurgency has left a profound impact on the lives and livelihoods of these people. They have been going through unsettled life pattern wandering from one hill to the other in quest of peaceful dwelling place, food and water.

The economy of the CHT is mainly agricultural. The agriculture comprises crop, livestock, poultry, fisheries and horticulture. But the steep and rugged terrain has made land suitable for plough cultivation scarce. Plough cultivation is extremely difficult except in flat valley bottoms. Within approximately 3 million acres of land an estimated 364,000 acres is cultivable land. And among this 364,000 acres' cultivable land, 27% is used for *Jhum*, 20% is under plough cultivation, 18% is set aside for homesteads and 35% is used for plantation or left to fallow. Moreover, the *Kaptai* Dam built by the government in early sixties in Rangamati district of the CHT devoured up to 54,000 acres of arable land, more than 60% of the total district. Two-fifths of the highly paddy land of the CHT was reported to be inundated as a result of the Dam. Though this was a development programme, but it has also led to reducing cultivable land in CHT. On the other hand, state-sponsored migration of 400,000 landless Bangali settlers that took place from 1979 to 1980 led to the control and monopoly of trade and commerce by the Bangalis.

Not much industrialization has occurred in the CHT. The *Karnaphuli Paper Mill* and *Karnaphuli Rayon and Chemicals Ltd.* situated at *Chandraghona* remains to be the two major industries in the region. But the indigenous people in CHT have rather been involved with a range of small industries of various kinds of handicraft, clothes, mats carpets, home & beauty accessories, etc. These small and cottage industries have huge demand and potentials, but government support is required for the full flourishing of these as established business enterprises.

Poverty Scenario of Rural CHT

Poverty is well observed among the indigenous communities living away from the facilities of municipalities and City Corporation. These communities live a confined life with little connection with the outside surroundings. Therefore, their economic activities are though productive, but less profitable. Their children have either no education or just primary education from backward community schools. Moreover, language barrier have created further problems for the indigenous children to compete at the mainstream Bangla medium schools situated at the unions. However, only indigenous children living in the near-by hills are going to these schools. This lack of education is propelling them to remain within their ancestral professions i.e. *Jhum* cultivation, horticulture, handicrafts, etc. The remoteness of the Hills is

different in nature from the plain lands. The distant living hilly communities are mostly dependant on local NGO development workers for receiving any services or facilities. Their boundary to development is thus, limited and curtailed.

Distant living is also provoked by the sources of water to be found in the hills. With the drying up of the *Chharas*, these hilly people change their dwelling in search of new a *Chhara* that will ensure their water security needed for drinking, household purposes and cultivation. But for this they are paying a heavy price as many of the hilly communities have become isolated from the civil amenities available within and nearby urban settlements. The hilly indigenous people are usually very laborious; family members work from dawn to dusk to produce living from *Jhum* cultivation and horticulture in the hills. But communication difficulty, lack of education service within reach, electrification, etc have kept them from overall economic development despite ensuring food security for the families.

3.4.2 Economic Hoist after the Peace Accord

Government and non-government interventions in line with the CHT Peace Accord (1997) and complementing it have helped to restore the indigenous people's living conditions and economic benefits. The Accord has made space for initiating development activities in the hilly areas. Besides the government and INGOs, some local NGOs also have evolved to accelerate the process aiming at developing their communities utilizing their own capacities and potentials. Several projects and programmes aimed at building sustainable income generating activities. Efforts have been made to create indigenous people's linkage and access to market, encourage small enterprises by the indigenous groups, strengthen producer association networks and create more opportunities for employment.

Both national and international NGOs came forward with development programmes for the indigenous communities. The programmes particularly aimed at empowering the indigenous people, promoting health, education, income generating activities, tree plantation, gardening at homestead, water supply, sanitation, etc. The local NGOs adopted the programmes and started implementing jointly with government and national NGOs in partnership mode. At the very beginning, most of the newly established NGOs in the CHT started working to establish the rights of the indigenous people. The local NGOs at first tried to uphold the right-based issues.

NGO Forum in partnership with some local NGOs paid attention to the improvement of Public Health situation. Since 2003 the Forum started working in the CHT region intensely; designing, initiating and implementing community-managed and demand-responsive programmes ensuring sustainability of programmes based on empowerment, participation, ownership and close coordination with community allies.

To create sanitation facilities at the vicinity of the communities, Village Sanitation Centres (VSC) have been established in the working areas of partner NGOs. These institutions are successfully running with the full ownership of the community people. NGO Forum developed male and female entrepreneurs equally to address its cross-cutting issues such as women's empowerment, poverty reduction, etc. The private entrepreneurs have been enjoying self employment and dignified entrepreneurship status in their respective communities. The capacity building initiatives have direct contributions in alleviating poverty among the hard-to-

reach disadvantaged hilly communities. The ‘masons’ developed from amongst the beneficiaries are engaged in latrine production and also bearing their family expenses from this earning. Alongside, the user communities are imparted with skills for technical operation & maintenance as well as repairing of the water and sanitation technologies. Through this they have been able to save the expenses in this regard and to earn some extra income providing this service to others as well.

Abre Marma, Mason established his Village Sanitation Centre at Bet Chhari Marma Para, in Kamol Chhari union of Khagrachhari sadar district. The VSC was established by Abre Marma with a loan of Tk. 25,000 from NGO Forum. Now he has a monthly income of Tk. 4,500 from the VSC. He has received masonry training from NGO Forum and also training on construction of building under a government programme. Capitalizing on his enhanced skills as Mason, he also gets work as construction worker through which he earns up to Tk. 15,000 each month. He claims that his latrine products do not break which is a common complain of the people against the rings and slabs provided by the UPs. He gains a profit of Tk. 150 per latrine set consisting of a ring and a slab. In a day, Abre Marma produces rings and slabs worth Tk. 700 to 800. With this earning he is maintaining a family of seven. He has gained reputation as a Mason and is now receiving orders from distant unions as well i.e. Sheel Chhari, Jurachhari of Rangamati.



The WatSan promotion intervention also has been indirectly contributing to poverty reduction among the beneficiaries. The Plastic Latrine innovated and promoted by NGO Forum has gained wide acceptance among communities across CHT. This is a low-cost alternative sanitation technology that has been proved apt for the hilly landscape. Alternative water technologies such as Ring-wells, Spring-water Capping System, Infiltration Galleries, etc also have saved the hilly people’s time and gave them a stable life as they no longer has to wander from one hill to the other looking out for water sources.



The light-weight: Plastic Latrine is reducing the hill-people’s burden a little



As a refugee and victim of the pre-peace accord conflict Kamol Chakma’s settling down in the hills was hampered due to constant water crisis. The guarantee of continuous water supply within his home yard has led the couple to invest more time and energy in their income generating activities. His wife, Shefali Talukder does not have to spend hours behind water collection. Their children are also healthy and going to school regularly. Today they are happy to be able to have a settled and steady life.

Through creating safe water and hygienic sanitation options for the poor people, the intervention in CHT contributed in reducing water and excreta-borne diseases. In doing so

health benefits are enjoyed by the community people who have been able to save from the money spent in frequent medical expenses.

“We used to bear the expenses for our treatment from the money earned from *Jhum* cultivation. We had to go to the doctor frequently crossing muddy hilly paths. Diarrhoea was very common in our community. Now this money is saved after we are drinking safe water from the IFG”- Suresh Chakma, Chala Chhara Para, Ghagra, Rangamati.



Engaging community people in cost-sharing has helped especially the hilly indigenous people to develop their concept on savings. They are now concerned to save certain portion of their earnings and utilize it through proper planning. Earlier they never thought of this and spent their daily incomes without any planning. The planning has now helped them to better utilize their hard-earned money and improve their solvency status. Finally, adding to the poverty reduction contribution is the proper utilization of the allocated 20% funds from ADP by the capacitated UPs for promoting sanitation among the hardcore poor in CHT.

3.5 Health Condition

Health is a vulnerable term for the indigenous communities of CHT. With very poor knowledge on healthy living and its pre-requisites, the circumstances became even more vulnerable. Health is also closely related to economic well-being and easy communication which, the hard-to-reach hilly indigenous communities do not possess in their favour. Inability to afford the cost of treatment and problems of transportation & communication remain the major obstacles to getting access to health services in rural CHT. Low-level of awareness on the backdrop of high rate of illiteracy added up with the lack of adequate facilities and difficulty in getting access to the available health care facilities are main reasons for poor health status among the indigenous people.

Most of the people are used to availing traditional and indigenous treatment from quacks and village doctors. They mostly go for allopathic treatment, indigenous or traditional treatment or homeopath. Faith healers are also in business in the CHT. Traditional practices of using unsafe water, open defecation and unhygienic practices are widespread among the indigenous communities. They leave the human wastes for pigs or dogs. Instead of water, they use special leafs to clean after defecation. Though their dwelling depends much on the adjacent water sources, but they know very little about the dangers of consuming untreated spring or canal water. Moreover, with less water available in the hills, these community people are compelled to collect water from dried up springs, bathe in these springs and perform other household chores. The prevalence of water-borne diseases is thus quite high among the hilly communities. Common



The indigenous people's lives dry up with the drying up of spring water

diseases in CHT include warm infection, dysentery, diarrhoea, scabies, tuberculosis, malaria, measles, etc.

Much attention was given by the government and major development actors in preventing malaria in the CHT that was once a giant killing factor. This is quite under control through massive scale interventions undertaken. But scarcity of water keeps on playing a major role on hilly people's lives silently. The indigenous women's day begins with the difficulty to fetching water from the faraway water sources, mostly springs. The path to the springs is often more than 500 metres and also steep or uneven muddy steps which, is very dangerous and difficult for the women and children while carrying weight. The children often slip and get bruises. The women and adolescent girls remain busy devoting a big amount of their time and energy into fetching mound of

water each morning of their lives. These daily health hazards are ignored in government's development interventions. But this sort of hazard has a deep impact on hilly people's minds and body. Even the men stretch out for help to fetch water when the source is too far. In fact, every member of the family is engaged in this arduous activity at one time or the other throughout the day. The girl children often help out their mothers and after bringing water at home, these children go to school. This is a regular task for them. Children are seen carrying pitchers and bottles filled with water in their school uniforms even while returning home. This can be seen throughout the hill tracts. They collect this water from alternative technologies such as Spring-water Capping System or Ring-wells installed through private interventions such as NGO Forum's. In this way they try to lessen their parents' difficulty of going out to fetch more water in the evening from the distant springs. Their lives seem to be circled around collecting water for the day. The psychological impact besides the physical health impact of this water collection goes on years after years unnoticed. There is another aspect of health impact in relation to water in the hilly regions especially families engaged in *Jhum* cultivation. The members of these families that equally include women and often children have to spend the whole day with least amount of water. While going for *Jhum* cultivation at dawn, they carry food, water and other belongings for the whole day until dusk. As water sources are scarce in the hills, they are compelled to consume little amount of water that eventually has a negative impact on their health.

Many schools in rural CHT do not have functional alternative water technologies within the school compound. The children have to rely on water brought from their homes in small water bottles. This is insufficient for these children who spend at least four to six hours away from homes. Signs of fatigue and ill-health are visible among these indigenous children. Lack of water also creates less sanitation facilities available for them. Together their health becomes fragile from childhood, at life's very beginning.



Thirsty school children love this road-side Spring Water Capping System more than their school



Hilly indigenous people collecting water and performing other daily necessities from the road-side Spring Water

Due to this ignored aspect of their lives, the CHT people mostly rely on NGO interventions for having access to safe water and sanitation services and facilities. Government interventions are highly insufficient in providing these services throughout the CHT region. The vast hilly landscape and the scattered dwelling pattern of the hilly people makes the task of bringing each and everyone under safe water & sanitation coverage even more difficult.

NGO Forum has installed different area-appropriate safe water and sanitation technologies within different indigenous communities and brought smiles to their faces. The change in their health after having the access to safe water and sanitation is clearly visible and encouraging. Water-borne diseases among these communities have become rare; only during the hot and humid summer season vector-borne diseases are affecting mostly children. In their consideration the access to these facilities has become a huge privilege for them. Their lives' burdens have lessened and their children are healthier.

Using IEC/BCC Materials in the Process of Community Mobilization

"We do not receive hygiene education from school. Rather, we get it from the NGO Community Mobilizers. These messages are given in their language by the Community Mobilizers" - Rangrai Mru, Empu Para, Tankaboti union, Bandarban

The indigenous people also lack clear understanding on health messages available in government health complexes at upazila level due to language barrier. This is another overlooked aspect by the government regarding the development of indigenous groups. NGO Forum along with its local partner NGOs have been disseminating health and relevant WatSan messages and is used in the process of community mobilization. Promotional messages in pictorial form is used in its IEC and BCC materials in which faces and



Bina Satek, GRAUS' Community Mobilizer conducting promotional sessions with the Mru Community of Empu Para, Tankaboti Union, Bandarban Sadar

styles of the indigenous community people have been drawn with a reflection of their culture, and reality of water, sanitation and health. The Community Mobilizers have to work hard to reach the remote areas of CHT. It is observed that the Chakma, Marma, Tripura are found have better access to health services as they live nearby the main town; while other groups especially the Chak, Khumi, Lushei, Rakhain are most disadvantaged as they have been living mostly in remote hilly areas. Health status of these community people is the worst of the worse. There are areas where it takes 2 nights stay to reach the indigenous community by the Community Mobilizers and then return to their respective offices. In such difficult and hard-to-reach areas, the government

health service staffs are not willing to go. Thus, the disadvantaged communities rely totally on NGO interventions.

3.6 Education

Education is a factor that has made the difference not only between mainstream Bangalis and indigenous groups but as well as between main indigenous groups and the comparatively outnumbered groups. People's access to education services is a key parametre of the particular society's advancement and privileges. This is a very dominant factor among the indigenous groups. For instance, the Chakma community has advanced in terms of access to government and private services, jobs, etc in comparison to the other indigenous groups. This is because the Chakma youths have come out of their ancestors' traditions and walked abreast of the mainstream Bangalis to avail prevailing government and other private services and facilities. But one notable point here is that these Chakma students had to study in Bangla medium which is not their mother tongue. The language barrier plays a major role in education as both the education and job market in metropolitan cities is highly competitive and language plays in favour of the mainstream Bangali communities.



“The indigenous students face problem in examinations under the new creative questionnaire education system; especially the Marma and the Tanchangya are in greater trouble due to language barrier. In the last SSC examination, 8 SSC examinees had failed out of 45 in Bangla subject” - Baburshey Marma, Principal, Ghagra Girls' High School

In the present times it is encouraging to see many indigenous people to realize the importance of education in progressing their living standard. But regardless of their realization, little has been done to increase their children's access to mainstream education system. Communities living adjacent to the towns are sending their children to primary education but fail to continue with it in higher secondary level and / or at higher studies level as these institutions are farther away. On the contrary, the distant living hilly community children are still out of proper education. They receive primary education from their community schools where the teacher is someone from their community. The teacher often is a youth who has completed till higher secondary level. Here, education is given in their mother tongue through printed books.



Most of the children do not continue education after 5th standard. There are only 3 adolescents in the community who have completed secondary school examination. Manrui is one of them, who at present teaches at a community school of BRAC.

School drop-out at secondary level is high among the indigenous children due to multiple reasons-distance, difficult communication, poverty, language barrier, and so on. Children in rural CHT walk miles of uneven hilly paths to reach their school and again to return homes after school. Inadequate or lack of water and sanitation facilities within the school compound is another crucial factor for most of the schools situated at union level. Education is hampered due to this reason also. Especially for the girl students for whom improved hygiene conditions are essential to protect their reproductive health. These conditions are often hampered in the rural schools; and the CHT region is no exception to this. Students studying in schools that do not have functional water options often drink water of nearby canals or springs.



A non-functional Ring-well within school compound

“The children from distant villages do not have education facilities within their Para. Children come to schools carrying at least 10-15 kgs weight; they bring the whole day’s food along with them. The number of schools has increased after the Peace Accord. The government is also providing schools with more facilities. Many community people have also received training from the non-government organizations”- Don Nem Bom, registered school teacher, local community school.

Considering the reality that hilly people’s awareness and knowledge on WatSan and hygiene is lowest among the country, NGO Forum together with its local partner NGOs have intervened School WatSan Programmes to address this issue as well as to contribute in developing WatSan infrastructure within the schools. The School WatSan Programme has been a successful intervention to develop knowledge of the students who were found to practice and maintain proper hygiene behavior. The students in schools where WatSan Programme has been conducting with the cooperation of the School Management Committee were found to be practicing regular handwashing before handling or eating food and after defecation. This is contributing much to the enhancement of community’s sensitization on water, sanitation and hygiene issues in their daily lives.

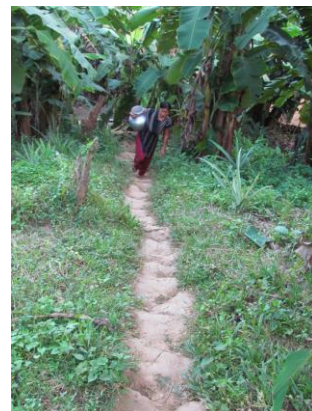


A total of 338 students study in the Ghagra Girls’ High School at Dewan Para under Ghagra union of Kaukhali Upazila in Rangamati. There are 26 villages adjacent to the school comprising of 20,000 population. Half of the students come from distant locations. But the school has developed a well reputation in terms of its result. This school is ranked first in terms of result amongst the 13/14 schools under Kaukhali upazila. The student regularity is up to 90%. 10% of the students fail to attend school regularly due to poor communication; they have to come to school by *Chander*

Gari, a local vehicle that is not very comfortable or safe for the children, especially of tender age. Some students also miss school to help their parents in *Jhum* cultivation; and some miss school due to illness. Mostly the children fall sick from consuming unhealthy food. Students coming

from distant areas often come to school without taking breakfast for which many of the students suffer from gastric. However, the rate of drop-out has been gradually decreasing in the school. Teachers have become more aware and are personally keeping watch over students' personal hygiene. In 2009, the Department of Public Health installed a Tubewell in the school; also a Ring-well has been installed in the school the next year by the CHT Development Board. These have helped to improve the sanitation services; latrines have been established with piped water supply. Thus, with the installation of technologies awareness on hygiene practices has also increased in parallel. The students are eager to hear about health messages from the NGO's awareness-raising School WatSan Programmes.

The hilly CHT children also collect water for their homes from the school's ring-wells. This also reduces their burden of collecting water from distant natural water sources after school hours. In the reality of CHT, this is crucial as a major portion of women and children's time and energy is spent behind water collection. The children even those who go to schools have to start their day with this strenuous task of collecting water; after school also they have to bring water. Thus, their time and energy for education is severely obstructed. This is also a 'silent' feature for the hilly children to fall back in their studies.



**Pinky, 8th grade student
carrying water from Ring-
well down her home yard**

Education for the hilly rural community children is still far-off. Many unvoiced aspects in the hills such as remoteness of the indigenous communities, difficult communication in the hills, language barrier, economic insolvency, massive water scarcity and time & energy engaged behind water collection, fragile health, and the like are all the existing causes for this. Many of the schools do not have adequate or functional water technologies within their school compounds. Improved sanitation and hygiene measures are still out of reach in these schools furthering hampering the education environment. These aspects of education need to be taken into serious account to encourage and support hilly community children's further advancement in education.

3.7 Women Empowerment

Gender focused development activities by the non-government organizations has lessened their struggle and utilized their potentials in WatSan and health promotion. These interventions are institutionalizing women in this promotion through the village-level development centres. NGO Forum has been working to develop women's fair share in WatSan promotion considering them as mainstream beneficiaries. The success of WatSan and health promotion much depends on the successful engagement of the women into the intervention. In the CHT region, the focus has been to develop the women beneficiaries at different levels of programme implementation. NGO Forum recognizes the women's contributions to her family and

community; and to make their contribution meaningful to all it has worked to enhance their capacity as income earners. Target number of the women beneficiaries has been developed as masons and caretakers of the installed water technologies through WatSan intervention in the CHT.



Parveen Ahkter had received two training courses as Caretaker of the DSP. She was selected as a woman Caretaker as she was the only SSC passed woman among the community. It is notable that there are only three SSC passed people in their community. She is also a VDG member and mentions that the VDG chairperson also cooperates her inter work. The community people too regard her contribution. Through her work as Caretaker she has saved community people's money from being spent. Earlier they had to hire the

engineer of Upazila Health Complex to fix the technology when it showed some disturbance. They had to pay Tk. 1,400 including his care fare and snacks. With her enhanced skills, Parveen is now maintaining the DSP and has also fixed some small technical problems. The community people are happy to have a technical expertise within them.

The technical knowledge and skills have contributed in increasing people's respect towards women's capacity in outdoor activities. The communities are also found to be cooperative in this aspect. They encourage and cooperate with their women folks to perform these responsibilities. Community's acknowledgement towards their contribution and capacity further encourages the indigenous women. Thus, promotion of community-level WatSan and empowerment of women through WatSan intervention goes in parallel. Women in the intervening CHT areas of NGO Forum have grown in confidence that has helped to raise their voice and become active in decision-making.



Muijo Khiyam (45) is a hard-working woman of this community. She is one of the three woman members in the Ward WatSan Committee. All members of the committee have their say and equal level of participation. The female members of the Committee take relevant decisions. They also enjoy their hoisted social status within the community. People, especially women from other families come to them regarding any WatSan affair or even other social or familial affair. The community people regard them as community leaders.

The female VDG members also have importance among the community. Mostly the women of the community come to them with water and sanitation related problems. They also receive complains from the community people about certain families not maintaining cleanliness. Champa Chakma, female VDG member of East Gamari Dhala Para, Maich Chhari, Khagrachhari says, "They call us hygiene staff".



Many of the indigenous communities are matriarchal. The indigenous women generally enjoy a life more liberal than the mainstream Bangali women do in their societies. The women of indigenous communities also are used to hard-working to earn money for their families. They work from dawn to dusk abreast of their male partners and equally contribute in income generation for families. Besides they perform tasks of raising the children, collecting water, cooking, and the list of other household chores goes on. It is the women in every indigenous house who ignite fire in their mud-made ovens at dawn to cast away ‘*opodebota*’ (evil spirit) from their houses. After this they begin their day with going out for water collection and later join in the *Jhum* cultivation with their husbands up to sunset. Thus, women are the nucleus of an indigenous family that needs to be recognized as a development aspect in the CHTs. NGO Forum has worked with different indigenous groups of CHT; through the process it has realized the strength of hilly women as well as the indigenous culture itself.



“It takes an hour’s walk to reach *Nating Jhiri* spring. I go to fetch water twice in the morning and two more trips in the evening. We, women usually bring water at 4:30-5:00 am in the morning. Then we cook meal for lunch and go to *Jhum* cultivation.”- Tarulata Marma, local hilly woman

Female Community Mobilizers- An Inspiration to Community

Uchonu is a hard-working and dedicated Community Mobilizer. She belongs to the Bom community. She has been serving to her community as well as to the Marma community on behalf of ‘*Tahjing Dong*’. After receiving capacity enhancing training from NGO Forum, she has been serving to promote water, sanitation and health in the target communities where *Tajing Dong* operates. She goes to the extreme remote hilly regions such as the Chiyamuk Para of Bandarban where communication is very difficult. Her dedication and services have inspired other youngsters. Olif Bom, a ninth-grade student is eager to work as social mobilizer to develop her community. This has been observed in several indigenous communities where WatSan and health promotional activities are carried out with the cooperation of young Community Mobilizers.



Uchonu, Community Mobilizer, Tajing



“The Community Mobilizers are doing a commendable job. They are great inspiration to the adolescents and youth. We have many youngsters keen to offer their service” - Preetimoy Dewan, VDG President, East Gamari Dhala, Maich Chhari, Khagrachhari.

“I would love to work like Uchonu didi. She is an inspiration for me. Earlier I had no idea of social work. Now I know and can serve my community as well”- Olif Bom, Suyarnlu Para, Ruwangchari Sadar Union, Bandarban.



NGO Forum’s WatSan & hygiene promotion interventions have helped to develop women’s fair share in WatSan promotion as they are considered as mainstream beneficiaries. As the women-headed families are amongst the poorest in the rural CHT communities; thus, various services including hardware and software support were provided targeting the women beneficiaries. The interventions looked forward to mainstreaming gender through these activities. Women have participated in the awareness raising activities in enthusiastic numbers. Their significant roles as WatSan technology caretakers and VDG members within the family & community level has been acknowledged and supported by family members as well as community people. Moreover, various indigenous women staff of the local partner NGOs have been playing inspirational role within the serving communities. With this they are contributing in sustaining the programme through creating motivation among other youngsters to come forward in community development.

4. Sustainability of the Programme

Sustainable development of the CHT region is closely linked with the unique geopolitical characteristics of CHT. While working in CHT its troubling history and its string of sequences up to the Peace Accord and the development endeavors henceforth together crafts the way to sustainability. The region’s rural poor consists of hilly indigenous groups and migrant Bangalis who are living off traditional *Jhum* cultivation, horticulture, handicrafts, handlooms, etc. The communities are economically backward being detached from mainstream development, education & health services, and above all communication. ‘Exclusion’ would be the appropriate term to describe their lives in a word. The break free to isolation would be the key to sustainable development of the hilly poor. Nevertheless the full implementation of the Peace Accord is crucial for the region’s development as it will make way for the inclusion of the hilly people in every sector of development.



The smiles beholding promises may lose way in middle of the path

Sustainability through the community-managed water supply & sanitation programme is sought out from different perspectives. The Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach has led the path for sustainability in terms of creating ownership among the community; engaging effective leadership of UPs in promoting water, sanitation & hygiene maintaining pro-poor focus; developing village-level institutions supplemented with the development of entrepreneurs amongst the target communities; bringing desired level of cognitive and behavioural changes in the community; altogether contributing to the reduction of water and excreta-borne diseases in the target

communities and improving Public Health in the rural CHT region. Being a region in dispute for several decades, special efforts were necessary to ignite participation of all relevant stakeholders. This chapter unfolds the dynamic programme approach towards sustaining the success ensuring everyone's due stake into the process.

Getting Intimate with the Spirit and Culture of CHT

Understanding the local culture and other socio-economic variables was the starting point for designing effective community-managed programme in rural CHT. Understanding the true essence of the 11 different indigenous cultures and brining these into mainstream development requires much more effort than top-down intervention. NGO Forum for Public Health has been working in the CHT region intensely; designing, initiating and implementing community-managed and demand-responsive programmes. It has worked with local NGOs and utilized local manpower that helped to gain better in-depth knowledge and perceptive on the CHT region, geophysical characteristics, its diversity, its people, culture, socio-economic conditions, livelihood, etc. This was the pre-requisite to advance with community-managed programme among the diverse racial groups. At the outset NGO Forum gained sufficient understanding on the mentioned features to make development appropriate fitting the needs and particular circumstances of these people.

Alliance Development and Advancing Partnership

Building effective alliances with the most reputed like-minded CHT-based partner organizations has been another area where NGO Forum successfully proceeded. Additionally, it worked in partnership mode with 15 rights-based local non-government organizations in the three hill districts of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban. Each of the partners is in a leading position in their respective region and has well acceptance among the communities which is vital while working with indigenous groups and number of diversities in culture, language and religion. With the technical and facilitation support from NGO Forum the partner NGOs have been implementing programmes in the poor communities in these three districts. NGO Forum has developed strong networking base in the CHT that has effectively engaged its partner NGOs, mass media and civil society to create a strong momentum in any development movement.

“The lives of the hilly people evolve around water. Their dwellings set up near the water sources. Our programme is also contributing to the Peace Accord. We are working commonly for the people of Khagrachhari- either Bangalis or any indigenous group. Their voice has been raised. They can now approach to the UP Chairmen for their WatSan demands. This is also creating scope of employment for the people here. Even the grassroots people have come under rights-based programme coverage that the government also could not achieve. As a partner of NGO Forum, we also feel ownership over the programme. Both NGO Forum and my organization is benefiting from the programme. Other donors do not know the norms and values of partnership. We have known each other. We sit together to find solution. This is true spirit of partnership”- Arun Kanti Chakma, Executive Director, Association of the Livelihood of Origins (ALO)

Facilitating LGIs and Local Administration in Playing Lead Role

The CHT Regional Council, Ministry of CHT Affairs, Hill District Council, CHT Development Board, Local Government Institutions, Department of Public Health Engineering, etc have

been the collaborative partners of NGO Forum. In order to facilitate the local administration in taking the lead to promote water supply and sanitation programme in rural CHT, NGO Forum has also maintained collaboration and networking with the three administrative systems in CHT i) General administrative system ii) Decentralized local government system and iii) Traditional administrative system. The success of the programme implemented in rural CHT also came through the active involvement of key members of the local community; especially indigenous Headman (mouza headman or village *karbari*), religious leaders, teachers and representatives of local union council. Capitalizing on their influence over their community, representatives from these groups were included in the village development groups. Their motivation has helped to inspire and sensitize their fellow natives.

UP's Stance in WatSan Promotion as Human Rights

The UPs have been a strong base to promote WatSan and hygiene among the disadvantaged rural people in CHT. Through interviewing some of the UP chairmen involved with NGO Forum's WatSan promotion intervention in CHT, it was implicit that GO-NGO collaboration is yet required for reaching the unserved and underserved population in CHT. The Union Parishad's allocation for WatSan promotion is regarded highly insufficient in meeting the demands of the serving population. Many of the UP members within the working areas of NGO Forum expressed their obligation towards promoting WatSan as human rights; however, they also mentioned the limited allocation from central government and said that protecting human rights is a difficult task with this minimum amount of allocation received for each union.

The Union Parishad members serving within rural CHT believe that NGO collaboration is essential to meet the WatSan demands of their serving localities. Shantimoni Chakma, UP member, Ghagra, Rangamati talks about their responsibility towards the people, the existing challenges and other relevant issues. He said, "We regard the NGOs as another potential and supporting force. We also are present when the NGOs select areas for technology installation through community participation. I believe, the NGOs are complementing well in UPs' development initiatives. Another UP member from Ghagra, Rangamati, Deepen Chakma says, "As UP member, our responsibility has increased when we have recognized water and sanitation as human rights. We feel more obliged towards our people. But the fact is that our budget is very less. The union-wise allocation is extremely poor to meet the existing demands for water technology. For the entire union, we have received only 15 Ring-wells and 12 Tara Pumps for this year. The allocation is fixed by the Zila Parishad; and political influence is huge here." About sanitation he mentioned, "Through conducting the sanitation baseline under the UPs we select beneficiaries based on three indicators- those who have lack of space, money and awareness. But while distributing the allocated latrines, only those who did not have money were given away the latrines. Those who met all the three criteria could not be provided with latrines. In this way, half the selected population is left out in my union." Another UP member from 3 Ghagra union, Rangamati, Montu Chakma mentioned about his union's environmental and WatSan development and UP's role in the process, "Slashing trees are totally restricted. One has to take permission of UP members and the village *Karbari*. After the Peace Accord, we have also imposed restrictions over crushing stones and selling those. The



The UP representatives talk about prospects and challenges

people now have become more aware on these environmental issues. More promotional work on WatSan as human rights is required among the communities. The UPs are eager to promote WatSan but does not have the necessary resources. We need private sector's support for this. The government allocation for UPs is poor; human rights cannot be preserved through this amount of allocation."

Demand-responsive Water and Sanitation Options for the Poor

The sustainability of the community-managed water supply and sanitation programme stands upon this challenge. The intervention has developed and installed various area-specific and appropriate alternative WatSan technologies that were found to be well accepted by the communities. Thus, this triggered the promotion of demand-responsive WatSan programme in the coverage unions.

Hygiene Behavioral Change

Motivating the indigenous people into practicing safe sanitation has been a difficult task. For generations these people have been habituated in practicing open defecation in the hills and using untreated spring water for drinking and household purposes. WatSan-related knowledge base was found to be the least among the hilly people. Water and sanitation coverage is also one of the lowest in CHT region according to government and non-government records. The community-managed programme intervention effectively involved influential community allies and skillful local community mobilizers in sensitizing the local people bringing them under one umbrella fighting for a common cause. Mobilizing efforts through village level institutions have been successful in raising people's awareness, sensitivity and collective responsiveness towards WatSan and other community problems. The children in the intervening areas have been found to be healthier and practicing safe and improved hygiene behavior within families and schools.

The community people have enabled themselves to calculate health services and its cost per household and the cost incurred for maintaining hygiene behaviour. People have become aware about health hazards and its negative impact on family and economy. This ability has regenerated energy among the people in favour of sustainability of WatSan achievement. In all cases, the people themselves have become eager to maintain hygienic life and protect the environment from pollution for their own sake. Moreover, women-focused programmes such as the hygiene sessions with both females and males have helped to bring behavioral change among the entire community.



Dheeman Jyoti Kheesha, 75, vows to preserve the developments of his community through own initiative

Monchintu Marma, UP member, No. 7 Kamol Chhari ward, Khagrachhari mentioned, "This is a remote area and the demand for WatSan is high here. NGOs conducted motivational activities in the area that helped to make the people aware about safe water and sanitation. Earlier people had to purchase Tubewells from Khagrachhari that was costly and problematic. After the establishment of this VSC people have been purchasing latrine sets in higher numbers.

Before this, people used to make a hole and defecate into it. Now these practices have been changed. Now 80 to 85% houses have rings and slabs. Shallow Tubewells are also

installed through private initiative. It needs to be kept in mind that water need is still acute here. So initiative to meet the water demands should be carried out first.” A 75-year old Dheeman Jyoti Kheesha, an elderly of Chakma community in Maichhari, Khagrachhari says, “We will advance based on our experiences if no NGO continues working here. We are confident that we will not face any problem even if ALO does not come to us anymore.” The committee members are vowed to carry on their development initiatives to build a better living environment for their future generations. The VDG’s development activities have also inspired others; now many adolescent and youngsters are eager to work for community development.

Developing Ownership of Community

The community-managed approach emphasized on developing community people’s capacity and involved them in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of different programme activities at the community level. Through effective community participation sustainability of the programme has been ensured to certain extent. The installed water points are being taken care of by the masons and caretakers developed from amongst the community beneficiaries. Through engaging CBOs and developing their organizational and programmatic capacity has also contributed in enhancing the programme sustainability.

The cost-sharing mechanism played an important role in developing ownership among the communities. Initially it was difficult to motivate the hilly indigenous people to make a cost - sharing as they had no clear idea of savings. Especially the Marma communities were the least eager to take part in it. But later the communities were motivated and enthusiastically made contributions. In most of the cases the community people contributed in cost-sharing of the alternative water options through giving labour; they carried the sand, cement, rod, stones, bricks, etc materials saving labor cost for the installation. In this way the labor cost had been shared by the community. The rest of the cost had been shared in cash by the community in monthly installments.

Increase of Social and Economic Capital

The capacitated masons have been producing quality WatSan products and have brought it within the reach of the target beneficiaries. Many of the masons have developed their own VSCs that were found to be in regular production based on the WatSan demands created at the unions. They have gained respect among the people and economic well-being as well. The VDG members have gained popularity among the communities and are involved in various community development initiatives. Their contribution in the communities is far-reaching and inflicts greater impact on the children and youngsters to come forward and continue the actions. The programme also created links for the beneficiaries to get entrance into other development areas such as food security, education and health projects, and so on. Several of the capacitated VDG members, women caretakers, masons have received training under government projects and from development actors such as Unicef, BRAC, and others. So they have increased level of capability to integrate WatSan with other development issues. The trained masons have extended their area of expertise in various construction works.

The Challenge

Challenge has always been a part of development. Sustaining the community-managed water supply and sanitation intervention explicitly depends on the level of ownership developed among the communities, market access created and linked with the communities, certain level of political and cultural changes in the system and population, lesser impacts of climate change and human induced hazards, economic uplifting of the communities, etc. Long-term interventions of WatSan integrated with health, education, environment, disaster risk reduction, income generating, etc is required to make it a process in constant advancing. Considering the topography and scattered & diversified population of CHT developing cost-effective alternative water options remains a concern.



Lives are protected but the struggle to mingle into national development remains distant for these hilly people

“The partnership is effective as these projects have been designed through discussions with all relevant stakeholders in CHT. However, the grassroots people need to be involved directly with the project formulation so that the main implementers do not lag behind. The present context demands some modified or new WatSan technologies. At least Tk. four to five lakhs is needed to install a GFS. We need to innovate more cost-effective technologies for the grassroots families. And if we fail to ensure their access to water, we should not expect any advancement in sanitation,” Arun Kanti, Chakma, Executive Director, Association of the Livelihood of Origins (ALO)

The path to sustainability of the Community-managed Water Supply and Sanitation Programme for the rural poor of CHT has been through certain progress as well as challenges. Despite the development initiatives made in the CHT under government and non-government projects and schemes, much depends on the proper implementation of the Peace Accord. The rural poor of the CHT still remains isolated in distant hilly locations far from any mainstream development activities or services. Until and unless these silent aspects are addressed their sustainable progress will be hindered.

References

