



# TARANGO

**"We will establish a just and poverty-free society through the economic empowerment of women."**



*Tarango is a non-government organization, which works towards establishing a just and poverty-free society by organizing and training disadvantaged women in Bangladesh. Tarango works with some of the most marginalized women in the country, and assists them with entrepreneurship development, marketing facilitation, business advisory services, gender rights training, and personal and family health services. With the opportunity to develop their skills and recognize their potential, the women can take up the responsibilities of sustainable economic activities. And when women are empowered economically their status in their families and communities grows, allowing an increasingly gender-balanced society to develop*

## Tarango News Issue 1 - April 2008

The highlight of March for Tarango was the International Women's Day celebrations on March 8<sup>th</sup>, at Tarango's project in Kadambari, Barisal district (southern Bangladesh).

The annual event is a chance for the women to celebrate their achievements and reflect on women's issues. With several hundred women and children in attendance, the day began with a visit from local officials. And after some speeches the festivities started. Women from the local community who had been preparing for weeks sang, danced, and performed short plays.

Some of the skits explored gender relations and domestic violence issues. For the male roles women dressed in men's clothing and – to the delight of the audience - drew on huge fake moustaches or donned jute beards.

Other performances saw women who had written songs or developed dances especially for the occasion.

Activities for children, including singing, drawing, and clay modeling competitions, all based around birds and relevant environmental issues, took place one day earlier. In the area birds are often killed by humans and many were lost in Cyclone Sidr last year, endangering the migratory bird population. Environmentalist and bird enthusiast Mr. Enam Al Haque, of the Bangladesh Bird Club, gave a talk to the young audience on this topic.



*Children listen to Enam Al Haque*

Sheenagh Day of Masion Bengal, one of Tarango's development partners, stayed in the village for the celebrations, and visited several producer groups in the days before and after Women's Day. The producers all reported that they had had increased amounts of work in the past year, with their steady work only interrupted by floods and Cyclone Sidr.

Pasful, a long-term member of Tarango's handicrafts group, said that her eldest daughter recently finished college and has begun studies at Dhaka University. This is the first time a participant's daughter has been able to attend university.

Kohinoor Yeasmin, CEO of Tarango, commented on the changes to the area and to the women living there over the past years. She said the standard of living had risen and women were more confident, as their vibrant performances on Women's Day showed. She said the success of the day "demonstrated the result of 25 years of work in Kadambari, during which the women have slowly been empowered and recognized their rights."

As well as Women's Day activities, a health care support service was opened last year in Kadambari, with the assistance of Sheenagh, Ruth Zumbuehl, a long term associate of Tarango, and many more supporters. The service is now open two days a week, and is visited by 25-30 patients each of those days. Tarango plans to expand the services of the health care support, and increase the opening hours.

Tarango is still working in Barisal and Gopalganj on an Alternative Livelihood Development program with the UNDP (United Nations Development Program). This began on the 1st December, 2007, shortly after Cyclone Sidr, to assist people to develop sustainable livelihoods, suitable for such a disaster prone area. This will reach many of the families and husbands of Tarango beneficiaries. The activities underway include assisting people to develop appropriate agriculture businesses, and digging canals to allow floodwater to drain.

In other news, Tarango is currently undertaking organizational strategy planning. But for the first time, the beneficiaries of Tarango programs are directly involved. Through workshops over the past weeks, groups of women have been invited to share their vision and expectations for Tarango; non-literate women draw pictures to show and record their ideas. This will all be considered in Tarango's strategic planning decisions.

### News from the districts

**Barisal** – women from the Handicrafts Program here have started training participants in other women's handicrafts groups. In February two women from the Barisal program trained 25 women from Mukti Nari Sangtha in jute weaving, and another training for women in Nourshindi will start in late April.



*Women from Kadambari show Sheenagh the baskets*

In **Muksedpur**, Barisal district, 50 women whose husbands are no longer able to work, were recently trained in jute craft.

**Bogra** - Tarango's handicrafts group in Bogra recently received training to produce a new range of palm fiber baskets. The traditional weaving styles of the area were adapted to produce a variety of internationally commercially viable products.

**Dinajpur and Gajipur** – new groups of 25 women in both Dinajpur and Gajipur received training in December 2007 to become part of Tarango's Handicrafts program. Due to expanding demand for Tarango's products, more women will now be able to earn an income for themselves and their families. Two of the women were also assisted to travel to Dhaka for training, run by Aranna Craft, in vegetable dye use and production.

**Dhaka** - UK designer and former VSO volunteer Alan Flux recently returned for a stint in Bangladesh where he worked with Shukumar – Tarango's designer – to develop new designs for products and fabrics.

Please visit Tarango's new website [www.tarango-bd.org](http://www.tarango-bd.org) to see the increased range of Tarango products available for viewing online. Don't see what you're after? Just ask us. Tarango has more products than are currently in the catalogue, and is able to work with buyers to develop products to suit their needs.

### *Tarango's project in Kadambari*

