



# Bangladesh

The Hunger Project-Bangladesh launched in 1990 and is currently the country's largest volunteer-based organization.

Our strategy catalyzes change at the local level in partnership with regional councils as well as at the national level through country-wide networks, such as the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Shujan (Citizens for Good Governance) — networks that are shifting the national dialogue and policies centered on girls' rights and sound democratic governance.

Through this combined approach, we maintain a broad reach in both rural and urban areas.

## The challenges.

Following independence in 1971 and then a famine in 1974, there was an enormous flow of foreign aid to Bangladesh. The mindset of dependency that resulted was perpetuated in wealthy and impoverished communities alike, leading to widespread hunger and poverty and social conditions that subjugate and marginalize women and girls.

## The opportunities.

- Shift mindsets from dependency and resignation to empowerment and optimism through community engagement.
- Mobilize people at the grassroots level to break down social barriers to ending hunger: gender discrimination and corruption.
- Equip women with leadership skills to confront and transform issues of gender inequality.
- Form Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Unions to promote decentralized democracy and accountable governance.

## What we do.

The centerpiece of our strategy is a network of Hunger Project-trained volunteers (called “animators”) who mobilize their communities for self-driven, sustainable action in partnership with elected leaders.

Led by the priorities of animators, we leverage the existing structure of local government and partner with elected leaders who are committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level and to improving the conditions in the communities they represent.

Coalitions of these communities work together to develop local capacity through health and nutrition workshops, sanitation and hygiene trainings, women-led savings groups and more. In this way, change is community-led, owned and sustained.

In combination with strategic national-level advocacy efforts spearheaded by The Hunger Project and our partner organizations, we are able to transform attitudes, policies and societal structures that present barriers to people seeking lives of self-reliance and dignity.

## At a glance: THP-Bangladesh

- 183 SDG Unions
- 5.1 million people reached
- 44,000 youth meetings
- 1,672 volunteer leaders trained
- 40% of volunteers are women
- 1,200 child marriages halted by community interventions

In 2019.

## A cycle of malnutrition.

Severe gender discrimination perpetuates a cycle of malnutrition in which girls eat last and eat least. Girl babies are fed less nutritious food than their brothers and are denied health care. Young girls are routinely married and become pregnant too early – before their bodies have fully developed. They are underweight and malnourished when they give birth to the next generation – who are also born underweight and malnourished, perpetuating a cycle of malnutrition for millions of women.

## The history of National Girl Child Day.

In response to the deeply entrenched gender discrimination, THP-Bangladesh founded the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF), an alliance which has grown to more than 500 organizations.

The goals of NGCAF are to:

- Build awareness of the importance of valuing girls
- Gain support to secure girls' rights
- Advocate for policies that improve girls' lives

NGCAF inaugurated National Girl Child Day on September 30th, 2000. Each year rallies, marches and school-based events take place alongside mass media coverage and an open dialogue on the importance of providing better health, education and nutrition to girls. NGCAF joined the Girls Not Brides Alliance in 2013 and, each year, tens of thousands of people participate in National Girl Child Day events nationwide.

**The  
Hunger  
Project.**

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## Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls.

**Anju Aktar** left school at the age of 13. She had been forced into a marriage with an older man and had her first child just a year later — a daughter. Anju's daughter then dropped out of school and was married by age 16. It was then that Anju knew it was time to break the cycle.

In 2012, she participated in a Vision, Commitment and Action workshop and found other women unwilling to maintain the social status quo. She and these women started a small business and now invest the profits in a savings group that lends money to other women in her community seeking self-reliance.

**“I will tell my grandchildren, boy or girl, that the most important thing is to be educated, be empowered and be self-dependent.”**

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