

Getting Chittagong into the News

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To ensure the right to communicate, to have better access to the media, and to improve representation of the minority and indigenous community, the Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC) has been undertaking a pilot training project with support from WACC since March 2004.



Highlights of the Project

BCDJC has formed an alliance with 3 organisations—TOYMU, Zabarang Kalyan Samity, Centre for Indigenous Peoples Development (CIPD), based in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. These organisations work for the indigenous community and their rights, and are also interested to work in media & communication for better representation of the minority and indigenous people which they work with.

The partnership helped by selecting participants for the training on journalism and other activities under the on-going project. The partner organisations attended the Colloquium with the newspaper gatekeepers, shared their opinion and views, and expressed their concerns about the trivial representation and stereotyped presentation of the community in the media.

Colloquium of Editors held in May

A colloquium was held in Dhaka on 4 May 2004 attended by 27 Editors, Executive Editors, Assistant Editors and National Page Editors from the leading newspapers along with the Executive Directors/representatives of the three partner organisations of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The gatekeepers acknowledged the poor representation of the marginalised and indigenous community in the media. But they argued that there is no intention behind this. The newspapers wanted to cover the Chittagong Hill Tracts but in many cases they find very few contributors from that region and the community. They agreed to try to recruit some correspondents from the said community. The gatekeepers argued that in many cases the indigenous people have some linguistic limitations (Bangla); therefore BCDJC should emphasise the 'language for newspapers' while training them. They also said that only Foundation Training is not enough, Follow-up and advanced training plus long-term attachment with the newspapers is also necessary to make them competent.

The representatives from Partner Organisations told that they were not only poorly covered but also sometimes misrepresented as well as partially depicted. They also said that involving the marginalised community in reporting teams was not enough; proper training would also be required, so that they could accurately report to the newspapers, disseminate correct information and establish communication with the greater community.

Two-week Training held on 6-15 June

18 young people, including 5 women, from Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban participated in the two-week training on Fundamentals of Journalism. The programme schedule accommodated theoretical as well as practical sessions, field assignments, class review,

recapitulation and question & answer sessions. Furthermore there was a video presentation 'Getting the Story' (followed by critical discussion) from the International Centre for Journalists, which crafted all the components - Reporting, Writing and Editing from the practical experience of a working journalist.

The most significant success of the training is that after the training, the participants from Khagrachari brought out a small newspaper named "Adivasi Barta" (Indigenous Voice); and many others have started working/contributing to different national and local newspapers. The "Adivasi Barta" is requesting a government permit to continue publication.