

ACHIEVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

Improving livelihoods through sustainable management of
natural resources and technological innovations in agriculture



Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection



BANGLADESH

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT)

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

0 50 100 km



THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are a unique part of Bangladesh.

Large tracts of the region are covered by hills, creating a mountain ecosystem rich in biological and cultural diversity. In this area people have developed distinct agricultural practices and livelihood patterns. The CHT are home to a large number of ethnic communities, who depend mostly on jum, a type of traditional shifting cultivation on very steep slopes.

The CHT are divided administratively into the three hill districts of Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. It has a total population of about 1.7 million people and covers an area of 13,295 km².

The harsh environment and decades of social unrest have made the hill tracts one of the most vulnerable regions in the country in terms of food security, income, employment, health, water and sanitation, education, access to infrastructure and services. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, signed in 1997, brought an end to more than two decades of conflict, making it possible for the local population to start improving their lives.

The present challenges include land and population pressure, water scarcity in the dry season, extreme remoteness, weak market linkages and natural resource degradation.

Greater efforts are needed to ensure that all the people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts enjoy food and nutrition security with respect for their unique traditions and identities.



COOPERATION BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF
BANGLADESH, FAO AND ECHO



The Government of Bangladesh, particularly through the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, is committed to the implementation of the 1997 Peace Accord and the socio-economic development of this region. In recent years, FAO has partnered with MoCHTA and other CHT institutions to pursue food and nutrition security based on:

- A bio-physical and socio-economic assessment of the region
- The formulation of strategies for sustainable agricultural development
- The implementation of projects at field level

FAO works on food and livelihood security, nutrition, agricultural development and environmental sustainability through an integrated approach. The organization promotes gender equality and women's empowerment as a fundamental component of development efforts, which is reflected in all policy and project related work.

One of the major supporters of these efforts has been the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO).



ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

FAO works with men and women farmers in CHT to improve productivity in a sustainable manner. The focus is on increasing yields and production of crops in a way that does not harm the environment and exhaust the land.

To make sure that the land will be fertile in the future as well, basic conservation measures are promoted, such as minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover, introduction of strip cropping and mixed cultivation according to appropriate slope and soil condition, possible crop rotations and use of balanced and organic fertilizers.



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a stalk of golden wheat. The wheat grains are in sharp focus, showing their characteristic shape and color. The background is a blurred, warm-toned surface, likely the palm of the hand holding the stalk. The text is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO
AGRICULTURAL INPUTS AND
TECHNOLOGIES

Poverty, resource scarcity and poor service delivery are some of the main challenges of men and women in the hill tracts, particularly in remote areas. Small farmers do not have access to affordable inputs such as good quality seeds, balanced fertilizers and effective storage items.

If they had access to improved resources, technologies and services, men and women farmers would be able to grow more and better. To achieve this, FAO provides key inputs to help farmers raise their agricultural productivity, invest in additional livelihood activities and contribute to greater food security and income generation.

These are combined with training and other activities for effective long-term solutions.

Key Inputs to help farmers raise productivity:



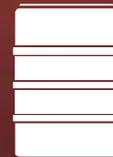
BALANCED
FERTILIZER



QUALITY
RICE SEED



VEGETABLE
SEEDS



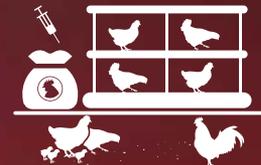
SEED & GRAIN
STORAGE SILOS



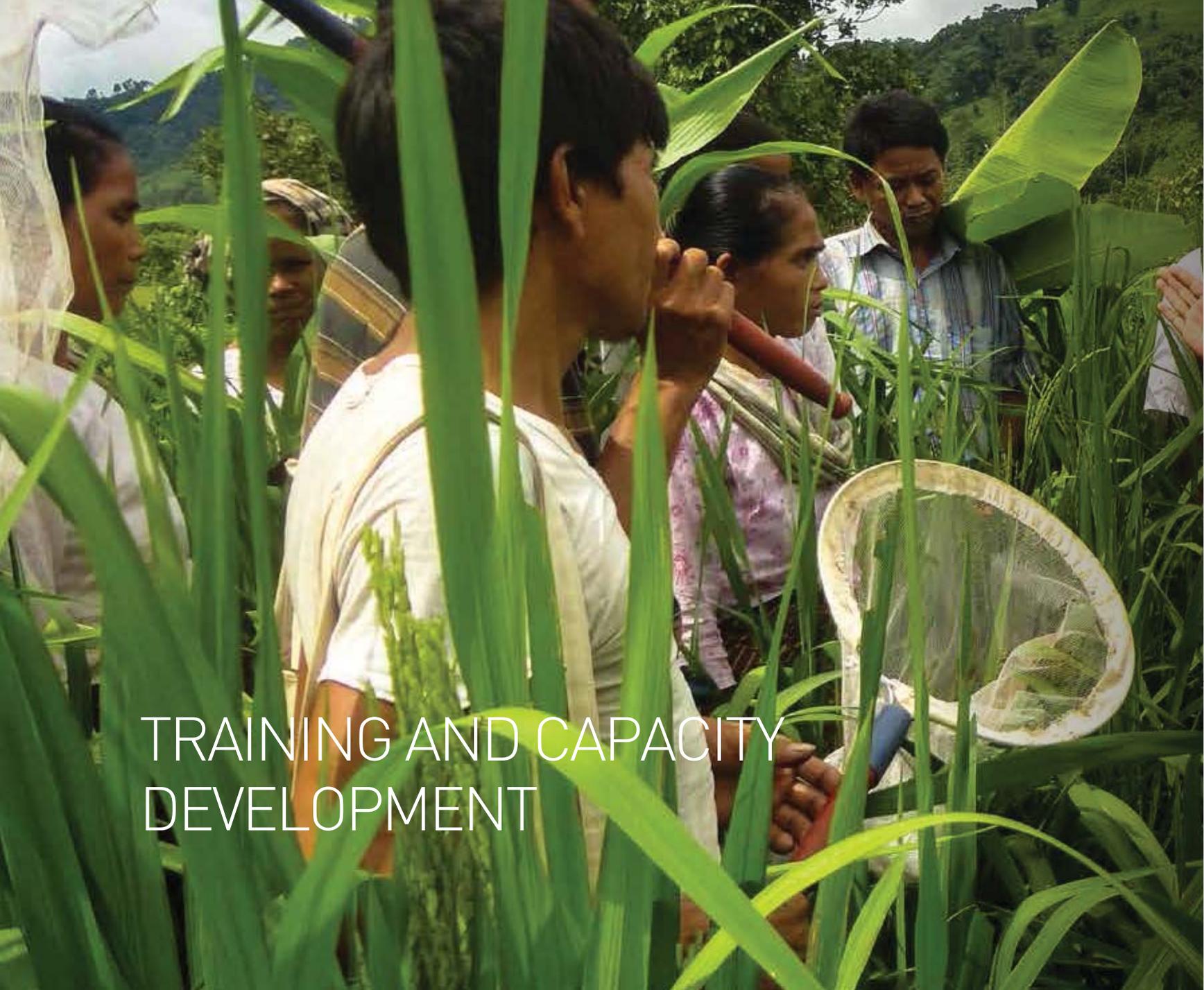
WATERING CANS
FOR IRRIGATION



FRUIT
SAPPLINGS



POULTRY, SHELTER,
FEED & MEDICINE



TRAINING AND CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT



Training and capacity development is at the core of FAO's approach. The organization works together with men and women in the communities to develop and share technologies that are appropriate to the specific environment and the needs of the people, taking into consideration the individual roles of men and women, their responsibilities as well as their traditions.

Learning and applying new skills and technologies allow farmers to be innovative and able to adjust to changing situations. This is key to the sustainability of development efforts.

- **Participatory Training**

Men and women in low income areas are very busy. The trainings have to adapt to their schedule and they have to be gender sensitive as well, in order to ensure the highest participation and impact. Trainings at community level are most successful when they are interactive and focus on practical application.

- **Farmer Field Schools**

Farmer Field Schools are based on the "learning by doing" principle. It is described as a "school without walls". Farmers learn in groups, directly in the field and following the agricultural calendar. Through this interactive approach, farmers improve the capacity to make decisions and the approach stimulates local innovation for sustainable agriculture. The FFS is considered a successful participatory model for skills development as well as empowerment.

A woman with dark hair, smiling broadly, is holding a brown chicken. She is wearing a green patterned dress with a red and blue striped shawl draped over her shoulders. The background shows a building with a corrugated metal roof and some dry vegetation. The text "DIVERSIFICATION OF LIVELIHOODS TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY" is overlaid on the image in white, all-caps font.

DIVERSIFICATION OF LIVELIHOODS
TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

To achieve food security, different livelihood strategies and activities are employed by people around the world. A household with only one means of support has nothing to fall back on if that livelihood is insufficient or lost entirely.

In the CHT, most rural households are highly vulnerable as they depend overwhelmingly on jum for survival. Efforts to diversify into other agricultural and non-agricultural activities is key to reducing risk and vulnerability, giving men and women greater opportunity for additional sources of income and food.



FRUIT ORCHARDS



LOCAL
POULTRY REARING



COMMUNITY LEVEL QUALITY
RICE SEED PRODUCTION



HOMESTEAD
VEGETABLE GARDENING

IMPROVED FOOD-BASED NUTRITION OUTCOMES



Consumption of healthy foods leads to a healthy, active and economically productive life. Eating a variety of foods can provide sufficient energy, help the body grow and repair injury, and strengthen the immune system against diseases. This is especially important for pregnant and lactating women, and infant and young children.

Increased food production and agricultural productivity is good but not enough. Alongside this, FAO in CHT promotes behavioral change through nutrition education and awareness raising campaigns within a supportive environment that also addresses household sanitation, hygiene, and safe food preparation and preservation.



NUTRITION AWARENESS
AND DIVERSITY IN DIET



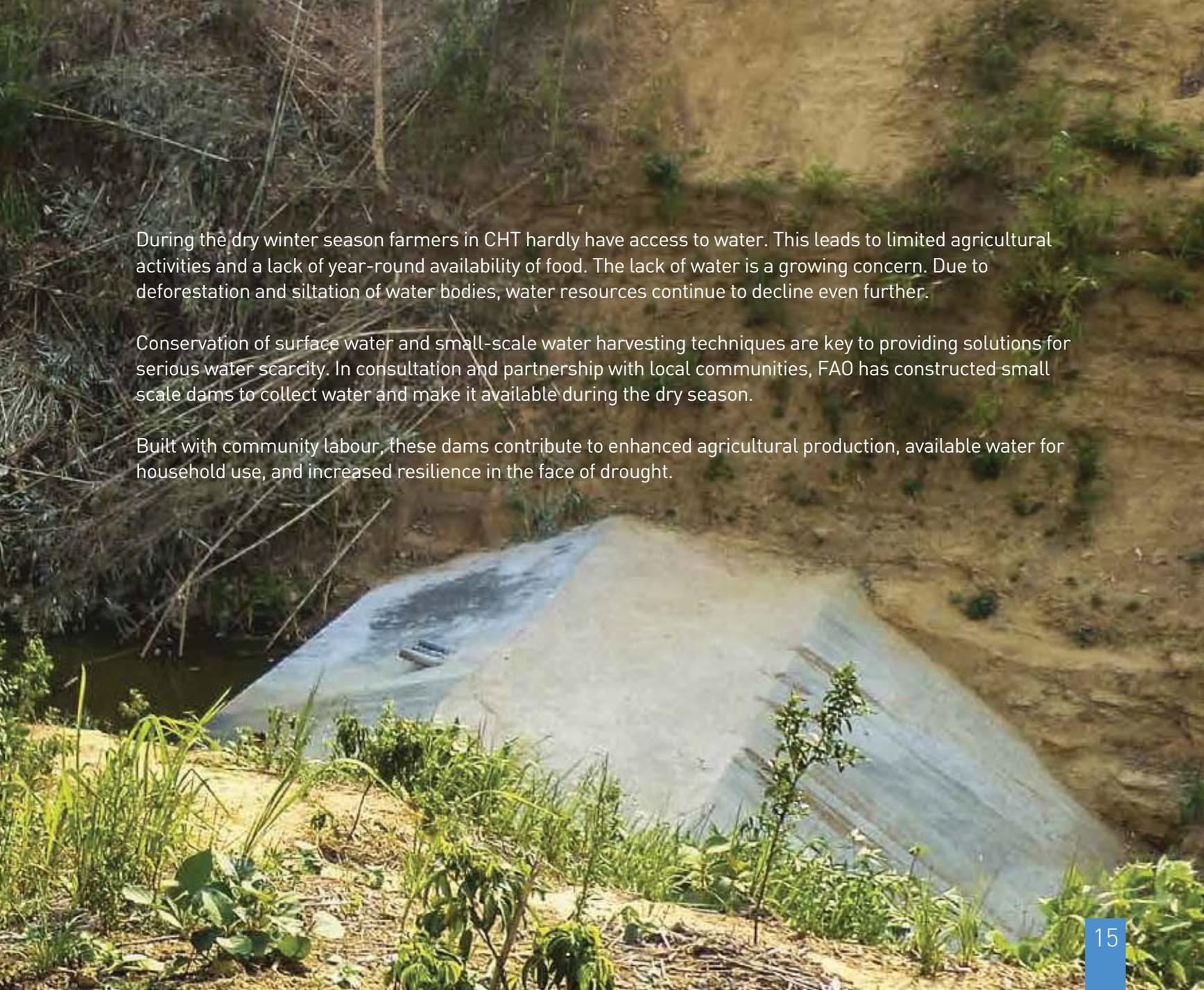
SAFE FOOD
PREPARATION



HYGIENE

WATER CONSERVATION & HARVESTING





During the dry winter season farmers in CHT hardly have access to water. This leads to limited agricultural activities and a lack of year-round availability of food. The lack of water is a growing concern. Due to deforestation and siltation of water bodies, water resources continue to decline even further.

Conservation of surface water and small-scale water harvesting techniques are key to providing solutions for serious water scarcity. In consultation and partnership with local communities, FAO has constructed small scale dams to collect water and make it available during the dry season.

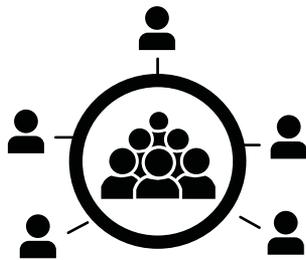
Built with community labour, these dams contribute to enhanced agricultural production, available water for household use, and increased resilience in the face of drought.

MARKETING AND VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

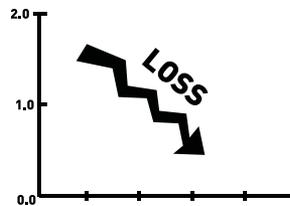


Selling surplus produce is an important source of income for men and women farmers. In remote areas of the CHT, access to markets and market information is challenging because of limited infrastructure and investment as well as high transaction costs. It is difficult for farmers to market their products as they mostly carry their goods manually over long distances. The costs of transport are thus very high, often offsetting sales proceeds. In addition, costs are often multiplied by product loss due to lack of appropriate transportation and storage facilities. The producers thus receive very small returns for their labour.

Marketing and value chain development in the CHT can be significant tools to increase the profits of small farmers, including getting farmers to join forces, training on reducing losses, and facilitating market information and linkages with retailers.



PRODUCER GROUP
FORMATION



REDUCING
POST-HARVEST LOSS



HOUSEHOLD
AGRO-PROCESSING



CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE
WITH MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Working in partnership is crucial in development. Continuous dialogue with all levels of stakeholders, from individual to community to national government, is key to ensuring mutual respect, legitimacy, lessons learning and continuous adaptation to emerging needs and realities.

Engaging with men and women can also be a powerful tool for empowerment and gender equality. In CHT as elsewhere, FAO puts a lot of emphasis on continuous dialogue as vital to the success of the development process.



These lessons and initiatives are built mainly on the experiences accumulated in 2013-2014 during the implementation of an FAO project entitled:

Early Recovery Assistance to Restore Agriculture-Based Livelihoods in Critically Food Insecure Areas of the CHT

The objective of the project was to enhance agricultural productivity, diversify food production and increase resilience of remote farmers to food and agriculture threats and emergencies through sustainable technical solutions in agriculture, for the benefit of communities in two remote locations of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The locations were Sajek Union in Baghaichari Upazila, Rangamati District, and Thanchi, Bolipara, Tendu, and Remakree Unions in Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban District.

The project was funded with the generous support of ECHO and implemented in partnership with MoCHTA.

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



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