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Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) is a nonprofit voluntary development organization, working for the welfare of various ethnic communities in Sylhet region, which is organized by some individuals from different ethnic groups

A Conference held with the ethnic people of Jaflong, Sylhet

A conference was organized by ECDO on January 5, 2004 with the Khasi ethnic people of Jaflong area. Naksheer Punjee Government Primary School was selected as venue of the conference that is located in the middle of Jaflong area of Goainghat upozilla under Sylhet district. People from Khasi ethnic community were the participants of the conference.

The conference was presided over by the locally honorable Mr. Baneal Lamin. Executive director of ECDO played role as moderator of the conference. Mr. Birolal Singh, Secretary of ECDO and Mr. Jogeswar Singh were present as the representative of ECDO.

Mr. K. Birolal Singh launched his inaugural thanks giving speech. Executive director of ECDO acknowledged the aim and object of the organization to the audience. He uttered that the main target of ECDO is to initiate and execute various development programs for the welfare of disadvantaged ethnic people of this region. The main objective of this meeting was to identify effective programs that are essential for overall development of the Khasi people, he added.

He launched request to the audience to put their opinion and suggestions regarding this. participation of the conference discussed about the needs and problems of their community in a free and fair environment. They identified their own community problem in different ways. All of the participants mentioned that education, health, sanitation, environmental pollution, unemployment and underemployment are the main threat and problems for their community. If somebody gets sick, he or she cannot afford proper treatment due to lack of health care centre or hospital at adjacent distance.



So they have to depend upon drug vendors for any kind of treatment. ~~They have to depend upon drug vendors for any kind of treatment. They have to depend upon drug vendors for any kind of treatment.~~

All of the people of Mokam Punjee, Naksheer Punjee and Songram Punjee have to collect drinking water from long distant hill waterfall. When dry season comes, flow of waterfall become insufficient and their struggle for collecting water become harsher. Describing this situation, they claimed help from ECDO to solve their problems. There are numbers of stone crashing factory make air and sound pollution over the Jaflong Punjee area, they added.

Their apple was to take steps against such pollution, which has become the cause of different diseases among the children and older persons of Khasi community. Unemployment and under employment are the remarkable problems among Khasi youths. Long time unemployment creating frustration and few of them are involving subversive activities or drug addiction. Participants suggested to take effective activities eg training, employment opportunity, income generating activities etc. for protecting youths from the "bad path".

Mr. Baneal Lamin highly appreciated the initiatives of ECDO. The people who love the neglected and exploited ethnic people, they can helps to execute such program successfully, he argued. Expecting ECDO's glorious success and giving thanks to all participants, he concluded the conference.



Organized Manipuri Cultural program in VSO conference

Annual Conference of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) held on February- March 2004. Second day of the conference, ECDO arranged an attractive Manipuri cultural show. One. of the leading Manipuri dancer Miss. L. Shantana Devi guided the cultural show. The aim of this program was to introduce Manipuri culture among the people of different countries. It is unfortunate that many of rich ethnic culture are dying due to lack of proper patronization. Manipuri culture is one of them. As a patronizer ECDO always encourage ethnic people to preserve and practice their own culture and try to support with its all efforts.

Distribution of education materials



On March 2004, education materials were distributed free of cost among the poor Khasi and Patro students of Mokam punjee of Jointapur thana under Sylhet district. The then upazilla education officer was present in the occasion as chief guest. Head master of Mokam punjee primary school, Khasi head man and other community leaders were also present at the time of distribution. Khasi and Patros are the most vulnerable disadvantaged ethnic groups in sylhet region. Due to constant poverty and economic hardship, most of them fail to continue their children education. Education materials sometimes become the extra burden for them. Considering this reality ECDO has initiated such program.

ECDO believes that if children got cost free education materials, they will be able to continue their education. This program already has gained attraction and popularity among ethnic people. This year ECDO distribute education materials without any cost among four punjees (village) of sylhet district. It plans to expand the program next year.

Visit project areas along with the agriculturists of Bangladesh Agricultural Research. Institute, Sylhet (BARI)

ECDO wants to identify the weaknesses of traditional agro-farming and to develop technology on how to increase production and produce multiple crops in the same land. In order to make it successful ECDO arrange regular visits of agro-experts in project areas where discussion session is held with the ethnic people so that they can understand and gain knowledge about modern agro-technologies, cultivation process, high productive crops, way of cultivation and caring crops etc. This year ECDO arranged visit of its two project areas (Jointapur and Goainghat upazillas of sylhet district). It has identified through the visit that there are many land in the project areas remaining unproductive. ECDO made a plan to create a model agro-farm on that land and it will be executed soon. ECDO consider that such farming will create job and income opportunity of the local tribal inhabitants.

Meeting on research on the socio-economic condition of Manipuri Community



A general meeting held on May 2004 on the study of socio-economic condition of Manipuri community. Advisory committee members of ECDO participated on the meeting. The meeting decided that the research wing of ECDO will conduct this research independently and ECDO will collect fund for this initiative.

Distribution of Warm Cloth



On January 21, 2004 warm cloth were distributed among the poor and disadvantaged people along with the Patra (an ethnic group inhabited in Sylhet region) community of Kulauti village in Sylhet Sadar Upozilla. The distribution work done in presence of Patro community leader Mr.Kartik Patro and local UP member Mrs.Neharunnesa Begum. Mr.Lakshmikanta Singh, Birolal Singh, N.Jugeswar Apu of ECDO were also present. Mrs.Neharunnesa thanked to ECDO for their help to the poor and disadvantaged people of her constituency. The effort was accomplished by the own fund of ECDO.



Relief Distribution program among Flood effected people

This year disastrous flood affected most of the people in Sylhet region including Sylhet city dwellers. Ethnic people were also most vulnerable among the affected. ECDO distributed relief both city and rural areas. Mendibag, Kushighat, Laladighirpar of Sylhet city and Nizpat union of Jointapur Upozilla were highly affected by the flood and ECDO distributed rice, Potato, Oral saline, Paracetamol, Entacyd, water purification materials etc, among the flood victim poor people. It should be mentioned that a lion share of fund for relief activity collected from FNBS representative organization of FIVDB and the medicine was supported from civil surgeon office, Sylhet.

Local voluntary organizations and clubs helped ECDO at the time of distribution.

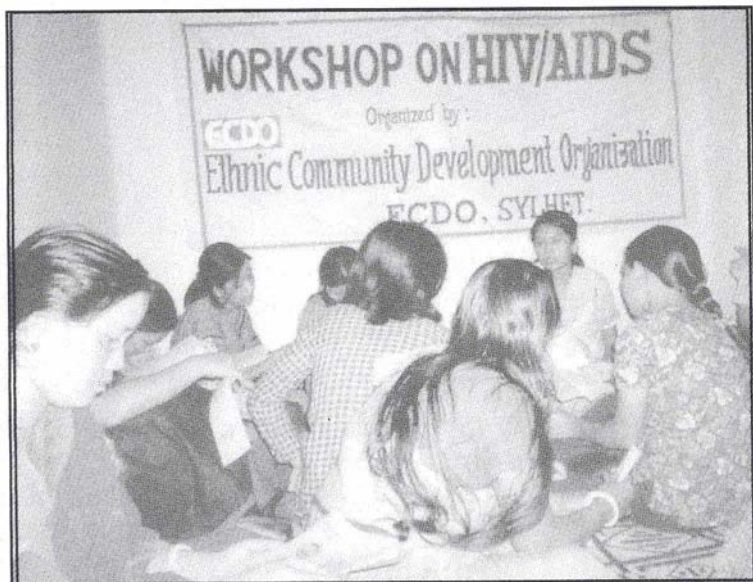
Research conducted in order to identify the causes of ethnic children drop out from school:

Before completion of primary school, many children leave school in Bangladesh. It is almost common in ethnic communities of sylhet region. ECDO's research wing was curious on such dropout issue and they intended to initiate a research for exploring the causes behind early dropout from school. The research work has already accomplished. It identified that almost 80 percent of the ethnic students struggle to communicate at school in Bangia as their mother language is different. Quite naturally, they cannot understand teachers, textbooks and friends properly and they began to feel alienated, school language become foreign language to them. They feel disinterest to school. This process forces them to leave school. On the other hand, a portion of the children cannot accomplish their homework due to lack of help from their parents. Fearing punishment of teacher, they escape school and once it becomes a regular matter. The study findings concluded that language is the one of the agent of dropout from school of ethnic children.

Curriculum development program for ethnic language

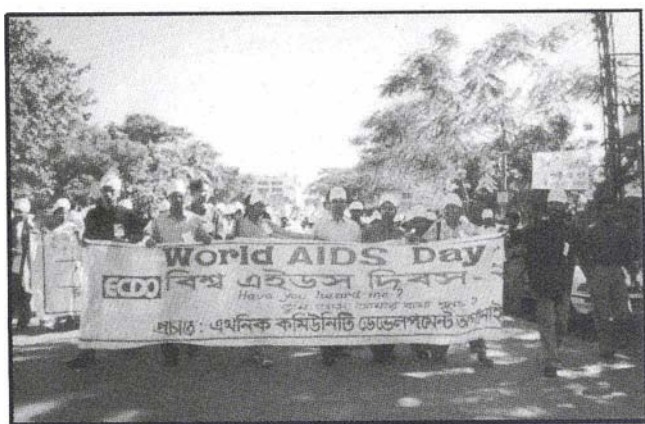
Working with the ethnic community ECDO find out that most of the ethnic language, history and culture are going to be discriminated. It means the identity of concern ethnic community's history, culture and civilization is going to be ruined from the world, which is very pathetic for all human being. Thinking of this fact ECDO is going to develop an education curriculum for the children of few ethnic communities, so that they can learn, reading and writing with their own mother tongue. It seems that the curriculum development program will be accomplished at the end of this year (2005) and the students of ethnic community will be able to learn with this curriculum from the beginning of the next year.

Workshop on HIV/AIDS And General health



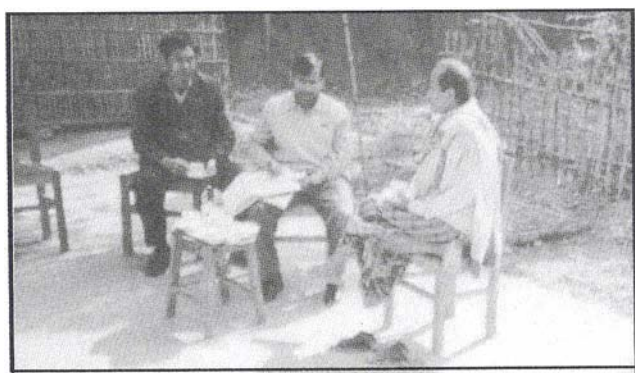
At present ECDO is arranging workshops on the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS as well as general health with the people of various ethnic communities in Sylhet region. The workshops are open to all people who are interested. What is HIV/AIDS, how it spread, how a person can protect himself from HIV/AIDS, present scenario of this epidemic etc. In the workshops, the counselors discuss also about the importance of pure drinking water and sanitation in our daily life. It is a continuous process of ECDO.

Observed World Aids Day



"World Aids day" was observed by HIV/AIDS.STD alliance in Sylhet. As an active member of the alliance, ECDO has attended the program. A colorful rally with banner, festoon, and play card organized which was circled around the main street of the city. The honorable Mayor of Sylhet City Corporation inaugurated the rally. After rally, a discussion meeting was organized in a city auditorium. The discussion meeting presided by Mr. Ahmedur Reza Chowdhury civil surgeon of Sylhet and Dr. Asad Uddin Deputy Director of health Sylhet was the chief guest. ECDO participated with all programs as an active alliance member of organizing authority.

Research on Socio-economic condition of Manipuri community



The research wing of ECDO has started a research work on socio-economic condition of Manipuri community. Primary phase (selection of sample areas, sampling, field visit etc.) of this research is already completed by December 2004. This ongoing research project will be completed by 2005. It should be mentioned that ECDO is operating its research wing with the direct voluntary supervision of a group of teachers from Social Work Department of Sylhet Shah Jalal Science and Technology University.