

# Empowering Left Behind Minority Communities in Bangladesh

## Project information sheet

**11% of the population of Bangladesh belong to a minority community and are under-represented in government. The 'Empowering Left-Behind Minority Communities' project will enable these communities to find opportunities, use their voices, claim their rights and be involved in the development process of Bangladesh.**

### The impact of under-representation

Communities who struggle to be represented at different levels of government or who experience marginalisation are provided with fewer opportunities. They are not able to be heard when leaders are making decisions that affect them.

Among the minority community population in Bangladesh, the Dalits, Plain Land Ethnic Minority, and transgender and Hijra communities are the most marginalised. Discrimination persists amongst members of these communities in access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Additionally, legal support for these groups is very limited to help them claim their rights.

### The left behind communities

Dalits occupy the bottom of the caste hierarchy in Bangladesh and face multiple forms of violence and discrimination. The average annual income in Bangladesh is around 2,200USD. However, the income for a Dalit can be as little as a tenth of the national average. Dalit women and girls often face further discrimination as the

**Donations will be matched 5:1 by the EU, making a gift of £5,000 worth £30,000.**

communities are patriarchal with deeply conservative values about gender roles that severely restrict their rights and freedoms.

Plain Land Ethnic minority people are the indigenous communities in Bangladesh with their own customs and languages. Inadequate access to education is a major issue for them which contributes to the estimated literacy rate of 9%. Additionally, around 85% of these



Members of the Adivasi community

communities are landless as they are subject to land grabbing in the areas they inhabit with very little recourse to seek justice.

The gender diverse population of the country (commonly known as Hijra) are also discriminated against in terms of access to services and opportunities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 95% of the members of this community reported a decrease in their daily income. This led to a large rise in mental health issues with over 90% reporting increased anxiety about where their food was going to come from on a day-to-day basis.

### Earning respect in an unjust society

Mukta Rabidas, 23, is the daughter of an egg seller and part of the Dalit community. Due to his low income Mukta's father found it difficult to continue educating his three children, but Mukta was determined to continue her education. That determination led her to enrol on a computer operating training course. Within a month of finishing her training, she got a job as a computer teacher in a school and also tutors children at home.

'As Dalits, people look at us like we are not worthy of them, we are lower, always beneath them... When I joined as a computer teacher, people started looking at me differently.' Mukta Rabidas

Now that Mukta is a computer teacher, she is able to earn BDT10,000 per month which she uses to support her education and her family. She has also been able to earn respect, something she realises can be much harder than overcoming poverty in an unjust society like hers. She says: 'For the first time in my life, I see people showing me and my family respect.'

Mukta has benefitted from previous projects that Christian Aid has supported in Bangladesh. She now has a brighter future and is saving to buy a computer of her own to improve her skills and learn programming. The Empowering Left Behind Minority Communities project will enable more people like Mukta to claim their rights and access opportunities that will benefit them, their families, and the communities they belong to.

## The Empowering Left Behind Minority Communities project

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play an important role in supporting minority communities. They are a hub of engagement and seek to amplify the voices of those not heard in civil society. CSOs are vital to minority communities as they enable their participation in local government and in the development process.



The divisions and districts where the Empowering Left Behind Communities project will be working



**Mukta has been able to earn a living and respect as a computer teacher**

Your support of this project will enable the vital work of minority rights CSOs and networks as they seek to tackle the discrimination experienced by minority communities. Your donations will go to increasing the capacity and skills of these groups, fund advocacy campaign work amongst the general population through courtyard engagement sessions and community drama shows, and support the formation of 'Leave No One Behind' coalitions that engage with government at all levels.

### Our partners

Partnership is vital to all we do and as you partner with us, you are supporting our fantastic partners in Bangladesh:

- Wave Foundation: Working since 1990 to establish universal human rights through advocacy & campaigns.
- Bandhu: Working for Gender Diverse People since 1996 ensuring dignified living through protecting human rights.
- Nagorik Uddyog: Working to ensure the rights of participation of the poor and marginalised in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- BLAST: Providing access to legal aid, prioritising support to women, men and children living in poverty or facing disadvantage or discrimination.



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