SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCTION LINKED TO IMPROVED NUTRITION STATUS, RESILIENCE, AND GENDER EQUITY

RED CRESCENT YOUTH VOLUNTEERS UNDER SAPLING

SAPLING and BDRCS introduce Red Crescent Youth volunteers in Bandarban

The USAID-funded Resilience Food Security Activity, Sustainable Agriculture and Production Linked to Improved Nutrition Status, Resilience and Gender Equity (SAPLING) has been working to improve gender-equitable food security, nutrition, and resilience of vulnerable people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. The program emphasizes youth engagement and strengthening community cohesion.

SAPLING collaborated with the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) to recruit and train BDRCS Red Crescent Youth volunteers. These volunteers were based in five upazilas of the Bandarban District, and trained on effective disaster response measures.

CONTEXT

Families in the CHT struggle to recover from natural and human-induced disasters, such as cyclones, flooding, landslides, and fire. The government of Bangladesh (GOB) works with BDRCS to establish Red Crescent Youth volunteers from the community to the district level across Bangladesh. They build technical, administrative, and organizational skills and empower youth.

To address this need for support in Bandarban, SAPLING aided the Red Crescent Youth initiative by helping to organize and train volunteers. SAPLING trained and mobilized community-based BDRCS youth volunteers, to increase community resilience through improved capacity for sustainable disaster recovery. The emphasis on youth fosters a culture of sustained volunteerism and civic duty that will carry to the next generation.

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ACTIVITIES

2,400
volunteers recruited

700
volunteers are young women

Red Crescent Youth training at district upazila, and community levels

777
high school volunteers (433 boys and 344 girls) recruited from 15 schools to form Red Crescent school groups

Red Crescent school groups trained by the upazila-level Red Crescent Youth volunteers in RCRC induction, first aid, and emergency response

SAPLING also collaborated with BDRCS on a second Red Crescent Youth initiative. This initiative accelerated disaster awareness activities in secondary schools and incorporated disaster response education into the secondary school curriculum.

Core capacity development

The core capacity development group comprised 38 Red Crescent Youth volunteers. They received:

4-DAY
Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) induction and training on first aid

2-DAY
Basic Disaster Risk Management training

5-DAY
Basic Training of Trainers course

This core group cascaded training to other Red Crescent Youth in Bandarban. They are responsible for continued recruitment and training of future volunteers, and maintain community-based disaster preparedness and response.

Youth empowerment

The Red Crescent Youth teams organized volunteer activities to raise awareness of preparedness measures in collaboration with local authorities and other stakeholders. These also included environmental efforts such as Green and Clean Bandarban and waste management at college campuses.

The Red Crescent Youth program empowers young people with critical skills to contribute to their communities. It provides a platform for them to be heard in their communities, and offers leadership opportunities.

These young volunteers were essential in responding to disasters, including fires, landslides, road accidents, and COVID-19 prevention and mitigation. These activities raised their profile and respect for the volunteer youth within their communities.

Through this effort by the GOB, BDRCS, and SAPLING, the people of Bandarban benefit from more effective and coordinated disaster mitigation and response.

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