Jute: an eco-friendly opportunity for a sustainable future

Jute has long been called the ‘golden fibre’ of Bangladesh. Crops that yield the natural fibres have thrived in the climate of the Bay of Bengal for decades. As the global demand for environmentally friendly products rises, jute cultivation and the export of diversified jute products represent a value chain with great potential for smallholders and the general economy of the country. Facilitating the connection between poor farmers, small entrepreneurs and market intermediaries, CARE’s programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports through the promotion of jute-related activities, with an emphasis on increased incomes for the most vulnerable groups and poverty reduction.

**DURATION:** 2013-2017

**CHALLENGE:** Women’s Social and Economic development, Natural Resources Management

**COUNTRY:** Bangladesh

**PARTNER:** CARE

**CONTEXT**

Bangladesh is currently the second largest producer and number one exporter of jute fibre in the world. Crops that yield these long natural fibres have thrived in the climate of the Bay of Bengal for decades. The global demand for jute and related products has steadily increased in recent years, driven by increasing global environmental concerns and responsible consumerism. Jute cultivation and the export of diversified jute products represent a value chain with huge prospects and great potential for smallholders and the general economy of Bangladesh, both locally and globally.

**ACTION**
The programme focuses on four districts in the peri-urban and rural areas of southwest and northwest Bangladesh. Facilitating connections between poor farmers, small entrepreneurs and market intermediaries, CARE’s programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports through the promotion of jute-related activities, with an emphasis on sustainable agriculture sector growth, increased employment and incomes for the most vulnerable groups, and poverty reduction.

The programme actions have been designed to build a sustainable and wealth-generating jute value chain and include:

- Strengthening farmers’ organizations and improving production practices to promote the eco-friendly production of high quality raw jute.
- Empowering poor and marginalized people working in the jute supply chain, and women in particular, through skills development, micro-enterprise and business training.
- Developing effective linkages within the jute value chain, bringing together business intermediaries and a consortium of Diversified Jute Product (DJP) entrepreneurs to collectively address constraints in the production and export of market-demand-driven DJPs.
- Influencing environmental policy and consumption patterns that have the potential to boost Bangladesh’s growth in the jute sector.

**EXPECTED RESULTS**

This programme targets 18,000 workers in the jute diversification supply chain, 20 small entrepreneurs engaged in the production and marketing of diversified jute products, three national private intermediaries and three jute mills. Overall, it will also benefit some 60,000 farmers engaged in jute cultivation and 4 million people engaged in the ancillary jute subsector in Bangladesh.

Expected results include:

- The environmentally-friendly and sustainable use of low-cost green products is promoted through the production and consumption of diversified jute products.
- 16,000 small jute producers (half of them women) are organized into 350 village groups and provided with technical support.
- 60 marginalized smallholding women are trained as producers and sellers of organic fertilizers.
- The sustainable consumption and production of diversified jute products is strengthened through the successful promotion of increased use in Asia and Europe.
- A consortium of small producers, exporters and business intermediaries of jute differentiating products is created.
- 2,000 marginalized workers (at least 60% women) are selected and trained for 6 months with skills development training on the production of diversified jute products.
• 2,000 workers (at least 60% women) are provided with three-day training courses on rights and obligations in the workplace.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY
Based on viable and demand-driven business models, CARE’s programme plans to create replication mechanisms by transferring knowledge, technology and capacities to vulnerable jute growers and processors, jute mills, business and market intermediaries, the public sector and small entrepreneurs’ consortiums. The actions capitalize on the policy momentum that has been launched at national and international levels and are complementary to national plans on climate change mitigation and poverty reduction. The alliance with national-level NGOs ensures coherence of the message and the harmonization of approaches.