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From the desk of Executive Director,

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present to you the Ethnic Community Development Organization's Annual Report for the year []. This past year has been a transformative period for ECDO, marked by significant achievements and meaningful progress in our mission to support the indigenous communities of the Sylhet region. In the realm of education, our initiatives have reached more children than ever before, ensuring that they receive quality education and opportunities for a brighter future. Through the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff and volunteers, we have been able to launch new educational programs, improve existing ones, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Our commitment to human rights has also seen remarkable advancements. We have conducted numerous awareness campaigns, provided legal assistance, and advocated for the rights of marginalized groups. These efforts have not only raised awareness but have also empowered individuals to stand up for their rights and contribute to their communities with renewed confidence and vigor.

The impact of our work is best captured through the stories of the individuals and families we serve. Their resilience and determination inspire us every day and remind us of the importance of our mission. In this report, you will find several of these inspiring stories that highlight the transformative power of our programs.

Financially, ECDO continues to grow, thanks to the generous contributions of our donors and the unwavering support of our partners. Our fundraising activities have been successful, allowing us to expand our programs and reach even more people in need. Our financial summary provides a transparent account of our income and expenditures, demonstrating our commitment to accountability and responsible stewardship of resources.

As we look to the future, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. We have set ambitious goals for the coming year, including expanding our educational outreach, enhancing our human rights advocacy, and introducing new economic empowerment projects. None of this would be possible without the support of our dedicated team, our partners, and our donors.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Executive Committee members, staffs, volunteers, partners, and donors. Your dedication, hard work, and generosity are the driving forces behind our success. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of the indigenous communities of Sylhet region.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us. We look forward to continuing our work together to create a more just, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

With sincere gratitude,
Lakshmikanta Singh
Executive Director

Overview

Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) is a voluntary development organization established in 2004 with a mission to enhance the development of various indigenous groups in the Sylhet region of northeastern Bangladesh. ECDO holds the UN special consultative ECOSOC status since 2016, signifying its commitment and contribution to the global development community. ECDO embraces its indigenous identity, utilizing it as a powerful tool to establish strong connections with local indigenous community leaders, a distinguishing feature that sets it apart from non-indigenous organizations. To leverage this advantage, we implement a rights based approach to development, actively including communities in all decision making processes. Our guiding philosophy is to entirely comprehend the needs and circumstances of the indigenous people by using a variety of resources, such as scholarly research of the highest caliber and frequent open-forum discussion in communities. We constantly work to increase the level of community empowerment, ownership and long-term sustainability in our projects by making their analyses as participatory as we can.

Indigenous peoples have no official recorded history, yet it is believed that around 475 years ago, over 435 different indigenous societies flourished in different portions of Bangladesh. Over time, a large number of migrants from various parts of the Asian subcontinent arrived, forcing the local indigenous population to relocate under cruel force. The districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts are currently home to the majority of indigenous communities.

The major ethnic groups residing in the plains of Sylhet are the Khasi, Manipuri, Garo, Patro, Bishnupriya, and Tripura. The Manipuri and Khasi are the two main ethnic groups in Sylhet Division, and they each have unique language and cultural customs. There are 16,508 indigenous people are there [BBS 2022, Population Survey]. It has been estimated that more than 500,000 indigenous people live in the Sylhet Division and confront a variety of particular challenges.

Indigenous communities nowadays suffer even more difficulties as a result of environmental degradation, making them victims of the negative consequences of industrialization. They can't take advantage of and benefit from Bangladesh's economic boom as they don't have the necessary knowledge and understanding.

The Bangladesh Constitution guarantees the equality of all citizens; however, it has no protections for people who identify as both indigenous people and citizens of Bangladesh. As a result, the government frequently disregards the particular difficulties faced by indigenous groups, which exacerbates their socio-economic situation. Compared to mainstream groups, indigenous people face more obstacles while trying to exercise their core human rights. Their situation has become more complex due to the mainstream culture's erasure of indigenous laws, beliefs, customs, and perspectives. In the absence of explicit legal procedures to prevent discrimination based on ethnic origin, human rights abuses and discrimination have become more severe.

Our Mission & Vision

Our aim is to ensure that indigenous people realize the importance of equality and empowerment and to eliminate the discrimination against these communities in society.

From its inception, ECDO has formed its mission and vision by considering the opinions and needs of the indigenous people themselves.

ECDO's mission is to assist indigenous communities who are deprived of rights and opportunities for a positive and sustainable change by implementing both service delivery and rights based approaches. ECDO implements its activities in a fully participatory and bottom-up approach with an emphasis on empowerment from within indigenous communities.

ECDO envisages a society where empowered, educated, aware and culturally diverse indigenous groups are able to ensure their own human development that would be free from discrimination, poverty and exploitation.

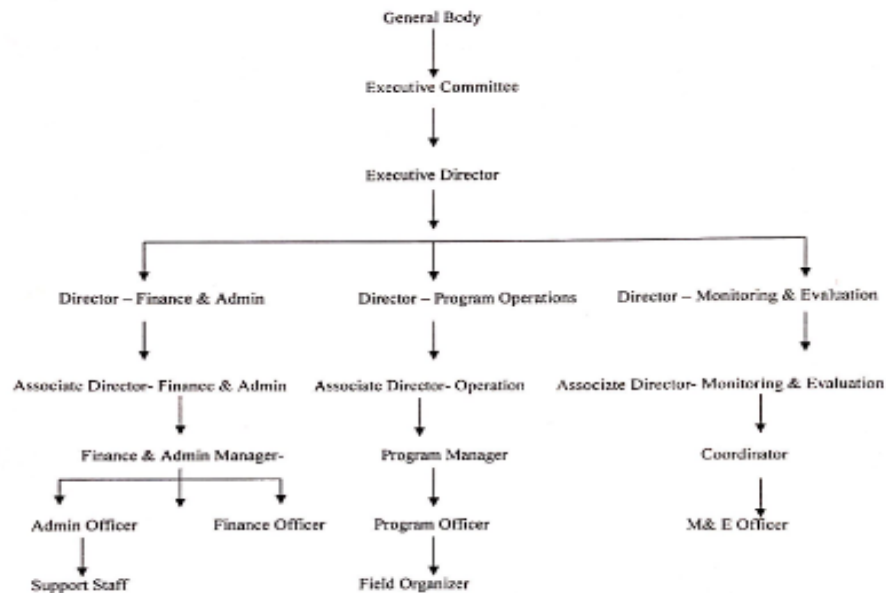
A significant majority of ECDO's staff comprises indigenous individuals, creating a unique and strong bond of trust between the organization and its target beneficiaries. Because of this innate link, ECDO is able to gain a thorough grasp of the issues and needs facing the indigenous communities it works with. To make sure that aid matches these communities' unique needs, ECDO is dedicated to a thorough consultation process that involves actively seeking their feedback and talking about their development priorities.

Our Values:

ECDO committed to inclusivity, empowerment, equity, cultural respect, sustainability, collaboration, transparency and a community-centered approach to ensure no one is left behind in the journey toward development.

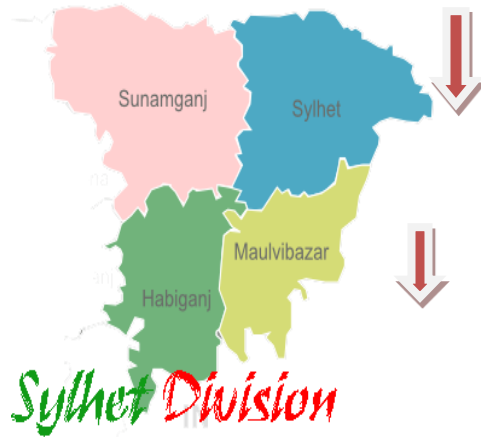
Organizational Structure

Organogram of Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO)



Where we work

ECDO is the only development organization working for all plain land indigenous communities in the Sylhet Division. Our project areas are scattered throughout Sylhet Division, but primarily focus on areas that have a dense indigenous population, including Sylhet and Moulvibazar Districts.



Legal status

- Registered (Syl-853/2003) under the Social Service Act 1961, Ministry of Social Welfare and Government of Bangladesh, dated 24.09.2003
- Registered (Reg. No-2385) under the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Rules 1978, NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh, renewed until 20.08.2028
- Enlisted from District Youth Development authority under Ministry of Youth and Sports (Syl-197/2008, dated on 05.05.2008)
- ECDO is also registered to PADOR (European Commission)

Executive Committee:

ECDO's Executive Committee comprises of seven members, who are either elected or selected by the General Committee, every second year at the Annual General Meeting.

Key achievements & Milestone

Our Support to Tea Labor, Patro and Manipuri Indigenous Community Children

Over the past decade, ECDO has been dedicated to improving the educational opportunities for children within the tea labor and Patro indigenous communities. Through our unwavering commitment and strategic initiatives, we have achieved several significant milestones:

1. **Completion of Primary Education:**
 - Successfully supported over 1100 indigenous children in completing their primary education. This has not only increased literacy rates but also empowered these children to pursue further education and personal development.
2. **Infrastructure Development:**
 - Established/Renovation of three Education Support Centre (ESC) and two Manipuri Language Centre (MLC) in remote areas to ensure accessible education for all children, regardless of their geographic location.
 - Provided essential educational materials including note books and other necessary stationery to 200 students annually.
3. **Teacher Training Programs:**
 - Conducted comprehensive teacher training workshops aimed at enhancing the teaching skills and methodologies for 6 local community teachers.
 - Introduced bilingual teaching approaches, focusing on interactive and inclusive learning environments.
4. **Community Engagement and Awareness:**
 - Organized 20 community awareness programs highlighting the importance of education for long-term community development and poverty alleviation.
 - Successfully engaged 300 parents and guardians in educational activities, fostering a supportive environment for children's learning at home.

In addition to our primary education initiatives, ECDO has placed a strong emphasis on preserving and promoting the Manipuri language and scripts. Our targeted efforts in this area have resulted in the following milestones:

1. **Language Classes and Curriculum Development:**
 - Developed a comprehensive Manipuri language curriculum tailored to the needs of Manipuri children, integrating cultural and linguistic heritage into the learning process.
 - Conducted daily language classes (except one day weekend) for about 60 Manipuri children before starting their mainstream school, ensuring consistent and quality language education.
2. **Teacher Capacity Building:**
 - Trained 5 Manipuri language teachers focusing on modern and effective teaching techniques and sharing best practices and innovative teaching strategies.
 - Facilitated regular meeting with local guardians.
3. **Outreach and Advocacy:**
 - Engaged with local government bodies to advocate for the inclusion of Manipuri language programs in public schools.

As a result, More than **600** Manipuri students can read and write using **Manipuri script**

As we reflect on these milestones, ECDO remains committed to our mission of providing quality education and preserving cultural heritage for indigenous communities. We look forward to expanding our programs, increasing our reach, and continuing to make a positive impact in the lives of children and their communities.

Projects

With a great deal of experience and obstacles, ECDO has concluded its working year, which ran throughout January 2023 to December 2023. We implemented three major projects in 2023:

1. Primary Level Education Support for Marginalized Children (PLESMC)
2. Secondary Education Support for Marginalized Children (SESMS)
3. Community Development Through the Initiative of Local Volunteers (CDTILV)
4. Leadership Development of Tea Garden Women Worker on their Rights (LDTWWR)

By reducing the number of primary school dropouts from ethnic groups due to language obstacles, the PLESMC project strives to ensure fundamental education for all. The SESMS project, on the other hand, aims to ensure secondary education for indigenous students. The primary objectives of LDTWWR projects are to sensitize women tea-worker about their legal rights, including labor laws, wages, and decent workplace and to develop their leadership skills where the ultimate goal is to have a strong network of women leaders capable of driving positive change within their communities.

1. Primary Level Education Support for Marginalized Children (PLESMC)

Objective: Ensuring primary education for all by preventing dropouts from ethnic groups from primary school due to language barriers

At a glance

Grant Period: Jan 2024-Dec 2026

Communities Covered

- Manipuri
- Patro
- Tea garden communities

Who benefited

Direct beneficiaries-

Boys: 76 Girls: 77

Total: 153 students

Indirect beneficiaries-765

Where did we work?

Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Sylhet district and Kamalganj upazila under Moulvibazar district

About the project

ECDO has been implementing PLESMC project since January 2024 in Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts with the support of Hei Verden, Norway. There are three Education Support Centers run by ECDO where children from tea labor community and Patro community are enrolled in primary education. Moreover, two Manipuri Language Centers are also established where Manipuri children are studying by using their own Manipuri script. Furthermore, ECDO has been playing an advisory role for ensuring quality education through engaging local governments, experts and ordinary people in parallel.

Objectives

- Ensuring primary education for all by preventing dropouts from ethnic groups from primary school due to language barriers
- Making the school curriculum accessible to ethnic minority children by imparting lessons through native language teachers
- Enhancing Bengali language skills of children of ethnic groups studying in primary level

Main activities

- Refreshers training for ESC teachers (1 day)
- Provide school bag and educational materials to each ESC student
- Motivational award for ESC students
- Organize quarterly meetings between Education Support Centre Management Committee and Gov't Primary School Management Committees
- Organize Education Fair for ESC students
- Manipuri text book print for MLC's (1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year)
- 3 days long TOT for Manipuri Language centre teachers
- Refreshers training for Manipuri Language Centre (MLC) teachers (1 day)
- Provide educational materials to each MLC student
- Motivational award for MLC students
- Bi-monthly Language Centre Management Committee meeting to oversee the running of the center

Target and achievement of PLESMC project

Sl. No	Main Activities	Our Target	Actual Achievements
i.	Printing Manipuri Text Book for MLC (Chapter-II)	350 copies of books	350 Copies of books
ii.	Distributing Education Materials to ESC (25+26+25= 76) students and MLC (41+33=74) student	150 students	162 students
iii.	Arranging quarterly meetings with Education Support Centre (ESC) Management Committee and	3x4= 12 meetings	12 meetings
iv.	Arranging quarterly meetings with Manipuri Language Center (MLC)Management Committee	3x 4=12 meeting	12 meetings
v.	Motivational award for outstanding results to ESC and MLC students	3x3x5= 45 students	45 students

Table: Target and achievements of PLESMC project in 2024



ESC and MLC students actively engaged in activities

2. Secondary Education Support for Marginalized Students (SESMS)

Objective:

Ensuring secondary education for all indigenous students and reduce dropouts' rate among them from secondary level.

Grant Period: 2023-2027

At a glance

Grant Period: 2023-2027

Communities Covered

- Manipuri
- Patro
- Tea garden communities

Who benefited

Direct:30

Indirect beneficiaries 150

Where did we work?

Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Sylhet district.

About the project

ECDO has been implementing the SESMS project since January 2023 in Sylhet district with the support of Hei Verden, Norway.

Objectives

- Ensuring Secondary education for all indigenous students by preventing dropouts from secondary school.

Main activities

- Provide admission and tuition fees to 30 students in grades VII and VIII
- Provide school bag and educational materials to these 30 students
- Organize quarterly meetings with guardians of the beneficiary students.

Target and achievements of SESMS project in 2023

Sl. No	Main Activities	Our Target	Achievements
i.	Providing admission and tuition fees to 25 students in grades VII and VIII (15+15=30)	30 students	30 students
ii.	Distributing Education Materials to 30 students in grades VII and VIII (15+15=30)	30 students	30 students
iii.	Organizing quarterly meetings with the guardians of 30 students	4 meetings	4 meetings

Table: Target and achievements of SESMS project in 2024



Students are receiving their education materials

3. Community Development Through the Initiative of Local Volunteers (CDTILV)

ECDO has been implementing CDTILV project since January 2024 in Sylhet Sadar upazila under Sylhet districts with support from Global Fund for Children (GFC)

Grant Period: January 2024- December 2025

Where did we work?

Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Sylhet District

Goal and objectives: The overarching goal of the project is to address the root causes of problems faced by marginalized communities and promote community-led development initiatives through SALT-CLCP approach.

- a. Formation of a robust facilitation team committed to promoting the community's self-development.
- b. Facilitation of community-led initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development and empowerment

Main activities

1. Project Launching
2. Formation of community volunteers and support two groups
3. Courtyard Meeting
4. Knowledge fare
5. Exposure visit
6. Safe Guarding Policy Development
7. Capacity building program for organization Staffs

Sl. No	Main Activities	Our Target	Achievements
I.	Project Launching	50 Participants	50 Participants
II.	Formation of community volunteers and support two groups	2 Groups	2 Groups
III.	Courtyard Meeting	34 meetings	30 meetings
IV	Exposure visit	01 visit	01 visit
VII	Knowledge fare	150 Participants	150 Participants

Table: Target and achievements of CDTILV project in 2024



Project Launching program of CDTILV with the presence of Ms.Nasrin Akhter, UNO, Sylhet Sadar Upazila & Courtyard session with patro community.

4. Leadership Development of Tea Garden Women Worker on their Rights

ECDO has been implementing LDTGWWR project since June 2024 in Sylhet Sadar upazila under Sylhet districts with support from OXFAM and European Union (EU).

Grant Period: July 2024- June 2025

Where did we work?

Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Sylhet District

Main activities

- Project Inception Meeting
- Staff Orientation Program
- Roundtable Seminar with Stakeholders
- Awareness and Advocacy Events with Local Media
- Formation of Drama Group and Awareness Spot Drama Shows
- Workshops on Leadership and Legal Rights
- Development and Distribution of IEC Materials
- Courtyard Sessions
- Sensitization Meetings with Local Leaders and Stakeholders
- Study on “Situation Analysis of Tea Garden Workers' Rights and Practices

Sl. No	Main Activities	Our Target	Achievements
I.	Roundtable Seminar with Stakeholders	1* 35 Participants	1* 33 Participants
II.	Formation of Drama Group and Awareness Spot Drama Shows	1 Groups*10 drama	Ongoing
III.	Courtyard Meeting	30 meetings	Ongoing
VII	Study on “Situation Analysis of Tea Garden Workers' Rights and Practices	1 study	1 study

Table: Target and achievements of LDTWWR project in 2024



Project Inception Meeting and Spot drama-show under LDTGWWR

Financial Overview

ECDO has maintained financial stability through diverse funding sources, including grants, donations, and partnerships. Detailed financial statements will follow in the subsequent sections, showcasing our transparent and efficient use of resources.

Partners and Donors

Hei Verden, Norway (PLESMC project)

Hei Verden, Norway (SESMS project)

Global Fund for Children (GFC), USA(CDTILV)

OXFAM & European Union (EU), (LDTGWWR)

Forward looking goal

In accordance with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4, "Quality Education," we strive to ensure that every marginalized child obtains primary education. We aim to extend our support to more marginalized students who deserve assistance but currently lack access due to our resource constraints. This year, ECDO expanded its staff and volunteer base, incorporating more indigenous language-speaking educators to meet the growing needs of our educational programs. We have also strengthened our partnerships with local and international organizations to enhance our program effectiveness.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

While ECDO has made significant strides, we faced challenges such as resource constraints and the need for more trained bilingual educators. However, these challenges have led us to innovate and seek new partnerships and funding opportunities to sustain and expand our programs.

Acknowledgments

ECDO extends heartfelt thanks to our donors, partners, volunteers, and staff. Your unwavering support and dedication have been instrumental in our achievements. We also express our gratitude to the communities we serve for their trust and collaboration.

The End