

INTERNATIONAL AID AND ITS EFFECTS TO PEOPLES LIVE AND
CULTURE IN CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS(CHT), BANGLADESH

A Conference on CHT

Organizers: The Minority Interest Group(MIG) in Uppsala, the Fourth
World Association in Stockholm and the International
Work Group for Indigenous Affairs-Sweden(IWGIA-Sweden)
in Gothenburg.

Place: Ethnological Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

May 20, 1989

My dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

With your kind permission I would like to present a paper in
this conference. I would also like to thank the Organizing Committee
for inviting me to participate in the conference.

The short history of international development aid to the
Bangladeshi government used in the CHT is a story of a constant
misuse and embezzlement.

Officially, development projects in the hills are meant to
improve the life of the people. In reality, however, underdevelopment
was developed and tribal communities, formerly well-to-do and
practically self-supporting were transformed into a society dependant
on Bengali markets, supplies and arbitrariness.

The CHT inhabited by 12 indigenous groups, each having its own
distinct language and culture. Since the presence of new Bengali
settlers, social criminalities, such as cheating , looting, raping
etc. are increasing rapidly in the hills. The new Bengali settlers,
backed by the army as well as other law enforcing authorities can do
whatever they like against the tribal people. Besides economic ruin,
today the cultural and physical life of the tribal people are in
danger.

Bangladesh, one of the poorest country of the world, seeks, as
it says, foreign aid for the socio-economic development of the tribal
people. Most of the receiving money is, however, used for the military
and for the Bengali settlers and not for the development of the tribes
people. Many development projects are carried out in CHT with the help
of foreign aid. The local people have not benefitted from these ~~projex~~
projects, they made their life not only worse but about 200000 people
were killed also.

In the 1950's and 1960's industries and factories were built
in the CHT. The Karnafuly Paper Mill at Chandraghona was built in
1953, Rayon and Chemical Factory was set up near the Paper Mill in
1966 with the help of foreign aid and created a lot jobs. But only 40
tribal people were employed there out of 6000 workers.

In the true sense the human suffering of the tribal people began with the building of the dam at Kaptai. To solve the energy problem a dam and a hydroelectric plant were constructed at Kaptai in the early 1960's. It was financed by USAID(United States Agency for International Development). The project created a vast lake, flooded 50000 acres of best cultivable lands, 40% of total cultivable lands. The lake displaced 100000 tribespeople. No adequate compensation were given and no alternative land was provided to the affected people. Out of 51 million US dollars set aside for rehabilitation, only 2,6 million US dollar were actually spent. Many people died during the relocation and about 40000 migrated to India. The electrical energy produced by the plant is used outside the district. Fewer than 10% of the tribespeople are receiving electricity from the Kaptai Power Station. Electricity is only available in government offices, police stations, military camps, market places and in the Bengali quarters.

The Kaptai dam caused immense human suffering, the family members were separated from each other and underdevelopment was created. The effects of the dam were: the breakdown the economy, the breakdown the social structure and to provide more economic facilities for Bengalis.

A pilot scheme for Jhum(shifting cultivation) control was implemented in 1967 in certain areas of the CHT, where a large number of peasants evicted by the dam had been rehabilitated. 5 mouzas (smallest administrative unit) covering more than 35000 acres were declared a protected area, 21000 acres were to be planted with fast growing soft wood, 14000 acres were to become fruit gardens. This project, however, failed totally but displaced again a large number of people.

A Horticulture Development Project, a second step to control the Jhum cultivation was implemented with the view of transforming the CHT into the fruit garden of East Pakistan(Bangladesh). Every household was to get 6 acres where bananas, pineapples, cashewnuts, palm trees, guavas, papayas and citrus fruits were to be planted. From this project officially 1500 Rupees per year was to be expected after 10 years. The actual aim of this project was to abolish rice production for self-consumption in favour of fruit production and a growing dependency on Bengali markets. Moreover, it needs at least 2-3 years to get the return from such gardens. No arrangements had been made regarding the peoples survival of the first 3 years. Due to

SIDA(Swedish International Development Authority)

implemented programs for reforestation and forest development. But SIDA did not renew the contract after 1981, because the Bangladesh government was unable to assure that the project would benefit the ethnic minorities. From the project the army gained 10 fast motor launches, used as gun boats and for quick transportation of the army into the remote area, originally provided for the project workers.

The CHT Development Board was created in 1976. This project was funded by the ADB(Asian Development Bank). The project was to rehabilitate the landless swidden farmers. One of them is the Joutha Khamar Scheme(Joint Farming Scheme), which practically turned into concentration camps for the Jumma people. They were forcibly brought in the camps and forced to live there. They had to leave their houses and properties to make place for the Bengali settlers. The life in the Joutha Khamar is miserable. The money they are receiving is not enough to maintain a family. People are not allowed to go outside, except for the purpose of marketing, to receive money and working materials.

Under these circumstances many people fled the Joutha Khama: and went to India, then Bengali settlers occupied their houses and properties with the help of army.

Another development project of CHT Development Board is the Fisheries and Livestock Scheme. Only very few tribal people received loan for fish farming where as Bengali fishermen received all kinds of facilities. From the Livestock Farm Project have benefited only the army personnels and Bengali officers.

ADAB(The Australian Development Assistance Bureau) financed the Chengi Valley Project and the Road Construction Scheme in the CHT. An all-weather-road was constructed in the Chengi Valley but had to be left unfinished due to attacks by tribal rebels on the ADB consultants. All-weather-roads were built throughout the CHT by the Bangladesh army with funds received from Australia, Britain and UNDP(United Nations Development Program). This project helped army movement against Jumma people, settlers migration and exploitation of the CHT resources only.

The WHO(World Health Organization) organized Malaria Eradication Programs inthe CHT only to protect the armed forces and Bengali settlers but not the local people.

UNICEF(The United Nations Children Emergency Fund) financed the implementation of drinking water supplies. These projects were, however, meant for the army camps and the Bengali settler colo-

The CHT has big deposits of natural gas, oil, copper and uranium. Gas is already tapped. Western enterprises have been searching for mineral resources in CHT. Shell oil was given contract to explore oil and gas throughout the CHT. The Bangladesh government received 5 million US dollar as a bonus at the time of signing the contract. The contract is valid for 25 years, but if no oil has been found, it will expire after 8 years. Shell has agreed to invest 120 million US dollar in the CHT. This sum would exceed the total amount of all development projects in the CHT for the last 20 years.

Tribal peoples experiences with the Kaptai dam, the Paper and Rayon Mills are such that they can hardly expect to benefit from future exploitation. As a result, in 1984 tribal guerillas kidnapped five Shell employees. Two were released immediately to report the demand of a \$200000 ransom. Shell was forced to stop work and lay off 600 casual workers.

The tribal guerilla demanded assurances that, if oil has been found, a part of the benefit would also go to the tribal population. It is clear that the tribal people really want to be developed. They welcome foreign aid if it is used for their benefit.

Since 1971 Bangladesh has received more than 12 billion US dollar as development aid. A big portion of the money are used against the people of CHT. The Bangladesh government has no goodwill for the development of the tribal people. The only thing she wants, is the total annihilation of the tribespeople. Between 1970 and 1987 about 200000 people were killed. Killing, raping, torturing and destroying are the armys daily routine against the hill peoples.

Foreign aid should not be given to inhuman regimes and should not be used to kill peoples. Though donor agencies do know how development aid is being used in the hill tracts, international money is still given which is in turn, used to stabilise the power of the regime and to suppress on peoples. Steps should be taken to stop the genocidal war in CHT, so that the tribal people can live in peace and develop in their own harmony.

We, the people of CHT need your help and call up all peace loving peoples and humanitarian organizations of the world to protect political, economic and cultural rights of the tribespeople.

Thank you.