

# PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE CHRISTIAN AID BANGLADESH

POVERTY

Strategy 2012–17





**We believe that at the root of poverty is a lack of power – the power to have your say and be heard, or to know your rights and demand them**

## WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

Christian Aid is an international organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We have an integrated approach to poverty eradication, working worldwide on humanitarian relief, long-term development, specific advocacy issues and campaigns to expose the scandal of poverty by challenging and changing systems and institutions that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised.

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities, supporting projects on the basis of need, not religion, ethnicity or nationality.

We work with, and through, partners including civil society organisations (CSOs), research institutions, churches, faith groups and social movements, as well as governments, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In 2011/12, Christian Aid gave grants to 578 partner organisations across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Our total income was £95.5m (BDT11.5bn), including £36.7m (BDT4.4bn) in funding from governments and other institutions.

## OUR GLOBAL STRATEGY

At Christian Aid, we believe human action is responsible for the underlying causes of poverty and that when people work together, the world can be changed. This thinking has framed our new corporate strategy, *Partnership for Change*.

We believe that at the root of poverty is a lack of power – the power to have your say and be heard, or to know your rights and demand them. It is clear to us that poverty can be eradicated only through helping people secure power to help themselves. Christian Aid has identified five areas on which to focus our work:

- 1. Power to change institutions**  
We want to see all people having the power to influence institutions – so that the decisions affecting their lives are made responsibly and fairly.
- 2. The right to essential services**  
We want to see all people able to fulfil their right to access the services essential for a healthy, secure life.
- 3. Fair shares in a constrained world**  
We want to see all people have a fair and sustainable share of the world's resources.
- 4. Equality for all**  
We want to see a more inclusive world where identity – gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, class and sexual orientation – is no longer a barrier to equal treatment.
- 5. Tackling violence and building peace**  
We want to see vulnerable people protected from violence and living in peace.

Our new strategy for Bangladesh is closely aligned with *Partnership for Change*.

## SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES, BUT STILL MUCH TO BE DONE

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated and disaster-prone countries in the world. With a population of 160 million people – 80 per cent of whom live in rural areas and depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods – it was ranked 146 out of 187 countries in the UN Development Programme’s Human Development Index 2012. There is substantial poverty – 80 per cent of people survive on less than US\$2 a day – as well as corruption, poor governance, an over-dependency on natural resources and poor environmental management.

But Bangladesh has still made significant advances in some areas of development, outperforming many other low-income countries, notably on education and health. The country is on track to reach Millennium Development Goal targets on hunger, child mortality, combating HIV and malaria, and environmental sustainability, as well as primary school enrolment and gender parity in education. It will fall short on addressing poverty in rural areas, primary school completion rates and maternal health.

Efforts to fight poverty in Bangladesh have become even more difficult due to the impact of climate change – extreme temperatures, erratic rainfall, and an increasing number of floods, cyclones and droughts – especially as the country is already highly vulnerable to natural hazards due to its geographical location, land characteristics, many rivers and monsoon climate. Natural disasters are invariably accompanied by a heavy loss of life, property, income sources and household assets. These events are a backward step for Bangladesh and push vulnerable groups and communities further into a cycle of poverty.

Politics in Bangladesh is highly polarised and confrontational. Power is concentrated within a small group of elites with vested interests, a trend that is evident even at the local level. Even though the constitution considers the citizens as the source of all power, people lack the opportunity to contribute to the governance process. In rural areas, citizens’ participation in democracy has been further narrowed by traditional power structures.

It is very difficult for poor people to access resources, to build their capacity and voice and to fight poverty in an effective way. There are some groups that are even more vulnerable and marginalised due to their gender, religious or ethnic identities: these groups struggle hard to meet their basic needs, face discrimination, and in many cases have no awareness of their service entitlements from relevant government departments and local institutions. Among the marginalised groups in Bangladesh, women are the most vulnerable and lack most forms of power: political, social or economic. Even though the government is committed to protecting the rights of minorities, discrimination against some groups is shown by their low participation in political and other decision-making institutions.

Bangladesh has been a democratic nation since 1991 and in the last four elections has seen a regular alternation of power. Both major political parties have shown



Christian Aid/Steven Buckley



Christian Aid/Tom Pilston

their deep commitment towards eradicating poverty and designing pro-poor policies and, in some cases, have succeeded in transforming their commitments into action. But marginalised groups, especially women, fishermen, dalits and ethnic minority groups, rarely see the benefits of these policies.

A vibrant NGO sector has also played a significant role in reducing poverty by raising awareness, building capacity, providing services and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. However, different NGOs working to achieve the same goals must strive for stronger collaboration. The growth of the private sector has played a major role in reducing poverty in the 40 years since Bangladesh’s independence, but it has yet to provide ample opportunities for the most marginalised groups.

## CHRISTIAN AID IN BANGLADESH

Christian Aid has been active in Bangladesh since 1972. We are recognised for our work on climate change, disaster risk management, gender equality and human rights issues, and have significant expertise and experience of working with government and CSOs.

Our programme promotes access to just and equitable resources and supports the creation of resilient and thriving livelihoods for marginalised people and communities. We believe in downward accountability and, alongside our partners, we are committed to making government and public institutions more accountable to communities for the services they provide. We will support and build the capacity of institutions to do so.

We are also recognised for our relationship with local government institutions in disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes in climate-vulnerable areas of the country. With our partners, we have developed and used tools and approaches that include participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA), climate smart disaster risk management, and social equity audits.

Christian Aid Bangladesh is exploring new areas of work such as renewable energy, climate justice, private sector engagement and enterprise-based development. We have a programmatic, results-based approach to participation, empowerment and policy advocacy at local, national and global level, working with our partners and through alliances, networks and consortiums.

We are already part of the consortium DeSHARI (Developing and Strengthening Humanitarian Assistance and Risk Reduction Initiatives), working with Action Contre la Faim (ACF), DanChurchAid, Muslim Aid and Save the Children in climate-vulnerable areas of Bangladesh.

Our programme is closely aligned with the vision and goals of donor organisations. We work with 15 partners in 27 of the most vulnerable districts of Bangladesh across the southern coastal region, north-west and central flood and haor (wetland) areas. We have long-standing relationships with local organisations based on mutual learning and experience.

In 2012, Christian Aid Bangladesh reached more than 10,000 households through our resilient livelihoods work, and our target is to reach out to more than 100,000 individuals by 2014. Through our humanitarian responses to natural disasters in 2012, we reached almost 15,000 households. We have two ECHO2 projects being delivered by our partners Agrajatra and GUK and, for the first time, Christian Aid Bangladesh is about to implement a DIPECHO3 project with our partner CCDB (Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh) through DeSHARI.

Among our governance projects, our work with Nijera Kori in Comilla, Kushtia, Natore and Tangail districts reaches 25,000 people, while projects with Nagorik Udyog in Tangail, Barishal, Rangpur, Pirojpur and Jhalokathi reach more than 51,000. The regional EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) project with Nagorik Udyog will emphasise the human rights issues of dalits in Bangladesh. We also have a partnership with the Wave Foundation in Barishal Sadar.



## OUR NEW STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH

Christian Aid Bangladesh's new strategy is closely aligned with several of the global goals laid out in *Partnership for Change*: 'Power to change institutions', 'Fair shares in a constrained world' and 'Equality for all'. We will work for equality for socially and economically marginalised communities, empowering them to know their rights, building their capabilities to negotiate with governing institutions, and ensuring their access to markets so they can enjoy a fair share of wealth and make the most of economic opportunities.

We will work towards deep and lasting change in socially and economically excluded communities, with a strong focus on women from fishing, dalit and ethnic-minority communities and on single women in highly climate-vulnerable areas of Bangladesh. Our overriding goal is to ensure these communities participate fully in vital decisions that shape their lives, thrive in building their resources and capacity to respond successfully to opportunities and the risks they face, and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty.

We will develop strategic partnerships with a greater emphasis on participation, innovation and learning, scalability and mutual accountability, with Christian Aid Bangladesh increasingly playing a facilitative and collaborative role.

### **Objective 1 – To empower excluded communities to claim their rights, entitlements and expand their power in social and economic spaces.**

We hope to see knowledge about climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and emergency preparedness and response enhanced, and see Christian Aid Bangladesh taking a lead in knowledge and information sharing around rights and entitlements.

What we will do:

- support the grassroots mobilisation of people living in poverty
- work to ensure excluded communities develop and strengthen their leadership and agency for collective action
- work with poor communities to develop and promote scalable, innovative and sustainable solutions for resilient livelihoods, disaster risk management and poverty reduction
- strengthen communities' resilient livelihoods options by building technical skills, knowledge and capacity on climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, emergency response, and social and political rights and entitlements
- support partners to build community-based monitoring groups and collectives where there is a lack of organised voice among excluded groups
- facilitate the development of the public sphere for dialogue among citizens, civil society, the private sector and the state, to ensure equal participation of the communities and that their voice is heard
- develop and strengthen funded and non-funded collaborations with like-minded CSOs, government, churches, our sister agencies and other faith-based agencies.

### **Objective 2 – To facilitate an enabling space for community-based organisations, CSOs, the private sector and the state to develop pro-poor policies and institutions that lead to large scale, innovative solutions to poverty.**

We want to see institutions that are participatory, empowering and mutually accountable, and that allow poor people to have a fair share and equitable access to markets.

What we will do:

- facilitate cooperation and collaboration between CSOs, the private sector and the state
- monitor government policies, programmes and practices to ensure poor and marginalised people have access to and control over productive resources and a right to information
- promote the rights of poor and marginalised people to food, employment, control over productive resources and decision making
- facilitate pro-poor market access and private sector engagement
- ensure the socio-economic empowerment of marginalised women
- facilitate relationships between marginal producers/consumers and businesses through a pro-poor market development approach
- support action research, innovation, appropriate diversification efforts and skills building, and promote access to better-quality inputs and technology, and fair terms by establishing links, promoting technical dialogue platforms and investing in enterprise development
- work with partners to develop the skills required for social enterprise development so women have increased power in the market
- advocate for policy changes that bring communities greater access and control over productive resources
- work with partners to engage the private sector to unlock the potential of markets where socially and excluded communities and women can have mutually beneficial engagement.

**Objective 3 – To support national level policy and advocacy work for socially just policies where they are needed, and ensure the effective implementation of those already in place.**

We hope to see innovation that increases poor people's power in the market and links humanitarian work with long-term climate change responses, resilience building and sustainable livelihoods work: an integrated response to rooting out poverty.

What we will do:

- monitor government programmes on livelihood, climate change, disaster risk management, emergency response and the economic rights of the women
- develop the social enterprise skills of the poor, increasing their power in the market and ensuring their access to and control over productive resources by facilitating dialogue platforms
- create an evidence base through consistent monitoring of national policies and programmes, and link them with regional and global frameworks
- forge partnerships with media and research institutions to gather and disseminate evidence and support campaigns
- specific policy work on women's rights over productive resources, employment for landless and resource poor people, the right to information, and the right to food for the poorest.

To bring real change through our work in Bangladesh, we are aiming for three integrated and mutually reinforcing outcomes:

**Resilient livelihoods** – We will integrate our existing work in secure livelihoods and economic justice with climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, and emergency response and pro-poor market access projects. Our work on resilient livelihoods will contribute to building thriving communities with greater income, food security and a better ability to respond to extreme climate uncertainties, natural disasters and emergencies – ensuring we work within humanitarian principles, Sphere standards and Human Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards.

**Accountable institutions** – Our work around accountable governance will be boosted by our learning from power analysis. We will promote civic space and effective dialogue between power holders and excluded communities, amplifying the voices of powerless groups and building the accountability of local and national institutions in their decision making.

**Equal rights for all** – Essential to all aspects of our work, we have named equal rights as a cross-cutting objective to ensure gender and power analysis are central to everything we do. The key outcome will be that broader civil society successfully influences government policies and practices on inequality issues, especially access to basic services, economic opportunities and emergency response.



## WHERE WE WORK



# OUR PARTNERS IN BANGLADESH

Agrajatra

Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies  
(BCAS)

Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre  
(BDPC)

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)

Christian Commission for Development in  
Bangladesh (CCDB)

Churches of Bangladesh Social  
Development Programme (CBSDP)

Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)

INCIDIN Bangladesh (Integrated  
Community and Industrial Development  
Initiative in Bangladesh)

Nijera Kori

Nagorik Uddyog (NU)

People's Oriented Program Implementation  
(POPI)

Shariatpur Development Society (SDS)

Shushilan

WAVE Foundation

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**Front-cover photo:** Selina Begum and her husband Abu Sayd harvest saline-resistant rice seeds in Jatidronagar village, Satkhira District. The village is affected by salination – an impact of climate change – so normal rice seeds do not grow well. Christian Aid partner Shushilan has introduced adapted seeds that grow in this environment.

**Christian Aid/Genevieve Lomax**

Christian Aid is a member of the

**actalliance**

Christian Aid is a member of ACT – an alliance of more than 130 churches and related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development – giving us the ability to respond quickly and easily to emergencies the world over.

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aid**

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