

Golden Fibre, Bangladesh

This five-year project aims to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of poor jute growers in two of the poorest districts of Bangladesh.



What problem or need is the project addressing?

Faridpur and Gopalganj are two of the poorest districts in Bangladesh. A recent survey revealed that average per capita income is far below \$1 a day.

Both districts produce very high quality jute, which provides a crucial source of income and food security for poor people. However jute growers face a number of problems including unfair prices, lack of quality seeds, lack of technical knowledge, unfavourable market linkages, and low domestic demand. Increasing numbers of poor jute growers are being forced to sell their produce at very low prices, often below the cost of production, to meet their basic needs (distress sales). During such times, they cut back on food, withdraw children from school and reduce spending on healthcare

What is the project doing?

The project has three approaches:

1. Empowering and organising jute growers to develop a collective voice, enabling them to influence policy and supply chain issues
2. Building the capacity of jute growers to improve productivity, quality and market access for jute
3. Building the capacity of local organisations to support growers and facilitate service delivery to ensure sustainability

These approaches include supporting jute growers to form groups and work collectively to negotiate better prices and policies, and providing training on improved farming and business practices.

What impact has the project had?

By the end of the project we expect jute growers to realise better living conditions and increased incomes as a result of improved farming practices, fairer prices and terms of trade, and more supportive government policies.

So far the following has been achieved:

- 4,145 jute growers have organised into 142 groups, further federated into four regional associations. This has given them an identity that has been recognised by government. The groups and associations are now able to identify their rights, are collectively engaging with government bodies, and have begun to access services such as micro credit.
- In order to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and natural shocks (e.g. flash floods) the groups have begun to initiate group savings. About 90% of the groups have also undertaken supplementary income activities such as fish farming, livestock rearing, leasing land for cultivation, and starting small businesses.
- Lead farmers have been trained on better farming practices and quality seed production and preservation. These lead farmers have gone on to train their group members. This has also included effective group operation, recognising farmers' rights, networking and negotiation.
- There is a shortage of good quality seed supply in Bangladesh so the project has trained 20 farmers on seed production, preservation and certification. Due to the success of this intervention, 20 groups are keen to produce their seed collectively on leased land for their members.

Our local partner

Traidcraft Exchange is implementing this project in partnership with [TARANGO](#). TARANGO is a Bangladeshi NGO that works with marginalised communities throughout Bangladesh. It has been working with jute producers in Faridpur and Gopalganj since 1989, and has a special focus on women's rights and empowerment.

How is this project funded?

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