



“We have full faith in the work Traidcraft is doing. We know we can make a better future for our children.”

Abu Hanif | Bangladesh

EqualiTEA

Summary:

Our EqualiTEA programme works with smallholder tea growing families living in rural and often very isolated areas. Through a combination of technical training, encouraging tea growers to work together and providing a vital support network, the project team are working hard to transform lives and make the tea sector profitable for even the most disadvantaged farming families.

We've been working to expand our work in India and keep reaching more smallholder tea growers. In Bangladesh our work is more pioneering - tea growing is relatively new to Bangladeshi farmers and there is a growing domestic market. We initially set up around 1,000 new tea growers in Bangladesh, but we're now expanding the programme to help even more smallholder farmers earn a fair income in the tea sector. This programme is benefiting about 170,000 people.

This programme is generously supported by the UK Government's Department for International Development, Christian Aid and the European Commission, as well grant-making trusts and individuals.

Background:

Our target communities are isolated with few livelihood options. Farming households are classed as 'extreme' poor as average per capita income per day is about 50 BDT (£0.42) based on average annual household income of 90,416 BDT (£753) and a family size of 5. This is well below international and national poverty lines. People also fare poorly with regard to other socio-economic indicators; 71% live in multi-dimensional poverty, over 60% are illiterate, 63% are in debt and there are high levels of malnutrition (about 43%). Families spend about 50% of their income on food.

Agriculture is the main source of income, with rice and sugarcane the dominant crops. However crop yields are very low and about 15% of the land remains fallow since it is not suitable for many crops. Research has shown that tea is one of the few crops suitable for cultivation in the target areas. Tea cultivation can also help improve the ecology by

reducing landslides, soil erosion and ground water depletion and increasing soil fertility. However, smallholder tea growing is fairly new in Bangladesh, and there is no comprehensive programme to promote smallholder tea growing in the region. This project will therefore promote tea cultivation as a sustainable livelihood option in a region which has limited agricultural production, and high levels of unemployment and migration.

The Programme:

This programme of work is supporting thousands of smallholder farming families to improve agricultural practices, cultivate tea and adopt new income-generating activities to diversify their income. It is ensuring access to agricultural knowledge, information, skills, services and inputs from 'barefoot' service providers, private sector (tea factories and companies) and public sector (extension service providers). It is also building the capacity of farmers to lobby for their rights and entitlements from public/private stakeholders so they can influence decision-making and improve their income from agriculture. There are four main activity areas:

1. *Encouraging smallholder farmers to work collectively and collaboratively* so they can share learning, collectively purchase inputs or equipment, negotiate with public/private sector stakeholders, and collectively access services and support.
2. *Developing strong agricultural enterprises through better farming and business practices and diversification into tea.* Families will receive training on tea cultivation and plant management as well as general agricultural practices so they can increase yields of both tea and other food crops. Families will also receive tea saplings.
3. *Ensuring smallholder farmers have access to appropriate ongoing agricultural services* by training 40 'barefoot service providers' to provide ongoing grassroots support to farmers in their communities. We will also link farmers to other service providers to ensure they can access appropriate agricultural services/support to help them improve cultivation practices, increase productivity, reduce costs and improve quality.
4. *Developing systems to support smallholder farming households to diversify their income.* This will include helping them to access loans so they can purchase agricultural inputs. This will include access to a revolving fund set up by the project as well as more formal financial services. The project will also develop the skills of household members (particularly women) so they can develop new income-generating activities and encourage groups to set up savings and investment schemes.

The Benefits:

We expect this programme to lead to an average 70% increase in annual household income. Improving incomes for farming households will ensure they have more income for food, healthcare and education.



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION



UKaid
from the British people