

## *Programme Area Summary*

**Country:** Bangladesh

**Programme Area:** Participation and Governance: Indigenous Community Rights 2004-2009

NB: VSOB's Participation and Governance Goal Area works in two strategic areas: Governance and Indigenous Community Rights. This programme focuses on Indigenous Community Rights.

### **What is the aim of the programme area?**

Indigenous community members exercise their rights free from discrimination and live in dignity.

### **Why is VSO working in that particular Programme Area and region?**

The indigenous communities are one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of the population of Bangladesh. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by extreme poverty and the fact that they can practice very limited human rights and lack the support of social justice. The key features characterising indigenous people's vulnerability are:

- They are not yet recognized as "indigenous people" or "adibashi" by the Government in the constitution
- A large part of them falls under the extreme poverty level
- They have lesser access to basic services like health and education
- They are involved in land disputes
- They suffer discrimination by the dominating culture.

Moreover, there is no initiative to preserve indigenous heritage and organizations working for indigenous people are lacking capacity.

In this context, the VSOB participation and governance programme strives towards enhancing the capacity of organizations working for indigenous people and involving local government institutions in indigenous people's development. With its activities in partnership, VSO will work in these key areas: advocacy, service delivery and accountability, transparency and gender sensitivity.

VSO will prioritise its activities in the Northwest and Southeast regions. It will work to a limited extent in the Northeast region. The learning from the first two regions will be applied to strengthen the activities in the Northeast region.

### **Key beneficiaries and partner organizations working for indigenous communities**

- Northwest: GBK AUS UDP PUAMDO MAASAUS BDO
- Northeast and Central: ECDO Tarango BASA
- Southeast: Green Hill Moanoghar ALO ZKS PBM Pajureco

### **Key objectives of the programme and cross-cutting themes**

1. Capacity of organizations working for indigenous communities is enhanced
2. Capacity of local government institutions to address indigenous community needs is enhanced.

Strategic Approaches:

- Empowerment Approaches: VSOB will build individual and organization's capacity to empower people to claim and exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.
- Participation Approaches: VSOB will build individual and organisation's capacity so that organization is able to ensure active participation of the community in the development process.
- Inclusion Approaches: VSOB will promote participation of Bangali community on indigenous community rights activity.

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- Reciprocal Obligation Approaches: VSOB will continue to work through partnership. It has formulated a Partnership Layer strategy, identifying core partners, network partners and wider stakeholders.
- Gender Equity: All programmes will seek to identify and eradicate gender discrimination within indigenous communities.

### **Current programme activities**

#### *Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

- Long term volunteers and youth for development volunteers
- Management advisers (capacity building)
- Human resource adviser
- Documentation and Communication Adviser
- Strategic Planning Adviser
- Research and Documentation Officer
- Gender Mainstreaming Adviser

#### *Workshop, training and conferences*

- Gender mainstreaming
- Rights Based Development and land rights advocacy
- A programme area review workshop participated in by partners, volunteers and staff was launched in April 2006 to assess the 2005-2006 programme implementation.

#### *Research*

- Research in 2004-2005 on the number of organisations involved in IP (indigenous people) work.

#### *Advocacy and Global Education*

- Advocacy focused on land rights issue, which is central to the existence of the IP communities. An advocacy group was formed which developed videos and booklet on IP struggles and launched community celebrations during IP days.

#### *Partner exchange visits /study tours*

- In November 2005, VSOB Indigenous Communities Rights PM and 4 local partners through the LINKS programme made a study tour to IP communities in the Philippines. Upon return, they shared their learning with other local partners.

#### *Providing grants and/or equipment for partners*

- One-off grants and placement support funds were used to support the celebration of the International Indigenous Day in two regions and observe one IP festival in Northwest. These events are strong agents of mobilizing IPs.

### **What makes VSO's work in this programme area special?**

The VSOB Indigenous Community Rights Programme focuses on supporting the most disadvantaged section of the Bangladesh population, the indigenous community, to fulfil their rights and build their capability as a people. This clearly addresses VSO's global aim of fighting poverty and dis-advantaged. Experience in this area could contribute to VSO's understanding of Indigenous People's struggles for self-determination.