

Project No. 53

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM TO THE CHILDREN (ESPC) OF GREATER SYLHET AREA

Principle:

Financial support is essential for *Adivasi* (indigenous) students to receive secondary education.

Objectives:

- To support poor, orphan and needy students, particularly *Adivasi* and destitute children in the form of monthly grant to meet the cost of textbooks and expenses of tuition fees, food, lodging and educational materials; and
- To help government efforts to raise literacy rate of *Adivasi* in the greater Sylhet Area.

Background:

The project started in July 2007 and completed its 1st part in December 2007. The present phase of the project is from January 2008 to December 2010.

Staff strength: There is no regular staff for this project. The project is implemented through a five-member committee formed with Caritas staff and Diocesan representatives.

Donor:

Caritas Japan

Expenditure:

Foreign partners' contribution : Tk. 2,115,670
Local contribution: : Tk. 904,365
Total : Tk. 3,020,035

Beneficiaries:

Direct: Total 300 (boy 147 and girl 153)
Indirect: Total 1,200 (Male-582 , Female-618)

Beneficiaries Contribution (Tk.):

Projected: 988,260 Actual: 904,365

Target and Achievements:

| Sl. No. | Items/Activities | Achievement as on June 2008 | Performance in FY 2008-2009 | | | Cumulative as on June 2009 |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| | | | Target | Achievement | % of Achieve. | |
| 1 | Grant for High School Students | 300 | 300 | 300 | 100 | 600 |

The above Table indicates that the selected 100% students received monetary help.

Impact:

- By receiving financial assistance from the project, the poor students have become able to pursue studies.
- The disadvantaged parents of these students are greatly inspired and they think that this kind of monetary help has created a great opportunity for their children to complete secondary education.
- With receiving education they are also learning to uphold ethical values and human qualities.
- The selected indigenous pupils frequently mix with the learners of majority community and thus they are becoming part of mainstream population.

Conclusion:

The project is playing a remarkable role to help the selected students to go for higher education. At the same time it has also exempted the poor parents from bearing their children's educational expenses to some extent. The stipend holders are grateful to those generous benefactors whose kindness has created an opportunity for them to step into secondary education. So these pupils always help others. The families of the stipend recipient students have a ray of hope that in future their children would become productive citizens and help the community people in various ways.

Education Support Program Enabled Sukumar to Achieve Academic Excellence

Sukumar Ekka (18) is now a student of Notre Dame College, Dhaka, one of the best educational institutions in Bangladesh. He passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) this year (2009) scoring Grade Point Average (GPA) 4.75 out of 5.00 from Victoria High School, Srimangal. He comes from a poor family living in Hatimara Tea Colony under Chunarughat *upazila* (Sub-district), Hobigonj district. It is about 20 km away from Srimangal *upazila* headquarters.

Sukumar has four brothers and two sisters. One sister reads in secondary school and one brother is a student of primary school. His elder sister got married and other two brothers are deprived of education. His father Camillus Ekka is a poorly paid catechist-teacher of Srimangal Catholic Church with monthly income of Tk. 1,500/- and his mother Onnora Besra is a tea garden laborer who earns Tk. 30 per day. It is quite difficult for them to maintain such a big family of 8 members with their small income. Sukumar has said that they can hardly eat three full meals a day. He never expected to be a student of Notre Dame College because his parents could not bear even his secondary school educational expenses.

Sukumar's father could convince the local Parish Priest to allocate a seat at the boys' hostel and to admit him into Victoria High School, Srimangal. But poverty was the main hindrance to his studies. As his father was unable to regularly bear the cost of food and hostel fees, he requested the Parish Priest to extend financial support to his son. The Priest could manage very small amount of money for the boy. Sukumar said that most of the time he had to go school wearing the same dress and could not buy necessary notebooks needed to be used in the class and at home.

When he was a student of Class IX, Caritas started Education Support Program funded by Caritas Japan. Like other students, Sukumar also applied for stipend and accordingly he was selected by the Project Implementation Committee. He received Tk.315 per month for full two years from the program. He passed the SSC examination with credit. He gratefully said, "I was able to appear at the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination as I received financial assistance from Caritas Education Support Program. It helped me lot to attain a satisfactory result."

His father said with joyful tears in the eyes that indeed it was God loving and generous friends of Japan, who gave pecuniary assistance to the very poor students including his son through Caritas. He thanked them for giving monetary help to their children to prosecute their studies.