

Chapter-19

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari districts under Chittagong Division, occupies one tenth area of the county, and is known as Hill Tracts region. Eleven different tribal ethnic communities including Bengalis live in Chittagong Hill Tracts. These ethnic communities, having distinct cultural identities, are also an indispensable part of the main-stream population of the country. Since independence of Bangladesh, and as per constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the government has been implementing various development projects undertaken for accelerated socio-economic development of the people living in these three districts through the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. Some of these include supplying safe drinking water, development of pisciculture, improvement of healthcare services, construction and development of agricultural infrastructure, development of tourism, eradication of poverty, women's advancement and overall socio-economic development of the people living in this region. In addition, other programs, focusing on the comprehensive development of this region, include development and expansion of educational institutions for children's access to quality education, providing technical education and training to young men and women, providing financial assistance to different tribal communities on their festivals and on special days for the conservation of their own language and culture, establishment and development of social welfare institutions, development of sports and culture, construction of physical infrastructure and construction and maintenance of religious institutions, etc.

1.2 Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs has been created in accordance with the provisions of the Peace Accord signed on 2nd December, 1997 to ensure overall development of Hill Tracts region. This ministry is committed to establishing equal rights and opportunities and equitable distribution of resources among the citizens of this region as guaranteed in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Women constitute more than 50% of the beneficiaries of the projects and programs implemented through this ministry. In addition, the ministry has undertaken some specific programs and projects targeting the women-folk of Chittagong Hill Tracts region.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Implementation of CHT Peace Accord through adoption of programmes with the objective to bring about development on socio-economic condition and uphold the originality of social customs, culture and language of tribal/non-tribal people living in the CHT areas;

- ❖ Supervision and coordination of all development activities Maintenance of coordination among all relevant Government agencies, International Agency, Donor Agency and Development partners.(e.g, RC, HDCs, UNDP-CHTDF, ICIMOD, FAO, ILO, EU, USAID etc.)
- ❖ Maintenance of coordination among all relevant Government agencies in order to preserve the environmental and geo-physical characteristics of CHT area;
- ❖ Conduct and coordinate activities related to social safety net, relief, rehabilitation and dealing with crisis situations arising from any calamity in the CHT areas;
- ❖ Provide secretariat services to Council Committees and other special committees formed for CHT areas and advice to relevant local Government agencies when required;
- ❖ Supervision and monitoring of NGOs activities in the CHT areas.
- ❖ Development of biodiversity and eco friendly tourism in CHT.
- ❖ Inact Hill tracts related rules, regulation and provision.

3.0 Strategic Objectives of the Ministry and their Relevance with Women's Advancement

3.1 **Improving quality of life for CHT People:** Setting up tubewells in remote area, supply of pure drinking water, providing health service and awareness building on clean environment will create more opportunity for women in development. Labour and time of women members of a family are being saved as a result of ensuring healthcare services through mobile clinic and supply of pure drinking water in the inaccessible hilly areas. Technical education and vocational training is provided to women. Moreover, continued effort to eradicate women unemployment through establishing small industry and handcrafts is still on.

3.2 **Preserving the language and culture of different tribe's people in CHT:** Increased number of tribal children will be able to receive an education as a result of the inclusion of 11 tribal language courses in the primary school text-book curriculum. Educational opportunities for tribal female children will expand as a result of introduction of multi language curriculum. Further, income of the tribal women is increasing as a result of conservation and marketing of products and inputs used by the tribal people.

4.0 Role of the Ministry in Women's and advancement and rights

4.1 Development of communication and power sector infrastructure, distribution of micro-credits to the people of hilly areas, creation of ancillary marketing facilities for agricultural products in Chittagong Hill Tracts region have created income-

generating opportunities for women, enabling them to enhance their income. Moreover, the micro-credit programme targeting the women (40%) will enhance women's self-employment opportunities and empowerment. 542 new para committees have been formed and 1172 para workers have been provided training on mushroom cultivation, bee-keeping, ginger processing and medicinal plant cultivation. 301 para workers have been provided training on healthcare services so that they can provide health-care services in the remote areas and benefit themselves financially.

- 4.2 Providing healthcare services, distribution of free text books and other educational materials, immunization programme, and services for eradication of malnutrition of children etc are contributing to increase literacy rate and motivated people. Infant mortality rate is decreasing as a result of targeted health-care services for children along with the health-care services provided to their mothers. Besides, women's participation in the income-generating activities in the labour market is increasing as a result of increasing opportunities for education of female children.
- 4.3 Technical education and various vocational training programs targeting the women (50%) are creating more employment opportunities for women in Chittagong Hill Tracts region, enabling them to earn more.
- 4.4 Several projects funded by the UNDP, the UNICEF and ADP have been implemented directly under the ministry's authority regarding reducing labor of women in water preservation and use, providing maternity healthcare and bringing down mortality rate, and preventing diseases related to malnutrition and feces. So far, girls' empowerment and child protection project has been implemented in 335 para centers, 62000 children birth have been registered and another project involving children's labor and physical empowerment, and child protection has been implemented.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas/programs and its impact on women development:

- 5.1 There is no separate budget allocation for the women. But 3,400 women are working as para worker under the CHT Comprehensive Social Development Project of the CHT Development Board, and another 4,000 under a project of the UNDP CHTDF. The government is implementing different assistance projects to improve the lifestyle of the CHT people. But it is hard for the MOCHTA to collect and assess information on the actual number of people, both men and women, benefited from the projects. The MOCHTA has identified five high priority sectors. The benefits of women from the programs is given below:

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Impact on Women Development (direct/indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Development of Infrastructure in CHT areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Because of the geographical location, general communication system of Chittagong Hill Tracts areas is not smooth as that of plain areas. Target based communication systems for individuals, tribes and regions will bolster real socio-economic development. ❖ Women's development gets hindered due to lack of communication infrastructure affecting their mobility. Therefore development of communication infrastructure will bring more benefit for female than male people through creating opportunities in various activities for them.
2.	Extension of agricultural and non-agricultural activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Considering the geographical characteristics of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region, it is possible to ensure overall economic development by constructing growth centers besides implementation of extensive target-based programs. ❖ Extension of agricultural and non-agricultural programs will encourage backward section of women-folk of Chittagong Hill Tracts to participate in economic activities.
3.	Primary and Technical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Providing educational facilities for female children, and trainings on income-generating activities for the unemployed, and organizing seminars and workshops on poverty reduction, development of environment and agriculture, local government, social development, gender issues, rural education, healthcare, nutrition, rural economy and management will all contribute towards women's advancement. ❖ In the next 5 years, training on different trades will be provided to 3000 people with women constituting 40% of the trainees.
4.	Basic Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Because of Special geographical characteristics in Chittagong Hill Tracts areas, special programs need to be undertaken to prevent peculiar diseases and to provide health-care services for women and children in the remote areas.

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Impact on Women Development (direct/indirect)
1	2	3
		❖ Providing health-care services through mobile clinics and ensuring potable drinking water will help the women to save their time and labour.
5.	Conservation of Ethnic tradition and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ More tribal children will get access to primary education as a result of inclusion of eleven tribal languages in the curriculum of primary school text book. ❖ Moreover, marketing facilities for tribal products and inputs used by them will increase employment opportunities of the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts, enabling them to increase these earnings.

6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2017-18			Revised 2016-17			Budget 2016-17		
	Budget	Women Share Women percent		Revised	Women Share Women percent		Budget	Women Share Women percent	
Total Budget	400266	112019 27.99		317174	86586 27.3		340605	92781 27.24	
Ministry Budget	1150	856 74.38		972	704 72.46		840	602 71.67	
Development	849	607 71.42		671	466 69.42		545	370 67.89	
Non-Development	301	249 82.74		301	238 79.23		295	232 78.65	

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the Ministry in relation to Women's Advancement and Rights

Performance Indicators	Unit of measurement	Actual		
		2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
Rate of women literacy in CHT	%	57	56	54
Small and handcraft training in CHT	Number	750	713	695

8.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

8.1 Around 30-50 crore people across the world are dependent on jhum cultivation. In the CHT, people of 11 ethnic groups are involved in jhum cultivation and it is related to traditional ruling system. Every member of a family including children and elderly members, specially the women, work in the jhum fields, which is a significant character of jhum cultivation. Several development schemes are being implemented in the CHT for overall advancement which include cluster village development programs, rehabilitation and assistance.

8.2 Success Stories:

Sports for Peace: Scoring Goals, Engaging Youth

As one of the more prominent sports in CHT, football is a pretty important subject. From an early age children across the region spill out onto the nearby 'pitch' after school to kick the ball with enthusiasm and determination equalled only on the World Cup field. This is a memory that resonates strongly with SathuimaMarma, current player with Bangladesh Ansar Women's Football Team. "From my early childhood I secretly kept a dream to be a soccer player and represent CHT."

Now a prominent player in the national women's league, Sathuima's formal football training commenced only three years earlier as a participant of the CHTDF supported Under 14 Girls' Football Training Camp.

Across the Hill Tracts young people between the ages of 15 and 24 make up almost one fifth of the population, making them significant partners in peace and confidence building processes. The Facility works through the Regional Sports Association under the CHT Regional Council to engage youth in the programme's football, martial art and other sports initiatives for building confidence and trust across ethnic divides.

This is particularly important in post-conflict CHT where limited employment opportunities among other factors can leave young people vulnerable to anti-social and criminal conduct. While sporting activities do not necessarily directly discourage violent behaviour, it provides a positive alternative for young people. Gender and Local Capacity Building cluster leader JhumaDewan explains. "Sport is a fantastic way to promote messages of unity, team building, discipline and friendship. It proactively builds relationships between young people and across ethnic groups. This project is ultimately about fostering social cohesion both now and into the future."

Under 18 Football Assistant Coach Mr KingshukChakma agrees that sport is a unique and powerful platform for engaging young people. "There are at least three aspects of sport that are often emphasised as a tool for social integration - sport as a so called non-verbal means of communication, as way of building collective experiences and direct physical contact, and as an instrument of culture. I strongly believe that it is really effective."

In addition to the obvious benefits sports training camps and competitions also provide a platform for breaking gender stereotypes and create a space for girls to engage in physical activity. This, says SathuimaMarma, is a great way of building confidence and empowerment among girls. "It encourages girls to lead, represent and independently take decision. It creates a strong base for women's recognition and challenges traditional gender structures."

Another advantage of the *Sports for Peace* intervention is greater coordination between CHT institutions at the grassroots level. Through closely supporting regional and district level sports associations to organise and implement sporting events, key institutions are working together to engage young people with greater impact. This year alone, with the support of CHTDF, the Regional Council in coordination with regional and district sports

associations have successfully managed two football tournaments, a solidarity match and two 15-day training camps for boys and girls, and dissemination of sports equipment across the region.

Sports for Peace is one of the many initiatives that CHTDF, in partnership with the international community and CHT institutions, manage to promote confidence in the Hill Tracts.

Farmer Field Schools: Nurturing a Greener Future for CHT

Ms. Manik Pudi Chakma is a resident in Ratnasen Para, Khagrachari, one of the oldest and most remote farming communities in Panchari Upazila. Farmers in Manik Pudi's community have a strong agricultural history, primarily in the customary slash and burn practice of *Jum* cultivation. "The traditional cultivation method is an important part of general practices to our cultural identity. It is a technique that is passed down from generation to generation."

While *Jum* was traditionally an environmentally sound farming practice, recent constraints on land availability and pressures have seen a marked reduction in fallow periods from approximately 15 through to roughly three years. This has resulted in soil fertility depletion and erosion, in turn translating to reductions in crop yield and a rise in the number of food shortages months faced by many households. Furthermore, insecure land tenure and poor road connectivity and infrastructure have added further obstacles to local farmers.

With the majority of people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods and subsistence, sound farming practices are essential to the region's economic future. Moreover, the unique geography and climate of the Hill Tracts means it has the potential to grow different and higher quality crops than the rest of Bangladesh including ginger, turmeric and certain fruits.

To respond to this need Hill District Councils (HDC) led over 900 Farmer Field Schools have been rolled out across the Hill Tracts since 2009, with the support of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) and development partner Denmark. FFS are a group based learning-by-doing approach, involving the active participation of farmers and communities in gaining new and innovative agricultural techniques. Training is season long, providing participants with an opportunity to learn about all stages of fish, poultry, livestock, spices and high value or nutritionally-dense crops.

The project is grassroots in focus, with locally recruited Farmer Facilitators undertaking extensive training to better enable them to facilitate and implement the FFS learning cycle in their own and neighbouring communities. Manik Pudi Chakma is one such facilitator. "I was selected to undertake the Farmer Facilitator training in 2014 and spent 60 days learning technical farming aspects...I also learnt strategies for motivating others and facilitating learning. Now I am using compost fertilizer in spice field without using fertilizer and harvesting brinjal round the year...this is a change to traditional practice. I'm seeing more advantages as well in self-confidence."

Central to the FFS model is its hands-on approach. The field is considered the primary teacher, providing most of the training materials and real-world problems. Consequently, every month farmers participate in three-four sessions on their own land to introduce new methods and practical solutions based on identified needs. Techniques taught include use of hand pollination in cucurbit vegetables, vegetable pit preparation and effective pruning of fruit trees, immunizing cattle and poultry to prevent disease, and the use of Farm Yard manure instead of chemical fertilizers.

The impact of FFS in CHT is real with targeted communities already increasing production and diversifying sources of income, with over half of the beneficiaries being women. In 2014 alone over 4,749 farmers benefited from training and cumulatively roughly 19,700 farmers have gained new and innovative farming techniques. Moreover, the four-six month lean period previously faced has been reduced by many villagers. This is something that Farmer Facilitator Mr. U Ba Maung from Mongmegyao Para, Bandarban, puts down largely to improved farming methods.

“Before Farmer Field School intervention we always faced acute food crisis and as alternative options we have to depend on money lenders with high interest. Now we do not need to borrow from money lenders as we are producing sufficient food. We are now better than before.”

The FFS intervention has been running since 2009 and is currently in its second phase. Encouraged by the impressive results to date UNDP, with the generous support of Denmark, are looking at strategies to deepen the environmental sustainability and profitability of farming activities in the Hill Tracts over the coming years.

9.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ In order to reate self employment opprotunities for entire women 500 sewing machines are provided in FY2016-17;
- ❖ Organizing various technical, vocational and market oriented training for ethnic women should continue;
- ❖ Making special efforts for marketing of women entrepreneurs’ products in upazilas, districts and in the capital city;
- ❖ Arranging loans from government/non-government banks without collateral for disabled and ethnic women;
- ❖ Appointment of tribal trainers and officials in Chittagong Hill Tracts during training period and loan disbursement time;
- ❖ Engaging land commissioner to settle land disputes of ethnic groups.
- ❖ Preservation of quota for ethnic women in education and training and making provision for education allowance;

- ❖ Giving lessons in ethnic languages to ensure technical and technological education;
- ❖ Introduction of primary level school curriculum in ethnic languages for tribal children;
- ❖ Increased participation of female children in main-stream education;
- ❖ In FY2016-17 5000 women will be given maternity health services through mobile clinic.