

Resilience in the Hills

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Stories of diverse communities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts striving to improve their lives through local initiatives supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation and its partners, 2004-2015

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(Revised version prepared by incorporating feedback from MJF team)

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Insofar as this document contains many stories that are based on materials contributed by staff members of partner NGOs of MJF, its authorship may be viewed as having been collaborative and collective. However, this consultant takes primary responsibility for any inadvertent omissions or other limitations in terms of the overall presentation and interpretation offered. (It may be mentioned that all the photos used in this document also come from reports submitted by various PNGOs. They have been used as a temporary arrangement for illustrative purposes, with the understanding that if and when the document is edited for publication or wider dissemination in any form, different photos with desired properties along with appropriate credits will be used.)

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***Brief biographical note:** An academic anthropologist turned development professional who worked fulltime in different capacities at Jahangirnagar University (1991-2001), CARE (2001-2009) and UNDP (2009-2012) in the past, Prashanta Tripura has been engaged in independent consultancies alongside part-time teaching at the Department of Economics and Social Sciences of BRAC University since 2013. He has many published articles – in English as well as Bangla – on issues such as ethnicity, development and multilingual education, and is the author of two books, both in Bangla, one on Jum Cultivation in the CHT, and another on Multi-Ethnic Bangladesh.

Glossary of acronyms and local terms

BDT	Bangladesh Taka (local currency)
CBO	Community-based organization
Chief	Also known as Raja, CHT traditional leader in charge of an administrative unit called 'Circle'
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts, comprising of 3 hill districts: Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban
CHTDF	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (a setup of UNDP Bangladesh in the CHT)
CHTRC	Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council
Circle	One of three traditional administrative units – roughly corresponding to the three present day hill districts – in the CHT: Mong Circle consists of all Upazilas of Khagrchari district except Dighinala; Chakma Circle consists of Rangamati district, and Dighinala and Rajasthali Upazilas; Bohmang Circle consists of all parts of Bandarban except Rajasthali Upazila.
GPS	Government Primary School
HDC	Hill District Council
Headman	Officially recognized traditional leader in charge of a <i>mouza</i> in the CHT
IGA	Income Generating Activity
<i>Jum</i>	A local term for shifting cultivation or swidden agriculture on hill slopes
Karbari	Traditional leader or head of a <i>para</i> , usually recognized officially, in the CHT
<i>Khas</i>	Public land not owned privately and available for customary use by local people
MG	Mothers' group
MOCHTA	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs
<i>Mouza</i>	Smallest unit of traditional revenue administration, serving as the jurisdiction of a Headman, in the CHT
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NGPS	Non-government primary school
PNGO	Partner NGO
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PSC	Primary School Certificate
<i>Para</i>	A small hamlet or 'village' of the CHT
<i>Sadar</i>	Headquarters
SMC	School Management Committee
Tk.	Taka, unit of Bangladeshi currency (BDT)
Upazila	Sub-district, a unit of administration in Bangladesh

Executive Summary

This document presents stories of ordinary people belonging to poor and marginalized communities in different parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The central characters of the stories depicted are individuals and community based organizations representing diverse ethnicities and contexts. All have been working hard to improve their individual and collective lives, and have something to show for their efforts. For example, in Khagrachari, the efforts of some community based organizations named after plants have begun to bear fruits in the forms of enhanced livelihood options and improved incomes. In the same district, a primary school destroyed by a cyclone was rebuilt as a revived school management committee learned to play its role effectively in order to enlist the support of all concerned. In Rangamati, a young man by the name of Longe Khumi, who comes from a poor family in Rowangchari, Bandarban is employed as a carpenter, thanks to a new trade that he learned not too long ago. In Rajbila, Bandarban, Kokila Tanchangya, an amputee, has become a role model for others by going on to run a tailor's shop successfully by overcoming her disability. In Barkal, Rangamati, a young boy by the name of Sunil Chakma is continuing his education as a star student, against all odds that included his family's poverty and the sudden death of his father. In some neighboring communities in the same district, rice banks proved to be an effective means of coping with seasonal hunger. These are just some of the individuals or communities featured in the twenty-five case studies that form the core of this document, representing the program participants of development initiatives supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Working through various partner NGOs, Manusher Jonno Foundation has been working in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for over a decade, helping some of the most disadvantaged communities in the region overcome their development challenges. In an ethnically diverse region that had undergone over two decades of widespread conflicts, and had largely been left out of mainstream development assistance of the country, one decade is hardly a long time to address the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization experienced by communities living in rugged terrains with poor infrastructure. Given the slow pace of the implementation of the CHT accord, and a complex governance arrangement with many key institutions specifically set up for the region still not functioning properly, devising an effective strategy for development interventions was not an easy proposition. However, beginning in 2004, Manusher Jonno Foundation took up this challenge directly, and remains committed to trying to make a positive difference in the region by working together with its partner NGOs and other stakeholders with which they have developed close working relationships. As of January 2016, MJF and its 16 partner NGOs, which are working through over 900 CBOs, are supporting disadvantaged communities in different parts of the CHT strive for greater livelihood security, improved access to primary education and other basic services, and promotion of their respective cultural traditions. Their collective efforts have led to considerable tangible results on the ground, as

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illustrated by some indicative data along with selected case studies put together in this document.

While presenting many success stories that may be a source of pride and inspiration for all concerned, this document also includes observations that indicate that there is little room for complacency as many challenges remain on the long road to peace and dignity for CHT communities. It also goes without saying that 'success' is a relative term that is open to subjective and diverse interpretations by different stakeholders. In the context of the program that MJF and their partners have been implementing in the CHT, the perspectives that matter most are that of the program participants on the ground, belonging to different disadvantaged communities on the in different parts of the CHT. In the context of decades of displacement, deprivation and destructive experiences of other kinds that they have endured, rebuilding livelihoods and achieving peace, justice and dignity will be long struggles. However, most communities that MJF and its partners have worked with proved to be resourceful in the past when there was not much development assistance in the region, and now that they have some organizations trying to help them overcome their poverty and marginalization, once again they are proving to be quite adaptive to changing circumstances. The resilience that the CHT communities display is not a gift that the external development actors have brought to them, but rather, it is something that they have possessed all along. If understood and depicted well, stories of this resilience can be their gift to the outside world in return for the support that they have begun to receive. And as illustrated through an indicative example in the penultimate section of this document, there are actually deeper stories that are waiting to be written and told, which would reveal the true depth of the CHT people's resilience.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The context and objectives of this document

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), comprising of the hill districts of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban, is a unique region of Bangladesh characterized by great natural beauty, rich cultural diversity and special governance arrangements. Unfortunately, the region also endured an armed conflict for over two decades, when local people experienced serious violations of their rights and were largely cut off from the country's mainstream of development. In 1997, when the historic Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord – popularly known as the CHT Peace Accord – was signed, there were high expectations among various quarters that the region would finally begin a new journey towards peace and development in an environment that would ensure the dignity and rights of all communities. Although the initial expectations and aspirations are far from being met adequately as yet, multiple actors ranging from local communities to government agencies, NGOs and development partners of Bangladesh have been active in implementing or supporting diverse development activities in the region. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is one such organization, which has supported local initiatives for development in the CHT since 2005.

Having begun its journey as a project of CARE in 2002, and then established as an independent Bangladeshi NGO by 2006, since its inception MJF has been working in Bangladesh with the mandate of 'supporting initiatives for real and lasting changes towards promotion and maintenance of human rights and good governance'. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the thematic focus of MJF has been on promoting the rights of the most marginalized communities of the region by improving policy practices and governance of institutions through advocacy, campaign, capacity building and mobilization along with a special mandate to provide limited service delivery. Since 2004, MJF has been working in the CHT in partnership with selected local organizations with the goal of enabling program participants attain improved livelihood security and greater capacity to influence policies, practices and attitudes to overcome poverty and promote peace and human dignity. This document presents stories depicting some of the main achievements and lessons from this decade-long journey of MJF and its partners in the CHT (See Annex 1 for a list of different NGOs that MJF have worked with since the beginning).

In presenting the stories related to MJF-supported development initiatives in the CHT, this document has tried to focus on identifying specific factors of success, where appropriate, summarizing the actual actions undertaken on the ground and describing the impact of interventions on the lives of those for whom they are meant. An attempt has been made to combine human stories and voices of program participants along with indications of concrete results achieved. Assuming that the potential audience of this document may include persons

that may not necessarily be familiar with the details of the the CHT context or of MJF-supported interventions in the region, it has been prepared in line with the following specific objectives:

- Present an overview of the historical background and distinctive characteristics of the CHT, and the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization operating in the region.
- Present the context and outline of MJF’s CHT program, summarizing its goal, objectives and strategies.
- Document success stories and lessons learned from the implementation of MJF’s CHT program, with focus on community initiatives in relation to targeted areas of intervention, namely, primary education, income generating activities and preservation of traditional culture in CHT.

2.2. Organization and methodology

In what follows, as a larger backdrop of the stories and lessons related to MJF-supported development activities in the CHT, we present an overview of the CHT region by highlighting some of its distinctive features in terms of historical, socioeconomic and other relevant factors, along with an analysis of the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization that many communities in the region continue to experience. We then present an overview of the MJF program in the CHT, including a brief description of some of the relevant details of implementation modality, followed by specific stories highlighting successes and lessons in key areas of support. Finally, we end with reflections on the main achievements and lessons to date, and the implications of these for MJF and its partners in terms of the way forward as they continue to support the promotion of improved livelihoods, peace and dignity in the CHT.

This document has been prepared through a collaborative process, with a consultant helping to put together available information from different sources, including relevant project documents and case studies submitted by partner NGOs of MJF.¹ Two field visits of limited duration to selected sites in Rangamati and Bandarban – during the periods of October 6-8, 2015 and December 7-8, 2015 respectively – were conducted by the consultant in the company of representatives of MJF and partner NGOs, for the purposes of gaining firsthand knowledge

¹A total of 86 MS Word files, each containing one or more case studies, as received from 16 PNGOs of MJF have been reviewed as part of the process of preparing this document. Many of these documents had the names of the staff members who prepared them, but there were also quite a few that did not include any such names. The names mentioned included the following: Shwashati Dewan of ALO, Sing Chong Mro of BNKS, Dayal Kanti Chakma of CIPD, Uttam Kumar Chowdhury of ECO, Thowai Se Mong Marma of EKATA, Philip Tripura of GRAUS, Dharmadharshi Chakma of Humanitarian Foundation, Esamong Marma of SANGRAI, Sujash Chakma of Trinamul Unnayan Sangstha, and Jnanadarshi Chakma and Dalim Kumar Tripura of Zabarang Kalyan Samity. Documents received from ASHIKA, BDPOD, Green Hill, Hilehili, Mrochet and Taungya did not have names of the staff persons who prepared them. The consultant is grateful to all such contributors, including the anonymous ones, whose inputs have been drawn upon extensively in this document.

of, and vetting available information on, project activities and their results through direct observation and interaction with program participants. Consultations with representatives of MJF and PNGOs were also held on several occasions. Care has been taken to use and synthesize different data sets and stories by assessing their accuracy and reliability through different – mostly indirect – means of cross-checks as much as possible, but given the diversity of the interventions, stakeholders and contexts involved, no special effort has been made to scrutinize all the details presented. In general, data or stories presented are meant to be indicative, but not necessarily representative in a statistical sense. It should also be mentioned that although this document draws on data and interpretations gathered with the help of staff members of MJF and its partner organizations, specific views or opinions expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the official positions of any of these organizations.

2. An overview of the CHT context

2.1. Historical background

The CHT is a distinctive region of Bangladesh in terms of various dimensions including geography, agro-ecological features, ethnic composition and administrative setup. In the whole country, it is the only region where ethnic minorities that self-identify as ‘indigenous peoples’ or ‘adibashi’ – groups that are more commonly referred to as ‘tribal’ people in official documents – form the local majority, although only by a very slim margin at present. It may be mentioned that in Bangladesh as a whole, according to some unofficial estimates (e.g. by Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples’ Forum), indigenous peoples comprise of at least 45 distinct ethnic groups, who collectively account for less than 2% of the total population of the country. In the CHT as well as in the rest of the country, these ethnic minorities have historically experienced various forms of discrimination and exclusion, including socioeconomic, cultural and political marginalization as well as downright denial of their identities in the context of the formation of post-colonial nation-states.

When the CHT was brought under British rule in 1860, it was almost exclusively inhabited by indigenous peoples that came to be known collectively by different names such as ‘Hill People’ or Pahari, ‘tribal’ or more recently, as ‘Jumma’. Etymologically, the last of these names derives from *jum*, a local term for shifting cultivation, which was once practiced by all local communities of the CHT (Tripura 2013). Through the Regulation of 1900 and other measures, the British rulers accorded special status to the region by formalizing a system of traditional administration, and by making the region off limits for settlement by communities not belonging to any of the local hill peoples. It may be mentioned that as of 1872, the share of Bengali population in the CHT was only 2%, which rose to 7% in 1901, and only slightly more to 9% as of 1951. However, once the CHT was opened up for settlement by non-Hill People in the

1960s, the share of Bengali population began to increase quite rapidly. This happened at the same time as the construction of the Kaptai hydroelectric dam, which displaced some 100,000 local people along with submerging 40% of the prime agricultural lands of the entire CHT region. It may be mentioned that by this time a growing proportion of the indigenous Hill Peoples of the CHT had begun switching to wet rice agriculture by abandoning jum cultivation (Sopher 1964).

The twin development of the 1960s – the construction of Kaptai dam and the opening up of the CHT for settlement by non-Hill People – created the larger background of land dispossession that the local communities of the CHT have experienced in recent decades. The situation got far worse as the region became heavily militarized since the second half of the 1970s in response to a movement for regional autonomy led by Jana Sanghati Samity (JSS). Moreover, between the late 1970s and early 1980s, large numbers of landless families from different parts of the country (an estimated total population of 400,000) were also relocated in the CHT, thereby changing the ethnic makeup of the whole region drastically. From the point of view of the indigenous peoples of the CHT, such measures could only be aimed at taking away more of their lands, and their identities as well. Indeed, as a result of various forms of ensuing conflict, tens of thousands of Pahari people were driven out of their lands and villages. While the crisis in the CHT simply compounded and deepened as time went on, and numerous innocent people—both Paharis and Bengalis—suffered, people in the rest of Bangladesh hardly had any clear knowledge or understanding of the actual situation there, since the whole country was under actual or de facto military rule until 1991. However, with the return of formal democracy in 1991, demands for a negotiated settlement of the CHT crisis began to intensify at various levels within the country. This led to a new round of serious negotiations between the JSS and the government, and after many rounds of negotiations, in December 1997, the two parties finally signed an accord that came to be known as the ‘Peace Accord’, after which the JSS formally ended its armed campaign.

2.2. Ethnic diversity

Of different ethnic groups that have been recognized as ‘tribal/hill people’ indigenous to the CHT since the region came under British rule in 1860, eleven distinct groups are present today. In alphabetical order, these groups are as follows: Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pangkhua, Tanchangya, and Tripura. In addition to these eleven groups, there are also three other ethnic minorities – e.g. Asam (Ahomiya), Gurkha and Santal – that are represented in very small numbers in the CHT. And there are of course the Bengalis, who emerged as the single largest ethnic group in the region over the past fifty years. Of the various indigenous peoples, the most numerous are the Chakmas, who constitute about half of the total non-Bengali (‘Pahari’) population of the CHT. They are followed by the Marmas, then the

Tripuras, Mros, and Tanchangyas. The smaller groups, namely Bawm, Pangkhua, Chak, Khyang, Khumi and Lushai together constitute less than 10% of the total Pahari population.

In terms of geographical distribution, the Chakmas were traditionally concentrated in what is today Rangamati district. But a sizable proportion of them also live in present day Khagrachari district, where many of them settled after being displaced by the Kaptai Lake. The Marmas are today more or less equally distributed in all three districts, but historically their traditional strongholds lay in the southern parts of the CHT. The Tripuras too are found in all three districts, with the largest proportion living in Khagrachari, followed by in Bandarban and Rangamati respectively. Most of the other groups, excepting the Tanchangyas and the Lushais, are mainly concentrated in Bandarban district. Among the three districts, Khagrachari is the least diverse ethnically, where only three of the indigenous peoples – namely Chakma, Marma and Tripura – are found, whereas Bandarban is the most diverse as it has communities belonging to all the known ethnic groups of the CHT.

2.3. Administrative pluralism

The administrative system of the CHT is a combination of mainstream institutions (i.e. those found in the rest of the country) as well as some that are unique to the region (cf. Khan 2004). Among the latter, first of all, there is the ‘traditional’ system that was formalized by the British. Then there are the CHT-specific local government bodies consisting of three Hill District Councils (HDCs) and the CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) that came into being (reconstituted and renamed in case of HDCs) after the CHT Accord of 1997. The majority of the seats (two-thirds) in CHTRC and HDCs, including the positions of chairs, are reserved for ‘tribal’ candidates/nominees. There is also a Ministry of CHT Affairs (MOCHTA) in Dhaka that was also constituted under the terms and conditions of the CHT Accord. At present, the CHT consist of three districts, under which there are 25 *upazilas*, 118 Unions and 377 *Mouzas* (traditional units of land and revenue administration).

The ‘Traditional’ System

The ‘traditional’ administrative system consists of three Circles, namely Chakma, Bohmang and Mong Circles. The three circles roughly coincide with the districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari respectively. These Circles are headed by hereditary Chiefs. Ethnically, the family of the Chief of Chakma Circle belongs to the Chakma community and the Chiefs of the other two circles descend from Marma families with common ancestry. Each circle is subdivided into *Mouzas*, which are headed by Headmen (although most are ‘men’, a few women Headmen also exist). *Mouza* Headmen also tend to inherit their office. Within each *Mouza*, individual villages or *paras* were headed by *Karbaris*. The Chiefs-Headmen-Karbaris assisted colonial

administration in revenue collection and land administration, functions that are still recognized but in a more limited way or without much practical relevance, especially as far as revenue collection from jum-cultivators is concerned. These traditional leaders also have jurisdiction over civil disputes relating to customary family laws.

The Hill District Councils

The Hill District Councils (HDCs) of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban, originally known as Hill District Local Government Councils (HDLGCs), were created in 1989 through three more or less identical acts. The JSS at that time rejected the proposed measures, but elections were nonetheless held under tight military control in 1989 and the Councils were formed, each having 1 Chairman (tribal) and 30 members, of which two thirds were tribal and one third non-tribal. Under the provisions of the 1989 Acts, these HDLGCs were to exercise limited authority in 22 'subjects' such as primary education, health, agriculture etc. Under the CHT Accord of 1997, the HDLGCs were renamed as HDCs, but their basic structures and functions were largely kept intact, with modifications such as the inclusion of additional 'subjects' to be transferred to the HDCs, the provision of 3 reserved seats for females (2 tribal, 1 non-tribal) in each HDC. No HDC elections have been held to date and in the absence of elections, provisional downsized Councils continue to consist of chairs and members directly nominated by the government.

The CHT Regional Council

The CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) was set up after the CHT Accord of 1997. It has initially been formed by the JSS, but eventually it is to be constituted by the votes of the HDC members. As stipulated in the CHT Accord, "the CHT Regional Council shall consist of 22 (twenty-two) Members including the Chairman. Two thirds of the Members shall be elected from amongst the tribals. The Council shall determine the modality of its functioning.... The Members of the Council shall, by indirect mode, be elected by the elected Members of the three Hill District Councils. The Chairman of the three hill districts shall be ex-officio Members of the Council and they shall have right to vote". Once the CHT Accord is implemented fully, it is hoped that the HDCs and the CHTRC will provide more effective leadership and coordination of various development activities that have been going on in the CHT.

2.4. Constraints to Peace, Social Justice and Livelihood Security in the CHT

The major problems faced by the people of the CHT—unresolved political issues, widening social inequality, and widespread livelihood insecurity—have deep historical roots that cannot be eradicated in a matter of few years. While the CHT Accord of 1997 was widely seen as an historic step towards resolution of the long-standing problems of the CHT, to date the implementation of the Accord has been a slow and contested process. Moreover, there are

some fundamental problems that are not quite unique to the CHT, but as far as the indigenous peoples are concerned, are found more commonly. For example, the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh are yet to be accorded full constitutional recognition as communities having distinct languages and customary land rights. More generally, in terms of specific government institutions or policies, the special needs and rights of indigenous communities are rarely taken into account. And socially, 'stereotyping' or biased popular views of indigenous communities are quite common among dominant classes of Bengalis. These stereotypes are perpetuated through popular media, textbooks, literature and so on. Finally, in the sphere of the market and economy, members of the ethnic majority tend to monopolize trade and commerce in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples. All these factors need to be taken into account in addressing the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization experienced by communities of indigenous peoples in different parts of the country, including the CHT (cf. CARE Bangladesh 2005).

3. MJF-supported development initiatives in the CHT

3.1. Overview of MJF's work in the CHT

In line with its official mandate of supporting initiatives for real and lasting changes towards promotion and maintenance of human rights and good governance, MJF has been working in the CHT region since 2004 in partnership with selected local organizations with the goal of 'enabling the poor and vulnerable indigenous population to attain adequate standard of living through promoting means of livelihood security and greater capacity to influence policies, practices and attitudes to overcome poverty and promote peace and human dignity'. This program goal, along with details of the strategy pursued in the CHT by MJF, was fleshed out towards the beginning of MJF's work in the CHT.

As part of the process of developing MJF's program strategy for the CHT, a Dhaka-based organization named Research and Development Collective was commissioned to conduct a study, which was carried out during the period from July - September 2006. The study report, titled Manusher Jonno Foundation Strategy for Program Activities in CHT (Kamal and Khan, n.d.), highlighted the need to have a long term goal, spanning a period of at least ten years, for MJF's CHT program. The report also stressed that MJF's program interventions in the CHT must address the specificities of the region, including its ethnic diversity, environmental features and special governance setups. In this context, program implementation through locally based NGOs, which had knowledge of local contexts, emerged as a viable strategy. In terms of program themes, the study report recommended for MJF to focus on the following:

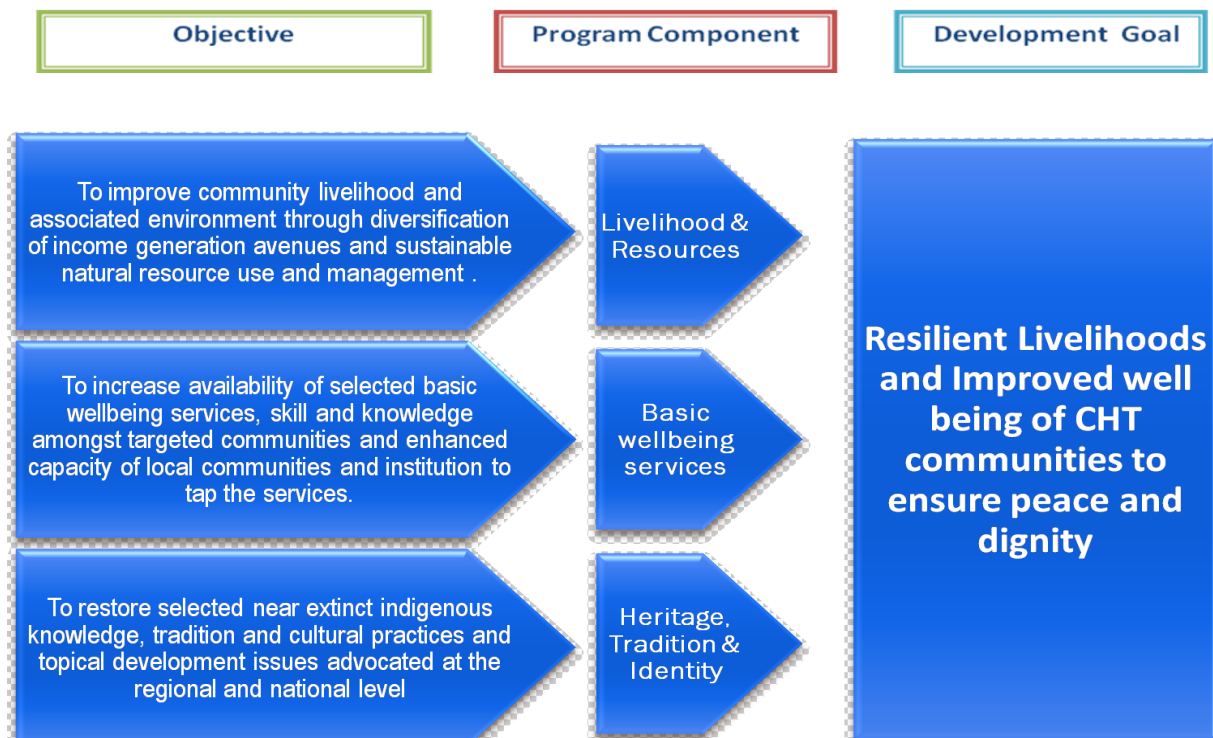
- Land rights

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- Good Governance
- Livelihood Security
- Service Delivery (Health & Education)
- Preservation of Tradition and Culture

Based on the recommendations of the above study report and subsequent consultations with relevant stakeholders, MJF started working in the CHT through partner NGOs based in the region. Later, after a strategic review, the overall development goal MJF's program in the CHT was formulated as follows: 'Resilient livelihoods and improved wellbeing of CHT communities to ensure peace and dignity'. Under this overall goal, three specific objectives focusing on improvement of community livelihoods, availability of basic services, and promotion of indigenous cultural traditions were set, as summarized schematically below (reproduced from MJF 2015):

Program Action Logic: Socio-economic Development of Chittagong Hill Tracts



Towards helping CHT communities achieve the objectives stated above, MJF has worked closely with local NGOs, with 16 organizations on board as directly contracted partners and 9 as sub-partners, as of December 2015. While the number of program participants has varied to some extent from one year or phase to the next one, attempts have been made by implementing partners of MJF to bring a significant proportion of the poorest communities in different Upazilas of the three hill districts under program coverage. As an indicative example of

program coverage, it may be mentioned that as of 2014, MJF-supported interventions implemented by 16 partners and 9 sub-partners in 19 Upazilas of the CHT targeted a total of 70558 individuals, including girls, boys, women and men, who benefited from support provided in different areas (cf. MJF 2015). It may be added that in terms of program components, partner NGOs focused either on livelihood and resources, or on basic services, particularly education. For example, as of 2013, eight partner organizations worked with the teachers, SMCs and other bodies associated with 341 schools, which had a total of 30,174 students (MJF 2014). During the same year, nine PNGOs worked with a total 63,752 program participants engaged in different livelihoods interventions, which were delivered through 373 community-level groups (ibid). All PNGOs focused on cultural traditions as well to some extent, with the matter treated as a cross-cutting issue in many cases, but in general the focus on cultural issues was not necessarily heavy in terms of time or resources devoted.

3.2. Indicative success stories: actors, processes and results

This section presents selected success stories highlighting various MJF-supported initiatives that proved to be relevant and effective in addressing the development challenges faced by some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the CHT. Methodologically, as indicated at the beginning, much of the information and analysis presented below are based on materials produced by the partner NGOs of MJF. However, instead of simply re-presenting edited accounts prepared by PNGO staff members, the consultant's own observations from field visits acted as a filter in sifting through them. In addition, findings from a program review carried out by an independent consultant (Khan 2013), as commissioned by MJF, have been used as important measures for assessing the relevance, effectiveness and effects of various initiatives involved. While the stories presented generally focus on results achieved, an attempt has been made to pay attention to the processes employed and the actors involved as well. With this in mind, in what follows, before going into different success stories grouped according to three main components of MJF's CHT program, we begin with a general description of the key actors and processes under consideration.

Key actors

NGOs: As indicated already, MJF's program in the CHT has been developed through consultation with diverse stakeholders, including local NGOs, among which 16 are presently engaged as directly contracted implementing partner of MJF. It may be mentioned that unlike in the rest of Bangladesh, the CHT had little presence of NGOs working with donor-assisted funds. Thus it comes as no surprise that all partner NGOs of MJF in the CHT are relatively new,

established in the 1990s, mostly after the CHT Accord of 1997 with a few exceptions.² However, despite relatively weakly developed organizational capacities and unfavourable regulations (cf. Kamal and Khan 2006:19), local NGOs of the CHT possessed some valuable capitals in the form of sound knowledge of local contexts, their rapport with local communities, and high levels of commitment and enthusiasm about development work. Considering this background, MJF's policy of partnering with such organizations, investing in their capacity development – helping them to learn by doing as well as through targeted capacity development measures – may be seen as a success story in its own right (cf. Khan 2013:45).

Sustainability, livelihoods, education and empowerment are shared ideals of MJF PNGOs

While the partner NGOs of MJF are operating within a broad pre-established program framework, each has its own specific area of geographical as well as thematic focus, with its own unique project name. Out of 16 such project titles, the most frequently used words are as follows: the word 'sustainable' occurs six times; 'livelihoods' and 'education' four times each; and 'empowerment', 'rights' and 'integrated' three times each.

CBOs: Different community-based organizations (CBOs), whether established newly in the context of project implementation (e.g. groups of local cultivators organized for participating in agricultural interventions, mothers' groups, cultural teams) or reconstituted/activated through targeted support (e.g. School Management Committees), were at the heart of almost all MJF-supported activities facilitated by NGOs at the community level. According to information provided by 16 PNGOs, as of 2015, they were working closely with over 900 CBOs of different kinds. Although it is not clear to what extent MJF PNGOs have begun to play the role of true facilitators in relation to local CBOs (cf. Kamal and Khan 2006:42), and whether most CBOs have acquired the capacity to fulfil their potentials (cf. Khan 2013:13), the fact that such locally-based organizations are active at the community level itself may also be viewed as a success story in itself. The role played by CBOs carries added value and significance that most of them provide space for active participation of women, who constitute about half of the membership of all the CBOs combined.

CHT-specific institutions: MJF and its partners have good working relationships with CHT-specific governance institutions – e.g. CHTRC, HDCs and traditional leaders – that have important roles to play in supporting development activities in the region. Program participants or their spokespersons have been supported to engage with this important group of stakeholders on different occasions, including in the context of advocacy initiatives (e.g. to

²MJF PNGOs that were established (and registered) prior to the CHT Accord of 1997 include Green Hill, MROCHET and Zabaranga Kalyan Samity.

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seek support for school registration process). To a limited extent, MJF has provided support to some of these institutions to carry out important activities, e.g. the CHTRC was supported to compile the customary land laws of the CHT, and also to conduct some training events in 2014. However, on the whole, CHT-specific governance institutions are not yet fully equipped to play their mandated development roles effectively, a situation that largely acts as a constraint for MJF and its partners to support development initiatives in the CHT, but this is limitation that MJF is not in a position to address directly.



MJF's support to the CHT Regional Council

Land is a critical factor in sustaining the livelihoods and cultures of indigenous peoples of the CHT, and there has been a widely felt need to compile the customary land laws of the indigenous peoples of the region. In 2013, the CHT Regional Council took an initiative to carry out this important task with support from MJF. Following this important initiative, the CHTRC was also supported to organize a series of training sessions and conferences involving the traditional leaders of the CHT (Chiefs, Headmen and Karbaris), focusing on raising collective awareness of land laws and other related matters, including international legal instruments. (MJF 2014:21, 2014:15)

Processes

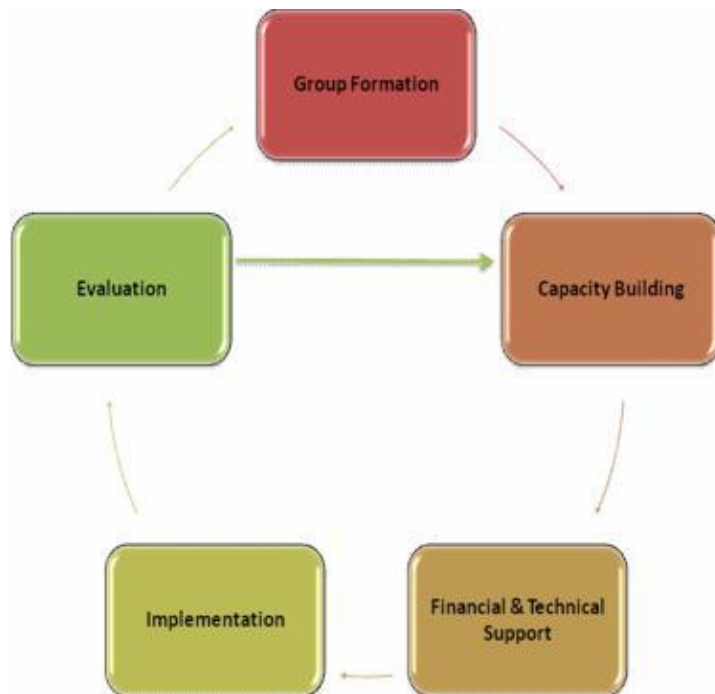
MJF and its partners have followed standard processes of project cycle management in designing and implementing various interventions. Within the broad scope of the general framework of MJF's CHT program, local partner NGOs acted on specific sets of agreed interventions in specified geographical areas, supporting various community-level initiatives relating to improving access to primary education and other basic services, income generating

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activities, and promotion or protection of traditional cultural practices. Of the three program components identified by MJF, partner NGOs tended to select either livelihood or basic services (in particular education) as their main area of focus, even though in practice different components were combined to varying degrees. Thus, there were livelihoods-focused projects that incorporated some education-oriented activities, just as school-focused projects had IGA-oriented activities. As for the third component, promotion and protection of traditional cultural practices, it was used by all PNGOs as a cross-cutting theme to some extent, although some specific activities not necessarily tied directly with other components were also undertaken. Regardless of the program components involved, the following types of implementation modalities have been used in different combinations by all PNGOs of MJF:

- Community mobilization, involving formation of new CBOs in many cases
- Capacity building of CBOs
- Financial and technical support to CBOs
- Facilitating linkages between program participants/CBOs and government service providers/market actors
- Advocacy

In general, members of CBOs were supported to play active roles in different parts of the project cycle, with regular systems of monitoring and development put in place at various levels. For example, livelihood projects typically followed the cycle presented below diagrammatically (MJF 2015:7):



Below, we take a closer look at concrete examples of the actors, processes and results associated with various MJF-supported development initiatives grouped according to three program components: livelihood and resources, basic wellbeing services, and heritage, tradition and identity. For each component, we look at representative details and some case studies showing achievements at the level of individuals, groups or communities, and in terms of processes and results in varied contexts.

3.2.1. Livelihood and resources

Under this program component, the main objective is as follows:

Objective: To improve community livelihood and associated environment through diversification of income generation avenues and sustainable natural resource use and management.

The main activities undertaken to achieve the above objective included the following:

- Formation and capacity development of community-based groups to undertake various initiatives for improving their livelihoods, including pursuit of diverse income generating activities that are deemed compatible with local cultural and environmental conditions.
- Technical and material support members of above groups to engage in IGAs in diverse areas such as handicraft, livestock, poultry, apiculture, mushroom cultivation, nursery development, mixed fruit gardening and vegetable gardening.
- Supporting program participants to find improved ways of preserving and marketing their produces.
- Supporting community groups to take different types of collective action such as savings and credit schemes and rice banks that are designed to improve their livelihood security.
- Facilitating improved linkages between program participants and government service providers in key livelihood sectors such as agriculture.

Activities such as those mentioned above have resulted into tangible benefits for program participants, as suggested by some indicative figures found in MJF's annual report of 2014. For example, the average monthly income of the participants of targeted livelihood projects reportedly rose from BDT 3000 to 5500, an impressive gain; and there were 38 rice banks in different MJF working areas serving poorer members of the communities of the respective localities (MJF 2015:7). In 2014, altogether there were 336 IGA groups, consisting of both men

and women, who were engaged in a wide range of livelihoods-related interventions supported by MJF, leading to tangible improvements in earnings and savings (MJF 2015:9). In what follows, we present examples of groups, individuals, communities and initiatives involved in bringing about positive changes supported by MJF and its partners in different parts of the CHT.

Case Study 1: Groups named after plants bear fruit in Khagrachari!

ALO has been implementing an agriculture-focused project named Integrated Sustainable Hill Farming with support from MJF in two upazilas of Khagrachari. At the community level, the project is implemented through a total of 60 CBOs, each of which has 25 members, including both men and women. The brief profiles provided below of three such CBOs, all named after plants of some kind, indicate that these groups have proven to be quite effective vehicles for achieving project objectives.

Barbati (Bangla for ‘string beans’) is the name of a group formed in October 2011 consisting of 15 women and 10 men at a village called Modhyo Adam Para in Babuchara, Dighinala. It is a village where there was no CBO before. Having a CBO in this village was no mean feat considering a past history of disunity that had prevailed there previously. In January 2013, the CBO developed a participatory strategy plan through a three-day exercise, involving 60 households of the village and leading to the formation of a village-wide cooperative. As for members of *Barbati* group, they received technical and material support with the help of ALO project staff. The Barbati group has been engaged in exhibition plots, goat rearing, mixed horticulture etc. and they have started a savings and credit program for their group members. Villagers are also engaged in homestead gardening. There is greater unity in the village now, as attested by various positive changes made by villagers working together, e.g. they repaired an earthen road by themselves, and revived a lower secondary school that had stopped functioning but now has regular classes; they even got a member of their community elected as a councillor at the Union Parishad. The elected councillor now helps with infrastructure and safety net support. There is also a resource center in the village, not to mention tube wells, established through direct or indirect support of the MJF-supported project. The educational institutions that exist in the village – Para Center (preschool) and government primary school – run properly. There is lower school dropout rate. The momentum for collective action generated by and through *Barbati* group is behind most such positive changes.



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Some members of the Lau group at a courtyard meeting

Members of an IGA group involved in goat rearing

Lau (Bangla word for bottle gourd or calabash) is another group of 25 members, of which 17 are female and 8 male. The group was formed in July 2011 and has been working at Dozorpara village in Babuchara union of Dighinala Upazila. Like other such groups, Lau members received training on social awareness, IGA and rights issues. Members of the group also received local vegetable seeds and saplings of four kinds of fruit-bearing trees. The group members realized that people are more interested in cultivating different varieties of agricultural products like betel leaf, turmeric, ginger, and various types of seasonal vegetables, and also in creating mixed fruit garden and forest cultivation increasing day by day in own or community fallow land. At the first time the Lau group earned BDT 6181, which they used to buy 3 goats.

After the project field staff analysis comparatively the group members are working well such as regular group meeting, planning, and group IGA activities. For the reason in 2nd step the project again approved BDT 13,000 for group IGA activities. Similarly the group members decided to buy 5 goats by using the money. Starting from an initial stock of 8 goats in July 2012, the group had a total of 47 goats as of July 2015. Subsequently, the Lau group sold off some of the goats (e.g. they sold 5 for BDT 8,362 in one month), but as of September 2015, they still had a total of 29 goats in their stock. In addition to such assets, the group members also had savings of BDT 10,500 in their group bank account, based on monthly deposit of BDT 20 by each member. The group has plans to become a government-registered organization so that they can start new initiatives such as an afforestation project in their local area. The group is very optimistic about achieving success with their future plans.

Ketaki group (named after a flower plant), consists of 7 women and 18 men of Eetchari village at Kamalchari Union in Khagrachari sadar. The village has a total of 25 households with a population of 175 and is situated six miles away from the district headquarters. There is no school in the village, where adult literacy rate is still low, at around 30%. The nearest primary school is 2 miles away, and no NGOs worked in the village until ALO started working here with MJF support. Group members contribute monthly BDT 10 each and they have savings of BDT 30,000 already. They received training on livestock rearing, maternal and child health, food and nutrition; organizational development; homestead gardening; violence against women etc. The project also provides seeds and saplings, vaccination and grants for raising goats; they received BDT 15,000 for raising goats and earned BDT 23,000 by selling the same. The villagers also got a

water pump from the MJF-supported program. The CBO can earn money by collecting payment for the pump. Agricultural production of villagers has doubled because of irrigation and there is also production of winter vegetables. Their next target is to set up a school in the village, and save up to BDT 200,000. This is a target that seems to be within their reach, but regardless of whether or not they achieve it soon, the fact that they have such collective dreams and plans can be seen as an achievement by itself.

Case Study 2: A women's CBO supported by BNKS in Bandarban

Among MJF partner NGOs, BNKS has a special focus on women, as is indicated by its very name which may be translated as Balipara Women's Welfare Association. Under partnership with MJF, in late 2013, BNKS set up 30 women's groups in Bandarban sadar upazila. One such group was Tangbuse Para Nari Kalyan Samity (TPNKS), which consisted of 27 enterprising women belonging to three ethnic groups, Marma, Tanchangya and Chakma. The community had no such group before. Its women were dependent on money lenders. In November 2013, TPNKS was formed and its members were trained on handicrafts, mushroom cultivation, livestock and poultry rearing, vaccination etc. They would meet monthly; start a savings and credit program with BDT 40,000 received from BNKS; each member saves some money regularly, at the rate of BDT 50 a month, raised from an initial amount of 20. Now they have a total balance of BDT 22,080. In addition, many members who received training on different income generating activities have managed to increase their income. For example, 8 members of the CBO took loans of BDT 5,625 each from an initial grant provided by BNKS for use as revolving loan fund. Each of them then started rearing pigs, by selling which members made sufficient profits within a year to repay their loans and to invest in purchase of more piglets. Meuma Marma, pictured here, is one such member who has repaid her loan and takes part in the meetings of the CBO regularly. She is married and lives with her husband and two school age sons. With her income contributing to greater livelihood security of their household, she radiates confidence when talking about it as well as the fact that both of her sons attend school.



Case Study 3: A 'model village' in Hilehili working area in Rangamati

Jummabi Adam may be regarded as a model village, which now has a mixed fruit garden, a school and a rice bank, all set up with the help of an MJF-supported project implemented by Hilehili. Each household in this village is now engaged in homestead gardening, and several are engaged in rearing poultry and pigs. There are signs of improved livelihood throughout the village; this was not the case not too long ago. The village, located at a distance of 9 kilometers from Baghaichari Upazila headquarters, was formed after the CHT Accord of 1997 as many uprooted families from different places settled here. There is almost no cultivable land in the

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village, where most people are dependent on jum. Almost no household has enough rice stock for the whole year. A CBO, with 50% women, was formed following a baseline survey under a project supported by MJF. Its members were trained on organizational and financial management. After receiving training, they became interested in setting up a mixed fruit garden. They received BDT 20,000 as grant for this purpose. The garden was set up on a 2-acre land. The CBO members meet regularly, and have become more aware of human rights issues, and about their entitlements for basic services. They are now also more capable of linking up with government service providers. They have taken part in training sessions on various topics such as small business, organizational and financial management, CBO work plan development, sustainable and environmentally friendly jum cultivation, nursery management, homestead gardening, pig rearing, seasonal vegetable cultivation and poultry rearing.

From the mixed fruit garden, started in 2011, in 2015 they made a total profit of BDT 12,000. Among the villagers, 30 households are presently engaged in pig rearing, each earning BDT 8-10,000 per month. Initially, the CBO supported only 11 members on pig and poultry rearing, but their success motivated many others, who also followed suit and found success.



Seasonal vegetable cultivation and mixed fruit garden also constituted an important area of intervention, with training provided to program participants who received small grants of BDT 4554 each. Out of this assistance, one gardener made a profit of BDT 22235 and has set up a 2-acre garden. There is also a rice bank in the village, where there is now less dependence on moneylenders. Established in 2012, the rice bank has a stock of 6000 kg of rice as of September 2015. It is also noteworthy that villagers now have improved linkages with service providers, e.g. line departments in education, agriculture, livestock and the UP and UzP. There are different indications of improved services and resources received by local villagers. For example, as of 2015, the numbers of persons receiving different allowances were as follows: old age allowance 7, widow 4, and VGF 18; there has been regular vaccination; one community school received registration; 2 ring wells and 1 deep tube well have been set up. On the whole, the villagers are more aware of their rights and entitlements, and have greater access to

information. It is also notable that the local CBO general secretary got elected as a UP Councillor in 2011.

Case Study 4: Women lead the way in a village in Rangamati

Suridas Para, a Chakma village in Ghilachara union under Naniarchar upazila in Rangamati district, is located near the Rangamati-Khagrachari road at a distance of 38 km from the district headquarter. The villagers are predominantly dependent on agriculture, and have very low rates of adult literacy. The population of the village stands at 233, of which 127 (i.e. nearly 55%) are female. Whatever may be the reason behind why females outnumber males in this village, the women here have begun to make themselves count in terms of their active roles in combating poverty. For example, with the facilitation of ASHIKA in the context of an MJF-supported project, 25 women of this village has formed a CBO, the members of which have been active in trying out different income generating activities.



Since being established in December 2013, members of this CBO have received training on vegetable gardening and marketing process, with Upazila level government agriculture officers acting as resource persons. After training, the members of the CBO received a grant of BDT 11,500 for vegetable gardening. With this help, they cultivated vegetables that they were later able to sell for BDT 55,000, encouraging them to share and reinvest the profit for other productive purposes. They are also engaged in a goat rearing project with financial and technical assistance arranged by ASHIKA. From an initial stock of 25 goats, in one year they now have a total herd of 65 goats that is estimated to be worth BDT 180,000, which is almost three times the initial amount invested.



The CBO members have started saving up, and maintain a joint savings account where the present balance is BDT 30,500. Apart from receiving training on matters such as agricultural activities, financial management and organizational development, the members of the CBO have also participated in other training and workshop events focusing on rights issues, gender, conflict reduction, and accessing services. Now they are more aware of their rights and entitlements and have better linkages with and access to government as well as non-governmental service providers.

The people of Suridas Para went through a terrible experience when on December 16, 2014 their community became the target of an arson attack by some criminals. As a result of the attack, 22 households belonging to the program participants of the MJF-supported project suffered huge losses. During this tragedy, MJF and ASHIKA came forward with emergency assistance for all affected households. The community as a whole showed remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in rebuilding their lost homes and livelihoods. They realize that they need to improve their livelihoods, and remain united, while trying to fight injustices as well as poverty in a peaceful manner with the help of supportive organizations.

Case Study 5: A village that may be renamed as Honeyville in Bandarban

Tentulia is a small Marma village located about half an hour's boat ride away from Bandarban upstream along the river Sangu. Administratively, it is located in Taracha Union of Rowangchari Upazila. The village has 30 households, which formed a group with support from ECO-Development. Members of this group started cultivating vegetables, developing nurseries as well as bee-keeping. They soon realized that the vegetable gardens needed to be free of harmful chemicals for the bees to collect honey. The bees in turn contributed to increased vegetable crops. The villagers realized this quickly and really got wholeheartedly into integrated organic farming, which boosted their yield of honey as well as vegetables. In 2013, the group started with 10 boxes, which have been increased to 13 by 2015. The villagers have started saving up, and many of the households now earn incomes of BDT 30-40,000 every quarter from sale of their honey and vegetables. Demand for the organic honey grown by them has grown through word of mouth, and the villagers have attracted favourable attention from

government agricultural officials as well. The leading Bangla newspaper Prothom Alo carried a story on this village on 22 November 2015. It may be mentioned that the original name of this village is associated with the Bangla word for Tamarind. However, now some locals have started to refer to it as 'Modhupara' – which means 'Honey Village' – albeit in a humorous vein. But if the village does come to be known as something akin to Honeyville, it would actually be quite appropriate given the spread of beekeeping and organic farming in the village.

Case Study 6: Rice banks of CIPD working area in Rangamati

Among indigenous communities that still depend largely on jum cultivation for their livelihood, many households experience seasonal food shortage (known as *bhadrat* in Chakma language) that can last for several months – particularly during the period from April to June – preceding annual harvests. A similar situation prevails among communities that live around Kaptai Lake and rely on fringe lands, i.e. lakeside paddy lands that become available for cultivation for short periods when the water level of the lake becomes low. As



a result of seasonal food shortage, the poorest households in both types of communities become vulnerable to exploitation by moneylenders and traders who offer advances for their agricultural crops at very low rates. In order to address this situation, since November 2008, CIPD has been working to help target communities set up rice banks from which households experiencing food shortage can borrow necessary amounts of rice, which they would replenish later when they have the means. In CIPD working areas of Jurachari and Bilaichari upazilas, 23 rice banks have been established as of September 2105, serving a total of 3244 households that experienced greater food security and freedom from exploitation by moneylenders. From November 2008 to September 2015, about 49122 Aris of un-husked rice (Ari is a volume-based measure; one Ari is equal to roughly 10 Kilogram of rice in weight) has been distributed among members in need, out of 52108 Aris collected at various points in time. As of September 2015, the rice banks had a total stock of 14221 Aris of rice.

Case Study 7: Rice Banks of Humanitarian Foundation working area in Bandarban

Saving up for rainy days is an idea that is not completely foreign to CHT communities, many of which had some traditional practices of pooling resources that lie behind the idea of what came to be known as rice bank among development practitioners. The idea has been picked up by many NGOs in different parts of the CHT. Among MJF partners, Humanitarian Foundation also

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helped local communities in its working areas set up 8 rice banks in 2010 (2 in Bandarban Sadar, 1 in Rowangchari, and 5 in Thanchi), serving a total of 184 households. One distinctive feature of this rice banks was the fact that they were set up for around schools supported by HF.



Mrolong Para Rice Bank

Walewa Para Rice Bank

The rice banks constructed with funds from MJF were meant to serve the poor students of the schools and the communities associated with them. The total number of direct or indirect beneficiaries associated with eight schools was 1425 persons, including 466 students (289 boys and 177 girls), 934 parents and other adults, and 25 teachers. The rice banks established around these schools have reduced seasonal hunger among these people. Earlier, it was not uncommon to have children come to school in empty stomachs. As for adult members of households experiencing seasonal food shortage, they would often have to walk miles after miles to collect rice from the market or other places. In this context, the rice banks came as a reliable means of combating seasonal hunger through collaborative efforts at the community level.

Case Study 8: Padda Mala Chakma shows her fighting spirit at the age of 62

Jarulchari village, located at a distance of 4 kilometers from Babuchari Union Parishad and 18 kilometers from Dighinala Upazila headquarters of Khagrachari district, is home to a remarkable woman named Padda Mala Chakma (62), who lives with her husband, without any of their children – two sons and two daughters – around, as all of them are moved out after getting married. The village has no electricity, and most people here subsist on jum cultivation. Padda Mala and her husband too have lived migratory lives until the CHT peace accord of 1997, after which they settled down in their present village. However, they have no land except for 20 decimal of homestead. Despite being landless, she does not want to depend on others in her old age. So in 2011, Padda Mala expressed her interest to join in Mula ('white radish') Group under the Integrated Sustainable Hill Farming project implemented by ALO. She proved to be a very active and eager member of this group.

Padda Mala Chakma received training on livestock rearing, and afterwards was nominated by her group to be the recipient of one pig and three goats, altogether valued at Taka 6000, donated by the project. She took good care of these, which she sold off for Taka 8500 after six months. Then she reinvested her money to buy a pig and six chickens for Taka 3900 taka and used the rest of her earning for her household's consumption. She has a sellable pig, eight hens and twenty four chickens at this time and now also able to lead her household's consumption. She got training on violence against women and shared it with her husband as a result she has gotten supports form her husband. She attended at more group meetings and also has been aware on livelihood. So she keeps clean home regularly and installed a hygienic latrine. Now she also grows a home state vegetable garden around her home. Padda Mala Chakma states about her future plan that she will try to buy some cows in future and want to change her livelihood and dignity and also want to build a house of semi-brick building.

Case Study 9: A widow overcomes her personal hardships

Ma E Marma, a widow from a Marma community in Lama, Bandarban, is a marginal farmer who has been living with her father and her three daughters and a son. Her husband did not have any land property, and the limited amount of land owned by her father is being used by her brothers. Thus as a cultivator, she has to subsist by taking lease of land owned by others. After her husband's death, she struggled a lot to raise her four young children. She even worked as a day labourer to support them. Then, at one point, her elderly father joined her household. She worked her as a day labourer as well as by cultivating leased plots of land, but she was often in debt.

While passing through such hardships, Ma E Marma came to know about support provided for homestead gardening through a MJF-supported project implemented by EKATA. She became a member of an IGA group under this project. After receiving some training, she took a small loan of BDT 7,000 from the revolving loan fund set up through the project and started cultivating bitter gourds on family plots



leased from her brothers. Although half of her vegetable garden was damaged by a flood, she earned BDT 10,000 by selling the produce from the remaining part. As of late 2015, undaunted by the minor setback, she was planning to expand cultivation of many more types of vegetables

during the upcoming winter season. She was also hopeful that her success as a vegetable grower will encourage other members of her community to take up homestead gardening more systematically and on larger scales.

Case Study 10: Kokila Tangchangya has overcome her disability and lives with dignity



Kokila Tangchangya, an energetic woman in her early 30s, as a resident of a Tangchangya village at Rajbhila union in Bandarban district. She has been living with a physical disability that fell upon her soon after completion of her primary education. She was diagnosed to have developed bone cancer on one leg, which had to be amputated upon her doctor's advice. She struggled for several years with the physical and emotional difficulties that

this traumatic experience had brought in her life, and led a fairly unproductive life until she came in touch with the outreach activities of BDPOD, an organization that specializes in working with the disabled, and was implementing a project funded by MJF.

Kokila Tangchangya's contact with BDPOD proved to be a turning point of her life. She became a participant of BDPOD's project group, the field facilitator of which discussed the different development issues in the group meeting. Here she heard the success stories of disabled people from all around the country as well as the rest of world. She became inspired and tried to do something. She received elbow crutch for walking as assistive device from the project. She also received IGA training on poultry and three month long training on tailoring. She also received a sewing machine from the project. Kokila started her tailoring shop in her house by receiving grant fund. Now she expended her business in local bazaar area. She rent a shop in local bazaar. At present total of two employees work in her tailoring shop. She earned around Tk. 15000.00 –Tk. 18,000.00 per month. Her deposited savings amount is 3500.00. Now she is a self dependent person. Her goodwill spreading in the locality and she lives with dignity. Kokila Tangchangya shows her special ability by her effort.

Case Study 11: A new trade helps Longne Khumi make a living

Sunkim Para village under Taracha Union is about 20 kilometers far from Rowangchhari Upazila quarters. The village has 20 households with a population of about 100, all of whom are Khumi,

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which is among the smallest ethnic groups of the CHT in terms of population size. The main sources of livelihood for the members of this community is jum cultivation, along wage labour, collection of forest resources such as bamboo and woods, and pig farming.

As with many indigenous communities of the CHT, the people of Sunkim Para have been trying to uplift their livelihood status for some time, but without necessarily having proper guidance and access to necessary information and assistance. In this context, an 18-year old young man named Longne Khumi emerged from them as a potential role model for many others by learning a new trade that helped him overcome poverty. Longnes are 2 brothers and 4 sisters. He had to leave school just after completing third grade. Soon after the sudden death of his father in 2008, his elder brother left their household after getting married. Later, two of his sisters also got married and moved out. In that situation, the entire



Longne busy with painting

responsibility of the whole family came to rest on Longne's young shoulders. He was struggling to support a four-member household with the limited seasonal income from their family possession of about 5 acres of low grade hilly *khas* land. They usually cultivate different kinds of fruit-bearing trees there, but life slowly became difficult for managing family cost round the year from the meagre income from their garden.

Having no other means, Longne resorted to work as day labourer and had to take loans as well. Thus in his mind he was searching for other sources of income for better livelihood. It was in this context that he came in contact with the project staff of Humanitarian Foundation (HF), which had formed a Khumi Cultural Group at Sunkim Para village under a project supported by MJF. Longne among others joined that cultural group. But when the project personnel came to know about the economic hardships faced by people like Longne, they had a meeting with the community, and informed them about vocational training opportunities for trades like carpentry, nursery, sewing and loom production with support from Humanitarian Foundation. Upon learning about these options, Longne enrolled himself for a four-month long carpentry training, which he completed successfully by April 2014. Having accomplished this intensive training, he became quite skilled in making furniture items and carving different floral designs.

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After completing his training, Longne was taken on a learning visit to Rangamati, and with the help of contacts facilitated by Humanitarian Foundation officials, based on his skills, he was offered a job with a pay of BDT 6,000 per month with free lodging and food at a furniture shop in Rangamati. Longne has been working there since May 2015, but within the first couple of months of his new employment, he earned the appreciation of his employer who is happy with his performance and dedication to the trade. Longne takes great satisfaction in having found a means to leave behind the economic hardship that he and his family members endured in recent past, and beams with a self-confident smile in talking about his present as well as future plans.

Alu San, Alusama Froi

‘Learn a Vocation. Become a professional’.

Humanitarian Foundation has a motto, transcribed in Marma language with an accompanying translation in Bangla, printed on many of its communication and educational materials. It reads *Alu San, Alusama Froi*, which may be translated as ‘Learn a vocation. Become a professional.’ Longne Khumi may be seen as an example of the viability of this slogan. Humanitarian Foundation is training many other men and women from different ethnic groups of the CHT in learning new trades which are helping participants improve their livelihood security.

Case Study 12: An analysis of the results of one project at specific location

This brief account, based on a longer ‘analytical case study’ prepared by Trinamul Unnayan Sangstha (TUS), highlights the differences made by one project, namely CANDL, which the NGO implemented in Khagrachari during the period from 2009-2012 (Trinamul Unnayan Sangstha 2003). Their study looked at project initiatives aimed at natural resource management and livelihood renovation in one specific location, namely Bhaibonchara Union. It is an area with underdeveloped infrastructure where indigenous communities belonging to three ethnic groups – Chakma, Tripura and Marma – live. Most people subsist on agriculture with much dependence on natural resources, and they have only limited access to basic services, although there are multiple actors, including NGOs and government departments, that are present in the area. During the period under consideration (2009-2012), TUS was also working as an implementing partner of UNDP’s CHTDF in the same area.

Under the goal of strengthening local communities’ control over land and resources by creating livelihood opportunities, the purpose of CANDL was as ‘to enhance capacity of local communities in community based agro-forestry and increase marketing facilities and extension services for improving livelihood options in Khagrachari Hill District in coordination with cultural heritage.’ The specific objectives of the project were as follows:

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- 1) To enhance capacity of the target communities for sustainable hill farming and agro-processing.
- 2) To promote marketing and processing of locally available agricultural and non-agricultural products;
- 3) To preserve and promote the cultural heritage of indigenous 'Jumma' communities.

CANDL was implemented in two Upazilas in Khagrachari, covering a total of five unions and 800 program participants who were drawn from among the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities, with a special effort made to involve women and the youth in considerable numbers. Specific activities carried out under the project fell under the following components:

- Formation of CBOs and institutional capacity and skill building support to them
- Support to CBO members for income and employment generation activities
- Market promotional activities
- Facilitation for gender equitable participation
- Cultural preservation and promotion

TUS performed fairly detailed input-output analysis for each of the above-mentioned components. For example, some of the details related to the first two components are presented below.

Under the first component – institutional capacity and skill building of CBOs – the inputs provided in Bhaibonchara union consisted of activities like training, workshops, yard meetings for awareness raising, facilitation of group planning and technical support. Targeted areas for IGA training included production technology-nursery management, homestead gardening, hill farming, handicrafts designing, mushroom cultivation, honey bee keeping, plastic cane handicraft making and food processing. Orientation was provided to the program participants in the areas of group management, agro forestry, land use, right to information, gender, health and hygiene, and cultural preservation and promotion. The trainees and participants were selected as per the group management guideline. The trained group resource persons and representatives were responsible for sharing the information and skills with other members of the group. The best available facilitators- resource persons were approached for conducting the training sessions.

In terms of outputs and outcomes, data collected by TUS suggested that among the 300 farmers of the Union who became program participants, 60 learned about nursery management and grafting through direct training and post training technical sessions. Among others, 10 became skilled in grafting and could earn around Tk. 10,000/month out of grafting and supply of scions; 20 set their own small nurseries at homestead level, with one of them

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starting his own nursery at a different upazila; 10 women trained on plastic handicrafts making engaged themselves in regular craft making and sale; 10 out of 20 farmers trained on honey bee keeping got engaged with bee keeping at household level, with 2 of them emerging as local resource persons on bee keeping and earning from catching queen bees and technical advice to bee keepers.

In terms of the second component, inputs of materials and money for Income and employment generation, the major activities and supports were: nursery and agricultural support; mushroom, honey, fisheries support; food processing support; handicraft revolving fund-handicrafts production and sale; and seasonal and homestead vegetable cultivation. A nursery establishment grant worth Tk. 50000 was provided to each of the 8 nursery groups. Additional support was also provided to nursery and other groups for seasonal -homestead vegetable production and scions collection. Mushroom spawn and materials were delivered to the cultivators. 5 mushroom centers were built for collective cultivation facilitation. 6 honey boxes and bee keeping materials were delivered. For food processing, a food processing factory was established at Chotonala village. The members of food processing groups were also provided with raw materials. For handicrafts promotion, a revolving fund was created with Tk. 56,000 for 8 groups of the Union. 10 Sewing machines were provided to the tailors among the handicrafts groups. As part of model agro village sub project, roadside plantation and pond side plantation was done at Purna Bijoy para. Besides, hill side vegetable plots were introduced in fallow lands.

In terms of outputs and outcomes under the second component, data collected by TUS suggested that 47 acres of fallow land of the direct beneficiaries were utilized for agro-forestry and commercial plantation. Beyond the direct beneficiaries, villagers of other villages of the Union became encouraged in agro forestry and utilized around 300 acres of fallow lands. Saplings and vegetables around Tk. 8,00,000 were sold from the nurseries. At the community nurseries, assets of Tk. 72,000 are available on average in each. A total of 35,500 saplings are also available for sale. Being motivated and encouraged with the success of CANDL nursery groups, many individuals and households replicated the nursery business. Some of them took technical advice from the CANDL group members. In the Union, there were only teak and rubber nurseries, by CANDL initiatives, 10 species are available. Through repeated replication of the nursery initiative, the whole union transformed into an agro-forestry plantation and nursery zone. From other small scale income generation activities like mushroom cultivation and honey bee keeping, around Tk. 40,000 were earned by the beneficiaries. The handicrafts group members could repay the loans that they took during the weaving season from the revolving fund. The income level was increased by using of the fund in purchasing extra raw materials. Plastic handicraft makers of 6 groups had sales amounting to Tk. 18000.

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After analysis the remaining components in the same way as indicated above, the TUS study concluded with some general observations regarding the changes that took place in Bhaibonchara union as a result of CANDL initiatives from 2009-2012. Some of these observations are presented below:

- A total of 200 program participants were organized into 24 thematic IGA groups, 8 of which dealt with agricultural nurseries, 8 with handicrafts, and 8 with food processing. It was also concluded that as a result of project activities, the assets of the households with active representatives in the groups had increased significantly. The value of the assets gained by 200 program participants of Bhaibonchara through CANDL operation was estimated at BDT 1,650,000 as of December 2012.
- The individuals learned the mechanism of groups and gained Institutional management capacity regarding planning, book keeping, decision making, among others. Level and diversity of skills in the areas of agro-forestry and nursery, food processing and handicraft making also increased at a mentionable level. The group representatives came to know about the update facilities of the line departments through participating in the Upazila level meetings organized by CANDL.
- The pattern of Natural resource management at the whole Union has changed with the huge replication of community and individual nursery in the Union. A total of around 350 acres of fallow land came under agro-forestry and plantation scheme indirectly increasing the control over resources. By this, the land covered by mixed fruit gardening covers around 700 acres of land in Bhaibonchara Union.
- Income of the groups and members has increased. Only from the CANDL activities, a total of around BDT 900,000 was earned throughout the intervention period. Employment opportunities were created for around 20 women of Bhaibonchara union through the food processing factory.
- Through earning more through crafts-making and food processing, women could increase their mobility to the local and district level markets. Skilled women could make foods for their children in a more healthy way to meet the nutritional demand of the children.
- In the markets which were unexplored by the indigenous peoples of the project area a stake has been created. The overall mobility and access of the group members increased significantly.
- The children of new generation came to know about some near extinct handicrafts and the making techniques. Cultural activists and villagers became more aware on the cultural heritage and use of the traditional elements in modern time.

3.2.2. Basic wellbeing services

The objective of this program component is as follows:

Objective: To increase availability of selected basic wellbeing services, skill and knowledge amongst targeted communities and enhanced capacity of local communities and institution to tap the services.

Even though the stated objective above does not specify any sector as its focus, in practice primary education has been the main area of intervention of MJF-supported project activities under this component. The reason for this focus was obvious as poor access to basic education has been a serious concern for many communities in the CHT for a long time. In the working areas of MJF-supported PNGOs, rates of adult literacy, net enrolment, school completion and gender parity are still considerably lower than the national average (cf. MJF 2015:12). Difficult terrains and linguistic barriers make the delivery of basic education particularly difficult for institutional service providers. In this context, some MJF partner NGOs took over or carried on interventions started under a project called CHOLEN (CHT Children's Opportunity for Learning Enhanced) as managed by CARE Bangladesh in an earlier period.

Some of the main activities carried out under MJF-supported education-focused interventions in the CHT are as follows:

- Formation or activation and capacity building of school related committees and groups, particularly SMCs, PTAs and MGs, and in many cases, youth groups (YGs).
- Financial support to schools, including full or partial salary support for teachers, limited infrastructure support (for construction or renovation of school buildings, toilets, tube-wells; school furniture), teaching and learning aids.
- Technical support: Teachers training on participatory active teaching, multi grade & multi level teaching method'; mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE); supporting schools with quality improvement measures such as conducting model tests, special support to PSC examinees; supply of test papers; classroom decoration with traditional cultural materials.
- Other philanthropic and welfare activities: distribution of warm clothes/blankets to children; health checkup camp, student/children hostel ('Residential Support initiative to students for community schools'); cultural and sports competitions.
- Conscientization and dissemination: Documentary film show and motivational session; learning visits; school visit by service providers/decision makers including relevant high level public officials; various national and international events celebration (e.g. observation of Indigenous people's day, Mother language day, Children day);
- Community cross learning visit; media mobilization.
- Education/school related advocacy: Policy advocacy on CHT education with major CHT government and local government institutions (e.g. HDC, RC, ERs, TCLs, SMC) an relevant stakeholders at district level to 'help LGIs take necessary policy initiative to

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sustain culturally suitable and quality education in CHT; observation on education, child & women rights at school level; round table discussion with HDC on quality/effective education management; round table discussion with Upazila chairman & UNO, UEO, teachers, Orientation workshop on education policies.

- School-focused IGA such as commercial gardening and/or plantation of mango, banana, turmeric, ginger, pineapple, and mixed fruits; livestock rearing (especially beef fattening) for school sustainability.
- Support for the registration of community schools.
- Support for the community managed student hostels.

As an indication of some of the outputs and outcomes of the above activities, it may be mentioned that as of 2014, SMCs, PTAs and MGs were supported and actively engaged in 337 schools. In these schools, altogether there were 24,426 students studying, with 8753 students freshly enrolled in 2014. A total of 5095 children in 61 schools were learning through mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE). Students had access to safe drinking water in 193 schools and there were toilet facilities for students in 187 schools. Among other measures, in 2014, a total of 126 schools were involved in different IGAs; there was also an active school registration campaign underway, leading to 37 schools obtaining registration, while the process was on for 60 more. Support was also provided for construction of 3 hostels, and for running 10 community-managed hostels.

In what follows, we present specific examples of schools, SMCs, students, and various education-related initiatives involved in bringing about positive changes supported by MJF and its partners in different parts of the CHT.

Case study 13: A community school set up in the year of the CHT Accord of 1997, supported by organizations that began to be active in the region following the accord

Left Bhushanchhara Non-Government Primary School is situated at an area that has endured some of the worst forms of violence experienced by people in the CHT. Established in 1997, the year of the CHT Peace Accord, this school is presently supported by Taungya, an MJF partner NGO, which has been working with local community leaders and teachers to find sustained access to quality primary education for the children of their locality. Limited access to and poor quality of basic education is just one of many problems suffered by communities such as that of Left Bhushanchhara, with their subsistence dependent on different combinations of precarious livelihood strategies ranging from extraction of increasingly scarce forest resources and/or *jum*, a local form of shifting cultivation that is under serious pressure, seasonal agriculture on fringe lands that surface when the water level of Kaptai dam recedes, and so on.

Given poorly developed infrastructure and institutional capacities, neither the line departments of the central government nor the CHT-specific institutions such as the Hill District Councils can provide effective services to such communities. In this context, local NGOs like Taungya, most of which were established after the CHT Accord of 1997, continue to implement some stopgap measures along with engaging in community mobilization and advocacy initiatives under specially tailored programs introduced in the CHT in the post-accord period. MJF's support to Left Bhushanchhara Non-Government Primary School is just a tiny part of this broader engagement.

Case Study 14: Support for proper functioning of government primary schools by ZKS in Khagrachari

MJF partner NGOs implementing education-focused projects work with government primary schools as well as non-government ones. In many places, government primary schools do not run properly due to various reasons, including inaction of School Management Committees and lack of awareness of community members. In this context, MJF partner NGOs have played active roles in filling existing gaps, and in terms of strengthening existing systems as well as expediting some essential processes. For example, we may take note of how Zabarang Kalyan Samity played a facilitating role in the context of two government primary schools in Khagrachari.

Surendra Karbari Para

The first example is that of Surendra Karbari Para GPS, which is situated at Khagrachari union of Sadar upazila, not very far from Khagrachari district headquarters. Originally established in 1979 at the initiative of some enlightened members of the local community, the school obtained temporarily registration in 2003, and became



fully registered in 2007, opening the door for substantial government support. Then in 2013, the school was enlisted to become a government school. At that time, it had 4 teachers (2 male and 2 female) and 85 students (with 35 boys and 50 girls). However, when in May 2013 a cyclone named Mahasen damaged the infrastructure of the school badly, its regular activities were seriously disrupted. Despite the lobbying by local teachers and community leaders as well as some media coverage of the situation of the school, no prompt action was taken by the

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authorities to provide any urgent support to address the damaged infrastructure of the school. Thus students of this school had to take lessons out in the open. In this situation, Zabarang Kalyan Samity (ZKS), under its project “Grassroots Initiative for Quality Education” (GIQE) funded by MJF, stepped in to support the school starting in October 2013.

Under the GIQE project, ZKS facilitated the (re)formation and activation of the School Management Committee (SMC), and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and formed a Mothers’ Group (MG) of this school. In addition to arranging some basic training for members of these bodies as well as teachers, ZKS also sought to support the renovation of the school



infrastructure with the help of the community people. They joined hands with various stakeholders to step up a renewed campaign for urgent attention to the needs of the school. Eventually, concerned authorities responded, and a new school building of 4 rooms was built by Khagrachari Hill District Council urgently. Apart from providing facilitation and other support in such processes, ZKS worked closely with

the SMC, PTA and MG to support different activities that contributed to the smooth functioning of the running of the school. With their combined effort, all of the 9 students who appeared at the PSC examination of 2013 passed, marking the first time the school recorded such 100% success rate. Parents and local community leaders were clearly more involved and interested in the affairs of the school, and they as well as parents appreciated the support provided by MJF and ZKS in helping them play their role more effectively.

Mayafa Para

Another government primary school that ZKS supported under the same project was located in a community named Mayafa Para under Boalkhali Union of Dighinala upazila in Khagrachari district. Initially established in 1993 through local initiative, the school has a catchment area that consists exclusively of poor communities of Tripura jum cultivators. Despite being a government-run school, the school had very poor infrastructure and little involvement of parents and other community members. It is in this context that ZKS, through its sub-partner Kabidang, started supporting the local community people and their school bringing much-needed changes in infrastructure (e.g. by repairing school toilets, and teaching children to use them) as well as management. They also provided emergency assistance during an outbreak of

diarrhoea that caused one death in the locality. Members of the local community were made more aware on preventing and responding to such situations. In this context, the school became a conduit for basic services for more than just in the area of education.

Case Study 15: Organized mothers make a difference at a primary school in Bandarban

In December 2013, GRAUS started implementing an MJF-supported basic education project called PROCESS (Promotion of Community Empowerment through Ensuring Basic Wellbeing Services) in hard-to-reach areas of Bandarban district. Part of the implementation strategy including forming/activating and working closely with different committees including Mothers Group. The project facilitators support the Mothers Groups (MGs) hold meetings every two months, encouraging them to play an active role in making community members more active and involved in relation to functioning of their schools.

The Mothers Group of Niangkhang Para Government Primary School is one of the active MGs that hold regular bi-monthly meetings and take keen interest in the running of the schools that their children are attending. In these meetings, they talk about the importance of education, regular attendance of children in school, cleanliness, and stopping the practice of sending school-going children to jum fields for work.

Niangkhang Para is located at a highly underserved and hard-to-reach area in Paindu Union of Ruma Upazila, Bandarban. Located approximately 14 km away from Ruma Upazila headquarters, the area is only accessible on foot. The catchment area of the school covers 196 households in three villages, including Niangkhang Para, all inhabited by Marma communities. The majority of the adults in these communities are non-literate, and many of them do not yet appreciate the importance of formal education. Most lack functional literacy and numeracy, and many villagers lack fluency in spoken Bangla as well. Many households are too keen on sending their children, especially girls, to school and are instead more interested in engaging them in domestic chores and in subsistence activities especially during peak periods of the jum cultivation cycle. Among such households, even if children are enrolled in school, many tend to lose interest and drop out. Thus even though the local primary school had been established in 1965, it was not running very effectively at the time when GRAUS started the activities of PROCESS in the locality.

Compared to the situation two years ago, the members of the local community now express greater appreciation of the importance of education, and of sending all children, including girls, to school regularly. The members of the mothers group deserve much of the credit for this positive difference, which they contributed to by talking about at every opportunity with all concerned, including in their bimonthly meetings. As a result of their vigorous efforts, the attendance of the students in school has shown marked improvement, they are also hopeful of

bringing school dropout rate to zero. Ms. Kra Thoi Prue Marma, the energetic chairperson of the mothers group working with Niangkhang Para GPS, explains why they have taken their roles and responsibilities seriously:

I am illiterate. I cannot read or write. I feel ashamed of my shortcomings in comparison with literate persons who can read and write. I have faced problems in keeping proper records of market transactions due to my illiteracy. Therefore I am determined to ensure education of my children and have decided to encourage other parents of our community to send their children to school as well.

Ms. Nuching Prue Marma, another member of the same mothers group, echoes similar sentiments and explains why she attends the bimonthly MG meetings regularly, “In these meetings, we can share our views and experiences with one another, and we learn new and important things about our children’s education.” The head teacher of the school Mr. Jon Bahadur Tripura appreciates the contribution made by the mothers group in improving the school attendance rate, and hopes that they will also help to bring down the drop-out rate.

Case study 16: Four SMCs help their community schools obtain registration

Taungya has been implementing an MJF-supported education project in different upazilas of Rangamati. Among different kinds of schools that they have been working with, four community schools in Barkal upazila recently became enlisted under a government initiative to nationalize new schools throughout the country. The four Taungya-supported community schools brought under this move in Barkal are located in the following villages: Kukichara, Doluchari, Thega Jhorjhorichara, and New Bogachari. It may be mentioned that apart from these four schools, a total of 19 more community schools supported by Taungya in two other upazilas – Barkal and Bilaichari – have been preliminarily selected for inclusion under the nationalization process. In poor rural communities, nationalization is regarded as an important step in ensuring long term sustainability of schools initially established through local initiatives. In Barkal, as in most other places, much of the credit for the success in this regard is due to the concerned SMCs, which have worked hard for years to keep their schools running.

Before Taungya started supporting the four community schools under consideration, the local people could barely pay teachers for more than three-four months out of their own contributions. They were also not in a position to ensure on their own that their schools met different criteria for nationalization. However, what they lacked in terms of technical knowledge or financial resources were more than made up by the enthusiasm and dedication of the members of the SMCs that Taungya came to work with closely. With some support provided by the project, these SMCs began to establish and maintain regular contacts with the Upazila education officials, to whom they kept sending data about their schools regularly, while

they also completed other important steps such as maintaining fixed funds for schools, getting school lands registered, improving infrastructure etc.

The tireless efforts of the four SMCs supported by Taungya and MJF paid off when in 2013 they came to know that their schools were selected for nationalization, a process that would come in effect from the beginning of 2014. All concerned were very happy and hopeful that their schools would now function more properly without having to deal with resource constraints all the time. The sense of achievement prevailing among the SMCs was echoed among the local communities and even the students. For example, Ms. Mita Chakma, a member of the mothers group associated with Thega Jhorjhorichara Community Primary School said, “Our worries about keeping the school running have now come to an end. Our efforts did not go in vain. We are happy and thank all those who have worked for so many years. This would not have been possible without the continuous support of many.” Ratna Chakma, a female student of class five, said that she was very excited at the news of their school’s new status. She said, “It is so nice to think that we would be appearing at the PSC examination as students of a registered school. Now others will not look down upon us. We are feeling happy and proud.” Mr. Natan Mani Karbari, the SMC chairperson of a neighbouring community school at Poolchara shared his own thoughts, “The news of these four schools obtaining registration makes us happy and hopeful as well. We too are now inspired to follow their example, and hope that we can succeed like them if we pay more attention to all that needs to be done.”

Case study 17: Sixteen non-government primary schools supported by Green Hill under the MJF-funded SPEED project are enlisted for nationalization

The project named SPPED (short for Solidarity for Preservation, Education, Excellence and Dignity), as implemented by Green Hill in different locations within Rangamati district, seeks to help improve access to and quality of basic education for disadvantaged children belonging to marginalized communities. The project builds on the achievements of two previous phases of a similar project named SAMPRETI, which had resulted into significantly high school completion rates of students (97%), better performance by the SMCs, greater involvement of parents in school affairs, and stronger financial positions of the schools in the project area, better infrastructure, more suitable environment etc. These achievements paved the way for many non-government schools obtaining registration with further support through SPEED.

Altogether, a total of 16 schools (3 each in Rangamati sadar and Kaptai Upazilas, 1 in Naniarchar, 2 in Jurachari and 7 in Baghaichari) out of 50 non-government primary schools supported by the SPEED project have been brought under the process of nationalization in addition to qualifying for other types of support from the government. It may be mentioned that in general, in all the schools supported by SPPED, there have been achievements in many

areas including improved infrastructure, greater awareness and involvement of SMCs and other community members, improved availability of education materials, greater linkages with government authorities, improved attendance rates and lowered drop-out rates, and better performance of students in PSC examinations. While facilitation by Green Hill and the overall support made available by MJF stimulated these achievements, the efforts by concerned community groups were the main reasons for success. In general, the rates of achievements in different areas are found to have been proportional to the level of commitment and active engagement of SMCs and MGs of the schools involved.

Case Study 18: Social lodging: an affordable indigenous practice revived by SANGRAI

In the CHT, many children attend primary school by walking 3-4 KMs from their villages. It becomes difficult when the distance is more than that and during the monsoon. At the secondary level the problem becomes even more difficult as there is often no junior high school within 8-10 KMs. There is an old practice in the CHT of children staying away from their parents from a young age for education. For example, many Buddhist temples arrange lodging facilities for groups of 8-12 children. Even though such facilities are not always very child-friendly, still they offer a useful and much-used option many poor people in the CHT to help their children receive some education. Where such facilities are not available, many children especially girls drop out of school too early at the start of secondary school. Against this backdrop, SANGRAI conceived of using the traditional practice of social lodging in a way that would give a safe, child friendly space for learning and development.

SANGRAI staff members motivated monks of suitably located temples to set up small hostels for up to 10 children in one place, without requiring any major changes in infrastructure of the temples. These facilities would be low cost for the parents, safe and convenient environment for the children and not very far from their parents. Monks would act as Hostel Supers and temple management committees would assist in managing the initiative. SANGRAI started this social lodging initiative in July 2011 through the EREICA project which was temple based. From that initiative there is a hostel that is functioning well at Purba Kudala under Raikhali union of Kaptai Upazila. The project extended support for 10 children lodged at this hostel, most of them attending school at the primary level. The children are from distant villages that are located 8-10 KMs away and their parents are very poor.

The hostel is coordinated by the principal of the temple and a committee is formed with community leaders, parents, Karbaris and the concern of the respective community people to support managing hostel. The project provided support for minor hostel renovation and utensils. Parents are contributing monthly minimum food cost while the project arranged minimum subsidy to incur the short fall the expenses in the hostel. U Chai Hla, a male student

of class five of Purba Kudala Government Primary School, has been staying in Purba Kodala hostel. He passed the PSC examination with GPA A+ in 2014. He comes from a very poor family of Keuomrong Para of Kawkhali Upazila. His parents kept their son in the hostel so that he could continue studies with minimum cost.

Social lodging arrangement is a well-accepted option now for many other children like U Chai Hla. The parents feel comfortable while children live at a safe place under the guidance of monks.

Case Study 19: Mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) for inclusive education

Under the GIQE (Grassroots Initiative for Quality Education) project supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation, Zabarang Kalyan Samity (ZKS) in Khagrachari initiated mother tongue based Multi Lingual Education (MLE) program at pre-primary



level since the year 2012. ZKS, with approval from Khagrachari Hill District Council, started the program in three indigenous



An MLE Centre

languages (Tripura, Marma and Chakma) for children aged 4-5 years from the catchment area of project schools. It has constructed three MLE centers beside three project schools in Khagrachari Sadar in 2012 on a pilot basis.

ZKS appointed three teachers from three respective communities as MLE teacher and provided basic and refresher training following MLE Module focusing level 1 language instructions, positive discipline and basic language skills in Chakma, Marma and Tripura language. Different kinds of child friendly MLE materials such as alphabet chart, flower chart, fruit chart, domestic animal chart, bird chart were developed in three languages and the MLE teachers are using these materials as learning activities. At present there are total 41 students (24 boys and 17 girls) are learning at these three MLE centers, 11 students of them from Chakma community, 12 from Marma and 18 from Tripura community.

It has been observed that children of these MLE centers are now more confident to come to the centres and active in teaching learning activity, whereas they used to play with sand before at this learning age and afraid to go to school. Children from these MLE centers are now ready to get them admitted at primary school. Views expressed by villagers in these MLE centers may be summarized as follows:

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We are very pleased with MLE program as our children do not hesitate to go to the centre now and participating in classroom activities actively. Such kind of pre-school program should extend in all primary school. By this way enrolment rate will be increased and it will facilitate to reduce dropout rate.

In this phase, from this year ZKS is going to start seven more MLE centers of this type in three Upazilas of Khagrachari, all approved by Khagrachari Hill District Council.

Case Study 20: Good rates of primary education completion in project-supported schools

Since 2009, Bangladesh has had a system of centrally administered primary education completion examinations at the end of the fifth grade, leading to Primary School Certificates (PSC) to successful students. It has been observed that support provided by MJF through partner NGOs has generally led to improved performance of students in targeted schools. For example, we may look at some aggregate results compiled by Green Hill for their working areas. Under SAMPRETI-II, Green Hill supported a total of 70 primary schools in 5 upazilas (50 NGPS and 20 GPS), in which the overall success rate at the PSC examination in 2010 was 95.62%, involving 95.40% for boys and 95.91% for girls. In 2010, this rate was 97.98% (99.54% for boys and 96% for girls). Subsequently, under SPEED project, 70 schools in 6 upazilas (50 NGPS and 20 GPS) had their students pass the PSC examination at the aggregate rate of 97.68% (boys 99.53% and girls 95.90%). In 2013 and 2014, these rates have been as 96.14% (boys 97% and girls 95.27%) and 98.11% (boys 98.31% and 97.90%) respectively. In absolute numbers, between 2010 and 2014, a total of 1895 students (1043 boys and 852 girls) have completed PSC examinations successfully in schools supported by Green Hill with MJF funding.

Comparative analysis between the overall pass rates for all schools in different Upazilas and aggregate pass rates for Green Hill-supported schools in the same Upazilas show that support provided through the MJF-funded project made a positive difference in many cases. Pass rates were either comparable, or in some cases higher for Green Hill-supported schools than in general. If we consider the fact that many of the project supported schools are located in relatively inaccessible areas where students did not perform well in the past, the differences made by MJF support channelled through PNGOs would appear to be even more impressive.

Case Study 21: Sunil Chakma, a star student of an MJF-supported school

As in the preceding case study, the pass rates in schools supported by other PNGOs of MJF have also been highly impressive. For example, in Taungya-supported schools, overall PSC pass rate in 2014 has been 100%, as it was in 2013 as well. In 2014, out of 142 students who completed primary education successfully, 62 were women. Altogether, since 2009, a total of 814 students have passed PSC successfully in Taungya-supported schools (boys 465, girls 389).

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Gender disparity continues to be a concern as in most other areas of the CHT, but all concerned – including SMCs and MGs – are working to reduce the existing gap in this regard.

While the overall pass rate of PSC examinees in recent years in Taungya-supported schools has been a source of great satisfaction for all concerned, there have been a few individual achievements that have warmed many hearts. One such bright student is Sunil Chakma of Chumochumi Community School, who brought pride and happiness to all those who supported him in overcoming great odds. The youngest of six children belonging to a poor family of marginal farmers, he lost his father within six months of starting primary school education in 2010. His father's sudden death could have brought an end to Sunil's education prematurely, but luckily Taungya field staff came to know about him through the local SMC, and together they persuaded all concerned including his family members to help him continue studying in school. Teachers too gave extra attention to him at school and soon he would emerge as the brightest student of his class. Then, when the results of the 2014 PSC examination came out, he made everyone proud by earning GPA 5 (A+) and securing the coming out on top of all students in the whole of Barkal upazila. His results meant that he would now get a monthly stipend of the 'talent pool' grade.

Upon learning about his results, Sunil Chakma was very happy and he expressed his gratitude towards his teachers as well as others, including SMC members and Taungya staff, who encouraged him to continue with his education. His mother, who was overjoyed, echoed similar sentiments. His older brothers and sisters are also very happy and have indicated that even though they themselves could not complete their education, they are hopeful that their younger brother would go a long way. Sunil has started going to Khubbang Junior School, the authorities of which are bearing all his educational costs. He hopes to study in Rangamati after completing JSC, and then continue studying further to become an engineer.

Case Study 22: A shared interest in education helps two Mro communities move from conflict to cooperation

MROCHET, an MJF partner NGO in Bandarban, implemented a project named Promoting Community Rights through a Primary Education and Multi-cultural Activities for Sustainable Development (PCRPEMA) between October 2010 and July 2013. Their working area included Sintue Para and Baittya Para, two villages housing Mro communities in Tongkaboti Union of Bandarban Sadar Upazila. There was a long drawn out conflict going on for a number of years between these two communities over the possession of a piece of land. At one point in 2011, the conflict threatened to escalate into violent confrontation between the two communities. However, the Sintue Para Community School Management Committee brought the matter to

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the attention of MROCHET management and together they took an initiative to mediate and mitigate the conflict between the two communities.

After much discussion and negotiation, a proposal to utilize the disputed land as the site for a primary school was welcome by representatives of both villages. Both communities agreed that a school located in an area halfway between their villages could benefit children on both sides, and that education was indispensable for their new generation. Afterwards, they lobbied with the Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC) jointly for construction of a school on their designated land, and in 2012 BHDC commenced the construction of the requested school building, which was completed by March of 2013, when school activities started there. BHDC also provided one school teacher, while MROCHET with the support of MJF provided for 2 additional school teachers for continuing the primary school.

The cooperation between the two communities took a further positive turn in the form of solvent families of one village offering to provide accommodation facilities for children of the other. Although the school was located in an area located between the two villages, it was a bit far for children of Baittya para compared to that of Sintue Para. Thus the people of both villages sat together in the month of April 2013 to find a solution for this. At the end of their discussion, comparatively solvent dwellers of Sintue para offered the parents of the children from Baittya para to send their children to Sintue para, where they would undertake the responsibilities setting up a community hostel in their homes. Now, the children from both villages share the same school and there is more friendly interactions between their parents as well (Photo: The children and community people of Sintue Para and Baittya Para observing the International Mother Language Day 2013 in front of their newly constructed school).



3.2.3. Heritage, tradition and identity

The stated objective of this program component is as follows:

Objective: To restore selected near extinct indigenous knowledge, tradition and cultural practices and topical development issues advocated at the regional and national level.

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Compared to the other two components, one of which acted as the main areas of programmatic focus for MJF partner NGOs, this third component did not function as an exclusive area of concentration for any of the organizations. However, most of them worked with cultural groups of some kind, and supported some events and initiatives either as part of activities under other components, or as special activities. The following are some activities that fall into one of these two categories (with some achievement-related indicators mentioned parenthetically, as taken from the MJF annual report of 2014):

- Formation and facilitation of locally based cultural groups (A total of 11 cultural groups, involving 158 persons, are formed, which performed in various events such as day observations. and occasions.)
- Promotional materials and publications (e.g. public posters, leaflets, information brochure) on various aspects of indigenous cultures and practices have been produced and disseminated by MJF and its partners.
- Research-based publications, for example, on the profiles of diverse cultures of various indigenous communities have been produced (e.g. 'Cultural Catalogue' published in association with CIPD) and compilation of customary land laws by the CHT Regional Council)
- Provision of mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) for indigenous children in targeted schools. (A total of 5095 students belonging to different ethnic groups in 61 schools getting education through mother tongue based MLE)
- Preservation of traditional community practices; celebration of traditional and cultural events (e.g. 2345 students participated in extracurricular activities linked to their indigenous cultures; CIPD medicinal herbal garden.)
- Promotion of local handicrafts and other traditional craftsmanship (e.g. in the form of establishment and maintenance of exhibition, sale and display centers promotion of local fine arts dance, music, literature; 6 Chak women received handloom training on their own traditional dress.)

A number of the case studies narrated earlier in the context of previous two program components include instances of indigenous cultural practices or languages being taken into account in carrying out project activities. For example, to some extent, issues of indigenous cultural practices and traditions feature in the context of income generating activities (e.g. in relation to jum cultivation or pig rearing). Similarly, we have seen how attention is given to indigenous languages in the context of mother tongue based multilingual education. In

addition to some examples, a few more case studies highlighting more exclusive concerns with promotion and protection of indigenous cultural traditions are presented below.

Case Study 23: Folk festival organized by SANGRAI in Kaptai

A folk festival for showcasing the cultures and traditions of the CHT communities was arranged by SANGRAI³, under an MJF-funded project named DCSRW, at the compound of a government primary school at Karigorpara, Raikhali Union in Kaptai, Rangamati. The festival was attended by five project supported groups from various villages in the area.



The main purpose of the exhibition was featuring and promoting vanishing forms of folk arts, crafts and traditions to the newer generation for awareness development. Members of various groups that took part in the festival understood this readily. Thus the convener of Hapchhari Para Youth Group, Bahaimong Marma said, "We feel proud and encouraged after attending this festival. SANGRAI and its partners have taken a very timely initiative that has infused a new feeling of ownership and enthusiasm related to cultural activities among the local people." Ms Purbasha

Tanchangya, the group leader from Choto Pagli para village said, "Today I have seen different kinds of food items and cakes in our area, many of which I have never seen before. Then the items on display also reflect the diversity of ethnicity and culture. We love them all. I hope to see more of such things in future."

By visiting the folk festival, the new generations have had more direct experience of some vanishing cultural elements and traditions of the locality. The young and the old all have developed awareness on the main theme. The local people felt encouraged to preserve the lost traditions and also showcase them to audiences at national and also international levels.



Case Study 24: Income generation opportunity through revival of traditional culture

Ms. Akhain Chak, 49 lives with her family in Mrachhaong para, under the union of Naikhyongchari sadar of Naikhyongchari upazila, Bandarban. She has two sons and three daughters and the family members consisting of eight.

³ The acronym SANGRAI also stands for a Marma word, Sangrai, which refers to traditional festivities around the transition from one traditional calendar year to the next (similar to festivities that are known other names such as Boisu among Tripuras, Biju among Chakmas, and Bishu among Tanchangyas).

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Akhain Chak is the president of Mrachhaong Para Women Development Group which was formed in December 2013 with support from BDPDO. After formation of the group Ms. Chak sincerely organized and presided over the monthly group meetings. Thus the group activities ran smoothly.

Day labourer in profession, Akhain Chak thinks about the Chak traditional culture and heritage. In group meetings she came to know about the project activities and plan. Gradually she received capacity building training on group leadership and management, rights, savings, budgeting and livestock. She became very interested in getting trained on waist loom that she saw her mother use during her childhood. She said, "It is after passing 40 years of my life that I am learning that it is possible to receive training on waist loom. I think if we know how to weave and practice it regularly, our traditional dress will be revived."



Akhain Chak received 45 days long waist loom training in the first batch and completed different tasks and items of training in time. She has trained on how to set up a loom, weaving the loom, designing etc. She has also trained on preparing Chak women's traditional dress, which has nearly vanished. Most of the Chak women do not know how to weave it. As Akhain Chak explained, "None of us practice our waist looms. We usually wear Marma or Rakhine dresses bought from the market." She added, "One cause of the unavailability of our traditional dress is lack of practice on waist loom. So I became interested in learning practically about weaving different items on waist loom and I will continue practicing."

Now she is practicing waist loom individually at home besides the daily activities. Akhain Chak said that she will prepare different waist loom items for herself and her family members, and will also try to fulfil the local need by selling surplus items to others. This is just one example of how promotion or revival of different elements of traditional examples may present income generating opportunities as well.

While the loss of traditional knowledge and practices related to weaving is just one small example of a much larger trend of erosion of indigenous cultures in the CHT, this case study shows that with necessary planning and support, it is possible to stem or reverse this trend. What is needed would be to have a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes behind this erosion, and addressing them in a systematic manner.

Case Study 25: Muralya Daru Tarum: CIPD's garden of medicinal plants

Set up on a small island, consisting of former hill tops in the middle of the Kaptai Lake and not very far from Rangamati town, CIPD's herbal garden consists of rare plants belonging to some 150 species, many of very rare kinds and used in traditional medicine by indigenous peoples of the CHT. These plants are not easily available, and many species have become nearly extinct in the region, due to large scale deforestation. Along with the medical plants, the role and knowledge of traditional medical practitioners known as *baidyas* have also undergone serious decline in the absence of institutional support. In this context, CIPD has taken an initiative to link up its herbal garden with groups of traditional practitioners who are supported to learn from one another, and have access to materials for use in their practices. Along with cultivation and preservation of various medicinal plants including rare varieties, systematic documentation and research on different species are part of CIPD's maintenance of a medicinal herbal garden (on which further information may be obtained from the organization's website, from which the photo shown here has been taken [CIPD n.d.]). This is a unique initiative that can become a basis for further systematic research on and promotion of best practices associated with indigenous medical systems.



3.3. Reflections and lessons

This section presents some reflections and lessons relating to what worked well and why, and what did not work so well and the reasons involved. Some of the descriptions are based on reports submitted by PNGOs of MJF, while other are based on observations by third party consultants. The latter kinds of observations are somewhat impressionistic in nature, and are not meant to be substitutes for lessons that should ideally be extracted in a participatory manner by program participants and project personnel directly involved with various interventions on the ground. On the whole, the observations and interpretations included in this section are presented as indicated examples of matters for further reflection and analysis rather than as definitive statements on the issues involved.

In terms of timely implementation of planned activities and achievements of outputs, the implementation partners of MJF have generally achieved the quantitative targets, as indicated by the report of the program review conducted in 2013. This is clearly due to all the basic systems and processes required for smooth management of project activities being in place among all the concerned organizations. Even though most of the PNGOs of MJF in the CHT are relatively new organizations, they have been selected on the basis of meeting some specified

criteria related to organizational capacity. Moreover, as noted earlier, any shortcomings that different PNGOs may have in terms of experience or expertise are compensated by the knowledge of local contexts and commitments that their staff members bring to these organizations. The areas of intervention that most project activities have concentrated on – IGAs and education – also relate to demonstrated needs that can be fulfilled in a fairly straightforward manner, at least while available inputs last.

It may be mentioned that regarding the correspondence between project inputs and outputs, the report of the program review of 2013 contains the following observations: “most of the physical targets of the various components of [MJF’s CHT program] have been achieved; in the limited number of cases, where the progress has lagged behind the targets, the reasons reported include the following: limited capacity of the concerned community groups (i.e. SMCs, IGA groups); ineffective leadership and accountability; difficult terrain conditions; inappropriate selection of IGA enterprise; and protracted or slow pace of implementation” (Khan 2013:21). These observations seem to be generally valid as of 2015 as well. However, instead of placing the onus for underperformance on weak CBOs, it may be useful to look for weak links at other levels as well, e.g. in terms of possible gaps in facilitation and program design. In this context, it is encouraging to note that different reports prepared by PNGOs contain some reflections on programmatic achievements or lack thereof. For example, one of the documents containing success stories, prepared by Taungya, includes a list of intervention areas – such as the ones reproduced below – in which achievements are not deemed to be satisfactory:

- a) Continuation of children’s education at the secondary level after completion of the primary level could not be ensured.
- b) Not all schools have been able to engage in IGAs equally.
- c) Mother tongue based (multilingual) education could not be ensured in the way expected, although one textbook has been published.
- d) Land registration for schools located in reserved forests could not be completed, although a process is still on.
- e) Duplication of interventions, sometimes involving working with the same beneficiaries by different partners of the same funding body (e.g. even MJF), could not be avoided completely.

Another document (probably part of a project completion report) by the same organization (i.e. Taungya) includes a section on lessons learned, which includes the following points (reproduced after some editing):

- **Importance of proper facilitation:** The project has proved that proper facilitation can help a community realize its own strength and self-confidence that can help them work towards a brighter future even amidst despair.

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- **Financial resources are not the main factors behind success:** This project has also shown how a collective management system involving local communities can be developed within relatively limited financial resources.
- **Skilled and committed teachers and parents can help children overcome many barriers:** Children everywhere are born with the same potentials which they can fulfil if given the appropriate environment. For example, the Agujjachari Community School, located in a hard-to-reach area of No. 3 Farua Union under Bilaichari Upazila, has become the center of many people's attention and interest through the performance of their students. For many years in a row, this school has always produced some bright students who went on to earn good grades with scholarships.
- **It is important to invest resources to attract and retain qualified teachers:** Insufficient financial support is one of the primary reasons that prompt many qualified teachers look for alternative job options. It is important to devote resources to retain qualified and committed teachers who can make a lot of difference in remote areas.
- **Good planning and proper monitoring are keys to success:** Project interventions that are well planned and implemented with proper monitoring can bring positive results even amidst various challenges, including negative trends set by some development actors who may be less thoughtful in pumping in resources.

Somewhat similar to the above, the highlights of the lessons learned presented by Green Hill in a project completion report, include the following (Green Hill 2013) points:

- **Sufficient teachers are essential for good quality education:** Remote schools always suffer for lack of teachers. SAMPRETI-II could address the problem to some extent by providing additional teachers to these schools. The result was immediately visible. The additional teachers improved the overall teacher-student ratio. It resulted in better teaching and better results in the examinations. The lesson learned is that all schools have to be well equipped with sufficient teachers and only then better results can be expected. Increasing the teacher-student ratio can bring miraculous change in the performance of the students.
- **Well functioning SMCs are important for management of primary schools:** SMCs often exist only in papers and at times are improperly formed. This leads to ill-functioning of SMCs and school lacks accountability and transparency, which leads to poor performance of the students and teachers. The lesson learned is: if SMC is properly formed and strengthened, it works well. It can bring about positive changes to school's learning environment.

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- **Parents have important role in schooling:** SAMPRETI-II learned from its experience that the parents are important players in making primary schooling more effective. The PTAs were rarely active in the project schools prior to SAMPRETI-II. The illiterate parents little knew that they also had a role to play in the schooling of their children. The project activated the PTAs and saw the results of it.
- **IGAs by SMCs help attaining the schools to become financially stable:** Primary schools often lack adequate funds for fulfilling various needs that may arise any time. SAMPRETI-II implemented the innovative idea of IGAs undertaken by the SMCs for raising additional fund for school management. The IGAs gave the schools greater financial stability and let the SMCs think ahead with their plans. This experience of SAMPRETI-II can be considered as a good model replicable across the country particularly in the poverty stricken and hard-to-reach areas, where it is difficult for schools to run due to lack of sufficient resources. This can be a model for the government and the NGOs working in primary education.

Project completion reports of other organizations (e.g. Zabarang Kalyan Samity n.d.) also contain many bullet points and observations that relate to challenges faced and lessons learned. However, it is not clear to what extent the lessons identified in different reports reflect products of collective reflections, which could probably be done more systematically and regularly than what may have been the case so far. Be that as it may, in what follows, some areas that may be explored further to extract relevant lessons are identified below, with accompanying remarks that are based on somewhat cursory observations.

Land rights and governance issues could have been addressed more systematically

In the original strategy paper commissioned by MJF, land rights and good governance were listed among the issues recommended as programmatic focus areas. While admittedly these are very difficult issues to be addressed within the scope of time bound projects, and there are additional constraints applicable in the context of the CHT, it is not clear to what extent MJF and its partners took these factors into account in terms of planning and analysis at different stages of the overall project cycle management. With 16 partner NGOs involved in implementing a wide range of activities in different parts of the CHT, it is easy to lose sight of the deeper and systemic causes of poverty and marginalization in the CHT because of greater attention paid by all concerned to details related to matters such as transfer of funds, technical knowledge and provision of other services. In many ways, existing project interventions by all MJF partners deal with matters that relate in some ways to issues of land rights and governance. From this perspective, there could have been more explicit and strategic focus on these issues in project planning and reporting by MJF partners.

Re-examining the rationale of some key activities could be useful

It seems that there is room for re-examination of the rationale of some activities that are implemented by several partners of MJF.

- **Involvement of SMCs in income generating activities:** It is not clear to what extent the involvement of School Management Committees in income generating activities have contributed to greater financial sustainability or improved quality of teaching learning in the concerned schools. In the program strategy review, IGA ventures by SMCs were identified as an area of concern requiring further revision (Khan 2013:23). However, even if SMCs end up making profit, questions remain as to whether their focus on IGA may divert their attention away from academic aspects of their expected roles.
- **Cultural activities could be made more interlinked and integrated:** At present, cultural activities and initiatives in MJF-supported projects of different NGOs come across as somewhat scattered. In some ways, this situation may partly be a reflection of limitations of the existing design which seems to rest on a limited view of culture. For example, the stated objective related to the third program component talks about restoring 'near extinct' cultural elements, but if one thinks of culture as a living and ever changing system, translating the existing formulation in concrete activities may lead to somewhat artificial results or unintended consequences. For example, during the course of the present documentation process, it was observed on more than one occasion that cultural performances meant to represent 'traditional culture' actually relied on use of Bollywood style songs that may have been downloaded from the internet. Such innovations are not necessarily undesirable, but they do not exactly represent restoration of nearly extinct cultural elements. Perhaps the main point in this regard may be a re-examination of the conceptual framework relating to culture.

Need for greater common understanding and focus on key program principle and strategies

Given the varied contexts and multiplicity of actors and initiatives observed in the context of MJF's CHT program, it is easy to lose sight of some core program principles and strategies. In fact, it is not clear whether at present there is a set of common principles and strategies that MJF and its partners agree on. Of course there are principles and strategies implicit in the everyday discourses and practices in place. However, there may be room to explore the need to have something more explicit and more consciously held by all concerned. The following are just a couple of examples to illustrate this point.

- **A Mro school without any Mro teacher:** Ramari Para Government Primary School, which received support from MJF through MROCHET not too long ago, is located at an

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area inhabited by Mro communities in Tangkabati Union, halfway between Bandarban district headquarters and a popular tourist destination, the Chimbuk hill. Over the years, the school has been assisted by various organizations including several NGOs, UNDP's CHTDF, Bandarban Hill District Council, and even the military. The school became nationalized recently, which is an achievement for all concerned who pushed for this. However, it was surprising to learn that as of December 2015, the school had no Mro teacher, even though all the students are Mro. It is not clear as to whether this issue is high on the agenda of different stakeholders of the school. Given the low levels of literacy that are still common in Mro communities, finding qualified persons from among them to become teachers is indeed difficult. However, it is for this very reason that extra attention from all concerned would be needed to such an important issue.

- **Facilitation may be a weak link:** As is common in the context of many NGO-implemented projects throughout Bangladesh, facilitation may constitute a weak link in terms of program implementation. The concept of facilitation is used on paper everywhere, but it is often seen as synonymous with training. Insofar as many MJF-supported activities are geared towards providing inputs, organizing training etc, a top-down bias of program implementation emerges instead of NGOs or their frontline personnel playing the role of true facilitators.
- **Program participants are referred to as beneficiaries:** In various project documents generated by MJF and its partners, program participants are more commonly referred to as beneficiaries. Thus it may be helpful to have some discussion among all concerned as to what each term signifies, and how they relate to different program principles and strategies.

Contextualizing success by keeping in mind deeper and wider processes

While MJF and its partners may take pride in success stories of the kind presented above, there is little room for complacency as many challenges remain on the road to peace and dignity that CHT communities are expected to move closer to through improved livelihoods and wellbeing. It goes without saying that 'success' is a relative term that is open to subjective and diverse interpretations by different stakeholders. In the context of the program that MJF and their partners have been implementing in the CHT, the perspectives that matter most are that of the program participants on the ground, belonging to different disadvantaged communities on the in different parts of the CHT. In the context of decades of displacement, deprivation and destructive experiences of other kinds that they have endured, rebuilding livelihoods and achieving peace, justice and dignity will be long struggles. However, most communities that MJF and its partners have worked with proved to be resourceful in the past when there was not much development assistance in the region, and now that they have some organizations trying

to help them overcome their poverty and marginalization, once again they are proving to be quite adaptive to changing circumstances.

The resilience that the struggling communities of the CHT display is not a gift that the external development actors have brought to them, but rather, it is something that they have possessed all along. If understood and depicted well, stories of this resilience can be their gift to those who are trying to help them with material assistance. While some of the stories presented in this document try to convey this, there are deeper and longer stories waiting to be written. We are talking about stories that are not only about resilience, but also about losses and sufferings, which make the resilience under consideration even more remarkable. But these deeper and longer stories have to be approached with utmost respect and care for the subjects involved, and the full stories can only be learned and retold after gaining their trust and consent. With this in mind, we end this section with an outline of a deeper and longer story of the kind just mentioned.

The longer story of a community displaced more than once...

The story narrated very briefly below comes from the residents of a Chakma *para* that is situated at a roadside locality not far from the upazila headquarters of Thanchi on the other side of the river Sangu. Members of this community are involved as program participants engaged in horticultural activities under an MJF-supported project implemented by Humanitarian Foundation. They have been involved in gardening before as they were relocated to their present place to cultivate orange trees under a horticultural project implemented by the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board. Their *para* is known as Kamlabagan, meaning Orange Garden, though no orange trees were visible in the vicinity as of December 2015. Local program participants working with support from MJF-Humanitarian Foundation are now engaged in cultivating mango and other fruit trees, which are growing well. However, this is not the focus of the present story. Rather, the longer story that this community has to tell is about their long trek through five decades of history involving repeated relocations, most of which were forced.

The first displacement took place in the mid 1960s, after the creation of the Kaptai dam, which submerged many villages in Rangamati, which is where the parents or grandparents of the members of the community that we are concerned with were originally from. A group of such displaced families, originally from a place called Shubolong in Rangamati, moved south to Bandarban in search of jum lands. Their search eventually took them to remote areas of the district near Arakan borders. However, during the period of armed conflicts and militarization that prevailed in the CHT during the 1970s and 1980s, they were force by government forces to leave their habitats in the border areas, and relocate at rehabilitation sites supported by the

CHT Development Board, which used to be run by the military. The village in which the Chakmas of this story presently lives has no electricity. Even though literacy rates among Chakma communities are generally high, in this particular community most adults do not know how to read or write. However, although illiterate, they are smart enough to say what needs to be said if asked questions like, 'How has this project benefited you?' One will have to gain their trust to know more about what may be in the back of their minds. Their life stories are full of many instances of resourcefulness and resilience. They are certainly good with growing crops in most difficult environments. But what do they think about how and when lasting peace will prevail in the CHT. Beyond the fruits of the trees that they are cultivating, do they hope to share the benefits of the CHT Accord? Do they seek, and hope to obtain, justice for all the wrongs that they have been subjected to? For a program that has as its goal 'resilient livelihoods and improved wellbeing of CHT communities to ensure peace and dignity', questions such as this are worth probing into. However, as indicated, these are questions that need to be explored with care, making sure that no harm will fall upon the respondents if they choose to open their hearts.

4. Conclusions

This document has tried to present an account of the journey that Manusher Jonno Foundation and its partner NGOs in the Chittagong Hill Tracts began over a decade ago, in 2004, by trying to help some of the most disadvantaged communities in the region overcome their development challenges. In an ethnically diverse region that had undergone over two decades of widespread conflicts, and had largely been left out of mainstream development assistance of the country, one decade is hardly a long time to address the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization experienced by communities living in rugged terrains with poor infrastructure. Given the slow pace of the implementation of the CHT accord, and a complex governance arrangement with many key institutions specifically set up for the region still not functioning properly, devising an effective strategy for development interventions was not an easy proposition. However, since taking up this challenge directly, Manusher Jonno Foundation and its partners remain committed to trying to make a positive difference in the region by working together different stakeholders that they have developed close working relationships with.

As of January 2016, MJF and its 16 partner NGOs are working through over 900 community based organizations in different parts of the CHT. Collectively, they are supporting disadvantaged communities of the region strive for greater livelihood security, improved access to primary education and other basic services, and promotion of their respective cultural traditions. Their collective efforts have led to considerable tangible results on the ground, as illustrated by some indicative data along with selected case studies put together in this document. For example, we have seen how over three hundred IGA groups, consisting of both

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men and women, have been engaged in different activities such as homestead vegetable gardening, livestock rearing, bee keeping, weaving, carpentry, running shops and so on. Apart from trying to increase individual incomes, many of these groups have been engaged in various initiatives benefiting whole communities in various areas, such as improved access to services and combating seasonal hunger. We also came to know about remarkable individuals such as Padda Mala Chakma, Kokila Tanchangya, Longe Khumi and Ma E Marma, each one of whom represents stories of individual resilience against various odds. Apart from in the area of livelihood, education also constituted an important area in which considerable achievements have been made. For example, there are stronger SMCs, active PTAs and/or Mothers Groups, better trained teachers, and improved physical facilities in supported schools, benefiting nearly 25,000 students (as of 2014) attending 337 schools, many of which had mother-tongue based multilingual education. There have also been many initiatives aimed at supporting the preservation and promotion of indigenous cultural traditions and practices.

Taken together, the degree and kinds of achievements attained by local communities in the CHT in the context of development support provided by MJF through its partners have been quite impressive. However, as noted already, there is no room for complacency since improvements can be made in several areas that are within the control of the implementing organizations. Moreover, there are also various challenges and constraints (e.g. slow pace of the full implementation of the CHT Accord) that are beyond the control of MJF or its partners. Given this, they need to keep revising and refining their programmatic objectives and strategies by building on past achievements and in the light changing circumstances. Ways will have to be devised for leveraging limited resources for optimal use, combining grassroots support as well as initiatives aimed at influencing policies and institutions. Given various dimensions of diversity in the CHT context, it is clear that project interventions supported by MJF in the region must not be uniform in design. Instead, there will be need for continuing to draw upon the expertise and insights of local partners who are more in tune with local realities. Amidst all the diversity, however, all concerned may continue to draw inspiration from one constant that the CHT communities have upheld against all odds: their spirit of resilience.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1: MJF partner NGOs

| Sl. No. | Name of NGO (Direct Partner)                                                         | Working District | Partnership Period | Program Focus | Sub-Partner (As of 2015) <sup>4</sup> |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1       | Ashika Manabik Unnayan Kendra (ASHIKA)                                               | Rangamati        | 2013-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 2       | Assistance for the Livelihoods of the Origins (ALO)                                  | Khagrachari      | 2011-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 3       | Bandarban Disabled Peoples Organization to Development (BDPOD)                       | Bandarban        | 2007-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 4       | Bolipara Nari Kalyan Somity (BNKS)                                                   | Bandarban        | 2013-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 5       | Centre for Integrated Programme and Development (CIPD)                               | Rangamati        | 2007-Present       | Livelihoods   | Hymawanti                             |
| 6       | ECO Development (ECO)                                                                | Bandarban        | 2004-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 7       | Gram Unnayan Sangathon (GRAUS)                                                       | Bandarban        | 2006-Present       | Education     | KOTHOWAIN                             |
| 8       | Green Hill (GH)                                                                      | Rangamati        | 2005-Present       | Education     | WEAVE, Progressive and HSDO           |
| 9       | Hilehili Education and Social Development Foundation (HESDF)                         | Rangamati        | 2006-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 10      | Humanitarian Foundation (HF)                                                         | Bandarban        | 2007-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 11      | Moanoghar                                                                            | Rangamati        | 2007-2012          | Education     |                                       |
| 12      | Mrochaw Chen Chap Eungra Tia (MROCHET)                                               | Bandarban        | 2004-Present       | Education     | -                                     |
| 13      | N. Z. Ekata Mohila Samiti (Ekata)                                                    | Bandarban        | 2013-Present       | Livelihoods   | -                                     |
| 14      | Society for Advancement and Networking among Grass Roots Indigenous People (SANGRAI) | Rangamati        | 2013-Present       | Education     | -                                     |
| 15      | Taungya                                                                              | Rangamati        | 2004-Present       | Education     | Ashroy Angon, SAUS                    |
| 16      | Trinamul Unnayan Samity (TUS)                                                        | Khagrachari      | 2009-Present       | Livelihoods   | FOWARA                                |
| 17      | Zabarang Kalyan Samity (ZKS)                                                         | Khagrachari      | 2010-Present       | Education     | Kabidang                              |

<sup>4</sup>Some NGOs had the following sub-partners in the past. ECO: PRACOS, Tajingdon and Ekata; GRAUS: SANGRA; and Green Hill: IMDOO, Shining Hill and PAHARA.

*Resilience in the Hills*

**Annex 2: Details of field visits undertaken by the consultant, accompanied by Wasiur Rahman of MJF, and project staff members of relevant partner NGOs**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Place</b>                               | <b>Activity</b>                                                                                        | <b>Remarks</b>                                          |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 6, 2015 | Green Hill office, Rangamati               | Meeting with relevant project coordinators of all MJF partner NGOs in three CHT districts              | Representatives of all 16 MJF partner NGOs were present |
| Oct 6, 2015 | Gabghona, Magban, Rangamati                | Visit to a herbal garden                                                                               | CIPD working area                                       |
| Oct 7, 2015 | Amtali, Jurachari, Rangamati               | Meeting with a GSK ('Village Protection Committee') and visit their rice bank                          | Do.                                                     |
| Oct 7, 2015 | Boherachari, Jurachari, Rangamati          | Meeting with teachers, SMC and Mothers' Group of Baherachari non-government primary school (NGPS)      | Green Hill working area                                 |
| Oct 8, 2015 | Bhushanchara, Barkal, Rangamati            | Meeting with teachers, SMC and Mothers' Group of Left Bhushanchara NGPS                                | Do.                                                     |
| Oct 8, 2015 | Dhakbhanga, Barkal, Rangamati              | Meeting with a CBO (Dhakbhanga Jumiya Unnayan Samity)                                                  | Hilehili working area                                   |
|             |                                            |                                                                                                        |                                                         |
| Dec 7, 2015 | Tankabati, Bandarban                       | Meeting with teachers, SMC and Mothers' Group Ramari Para Government Primary School                    | Mrochet working area                                    |
| Dec 7, 2015 | Kamlabagan Chakma Para, Thanchi, Bandarban | Meeting with members of CBOs representing program participants engaged in livelihoods activities       | Humanitarian Foundation (HF) working area               |
| Dec 7, 2015 | HF Training Center, Thanchi, Bandarban     | Interact with participants of various training programs, and attend a program of Tripura cultural team | Do.                                                     |
| Dec 8, 2015 | Tetulia Para, Taracha, Bandarban           | Meet with the local farmers group engaged in bee farming and other agricultural activities             | ECO-Development working area                            |
| Dec 8, 2015 | En route to Bangalhalia, Bandarban         | Observe a natural storage facility for agricultural products like rice and potatoes                    | Do.                                                     |
| Dec 8, 2015 | Bangalhalia, Bandarban                     | Visit a store managed by a female program participant                                                  | BDPOD working area                                      |

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