

A New Ray of Hope

SIL
Bangladesh
helps
communities
achieve
their
development
goals
while
retaining
their
Ethno
linguistic
identities.

At the beginning of 2017 I was a bit concerned after attending an event with the Kurux community who live in Rangpur district, in northern Bangladesh. It was a program evaluation event. The participants were keen to know whether we would be working with them again, but their questions made me feel worried and embarrassed. We assured them that we wanted to work with them but explained that it depended on funding.

A year later, in the middle of 2018 we got good news about funding for a new project with six language communities: Mahle, Kol, Koda, Koch, Hajong and Kurux. We were excited about the new activities. The focus is on the basic needs of children, including their rights to health, education and family life. Children in these communities often get sick from diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid, scabies, pneumonia or worms. Many are also suffering from malnutrition. Sometimes they do not attend School because there is no school close to their village.

There is a lack of awareness amongst parents about how to keep their children safe. It is not uncommon for parents to leave their children at home while they are working in the fields. Instead of attending School, the children play unattended, which can put them in danger.

Children in these communities are often lacking in confidence.

... .. SPECIAL COMMENTS

The children who attend are enjoying themselves and we hope the project will be a great platform for their growth in the future.



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A New Ray of Hope...cont'd

The main activities of the project started with a community survey and health screening of the children. We hired a local health worker to examine the children's health, checking their weight, height, vaccination record, eyesight and any visible health problems including malnutrition, scabies, worms and anemia. We then launched a nutrition program, establishing 16 centers in different villages where children aged 3 to 12 can come and eat a nutritious meal three times a week. The menu rotates to include fish, meat, vegetables, eggs, rice and dhal. The food is cooked by mothers who have attended an awareness session about how to preserve the nutritional value of the food. The aim is that the mothers will continue to practice what they have learnt at home, helping to eradicate malnutrition among the community's children.



The village centers offer teaching sessions to the children on issues such as cleanliness, nutrition, moral values, child protection and ambitions for the future. The children also have opportunities to play at the center, which has equipment for football, chess, skipping, frisbee and other local games to encourage the children's physical and mental development. The children who attend are enjoying themselves and we hope the project will be a great platform for their growth in the future.

Written by: *Shanta Maria D' Costa.*