

SUCCESS STORY

Conflict, violence and alternative dispute resolution in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

PAVE for skill development:

"I have recently been appointed as karbari for my village. I am very grateful for the training because I have never before received a training such as this, which will help me in my role as karbari in my village." - Karbari leader from Hajaribag Mouza in Rangamati, CHT

"I learned a lot from the training, but most importantly, I learned how to mitigate violence. As a headwoman, this is my job in my community. Other karbari and headwomen should be given the opportunity to attend this training in order to learn how to mitigate electoral violence and resolve issues on their own without having to rely on others for support." – Headwomen from Hazachari Mouza in Rangamati, CHT

Difficulties Faced by CHT leaders:

As leaders in a remote region of Bangladesh, the karbari, headmen and headwomen of the CHT find it difficult to receive the skill development trainings they want to improve their ability to benefit their communities.

The CHT is a diverse region of Bangladesh consisting of numerous ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. Just to conduct the small trainings in November, IFES had to ensure translation between four different languages: English, Bangla, Chittagong language and Chakma. Numerous additional languages were also used among the participants.

A desire for more:

Many participants requested further training on violence in elections and elections management. IFES is exploring possibilities for further training for indigenous leaders throughout CHT.



Photo: IFES

Participants reflect on causes of violence in Bangladesh.

alternative dispute resolution process in this violence prone area of Bangladesh.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) worked with predominant women in CHT to organize two sessions of its People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) training in Rangamati District for 38 karbari and headwomen between November 12-16, 2014. Designed to promote peaceful elections and political processes in Bangladesh, the leaders learned about democracy, how elections can be a violence prevention tool, codes of conduct and how to transform conflict.

Originally created to reduce conflict between political parties in Bangladesh, the curriculum was equally useful as a way to strengthen the leaders' alternative dispute resolution skills. A key focus was that conflict naturally occurs but does not have to lead to violence. Through discussions on this point, the participants felt better able to serve their communities and resolve the conflicts they are called on to fix while still meeting the needs of the conflicting parties.

To reach the leaders effectively, IFES adapted its trainings to reach those who lacked previous exposure to abstract learning and/or those new to their positions. The training methodology was also modified to focus less on written materials as many of the participants are semi-literate and illiterate.

In an effort to encourage women's participation and leadership at the community level, the three Rajas (chiefs) of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have started appointing more female karbari and headwomen. These indigenous leaders serve as the first level of a formal