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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR HILLTRACTS UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE: CHALLENGES AND MILESTONES: YEAR 4

A Project of
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Church Fellowship
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IMPACT OF CDPHUP WAS OBSERVED FIRST HAND!



My visit to both tribal areas in February 2024 gave me a wonderful opportunity to see how well the program was advancing and to meet the dedicated leadership in both the Tripura and Chakma tribal areas. The model of 7 communities in each tribal area working together under strong leadership had proven to be a successful model for empowering rural communities. The work of the full time Supervisors along with their Mentors allows for an effective way to share new technologies as well as facilitate the core loan program that each church community operates independently, but under the close supervision of the local association leadership.

This past winter season was the first with an active potato program of evaluation of imported Holland seed versus the local indigenous potatoes named Deshi alu. The on-farm experiments were challenged by heavy rains after planting in November followed by late blight that attacked most potato fields regardless of seed origin during the growing season.



Much was learned about how to select good seed as well as how to prevent late blight losses through preventative fungicide sprays.

A major new focus is encouraging young entrepreneurs to be dynamic farmers who prepare a business plan and seek funding from CDPHUP to make the necessary investments.



Several such applications have been received and more are expected. Along with this we also are encouraging larger investments in larger power tillers that can be owned and managed by some communities for custom work for its members as well as non members with a fee for service arrangement.

Based on my observations, the model we have developed and implemented is an effective way for communities to work together to help each member prosper with more food and more cash to live well. This leads to whole community development. Agriculture can become attractive for young people with the new technology and financing available to make it a reality!



*Congratulations to CDPHUP on your success!!
Peter VanderZaag PhD.*

IMPACT OF CDPHUP IN COMMUNITIES



I visited some fruit gardens as sustainable livelihood programs of local churches. I talked with some church members and learned about the changes like increased church and family income, increased attendance in church, parents supporting their children in study, and growing unity among the church members.

It was a great opportunity for me to visit some project areas of the Chakma community in Rangamati. However, from my observation, I found that, there are still some challenges for implementing the project smoothly and for a more positive impact. As an agricultural project, we need technical support for planning, monitoring, implementation, and production. It is essential to have the expertise for future improvement. However, finding a full-time Agriculture Specialist for support is very challenging and costly. Church members need to undergo a transformation as Christians, not just economically but also through the CCT (Church and Community Transformation) program. We are thrilled and honored to collaborate with the Church community in Chakma and Tripura. If it is in God's plan, we aspire to expand the program to other Churches in the northern part of Bangladesh in the future.



We like to give thanks to SPSP, especially brother Peter VanderZaag & Sister Dr. Victoria Demonteverde for their support and prayer. Hope our partnership will continue and more church communities will be involved in future.

*Milton Munshi, Secretary,
Development Board BBCE*

IMPACT OF CDPHUP IN COMMUNITIES



Since the beginning of this project, I have been serving as the coordinator for the Development Board. Implementing the project in the Hill tracts has been quite challenging from the start, but we are grateful to still be on track. Seeing the positive changes within the church community is truly inspiring, and we are witnessing those changes increasing day by day.

I had the chance to visit Tripura and the Chakma Communities in February of this year with my brother, Peter. It was a memorable trip for me because I learned a lot about agriculture from him. Additionally, I witnessed the development in the lives of the church community people.

In my overall observation, I found some challenges are still there to get a better impact and they are as follows:

- Implement or follow-up the yearly action plan regular in field level
- Monthly program reporting and monitoring
- Less knowledge of agriculture production and modern technology
- Cold storage is far away from project areas
- Joint Bank account with DF
- Conflict between ethnic groups



Milton Munshi, Secretary, Development Board BBCF

This project approach is very effective for the Church communities. It would be more effective if we do some activity about transforming Christian life. Also, this agriculture-based approach could be extended to other areas to strengthen the Church community and for a sustainable strategy.

Big thanks to SPSI for continued support and especially thanks to Brother Peter VanderZaag & Sister Victoria Demonteverde for their support and guidance.

Simon Amit Das, Project Coordinator

GROWING FRUIT TREES

A response for sustainable food production in the Hilltracts

Jhum cultivation, known as shifting cultivation, is an indigenous agricultural practice of slash and burn of the forests followed by growing several crops until the land is no longer productive and are often left barren for years.

To provide sustainable livelihood opportunities on such land, CDPHUP initiated planting of fruit gardens by 14 Tripura and Chakma communities for the Year 2022 and 2023. In 2022, Tripura purchased 700 fruit tree seedlings in 2022 and distributed 5 to 10 seedlings to its members.

However, they realized that distributing few seedlings per member will not have a long term economic impact since trees are scattered and management differs.

Hence, in 2023, the Tripura communities decided that instead of dividing the 110-115 mango seedlings per organization into its members, only 1 farmer will plant the total allocated seedlings per community per year.

In this way, they will be able to establish 1 fruit tree garden per community or 7 gardens for Tripura communities per year.

For 2023, the farmers that established fruit tree gardens were Karmochan Tripura, Shamal Kanty Tripura, Rijoy Tripura, Rakesh Tripura, Jagat Moy Tripura, Anil Tripura, and Sudorson Tripura from the associations of Dhumnigat, Chotabari, Jamtoli, Chelachara Para, Khagrapur, Wakra Para, and Mohalchara respectively.

The Chakma communities opted to distribute the seedlings to members of their churches. All the mango seedlings planted by members of Rangkarja, Suknachora, and Philadelphia survived and are growing. There were mortalities in Gonggarum Muk, Baibonchora, and Christian Para.

Generally, seedlings planted were well taken care of and communities look forward to the harvest in the next few years.



However, these were replaced at their own expense. In Prosangsha church, the saplings planted were coconut, betel nut, mango, dragon fruit, and plum.

POTATO PRODUCTION

Challenges and Possible Solutions



In October 2023, CDPHUP purchased 350 kgs Holland tuber seeds from BADC Cumilla Cold Storage for distribution to farmers. This is part of the On-farm trial so that farmers can compare the performance with their Deshi alu tuber seeds stored at home or bought from the market. Traditionally, Deshi alu (indigenous local potato) seeds are being kept by farmers in their homes from harvest until the next growing season. For example, Ranjon Joy Tripura from Dhumnigath association stored 15 kgs of Deshi Alu seed at home. However, most of the tubers rotted in storage and only 5 kgs. were left for planting. Some plants grown from these tubers later rot in the field due to heavy rains after planting. On November planting, Ranjon Joy and Charanta Tripura were provided with 10 kgs each of imported Holland potato seeds from BADC. There was some seed tuber rot after planting due to heavy rains, however, surviving plants had good growth and yield.

Join Tripura from Jamtoli association grows Deshi Alu every year. After the potato harvest, they selected good tubers and kept 100 to 150 kgs of seed tubers in a cold store facility. The seeds were in good condition after 7-9 months in cold storage. However, many rotted in the field after planting due to heavy rains. He was able to harvest about 30-40 kgs very small tubers.

Rakesh Tripura, Hemongkar Tripura from Khagrapur Association, Anil Tripura, a farmer from Wakwak Para and Caran Tripura also planted Deshi alu seed and or Holland seed from BADC. Similarly they all experienced the heavy rains after planting that caused some seed tuber rot.

The major problem experienced by all growers was Late blight caused by *Phytophthora infestans*.

This was a surprise unexpected event that actually affected all potato crops across the whole country including the hill tracts. The failure to spray fungicides in a timely manner resulted in substantial yield losses.



In Chakma communities, Binoy Sonkor and Subidon Chaka of Rangkarja and Milonto Chakma of Christian Para, Baibonchora, Prodi Jyot and Amor Bijoy Chakma of Gongarum Muk all grew potatoes of both the Deshi alu and Holland seed from BADC. These communities had the same issues as their counterparts: heavy rains and later late blight attacks that made for some very poor yields often not being a profitable harvest. After the harvest in March, 150 kgs of tuber seed was purchased from some better fields where positive selection was done to only keep seed from healthy plants for cold storage at BADC.

The use of quality planting materials and multiply them with careful selection by only keeping the tubers from healthy plants (no foliar virus symptoms observed) is the best way for the tribal growers to become self sufficient in having good quality seed for replanting every year. This can be done with both the Holland seed as well as the Deshi alu.



YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS INVESTING ON NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The CDPHUP is encouraging young farmers to become successful entrepreneurs by having larger businesses that will give them satisfaction in being successful farmers as well as providing more food for the local population. Loans are provided by CDPHUP to worthy young applicants.



Mr. Colin Tripura, a young entrepreneur from Jamtoli Association initiated a startup business on mushroom culture. The initial investment cost for 100 mushroom bags was 12,000 to 14,000 Taka with an estimated gross income of more or less 30,000 Taka. He plans to slowly expand to 1000 bags of mushrooms.



Pijush Kanti Tripura, a college student and a member of Jamtoli Association, cultivates flower broom grass (Ful jharu) together with his parents. The flower broom was planted during jhum season and he started collecting flowers and selling them in the market on January and he earned 15,000 Taka.

He got a contract for flower broom at a wholesale price of 60,000 Taka. To be able to meet the demand, he applied for a 20,000 Taka loan. At harvest, he earned 60,000 Taka.

These are noteworthy stories of young hardworking entrepreneurs that succeeded due to CDPHUP's income generating activities.

MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC).

The PAC regularly conducts quarterly meeting to discuss challenges and how to address them accordingly. Likewise, to make plans and make necessary decisions regarding CDPHUP implementation within the District. The PAC is composed of District Convenor and Mentor, District Representative, Supervisor, and 1 representative per church.



Achievement sharing.

Regular sharing within church association were conducted wherein members discussed, evaluated and made plans for their local activities.



Participation in Hill Agriculture Advance.

Three farmers from 3 Tripura organizations participated in this initiative by the Agriculture Bureau wherein they were trained on good agricultural practices.



Project Evaluation workshop.

Representatives from members of the seven Tripura associations conducted a workshop at Khagrapur J.B.C. Hall in February 2024 and discussed about their successes and challenges. Chakma communities also conducted project evaluation workshops in Proshongsha Baptist Church in Rangamati.

They reported that since CDPHUP started, church member attendance for worship services increased. Likewise, giving of tithes and gifts had increased in every church. Farmers are seriously working for their families. Household poverty decreased due to increase in family income. Members were also able to pay for education and purchase additional clothes for their children.



Training on on-farm applied research.



This training was conducted on December 29, 2023 at Khagrapur. This training aim to equip participants with knowledge and skills on how to start an applied on-farm research. There were participants coming from the 7 communities.



DISTRIBUTION OF CAPITAL ITEMS



On March 2024, Mohalchara Baptist Church and Jamtoli Baptist Church received one water pump each while Wakra Para Baptist Church received a water pump and mini power tiller. The Suknachori Baptist Church received one water pump and one sprayer machine while Filadelpiya Baptist church received 2 sprayer machines. One printer was given to Chakma communities.

POTENTIAL OF PAPAYA CULTIVATION

Mukta Lal Tripura from Chatabari para association has benefited immensely from papaya cultivation. He cultivated papaya with a loan of 20,000 Taka. He has tripled his income as he already had earned 70,000 Taka. He look forward to earn an additional at least 20,000 Taka from succeeding harvests. He has paid his loan and was able to pay for his son's education.



SUPERVISOR'S NOTES KAMENDRA TRIPURA AND MILTON CHAKMA

CDPHUP has positive impact in the communities socially and economically. Everyone are enthusiastic to do something for their families. Most farmers are hard working as they would like to provide well for their family needs and their children's education. The different communities have the potential to continuously prosper in their future projects.

CDPHUP PROJECTS IN COMMUNITIES



Contributors:

Peter VanderZaag, Ph.D.

Milton Munshi

Simon Amit Das

Milton Chakma

Kamendra Tripura

Victoria Demonteverde, Ed.D.

Layout Artist:

Kayla Canoy