



Ethnic Horizon

A Vision for an Inclusive and Empowered Future



EDITORIAL

Contributor

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About Us

Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) is a non-political and non-profit voluntary development organization dedicated to improving the lives of indigenous communities in the Sylhet region of north eastern part of Bangladesh. Since its establishment in 2004, ECDO has been committed to a rights-based approach, empowering indigenous and other marginalized groups through education, legal support, and community-driven initiatives.

Holding UN ECOSOC special consultative status since 2016, ECDO aligns its efforts with global development goals to foster equality and empowerment, eliminating discrimination against indigenous communities. By actively listening to their needs, ECDO creates development programs that reflect their unique cultures and priorities. Our vision is a future where indigenous communities thrive, free from discrimination, poverty, and exploitation.

We are delighted to present this edition of the Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) Newsletter, which highlights our recent initiatives, achievements, and ongoing efforts to uplift indigenous and other marginalized communities.

ECDO, as an indigenous people's voluntary development organization committed to social justice, empowerment, and cultural preservation, ECDO has been working tirelessly to create sustainable change. Over the past months, we have implemented impactful projects focused on human rights, leadership development, education, health and livelihood support. Our collaboration with national and international partners has enabled us to expand our reach and strengthen our advocacy for the most vulnerable communities.

Warm regards,
Lakshmikanta Singh
Executive Director
Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO)

Current Initiatives:

Empowering Communities, Building Futures

At ECDO, we continuously implement initiatives to support the indigenous people of Sylhet region. Below are some of our key ongoing initiatives designed to create lasting positive changes.



Primary Education Support for Marginalized Children (PLESMC)

This initiative addresses a significant challenge in indigenous communities: access to education. The project aims to reduce school dropout rates among ethnic minority children, particularly tea-garden and Patro indigenous children, by overcoming language barriers and the lack of educational resources.

Key Activities:

- Operating three Education Support Centers (ESC) and two Manipuri Language Centers (MLC) to preserve the endangered Manipuri indigenous language
- Providing school bags and other essential educational materials
- Organizing quarterly meetings with ESC and MLC management committees
- Offering motivational awards to outstanding students

Target Impact:

Students from tea labor, Patro, and Manipuri indigenous communities directly benefit, with a broader reach of 765 individuals since the project's inception. This initiative has been supported by Hei Verden, a Norwegian development agency, since 2015.

Secondary Education Support for Marginalized Students (SESMS)

This project supports students at risk of dropping out of secondary school by covering admission and tuition fees and providing necessary educational materials.

Key Activities:

- Covering admission and tuition fees for students
 - Providing educational materials
 - Engaging with students' families through regular meetings to encourage continued education
 - Collaborating with school authorities to ensure proper care for project beneficiaries
- Organizing extracurricular activities such as sports, cultural programs, and tree plantation initiatives

Target Impact:

Directly benefiting 30 students from the Tea labor, Patro, and Manipuri indigenous communities, with over 150 individuals indirectly impacted through family and community engagement. This initiative is also supported by Hei Verden.

Community Development through Local Volunteers (CDTILV)

Supported by the Global Fund for Children (GFC), this initiative fosters community-led development in the Patro and Doldoli tea-garden communities of Sylhet Sadar Upazila.

Key Activities:

- Forming volunteer groups to promote self-development
- Hosting knowledge fairs, courtyard meetings, and exposure visits
- Conducting community household mapping
- Building capacity through workshops and training
- Developing safeguarding policies for stakeholder protection
- Identifying local resources and strengthening community resilience

Target Impact:

Over 200 people actively engaged in volunteer efforts, with community-led solutions becoming more sustainable.

Leadership Development of Tea Garden Women Workers on Their Rights (LDTWWR)

ECDO, in partnership with OXFAM and co-funded by the European Union (EU), is empowering women tea garden workers in Sylhet Sadar Upazila by enhancing their knowledge of legal rights and leadership skills.

Key Activities:

- Organizing training sessions and workshops on leadership and legal rights
- Conducting research on the legal rights and challenges faced by female tea garden workers
- Raising awareness through campaigns and roundtable discussions
- Conducting courtyard sessions with tea garden women workers
- Organizing spot dramas in tea gardens to educate workers about their rights
- Holding sensitization meetings with tea garden authorities, local administration, labor commissions, media, and labor unions
- Day observation like; Internal Human Rights Day, International Women's Day etc.

Target Impact:

Empowering 5,000 women tea garden workers with knowledge of their rights, enabling them to advocate for change and become leaders in their communities.

Enhancing maternal and Adolescent Reproductive Health in Tea-garden and Patro Communities in Sylhet

The goal of this initiative is to empower and raise awareness among the vulnerable tea garden and Patro communities in Sylhet Sadar upazila by providing training to untrained Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), increasing knowledge about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and adolescent health, and promoting women's rights and leadership. This will be achieved through workshops, awareness campaigns like; spot drama, courtyard session, and the development of informative materials to address key health and social challenges in the community.

Key Activities:

- Training for 25 untrained Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) to ensure safe deliveries.
- Conducting Courtyard Meeting on adolescents and women's sexual health and reproductive health (SRH).
- Spot Drama
- Raising adolescent's health awareness through workshop
- Develop IEC Materials on Sexual Health and Reproductive Health (SRH) and adolescent's Health

Project Impact:

This project will enhance safe delivery practices, increase understanding of SRH and adolescent health, and foster empowerment within the isolated and marginalized tea garden and Patro communities. By addressing barriers related to limited access to information, social exclusion, and gender inequality, the initiative will encourage positive change, improve health outcomes, and uplift the community's overall well-being. This project is supported by Ipas Bangladesh.

Shadows in the Tea Gardens

A snapshot of the current realities faced by tea garden communities in Sylhet

Poverty & Irregular Wages

- 65% of families earn only BDT 1,000–5,000 per month
- 64% do not receive wages regularly

Education Crisis

- 64% of respondents are illiterate
- Only 33% completed primary school
- Just 3% completed their Secondary School Certificate (SSC)
- 42% said their children often miss school

Basic Needs Unmet

- 82% lack access to clean drinking water
- Healthcare services are nearly non-existent
- No childcare facilities available

* Emergency Food Support to Tea labour community supported by Global Fund for Children (GFC)



A photograph showing a tea laborer community in Sylhet, Bangladesh, receiving food support. A woman in a green and white striped shawl is handing a small packet to a man in a grey blazer. A woman in a purple dress and black shawl is also present. They are standing outdoors near a white car and a red building.

Unsafe & Uninformed Workplaces

- Workplace safety is unsatisfactory
- Only 10% approached trade union leaders
- 80% were unaware of labor laws
- 51% have no knowledge of their legal rights
- 97% are unaware of Tea labor welfare funds

Study conducted by ECDO

- December 2024
Doldoli, Kewachera & Hiluachera Tea Gardens
Sylhet

* Emergency Food Support to Tea labour community supported by Global Fund for Children (GFC)



in a Project Inception Meeting with Mr. Muhammad Sher Mahbud Murad Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Sylhet and MS. Khadeja Akhter Antora of OXFAM representatives along with other Participants.



Doldoli tea-garden community volunteers with their community vision.



EU Ambassador and head of EU delegation to Bangladesh Mr. Michael Miller visits tea-garden community in Sylhet and interacts with the Tea-garden women workers.



Courtyard session with the Patro community at Bhararhat Patro indigenous village on the process of SALT.



EU Ambassador and head of EU delegation to Bangladesh Mr. Michael Miller visits ECDO office and interacts with the ECDO staffs.



ECDO Organized Education materials distribution Program with the presence of Hei Verden representatives.



EU Ambassador and head of EU delegation to bangladesh Mr. Michael Miller welcomed by tea-garden community with their traditional culture.



Ms. Sharyn C. Fitzgerald
Political Unit Chief at the U.S. Embassy to Dhaka, visits Manipuri Language Center of ECDO.



Awareness-raising spot drama for tea workers on their rights and access to social services.



Rally on the occasion of International Human Rights Day with the participation of tea garden women workers and civil society members.



Lakshmikanta Singh, Executive Director ECDO handover some Publications to EU Ambassador and head of EU delegation to Bangladesh Mr. Michael Miller



Roundtable seminar with government and non-government stakeholders, featuring Ms. Khushnoor Rubaiyath, UNO of Sylhet Sadar Upazila.



CDTILV project of ECDO launched by Ms. Nasrin Akter, UNO Sylhet Sadar Upazila, Sylhet.



Knowledge Fair organized by the Patro and Tea-garden community.



Community-led livelihood initiatives taken by the Patro community through SALT-CLCP approaches.



Courtyard session with the tea labor women on Sexual and Reproductive health supported by Ipas Bangladesh



Girls Friendship Football Match in the Knowledge fair program initiated by the Tea-Garden and Patro community.



Community-led education initiatives in the Patro community through SALT-CLCP approaches.

**State of the Rural Minorities in
Bangladesh**

Md. Faisal Ahmed
Lokshikanta Singh



**Annual
Review of
Ethnic Affairs**
Volume VII
August 9, 2011

ECDO
Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO)
Sydney, Bangladesh

**Annual
Review of
Ethnic Affairs**
Volume VI
August 9, 2010

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Volume V
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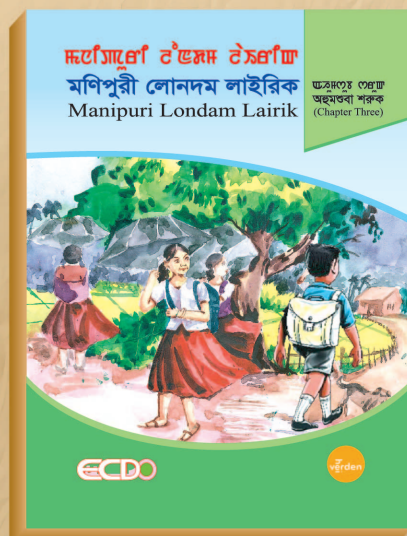
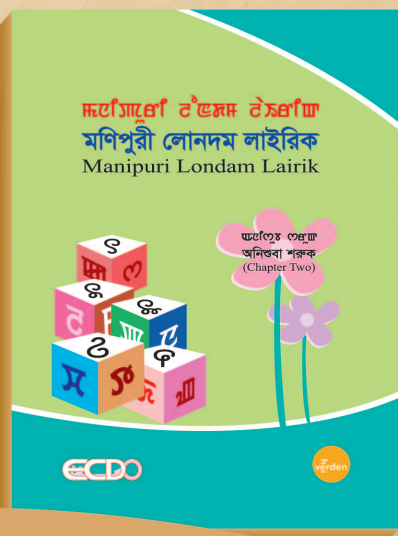
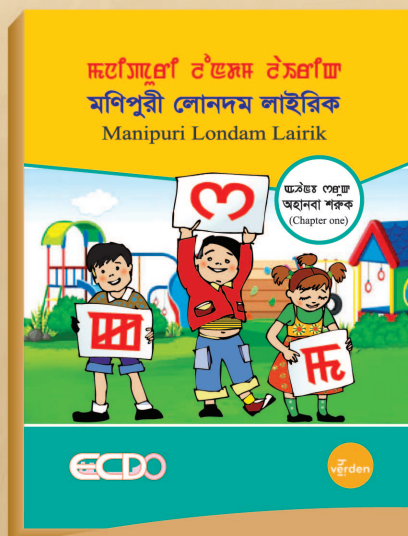
**Annual
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August 9, 2007

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Sydney, Bangladesh

Human Rights 365
Anthology on the Occasion of International Human Rights Day, 2014

ECDO
Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO)
With support from Embassy of France in Bangladesh

**Publications
of
ECDO**



Manipuri Text Book Written in Manipuri Script
for Primary Level Manipuri Students

Looking Ahead: Expanding Our Reach

As ECDO continues to grow, we aim to expand our programs to reach more marginalized children and ensure greater access to quality education. We are actively seeking new partnerships and resources to make this possible.

Our work is made possible through the generous support of donors, partners, volunteers, and the communities we serve. Together, we can create meaningful change and improve lives.

Get Involved!

You can support our mission in many ways—by volunteering, donating, sponsoring marginalized children, or spreading awareness. Every contribution makes a difference.





*Thank you for your continued support!
Together, we can create a brighter future for all.*

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