

Empowering indigenous community for sustainable development

A recent visit by a team from UKAid to Rangamati testifies that socio-economic development interventions directed at indigenous community contribute to creating enabling environment for the disadvantaged and marginalized people in the hill district to express their voice and claim rights.

A three-member UKAid team led by Joel Harding, Senior Governance Adviser of UKAid Bangladesh visited Rangamati during 22-23 April 2018 to observe how the support of the British Government helped to build the capacity of the indigenous community who have taken the responsibility of facilitating the sustainability of efforts in the area. The British Government had provided a substantial assistance to MJF's last strategic phase named Creating Opportunities for the Poor and Excluded (COPE) in Bangladesh from 2013-2017, which was channeled by the country's leading national NGO Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). The Team Leader appreciated both the warmth, determination and

resilience of the people experienced first-hand during their visit.



By interacting with School Management Committee (SMC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Mothers Group (MG), the visiting team found that these forums have a positive impact on teacher attendance and performance. They were impressed by seeing the effective involvement of parents, especially of mothers, that are directly contributing to better school management, quality education and participatory governance. After receiving seed money from MJF, these committees are investing more in the school development using income from income generating activities. As a result, more students are getting enrolled while parents are monitoring the quality of education with the help and cooperation from the teachers. "I studied in this school and now returned here to teach", said

a jubilant teacher who benefitted after attending the Taungya school visit at Belaichari upazila.

The team also visited livelihood project of CIPD partner NGO and observed that adoption and promotion of indigenous ideas such as homestead gardening, vegetable cultivation, pig rearing and rice bank are giving dividend to the community. Members of the Gram Surokka Komity (GSK) appraised the visiting team how the rice bank is being managed by them. Because of active community involvement and geographical proximity, the GSK members are more aware about their health, education and safety net rights than the nearby community, and the communities living remotest areas.

Exploitation and deprivation of women and girls in the Hill Districts of Bangladesh are a common phenomenon. Working through various local partners, MJF has been building the capacity of the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to raise awareness about women rights. After interacting with a woman's group, Ms. Tahera Jabeen, Social Development Adviser of DFID Bangladesh, appreciated their efforts to increase income level including

practice of indigenous culture by them.



With the additional support from the UKAid for the period 2018 to 2022, MJF has embarked on a new journey named 'Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh' (EPR), with the strategic aim of establishing wellbeing and dignity of ethnic people. The EPR is expected to contribute to ensuring access to services and resources (agriculture extension, education etc.) and safety-net of the ethnic people including persons with disabilities; and improving social status of ethnic women and girls by reducing violence against women and preserving their indigenous identity, knowledge, tradition and culture. At the same time, Public service institutions are expected to be sensitised to providing services to the ethnic people while duty-bearers will be influenced to ensure access to quality services through persistent advocacy efforts. END//