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”Ambivalences of Development Cooperation in Post-Conflict Regions. Ethnicity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh“

diploma thesis

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*I wish to thank
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1. Introduction

Supporting peace-processes in conflict ridden societies has been a heavily discussed issue in social sciences and development practice during recent years. The events in former Yugoslavia, Israel and Palestine, Rwanda and many other regions in the world have gained not just a great deal of media presence, but led to discussions on how the “international community” could assist the actors embroiled in violent struggles in the different phases of conflict in order to mediate, pacify and consolidate peace-processes (DAC 1997; Uvin 1999; Klingebiel 1999; Mehler et al. 2000). Development-cooperation is seen as an appropriate tool for peace-building efforts, since it is commonly assumed that development and peace have a reciprocal relationship to each other¹.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh, located in the south-east at the border to Myanmar, are a “classical” case of conflict between the state and separatist groups fighting for cultural autonomy, freedom and recognition, against oppression, nationalism and hegemony. The people of the CHT are so-called tribals, or indigenous people². They are comprised of different ethnic groups, representing a broad cultural diversity. Starting with Bangladesh’s independence and having developed in a reciprocal process of nationalism and counter-nationalism, the armed struggle between the CHT and the state continued for about 25 years. Finally, in 1997, the government of Bangladesh and the CHT resistance movement were able to negotiate acceptable provisions in a Peace Accord, which ended the long era of ethnic conflict.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world. The CHT are a small region of 16,966 square kilometres, about 10% of the state territory. Development cooperation has a long tradition in Bangladesh, but the CHT have been almost unaffected by any assistance from donating countries and are considered even “less developed” than the rest of the country. Among many other donating countries, Germany is interested in contributing to CHT’s development, and at the same time in supporting the peace process. By joining an appraisal

¹ With the statement “development is the most secure basis for peace” the UN Secretary General has expressed the importance of development for peace. Agenda for Development: Report of the Secretary General, UN GEOR 48th Sess., Agenda Item 91, UN Doc. A/48/935 (1995) cited in: Linarelli (1996).

² In the following I will refer to the CHT people predominantly as “Hill People”, which derives from its local equivalent “pahari”. Although the local people labelled themselves as “tribals”, the notion has a negative connotation, since it refers to the “backwardness” of the Hill People, as in many other parts of South Asia. The term can actually traced back to the African context, where it implied association with racial supremacism (Bates 1995: 103). The notion of “indigenous” which is increasingly used among the CHT people, and which I will use in this thesis as well, has been introduced and adopted in South Asia in order to demonstrate unity with other ethnic groups struggling for recognition of their rights. It is thus a political concept. At the same time “indigenous” refers to a broad category of people, and is commonly regarded as a more neutral term than “tribal” (Colchester 1995: 60).

mission of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in 2000, I had the opportunity to participate in the process of finding possible strategies a donating agency could adopt in order to support peace and development in the CHT. On the basis of this field research my aim within this thesis is to address the problems and difficulties of planning projects in post-conflict regions which are characterised by high ethnic complexity, such as the CHT.

The major focus of this thesis lies on the analysis of the local setting, exploring the dynamics of conflict there. The most important category for analysis is ethnicity. But the concepts of ethnicity are broad and complex. Two major schools can be distinguished: the primordial and the constructivist approaches. The primordialist conception of ethnicity has been primarily developed by Clifford Geertz (1963). Geertz' perspective focuses in the primordality of norms and values, and understands ethnicity as a "quasi-natural" extension of family bonds (Schlee et al. 1996: 17). Blood, language and religion are seen as the defining features of the community. (Geertz 1963: 110). While the primordialist approaches focus on the content of communities labelled as "ethnic", constructivist approaches address the boundaries between groups as the constituting element for ethnicity. Ethnic identities are constructed in relation to other groups, cultural features are thus produced or reproduced, invented or reinvented, and constructed or reconstructed, where social entities come into conflict. The major classical contributor to the constructivist approach is Frederik Barth (1969) with his introduction to "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries". The constructivist approaches see ethnic groups not as prevailing cultural entities, but emphasise the changing, unstable and invented character of ethnicity. In line with this assumption go instrumentalist approaches, developed since the 1960s, which explain ethnicity as an instrument for access to economic and political resources (Schlee et al. 1996: 18). The conflict in the CHT is characterised by a complex multiplicity of causes, which derive from political, economic and social processes. These need to be taken into account when attempting to understand the dynamics of conflict, the construction and reconstruction of ethnicity. Although cultural differences, in the sense of primordial descriptions, play an important role within this dynamic, they are nevertheless produced and reproduced by the struggle for recognition of the minority within the state.

When third parties, e.g. donor agencies as representatives of states, try to intervene in a conflict region such as the CHT, they need to face the dynamics of ethnicity. Assisting conflict regions has far-reaching ethical implications (Mehler 2000). A central aspect is the premise of a neutral and impartial attitude of third parties towards the conflict context. Although the scientific discourse emphasises that development-cooperations's reaction can never be neutral (Fahrenhorst 2000a: 13; Schlichte 2000: 49), neutrality is nevertheless a

central ethical postulate in donating country's policy (Mehler 2000). This crucial aspect therefore needs special recognition. The thesis finally aims to discuss the practical carrying out of activities whilst taking the ethical ramifications into account.

The following chapter focuses on the methods applied for field research in the CHT. Reflecting on the researcher's role is a constituting element for the selection of methods. Additionally, in this chapter I will discuss the problem of field research in societies characterised by ethnic conflict. The third chapter attempts to give an introduction to the new paradigm in development-cooperation, namely crisis-prevention. Of major importance is describing the state of the art in the German context. The German contribution to the discussion is in general in line with the policy of other donating countries and multilateral actors. In chapter four the Chittagong Hill Tracts will be introduced by examining elements of social change which relate to the history of ethnic conflict in the region. These historical processes are crucial for understanding and explaining the conflict in the CHT. Chapter five deals with the major features of the Peace Accord and Germany's engagement. This Chapter introduces the major changes since the Peace Accord, and the history of GTZ's project idea for the CHT. Additionally, an overview of donor activities is given. In chapter six the local dynamics and structures will be analysed. This will happen in view of third parties' attempt to plan projects in the CHT. The administrative structure will be analysed with special attention to processes which enable the state to exercise power over the CHT. Closely related to this are political dynamics. The relations between different institutions and political parties are partly ethnically determined. In the centre of analysis are those institutions which have been formed due to the Peace Accord. The analysis of the institutional setting shows how political interests become ethnically polarised. But the polarisation is not the only determining factor for group formation processes. Political and especially personal interests need to be taken into account as well. These interests criss-cross ethnic polarisation. Another important issue are the economic structures. There, the relationships between majority and minority will be analysed in particular, by explaining social process in terms of the struggle for control of resources. The ethnic segregation of market and trade are an important feature as well. Another aspect crucial for development agencies is the emerging civil society. These actors are gaining more and more importance in development cooperation in general, but in crisis-prevention in particular (Mehler et al. 2000; Hoffmann 2000). The most important civil society actors in Bangladesh are NGOs. The scene in the CHT is ethnically segregated; so-called national and local NGOs are the most significant actors there. Chapter seven discusses the empirical findings of Chapter six in view of the practical implementation of projects in the CHT. One

major challenge is the question of how to remain neutral in the complex ethnic setting. The claim for a neutral attitude of donor agencies intervening in conflict regions exposes the planners to challenges within the local setting, whose dynamic needs to be discussed and taken into account. The selection of project areas and counterparts already confronts the agency with political and strategic difficulties. Further, the empirical findings reveal that activities can have negative effects. Several examples which have been discussed and planned in the field will be discussed. In this regard, I will try to give some recommendations for intervention in post- conflict regions. Nevertheless the analysis reveals that intervention needs a very careful inquiry of the local setting. The conflict lines are diverse, due to different actors and interests. Peace-building cannot be achieved with patent solutions. It is thus of the utmost importance to introduce a broad range of activities, and to include a broad variety of actors. The different donor agencies need to coordinate and attune their activities to each other. In chapter eight the main findings will be summarised.

2. Methodology

The data collected in the CHT are based predominantly on research I conducted in 2001 during the assessment of a GTZ Appraisal Mission I joined as an intern. Although I had had some experience with research in Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the situation of joining a donor agency's mission was new to me. Before we started, I did not really have a clear picture of what to expect. Meetings with the Director of the Dhaka-Offices and the proposed Team Leader of the Mission were not particularly informative either. I did not get any precise information about the work which awaited me. Besides I felt a bit nervous about returning to a country where I had had a number of exciting but difficult experiences when, during a three month research project conducted by Bielefeld University, I had visited the CHT for the first time.

The mission then started its preparations at the end of April 2000 by studying the relevant literature, followed by informative meetings with various donor agencies, relevant governmental institutions and NGOs³ which were proposed to work in the CHT. The mission actually did everything it could to gather information about development-cooperation, activities and experiences in the CHT, the donating countries' policies concerning such cases and information about problems, difficulties, in short, everything what could be relevant in any way. After this orientation phase the field visits started at the end of May. First of all we

made courtesy visits to the three headquarters of the Hill Districts, Rangamati, Bandarban and Kagrachari. These visits took between one and four days for each district. The mission talked to the Chairmen and members of the local bodies (Hill District Councils and Regional Council), the District Commissioners, the civil surgeons, the vice-chairman of the CHT Development Board and the Chakma *raja*. Additionally participatory meetings with business people, NGO representatives, women's groups and so-called opinion leaders were held. Further this first "orientation visit" was used to find local experts as consultants for the participants' fields of interest. GTZ hired four consultants, who joined the mission in its further steps. An assessment in five *upazilas*⁴ of Rangamati and Bandarban district followed. The time for the assessment was very limited. Usually the mission made daily trips from the district headquarters to the headquarters of the *upazilas* concerned and to unions⁵ as well as to some selected villages. During the assessment the contacts with the authorities concerned was maintained. The assessment finished with a ZOPP workshop⁶ in the beginning of August, to which possible counterparts of the project were invited.

2.1 The Field Entry

Bangladesh is not an attractive tourist spot, although there are beautiful places to be found. The CHT were a restricted area until 1997, and consequently the number of white-faced visitors was and is still extremely low, compared to many other parts of the world. The only ones to be seen are the expatriates from various donor agencies and international organisations. Sometimes one spots a lost tourist on the street, but these disappear at the latest after three days. Westerners staying longer are "observed observers".

During my field research in 1999 I was able to establish some contacts and a more or less useful network of people, of whom many became close friends. I felt at home when I came to Rangamati at the end of May 2000. My previous knowledge and the already existing networks to rely on, together with the good personal relationships, make it necessary to reflect on my personal impact on the local context (Lachenmann 1995a: 4). Enjoying the extraordinary possibility of two parallel entries to the field can turn out to be difficult in many different ways, as I came to realise after a while. On the one hand I was regarded as a

³ The NGOs are an interesting case of development work in the CHT. They will be the subject of Chapter 6.4.

⁴ *Upazilas* are the administrative units which comprise a district. In Rangamati district the mission visited Rangamati Sadar and Juraichhari. In Bandarban district the assessment was made in Bandarban Sadar, Rowangchhari and Ruma.

⁵ Unions comprise an *upazila*.

⁶ ZOPP means Zielorientierte Projektplanung, and is the GTZ's method for participatory project planning.

representative of the expatriate community and as a development expert. On the other hand I was a young research student, a visitor, and someone who was already known within the locality. People trusted me and I had a certain “lobby” due to personal networks and friendships. I immediately found myself lost in the complex dynamics of local structures with all their personal relationships and the resulting conflicts and opinions. After a while I had some idea about the relationships between different people, and I was at least prepared and could react with appropriate care.

Lévi-Strauss (1978: 378) notes that a researcher can either keep a certain distance and represent his own group's values or he can dedicate himself to the field and lose his objectivity. Both extremes have advantages and disadvantages, and balancing them is the art of fieldwork⁷. My submission to the field due to close friendships from my first visit implied some problems related to the situation described above. Having a friendly relationship with someone who is well known can first of all be interpreted as a prerequisite for establishing further contacts with people, as it was in my case. At the same time, a well known person is confronted by enemies and critics. A locality is not a place without history when a researcher arrives. Establishing oneself as a stranger who comes today and stays tomorrow (Simmel 1992: 764) necessarily implies confronting the local history because at a certain point one will oneself be integrated into and defined by local structures. Having a certain position within a development agency can be problematic as well. Expectations related to such an agency almost naturally produce a certain kind of envy and jealousy, having consequences not just for the researcher also for his local contact persons. These anticipations range from being provided with a job to the obligation to “do something” for the people of a specific area. Expectations concerning the researcher appear in the literature as “advocacy-function” (Lachenmann 1995a: 5). Thus as a researcher I was in the position of having a “double face”. While I was a friend interested in the way of life of the local people who is expected to show loyalty, I was also a member of GTZ, whose task is to remain neutral in the treatment of different local people, which is not compatible with the advocacy-function.

Considering this framework, which had already begun to crystallise during the previous research period in 1999, explaining who I was and what I was doing in the CHT was a difficult and confusing task due to my different “roles”, which turned out not to be clear to most of the people, nor, finally, to myself either. This produced confusion, and I myself was put into the dilemma of having to attempt to do independent ethnographic research on the one

⁷ Sociology in particular emphasises the importance of a “reflexive distance” to the field (Lachenmann 1995a: 6).

hand and represent a donor-agency on the other. Different interests needed to be tackled, expectations to be fulfilled and broad variety of methods applied to gather that information I wanted. During my leisure time I asked to be introduced simply as a tourist in order to gather data which had nothing to do with expectations towards myself as a GTZ member but which dealt merely with aspects of every-day life. Nonetheless, the situation of not being solely an ethnographer meant I had advantages when it came to getting information. Agar (1980: 58) describes the importance of making oneself known in the area, which was easy in my case since I could simply hand over my important-looking visiting-card and refer to the mission. No difficult explanations were necessary to get information or an invitation, although this is not the ideal, honest way. Nevertheless, the question of power and partiality needs to be reflected upon when operating within official development research (Lachenmann 1995a:6).

Books about ethnographic methods usually state that the researcher should ideally have the ability to communicate in the local language (Bernard 1995: 145; Robins 1986: 69). But doing research in the CHT implies several problems concerning language. 13 different ethnic groups speak 13 different languages. If Bengali were the second main language it would be appropriate to use it for conversation. But the main mode of communication in large parts of the Chittagong District is the Chittagonian dialect, which derives from Bengali, but is still quite different and not understandable for those able to speak Bengali. Bengali has nowadays become the lingua franca in the CHT instead of English, although the elder generation is still more familiar with English⁸. Bengali may evoke considerable hostility, because it is the national language and has to be seen in the context of the conflict between the Hill People and Bangladesh. Once a researcher from Dhaka University told me that as a foreign, English speaking researcher, it would be easier to build up a trustful relationship with the local people. Of course this is an opinion which could be controversially discussed. My solution was to work with an interpreter. Robins (1986: 69) describes that the difficulty that working with an interpreter implies, pointing out that one has to rely on interpreters' interpretations and that the information therefore is not "pure", especially when the interpreter in question is an anthropologist or sociologist. My experiences showed that a good interpreter is one who has little knowledge about the issues you are researching. He will have his own opinion about many issues, but attempts to start interpreting the data in advance are limited. An important task of the interpreter is his function as a "cultural broker", who enables the researcher easy

⁸ The Bengalisation of many parts of public life as well as other spheres derives from the nationalist language movement which was the motor of the independence war in 1970. Speaking Bengali is one of the most important codes of nationalism. The definition of nation in linguistic terms has had negative consequences for the indigenous population, but implies a shift from English to Bengali among the intellectual part of society.

access to the field. Described as a “professional stranger handler” by Agar (1980: 59), the interpreter in my case was able to win the trust of the members of his group and give information necessary for the validation of data (Lachenmann 1995a: 5). This function was partly fulfilled by the local consultants and by my private local contacts as well.

2.2 Methods Applied

The reflection on what I described above as the “double-faced” role I had in the field is very important with respect to the method applied. In general, every conversation, observation and meeting about anything that is related to CHT could be considered to be important (Bernard 1995: 147). The method applied was therefore composed of different methodological tools. The mix of methods is known as triangulation (Lachenmann 1995a: 11; Flick 1995: 250). This procedure seems to be appropriate to the situation under which I entered the field. The openness provided me with insights I could neither have had with a more structured way of doing research, nor by having only one of the two “roles”. The personal research situation was thus necessary to obtain an idea of what is called “local knowledge”. Although sometimes confusing, the open approach enabled me to get comprehensive but solid knowledge about the context and a broad variety of context-relevant information. The fact that I was visiting the CHT for the second time provided me with good basis for contextualisation, which is very important when qualitative methods are used (Lachenmann 1995a: 12ff). At the same time from my former experiences in fieldwork in the CHT I knew that it is extremely difficult to talk about “sensitive issues” in a formal or public setting (Gerharz 2000: 7). Using a tape recorder is impossible, in my experience. People seem to be scared of talking too openly. I still feel it to be better not to put the interviewee into an uncomfortable situation and so decided to do without optimally documented data.

Due to my having had two different field entries I am able to distinguish two different main sources of empirical data. One relies on the GTZ context, which enabled me to gather information in official circles, among the staff of different donor-agencies and on the diplomatic level. By attending various official meetings, informal talks in various offices, courtesy visits and also thanks to coincidences of various kinds, a broad variety of information came together. The selection of interviewees was arbitrary. I talked to people of very different social backgrounds. Governmental officials, representatives of other donor agencies, NGO representatives, political leaders and experts with an academic background. Large amounts of additional material, consisting of papers, annual reports, mission reports

and project applications complemented the data. Talking to officials implied visiting them in their offices and waiting time could be utilised for chatting with the people sitting around.. Here the interpreter helped a lot in his capacity as broker. This way of getting information gave interesting insights into how reality can be differently constructed. Data could be verified and especially estimations showed an interesting broad variance dependent on who elaborated them in which context-setting. The mission, as I have indicated above, also visited different *upazilas* and unions⁹. In some unions the *headmen* and *karbaris*¹⁰ were called for the meetings besides government officials, religious and political leaders and women; a broadly-based, mixed group came together. Different aspects were discussed in the group, and it was possible to talk to some people individually or in small groups. In addition, the driver turned out to be a promising researcher; sometimes he gathered interesting information when he had to wait somewhere for a whole day. The information needed to be pre-selected, because of the absence of recording-possibilities. I was therefore in the first place reliant on note-books, where information was written down. During my leisure time I was able to process the data further by producing memos and comments (Strauss 1998: 153).

The second set of information was collected during “leisure-time”. Personal contacts brought me together with a wide variety of people from different social contexts. Accompanied by someone who could translate, if necessary, I spent interesting hours sitting and chatting. Well integrated into a host-family, I had the chance to participate in social events and got access to a broad variety of persons. The collected data are a useful pool for contextualisation and validation. Nevertheless the central research focus of this thesis is related more closely to data gathered during the GTZ phase. Although providing interesting knowledge about the region and every-day-life in the CHT, these insights predominantly belong to the “context-knowledge-category”. The same is true for newspaper-articles, specific literature on CHT and ethnographic publications.

The method described above is in line with the standard methods of ethnographic research. Green (1986:3) describes these as “useful and adaptable to a wide range of information-gathering tasks” in the field of development. A certain sensitivity is necessary if the researcher wants to avoid local perceptions of her or himself as arrogant or paternalistic (Green 1986, 8). Bernard (1995: 141) points out that especially sensitive issues are captured best by using an open method of participant observation. According to my experiences this kind of sensitive research not only made the local people trust me, but refrains from imposing

⁹ *Upazilas* and unions are administrative unions.

the researcher's perception on the field. An open and free method enables the field to expose its socially constructed phenomena and enables the researcher to reconstruct these with an expedient degree of impartiality.

Finally the aim of this thesis is the formulation of hypotheses, which are, although developed within the local context of South Asia and CHT in particular, to a certain extent generalisable. My aim is not only to write an exclusively academic report, but also to contribute to the field of practical work. German development-cooperation does not have a long tradition in dealing with conflicts and for a long time emergency measures were the only means of operation in such areas. In order to contribute to the practical discussion as well, it is necessary to take a look at other contexts. The literature shows that most of research on conflict-management has been done in Africa due to number and intensity of conflicts¹¹, and this is where experience has been gathered. The CHT specifically were, according to my knowledge, never the focus of research on this topic until 1997¹². A private two-week visit to Rwanda in February 2001 gave some idea about how to compare different contexts in order to develop hypotheses. Conversations with development experts in various projects revealed interesting and thought-provoking ideas. Rwanda has been the scene of one of the most highly-visible ethnic conflicts in recent years, and therefore it seemed it might be easy to develop approaches for the CHT when comparing both cases. The analysis of this work will show however how different ethnic conflicts can be, how complex the issues are and how diversified the set of approaches for action should consequently be.

2.3 Fieldwork in Post-Conflict Regions

Research about people's lives involves getting close to them and making them comfortable with the researcher's presence (Bernard 1995: 137). Ethnic conflict is in particular a sensitive issue within a society. Without trusting the interviewer one will never start to express his frank opinion about another group or the relationship with it, especially when it is determined by stereotypes and prejudices. One might expect or fear that the person who is asking questions actually belongs to the other side. In respect to this, having friendly relationships to certain people turns out to be difficult as well. But nevertheless friendships make research

¹⁰ The *headman* is the traditional leader within a *mouza*. A *mouza* comprises 5 to 10 villages. The head of the village is called *karbari*.

¹¹ See Scherrer (1999) for a register of violent conflicts from 1985 to 1994.

¹² This fact has much to do with the special status the CHT had until 1997. No foreigner was allowed to enter the CHT without permission from the Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs. No development agency except UNICEF worked in the CHT either.

activities easier to handle on one side at least. The same problem appears when a mission of seven to eight people enters a village. The *headman* or UP chairman holds a meeting attended by a group of fifty to hundred partly concerned, partly curious people, and one white faced (something some of the people have probably never seen except on TV) mission member starts to ask questions about ethnic relations or armed resistance activities. Valid information will not be available¹³. This happened to me in the Sapchari Union of Rangamati *upazila*. First I noticed a very uncomfortable atmosphere, then I was advised by the interpreter not to ask such questions. This example shows that it is an extremely difficult task to find out something about sensitive issues when coming as a member of a donor agency. There are two different possible explanations for this. One is related to the vast recognition such a mission obtains. Not knowing who might be listening to the conversation when a crowd of people is around you deters the informant from talking about sensitive issues. Another plausible explanation is that people and stakeholders have expectations towards the development agency. They know that there is a certain amount of money which will not cover the whole area. Certain *upazilas* and unions have to be selected. Of course everybody is interested in presenting his union as an attractive one, with lots of potential and a good political climate. Denying conflicts is therefore related to expectations about the amount of money western donor agencies bring with them.

During the field visits some people complained about the habit of donor agencies carrying out appraisal missions, pre-appraisal missions, post-appraisal missions, fact-finding missions or workshops without getting started. Once, together with a local mission member, I visited an official in Bandarban in order to introduce the mission. Suddenly a local politician entered the room and started shouting at us. Later it was explained to me that he did not want to see all these useless missions coming and going but not doing anything. The history of the CHT as a restricted area following an internationally recognised peace accord, the overall intensive development cooperation with Bangladesh and the fact that the CHT are seen to be less developed than the rest of the country, has caused a massive interest in investigating the area for development activities. The various agencies can neither rely on their own experiences nor on others in the CHT. At the same time there is a certain reluctance to work in the CHT for various reasons, which will be examined later on. From the donor agencies' side, this problem should be reflected and appropriately reacted upon.

¹³ This is a problem of research in developing countries in general. Lentz (1992) therefore suggests applying qualitative instead of quantitative methods, in order to avoid the problem of faked statistics, since quantitative data collection is not just dependent on certain conditions, but has very limited scope (Lentz 1992: 310).

Finally it may be considered that the object of research, the question which is to be answered within the research process, should be the guide for choosing and applying methods. My aim was neither to develop a monograph of a certain ethnic group nor to evaluate a project. My research concentrates instead on problems and difficulties which arise during the process of planning a development project in the CHT. Not just according to my own observations also to the already existing analyses done in recent years, due to historical processes, ethnic differences are the crux of many problems, not least the developmental ones. Ethnic identities are largely constructed by various mechanisms and processes and vice versa. Ethnicity has become politicised during a long lasting violent conflict. The fact that the people of CHT have a long tradition of constructing boundaries between their different groups should not be denied and will be analysed in the following chapters. Consequently one might expect that ethnic conflict will affect the work of a development-agency as much or even more than other processes that structure society. To analyse these processes resulting from ethnic conflict, is the main object of this work. This has some implications for the methodology, which will be seen in the context of the previous paragraphs. A broad variety of different data has to be considered as relevant: the experiences of various agencies as much as the opinions of local leaders, politicians, diplomats and others concerned in some way with the question of development. Furthermore a priority has been to pay appropriate attention to the opinions and beliefs of what development agencies call the “target group”, the “ordinary people” in villages and towns from each social context.

3. Peace-Building and Development-Cooperation

In recent years peace-building and conflict-management have become an important and well recognised field in politics and area of research. The main argument put forward in the literature is that the new age, which has started with the end of the Cold War, led to a new climate enabling the international community to concentrate more on a global expansion of views on conflicts rather than concentrating on the prevention of a nuclear world war (Matthies 1999: 103). The amount it is talked about is matched only by the amount of confusion there is about it. This starts with the question of how to define exactly the terms one is confronted with when addressing the issue: peace-building, crisis-prevention, conflict-management, peace-making or peace-keeping. In recent years there have been many efforts to put them into a kind of systematic order. But these efforts turn out to be as complex as the issue itself. Within this chapter the terms are going to be developed from an overview of the

current debate on the issue, since different actors have different views, perspectives and awarenesses.

This chapter attempts to give an overview of the main developments within the field of peace-building, concentrating on those efforts combined with development-cooperation. There are different levels as well as different actors: international, regional and national actors are involved into the ongoing discussions. The “international community” as a whole in the sense of umbrella organisations like the UN have their own approach to what is meant by peace-building. Other actors belonging to the multilateral level are regional organisations like the European Union (EU), Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and others who are advancing the conceptualisation of crisis-prevention. International non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are contributing to the discussion by developing conceptions¹⁴ as well. Finally bilateral relations play a certain role in this field. After an outline of the international debate I will concentrate in the following on the German context, since this has been the focus of my research and further zoom in on the context of development cooperation.

The enthusiasm for peace-building and crisis-prevention in recent years amazes at the first sight, when one considers the discussions on peace-research which took place in the 1960s (Brauer 1999). Especially Germany attempted to combine development-cooperation with social- and peace-policy (Korff 1997). But not just the German context, also on the international level the question of conflict and peace was much discussed during these times. The result of academic research and discourses is what is called today “classic war studies” (Wiberg 1999: 1). This scientific approach, commonly known as peace and conflict research, focussed on a conceptualisation of different types and on the causes of war (Funke 1978). As a school of thought in international theory, peace and conflict research anticipated that social conflicts always have the possibility of employing mechanisms for peaceful conflict-regulation, while international conflicts are determined by the absence of an authority which is able to interfere and to settle a conflict (Senghaas 1987: 58). The nation-states were seen in these approaches as the ordering entity in the world system, therefore the relations between states were considered as most important. Thus, two main foci were assumed for analysis: one was the East-West-relationship, the other one referred to the North-South-difference. Due to the end of the Cold War the landscape of conflicts has changed. The focus of research in this field has shifted from conflicts between states to conflicts within states, since the anticipated stability of the nation-state is more and more questioned due to an increasing number of

¹⁴ For the influence of NGOs on the crisis-prevention debate see for example: Fischer (1999); Adelman (1997) and van der Linde et al. (1999).

struggles within (Baechler 1998: 2; Stather 2000:3). A significant argument therefore is that the Cold War contributed much to the stability and viability of political communities (Rönquist 1999: 145). The dissolution of the polarisation has set free different dynamics, especially reflected in the rising effort to redefine territorial boundaries according to ethno-national identification. During the Cold War conflicts were perceived as results of East-West-Confrontations¹⁵ (Scherrer 1997: 15); the end of the Cold War has consequently a changed perspective on conflicts as a consequence: since the East-West relationship offers no points of reference any longer, intra-state-conflicts are gaining more attention.

Intra-state conflicts are in general more complex due to a large number of actors and interest groups (Brauer 1999: 21) than those between states. The actors are not just quasi-equal opponents offending each other, but are much more diversified: for example separatist movements representing oppressed (-feeling) groups struggle against governments. Often neighbouring states are involved, and/or foreign paramilitary groups as well. Conflicts within states are more determined by the question of “Who owns the State?” (Wimmer 1997). The quality of conflicts nowadays implies practical problems like the question of intervening in the sovereignty of the state for instance. Much significance is gained by the fact that the different nature of conflicts and the different set of actors requires different analytical tools than those applied by researchers doing classic war studies. A different set of methods and tools for investigation is needed. Furthermore the knowledge which has been developed by analysing wars between states does not provide sufficient analytical instruments for intra-state conflicts (Wiberg 1999: 7).

Of major significance is the fact that a large number of conflicts are rooted in separatist movements which justify their assaults by pointing to ethnic diversity and identity (Väyrynen 1999). Emphasising this specific ethnic character of today’s conflicts has led to a controversial discussion. What is in question is, whether conflicts are really ethnic ones or if they just claim to be. Mehler states in this context that the phrase “ethnic conflict” might be overstretched, because causes of conflicts are usually more complex and cannot be attributed solely to ethnicity (Mehler 2000: 32; Ernst 2001). Eid argues that conflicts are predominantly guided by struggles for power, unequal distribution of land, access to resources etc., while ethnicity is often misused by political leaders for their own interests (Eid 2000: 56). Also the CHT case study, when subjected to thesis, reveals that ethnicity is not the only cause of the observed conflict. But as we will see later, ethnicity and nationalism determine unequal

¹⁵ Although, as Scherrer shows, citing the Gulf War as an example, the conflicts have not always been determined by East-West contradiction (Scherrer 1997: 15).

access to resources, polarisation of political power, oppression of minorities, ethnocide and finally genocide¹⁶ (as much as these structures determine the construction of ethnic identities). Due to the reciprocal dynamics of political and economic interests on the one hand and membership of an ethnic group on the other, processes of constructing ethnic identities need to be analysed, since they have major impacts on conflict dynamics. Understanding and analysing these is a necessary precondition for developing tools which can provide scope for action. The Chittagong Hill Tracts case can function as a kind of model of how these processes take place¹⁷. I consider it therefore important to analyse the processes of identity construction with respect to the question of how to build peace in the CHT. Ethnicity is a determining factor for conflict in this context and gains prior importance in analysis. This must additionally be seen in line with the changed paradigm in war studies. While previously the conflict has been between states, the actors today are groups which are not always ethnic groups in the classical sense, but which construct their group identity by applying cultural or historical commonalities.

In the following I attempt to give an overview of the latest international discussion of action on peace-building and the state of the art. Zooming from this perspective in on the context of this thesis, namely the German initiative in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the German policy is of major significance. For the last two years the German government has developed a new policy regarding crisis-prevention and peace-building, one which is embedded in the international discussions. Finally I will discuss the particular relationship between peace-building and development efforts.

2.1 Searching for a New Paradigm

Peace-building and crisis-prevention are issues leaving much room for interpretation. As already stated, the terms have a certain tradition, while their point of reference, the actors

¹⁶ An interesting example is provided by Rwanda. Discussing the genocide of 1994 with several people during a field visit there, I found that some argued that the Rwandan conflict is not an ethnic one, while others argue that the Hutu and Tutsi are different ethnic groups in conflict. Both groups have the same language, religion and what can broadly be called "culture". No visible markers differentiate the groups from one another. Inter-marriages have reportedly taken place frequently. One can argue, in line with Eid (2000), that the groups have been instrumentalised for leaders searching for power, and cleavages are a product of agitation; others would see this as an example how ethnic identities can be situationally constructed. Here there are not necessarily ethnic "boundary-markers" of importance, but socio-economic status and power structures, historically embedded advance in gaining power within the state and a common history based on common origin, stories and myths. For the case of ethnicity in Rwanda see Wimmer (1995: 465).

¹⁷ Chapter 4 will show the construction of ethnic identities and ethnic divisions due to processes of social change through administration, economic development and nationalism. For action and reaction of ethnicity, politics and economy in the CHT see also Gerharz (2000).

involved in the war as well as the structures, have changed. Due to a broad variety of actors, research on conflicts as well as activities covered by the terms peace-building, crisis-prevention or conflict-management range from military intervention to community-based projects in conflict-regions implemented by local NGOs for instance. There is consequently a wide range of actors intervening at different levels: from the United Nations and its various sub-organisations, World Bank, regional organisations such as the EU, Western donating states, to national and international NGOs. At each level there are different ways of dealing with the issue, as will be shown in the following.

In 1992 the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali presented the “Agenda for Peace” to the world public. Within this agenda post-conflict peace-building was identified as an integral part of efforts to maintain and establish international peace and security (Linarelli 1996: 253). The new model was seen as a meaningful step forward due to increasing amounts of ethnic conflict and violence. Due to the changing nature of wars (from inter-state to intra-state conflicts), the “Agenda for Peace” comprises four main sectors of action: preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building (Unser et al. 1996: 90). Although these sections provide various possibilities for action¹⁸ and activities, UN-missions are apparent in the form of military interventions, like those in Somalia and former Yugoslavia, maybe due to the media’s agency. Programmes in peace-building phases are mainly implemented by the UNDP and include reintegration-programmes for refugees and internally displaced persons (Bruchhaus 2000: 74). Additionally other UN-organisations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO deal with intervention in pre- or post-conflict situations by implementing development projects, which take conflict-issues into account.

With the intensified international discussion on peace-building the emphasis on linking such measures with development-cooperation has increased also outside the United Nations. The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has been at pains to create a special task force on “conflict, peace and development co-operation” which was instructed to develop conceptual policy papers and elaborate “best practices for development co-operation and relief during and after conflicts” (Landgraf 1998: 109). In May 1997 the DAC adopted the “Policy guidelines on conflict, peace and development co-operation” (DAC 1997). The guidelines provide an overview of how donor agencies should deal with situations of violent conflict and its prevention, key principles for coordination within the international

¹⁸ Preventive diplomacy includes measures like mediation, dialogue and early-warning, peace-making’s emphasis lies on non-violent action like sanctions and negotiation, peace-keeping includes UN-peace-troops and peace-building means predominantly measures like demilitarisation, repatriation of refugees and ex-combatants and projects for social and economic development (Unser 1996: 90).

community, basic codes for the foundations of peace-building such as good governance and civil society and operational principles for post-conflict recovery (DAC 1997)¹⁹. The guidelines can be seen as the most important document in providing orientations for donor organisations (Landgraf 1998: 109). They promote greater coherence and coordination of international assistance (DAC 1997: 7). Another important document of the DAC Task Force titled “The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict” is a comment on the lessons learned from four case studies in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Sri Lanka (Uvin 1999). The report’s intention is to verify the guidelines’ relevance and supplying further recommendations.

Since 1993 the European Union has predominantly dealt with the issue by trying to develop the ground for a collective position of their member-states (Landgraf 1998: 103). The most important document, “The European Union and the issue of conflict in Africa: Peace-building, conflict prevention and beyond”, was published in 1996 and focuses predominantly on the African context (Mehler 2000a: 68). The approach which is put forward in this document emphasises the strengthening of early-warning and peace-keeping by the OAU²⁰ and capacity-building in various other African regional and sub-regional institutions. Besides assistance for the establishment of civil-society²¹ structures, the EU’s approach tries to make international coordination more effective and to reduce the gap between analysis, early warning and action in order to contribute to preventing the violent outbreak of conflicts (Landgraf 1998; Debiel 2000). While the EU is trying to find a general conception for dealing with conflict-situations, the member-states are in parallel developing their concepts and policies. Great Britain and the Netherlands are paying much attention to conflict-prevention (Mehler 2000a: 67). The other donating states are also becoming more sensitive to the issue²².

The activities of various actors within the “international community” concerning the conceptualisation of crisis-prevention reflect the emerging “mainstreaming” of conflict-prevention. Since conflict-prevention is not a policy sector itself, the conceptual emphasis lies on the development of practical tools²³ (Lund 2000: 3). Conflict-prevention is seen as a particular topic which needs to be combined with official diplomacy, unofficial diplomacy,

¹⁹ The guidelines have also confirmed a definition of the terms conflict prevention and peace-building. The distinction mentioned there can be said to have become common international ground and will be discussed later on.

²⁰ Organisation of African Unity.

²¹ Civil society as a term and how exactly intervention could look will be discussed in Chapter 6.

²² This appreciation is based principally on various conversations with representatives of donor-agencies in the field. What Germany’s engagement looks like will be the subject of the following chapter.

²³ Although, as will be shown in Chapter 5, the practical side has its limits, since guidelines for practitioners lack information about instruments for implementing projects in this context.

development-cooperation, economic cooperation as well as security policy. It is therefore a cross-cutting issue, since the different actors need to combine their efforts in order to be successful. However, this thesis concentrates on development-cooperation and the German context, since this was the topic of research.

2.2 Germany's Peace-Building Policy

Crisis-prevention has gained increased attention in Germany since the instalment of the social-democratic government in 1998. Germany's government has declared deterrence and overcoming violent conflicts as a central goal of its international policy (Kloke-Lesch 1999: 13). Crisis prevention is first of all not just a development policy task in the classical sense. To achieve the aim of maintaining and securing peace, the combined efforts of foreign, security and development policy are required according to Stather (2000: 1). Although it is clear that the tasks of the different sectors cannot be differentiated as such, each one has its own perspective and main field of action. While foreign policy's task is predominantly the shaping of relations between governments and the usage of track one diplomacy in crisis situations, security policy is for example responsible for the regulation of trafficking weapons. Especially small weapons play a crucial role in the escalation and manifestation of conflicts and their trade need to be controlled more efficiently²⁴ (Schmieg 1998). According to the coalition agreements between SPD and Die Grünen, development policy needs to be understood as peace policy (Thiel 1999a: 8; Thiel 1999b: 11). The Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Wiczorek-Zeul has emphasised that crisis prevention is a central task of development activities and should help to eradicate structural causes of violent conflicts by improving economic, social, ecological and political conditions in the respective country. It should further help to establish mechanisms of non-violent conflict management (Mehler et al. 2000: 47; Stather 2000: 2; Kloke-Lesch 1999: 14). In general security, foreign and development policy need to interact coherently when crisis prevention is put into practice (Hoffmann 2000: 67; Kloke-Lesch 1999: 14).

Whilst aware that these three policy sectors are equally important, I will focus on development policy as an instrument for preventing conflicts. Furthermore it seems of special interest in Bangladesh, since development cooperation between Germany and Bangladesh has

²⁴ It should be noted that security sector reforms in developing countries are an issue addressed by development policy as well (Wulf 2000), for example demobilisation is a task development cooperation needs to address. But at the same time the international trade of small weapons needs to be regulated by establishing an international registration system or identification codes (Schmieg 1998: 69).

a long tradition. Not only does Germany contribute there, but also many other donor countries are involved in development activities in general, and in the new discussion of preventive action in the CHT in particular.

Development policy and activities in general contribute to shaping economic, social, political and ecological conditions in developing countries (Kloke-Lesch 1999: 13). Their impact on societies' social and structural change is therefore expected to be utilised to support the establishment of sustainable peace in conflict-ridden countries. Germany's development policy is in general congruent with the international efforts in this field, known as "global structural policy"²⁵ (Mehler et al. 2000: 48). The BMZ²⁶ has made some effort to realise tasks which are linked with its aim of conflict prevention. One of them is the establishment of the "Civil Peace Service"²⁷. Furthermore BMZ has initiated an evaluation of development cooperation programmes in six crisis-affected countries²⁸ which have been synthesised and published (Klingebiel 1999). Another notable undertaking has been the development of an indicator-catalogue for crisis-potential in affected countries (Spelten 2000). Crisis prevention in the long term should be integrated into the development administration by: a better monitoring system, the adjustment of BMZ's country concepts on crisis-potential, the selection of key countries, the further development of the traditional development-cooperation instruments and better networking between the institutions concerned. Working group meetings of representatives of development cooperation agencies and academics on crisis prevention should not only be considered, but realised as well (Mehler et al. 2000:51). Regarding these efforts Germany is in line with the mainstream of the "international community". On the operative level this conception has various implications. A central issue here is the reduction of classical emergency aid in order to put the accent on preventive action. Wiczorek-Zeul among many others emphasises the pragmatic argument that crisis prevention should gain first priority in order to prevent the costs wars produce; she believes that prevention is cheaper than the reconstruction afterwards. Not just economically but ethically prevention avoids costs when compared to those of military intervention and repair of damage (Thiel 1999a: 8).

²⁵ This implies three main objectives: strengthening the UN system and regional cooperations, elaboration and implementation of global standards in various fields (weapons, child soldiers, indigenous people, international criminal jurisdiction) and the establishment of and participation in development-policy networks for crisis-prevention.

²⁶ Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

²⁷ The Civil Peace Service (Ziviler Friedensdienst) is an initiative which is concerned with the training and organisation of specialised personnel for working in conflict regions. See Hornung (2000) and Horlemann et al. (2000).

²⁸ The countries evaluated are: Mali, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and El Salvador.

At this point in the presentation of the conceptual development of crisis-prevention it would seem to be necessary to give some elementary explanations on the frequently used terms introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Commonly conflict- or crisis-prevention is distinguished from peace-building by defining conflict prevention as designed “to denominate measures aimed at easing a situation where the outbreak of violence is immanent”. Peace-building is intended “to cover measures aimed at the preventing the occurrence of such a situation” (Landgraf 1998:107). Prevention therefore is a tool coming into action before conflicts become violent, while peace-building as a tool is used after the pacification of violent outbreak. The terms therefore relate to different phases of conflict (Matthies 2000: 139). But this does not mean that there is a clear-cut differentiation of peace-building and crisis prevention: the post-conflict phase has an immanent need for crisis prevention as well, since the danger of the outbreak of new violent conflict has to be reduced. Peace-building in post-conflict situations is therefore somewhat broader than crisis prevention: it includes not just the preventive moment, but reconstruction as well. The Chittagong Hill Tracts are presently in the post-conflict phase and development action there is consequently peace-building, while new crises are likewise to be prevented.

The main focus of this thesis are the problems of development-cooperation in the CHT. It is thus necessary to reduce the focus further from the broad policy context, in the narrow sense development-policy to technical cooperation (TC). It is commonly assumed that development produces peace and peace brings about development. Technical Cooperation hence sees itself as a classical instrument for contributing to peace and stability (Hoffmann 2000: 65). Technical Cooperation, as the tool for the practical realisation of development policy, simultaneously contributes to the discourse and conceptualisation of crisis-prevention. Experiences and lessons learned in practice must be analysed when developing a new conception. This becomes obvious when looking at negative effects of development-cooperation. For example the construction of dams, as has happened in the CHT, can generate conflict over land between the rehabilitated and original inhabitants of a region chosen for rehabilitation. The same is true for resettlement projects (Adelmann 2000), resource-management projects (Fahrenhorst 2000b) and water, as in the case of Palestine (Al Baz 2000). Development programmes which have an original intention can thus unintentionally contain factors which were not anticipated during the planning phase due to a lack of knowledge about the situation. Especially in conflict-situations, where often all areas of social life are affected by the conflict. Especially then, TC may fall into manifold traps when intervening in a post-conflict situation. A good overview of these unintended side-effects of

aid is given in Anderson's study "Do no harm. How aid can support peace – or war" (1999). The side effects are one important aspect within this thesis.

However, the expectations of TC have changed; crisis prevention has become an issue which is not just dealt with implicitly, but is gaining more relevance now that TC's effects and possibilities for action are increasingly reflected upon. Germany's TC is implemented by the German Technical Cooperation agency, (GTZ), which sees its task predominantly in supporting the BMZ's policy on an operative and instrumental level. GTZ's fields of action as regards peace-building are concentrated in six domains: supporting social groups with strategic significance to establish a "peace-lobby", assisting local and regional institutions and mechanisms with conflict-management-character, maintaining educational measures for peace and conflict-management, supporting active media to substantiate a "peace-lobby", reconciliation in post-conflict-situations and supporting structural stability as the basis for sustainable development (Hoffmann 2000: 68). The key approach to implementing projects with conflict-management background is to continue to support existing development projects with sectoral focus under specific circumstances: traditional measures need to be carefully assessed, possibly new components can be added. The development of instruments in accordance with the aim defined should help to prevent crisis. Innovative activities in the new areas should be attached to the traditional ones, while training of the respective personnel is essential in order to make projects politically more sensitive and conscious (Mehler et al. 2000: 93). The dominant view within Germany's technical cooperation is that a "correct mix of measures from TC's own broad repertoire"²⁹ (Mehler et al. 2000:17) makes it possible to achieve the overall goal of preventing the escalation of conflicts.

Having given this overview on recent discussions, further aspects of development cooperation and technical cooperation in particular will be examined in greater detail by analysing the specific case of the CHT.. In the following I will give an introduction to the local conditions of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. From historical, political and economic contextualisation I will move on to the present situation in the CHT and GTZ's project idea for the area.

4. Ethnic Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts – A Historical Perspective

Bangladesh is a country with a largely homogeneous population with respect to religious or ethnic differences. More than 85% are Muslim Bengalis, about 10% are Hindu Bengalis and a

²⁹ This is an example of how unspecific literature refers to methods and instruments. This issue will appear again in chapter 5.

very small minority comprise those ethnic groups which are locally called “tribal”. Different ethnic groups of this nature live spread all over the country, but their concentration is the highest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where they were able to stay undisturbed and relatively isolated for a long time. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of political, economic, and administrative changes in the area. I will begin by presenting the changes during British colonial rule (1760-1947), which were mainly of an executive nature. The Pakistan period (1947-1971) was strongly determined by economic development. Both influenced the CHT substantially and implied considerable processes of social change relevant for today’s situation. An important historical role is played by the growth of nationalism in Bangladesh, in particular its birth and reciprocal influences on the CHT issue. The conflict between Bangladesh and the CHT counter-movement evolved principally from dynamics of exclusion and inclusion processes, nationalism and counter-nationalism. The last part of this chapter on ethnicity and construction of ethnic identities affiliates to the discussion.

In former times the highlands between Burma and Bengal were an impermeable jungle, forming a quasi-natural border between South and Southeast Asia. Not just geographically but in cultural respects the small mountain-range forms a frontier. The South-Asian and Southeast-Asian cultural model meet in the CHT, expressed in different habits related to dressing, origin of language, religion and outward appearance (van Schendel 1992a:106; Brauns 1986: 26f). Many migration movements have already taken place before British rule. In the 15th century the Chittagong area was ruled by the Arakanese kings for about 200 years, sometimes competing with the rulers of Tripura. In 1666 the Muslim Moghul conquered the plain-land around Chittagong. The Sino-Tibetan groups living there migrated towards the hills in the east. The Chakma are said to have lived in the Chittagong area in ancient times and then, slowly moved towards east up into the hills until they reached their present headquarter behind the first mountain-range of the CHT-region, what is today called Rangamati. The Marma migrated in two groups. Some lived in the plains of Chittagong and settled in the CHT later, but most Marma living in the CHT today came later on, when the Arakanese kingdom was destroyed in 1884. Other groups are said to have been involved in huge migration-movements during these turbulent times as well (Brauns 1986: 28). Generally the different ethnic groups were at least semi-independent during the period of Moghul rule and the different communities “were a self-sufficient unit as well as a self-administered political

entity with intertribal relationships regulated by tribal customs” (Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 959)³⁰.

From those ancient times until today there are about 13 different ethnic groups said to be living in the CHT, although various deviations with respect to number can be found in the literature. Some authors categorise the inhabitants into fewer ethnic groups (Bernot 1960; Brauns 1986; Ahmed 1993: 33), others define more ethnic groups within the CHT, and the Bangladesh census again counts in a different way³¹. Many authors and other authorities have tried to categorise the CHT people, not just according to ethnic group definitions, but as larger entities as well: T.H. Lewin (1984) for example has introduced the distinction “Khyongtha” and “Toungtha”³². Other classifications use the terms “joomas” and “kookies”³³ (van Schendel 1992a: 100; Hutchinson 1984: 14). The different ethnic groups themselves are categorised differently. For example the Marma are sometimes called “Mogh”³⁴ by Bengalis and other groups, while they call themselves Marma. Other sources say that “Mogh” refers to a unity comprising the Marma and Rakhaine³⁵ (Khan 1998:39). Some people as well as literature sources group Pankhua, Bawm and Lushai together as closely interrelated, others Pankhua and Bawm only (Brauns 1986: 32; Mohsin 1997: 20). The Murong are called Murung, Mru or Mro and the variety of explanation is as broad as in the case of the Marma. Brauns (1986: 33) explains that the first two terms are used by Bengalis, Mro is a Marma ascription and Mru, meaning human beings, is used for self-ascription. The groups are themselves divided into different lineages or clans (Lévi-Strauss 1952). There is thus a broad variety and complexity of boundaries between groups and differences in ascription and self-ascription. Nevertheless I will refer to a categorisation which seems to me the most plausible

³⁰ For more detailed information about administrative structures before British colonialisation see Löffler (1968: 153)

³¹ Some groups are not mentioned, for example the Riyang; Tripura and Mru are divided into two categories (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 1999: 159f). There are speculations why the official census shows figures deviating from others. Some people argue that it is impossible to present the “real” numbers in the census, since the indigenous population has decreased extensively due to settlement politics. The census consequently presents numbers which show the indigenous population always as slightly overrepresented.

³² The terms are in the Burmese-Arakanese language: “Khyongtha” means “children of the river” while “Toungtha” means “children of the hills” and were used earlier already for example by Latter (1846) and in the local context as well. Since Lewin’s publications have become quite popular and well known in comparison to the older ones on CHT, it has been his contribution to make them common in literature.

³³ The term “joomas” was used for those indigenous people who were partly assimilated, cultivating plain-land like the Chakma and Marma. “kookies” indicated those hill people living in the interior on the ridges of hills and cultivating exclusively *jhum* (shifting-cultivation of slash-and-burn-cultivation). While “Khyongtha” and “Toungtha” are terms of Burmese origin, “jooma” and “kookie” derive from the Bengali language.

³⁴ Or “Magh”, which has different etymological meanings: if this word is derived from Persian it means fire worshippers, others believe it to derive from the Sanskrit word “Magdu”, which means seabird and by implication it is commonly defined as pirates (Khan 1998:39). The negative term pirates has a lot to do with stereotypes of the Marma which were expressed in the field several times, as will be discussed later.

³⁵ The Rakhaine are concentrated in Cox’s Bazaar district while the Marma are mainly residents of the CHT.

one, because it was used by some local people I discussed this issue with³⁶. The largest groups are Chakma, Marma and Tripura, followed by Murong, Tanchangya, Lushai, Bawm, Pankhua, Khumi, Kuki, Riyang, Kheyang and Chak.

4.1 “Wild Races at the Eastern Frontier of India”³⁷ – British Colonialism

The CHT were occupied by the British in 1860, after British forces had defeated rebellious Lushai-Chin-groups who repeatedly attacked not just British tea plantations, but other communities and villages as well (Mey 1980: 93ff.). For the first time the Chittagong Hills were administered from Bengal. Until then, different chiefs ruled on the basis of communities rather than territory (van Schendel et al. 2000: 25). The clan-system created a more or less hierarchic order, which determined social categories, responsibilities and functions. This changed after annexation: on the basis of the accessibility of their headquarters, only three chiefs were accepted and three circles were created. The northern circle is headed by the Mong *Raja*, whose headquarters is in Manikchari (Kagrachari district), the southern by the Bohmong *Raja* in Bandarban. Both of them are traditionally Marma. The third chief is the Chakma *Raja*, residing at Rangamati. The borders of the circles, which are still in power, are almost equivalent with those of the today’s districts. The other traditional chiefs left over had to submit themselves to the *Rajas*’ authority (van Schendel et al. 2000: 28). The CHT chiefs were, although not recognised as hereditary Indian princes, integrated into the colonial power structure (van Schendel et al. 2000: 40); their position, although hereditary, has to be officially legitimised. With the introduction of this new administrative system, the rule shifted from a communal basis to a territorial one. In former times the chiefs got their legitimisation through their position within a complicated clan-system³⁸, each group separated from the others. These traditional leaders lost much of their former power, but were integrated into the new system as *headmen* and *karbaris*. *Headmen* preside over the *mouza*³⁹ and *karbaris* over the villages. With this three-step administrative system the smaller communities were subordinated under the major ones, Chakma and Marma. Besides the administrators started to

³⁶ I consider it as important to present these to the reader, as the labels will appear later on in the analysis. It is necessary to know what is meant when for example a field trip to a “Pankhua-village” is described. The categorisation has been used by some knowledgeable authors like for example Mohsin (1997: 12ff), Aziz-al Ahsan et al. (1989: 961) and Shelley (1994: 51) and gains therefore some justified relevance. Spelling of the names varies.

³⁷ Lewin (1984)

³⁸ Lévi-Strauss (1952) describes these clan-lineages, which are called *gusti*.

³⁹ A *mouza* is a unit comprising about 5 to 10 villages. There are more than 100 *mouzas* in the CHT (Löffler 1968: 153). Today the circle-*mouza*-village system is defined as the “traditional structure”, but was actually introduced by the British (Schendel 2000: 29).

categorise the various communities according to their language, outward appearance, clothes and religion. Lewin and Hutchinson, both administrators during the colonial rule, attempted to create a kind of racial order out of the complex social structures within the CHT (Lewin 1984; Hutchinson 1978). People were for the first time categorised and counted under British Colonialism.

The new administrative system was first of all established to facilitate the collecting of taxes from subordinates, which were handed over to the British authorities by the chiefs. Chief and *headman* received a commission. While the *headmen* were installed by the chief with acceptance of the Deputy Commissioner (DC), who is the highest administrative power in the region (Löffler 1968: 153), the *headman* and *karbari* title are hereditary today. The *headmen's* and *karbari's* function is, besides tax collection, a primarily social one. They are in charge of pacifying social conflicts within the villages and *mouzas*, or if the cases are too difficult, they are transferred to the chief. The so-called traditional institutions are responsible if these cases deal with customs and norms regulating indigenous life. Interfering into these matters by the outsiders was not allowed (Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 962; Mey 1980: 97).

The major changes during British colonialism were conducted with the CHT Regulation of 1900. The British aimed to use the resources in the CHT appropriately according to their needs. Tea-plantations for example were a lucrative source, as was cotton, which has long been a traditional product in the CHT, cultivated by the Hill People in order to exchange it for other goods like salt or iron. The CHT Regulation's predominant intention was to establish an administrative structure to control and rule the area. Collecting taxes had to be guaranteed, which meant at the same time introducing a new form of a landholding system. Traditionally land has been communal property, because of the commonly practised slash-and-burn cultivation⁴⁰. The British aimed to abolish this form of cultivation, since it made a nomadic way of living necessary and administrating the CHT was difficult without settlement. By shifting to individual land rights based on private property, the land in the CHT could be claimed as the property of the colonial state (Gain 2001: 16; Mey 1988: 34; Maass 1998: 43).

⁴⁰ Slash-and burn cultivation is a way of cultivating steep slopes practised in many parts of the world. In the CHT it is locally known as *jhum*. The farmer looks for a piece of jungle appropriate for cultivation, gets permission from the community and clears this piece of land by cutting down all smaller trees and vegetation and then fires it. A mixture of different seeds, including rice, cotton, melons, pumpkins and various other kinds of useful vegetables and fruits are planted together in small holes. The crops ripen at different times, so that the *jhumia* can harvest different kinds of food throughout the year. A *jhum* field can be cultivated for a maximum of two years and needs at least 10 years to recover afterwards. For a long time and in Bangladesh still today this form of cultivation is seen as environmentally harmful, since it accelerates soil erosion, when the cycle becomes too short. See for further information on *jhum*-cultivation Kaufmann (1962) and Khan (1970).

Additionally the British introduced some other major changes with the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900. For example the hill people enjoy some special rights and privileges, like being allowed to carry out production of fermented liquor. The most important aspect within the regulation was that the CHT were closed to outsiders: “No person other than a Chakma, or a member of any hill tribe indigenous to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, or the State of Tripura shall enter or reside within the Chittagong Hill Tracts unless he is in possession of a permit granted by the Deputy Commissioner at his direction” (cited in Shelley 1992: 77). This was designed to guarantee that no non-indigenous money-lenders, traders and commercial farmers entered the CHT in order to make money by employing a market system which, as many people feared, would exploit the indigenous population. This process had already started and was strongly opposed by the *rajas*. Although it is argued that this was an act intended to protect the hill people and their distinct culture from the outside, one could also argue that this left the CHT people out of the development of a market economy in the plains⁴¹. That these concerns were justified is shown by the further development after the Indian subcontinent became independent in 1947.

4.2 “A Land of Promise”⁴² – The CHT under Pakistani Rule

The partition of India was a process that included negotiation of difficult issues. Although the principles of partitioning were guided by the attempt to establish two religiously homogeneous states, a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu India, the CHT became, surprisingly, a part of Muslim Pakistan. The decision had been taken according to the architectonic paradigm⁴³. It had been a highly controversial, since this culturally distinct area had almost no commonalties with the rest of East Bengal. The local elite was in favour of allotting the CHT either to India or Burma⁴⁴. The final decision was shocking for the local people. The relationship between the CHT and the Pakistani government never really recovered.

⁴¹ This argument relates to the establishment of a money-based economy as much as the introduction of paid labour and will appear again in Chapter 6.3.

⁴² Mey (1997)

⁴³ “Grand architecture”, meaning the reorganisation of political space along national lines, retaining as much ethnic purity within a state as possible, i.e. the correct territorial and institutional arrangements (Bruebaker 1998: 275), was the paradigm when the Indian subcontinent was divided into a Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist state (India, Pakistan and Myanmar). Nowadays it is commonly argued that such an “artificial” homogenisation of states creates hegemony of majorities over minorities Mohsin (2000), while the so-called “correspondence theory” has failed since nationalist demands cannot be satisfied by the principle of self-determination (Bruebaker 1998: 274).

⁴⁴ History tells that on the day of independence Rangamati hoisted the Indian flag and in Bandarban the Burmese flag. The literature gives different reasons for the shocking decision Radcliffe made with his Awards: one predominant consideration was that the CHT belonged to Chittagong with its harbour, important for East Bengal’s economy (Maass 1998: 44). The local elite pleaded for autonomy within a confederal India. Lord

During the Pakistan period some changes of the political organisation were made. First of all the “Basic Democracies Order” of 1959, which stipulates the formation of unions (comprising about 10,000 in all), in which elections are to be held. Since 1962 the people elect members of the union-council (union-parishad), which is responsible for public administration, administration of taxes, welfare, health and safety-promotion as well as questions concerning development (Mey 1980: 141). The second level of basic democracies institutions comprises the *upazila* council, followed by the district council and finally the divisional council, corresponding to administrative hierarchies⁴⁵.

In 1959 the Pakistani government abolished the special status of the CHT as an “excluded area” and changed it into a “tribal area” by a constitutional act⁴⁶. The consequence was that the power of the traditional leaders was further weakened. At the same time a higher influx of plain-land people started. For foreigners the CHT were closed and only reopened after 1997 (Gain 2000: 18). The Pakistani government intended to use the CHT for commercial purposes like rubber plantations. The area was officially claimed to be a “project area” for economically useful development (Maas 1998: 45; Schendel 1992: 116; Gain 2000: 18). This meant, besides the Chandraghona paper mill established in 1950, a huge dam project at the Karnaphuli, commonly known as Kaptai Hydroelectric Project. The venture started in 1959 and was completed 1963. It was undertaken solely by the Pakistani authority, financial support was provided by USAID. The labourers were mainly imported Bengalis, the experts were Pakistanis and Westerners (Shelley 1992: 31; Gain 2000: 33; van Schendel et al. 2000: 203; Mey 1980: 211). The planners considered how to use the electricity produced and what impact the project would have on the development of electrification of the area as well as for industrial areas of East Bengal. But what impact the enterprise would have on the local people dependent on the land the resulting reservoir swallowed, was not taken into account. The Chakma in particular had adopted plough-cultivation during the previous decades due to the pressure of the British administrators, who aimed to abolish *jhum*-cultivation. Now 40% of the best cultivable land of the CHT went under water (Roy 1995: 56; Arens 1997: 1812; Gain 2000: 33; Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 963). Paradoxically the people were forced to adopt *jhum* cultivation again. The reservoir swallowed a major portion of Rangamati town, including the Chakma *rajbari* and large areas of the whole Rangamati district, including 125 *mouzas*

Mountbatten argued that the CHT depended on Chittagong infrastructurally, while there are almost no connections to Burma or Assam (Karim 1997). Mey argues that the CHT were allotted to Pakistan in exchange for Ferozepur in India, where the British feared trouble among the local Sikhs (Mey 1988: 40).

⁴⁵ The functions of the different levels are explained at length in Mey (1980: 142).

⁴⁶ The 1900 Manual has had a special status ever since and has never been annulled, although it is not recognised under the constitution (Gain 2000: 18).

(Chakma et al. 1995: 1). Especially the Chakma population was affected: only about one third of the lost land has been compensated for (Mohsin 1997: 114). Approximately 100,000 Hill People crossed the border to India as refugees⁴⁷ (Roy 1995: 56; Bertocci 1989: 156; Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 963), and many were internally displaced⁴⁸ (van Schendel et al. 2000: 205). The construction had been a catastrophe for many local people not just in respect to the loss of land and home. Although the dam was intended to control the floods of the Karnaphuli river, “every year since the dam was built there have been floods in the very region it was supposed to save, with unfailing regularity” (Roy n.d. cited in van Schendel et al. 2000: 204). Still today many farmers who are cultivating the so-called fringe land⁴⁹ suffer from floods which sometimes destroy the whole rice harvest⁵⁰.

It was expected that due to the immense economic uplift of the area, resulting from the huge project, the indigenous population would find some niches within the new economy, for example working on plantations and in industry (Maass 1998: 45). A further source of income, it was assumed, would be provided by fishing in the lake and horticulture. But the employment rate of indigenous people in major industries in the CHT was less than 1%, and at the end of the 1970s out of about 3,000 registered fishermen only 20-25% were local people. Bengalis controlled and regulated the commercial fishing (Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 964). The results of a survey conducted in 1979 (cited in Mohsin 1997: 116; Aziz-al Ahsan et al. 1989: 964; Zaman 1982: 77) show that 93% of the interviewed hill people said that their economic condition was better before the construction of the dam⁵¹.

The CHT people experienced a massive uprooting and changes in their patterns of life, which were difficult to adapt to. As a religious and cultural minority within the state with a distinct way of cultivation, life-style and cultural characteristics, the Hill People became even more marginalised through these “modernisation processes”. Those people affected by the dam-construction were predominantly Chakma and many members of this group had to orient themselves within the new structures. Alternatives to agriculture had to be found. A massive process of social change thus affected mainly the Chakma. After the construction of the dam resistance evolved among the Chakma, finding its manifestation in the motto “the pen is mightier than the sword”. Education flourished. The result is a literacy rate among the

⁴⁷ Most of the Chakma refugees were rehabilitated in North East India (Chaudhury et al. 1997; Saikia 1994).

⁴⁸ The consequences of the loss of land, including a detailed description of the situation immediately afterwards, is given in Chakma et al. (1995).

⁴⁹ Fringe land is on the edges of the lake and goes under water temporarily.

⁵⁰ Especially Juraichhari *upazila* has reportedly been affected; as a GTZ project area the case therefore gains some relevance within this work. See Chapter 6.3.

⁵¹ This problem will appear again in Chapter 6.3.

Chakma which is much higher than among the rest of Bangladesh's population and definitely higher than of the other CHT people (Roy 1999; CHT Commission 1991: 103). In the field some people stated that this declaration was the reaction to the Bengalis' economic strength in the region, and the Hill People's marginalisation. Others argue that the transformation is nothing but the logical consequence of losing their land. During the following years the political interests of the CHT people were increasingly represented by Chakma leaders. Political resistance was led by Chakmas.⁵² Nobody will deny that members of other groups participated in the resistance movement. Nevertheless an imbalance developed, dividing the Hill People until today. But it was not just education that enhanced the Chakma's domination, but ancient historical factors as well. The Chakma are said to have always had the best contact to the plains-people. Their headquarters, Rangamati, has always been the capital of the CHT.

4.3 "We want to live our separate identity"⁵³ – Nationalism in Bangladesh

Political resistance became topical after the War of Independence in 1970. The attempt to gain independence and the rise of nationalism determined the relationship between the CHT people and the majority of Bangladesh extensively. The Hill People remained mainly passive during the Liberation War, some collaborated with the Pakistani army, others joined the Mukti Bahini⁵⁴ (Ahmed 1993: 40; Mohsin 1996a: 72). It is argued that East Bengal attempted to free itself from the hegemonic system of Pakistan, which exploited and marginalised the Bengalis within the state of Pakistan. The Pakistani nation-building process was based on Islam as the main religion and Urdu as the Islamic language. East Bengal on the other hand has a history of pre-colonial syncretism. Hindu and Muslim origins were both present in the region (Mohsin 1997: 74). The Bengalis were considered to be a lower Hindu caste and not real Muslims by the Pakistanis, although they had actively supported the idea of a Muslim Pakistani state. The exclusion from Pakistani identity led the Bengali population to develop their separate identity, based on secularism, culture and language in order to counter Pakistani hegemony. The creation of Bangladesh can thus be explained in terms of to nationalism theory as having evolved out of the attempt to define the "core-nation" in ethno-cultural

⁵² Ahmed (1993: 40) describes the manifestation of political resistance in connection with an intense influx of plain-land people into the hills. Ethnic relationships worsened and although the Pakistani government was the actual enemy, resistance found its expression in refusing to accept the newly immigrated Bengalis.

⁵³ Manobendra N. Larma cited in Mohsin (1997: 63).

⁵⁴ Mukti Bahini means liberation force. The CHT people's elite was split up: The Chakma *Raja* Tridiv Roy opted for Pakistan and went into exile after the war. The Mong *Raja* supported the liberation movement (Ahmed 1993: 40; Mohsin 1996b: 38). Some of those people joining the Mukti Bahini had to face discrimination or were not accepted in general although there has been great enthusiasm about it (Mohsin 1996b: 74)

terms, a “nationalising” nationalism (Brubaker 1998: 277). Bangladesh’s “father of the nation”, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his party, the Awami League, were central within the process of the construction of a new nation. This process, like many other comparable movements, was determined by emphasising cultural features considered as important according to the given situation. The features are not necessarily objective ones, but are used as signals and emblems by the actors involved (Barth 1969: 14). As the movement based its nationalism on Bengali language and culture, the Hill People and the other minorities fell through. Additionally, since the ideology was based on a centralist idea, marked by the total integration of the individual within the community (Jahangir 1986: 33; Mohsin 1996b: 42), the Hill People could not identify with. A resistance movement already smouldering since the Kaptai-Dam project was led by Manobendra Narayan Larma, and supported by notable personalities like Rajmata Benita Roy demanded arrangements that would provide basic protection for the Hill People. The main points were: (1) autonomy for the CHT, including its own legislature; (2) retention of the CHT manual in the constitution of Bangladesh; (3) continuation of tribal chief’s offices and (4) a constitutional provision restricting the amendment of the 1900 Manual and imposing a ban on the influx of outsiders (Aziz-Al Ahsan et al. 1989: 967). The answer was a shock: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman advised the Hill People to get rid of their own identities and merge with the Bengali community. The constitution permitted none of the special provisions, but included the following statement in Article 9: “The unity of the Bengali nation, which, deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained a sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengali nationalism” (cited in Mohsin 1997: 60).

As a consequence, Manobendra Narayan Larma formed a political platform representing the CHT people under the unifying label Parbattaya Chatragam Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS/JSS)⁵⁵ with its armed wing *Shanti Bahini* (Peace Force)⁵⁶. In the parliament he asserted: “Our main worry is that our culture is threatened with extinction ... we want to live with our separate identity” (Mohsin 1996b: 44). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman answered in a

⁵⁵ Means: The United Peoples Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

⁵⁶ *Shanti Bahini* was originally the name of a youth movement immediately after the Liberation War. After the Pakistani forces had left the CHT, Mukti Bahini carried out several violent actions against the CHT people. Several local leaders appealed to the Bangladesh government to stop these atrocities, but Sheikh Mujibur Rahman answered that these incidents were natural after war. The local youth recovered Pakistani weapons and started an initiative to defend their villages (Mohsin 1996b: 39). Later on *Shanti Bahini*, the armed wing of JSS, took up old Pakistani weapons and training was provided by retired members of East Pakistan Rifles and military personnel. Evolved from the youth movement *Shanti Bahini* saw as its first priority resisting the Mukti Bahini actions, and the more ideological aim of protecting its own rights within the new state (Mohsin 1996a: 3).

speech at Rangamati in 1973: “From this day onward the tribals are being promoted into Bengalis” (Mohsin 1996b: 44). Although the Sheikh had probably intended to express his willingness to include the indigenous people within a great community, his speech was interpreted as the attempt to eliminate those who were different. Under this pressure the Hill People were almost forced to become aware of their distinctiveness and resist. Becoming submerged under the majority of Bengalis, the Hill People started constructing their own unified identity based on political content but expressing cultural distinctiveness. At this moment of direct threat a process of politicising culture evolved, mixed with the effects of the economic uprooting produced by the Kaptai-dam. It is common that cultural differences become apparent when pressure and threat from outside or the dominant group within a nation-state necessitates inclusion for defence (Köbler 1995: 4). Bengali hegemony affected all indigenous people equally and a process of unifying the CHT people started on the political level. The construction of a common “*jhumma*”-identity⁵⁷ evolved. This politicisation was led by the Chakma, but other people opted for the movement as well.

When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in 1975, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) with General Ziaur Rahman took over political leadership. BNP’s conception of nationalism differed from the Awami League’s predominantly in its religious character. Sheikh Mujibur’s secularism was diminished, Islam was put into the centre of national unity⁵⁸. The word “secularism” in the constitution was replaced by “absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah” (Jahangir 1986:79). General Zia’s politics also included an Islamisation of the mass media, education and administration. Religion thus became instrumentalised and politicised. The CHT people took the BNP’s policy as a further rejection, since Islam as a leading category within the nation-building process excluded them further. The JSS started acting underground under the leadership of M.N. Larma (Mohsin 1996b: 4). The armed struggle and violent phase of the conflict started. With Indian support *Shanti Bahini* set up a paramilitary guerrilla group and established training camps (Ahmed 1993: 49). Their first actions targeted Bangladeshi army camps in the region, and settlers and state authorities were attacked. Fighters were recruited from refugee camps in the neighbouring Indian states

⁵⁷ “*jhum*” as the main mode of cultivation in the CHT is the most convincing unifying label the CHT people have, since their languages, religion, ways of dressing, even their way of making baskets differs (Gerharz 2001). It has always been a society of a culturally highly exclusive nature, where contacts in between existed but never extended.

⁵⁸ Mohsin describes BNP’s so-called “Bangladeshi nationalism in comparison to the Awami League’s “Bengali nationalism” as follows: “Religious belief and love for religion are a great and imperishable characteristic of the Bangladeshi nation ... the vast majority of our people are followers of Islam. The fact is well reflected and manifest in our stable and liberal national life” (Mohsin 1996b: 49). The BNP has traditionally been a movement supporting Pakistan rather than India; consequently its nationalism served the attempt at drawing a line (also territorially) between Indian West Bengal and Bangladesh (Mohsin 1996: 47).

Tripura and Mizoram. The government perceived the CHT in the first place as a national security problem (Mohsin 1996b: 3) instead of realising that these were also the consequences of its policy. It reacted by militarising the CHT. Settlement programmes for rehabilitating landless Bengalis were developed (Roy 1996). The restrictions against outsiders in the 1900 Manual were removed by the government. About 400,000 settlers were in the CHT from 1979 to 1982 (The Guardian 06.03.1984 cited in: Mohsin 1997: 113). Estimations give a much higher number since the settlers from the official programmes attracted relatives of theirs and other people. The aim of these actions was not just to rehabilitate landless Bengalis from the densely populated plain-land, but the side-effects were the establishment of a demographic shift within the CHT. The indigenous people, it was intended, should change from a majority into a minority within the region in order to allow better control and assimilation. Mohsin writes about a “non-natural” or “political” migration (Mohsin 1997: 112). The CHT people were to be segregated in order to prevent group formation⁵⁹. At the same time General Zia gave much attention to the CHT by making concessions like reserving seats for hill students at the universities, setting up Tribal Cultural Institutes and supporting eminent indigenous personalities like Chakma Rajmata Benita Roy, Aung Shwe Prue Chowdury⁶⁰ and *Raja* Devasish Roy (Ahmed 1993: 46). Development programmes were established under the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) founded in 1976, financed by Sweden, Australia and some multilateral agencies and coordinated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Ahmed 1993: 47). One important project was the establishment of so-called joutha khamars (collective farms)⁶¹. At these times the predominant aim of development policy was counter-insurgency policy, although the programmes were presented to the international donor community as development efforts (Jessen 1998; Mey 1991:57) .

Under the dictatorship of General Ershad (1982-1990) the policy of Islam-driven nationalism was continued and became even more rigid and totalitarian. Ershad “raised the slogan of building a mosque-centred society” and introduced Islam as state religion through an

⁵⁹ During my field trip I was told that especially in Bandarban the military gave food aid or performed other charitable actions like employing people for day labour. In return the army expected loyalty and sympathy. In the case of the Mru for example they were successful: in 1984 the Mru rose in revolt against the Chakma led movement, known as Murong Bahini (Shelley 1992: 117; Mohsin 1997: 176).

⁶⁰ The present chief of the Bohmong circle

⁶¹ A joutha khamar is a CHTCB financed settlement of several families (about 60) provided with some land. Collectively these families grow various kinds of crops. After three years the collective farming should be sustainable, no further financial support is given. These projects attempted to save farmers from insurgent actions (Ahmed 1993: 48), but at the same time functioned as institutions for controlling the CHT people rehabilitated there in order to prevent contacts to *Shanti Bahini*. Not just the sustainability of the scheme, but appropriateness to the CHT framework has been questioned. Another point of critique is that producing commercial products needed in the plains nurtured economic exploitation by middlemen from outside. Although

amendment to the Constitution (Mohsin 1996: 52). In the 1980s Buddhist and Hindu temples in the CHT were destroyed, ceremonies prohibited and sacrileges like entering temples with shoes, a religious taboo for Buddhists, were deliberately performed. The number of mosques increased enormously⁶² (Mohsin 1997: 179). Religious symbols and the performance of religion became further politicised and instrumentalised. In order to promote Islam, indigenous women were kidnapped, converted and married (CHT Commission 1991: 108). Religion was used as an important symbol for distinction and oppression, supported by Islamic NGOs⁶³ and radical parties like Jamaat-i-Islam, trying to win the Bengali settlers as voters by polarising and politicising the CHT issue. The CHT people on the other hand reacted by politicising Buddhism. In the early 1980s for instance, the Buddhist Minority Protection Committee (BMPC) started a radical campaign against Bangladeshi authorities (Ahmed 1993: 53). Although the CHT became militarised and the situation polarised, Ershad undertook different measures like opening the region to the media world, as well as to professionals and others. Arranged tours offered Bangladeshis the chance to visit the CHT. Projects for economic integration were set up; the CHTDB gained more importance within this process⁶⁴ (Husain 1999: 39). It was headed by military commanders (Mey 1991: 57); some people assume that development during that time “was conceived of as a counter against insurgency” (Tripura 2000: 99). Whether the CHTDB-implemented projects have sustainably improved socio-economic conditions in the region at all is doubtful⁶⁵. During Ershad’s dictatorship negotiations with the JSS were already started. From 1982 on the government offered the possibility of negotiations by forming a liaison committee headed by Upendra Lal Chakma⁶⁶. In October 1983 a package deal was announced, including an amnesty and proposal for direct dialogue with the JSS; the first dialogue then was held in 1985. Until 1988 seven dialogues were held, but with minimal results (Husain 1999: 47). Ershad’s policy included the Hill District Council Act, adopted in 1989. It included the division of the CHT

presented as a classical development project, the joutha khamars are a good example of the politicisation of development projects. See Chapter 6.

⁶² Mohsin writes that the number of mosques increased from 40 in 1961 to 200 in 1974 but more strikingly until 1981 to 592 mosques (Mohsin 1997: 179).

⁶³ Al-Rabita for example is a Saudi government-funded NGO working as a missionary organisation in the Hills and backed by the military (Mohsin 1997:179).

⁶⁴ In August 1985 the CHT were declared a Special Economic Area (SEA) in order to integrate indigenous and non-indigenous people. Job-reservations were made for the indigenous population as well as at the educational institutions. Development projects were aided by UNICEF in particular. The development projects were mainly of structural character (Husain 1999: 42). The CHTDB at that time, since Ershad ruled a military dictatorship, was under military control.

⁶⁵ Mey (1991: 57) asserts that a high-ranking military officer stated in 1991: “Development policy in the Hill Tracts is counter-insurgency policy”.

⁶⁶ Upendra Lal Chakma is a indigenous Awami League politician. In the past he functioned as a connecting link between the government and the hill people.

into three districts and the establishment of Hill District Councils responsible for various tasks (Roy 2000: 4).

Under Ershad's military rule the conflict escalated. The major cause was the emphasis on Islamic religion as a national project. Military's "behaviour" in the area supplemented the aggravation of conflict.. Human rights violations were perpetrated by the army and army-supported settlers likewise, and a dynamics of violence and counter-violence evolved. In 1980 the Bangladesh government passed the Disturbance Areas Act which "authorized any police-inspector or non commissioned officer (NCO) to make arrests or open fire on any person suspected of engaging in unlawful activity ... and empowered the police to enter any premises and destroy any houses ... and to confiscate property" (Karim 1998: 311). The picture given of Ershad's rule is therefore contradictory: on the one hand his policy concentrated on development efforts and integration of the CHT people, on the other hand he used instruments of oppression, hegemony and violence. Reflecting on the role of the military and its action during that time, it should be noted that the CHT have always been regarded by the military authorities as posting characterised by particular hardships⁶⁷. Due to the danger of malaria, the hilly topography and lack of infrastructure, the army had been in the habit of sending personnel to the CHT for punishment reasons. Consequently there was a high level of dissatisfaction and frustration among the soldiers. This fact might probably intensify negative behaviour towards the local population. Ershad's rule, although officially determined by efforts to pacify (with negotiations and amnesties) and develop the CHT had been one of human rights violations and injustice (Jagadish 1997).

The following BNP government (1991-1996) under Khaleda Zia⁶⁸ was the first democratic government after two military dictatorships. Khaleda Zia moved on with a general amnesty as a first important step towards a solution of the conflict. Several pacification programmes and the rehabilitation of internally displaced people as well as refugees followed (Husain 1999: 55). The situation calmed down, and in August 1992 the PCJSS declared an unilateral cease-fire. Repatriation successfully went on and negotiations between the parties succeeded.

In 1996 a new Awami League Government was installed and the "overall scenario in CHT underwent a multi-dimensional positive change" (Husain 1999: 58). Efforts to pacify the conflict had become stronger; on the one hand military activities were expensive for the state of Bangladesh, on the other *Shanti Bahini* were pressured from the Indian side, which

⁶⁷ It is not just the military staff for whom the CHT is meant to be a hardship post. This problem is a well-known one for government servants of the various departments. This issue will appear later in the analysis as it gains some relevance for development questions.

supported them financially and supplied them with weapons and shelter. After the repatriation of refugees had been successfully negotiated between Bangladesh, India and *Shanti Bahini* (Husain 1999: 57), the new government stabilised the Bangladesh-Indian-relationship further (Rashiduzzaman 1998: 663). In 1997 a peace treaty between the government and *Shanti Bahini*'s leader Shantu Larma ended insurgency and year-long negotiations⁶⁹.

4.4 “As long as they have enough to eat they are not much bothered by worries”⁷⁰ – Constructing Ethnic Boundaries

Having given an outline of the political and economic past of the CHT, which is very much interwoven with the history of Bangladesh and the whole subcontinent, it would seem appropriate at this point to describe and analyse the cultural and ethnic dimension⁷¹. Complex processes of social change have taken place throughout the years but one important feature remains: The people of the CHT have been categorised as primitive, backward and uncivilised (Mey 1997: 112). Using the term “tribe” indicates the construction of a single category; differences between the communities are not commonly reflected upon. But differences and boundaries are present and important to look at. Consequently they must be taken into consideration when establishing development projects, or as Prashanta Tripura (2000: 97) puts it: “one must understand the dynamics of culture and identity of the people of the CHT (or of any other region for that matter) before one is to speak of development on their behalf”.

The complexity of identity formation processes and conflict-dynamics has to be understood as the consequence of extreme majority-minority relations; the importance of demographic dimensions is described by Barth (1969: 20ff). But at the same time internal boundaries maintained and are conflictive. Perceptions of differences and hierarchies between social entities predominantly constructed from ethnic differences are significantly causal for conflict and vice versa. Therefore it is necessary to analyse these processes when attempting to support and stabilise peace in the region on the one hand, but for development efforts in general on the other. In the following I will present aspects of ethnic diversity within the CHT and discuss the constructive settings of ethnicity. Finally I will contrast different levels of construction, including the “grassroots” perception, the “outside” level and the political dimension of ethnic identity within the CHT.

⁶⁸ Khaleda Zia Begum is the widow of General Ziaur Rahman, the prime minister who was assassinated in 1981.

⁶⁹ The peace treaty and its features will be the subject of chapter 5.

⁷⁰ Sattar (1971) cited in: van Schendel (1992a: 104).

⁷¹ This has been in particular done in my Lehrforschungsbericht “The Construction of Identities” (2000).

It may be noted that the various groups all have or had their own language⁷². Some of these languages have been assimilated to each other due to external influences, like the languages of Pankhua, Bawm and Lushai, whose speakers were all Christianised, and have been provided with, or developed themselves a script which is written in Latin letters. Since there are close relations to the Indian Mizo (who are considered to be the forefathers), the Pankhua-village I visited was provided with Christian songbooks from Mizoram, written in a combination of Latin letters, Mizo spelling and Pankhua language. The Marma language, as an Arakanese dialect, is written in Burmese letters. The Chakma have had a script which looks similar to Burmese, but the spoken language gives some hints of Bengali influence (Brauns 1986: 28; Bernot 1964: 145f; Mohsin 1997: 12). Lingua franca in the CHT is the Chittagonian dialect, which is known by almost everybody. Until the school system changed in the early 1970s the curricula were in English. The educated classes used English as a medium of conversation. Nowadays the elder intellectuals are easy to communicate with in English, while among the younger generations the language for educated people is Bengali.

Besides language, clothes are another interesting boundary-marker for distinguishing different ethnic groups from the Bengali population as well as from each other. Traditionally every group in the CHT has its own way of dressing, although some of them are difficult to distinguish. Nowadays the boundaries in dressing are not as sharp as they might have been in former times, for example many of the smaller groups living in the Marma-dominated Bandarban use to wear the Marma *thami* (a wrapped cotton skirt), which is cheap, easy to get and comfortable⁷³. Still many women wear their traditional ornaments and jewels combined with the newly adopted clothes. The case of the Chakma shows that traditional clothes can be utilised for expressing their distinct identity besides being fashionable and modern. Some years ago the traditional Chakma pinon (a traditionally red and blue hand-woven skirt) and *khadi* (a piece of cloth wrapped around the breast) has been almost outdated but nowadays are gaining more and more popularity. In the field I was told about a lady who always wore a *sari*, but on 2nd February 1998, the official ceremony of the Peace Accord, she wore pinon and *khadi*. Her explanation was: “Why not, it is my national dress, so I am proud to wear it”.

The CHT people do not just differ in language and dress, but religion functions as a feature of demarcation as well. While the majority of the Hill People adhere to Buddhism, the smaller

⁷² A good overview of the different languages is given by Löffler (1986: 28-36), Islam (1984) and Maloney (1984).

⁷³ In the case of the Mru for example wearing the Marma dresses which are very similar to the Burmese style makes sense, since Mru women traditionally wear a very scanty piece of cloth which attracts those people who are not used to seeing bare female legs, arms and breasts. Adopting another way of dressing has therefore become a necessity due to the loss of an isolated life.

groups are either Christianised or Animists. The Tripura are traditionally Hindus (Mohsin 1997: 11-21; Shelley 1992: 51-64; Bernot 1964). Religion can be seen as a good example for the changing nature of ethnic features. The Tripura for example are seen as a homogenous Hindu-community (e.g. Mohsin 1997: 16), whereas I was able to observe that especially those Tripura communities living in the southern district are becoming Christianised. The same is true for the Mru, who are traditionally Animists. The Mru provide an interesting example of how religion can be changed over time: in the 1980s a boy disappeared from the boarding school in Shoalak, and has never been seen again. This boy had some special talents: he used his cleverness to develop a script for the Mru-language, and it is said that he had a lot of visions concerning his group. Since this boy disappeared, a new religion, called “Grama”, has developed. It is said that their priest would wear the same robes as a Buddhist priest, just in white instead of yellow, but that they call their temple “church”. Nevertheless none of the CHT groups follows Islam, which differentiates them from the Bengali Muslim majority within Bangladesh.

Not just these “major” boundary-markers distinguish the Hill People from the majority Bangladeshis and from each other, but lots of other habits and traditions as well. While the Muslim Bengalis avoid alcoholic drinks and pork, both are things many CHT people seem to love⁷⁴. The Mru are said to eat dogs, others to eat snakes, tigers or elephants (Mohsin 1997: 11-25). The people in the Hills have different rituals which are illustratively described in the literature (Mohsin 1997: 11-25; Shelley 1992: 51-66; Brauns 1986; Khan 1999; Bernot 1964; Lévi-Strauss 1951). Substantial in respect to this is the fact that recent authors often describe rituals and habits which have been observed by classical ethnographers and administrators⁷⁵ who did their research more than 50 years ago. Mohsin for example writes that the Lushai put their beautifully dressed dead in a kind of bamboo-cage in a sitting position until the bones are buried after three months, or that the Khumi build their houses on tree-tops (Mohsin 1997: 17-19). It is questionable whether these descriptions make sense nowadays. Those Lushai I met buried their dead immediately, being Christianised today. Braun and Löffler’s illustrated monograph shows a picture of a “Brong-woman” with a particular way of wearing jewellery (1964: 34). During my field trip I was told that this jewellery is characteristic for Tripura women. Cultural habits and ascriptions are often taken for unchangeable facts. Additionally the examples show that social reality, though described in a certain way, might be more complex than it looks. The example of the “Grama” religion shows that groups are not

⁷⁴ The importance of this habit has already been mentioned by Hutchinson (1978: 21): “Though addicted to drink they do not smoke to excess”.

homogenous entities; legends of a common origin of Pankhua and Bawm⁷⁶ show that boundaries are likewise not clearly fixed. Markers and characteristics of ethnic groups undeniably exist, but one should take care not to take them as immoveable ones. Ascriptions are often used in order to construct racially or ethnically homogeneous groups and their boundaries. They are hence taken for “objective” categories. Hutchinson (1978: 21) writes: “The Chakma is of medium stature and thick-set build, with fair complexion and a cheerful, honest-looking face. Physically he is a finer specimen of manhood than the Magh. He possesses none of the hereditary laziness of the latter, and although his independence will prevent him from working as a menial for others, yet he works exceedingly hard to further his own interests. He possesses a retentive memory, grasps details quickly, and appreciates the advantages that can be secured by industry”. These essentialising descriptions mean that entities are created without asking further, as if these were stable and never-changing systems, in order to ensure that boundaries are maintained, continuing in time and bounded in space (Werbner 1997: 228). Not just the different hill people’s groups, but other categorisations like the distinction “tribal” and “non-tribal” become essentialised in this way and have a highly polarised and hierarchised political content. Werbner suggests that there is a difference between reification and objectification. The notion of reification refers to a descriptive and representational rhetoric which distorts and silences, while the term objectification reflects a fluid, hybrid and multiple identification (Werbner 1997: 229)⁷⁷. This does not mean that one should deny the existence of collectives, collective identities or boundaries between groups. I would merely like to indicate that there are no “objective” differences that make an ethnic group. Of most importance here is that features used for describing a group are chosen according to those which are considered as relevant by the respective group members (Barth 1969: 14). Ethnic identities are constructed through a process of describing and re-describing one’s own collectivity (Werbner 1997: 229), in contrast to those understandings focussing on primordial ascriptions⁷⁸. The following illustrates such a process as well as the complexity in which boundaries are constructed, maintained and at the same time crossed by others:

⁷⁵ Of importance here are especially Lewin (1984), Hutchinson (1978), Brauns (1984) and Sattar (1971).

⁷⁶ Hutchinson (1984: 38) writes that Pankhua and Bawm claim to be of common origin, being descended from two brothers.

⁷⁷ Ellen Bal shows in her article based on fieldwork in northern Bangladesh “Sie fragen uns, ob wir Frösche und Schlangen essen. Die Garo”, how reifications are produced and what consequences evolve out of that process (2001). Pnina Werbner suggests that reifications lie at the core of racism, ethnic cleansing and xenophobia (1997: 229). This form always implies a hierarchisation, as the relationship “tribal” and non-tribal” illustratively shows.

⁷⁸ For the primordial approach to ethnicity see Geertz (1963), for the differences between constructivist and primordial approaches Schlee (1996).

The JSS policy included the construction of a unifying identity, called “*jhumma*” (Mohsin 1997; van Schendel 1992a). The PCJSS autonomy plan spoke of the CHT as “*Jhummland*” (Mohsin 1997: 197). Other labels have been employed as well: “pahari”, “adivasi” and “tribal”⁷⁹. Each of these has its own dimension; “*jhumma*” has a political one, referring predominantly to resistance to state power and the struggle for rights and autonomy. “*Jhumma*” derives from pursuing *jhum*-cultivation. Since the CHT people differ in almost all “classical” boundary-markers for the construction of a group’s identity, constructing identity from commonalities is limited to negative attributions: non-Bengali, non-Bengali-speaking and non-Muslim. *Jhum* is the only aspect of culture employable for creating collective hill people identity.

Although attempting to unify the CHT people under one label, like “*jhumma*” as a collective identity, there have been too many cleavages in between: the promotion of Buddhist identity for example became counter-productive as it was opposed by non-Buddhist sections. Christians and Buddhists usually live side-by side, but accentuate their distinctiveness by rejecting inter-ethnic marriages and further intensified contacts. Cleavages can be ethnic-political or non-ethnic political: like many counter-movements the JSS and *Shanti Bahini* were not a united force combining all CHT people. Within their own front, ideological disputes divided the political platform. Preeti Kumar Chakma opposed M.N. Larma, who was assassinated in 1983 by Preeti’s supporters (Ahmed 1993: 52). Shantu Larma took over his elder brother’s position and has been the political leader of the JSS until today. After the assassination of a prominent Marma among the functionaries of the JSS in 1980, most of the members belonging to the Marma left the movement. In the beginning of the 1990s about 90% of the insurgents were Chakma (Shelley 1992: 117), who have always been the strongest supporters of the movement (Zaman 1982: 78). The Tripura were moreover very critical about the insurgent’s activities, I was told by informants in the field. Ahmed maintains that to them “the jungle war was essentially a ‘Chakma show’ to perpetuate their ethnic hegemony over other communities of the CHT” (Ahmed 1993: 54). Large factions are traditionally followers of BNP and other nationalist parties⁸⁰. Stereotypes and prejudices towards other ethnic groups in the CHT are common. I heard Chakma talking about Marma as “pirates” and Pankhua as “naked kookies”. Whilst in the field I never heard about a “*jhumma*” identity, except from politicians. The question here is not if these identities are artificial or not. Nobody can deny that there is a sense of belonging together and that the CHT people differ from the others as

⁷⁹ The term “pahadi” means Hill People, “adivasi” is commonly used in South Asia and India in particular and has a political connotation, while “tribal” as a commonly used phrase in Bangladesh implies hierarchic relations.

⁸⁰ In the field I was told that BNP is very popular among the Mru especially.

much as many feel different from the Bengali population. But at the same time there are other interests, ascriptions and characteristics, forming different entities. Identities are, according to Schlee (1996: 11) never stable systems for ascription or self-ascription, but are fluid and changeable, i.e. multiple configurations. Manobendra N. Larma put this in a nutshell when he stated in the parliament: “I am a Chakma. A Marma can never be a Chakma, a Chakma can never be a Bengali ... I am a Chakma. I am not a Bengali. I am a citizen of Bangladesh – Bangladeshi. You are also Bangladeshi but your national identity is Bengali. They [tribals] can never be Bengalis” (Shelley 1992: 110).

This chapter aimed to show the history of the CHT as much as the most important developments and changes. The major ones are the establishment of an administrative system during British colonialism, the period of structural development efforts under Pakistan’s rule and finally the policy of Bangladesh towards the CHT. Especially this nationalism-driven period had dire consequences, leading to increased ethnic conflict and war. It should be noted that the development efforts by the Government of Bangladesh, especially since the establishment of the CHTDB, could be taken for a model of how development-cooperation can unintentionally contribute to conflict and war⁸¹. Development-cooperation today has changed due to such experiences and might now be better able to avoid becoming instrumentalised for the interests of the dominant community within a state.

The politics of nationalism (Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Hill People) are necessary in order to understand the causes and dynamics of conflict in the CHT. Ethnicity or nationalism always implies the combination of various factors, namely political, economic and cultural ones (Gerharz 2000). At the same time they are neither given nor unchangeable constructions; ethnic identities can be adverse and overlapping and are always “work in progress”. The structure of ethnic diversity in the CHT is a complex setting which is remarkably unstable and situative, although there are graspable frontiers and coalitions.. There are moreover not just conflicts between Bengalis and non-Bengalis. Other conflict lines are found in the dichotomies Buddhist – non-Buddhist; Chakma – non-Chakma; Marma – non-Marma; Christian – non-Christian or Southern-Marma – Northern-Marma. However these pairs are changeable, depending on what is presently considered as relevant (Barth 1969: 14 and 34). Being aware of these processes is necessary for any form of intervention, especially when planning development projects which should have a stabilising effect. Analysing and grasping the local context and the complexity and dynamics of conflict is undoubtedly a necessity for

⁸¹ For this topic and the present state of the art see Fahrenhorst (2000a) and other contributions within the publication.

development-cooperation ventures (Fahrenhorst 2000a: 13). This chapter will therefore constitute the basic groundwork for understanding the presentation of the main objective of this thesis: to show and explain the ambivalences to be faced when planning a project in the CHT.

5. The Peace Accord and GTZ

The historical peace treaty between the Government of Bangladesh and the JSS, signed on 2nd December 1997, has gained international recognition. As already mentioned, negotiations took place for a long period of time, until a solution was found which could be accepted by the parties involved. India supported the peace process substantially, mainly for strategic reasons (Rashiduzzaman 1998). It is no secret that India had been sympathetic with the hill people's movement. *Shanti Bahini*'s training camps were located across the border in Mizoram and Tripura. There had been an understanding between the insurgents and the Indian government which empowered the insurgents during their resistance. India showed much solidarity with the Hill People not just by rehabilitating the Chakmas who fled to India after the Kaptai-dam-construction (Saikia 1994), but by accepting and supporting the refugees coming to India during the "hot phases" of insurgency and counter-insurgency in camps⁸². Under Indian pressure, one can assume, the *Shanti Bahini* simply ran out of the money and resources that were necessary for their activities. The international overall impression is that the Peace Accord will contribute to economic development of the CHT and stability in the whole region. Hopes and expectations regarding the accord have attracted donor organisations looking for project areas in order to realise new ideas of peace-building. Bangladesh has a long tradition of development cooperation activities during the armed conflict in the CHT. The rest of Bangladesh and development cooperation likewise have not been affected. Necessary structures for development-cooperation, such as offices and local administrative personnel already exist. Personal contacts to governmental institutions are established and well maintained. Due to long-lasting intensive cooperation the donor agencies have experience in negotiating with the partners concerned. The Bangladeshi institutions in turn know their counterparts; trust is an important feature of good bilateral relationships. It is therefore obvious that the CHT are an ideal project area for testing peace-building measures on a small scale, compared to states where conflict has led to a complete breakdown of societal structures.

⁸² Conversely Indian rebel movements like the Mizo took shelter in the CHT (Rashiduzzaman 1998: 664). India therefore has its own interests in the establishment of secure borders between the states.

5.1 Expectations and Reality of a Historical Event

The treaty comprises, in addition to minor ones, several major provisions (Mohsin 1998; Rashiduzzaman 1999): The formation of a Regional Council (CHTRC/RC), reformation and renaming of the District Local Government Councils as Hill District Councils⁸³ and the establishment of a Ministry for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. All temporary army camps are to be withdrawn, except the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the three cantonments. A general amnesty for the *Shanti Bahini* was declared. Each fighter received *Taka* 50,000 for rehabilitation on condition that they surrender arms and ammunition and return to normal life. An important feature of the accord is the formation of a land commission responsible for solving conflicts over land issues in the hills.

Peace in the hills implies strategic elements dealing with policy and the security of the whole subcontinent, starting with security at the borders to Myanmar and India⁸⁴. The relationship between India and Pakistan is a considerable factor as well⁸⁵. The Bangladeshis are not unequivocally enthusiastic about the newly established peace in the hills. On the national level the treaty is often seen as a “hot issue”⁸⁶. The opposition BNP is instrumentalising the accord for their national policy and uses it for their election campaigns. On 25.08.1999 the prominent Bangladeshi newspaper Daily Star reported that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia “advised the government to rehabilitate the city’s slum dwellers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as there are huge fallow lands in the hills” (Daily Star 25.08.1999: 1). Immediately the next day another article carried CHT leaders’ criticisms of Khaleda Zia’s statements. Khagrachari’s Hill District Council Chairman stated Khaleda Zia’s demand would be “a new conspiracy with the hills”, while a Bengali Regional Council member stated that the BNP did not want peace in the hills and a JSS member asserted that the appeal would be “rubbing salts into wounds (or add flame to fuel)” (Daily Star 26.08. 1999: 12). Besides having consequences for the state as well as the whole of South Asia, the treaty has its opponents and

⁸³ The Hill District Local Government Act was adopted in 1989 under Ershad (Hosain 1999: 47). The idea is discussed in a twofold fashion: some argue that the institutions contribute to democratisation in the hills, others argue that dividing CHT’s unity is an attempt to divide the unity of its people.

⁸⁴ During my field visit German officials voiced suspicion concerning the security at the Myanmar border, because the CHT could possibly function as a trail for drugs from the “golden triangle”, since Chittagong has a suitable port for trafficking drugs.

⁸⁵ It is not just Bangladesh’s relationship towards India, but Pakistan is involved with its interests as well. As Rashiduzzaman (1998: 664) states, the BNP governments as well as Ershad actively worked together with Pakistan by supplying arms to Indian dissidents who took shelter in the CHT area.

⁸⁶ On the national level security aspects and especially land questions there is intense discussion. Many Bangladeshis do not accept the provision made in the 1900 Manual, that outsiders are not allowed to purchase

supporters among the Hill People themselves. Especially the Pahari Chattro Parishad (PCP) and Hill Women's Federation (HWF) are protesting against the accord, since there is a feeling of being "sold out" to the governmental authorities (Mohsin 1998; Rashiduzzaman 1998: 661; Gain 2000: 11; Mohsin 2000). A new party has been created in order to represent the fractions of Hill People who do not agree with JSS's policy on the issue. The United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), founded by a former JSS member, openly opposes Shantu Larma's policy and still calls for full autonomy of the Hill Tracts⁸⁷. The implementation of the treaty indeed involves several problems and are perceived with suspicion by most people. An important problem is the formation of the land commission, which had not been formed during the time of field research. As a crucial issue it causes much tension, since many internally displaced people and returned refugees are not properly rehabilitated yet. Many of them are still living somewhere provisionally, since their land is occupied by settlers (Mohsin 2000: 73). At the same time many people are looking forward to a better future under peaceful circumstances. According to my observations in the CHT and interviews conducted, many people perceive the Peace Accord and the present situation as difficult, but are optimistic concerning the future development in the hills. Especially new opportunities to receive support from the outside (the donating countries and the international donors in particular) play an important role for many.

5.2 New Conditions, New Hopes – Development Efforts in the CHT

Before the accord the CHT had been cut off from most activities by multi- and bilateral donors in Bangladesh. Only a few organisations and countries supported the CHTDB with funds, e.g. UNICEF, WHO, ADB, Sweden and Australia (Ahmed 1993: 47; Jessen 1988: 92). The direct implementation of projects separately from national programmes was impossible, since the region was closed to outsiders. Many development activities in the Hills have been perceived as supporting Bangladesh's policy of oppression and "development policy as counter-insurgency policy" (Mey 1991:57; Jessen 1988; CHT Commission 1991).

land in the CHT, while the Hill People are allowed to do that in the rest of Bangladesh. For details about supporters and opponents of the accord see Gerharz (2000).

⁸⁷ During my field visit I discussed UPDF's role concerning CHT's future extensively with various people, but unfortunately I could not meet any representative of them myself. UPDF is seen as a radical party by many people, and the majority of my interviewees are suspicious about their reliability. Recent literature gives some additional idea about UPDF's programme and demands (Gain 2000:12).

In terms of new perspectives in international development policy, the CHT are a suitable area for investigating new models⁸⁸. Various donor agencies are interested in implementing projects in the CHT and many representatives interviewed during the field research expressed willingness to work in the CHT but showed reluctance after first investigations have been made. This has been explained as being predominantly due to the unclear governmental and administrative structures in the CHT context. The responsibilities and competence of the new institutions in particular have been questioned. Most representatives of donor agencies said that on both sides, the donor and government ones, nobody really knows who is concerned with what. This indeed was also stated by the GTZ staff responsible as well. Throughout the whole mission the questions of responsibility could not be properly clarified, and therefore caused much confusion and exhaustion. This crucial point indeed was very conspicuous in the field and is one of the major points in this thesis⁸⁹. Especially those working multi- and bilaterally are dependent on knowing the functions of different institutions, since their predominant counterpart is the government. It is therefore necessary at this point to give a short presentation of the various institutions dealing with development cooperation in the CHT. Most attention is given to those which were newly formed after the Peace Accord. In the following I will discuss the institutions according to the literature. In Chapter 6 the institutional setting, its functional problems and potential will be analysed according to information extracted from field observations and interviews.

The Hill District Councils (HDC)

Every district has its HDC responsible for land and revenue administration, policy-making by prerogatives of framing regulations and budgetary allocations for the CHT on national policy-making level (Roy 2000b: 50). Their members are 30 indigenous and non-indigenous members elected on the basis of proportional representation. The Chairman is a hill person elected by the members of the council (Husain 1999: 63). The HDCs of the three hill districts have limited authority over some government departments at district level⁹⁰. Consequently their role in development-related matters needs recognition. The HDCs can “indicate and implement development projects from their own funds and implement the same either through their own engineering section, or through one or the other of the transferred departments”

⁸⁸ Which has already been discussed at length in Chapter 2.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁹⁰ The authority relates to the so-called “transferred departments” which are among others: Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Department of Fisheries (DOF), Department of Livestock, Department of Health,

(Roy 2000b: 50). Their responsibility is therefore of crucial importance for implementing projects. But their authority is largely limited to disciplinary authority over employees of the departments, while any substantive role in monitoring development projects of the departments is limited⁹¹ (Roy 2000b: 50). “The central government will, however, retain advisory and regulatory power over this council” (Hosain 1999: 64).

The Regional Council (RC)

The Peace Accord includes the formation of a Regional Council responsible for the entire CHT. The RC, headed by an elected chairman, has 25 members of which 21 are elected on proportional basis⁹² (Hosain 1999: 64). Its policy-making role comprises two tasks: legislative prerogatives and supervisory and monitoring authority over the HDCs and the other institutions on district level (Roy 2000b:51). The RC’s task is to “exercise supervisory authority over the HDCs, *headmen*, and junior-level officials of the revenue (including land) department, the CHT Development Board and some authority over tribal law, heavy industries and the activities of NGOs, among other matters” (Roy 2000a: 3). Thus the RC’s main duty is to coordinate the institutions concerned. At the same time its power is weakened by not having any direct executive role in the administration (Roy 2000a: 5).

The Ministry of CHT Affairs

The Ministry is to be headed by an indigenous person. Its advisory committee consists of those members of the parliament from the CHT, the chairpersons of the HDCs, a representative of the RC chairperson, the three *rajas* and a “non-tribal” nominee of the government (Roy 2000a: 5). The predominant task of the Ministry is maintenance of relations between HDC and RC and those ministries and institutions in Dhaka concerned and influencing policy decisions in the cabinet and ministries. It might be expected that under the provision the ministry is doing its job well, and can support actively stabilising processes by functioning as a pro-active and cooperative channel and spokesperson (Roy 2000a: 5; Roy 2000b: 51).

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Bangladesh Small Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Office of the District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) and Tribal Cultural Institute (Roy 2000a: 4).

⁹¹ The funds for the departments are sent directly to them, bypassing the HDCs.

⁹² 12 members are indigenous people of whom 5 are Chakma, 3 Marma, 2 Tripura, 1 Mru or Tanchangya and 1 member who belongs to Lushai, Bawm, Pankhua, Khumi, Chak or Kheyang. 6 members are non-indigenous, two from each district. Of 2 indigenous women one has to belong to the Chakma, and finally the RC has one non-indigenous female member. The HDC chairmen are ex-officio members (Hosain 1999: 64).

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB)

Formed in 1976 under General Zia, the CHTDB has a long tradition of development work in the CHT, criticised often for instrumentalising aid and development for military purposes⁹³. Most of the projects have been of a structural nature, and many failed for various reasons⁹⁴. Until 1997 the CHTDB was headed by an army officer. Still the CHTDB plays a crucial role in development matters. But since the Peace Accord the institution has lost some of its military attachment. The present Chairman as well as the Vice-Chairman⁹⁵ are people from the hills. The CHTDB is still one of the most important development agencies in the region.

The bilateral donor agencies who decided to work in the Hills besides GTZ are DANIDA and AusAID. Both had not yet implemented their projects at the date of research. Other donors such as NORAD, SIDA, JICA and CIDA are supporting local and national NGOs⁹⁶ on a small scale. The United Nations agencies UNICEF and WFP have had some presence in the CHT; the WHO is planning a malaria programme. UNDP is the nominated coordinator of donor activities and its main project at present is supporting the Regional Council in capacity-building. Nevertheless all agencies talked with (also those not mentioned here) expressed willingness to support the development process and are aware of the situation in the hills.

International NGOs are present in the CHT as well, and MSF/Holland has already implemented a health care project in Kagrachari. Oxfam/UK is planning to support small local NGOs. The International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC) have included the CHT in their global “Local Capacity for Peace Programme” which is going to be implemented by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS). NGOs such as CARE Bangladesh, Caritas Bangladesh and World Vision Bangladesh have projects in the CHT, various others are planning projects and are interested. The big national NGOs BRAC, Grameen Bank and Proshika are working in the CHT mainly with credit programmes and some other components, the same is true for the Integrated Development Foundation (IDF)⁹⁷. Other national NGOs have expressed their interest in integrating the CHT into their

⁹³ See Chapter 4.

⁹⁴ For example rubber plantations have been promoted and supported by the CHTDB, but as a long term measure rubber is a non profitable source today due to falling prices on the world market.

⁹⁵ The Chairperson and other officials are appointed by the government. The Peace Accord states, that preference will be given to a hill person for chairpersonship (Roy 2000a: 6).

⁹⁶ For the differentiation between local and national NGOs see Chapter 6.4.

⁹⁷ The micro-credit model applied by these NGOs implies some criticism in the CHT. The acceptance problem of these NGOs can be found in Gerharz (2000).

programmes as well. Among the Hill People there is a growing tendency towards establishing and forming associations and NGOs on their own initiative. Inspired by successful examples such as Green Hill⁹⁸, a young but energetic organisation, many people are starting to set up local initiatives. There is an overall spirit of activity and dynamics in the region, and local NGOs are rising like mushrooms. Many organisations and individuals are awaiting donor activities to get started, since the development business creates a new labour market and promises funds for rising NGOs⁹⁹. Accordingly there are in general many expectations and hopes in the further development of the region from both sides: the development agencies on the one hand, the local people on the other hand. After the presentation of Germany's contribution and objectives, problems will be analysed and discussed, which are, in spite of enthusiasm among various actors, immensely hampering the implementation of and processes for establishing developmental structures.

5.3 Germany's Contribution – Showing Initiative and Goodwill

Already a month after the signing of the Peace Accord, in January 1998 the Bangladeshi Ministry of Finance submitted a proposal to the donor nations, requesting \$ 250 million for the CHT. There was a consensus among the donors not to accept proposals which are not participatory and do not include confidence-building measures (Revuelta 2000a: 5). Nevertheless Germany maintained its interest in assisting development in the CHT and after Bangladeshi-German Government negotiations in December 1998, the German government allocated DM 3.5 million for technical assistance. In order to get a better understanding of the situation in the CHT and to identify possible areas and sectors for assistance, GTZ accomplished a fact finding mission in June 1999. This exploratory mission developed first ideas of where the deficits and needs of the CHT people are, which sectors GTZ could support and how a project design could eventually look. A significant point has been emphasised by members of the fact finding mission: ethnic differences above all determine the overall situation in the CHT. The mission agreed that the ethnic relations would be difficult to handle, if a so-called "controversial" sector was selected for activities. This becomes clear with the example of the education sector: The indigenous population has interest in reforming the school system by introducing their mother-tongues as a medium of instruction in primary schools. GTZ would obviously come into conflict with either one or the other side if it intervened in such issues, which are not clarified yet. It was agreed that the

⁹⁸ For Green Hill's significance and critiques see Gerharz (2000).

project should try to concentrate on “non-controversial” issues. Consequently the health sector, combined with some income-generating activities, were identified¹⁰⁰. Further the fact finding mission identified the capacities of the RC as insufficient and members expressed an interest in supporting the RC by establishing necessary structures for efficient functioning. In January 2000 The BMZ put forward its recommendations for the project: It was emphasised that the project should start as early as possible and that BMZ would try to investigate if the CHT are a possible working area for the Civil Peacekeepers (Ziviler Friedensdienst). Further BMZ made the provision that the new project should work with other on-going GTZ projects in Bangladesh. BMZ additionally emphasised that the GTZ should not get involved in the education sector, due to the problems mentioned above. Finally the project should not focus on the capacity building of the RC (Revuelta 2000a:5). Consequently the original working title of the project: “Unterstützung des Friedensprozesses in den CHT” changed to: “Unterstützung von Basisgesundheitsdiensten und ggf. weiterer grundbedürfnisorientierter Vorhaben” (Revuelta 2000a: 5).

In agreement with other actors involved, such as the Ministry of CHT Affairs and BMZ, GTZ suggested following a two-step approach to implementing the project. The first step would constitute the appraisal mission, the second the implementation of the project. The appraisal mission¹⁰¹ was instructed to apply a participatory approach in investigating where and how the project should be implemented. The Terms of Reference advised the mission members to meet and discuss with representatives from governmental institutions, various representatives of different professions and societal groups (business community, NGOs, cultural organisations, women’s associations etc.) in order to identify key problems and possible solutions relevant to the planned project. In consultation with regional and local authorities *upazilas* should be selected for the implementation of activities.

The time planned for the mission to carry out the assessment was four months. Although this period seems to be a long one at first glance, it turned out that much time had to be spent on other things than field work. The first phase in Dhaka took about one month, and at the end of the period it was planned to undertake so-called “confidence-building measures”¹⁰². The

⁹⁹ For NGOs’ significance in Bangladesh see White (1999).

¹⁰⁰ The activities, their advantages and disadvantages will be discussed in Chapter 7.

¹⁰¹ The appraisal mission was allocated an additional sum of DM 300,000 from the “Study and Expert Fund (SEF)”.

¹⁰² Confidence-building measures in this context were seen as efforts at showing goodwill, since many locals complained about donors attitude of investigating everything but actually “doing nothing”. Many missions had come for assessments, but the implementation has not been started yet. To overcome these frustrations and show the local people that GTZ can be taken for seriously, although the actual activities will start much later due to bureaucratic procedures, a small amount of money had been provided for these measures. The team leader

planning workshop therefore was dated at the beginning of August to have enough time for the activities. In the meantime the assessment had to be carried out, but besides that there were different other things to do: the mission had to be introduced to local authorities, the workshop had to be organised, additional meetings in Dhaka the team leader had to attend took some time and finally the mission had actually one day per union¹⁰³ placed at its disposal. Although a conflict analysis has been done to a certain extent, the analysis at the grassroots is consequently missing¹⁰⁴. Meetings with representatives and stakeholders took place, the mission visited several villages and Union headquarters. But it can be doubted that the methods applied during the assessment were appropriate for the local setting. In the literature representatives of TC agencies claim that approaches aimed at supporting peace processes need specific instruments and methods which are more crisis-sensitive (Mehler et al. 2000: 72), although concrete recommendations are largely missing due to limited experience (Mehler et al. 2000: 71). Nevertheless leading recommendations proclaim that “to address the potential for renewed conflict requires an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of its background and root causes” (DAC 1997: 17); furthermore it is stated that “detailed analytical work should for the basis of judgement to be made on the relative importance of explicitly addressing the root causes of conflict within development co-operation strategies” (DAC 1997: 18). At the same time the guidelines emphasise that participation of the groups concerned (returning refugees and displaced persons) is a necessity for successful post-conflict reconstruction (DAC 1997: 59). Involving the target groups in the planning process is therefore a prerequisite to successful implementation of projects in post-conflict situations. What has methodologically been done during the assessment was labelled Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). This planning method developed in the beginning of the 1980s has been criticised for its weaknesses in validation and theoretical conception as well as for various other problems (Lachenmann 1995a: 17/18). RRA, as an informal method, employs information gathering techniques which are of limited reliability, because samples are selected on a casual basis (Fischer et al. 1990: 25). Of major importance in post-conflict regions is the equal treatment of each conflict party¹⁰⁵, and in this regard the CHT provide a very intricate ethnic setting. The assessment, with its limited scope, thus was concentrated on areas which are almost exclusively inhabited by indigenous people. The settler areas were

decided on supplying mosquito-nets in selected communities, partly through local NGOs, deworming medicine for livestock and children and support for a horticulture activity implemented by a local NGO.

¹⁰³ The mission visited five *upazilas*, of each *upazila* approximately two unions, altogether 12 unions were visited.

¹⁰⁴ For conflict analysis see Uvin (1999: 17).

¹⁰⁵ For the question of (im-)partiality, which is crucial in the peace-building context, see Chapter 7.

completely left out of the scheme. This was due to pressure exerted by political institutions, but was welcomed, since time was limited. As a consequence, the development of more appropriate methods for situation analysis in post-conflict regions should be considered. This need is not just related to the limited scope of the “classical” instruments, but to the complexity of ethnic relations in post-conflict regions. The ethnic relations imply much conflict potential, which is, as has already been stated, the major focus of this thesis.

It is obvious here that there is a gap between what has been conceptualised in theory and the output in practice, although many aspects to be found in the relevant guidelines on peace-building and conflict-management have already been taken into consideration. One important aspect is the coordination and exchange of information of various donor agencies and other actors in development (DAC 1997; Mehler et al. 2000, Uvin 1999). The talks held in Dhaka as well as additional contacts provided missing background information. It was attempted to supplement activities already up and running, and to attune activities to those of others¹⁰⁶. The DAC guidelines propose that development cooperation should focus on “support for the development of intermediary social organisation such as local NGOs, business associations, multi-ethnic committees, women’s organisations and helping marginalised groups obtain better access to justice systems, the civil administration and the media” in order to nurture appropriate social and institutional networks and organisations that can act as stabilising points in society (DAC 1997: 17). It has been one of the strengths of the assessment that a wide variety of actors and groups has been taken into account on the large scale, but contrarily the grassroots-level, i.e. the possible target-groups, has not been asked for their participation. This is not only the problem of the concrete case, but can be traced to a more general problem. Although the literature for practitioners and guidelines emphasise conflict-sensitivity in analysis, there is almost no concrete practical advice. The field of peace-building, although vast in its formulations of policy and overviews, still lacks appropriate methods of analysis and orientations.

This chapter has given an overview of the recent developments in the CHT, especially in respect to those following the Peace Accord. The formation of new institutions has principally contributed to making compromises acceptable by all parties. Although largely supported and recommended, the alterations imply problems which are invisible at the first sight, issues which are discussed by the Peace Accord’s opponents in particular. Nevertheless a new situation in the hills which is overloaded with hopes and expectations is implied. Development efforts in particular are a big issue and there is great enthusiasm and activism.

Various donor agencies evince an interest in supporting the process, although they show some reticence due to various problematic aspects. National organisations are interested in contributing to the establishment of developmental structures in the CHT as well, although one should avoid seeing these efforts in a naively positive light, since there is firstly some local rejection potential and secondly, organisations always work for their own interest. On the local level many people can be seen to be making efforts to contribute to development, since new associations and NGOs are being formed and gaining more and more importance. Germany's contribution to the process is based on support for the basic health sector, but is open to other activities. The integrated nature of the project design is the product of an assessment, which implies, for the sociologist, some aspects worthy of criticism, but has been carried through maybe more carefully than those for other projects. During the assessment many different aspects had to be taken into account, and since I was advised to look especially into ethnic issues, I was able to concentrate on analysing different structures from the ethnic point of view. The results will be presented in the next chapter of this thesis.

6. Challenges to Face when Planning a Project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

“All assistance aimed at supporting indigenous mechanisms of dispute resolution – whether traditional authorities, or moderate groups – needs to be developed in light of the best possible understanding of the political, social and economic dynamics that underlie the conflict” (DAC 1997: 52). Having given an overview of the premises concerning peace-building and the local setting, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the features of ethnic conflict in the CHT. This will be done by embedding the data collected during the field visit in the local context, especially in view of the general aim of this thesis: illustrating the problems which have to be faced when planning a project. When societies are highly determined by ethnic polarisation a careful look into their specific dynamics, causes of conflict and the results of the same is required. An appropriate planning process in order to fulfil such aims of development work as reaching the “really needy people” is the major goal on the one hand, but equal treatment of ethnically defined groups must be considered on the other hand. Bilateral cooperation, which is obliged to work with governmental counterparts, cannot freely choose where which kind of implementation is appropriate. The project needs to be carefully handled, if it is to avoid controversial issues¹⁰⁷. Partiality and inappropriate treatment can influence the local setting due to their polarising character. The administrative structure is an important topic to

¹⁰⁶ Although UNDPs representative complained about a lack of interest in donor-coordination-meetings.

start by analysing, since there are different aspects affecting development cooperation. The newly created regional institutions¹⁰⁸ have an impact on administration, since they attempt to take over power from the centralist administrative structure of the Bangladeshi state. Nevertheless, the centralist power tries to retain its power, although pretending to meet the Hill People's wishes for decentralisation and more self-determination. Dynamics which are politicised and polarised play the crucial role here. There is a need to lay these open in order to discuss premises like (im-)partiality and ethical postulates. In line with the overall goal of this work I will concentrate on issues which are ethnically determined, although there are manifold different aspects to be considered. Ethnicity as an elementary feature constructing social life in post-conflict contexts affects economic structures as well. According to Barth (1969: 19) ethnic groups occupy distinct niches and provide different goods and services for each other. In the context of a "classical symbiotic situation" (Barth 1969: 20), the perspective of majority-minority-relationships within a state, centralisation of economic power, changes the situation on the regional level into one of unequal access to resources and therefore of economic inequality. Intervening in economic structures, as development cooperation does, needs careful consideration of these processes. Finally the field "civil society" entails ethnic features as well. In the CHT NGOs are segregated according to ethnicity due to the local and national origin of organisations and their personnel, competing for beneficiaries. NGOs have a clear ethnic feature as regards their way of acting, affecting culture and politics as much as economic structures.

Having considered that there is a majority-minority relationship within the hegemonial state affecting the conditions in the CHT, another level of identifying along ethnic lines has to be taken into account. In general there are two frames of reference: there is a majority-minority relationship on the national level, many Bengalis and only a few indigenous people, while the CHT themselves are demographically still slightly dominated by the indigenous people. The impact of the hegemonial power of the state on the regional level still has to be taken into account. Nevertheless, the CHT level gains an additional perspective, since the CHT people are diversified in their identities in as much as there exists a general demarcation between themselves and the Bengali majority within the state. The empirical data show that the relationships between different ethnic groups are shaped by more or less negative and positive aspects: some groups have more contact with each other, while others clearly demarcate themselves from distinct ones. The "way of life" is described differently in the literature and it

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 5 for the meaning of controversial issues.

¹⁰⁸ An introduction has been given in Chapter 5.

can be observed in the field as well, for example if villages are scattered or more congested, on the ridges of the hills or preferably in the valleys. These differences indicate possibilities of intervening in given structures and need to be considered.

The complex structure of ethnic relations, differences between the majority and minority as well as between the different groups, are important topics. (Virtual) possibilities of integration or assimilation of minorities need to be discussed by representatives of donor agencies as well. But often an appropriate analysis seems to be lacking. The problems are obvious, but strategies how that would support both processes remain absent: providing people with the freedom to use that potential of specific benefit specific for their own community which are adapted to the local and communal setting on the one hand, and on the other hand supporting integration into the overall regional and national structure, so as to ensure stability and appropriate mechanisms for solving conflicts, have not yet been developed. The difficulty for donor agencies in their policy is moving between supporting both processes, which is a difficult task since there is a structural imbalance due to hegemonic and centralist structures. Analysing and drawing attention to these imbalances will be the aim of this chapter.

6.1 The Administrative Setting – Executing Power over Minorities

The basic administrative structure of the CHT was laid down in the 1900 Manual. It defines the Deputy Commissioner (DC) as the general administrative head of the CHT districts, under direct control of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (Chakma 1998: 33). Further the three *rajas* and the *headmen* played important roles¹⁰⁹ (Roy 2000b: 46). Due to various changes the general administration today has been split off, the DC's remain in a central position and their responsibility is allotted to the central state, but they are supplemented by the HDCs and the RC. The *Upazila* Nirbahi Officers (UNO) have the status of DC's junior associates at *upazila* level. As the main administrative agencies DCs and UNOs play a certain role, although the HDC's and RC's responsibilities within the administrative framework are more important for development cooperation, because they are the implementing and coordinating agencies¹¹⁰. Further there are the departments of respective line ministries, which are present at district and *upazila* level. These subdivisions, called departments, are directly relevant for development-cooperation, for example a health project is usually implemented in cooperation with the Civil Surgeon at district level and, at *upazila* level with the *Upazila* Medical Officers

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 4.

¹¹⁰ The main tasks of both institutions have been presented in Chapter 5, their analysis will take place in the next section of this chapter, as they are predominantly of political significance.

(UMO). Although the projects of the respective line ministries are to be supervised, monitored and executed by the HDCs, the funds are directly allocated from the ministries to the departments¹¹¹ (Roy 2000b: 50). The general administrative institution and the departments are therefore under the control of the central state level, rather than the regional and local one. In the following I will present some findings from my empirical data which illustrate the relationship between state authorities and the Hill People.

The District Administration

A courtesy visit at all three District Commissioners' (DC) offices at the beginning of the mission was obligatory, since GTZ is an organisation representing German development cooperation. The DC in Bandarban presented himself and his assignment in a more open fashion than the other two. During our visit one point discussed was the implementation of the Peace Accord. He stated that the implementation of the Accord has been fulfilled by "approximately 80 or 90%" and that he would not understand why people are so impatient. He gave me a publication of the Bandarban District Administration "Tribal Issues & Peace Treaty '97" which points out that "The present government has fulfilled the maximum demand of the 'peace Treaty'". A list of eighteen points has been used to prove the thesis. This opinion is opposed by the majority of the indigenous people, their leaders and politicians and the literature. They claim that the implementation of the Peace Accord has come to a standstill except on certain issues (CHT Commission 2000; Gain 2000: 11; Mohsin 2000: 75; Erni 1999: 252). Of major importance here is the fact that the perception of the situation is a very different one. One aspect often discussed in the field is the withdrawal of military camps: the DC stated that 60 military camps have been withdrawn. According to the JSS only 32 have been dismantled (CHT Commission 2000: 20). Less important than the actual number of camps withdrawn is the fact that there are more than 500 camps in the region and that the strength of armed forces in the CHT has actually not been reduced. On the contrary the defence budget for 2000 has even increased by 7 percent compared to 1999 (CHT Commission 2000: 20). After the visit some of the local consultants complained about the fallacious statements of the DC.

The example reflects what is perceivable everywhere in the CHT. The people belonging to the opposing groups perceive the situation in a different way and each tries to present their perception to the outsider. While the members of the indigenous community try to make

¹¹¹ Although the HDCs should get the authority over the respective institutions according to the Local

obvious that they are still the oppressed and that the other side would not try to take cognisance of their interests, Bengali officials conversely present themselves and their group as those who are contributing more than enough to the peace process in the region. Both sides are convinced that they are in the right position. Playing with numbers is a tool used in this attempt, since numbers give a certain objective justification, although each group tries to interpret them in the way which is most useful to itself. Barth describes this process as following: “A dichotomization of others as strangers, as members of another ethnic group, implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgement of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest” (Barth 1969: 15). The Peace Accord thus is not seen as a joint project, but as a kind of force to provide something for the other group. The more one group gives, or pretends to give, the more it is in the position where criticism cannot be accepted, since the necessary contribution has been paid. The consequence is a lack of trust and communication between the respective groups. Members of both communities stand their ground and are not willing to perceive the current peace process as a chance for mutual understanding. In talks with local people it was often stated that the DC of Bandarban has an anti-Hill People attitude. Especially the indigenous people largely distrust the administrative head of their district and feel not represented but merely opposed by him. Never openly expressed, this emerged however in informal talks with consultants and other people. The phenomenon has to be seen in the historical context. The DC has had the most powerful function in the CHT until 1989¹¹² (Roy 2000b: 46). Especially his functions regarding land issues and settlement (Gain 2000: 17,18) have not contributed to a trustful relationship between the local people and the state authorities, since land and settlers are the main points of political controversy between the Hill People and the government. According to the Peace Agreement the DC has lost much of his power, which has been transferred to the HDCs and RC, but his “role is still very authoritative on account of his powers over land matters, ‘law and order’, the issuance of licences and permits for trade and commerce, the extraction of natural resources, and his magisterial authority” (Roy 2000b: 47). The DC has played an important role in the land disputes, which were the crux of conflict in the CHT¹¹³. Land has been transferred by the government in various programmes: the Hydroelectric Project at

Government Council Act and the Peace Treaty, most of the necessary powers have not been transferred yet.

¹¹² In 1989 the Local Government Council Act came into force.

¹¹³ Land in the Hills is not just necessary to survive for the majority of the population, but plays a crucial role for Hill People’s common identity. Their way of cultivation has provided them with the self-description “*jhumma*”, which means “those who are cultivating *jhum*”. Due to the socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh land has additionally been the most valuable resource in the CHT. An army officer once stated: “We want the land, but not the people” (Mey 1988).

Kaptai and the settlement programmes initiated under General Zia in the late seventies are the major causes for land dispossession and struggles for land. After the Kaptai project the government's rehabilitation programme should have provided compensation for the dispossessed families, but while 54,000 acres were submerged by the lake, only 20,000 acres of inferior quality were allocated for resettlement (Roy 1996: 62). The literature shows that the distribution of land was hampered by linguistic and cultural differences; many people, not being able to speak Bengali, could not make clear their claims and received only a part of what they were entitled to (Roy 1996: 63). Mohsin demonstrates how the district administration was directly involved in the process of transferring land to settlers¹¹⁴ during the settlement programmes in the 1970s (Mohsin 1997: 112). Furthermore, the DCs reportedly did not consult the *rajas* concerning the settlement question, although this is laid down in the 1900 Manual (Roy 1996: 74). The CHT Commission points out how Hill People were dispossessed of their lands by settlers with the state authorities' support. Among other cases a Chakma refugee interviewed by the commission stated: "... Settlers moved into the Hills where no one was, then they moved the tribals by force with the help of the army. The Deputy Commissioner would come over and say that this place was suitable for settlers so tribal people must move and receive money in compensation. But in reality they did not get money or resettlement" (CHT Commission 1991: 65).

Access to collective goods within the state always depends on bureaucratic power (Wimmer 1997: 642). The most important collective commodity in the CHT is land. In the case of Bangladesh this dynamic, the struggle for resources and access to them, has been intensified through persisting insurgency action. Insurgency action and answering by practising hegemonic power over the unstable territory in order to maintain imperative power (or vice versa), created a dynamic in which where both aspects produced and reproduced each other constantly. Ethnicisation of bureaucracy thus ensured the majority would gain and maintain control, and therefore access to wanted resources. But with the ethnicisation of bureaucracy benefits are most likely unequally distributed among the ethnic groups (Wimmer 1997: 652). While the minority has become excluded and marginalised, members of the majority could profit. The ethnicisation of bureaucratic power therefore has made a recognisable contribution to unequal development and the marginalisation of minorities politically as well as economically¹¹⁵. It is quasi-natural still today, then, that there is a relationship of distrust and

¹¹⁴ The exchange of Secret Memorandi by the Divisional Commissioner Chittagong and the Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati can be found in the appendix of Mohsin (1997).

¹¹⁵ The political and economic aspects will be analysed in later parts of this chapter.

suspicion between the state authorities and the Hill People. It might be illusionary to assume that just the signing of a Peace Accord will change the situation.

Perpetuating Hegemony in Remote Areas

During the assessment we visited Juraichhari, a possible project area, which is one of the remotest *upazilas* of Rangamati. It is located furthest east of all, at the border to India. There is no road communication and reaching the *upazila* is only possible by boat. Its headquarters is about three hours from Rangamati town; the *upazila* is comparatively sparsely populated and the inhabitants are almost exclusively Chakma, with some Pankhua living close to the headquarters on the ridge of a hill¹¹⁶. Some Bengali families¹¹⁷ have lived permanently in the headquarters since Pakistani rule and work as shopkeepers or do some kind of business. They belong to the so-called “indigenous Bengalis”, those who are accepted to a certain extent and demarcated from the “settlers”. The administrative staff, especially in the higher positions, comes from outside, mainly from the plain land. They stay only for a certain period of time. They are in huge cemented buildings, separated from the local population, who live mainly in bamboo houses. I talked to the veterinarian from the *Upazila* Livestock Department. He comes from Tangail¹¹⁸ where his family stays. He is responsible for Juraichhari and Barkal¹¹⁹, since the post in Juraichhari is vacant. He splits his time per month into 15 days of working in the CHT and the other 15 days he stays in Tangail with his family. The 15 days in the CHT are split into a week for Barkal, and one or less for Juraichhari. He justified this by claiming that the others went home all the time as well. He has neither friends in Juraichhari nor does he speak the local languages Chakma or Chittagonian. The fact that the Bengali government officials are not integrated and have almost no contact with the local population was reported by the majority of people interviewed. The Bengali officials have been described as “outsiders” by local people. Although, as interviewees expressed, the locals would have the potential to fill vacant posts, only a few Chakma are in higher positions. The majority of Chakmas working in governmental departments occupy unqualified posts. It has been argued by officials that the indigenous population has not enough qualified members to fill vacant

¹¹⁶ The census of 1991 gives different numbers than the estimations of local people: according to these there are 531 Bengali people living in the *upazila*, 256 Tanchangya, 256 Pankhua and 10586 Chakma.

¹¹⁷ The number of these varied in local informants’ information: Of approximately 300 to 400 families in the headquarters about 20 are Bengalis.

¹¹⁸ Tangail is a district to the north of Dhaka.

¹¹⁹ Barkal is another remote *upazila*, northern from Juraichhari.

posts¹²⁰. This can be questioned when considering the fact that the literacy-rate among the Chakma is much higher than the overall level in the country¹²¹.

It is a common phenomenon in the CHT that in governmental departments mainly plain land Bengalis are working. The observed fact that many posts are vacant (Revuelta 2000a) relates to this deployment strategy. The CHT are claimed to be hardship-posts, due to limits in mobility, danger of malaria and former insurgency. Reaching villages like Juraichhari is difficult due to the lack of infrastructure. Especially for those who have never been in a hilly area, a two day walk between villages is hard. The question therefore arises, why qualified Hill People are not taken for the posts. Many Bangladeshis are, like the people in other South Asian states, dependent on the governmental employment sector. Especially the middle classes are attracted by this sector in countries with low economic growth (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 1999: 15). This competitive situation means that those, who are “stronger” get the jobs, or those who have better relationships to those in higher positions. The relationships are thus often ethnically determined (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 1999: 15). A strong majority-minority-inequality, as is the case in Bangladesh, marginalises minorities, especially when they are culturally so different from the majority as the Hill People. A Chakma who is a retired Professor of Veterinary Medicine at a well known University once told me that if he were not a “tribal” he would have had many more chances to get an even higher position. Besides personal networks, the way people are categorised and hierarchised within society plays an important role. The Hill People in the CHT, commonly known as “tribals”, are seen as “backward” and “underdeveloped”. This is a phenomenon not only specific to Bangladesh. Nationalist measures always tend to marginalise the culture of minorities and sometimes present them as backward and underdeveloped (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 1999: 23). A consequence is neglecting them in education and governmental institutions. The argument thus focuses on the contradiction between the perception of indigenous people’s potential and the actual state of education. Although Hill Peoples’ qualifications might, as in the case of the literacy rate, be higher, they are still perceived as an underdeveloped minority and have therefore unequal access to resources, e. g. governmental jobs.

¹²⁰ During the assessment it turned out that especially in the health sector there are a lot of vacant posts in each staff category, for example has Rangamati a vacancy rate of 68% for physicians, in Bandarban it is 69% (Revuelta 2000a: 17/21).

¹²¹ Rashiduzzaman argues that the literacy rate among the Chakma is estimated to be 70% (Rashiduzzaman 1998: 660), while the national average according to the 1991 census is 32.4% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 1999: 351). For the state of education in the CHT see also: The Independent (Editorial 09.07.1999); CHT Commission (1991: 114) and Gerharz (2000).

Centralist Administration Against Minorities

The unequal access to resources and jobs can thus be explained in terms of Bangladesh's administrative structure in general, as has been done by Huq (2000). Although the country's administration is divided into tiers, and the executive agencies have corresponding endowments at each level, down to the *upazila*, all policy decisions and personnel decisions are taken at the central Ministry level. Like other post-colonial countries, Bangladesh has in general a highly centralised and bureaucratic administrative system. The central institutions (e.g. the Ministry level) have the decision-making power; the executive agencies are therefore controlled and, although autonomous, "largely deprived of the functional autonomy they are supposed to enjoy" (Huq 2000: 72). Additionally important administrative posts are usually held by top bureaucrats belonging to Bangladesh's upper class, since bureaucracy in Bangladesh in general can be characterised as "highly competitive, costly and prequalified by acquisition of higher or highest education" (Huq 2000: 72). Thus as Huq indicates, the predominant aim of the Bangladeshi bureaucratic institutions in the CHT is to enrich "dominant social forces in Bangladesh and they invariably belong to the dominant ethnic group in the country" (Huq 2000: 135).

The administration of the CHT is an integrative part of the central state authority, which reflects the relationship between the local Hill People and the state. Applying Wimmer's instrumentalist approach, administration and bureaucracy play an eminent role within ethnic conflicts in post-colonial states. As Wimmer points out, bureaucracy is the "main actor in the process of state-building" (Wimmer 1997: 635). Central administration and nationalism or hegemony are tightly interwoven, especially in the Bangladeshi context. Bangladesh is not just a post-colonial state but the first two leaders Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and General Ziaur Rahman developed a policy explicitly based on nationalism. This can also be traced back to former experiences during Pakistani rule¹²². Jahangir points out that: "In the name of national consensus (one kind of use of nationalism) the state apparatus is extended to facilitate a wide range of supportive and directive activities. This is a mechanism to reproduce the system of political domination and to implement the hegemonic project ... Both Sheikh Mujib and Ziaur Rahman expanded the state apparatus and enlarged the area of state intervention in order to relate the role of other forces (bureaucrats, police, military) involved in the organisation of hegemony and to counterpose resistance and build an exceptional regime" (Jahangir 1986: 100). This process of centralisation of state power was first of all not an anti-minority one. The attempts were to integrate the nation by destroying "class-resistance" in its various forms

(Jahangir 1986: 100). Especially under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the indigenous population of Bangladesh was in the beginning not seen as an ethnic minority but invited to participate in the nation-building project¹²³. Nevertheless ethnic differences came into play then, since nationalism always has a cultural content (Gerharz 2000). In the case of Bangladesh the language movement first, and later Re-Islamisation played a significant role. The Hill People, following different religions and speaking other languages, were not integrated into the culturally based nation, but merely excluded. This turned out to be problematic first in everyday-life, in things like for example the lingua franca, newspapers and bureaucracy and affected the overall chances of the Hill People's equal treatment. The gap between the indigenous population and the majority of Bengali people has been broadened. Then, congruent with the nation-building process, bureaucracy and state become automatically ethnicised, since the majority population runs the administrative apparatus. In the case of the CHT the administrative centralist system has been taken over from British colonial rule and maintained, even intensified during the insurgency period, due to the army's interference. During the process of nation-building in Bangladesh, which started with the language movement and following Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism, administration in the CHT was a necessary tool to establish and retain power over resources as much as territory, which is maybe the most important factor due to Bangladesh's population density¹²⁴. The retaining of power has been institutionalised throughout the years and remains until today. Even now, after the Peace Accord, the actual administrative structure is changing slowly, although a more decentralised institutional setting has been established. During insurgency it was not possible to exploit the resources (oil, tourism, wood) of the CHT. Due to the pressure on the state, the government has much interest in retaining administrative power over the CHT.

The process described is, according to Wimmer (1997; 1995) the first precondition for the escalation of violent conflict. Indeed, the administrative structure in Bangladesh and the CHT in particular has been proved to harbour much conflict potential, since the developments after the Kaptai Dam Project are seen as one main cause for the outbreak of violence, while Zia's settlement policy aggravated the conflict. In the following I will supplement the outline of the administrative structure with a description of the political dynamics I was able to observe

¹²² See Chapter 4.

¹²³ In a famous speech on his first and last visit at Rangamati Sheikh Mujib stated: "From this day onward the tribals are being promoted into Bengalis" (Mohsin 1996: 74). This statement has been largely interpreted as an offence against the Hill People's right to live their own cultural and linguistic identity. During my field visit an old Chakma deliberately declared that he thinks Mujib had been wrongly interpreted. He stated that Sheikh Mujib had eventually meant that the Hill People are invited to participate in the national community instead of becoming oppressed.

¹²⁴ See Chapter 4.

during my field visit. Here the institutions which are more politically concerned come into play.

6.2 Struggling for Political Power – Ethnically Determined Politics

It has been previously stated that the newly created institutions have administrative and political tasks. In this chapter the main focus will rest upon the Regional Council and the Hill District Council, the Ministry of CHT Affairs and the relationship between them. In general three areas of analysis can be distinguished. First I will focus on the structures and dynamics between the institutions on different levels. The Ministry of CHT Affairs represents the government of Bangladesh and is therefore located at the national level and the Regional Council on the CHT level. The main aspect of this analysis is the problem of capacity of the Regional Council and the HDCs, which has often been claimed not to be appropriate to the demands of the Peace Accord. This is relevant for development cooperation, because bilateral cooperation needs to rely on the governmental institutions¹²⁵. The relationship will be analysed by applying an instrumentalist approach to explain power relations in ethnicised societies. An important background to explaining the relationships between the various actors is formed by party politics, since the institutional problems are highly interconnected with contradictory party interests. Here different conflict lines can be distinguished. First, there is the Awami League, which is the national party in power and the JSS as the local party representing the indigenous population. This relationship reflects the problematic majority-minority-relationship within the state. The second conflict takes place between the JSS and its followers and the so-called “anti-peace activists” within the indigenous community. These contradictions would seem to back up the argument that politics are not necessarily ethnically determined; political parties and the interests of their followers as a category can criss-cross the crucial category ethnic identity. The question which is relevant for development practice is, whether these dynamics contribute to, or rather harm the peace-process in the CHT. Further, my empirical data have shown that a crucial problem of understanding during the negotiations between the GoB and the JSS can be culturally explained. Negotiations have much to do with trust. Different ethnic groups have different cultures (Gerharz 2000), the culture of negotiating therefore can lead to misunderstandings, since different codes might be used.

¹²⁵ In this chapter I will not discuss the questions related directly to the implementation of development projects, but will concentrate on the analysis. This forms a necessary basis for the discussion of the possibilities development cooperation has. The practical questions will be discussed in Chapter 7.

According to my data the main expectation of the local people towards their political leaders is that their interests are represented and fought out against the government's interests. This is seen as a necessary prerequisite for peace. The underlying idea of the creation of a regional body like the Regional Council is not specific to Bangladesh, but has its place within crisis-prevention-theory. The approach commonly known as "power-sharing practice" is based on the assumption that "appropriate political engineering can help construct a democratic political system capable of withstanding the centrifugal tendencies that tear deeply divided societies apart" (Sisk 1998: 77). The underlying idea is to establish a consociational democracy, a model which ensures cooperation at the elite level, although the mass level is segmented (Lijphart 1975 cited in: Andeweg et al. 1993: 34). Power-sharing can only function under certain circumstances. In the following I attempt to explore whether these circumstances have been created so that this approach can be successfully implemented in the CHT. This is, in the last consequence, the prerequisite for peace and consequently for the success of development intervention.

During my field visits I had the opportunity to meet the Chairman of the Regional Council, Shantu Larma, several times. The first meeting was a private one in August 1999 initiated by a Chakma friend who had free access to him and introduced me in order to talk to him in a private atmosphere. The second meeting took place at the end of May 2000 with the official GTZ delegation, with some RC and JSS members present. Other formal meetings followed. Although I met the Chairman in different situations, Each time Shantu Larma made very clear that the implementation of the Peace Accord is not satisfactory. The main problems according to the interviews are the withdrawal of the temporary army camps, the settlement of land disputes, including ensuring rights for the hill people and the recruitment of locals into the police force, which is still dominated by the Bangladeshi army forces. Some former fighters have already been recruited, but as interviewees explained, are employed outside the hills¹²⁶. During the second meeting he focussed additionally on two critical points: first, the implementation of the Peace Accord is being hampered by administrative problems, so the HDC and RC do not yet function properly. Shantu and some members of the RC expressed the belief that the government is not willing to transfer the necessary power to the institutions concerned. Second, it was emphasised that the settler issue needs to be solved. According to him, Sheikh Hasina has verbally agreed to rehabilitate the settlers outside the CHT, but the "government is not sincere about taking them back". In general Shantu gave me to understand

¹²⁶ This is a critical point, because the indigenous people's interest is to have "their own people" within the police forces due to human rights violations perpetrated by the forces during the insurgency.

that it is a fact that the situation of the Hill Tracts has not really changed with the signing of the Peace Accord.

Three problematic areas related to the implementation of the Peace Accord can be analysed with reference to the interviews with the Chairman of the Regional Council. The success of the power-sharing approach, which is crucial for development action, depends on these three. In the first place it is clear that there is a difficult relationship between the government and the newly established institution, which has been predominantly created in order to provide the former anti-state-movement with a political instrument. It becomes obvious that the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is trying to maintain its power over the territory and attempts to reject efforts at establishing a “quasi-autonomous” administration. Second there are crucial dynamics between the different parties concerned, embedded in the complex structure of national and local politics and dependent on the centralist nature of the state as much as local power relations. These are predominantly determined by personal relationships as much as personal interests in gaining power. The third aspect relates to the elementary role misunderstandings play between the opposing parties; these can be explained historically but also culturally. .

Capacity and Responsibilities in a Quasi-Autonomous Region within the Centralist State

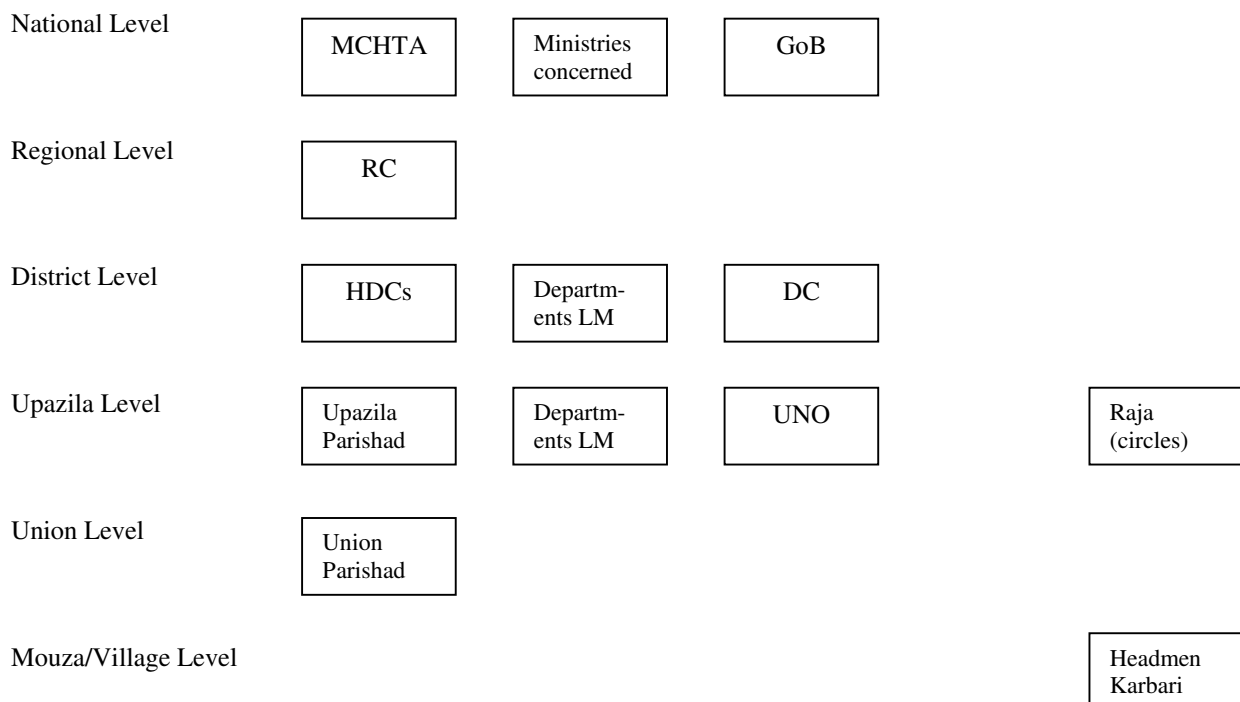
The interview with the Chairman reveals that the Regional Council and the Hill District Council¹²⁷ have problems with establishing their role within the administrative and political setting. How important this is, is stressed by Roy: “In any such exercise, the role of the RC, and to a lesser extent, the role of the HDCs, will be extremely crucial. But if this is done without proper and extensive consultations, and before the major dysfunctional problems are identified and studied, this could well lead to the creation of an inflexible system that concentrates authority in a faceless bureaucracy, whether at the local, district, regional or ministry level” (Roy 2000b: 53).

Although the indigenous movement represented by the JSS has reached the goal of more self-governing competence, it still has to struggle for the power the RC should have according to the expectations of the public that supports it and the premises of the Peace Accord. But the government has obviously no interest in transferring power to the institutions, which have a different (opposing) political conception. Without this transfer of the necessary competencies,

the Regional Council cannot function properly. The analysis will show that the inability of the regional institutions to gain certain power over the area is related to strategic considerations on the part of the government, especially concerning the exercise of power over the territory and resources.

The RC's struggle for power has much to do with donor activities: The Regional Council has an interest in requesting donor agencies activities, which could strengthen the RC's function, provided they are willing to cooperate with the RC. During the first meeting in 1999 Shantu Larma requested me, as a German, to establish contacts to the German embassy and GTZ in order to initiate support for the CHT. The governmental institutions on the other hand have a well established relationship to donor agencies, since there is a long tradition of development cooperation in Bangladesh, carried out by various donor agencies. The struggle for donors' goodwill and sympathy therefore means the struggle for power and competence on the local level. This has become obvious to the representatives of donor agencies as well, as discussions with them reveal. Almost all representatives of the donor agencies addressed the problem of the capacity the RC and HDCs have. It was commonly stated that the main problem in the CHT is confusion concerning responsibilities of the various institutions.

The administrative institutions in the CHT



¹²⁷ The relationship between the RC and the HDC as well as the one between the HDC and the GoB will be examined later on in this chapter. This issue reflects the meaning of personal relationships as well as dynamics which arise when party interests come into play.

As already described, the RC on the regional level responsible for the whole CHT is supposed to coordinate and supervise the activities of the HDCs on the district level, as the main implementing actors. The terms “coordination” and “supervision” are indeed unspecified. The Dutch representative for example emphasised that the Netherlands will not start to think about projects in the CHT until institutional problems are solved. The representative of the European Commission mentioned a certain sum for projects in the CHT, which remains in the pipeline, until the functions of the respective bodies are clarified and capacities as well as structures of the institutional setting are sufficiently developed. He argued that the HDCs are not workable, as the RC does not have enough capacity (in terms of personnel and infrastructure) and the function of the Ministry of CHT Affairs is not specified. Hence cooperation among the bodies concerned is fragmented. The DANIDA employee responsible claimed as well that the main problem occurring when planning a project in the CHT is establishing the clear responsibility of institutions for certain functions. The MCHTA was described as “inefficient”. On the other hand it should be noted that the Ministry itself as well as ERD¹²⁸ pointed out that the MCHTA is the main body responsible when it comes to donor activities. In other donor meetings I was able to attend, the issue has been one of those most discussed.

A problematic aspect is that the Peace Accord does not exemplify the functions of the RC extensively, and leaves much space for interpretation. The CHT Council Acts are not constitutionally recognised. The RC has neither administrative nor legislative powers (CHT Commission 2000: 26). Thus it is questionable whether its functions “coordination” and “supervision” can be realised in the ideal way, ensuring some kind of self-administration. Mohsin (1998) for example has analysed the post-Peace-Accord situation in the Hills in view of the original claims of the JSS and the outcome of the Accord. He argues that political interests dominate the struggle for power in the hills: “It is evident that the RC is a symbolic institution. Its power and functions are of a coordinating and supervisory nature” (Mohsin 1998: 81). The actors, having different interests, can interpret the functions of the RC according to their own agendas. The fraction which attempts to maintain its power, the Government, argues that the RC is a symbolic institution, and that the main responsibilities for donor cooperation remains with the Government (MCHTA and ERD). The JSS on the other hand argues that the RC has to coordinate the activities, and therefore it is the institution with the major responsibility for donor activities.

¹²⁸ ERD is the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance, responsible for the donor relationships.

In order to avoid the struggle over responsibilities for development cooperation in the CHT, the government's policy refers to encouraging the donor agencies to apply nation-wide programmes. Consequently, as some donor agencies claimed, is the Government which is not willing to support donor activities which target the CHT. This is obviously contradictory to the CHT representatives' interests: Some members of the Regional Council, although having less experience in development cooperation, are trying their best in establishing contacts with donor agencies and attracting them to work in the Hills. It has often been claimed that the government is bypassing the RC with its funds by allocating them directly to the HDCs. Additionally Roy points out that the HDCs again are bypassed by allocating funds directly to the line ministries concerned, although the responsibilities of the respective subjects have had to be transferred to the HDCs (Roy 2000b: 50). The question arising here refers predominantly to the contradiction that there seems to be: the RC is represented by highly ambitious members but constantly claims not to be able "to do anything" due to a lack of money and support from the government. Consequently, the government's position can be summarised as: at first sight highly ambitious about peace and development in the Hills, but on second blocking cooperation with the bodies concerned.

From the analysis it could be hypothesised that the government is attempting to establish a dysfunctional administrative setting in the CHT in order to maintain control. This is seen in line with the argumentation related to the role of centralised administration. The government is not willing to allocate power to the regional and district bodies, but wants instead to retain its power over the territory, although the institutional setting pretends to provide a democratic, quasi-autonomous administration and political representation for the people of the CHT. The idea of power-sharing thus exists on the paper, but not in reality. Decisive here is that the majority ruling the nationalist state has an interest in exercising power over the territory of the nation-state and resources, which are badly needed in Bangladesh as well. The bureaucracy has been ethnically determined throughout the years and is therefore an appropriate instrument for ensuring power. If the respective local and regional institutions performed their administrative functions as they interpret them, the central government would lose much of its control over the territory. But the integration of the CHT is still an important interest of the central government because of the resources in the CHT (land, forest and oil)¹²⁹. The same is true for the donor activities, which represent a considerable resource as well (Schlichte 2000:

¹²⁹ This argument, reflecting majority groups' interest in economic resources, is first of all one intrinsic in the overall situation of Bangladesh. This is characterised by a very dense population and relatively scarce resources except agriculture, and "the fact that majorities secure preferential treatment for themselves which – due to spatial distribution – often results in regional imbalances" (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 1999: 19).

48). The donor agencies which attempt to implement a project in the CHT therefore have to contend with the struggle for the resources they provide. The contradiction of interests is crucially determined by political parties' interests. It is therefore necessary to include them in the argumentation presented.

Political Parties as a Contradictory Feature Ordering Social Structure

The setting of political parties in the CHT is principally ethnically determined. In situations of ethnic conflict the party system always tends to be ethnicised (Wimmer 1997). The Awami League, which is a national party, can be characterised as the Bengali party, while the JSS is the party of the indigenous people. The Awami League is not just the Bengali party, but the one representing the state. Government's interests are therefore Awami League's interests. The institutions can be defined according to this distinction as well. On the one hand there is the Regional Council, which is JSS dominated and whose members are predominantly indigenous people. On the other there are the Awami League dominated institutions, to which the Ministry of CHT Affairs belongs. The Minister of CHT Affairs is an Awami League member and the only indigenous person in the Ministry; his staff are Bengalis. The HDCs are not that easy to categorise, because they still consist of the functionaries elected in 1989. Members who have resigned have been replaced by government appointed persons and can therefore not be regarded as elected representatives of the CHT people (CHT Commission 2000: 18). The HDC chairmen, except the one in Kagrachari who is a former *Shanti Bahini* member, are Awami Leaguers. What the relationship between the representatives of the opposing parties is like is revealed by the following example. During our assessment we foreigners once thought about inviting Shantu Larma as well the Rangamati HDC chairman for dinner. Our local contact persons did not agree, arguing that these two persons would never be willing to sit together at one table.

The Awami League, especially under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, is in the tradition of the "father of the nation" Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose predominant aim has been to create a kind of nationalism based on secularism, language and the cultural identity of "being Bengali" (Mohsin 1997; Mohsin 2000). In line with this tradition are certain interests the party follows. These interests are predominantly retaining centralist power, all the more so in view of the elections which are going to take place in the second half of 2001. The Awami League has defined "peace in the hills" as its main goal, while the opposition party tries to

win voters by applying arguments which propose economic as well as strategic interests¹³⁰. The JSS indeed still calls for the autonomy of the CHT, at least as far as it is possible within the framework of the Accord. The clash between the parties' interests was brought to a point by an interviewee who stated that Shantu still wants cultural autonomy and the government is not willing to accept this, since the autonomy of the CHT does not conform to their agenda of national integration.

In the literature it is argued that when a societal structure is determined by ethnic polarisation, this affects party politics (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al.1999: 16). In the case of the CHT this is obvious due to the historical context and, in the case of the JSS, it should be enough to argue that it was formed as a counter-movement in order to face the ethnicisation of the nation-state. But in the CHT it can also be observed that ethnicisation does not necessarily mean that the political parties are exclusively followed and represented by members of the respective ethnic group. This is not an unusual phenomenon, and has been observed in other countries as well. According to Pfaff-Czarnecka, "members of minority groups do have access to the national parties, but because of the mostly authoritative, clientelistic and centralist party structure, they are usually kept in low-ranking positions and are therefore unable to promote the well-being of members of their own population groups" (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al.1999: 16). Further she notes: "once appointed or elected, minority elites may pursue their individual goals or engage in politics not directed towards goals specifically related to their particular minority group(s)" (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 1999: 18).

The CHT case reveals that this is not necessarily the case. The Chairman of the HDC Rangamati is an Awami Leaguer and Marma. The three Members of Parliament (MP) are Awami Leaguers, since the JSS has not taken part in the national elections so far. The MP for Kagrachari, Kalparajan Chakma, is the present Minister of CHT Affairs. The MP for Bandarban has been selected for Chairmanship of the CHTDB and the Rangamati MP is in charge of the Task Force for the Rehabilitation of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. These people are in high positions and have much power within the CHT. The argumentation here is two-fold: First it can be argued that the government-party Awami League is interested in having some representatives of the minority group on the local level, providing the party with voters due to their personal networks for the national as well as the district elections. Having members from the opposing ethnic group promoting Awami League's publicity therefore can be seen as a strategy of weakening the indigenous party JSS on the regional

¹³⁰ Here the important issues are, among others, the previously mentioned debate about further settlement programmes in the Hills, as well as BNP's anti-India attitude.

level. The second argument is a theoretical one, which stresses the flexibility and constructive nature of ethnicity, since single persons or groups are able to break through the boundaries of ethnic groups. Identities and identification with a certain ethnic group can be minimised when personal interests for power come into play. The party provides personal power, although the party's politics might be contradictory to one's own group's interests. Nevertheless a person can retain his ethnic identity. The person is simply able to switch between the different frames of identification, from the party which is actually opposing one's own ethnic group, to the identification with the respective group¹³¹.

Two examples from the field make this contradiction clear. The Rangamati HDC Chairman still feels himself to be very much a Marma. During a meeting he was asked which *upazila* he would prefer for the GTZ's activities. Immediately he named Kauwkhali, Rajasthali and Kaptai¹³², the three *upazilas* of Rangamati, which have a relatively high Marma representation. The crucial point here is that this example reflects the constructive nature of ethnic identities. Ethnic communities, as Werbner puts it, "are not fixed: they overlap and vary in scale. They emerge situationally, in opposition to other moral and aesthetic communities. Seen over time, this multiplicity of contingent, shifting and emergent collective identities enact a composite, unreflective, 'natural', and changing hybridity" (Werbner 1997: 230). Consequently being indigenous does not necessarily mean being in favour of those who are in charge of representing the indigenous community. Here political interests can be much more influenced by personal aspirations to power than the feeling of belonging to a certain (oppressed) group, even when belonging to the opposing party. This might explain the difficult relationship between the HDC Rangamati and the RC, as much as between the RC and the MCHTA. The second example, the Minister of CHT Affairs, although Chakma, has stated several times that the Regional Council should not get executive power, since this should be the Ministries' task (The Independent 10.02.1999). Further he stressed that "The Regional Council will be a symbolic institution. It will look after and coordinate the activities of the three Hill District Councils. The task of the Ministry is to look after the activities of the Regional Council" (The Independent 01.01.1998). That these efforts are not in line with the JSS demands, is abundantly clear.

¹³¹ Especially in the CHT the setting is actually more complicated due to the complexity of the indigenous group itself. The indigenous people of the CHT, comprising different ethnic groups with different cultural heritages, have an inner dynamic, which cannot be analysed at this point. Nevertheless it is an interesting point that a Mru for example needs not necessarily to opt for the "common cause" of the indigenous people of the CHT. During the insurgency this happened, as described at other places within this thesis.

¹³² Although Kaptai has the best health facilities and Kauwkhali has been selected by World Vision for an integrated project and by CARE Bangladesh already.

It has been shown that the political parties are ethnicised, as is usually the case in conflict regions. But the boundaries are not clear cut. Personal interests in gaining power criss-cross ethnic boundaries. The picture thus is not just one of two opposing parties, but much more complex. Different interests are proposed by different groups, whereas actors and interests overlap and mingle. This is revealed when looking at the development of political forums among the Hill People.

Indigenous Parties Struggling for Autonomy

Since the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997 the agreement has been criticised and opposed by different fractions in Bangladesh. Crucial here is the critique uttered by members of the Hill People, which focuses not just on government policy, but on the JSS as well. During the field work many people stated that they are disappointed in their political leaders, who promised a better life in peace, but are accused of doing nothing¹³³. Shantu Larma was accused of not caring about his people any longer, since he has a nice residence and much nominal power. Other people attack the political content of the Peace Accord in general. The main actors here are the Hill Women's Federation (HWF), Pahari Chattro Parishad (PCP) and Pahari Gono Parishad (PGP), which belong to the political platform of the JSS. They are intellectually supported by activists, many of whom have an academic background. Already during the ceremony on 10th February 1998 in Kagrachari Stadium, where *Shanti Bahini* surrendered their arms, opposing activists demonstrated against the Peace Accord and attacked *Shanti Bahini* members (CHT Commission 2000: 30). At the end of December 1998 during a jointly organised conference of PCP, PGP and HWF, a new political party, United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) emerged. PCP, PGP and HWF split up, one faction supporting the JSS, the other pro-UPDF. The main demand of the movement is full autonomy, in the sense that they want to "ensure the existence of all nationalities in the CHT through the establishment of full autonomy, and to establish a democratic society free from oppression and exploitation. Equality of nations, equality of both sexes and non-communal and democratic ideals shall constitute the basis of all activities of the party; it shall show respect for the freedom, sovereignty and integrity of the country" (UPDF manifesto cited in CHT Commission 2000: 31). The elected convenor of UPDF, Proshit Khisa, has formerly been the president of the Hill Students Council PCP (CHT Commission 2000: 31). A member of the JSS, who knows him from their student days together, expressed disappointment at

¹³³ See Gerharz (2000).

Proshit's activism in an interview. The conflict between the parties must be seen in the context of the UPDF having been accused of attacking JSS members violently. A well known journalist at Rangamati gave me a list of incidents in which JSS members and supporters were attacked by Anti-Peace Accord Activists, lead by Proshit. Accord to the list, 10 people have been killed, 39 have been kidnapped, 20 wounded and 14 have been the victims of kidnap attempts since the Peace Accord.

The UPDF is, according to my information, intellectually based in Dhaka. During my field work it was extremely difficult to address the problem of anti-peace-activists in the Hills. My local informants claimed that the UPDF is a movement which is "making trouble" and criticises the JSS, but never the present government nor the opposition. Some people supposed that the armed wing of the movement would cooperate with the Bangladeshi army in the hills, in order to confront the JSS jointly. On the other hand there are reports of killings, arrests and abuses towards anti-peace-accord activists by the police as well as by JSS members (CHT Commission 2000). The political setting among the Hill People thus has been diversified due to the Peace Accord. New actors have entered the political stage, creating new boundaries within the formerly dense entity.

The relevance of this issue for development cooperation lies in its consequences for every-day life in the CHT, on which the successful implementation of a project depends¹³⁴. Especially during my visit in 1999 several clashes between the police and the anti-peace accord activists occurred; and later the PCP was usually blamed for it (Gerharz 2000: 53). The Daily Star of 26.06.1999 reported that at least 13 people were killed and about 100 kidnappings had happened since the signing of the Accord. Besides the political UPDF there are several anti-peace activists who are armed and attack Bengalis, but sometimes indigenous people as well. One movement mentioned by local people, which appears in the literature as well, is the *Jhumma* National Army (JNA) (Rashiduzzaman 1998: 661). Although these activities are actually disturbing the consolidation of peace in the area, most informants said that they do not think there is a serious threat of another insurgency. Especially the former *Shanti Bahini*, although segments are said to participate in further armed struggle (Rashiduzzaman 1998: 661), are largely involved in alternative activities¹³⁵.

¹³⁴ Different factors are important to consider here. It is not just the every-day life of the local people, but the security of the personnel that plays an important role here, as has been discussed during the assessment several times.

¹³⁵ in Kagrachari there are many local NGOs and associations founded by former insurgents, see Chapter 6.4. Others are involved in business or the JSS as political functionaries.

Resistance against the JSS is a phenomenon which does not concentrate on differences between the various ethnic groups¹³⁶. It is thus not ethnically determined. The main issue here is merely resistance against the hegemonic state, but expresses itself in action against those from the same community who cooperate with the government. Thus, what is fought for are still the original demands of the JSS. The “conflict within” can be explained with reference to two aspects. The first one relates to differences between two generations. The supporters of the movement nowadays are mainly younger, educated people, students in particular. The platform of the JSS by contrast are mainly elder people “lacking the strength to continue armed struggle”, since they belong to the first generation of fighters. The younger politicians, who have largely not been involved in armed struggle, do not accept the agreement, since it does not fulfil many of the original demands (CHT Commission 2000: 37). The second explanation relates to my empirical finding that many young people are going to Dhaka to attend university. The anti-peace movement can be assumed to have evolved in the Hill People scene in Dhaka, where PCP and HWF are actively represented and academically supported. Actually I met more Bengali people in Dhaka than Hill People in the CHT who support the UPDF. Nevertheless the conflict affects the entire CHT society, since the political opposition as well as the armed groups are active in the hills as well.

Due to the segregation of political interests among the Hill People, the community itself is divided in many ways. Nevertheless there is still loyalty among the respective groups, although differing political interests may disunite them. Still the cleavages are the deepest between the Bengali settlers and the Hill People. But there are many shades of grey in between. The result of this process is, finally, that the government could be said to have carried out the policy of “divide and rule” successfully¹³⁷. Nevertheless, although the inner cohesion among the Hill People has dissolved to an extent, the criss-crossed complex picture of cleavages and conflict actually contributes to stabilisation of peace in the area. I would follow Wimmer (1994), who argues that the chance for violent outbreak decreases when political ethnicisation becomes less polarised but more segregated. The formation of identities has ever been complex in the CHT due to the intricate setting of different ethnic groups, but with political segregation this has become even more complicated. Nevertheless there are, especially for donor agencies, two parties to address: one is the Regional Council

¹³⁶ Formerly it has often been asserted that the JSS is a pro-Chakma movement, involving about 80 or 90% Chakmas, while the other ethnic groups are less or not represented. The Mru for example had established a Murong Force, backed by the army, in order to oppose the *Shanti Bahini*. For further information on that issue see Shelley (1992), Gerharz (2000), Ahmed (1992), Shelley (2000), Zaman (1982) and CHT Commission (1991).

and the JSS, the other is the MCHTA and the Awami League. Considering this important point one should avoid believing that these are exclusively determined by opposing ethnic groups, since personal attempts to gain power, disappointed trust and expectations play an important role as well. During the research the overall situation could be described as awaiting the elections going to take place in 2001. The present HDC Chairmen are appointed by the government, the HDC are not seen as a democratic representative body of the people (CHT Commission 2000: 18). The national elections can change the situation in the CHT¹³⁸. It will depend to a certain extent on whether peace has a chance in the hills or not. The analysis of the present dynamics within the Hill People's community shows that the political interests are not necessarily determined by ethnic demarcation lines: "The CHT today are divided in every sense of the word" (Mohsin 1998: 107).

Politics and the Culture of Negotiating

Prior to our meeting with Shantu Larma in 2000 the RC chairman had been invited to meet the Prime Minister. Sheikh Hasina verbally agreed that the settlers who came to the Hills during the settlement programmes in the late 1970s, should be rehabilitated outside the CHT on government owned land. But Shantu, disappointed about the fact that nothing had happened yet, blamed the government for being "not sincere about taking them back". Verbally agreements thus seem to have a different content in the different cultural contexts. While Shantu took the agreement for granted, it might be possible that Sheikh Hasina did not, since it had been only a verbal agreement. With reference to my data I interpret this contradiction as a culturally explainable difference, related to a complex setting of habits and principles existing among the communities¹³⁹. The Chakma¹⁴⁰ are, as Hutchinson already wrote at the beginning of the 19th century, "stolid, argumentative and stubborn, but on the whole truthful" (Hutchinson 1978: 21). This has been stated by my interviewees several times as well. Many Chakmas emphasised that the Chakma are proud, but reliable. In contrast, Chakmas sometimes claimed that "the Bengalis never tell the truth", and "they never do what

¹³⁷ Mohsin has stated that the Government followed the colonial policy of divide and rule by hampering the implementation of the Peace Accord.

¹³⁸ The present Awami League government might be replaced by the opposition party BNP, which has a different CHT policy. This could have far-reaching consequences.

¹³⁹ The argument here is not an essentialist one. The focus lies on people's self-ascriptions, rather than those from others. Ethnic features and characteristics are principally seen as constructed, not as primordial.

¹⁴⁰ I will concentrate on the Chakmas, since the people in question were Chakmas. I am not able to formulate any hypotheses about the other groups with regard to this issue, because it was discussed in the field. Nevertheless the other groups might have their stereotypes concerning the Bengali majority, just as each ethnic group has own stereotypes of others.

they have promised”. That the Bengalis are not trustworthy must have been experienced several times before the Peace Accord, otherwise such a stereotype would not exist. This can, in the first place, be culturally construed, and might in this case be related to the well known Muslim “inshallah”, which means “if Allah wishes”. “Inshallah” can, as I was explained, be used for relativising statements or promises. Both groups thus have a different idea of how to “behave”, of when one has to tell the truth and when not. These sets and rules of “do’s and don’ts” thus differs between the groups; both have a culturally specific set of values (Barth 1969). Ethnically specific regulations of every-day-life which are used to construct boundaries between the groups are for example the payment of bribes and corruption. Among the Hill People it is an often stated opinion that the Bengalis are corrupt and that they will always try to cheat the Hill People. Especially the payment of bribes has often been complained of among the indigenous population and used as an explanation for unequal access to resources. A Chakma once told me: “the Bengalis have another mentality. They have no problem with paying bribes. I don’t know how to pay bribes, so I cannot do it. But the system is like that, it is the government”. The cultural difference of bribing or not, cheating or not and telling the truth or not thus is seen as an elementary feature ordering social life on the one hand, and reflecting the relationship between a governing majority and a oppressed minority on the other. The minority explains its minor chances for success within the apparatus in terms of different cultural habits which they have not adopted and are not willing to adopt, because these habits are morally and ethically not justifiable for them. Nevertheless the minority has no choice: “the system is like that”. Due to the inferior position the minority is not able to change these “bad habits” which determine finally the whole set of orientations regulating social as well as political life. The minority is thus exposed to the “bad influence” of the majority and has to protect itself in order not to be infected. Ethnic boundaries are thus drawn and maintained by stereotypes.

This chapter attempted to lay open the dynamics in national and local politics which it is necessary to consider when aiming to understand the relationship between the ruling majority and the minority. The essential issue is thus the question of the responsibility of the various institutions, the MCHTA, RC and HDC, for donor activities. The discussion of this unsolved question can be seen as a major feature of conflict between the majority and minority and reflects the struggle for power which has in reality not been settled with the Peace Accord. The formerly described power-sharing approach thus cannot be seen as successfully implemented. Intervening under certain premises is difficult here. A project planner has to balance the forces from the government negotiations and peace-building policy in general, as

well as ethic and moral questions which might instinctively let him or her opt for the oppressed minority. It is important to see the processes related to ethnicity from both sides as much as it is essential to gain a holistic picture prior to any judgement. Too many aspects are involved and can either affect the perspective in a positive or negative way.

The relations between the different actors as well as groups play an important role in the economic structure as well. Again, this is important for donor activities, since there is an economic imbalance between the groups, related to power over resources and institutions.

6.3 Economy in the Hills – Subsistence Production and Export Orientation

The economy of the CHT is traditionally based on agriculture. Land-related issues and transformative modes of agriculture (horticulture, production of wood) have therefore been the main point of reference for many people analysing the economy of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bertocci 1989; Chauduri 1991; Shelley 1992; Roy 1995; Bertocci 1996; Mohsin 1997; Gain 2000; Dutta et al. 1998; Siddique 1997; Shelley 2000). Land and agriculture are the main causes for conflict in the region, since the competition for land as a resource has determined the relationship between the majority and the minority, namely the state and the indigenous peoples. Agriculture, as will be analysed in the following, represents the most important potential for economic development in the CHT. At the same time there is a considerable market economy at the local level as well as the trade in CHT products, which is integrated into the national economy. Additionally, development projects over the last four decades have established a notable industrial sector in the Hills, which is, although less developed, not to be neglected. The integration of these three aspects - land, market and industrialisation - into the analysis is necessary to examine ethnically segregated features of economy in the hills. Economy is a broad field of analysis, and I will therefore concentrate on a few examples, in order to identify those features which I consider to be most important for this thesis. Some aspects hence need to be ignored. Agriculture, as a major feature of economic structure, will be the starting point for analysis in this chapter. Then I will move on towards market structure in order to analyse the ethnically determined forces derived from the segregation of economy, which is also highlighted by governmental industrialisation efforts.

Traditional Land Use and its Transformation

The traditional mode of cultivation in the CHT has been so-called *jhum* cultivation¹⁴¹. But through various changes, the field visits gave a relatively heterogeneous picture as regards agriculture and land use in the CHT. In the following I will show some forms of governmentally initiated transformations of land use, which had economic imbalances as a consequence. The land issue has to be seen in the historical context. The economy in the hills is an important subject in exploring the construction of nationalism, since there is a continuous struggle for resources. The struggle for land has been one of the major objectives during insurgency, and land has been the main resource the government has aimed to bring under its control. The settlement programmes of the late 1970s have aggravated the conflict over this scarce resource. Since then various modes of cultivation and land use, such as horticulture, have been propagated by the government, which have been more or less successful. The people in the CHT have in many cases adopted the belief that these measures would provide them with a better future, since they have been taught that they would overcome their “backwardness”. Consequently I will first of all analyse the local adoption of horticulture projects. These projects reveal the nature of government policy measures, which can be perceived as an attempt to oppress the indigenous people. Although this can be seen as intrinsic in the governmentally initiated developmental projects, the example of fringe land¹⁴² cultivation will make this aspect clear. Scarcity of land has led to other forms of earning some income in the agrarian sector, such as livestock¹⁴³. An example of the use of livestock will show the imbalances of economic chances between the majority and minority population.

In Bandukbhanga, a union under Rangamati Sadar *Upazila* which is comprised predominantly of little islands in the Kaptai lake, cultivation is difficult due to scarcity of fertile land. The soil is not suitable for rice, so people generate some income by fruit gardening, fishing and fire wood collecting. It was stated by interviewees that *jhum* on a small scale is exclusively practised in the interior. *Jhum* contributes almost exclusively to subsistence production, and people are dependent on the market in Rangamati, which is about one hour away by boat. Almost everything needs to be bought there. The people believe that productive land use can be ensured by horticulture development. The belief was expressed by local people that pineapples and bananas would provide them with an appropriate income. Homestead gardening and other forms of subsistence production has, like *jhum*, a low status.

¹⁴¹ Shifting or slash-and burn cultivation

¹⁴² Fringe land are the fields around the lake, which are flooded when the water level rises. This land is usually fertile, but the success of cultivating it depends on when the water level falls and rises.

¹⁴³ The people of the CHT have always had livestock, in particular pigs, chicken, goats and cattle.

This belief in market oriented rather than subsistence production, which can be found in many areas of the CHT, can be traced back to government policy concerning *jhum* cultivation. Already during the British Period authorities tried to abolish *jhum* cultivation, which was claimed to be harmful for the environment, the nomadic way of life was seen as “uncivilised”¹⁴⁴ (van Schendel 1995: 112). The authorities promoted plough cultivation in the valleys, which had been adopted by many people. When land became scarce due to the construction of the Kaptai dam, modes of cultivation developed were horticulture and fruit gardening. Before these government initiatives changed the mode of cultivation, *jhum* was the most suitable one, since it had been a subsistence based production structure. *Jhum* was employed by families or communities and even created surplus (Chakma 1998). Due to land scarcity this model is as such not applicable today. But the alternatives, which there are attempts to develop, are difficult to practise as well. In many areas even fruit gardening is not practicable because the slopes of the hills are too steep, as the GTZ horticulture consultant informed me. Moreover, the local specialists tend to promote the usage of fertiliser, although many people do not know how to use it in the right way. At the same time recent studies have revealed that horticultural production, although successful for the first years, decreased rapidly due to soil erosion (Roy 1995: 84; Chakma et al. 1995: 76).

The main objective of the government has been to encourage the Hill People to adopt alternative forms of cultivation by implementing various programmes. Especially the joutha khamar¹⁴⁵ scheme has major significance here. The major governmental development initiative of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board tried to settle the *jhumia* in so-called joutha khamars in order to provide them with land cultivable with tree crops and other products which could be sold in the market¹⁴⁶. But the programme turned out not to be successful. An important reason is that the rehabilitated people did not accept the new way of life in congested villages. An informant told me once: “the tribals like the open space. Living in cemented houses is not suitable for them”. During the insurgency period the joutha khamars were under the control of the military, and thus also belong to the so-called counter-insurgency activities. The settlements are described in the literature as “directly related to the

¹⁴⁴ At these times the Chakma were concentrated in the area between Chittagong and Rangamati, which is topographically less hilly and easier to cultivate by plough than the CHT, with its often extremely steep slopes. Under British rule *jhum* cultivation was completely abolished in the Chittagong district and exclusively allowed in the CHT area. Consequently the indigenous people who, although the Chakma *rajas* had much plain land, practised shifting cultivation, were pushed towards the East into the Hill Tracts.

¹⁴⁵ Joutha khamars are also called “cluster-villages” or “collective farmings”. See chapter 4.

¹⁴⁶ Here lies an additional significance of this approach, since the integration of the CHT into the national market economy plays an important role in government policy as well. This aspect will be described in the next section of this chapter with reference to the transformation of land use described.

presence of *Shanti Bahini*” (CHT Commission 1991: 72). The CHT Commission states that many people were forcibly settled in the new villages, in order to bring them under control and cut them off from contact to the *Shanti Bahini*, who have been backed by the local population in many areas. Being rehabilitated in the cluster-villages thus meant for the hill people forcefully adopting a new way of life. The joutha khamars have been compared with concentration camps and the so-called strategic villages created by the American forces in Vietnam (Mey 1986: 206). Nevertheless, many people, especially in the most intensely insurgency action affected districts Rangamati and Kagrachari, have adopted the beliefs which have been imposed on them by the authorities. From discussions with local experts it emerged that many of them have taken over the conceptions proposed by the authorities and believe that horticulture is the most appropriate mode of cultivation in the Hills, although the attempts of the last twenty years have neither been fruitful nor sustainable.

The strategy followed by this policy thus is two-fold. First, the government tried to overcome the “tribal people’s backwardness” by transforming their traditional subsistence production model into modes of cultivation which integrate them into the market economy. An important effect of this, it was believed, would be to use the available land more effectively. Second, the government policy implied the belief that the development projects would function as counter-insurgency measures¹⁴⁷ (Mey 1991: 57). The common perception in Bangladesh that the CHT people are “backward” and “primitive” has been analysed by various authors (Mey 1991; Mey 1984; van Schendel 1995; Arens 1997; CHT Commission 1991; Mohsin 1997). The notion of the “backwardness” of the “tribal people” in Bangladesh is an all-encompassing one, which includes cultural differences, the way of life as well as the economic structure. *Jhum* cultivation, as a subsistence production model, is in principle not compatible with the emergence of market structures. *Jhum* is rather perceived as an “archaic” way of cultivation, described as “crude and primitive, wasteful and unscientific” (Mey 1984: 325). Regardless of whether these perceptions are true or not, they always imply the construction of boundaries between two different groups, or more specifically between the majority Bengalis and minority indigenous people. The majority group thus perceives itself as more advanced than the minorities. This essentialist perception of minorities, as it occurs in Bangladesh, may be captured theoretically with the notion of colonialism and colonial domination. The issue has been taken up by scholars dealing with the notion of “indigenous” in the sense that the relationship between the nation and the “indigenous” is a hierarchical one comparable with

¹⁴⁷ As already mentioned in a previous chapter, the military has officially stated that “Development policy in the Hill Tracts is counter-insurgency policy”.

the colonialising and the colonised¹⁴⁸ and is thus intimately linked with the concept of development (Guibernau 1999: 69-70). Within this hierarchical relationship the indigenous peoples are those who are confronted with development efforts of the majority. Developmental progress thus might justify the assimilation/annihilation of communities with “lower status” by force. Development progress in this context implies that the minorities productivity can be utilised in order to benefit the majority, i.e. the national economy. The construction of hierarchical relationships is thus intrinsic to the notions of nationalism and ethnicity underlying this thesis, because these processes appear in particular in situations where majorities attempt to nationalise the state. The process, in its further development, becomes a reciprocal one: “The contemporary processes of ethnicity formation are largely a reaction to nationalist measures marginalizing the culture of minorities and sometimes representing them as backward and underdeveloped” (Pfaff-Czarneck et al. 1999: 23). Societies which are perceived as “backward” by their dominating majorities have a tendency to adopt this view towards their own heritage, as the CHT context shows. But at the same time, and this relates to the second strategy implied in the government policy, do marginalised minorities develop and maintain counter-strategies to the cultural and economic domination. In order to oppose these strategies, the Bangladesh government applies economic assimilation/integration. The major aim then is the segregation of the minority itself: creating a gap between the mobilised fractions of minorities on the one hand, and the rural population on the other¹⁴⁹. To summarise, government initiatives to transform agriculture in the CHT need be seen in the context of the nation-state which is dominated by the majority group. Attempts to develop modes of cultivation which are more appropriate to the needs of the local people¹⁵⁰ have so far not effectively been made. The following example, which refers to another strategy of establishing domination over minorities within the state, underpins the argument of utilizing minorities for economic purposes in the name of the nation.

Juraichhari *Upazila* has much fringe land which is comparatively fertile. Nevertheless there has been no harvest for two years now. Previously an area where surplus was produced, the *upazila* has suffered from an extreme food shortage for the last two years. The officially

¹⁴⁸ Indigenous communities are, in line with this argument, also called the “Fourth World” (Guibernau 1999: 68).

¹⁴⁹ Again, I would like to refer to the case of the “Murong Bahini” that were created and supplied with weapons by the army in the 1980s (See Chapter 4). This action has had the same underlying strategy.

¹⁵⁰ *Raja* Devasish Roy has not just claimed to “modernise *jhum* technology to fight back the government propaganda of their backwardness” (Janakantha 13.05.1994 cited in Mohsin 1997: 119), but refers to alternative modes such as “Sloping Agricultural Land Technology” (SALT), which retains the actual system of *jhum*, but avoids soil erosion by placing contoured lines of hedgerows in the fields. This model seems so far to be successful, as experiments show (Roy 1995: 87). Nevertheless this method not received sufficient recognition yet.

stated reason is that the water level of the Kaptai lake has been kept high in order to produce more electricity, so the harvest was flooded before it could be brought in. The same happened at many other places around the lake. A Chakma who has lost the last two harvests (including the input capital) suspected that the water level had been kept high not just in order to produce more electricity, but because Rangunia *Upazila*, which is located in the West of the CHT and is inhabited by Bengalis, needed to be saved from the water, which would have come down the Karnaphuli river if not stopped by the dam and would have flooded the rice fields there. He said: “They have two or three rice harvests every year there in Rangunia. In order to save them they have flooded our land to deprive us of one harvest a year. This is government policy against the tribals still today”. The example shows that some people of the CHT are suspicious of the government’s policy and have a tendency to interpret any measures as affronts against them designed to deprive them of any profits. Again, this needs to be seen in the historical context. Needless to say that the construction of the Kaptai dam¹⁵¹ followed by the settlement programmes have made a major contribution to the problems the indigenous people of the CHT have to face today. But not just these structural measures failed to satisfy Hill People’s needs. The literature reports direct discriminatory measures initiated by the government. A prominent example given in the literature is that during the insurgency period the Hill People (not the Bengalis) had restrictions on buying more than two kilos of rice per week. Other products such as clothes, oil, salt, sugar and kerosene were restricted as well. Medicine could only be bought with a government permit (Chaudhuri 1991: 150; CHT Commission 1991: 55).

Government policy does not only attempt to transform the minority community in order to provide maximum benefit for the majority, but does not hesitate to deprive the minority of resources which are provided for the members of the majority, either. The deprivation happens in the name of the majority. Measures like this thus clearly indicate that the minority is not perceived as a part of the nation, but can be eradicated in its name. This process consequently becomes more apparent when the minority starts to challenge the majority’s homogenising efforts, as happened during the insurgency movement. Then the majority, in the name of the nation, demonstrates superiority by discriminating against the members of the minority directly.

Tankabati Union under Bandarban Sadar *Upazila*, which is almost entirely inhabited by Mru, has, as informants stated, little plain land. The people are almost completely dependent on

¹⁵¹ An economic uplift for the CHT area was expected from the Kaptai dam. But shortly afterwards people came to realise that not they, but the industrial centres in the plain would profit from the electricity supply, while many

jhum cultivation, cattle and pig raising. Others stated that there are large plain lands in the union. The land is inhabited by the small group of Bengalis who live separately from the indigenous population in the union. We visited a small village about one hour's walking distance from Tankabati headquarters, which is inhabited by five indigenous families which have been rehabilitated within a programme of the Forest Department. Since large portions of the area are reserved forests, the people have almost no possibility to cultivate any crops. The families live from a little homestead gardening, animal raising and day-labour. Small groups of Chakma and Tripura, who have been rehabilitated in the union as well, reportedly need to earn their little income by wood and bamboo cutting. The Chairman of the Union Parishad is a Mru, who is locally seen as the most powerful man in the area. He has large lands and many cattle compared to the other people. Local people stated that he was able to gain power only by cooperating with the Bengalis. He was called the "Bengali-Murong". Many Mru are dependent on raising cattle for the Bengali inhabitants of the union on a 50-50 basis, since the financial situation does not allow them to buy cattle themselves. The phenomenon that the already scarce plain land is inhabited and cultivated by Bengalis even in remote areas, can be observed all over the CHT. In many areas we visited, it was striking that, although the areas were almost exclusively inhabited by indigenous peoples, the houses in the fertile valleys the road crossed were those of Bengalis. These can easily be distinguished by the way of construction as well as the clothes which are hanging outside to dry.

This example shows another dimension of conflict between the majority and the minority. The first and second examples referred to the relationship between the indigenous people and the government; the people and the authorities. The Tankabati case in turn shows the relationship between the majority and the minority on the communal level. The significance here lies in the following: the Mru are the majority in Tankabati, while the Bengalis are the minority. Nevertheless the Bengalis have power over the economic resources, since they are the majority within the state. Thus, although the Mru are the majority in Tankabati, they are nonetheless the disadvantaged minority, since this must be seen in relation to the nation-state. This fact can be explained by two phenomena: the impact of the settlement programmes on the one hand, but on the other hand for cultural reasons. The previous shift to plough cultivation had been rejected by many members of the smaller indigenous groups with the argument that "plough scratched the mother earth" (Khan et al. 1970: 25). The Mru are one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups, since they are regarded as being culturally more distinct in comparison to the majority than the larger groups. The Mru are, for example,

areas in the CHT have no electricity until today.

reportedly the only indigenous group in the hills whose members embrace Animism. Their cultural heritage and distinctness has not just fascinated the members of the GTZ Appraisal Mission, but ethnographers as well (Brauns et al. 1986). Nowadays the Mru have undergone a certain amount of transformation: The belief in animism is being replaced more and more by Christianity. In Tankabati an informant estimated that about 20% of the Mru are Christians today. It was argued that the conversion is so attractive because it is a way to establish contacts to other groups for representation reasons and to overcome the isolated position within the Hill Peoples community. Also the clothing habits have changed among the Mru. The women, formerly exceptionally wearing a small piece of cloth covering the hips, have largely adopted the Marma dress, which covers breast and knees alike. According to local informants this happens because the girls have been subjected to sexual harassment by Bengali men.

The case of Tankabati reveals above all that the Hill People are dependent on the economic input provided by Bengali people who have come from the plains. *Jhum* cultivation is gaining more importance among the Mru than among the Chakma and Marma, since they traditionally live on the ridges of the hills where *jhum* is the main mode of cultivation and land is communal property. The transformation has taken longer in their case, since culturally related reservations prevented them from adopting new modes of cultivation on the one hand, and on the other they are living concentrated in remote areas without road communication, where the topography does not allow plough cultivation. In Tankabati a large portion of the union has been declared reserved forest, where *jhum* cultivation is only possible to a limited extent. The Mru therefore need to look for alternative sources of income nowadays. Raising cows for the Bengalis, who have the capital, provides them with income, and in turn benefits the majority Bengalis alike. The gap between the two groups is becoming broader. Searching for new sources of income thus means integrating into the majority's economy, since the traditional way of generating income (subsistence production) is not longer practicable. Alternatives are thus to be found within the given structures. Barth describes this process as follows: "Where two or more ethnic groups are in contact ... they may provide important goods for each other, i.e. occupy reciprocal and therefore different niches but in close interdependence." (Barth 1998: 20). The political dimension of this process becomes obvious in the case of the Tankabati UP chairman. He does business with the Bengalis, and is successful not just economically, but politically. On the union level he is the most powerful man. This was only possible due to his relations with the dominant group and not, as informants stated, to his popularity among his people. Economic domination thus is closely interconnected with

political success within the hegemonic state, since the majority exercises power over resources. Smaller segments thus need to adopt the majority's economic structure in order to get some access to resources, although the majority has the control. The relationship between the ethnic groups is thus symbiotic, but at the same time hierarchical.

These examples show different patterns of hierarchical majority-minority relations in land-based economy. First, the transformation of land use has had enormous consequences for the Hill People's economy. Government initiated projects, like the promotion of horticulture, has had effects which contribute to the dynamic of inter-ethnic relationships. An outgrowth of hierarchical relationships between majorities and minorities within the state are direct oppressive measures, appearing in war situations, but contributing at other times too extensively to a sense of distrust among the Hill People towards the government. But hierarchical majority-minority relationships are not just a matter of "government against minorities"; they can be found on the local levels as well. The crucial role is played by the segregation of economic niches within the state. Closely related to this analysis is the question of how the impact of government policy described in this chapter affects the market.

Local Markets and the Contribution to National Economy

Marketing in the CHT and trade relations have a long tradition. Already in pre-colonial times the Bengalis from the plains and the indigenous people from the villages met at central places in order to exchange their goods (van Schendel 1992b: 85). Nowadays two dimensions of market economy can be distinguished in the CHT. The first dimension relates to the transformation of land use in the CHT in order to profit the national economy. The second dimension is constituted by the local market structures, which are determined by the relationships between non-indigenous business people from the plains, some of whom are residents of the CHT, and the indigenous consumers.

The government propagated transformation of land use has, as has been shown in the previous section, the adoption of horticulture as a consequence. People regard the production of crops which can be sold in the market as a possible source of income. The production of fruits like pineapples is in general an appropriate way to use the available land effectively, since *jhum* cultivation requires quantitatively more of that scarce resource. The CHT are famous for the good quality of their pineapples. Their production in the Hills has a long tradition, and the

Bawm in particular are regarded as specialists in pineapple cultivation¹⁵². The GTZ assessment took place during the pineapple season, and it was therefore easy to observe how the pineapples are grown, harvested and traded. In July the pineapples ripen and since they are a perishable fruit, they need to be traded very fast. The indigenous people come by boats from their villages to the centres, where trucks are waiting. The pineapples are loaded onto the trucks and brought to the plain land. Informants told me that the middlemen who buy the pineapples from the Hill People in order to sell them in Chittagong or Dhaka are usually Bengalis from the plains. But people also complained about the rigid practices of these middlemen: one interviewee described that the middlemen come to the market places where the indigenous people offer their pineapples and just wait until the prices fall. The farmers have no possibility to store their products at the market places and they cannot take them home again, since many of them come from remote villages. Hiring a transport boat is expensive. So at the end of the market day they have to sell their pineapples at very low prices, and thus sometimes do not make much profit with their goods. The consequence is that the prices fall in general, and those who try to sell the pineapples in the local market have to offer them for the lowest prices as well. On some days the pineapples cost about 1 or 2 *Taka*, while the prices in Dhaka are about 10 times higher. This problem does not just affect pineapples, but is a general result of market and commerce in the CHT (Chaudhuri 1991: 143). It can be expected that projects supporting the cultivation of cash crops and comparable goods will aggravate the situation, since trade is exclusively in the hand of Bengalis¹⁵³.

As in the case of land use, the pineapple example shows that the stratification of the market has led to unequal access to resources. The Hill People have neither the personal contacts nor capital to organise the trade of their goods to the plains. The Bengali people conversely have both the capital to organise trade and they are able to determine the conditions of marketing. The Hill People are thus dependent on them. The transformation of land use from subsistence production to the production of goods for the national economy thus has the economic disadvantage of the Hill People as a consequence. Although the Hill People have occupied their distinct niches within the environment in such a way as to be in minimal competition for resources (Barth 1998: 19), this stratification has led to an unequal relationship between the majority and the minority within the framework of national economy. The transformation has

¹⁵² The Bawm and some other smaller groups adopted fruit gardening in the 1930s (Mey 1984: 329). The Bawm belong to the Christianised groups in the CHT. The missionaries from outside might have initiated this shift in land use among them.

¹⁵³ The situation in the CHT is comparable with the problematic of developing countries' export orientation in general. The integration of developing countries into the world market has aggravated the unequal development

taken place due to influences from outside. Until today government policy propagates the cultivation of marketable goods, in order to benefit the majority population in the plains.

While the Hill People contribute to the national economy by concentrating on mono-cultures, they are becoming increasingly dependent on the local markets. These have been dominated by Bengali traders from the plains since the 1930s, when restrictions on trading in the CHT were loosened¹⁵⁴. These Bengalis came to the bazaar areas and actually had little interest in land (Roy 1995: 65). Visiting market places in the rural areas of the CHT it is a striking phenomenon that the shopkeepers are mainly Bengalis even in those areas which are actually exclusively inhabited by indigenous people¹⁵⁵. In Kutukchari we visited the market place, where only a few Chakmas were selling their products. Locals estimated their proportion to be about 5-6%. The shopkeepers have usually come from the Chittagong area, and therefore speak the local Chittagonian dialect and were described as having a friendly relationship with the local people. I interviewed a Chakma woman who had a small stand in the market. She stated that she purchases her products (chilli, dried fish and a few vegetables) at the end of the market day once a week from outsiders who come only for the market. She sells them on the following days. Although she has a little land for rice cultivation, she is not able to sell any products she has grown herself. The business provides her and eight children with an additional income to her self-produced rice, which lasts only for three months. In other areas a “tribal market” has been established. The women come from the villages to sell vegetables and fruit they have cultivated in the *jhum*. Others sell bamboo-shoots they have collected in the jungle. But nevertheless the Hill People are dependent on the offers made by Bengali people who are either residents or come to the hills to trade. The rice which is grown in the *jhum*, the so-called *bini bhat*, has become a scarce rarity, as have other indigenous fruits and vegetables as well. Bertocci refers to a socio-economic study done in the 1980s: “about 78 market places and bazaars in the district ... are owned, run and controlled by the Bengali population”. The people are “totally dependent on the market for exchange [of their agricultural goods] and the cash income generated ... to purchase the provisions of life” and “[l]eft in the hands of Bengali traders there is a feeling among the tribal people that they are being exploited” (Bertocci 1996: 138).

of southern and northern countries. A prominent example is the dependency of coffee-prices on the world market. See Nuscheler (1995: 267-304).

¹⁵⁴ Important to note in this context is that the restrictions imposed onto the CHT by the CHT Manual of 1900 had isolated the area from the development of market structures in the plains (Ahmed 1993: 34). The people of the CHT were thus not prepared to integrate themselves into the mainstream development later on.

¹⁵⁵ This could be observed in the mainly Hill People inhabited areas Kutukchari union under Rangamati Sadar *upazila*, Juraichhari *upazila*, all belonging to Rangamati district and Ruma *upazila* in Bandarban district. In the mixed areas this phenomenon was observable too.

Industrialisation, Labour and Infrastructure Development

The Kaptai Hydroelectric Project in the 1960s was a notable step towards the industrialisation of the Hills. At these times the CHT were promoted by the Pakistani government as the “land of promise” (Mey 1997). Another project for industrial development was the Karnaphuli Paper Mill, established in 1951. Both projects were attempts to integrate the CHT into the national economy; it was expected that the region would become more market oriented and developed (van Schendel et al. 2000: 191). Outsiders from Europe and the plain land came to the CHT. The Europeans planned the projects, the plain land people were hired for construction work. The planners did not consider hiring local people for construction work. Although “some observers considered them good material for a future wage labour force in forestry and industry” (van Schendel 2000: 216), this actually never happened. Tribal employment in major industries like the Kaptai project and Chandraghona Paper Mill has been less than 1% (Aziz-Al Ahsan et al. 1989: 964). Another more concrete figure is that in the seventies the Karnaphuli Paper Mill employed about 3,290 workers, of whom 14 were Hill People (Chakma 1998: 3). The indigenous people of the CHT accordingly have not been involved in industrial development at all. Van Schendel argues that the local people were not seen as a useful resource and that they were considered to be too “uncivilised” to partake in development. Most officials saw the Hill People as “too backward to join the national mainstream” (van Schendel et al. 2000: 216).

This perception, which persists until today, can be observed in the case of infrastructure projects initiated by various governmental institutions. In a tea-stall in Tankabati we talked to two Bengalis who told us that they come from outside the CHT, walking about five miles every day, in order to work in a road maintenance operation. The other people in the tea-stall also looked like Bengalis. Upon being asked why they were so many Bengalis in the tea-stall, although almost all inhabitants of the union are Mru, the Bengalis told us that almost all people in the tea-stall were construction workers or wood cutters coming from outside. Local people have not been recruited for labour, except some women participating in World Food Programme’s “Food for Work”¹⁵⁶. The WFP programme has indeed profited the indigenous people, but the tendency is still to import labour into the CHT from the plains.

¹⁵⁶ WFP launched the Expanded Food Assistance (EFA) programme in the CHT in 1998. Food aid is considered to be an important component of intervention in the different phases of conflict, not just in Bangladesh (Mancusi-Materi 2000; Clarke 2000).

Besides the fact that the Hill People have not considered as a source of labour power by the planners of infrastructure projects, another important aspect should be taken into account here. There are critiques of infrastructure development which interpret this as a further contribution to the Hill People's exploitation. The development of rural infrastructure, as it is argued, contributed to the superior position of the majority, who are already experienced in marketing and trade. In some cases it is even argued that the real reason for road construction has been to enable the military to control larger parts of the CHT, rather than to enhance the region's commercial potential. Australia for example sponsored a metalled road in Kagrachari district, which later turned out to have primarily military purposes (Chaudhuri 1991: 149; Mohsin 1997: 131). But in any event, and this is still an attractive argument today¹⁵⁷, the Hill People do not perceive infrastructure development as serving their own purposes, but merely as a measure to enable outsiders to exploit the CHT further. It is expected that middlemen will come even more deeply into the remote areas in order to dominate the market.

The major argument for the absence of integration of local people into any infrastructure and industrial measures relates to the tradition of the CHT people. The notion of embeddedness might be appropriate to explain this phenomenon. There it is argued that the "level of embeddedness of economic behaviour is lower in non-market societies" (Granovetter 1985: 482). As subsistence reliant agriculturists, the Hill People have problems with selling their labour. Especially the Chakma are traditionally self-reliant in their way of life. As *jhum* cultivators the Chakma usually work on the basis of family units, with each family having its own field, while other groups cultivate on a communal basis, where the families help each other with clearing and harvesting the fields. The idea of wage labour has always been completely alien to them. Hutchinson observed about 100 years ago: "his independence will prevent him from working as a menial for others, yet he works exceedingly hard to further his own interests" (Hutchinson 1978: 21). An example from the household will support this hypothesis. A Chakma family employed a Bengali girl to help in the household. In answer to my question why they did not employ a Chakma girl instead in order to provide income to someone from their own community, it was stated that it would be extremely difficult to find a Chakma willing to do this job. Occasionally this would be no problem, but they would never work for money. "They are too proud" it was argued.

The problem of integrating the local people into the industrial and infrastructural development thus is related to two aspects. The first argument relates to the formerly developed one, that

¹⁵⁷ This point will be discussed later on. But so far it should be noted that the Asian Development Bank has planned a project with a relatively large infrastructure component in order to integrate the area into the market.

the Hill People are perceived as being too backward and primitive to do these jobs. The other one relates to Hill People's tradition of working independently or communally for direct profits, which derives from the traditional way of life and cultivation. Nevertheless both industrialisation and infrastructure development have led to the Hill People's marginalisation. This must be seen in the context of the evolution of market structures and the contribution to the national economy.

The economy in the Hills, nowadays determined by the transformation of land use in order to produce for the national economy, which entails giving up the subsistence production way of life, has raised different problems for the Hill People. The CHT people have become increasingly dependent on business people from the plains who have different modes of marketing and trade. This happens not just in relation to the national economy but on the local level as well. The local markets in the Hills are dependent on the contribution of Bengali traders. Infrastructure and industrialisation have contributed to the development of the CHT, but not that of the people of the CHT. In general the Hill People are nowadays suspicious about government initiated economic development. A survey carried out in 1986 established that 87.9% of the indigenous people are suspicious about the plans. They did not believe that they would benefit from the programmes, but that the Bengali settlers would primarily profit (Mohsin 1997: 136). Consequently many people believe that their own initiatives are the only way to contribute to the betterment of their situation. Since the Peace Accord there is a notable tendency in the CHT towards the development of a "civil society". The organisation of support for their community independent from the state thus is a significant characteristic of the CHT society today and promotes progress but also implies problems, which will be subject of the following chapter.

6.4 Civil Society in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

While the former chapters have dealt with the significance of state and market in the CHT, civil society is the focus in this part. The notion of civil society has been widely discussed. Originally a western model, civil society can be seen in the dichotomy between the state and civil society (Hann 1996: 4). But at the same time it is clear that the western model is not applicable to non-western societies, but is highly dependent on the local contexts of the developing countries (Jessen 1995: 12). The major significance of civil societies in such countries is seen in their ability to cooperate with the state in order to democratise and take

The political leaders in the CHT in particular oppose this approach.

the “comparative advantage” in the delivery of benefits for the poor (White 1999: 308). Civil society’s significance thus lies in the strength of its ability to protect collective interests (Bratton 1989: 411). White (1999) captures the notion more concretely by contrasting two views: first the most inclusive one, which understands civil society as “all that is not state or market”, and second in a more restrictive way as the “arena of political association” (White 1999: 319). Such an open definition might be appropriate in the CHT context, where civil society is just emerging. According to Wedel, civil society “exists, when individuals and groups are free to form organizations that function independently from the state, and that can mediate between citizens and the state” (Wedel 1994: 323 cited in: Hann 1996: 1). Civil society thus refers to the ability and freedom of the citizens of a state to organise themselves in order to represent their interests.

Civil society is a popular term, gaining more and more importance in development cooperation and crisis-management in particular (DAC 1997; Anderson 1999; Papendiek et al. 1997; Heinrich 1999; Masserrat 1999; Adelman 1997; Schmieg 1997; Knehans 2000; Lachenmann 1995b: 12). But the definition of the term “civil society” in the development cooperation context differs from that used in the academic discourse. While the latter perceives the term as a category for analysis, one which is used to explore the presence of relevant social structures, the developmental approach sees civil society as a normative concept. Civil society is defined as a developmental goal (Neubert 1995: 409).

Commonly understood as the counterpart to the state, civil society is often used to describe the NGO scenario which is emerging in many developing countries¹⁵⁸. Especially in Bangladesh, which can be seen as the classical NGO country¹⁵⁹, the conception of NGOs as the major civil society actor is of outstanding significance. NGOs’ significance in Bangladesh’s civil society can be predominantly explained in terms of the historical and political context of this country¹⁶⁰ (White 1999). The donor agencies are drawing much attention to the potentials of non-governmental initiatives in Bangladesh. In the CHT it can be observed that the conception of such initiatives developed in the plain land has been taken over. NGOs are thus seen as an appropriate counterpart for development agencies, not just

¹⁵⁸ The usage of the term civil society in the development context thus differs from the academic discourse to a great extent. Within this thesis I will not concentrate on the broad academic discussions, since the main focus is development cooperation, and civil society’s significance for action in post-conflict regions.

¹⁵⁹ Bangladesh is the country said to have the greatest NGO density world-wide. The prominence of Bangladeshi NGOs has been mainly due to the emergence of the so-called micro-credit scheme, which has been developed by the Grameen Bank. This scheme, which is commonly assessed to be successful, has been applied world wide and is based on the provision of small credits to the rural population.

¹⁶⁰ Civil society includes a highly normative and moral connotation, in the sense that it draws attention to the oppressive character of the state.

because they are easy to find, but because development cooperation has experience in cooperating with NGOs. Additionally it is expected that they have the necessary expertise in development matters¹⁶¹.

Since the Peace Accord there has been a boom of organisations which feel the need to “do something for the people”. The objects of these initiatives range from development efforts in the classical sense to human rights advocacy and the protection of the environment. Prior to the accord local NGO activities had been largely prohibited in Kagrachari and Rangamati districts. Bandarban was the exception, where for about 20 years international and national NGO activities were allowed. The local NGOs started to be established in Kagrachari and Rangamati after the cease-fire in 1992, in Bandarban local NGO activities started later on¹⁶². (Hume 1999: 34)

The following analysis is divided into two sections. The first discusses the role of national NGOs which have come to the CHT after the Peace Accord. It will be shown that the different perceptions the actors have of each other play an important role in analysis. The issue of national NGOs will show again that the conflict in the CHT is one shaped by ethnic polarisation between majority and minority. The second concern of this chapter are the so-called local NGOs, which are relatively young and inexperienced. The importance of the local NGOs lies in their grassroots orientation, which seems to be absent in the case of the national NGOs. At the same time the local NGO landscape is determined to a significant extent by ethnic segregation, what has important implications for development cooperation and raises important questions concerning the implementation of development cooperation projects.

National NGOs and their Perception in the CHT

In the Bangladeshi NGO scene organisations range from small rural initiatives to huge company-like NGOs such as Grameen Bank, BRAC and Proshika. These big NGOs have predominantly adopted the so-called micro-credit scheme which has been developed by Grameen Bank. The large NGOs, seen in general as the successful examples for non-governmental development efforts, have throughout the years expanded and actually become company-like organisations with much prominence and outside representation on a national as well as international level. BRAC and Grameen Bank, which are the largest ones, have

¹⁶¹ Lachenmann (1995b: 11) emphasises the relationship between NGOs and development activities.

¹⁶² The activities of NGOs after the Peace Accord lacked organisation and coordination. Although registered, a number of NGOs are so-called “phantom” NGOs, which are actually not active (Hume 1999: 34). This

constructed office buildings which are seen by many people as the most modern buildings in town. BRAC has just recently opened its own university, Grameen Bank has invested in new technologies such as solar panels and mobiles. Critics claim that these organisations are not NGOs any longer but enterprises which are predominantly dealing with making profit and expansion. Nevertheless their significance in Bangladesh is one which is felt by some people to threaten the state authorities and compete with the traditional governmental sector¹⁶³.

These well established NGOs, with activities throughout Bangladesh, have, quite naturally, enormous interest in including the CHT in their area of operation since the Peace Accord has provided them with free access¹⁶⁴. The most notable NGO beside BRAC and Proshika is Integrated Development Foundation (IDF)¹⁶⁵, which also operates predominantly by employing the micro-credit scheme. IDF does not operate all over Bangladesh, but specialises in the Chittagong Division. Their projects are concentrated in the CHT. Their policy includes strict equal treatment of indigenous and non-indigenous people¹⁶⁶, and their staff is also selected according to ethnic background. Nevertheless they are perceived as a national NGO by the local people. The Hill People uttered many complaints about these national NGOs during the interviews¹⁶⁷. In particular, cultural arguments were employed to explain resistance to national NGOs. The most important argument was that the national NGOs would duplicate the scheme from the plains to the CHT, although it was not appropriate to the needs of the CHT population. Most criticised was the micro-credit scheme. The interviewees argued that the Hill People are still carrying out subsistence production to a significant extent. They would get loans from the NGOs, but they were not able to get any profits due to the economic structure which is less monetised than in the plains. People would get into the difficult position of having received the loans but not being able to repay them, since they do not have a real income. Consequently they need to take up loans from other organisations in order to pay the former loans back. Additionally people complained that the interest rates were too

phenomenon appeared during the assessment as well. The local consultant concerned with NGO activities reported NGOs of which nothing except a sign exists.

¹⁶³ For the interdependent relationships between state and NGO sector see White (1999).

¹⁶⁴ New project areas are especially of financial importance for micro-credit NGOs. Distributing micro-credits has not just a humanitarian background, but enables NGOs to expand. The more micro-credits are distributed, the more capital the organisation has. Beside the financial aspect many NGO representatives and programmes emphasise the engagement in poverty alleviation.

¹⁶⁵ IDF was founded in December 1992 after the cease-fire. It is a good example how fast NGOs can successfully expand by employing micro-credit schemes.

¹⁶⁶ The numbers of the monthly report June 1999 mentions 19,662 members, of whom 8,957 are indigenous.

¹⁶⁷ For the content of complaints uttered during my field work see also CHT Commission (2000) and Hume (1999), whose empirical findings are very similar.

high, at 15 to 20%¹⁶⁸. The overall strategy of the national NGOs was described by interviewees as the following: First, they come and establish an office. They capture the people by giving them loans, which is very attractive to most of them. After being integrated into the NGO groups, people are offered other services like health clinics, schools and nurseries for homestead gardening. If they are members of the NGO, they are provided with good services for free or a small amount of money. The others have to pay a relatively high amount for the services, which are usually better than the governmental ones. Thus people have to become members of the NGOs. Even when they do not need credits, they have to take them up and become dependent on the financial support. The NGO profits from the service charges of their loans provided, expands and becomes more powerful. An interviewee labelled this strategy sarcastically as “micro-colonialism”. The national NGOs thus are accused of having an interest in exploiting the indigenous people and pursuing not just financial but political dominance. The NGOs are predominantly seen as representatives of the majority within Bangladesh, which takes advantage of the minority in order to bring the capital back to the plains. The model applied by these NGOs further delineates the majority culture, which is perceived to be different from the Hill People’s cultures. Due to the ethnic conflict and the struggle for the recognition of their distinct identity, the Hill People are suspicious about “everything that comes from the plains”. Development approaches and strategies are especially critically evaluated, since former efforts to “develop” the CHT have been pursued by the governmental institutions exclusively without paying much attention to the needs and opinions of the indigenous people¹⁶⁹. What is important is that the people do not distinguish between the governmental projects and NGO activities. Both are perceived as representatives of the oppressing and colonialisng majority within the state. White (1999) shows in her article how the big NGOs are regarded nowadays by the rural population in Bangladesh. She argues that in many cases people lump them together with government officials and that the staff is in many cases closer to the government employees than to the grassroots due to their socio-economic status. She further asserts that the NGOs have developed a paternalistic model which “cuts off the NGO from important insights which the villagers have to offer ... the model which workers expressed was of ignorant villagers who needed to be taught enlightened ways” (White 1999: 322). The successfully established NGOs thus have distanced themselves from the grassroots, the “early pioneering vision has been replaced by an ethic of efficiency and professionalism” (White 1999: 321). This has

¹⁶⁸ In an NGO meeting in Rangamati the following numbers were given: Proshika takes 20% service charge, BRAC takes 15%. Local people complained that the charges are sometimes unofficially much higher, up to 40%. Nevertheless both NGOs have a recovery rate of almost 100%.

consequences for the perception of NGOs as civil society actors, because of the process of developments' de-politicisation. While the villagers see the big NGOs in the first place as service providers¹⁷⁰, the NGOs in Bangladesh rely on the "representation of poverty – and the poor – as a technical problem"¹⁷¹ (White 1999: 325). Employing White's argumentation concerning the distance between NGO and rural population of the plains, it is not difficult to imagine how deep this gap must be seen as by the people of the CHT. Besides the different culture of the NGOs in respect to professionalism and technocracy, the Hill People refer to the cultural distinctiveness and boundaries which exist in principle between the Bengali population and the indigenous people. This culture does not just imply the problems of language which were stressed by many interviewees. The Hill People perceive the gap between them and the NGO staff as the result of ethnically determined boundaries rather than between rural grassroots and professionals, however. The cultural gap thus is seen as an ethno-cultural one. This becomes evident from the often uttered reference to the success these NGOs would have in the plains: "This model might work in the plains, but not here in the Hills, our people and our culture is different".

This argumentation becomes more apparent when looking at the subject from the other side, i.e. the way the NGO representatives deal with differences and how they perceive the CHT people. The CHT, commonly known as a neglected area of Bangladesh, where the people are even "poorer and more backward"¹⁷² than in the rest of the country, are thus an interesting area of operation for the big NGOs. The engagement in CHT development activities is thus justified with the humanitarian argument of the necessity to develop the poorest of the poor. An interviewee from BRAC emphasised the need to teach the people discipline. Just as the CHT people have a certain perception of the NGOs' representation, the representatives of the national NGOs showed in interviews that they have certain images of the CHT.

The members of national NGOs highlighted in interviews the "backwardness" of the CHT people. BRAC has a general philosophy, as the employee explained, which is to educate the groups and to make them know why they are poor. By making the poor aware of their poverty, they are able to do something actively for their development. According to an interviewee working at BRAC, the CHT people in remote areas are especially affected:

¹⁶⁹ See the argumentation of the foregoing section of this chapter.

¹⁷⁰ This point is not specific to Bangladesh, but has been stressed by Neubert (1995: 409) for the case of Rwanda.

¹⁷¹ White additionally emphasises that the big NGOs have a tendency to orient themselves more towards donor interests than those of beneficiaries. This claim is backed by Neubert (1995: 407) as well.

¹⁷² This view was shared by almost all interviewees from organisations in Dhaka concerned with development. See also UNICEF (1999).

“people don’t know that they are poor. We have to give them a big shock that they see why they are poor”. The problem of development in the CHT has been described by the BRAC employee in relation to the differences between Bengalis and indigenous people: “The Bengalis are also poor, but somehow more smart and intelligent for surviving. I am talking about the poor”. Again, the NGO employees from the plains refer to cultural differences between the Bengalis and the indigenous people. But more important than the emphasis on cultural differences is the accent on hierarchical orders. The people of the CHT are at a lower stage of development, “backward” and less intelligent. This essentialist notion of differences between the two groups is, as has been argued in the previous chapters already, one which is related to the perception of indigenous people labelled as “tribals” in general. Samad describes in his essay “Notes on Our Tribal Population” that “the word tribal was used to indicate those groups of proliferate people who are preserving some features of archaic culture. ... Their way of life in many respect was reminiscent of New Stone age culture” (Samad 1984: 53). This perception is closely related to development, whose content is defined by the majority within the nation-state. The majority determines who is backward and whose conception of development is the only legitimate one (Guibernau 1999: 69). That the construction of differences between the “advanced” majority and a “backward” minority is one persisting in society is again revealed by the “conflict” between the CHT people and the national NGOs.

During the interview I confronted the BRAC employee with the criticisms uttered by the indigenous people. He referred to the BRAC project design, which includes men as beneficiaries as well as women, although usually only women are provided with the services: “the tribals have a kind of perception about the Bengalis that has to be changed. That’s why men are also included”. Further he argued that the people of the CHT are divided into two classes, the elites and the poor. The elites are, according to his argumentation, responsible for the resistance to the national NGOs, while the “poor people are so wonderful, so nice, you can really talk with them”. The elites instead “try to capitalise, make trouble and see cultural problems where no problems are”. This distinction between two classes, educated and uneducated, again reveals the perception of the “underdeveloped poor” who are not concerned with the construction of ethnic boundaries. Against this argumentation I refer to the case of Ruma, a remote *upazila* in Bandarban district, where local people explained that they do not want any national NGOs. BRAC tried to establish an office in the *upazila*, but according to information given by a local interviewee, was “driven away”. Interviewees in the remote *upazila* Juraichhari in Rangamati district strongly emphasised that they do not want any

national NGOs working in their area either. Nevertheless, the BRAC employee does not see “any reason why outsiders should not work in the CHT”. He still emphasises that the “only problem of the CHT is that nobody works with and thinks of the poor”, since “those on the top determine everything while the poor have nothing to say”. Nevertheless, my observations show that the CHT people are very much in favour of taking their development as a matter of their own initiative. *Raja Devasish Roy* has stated in an interview 1998: “Our big fear is that there will be a lot of NGOs coming in with all sorts of agendas, and confront us with changes. Nobody is against change, but this is accelerated change, which could aggravate current social problems”¹⁷³. Instead, their chance is, as many Hill People believe, to establish their own developmental initiatives and NGOs. These efforts will be the subject of the next section.

Local NGOs and Ethnic Segregation of the Scene

After the Peace Accord the rise in NGO activities in the CHT has been tremendous. As already stated, the Hill People have largely adopted the idea of NGOs as an organisational form of civil society, which has been so prominent in Bangladesh. During the last few years a number of local NGOs have established themselves, while new ones are emerging. In general, the local NGO scene is very heterogeneous, but most of them can be characterised as Revuelta has done: “the typical local NGO was established about two years ago, has not received any foreign funding, works in a very limited capacity, has a very small budget, and has supported small-scale activities only within the towns of Rangamati and Bandarban” (Revuelta 2000a: 41). Though the capacities and experiences of these local NGOs are limited, they play an important role in the CHT. This becomes obvious when looking at the significance the NGO scene has for the local people. Of further interest within this chapter is the grassroots orientation of the local NGOs, which is an important topic, as shown in the last section. The most important finding from the empirical data is that the local NGOs are ethnically segregated. Each NGO has an ethnic orientation according to its origin, which in many cases becomes visible due to their exclusiveness.

Most of the NGO representatives I talked with are highly active and ambitious. In all three districts these local NGOs are emerging in similar fashion, but there are slight differences from district to district. Kagrachari’s significance lies in the fact that many local NGOs have been established by former *Shanti Bahini*, while the NGO scene in Rangamati is to some extent determined by the initiatives of the elite, local leaders such as the *raja*’s relatives and

¹⁷³ Interview conducted by Naeem Mohaiemen, January 4, 1998 <http://www.shobak.org/jumma/inprector.html>

politicians. The NGO scene in Bandarban is, due to its exceptional status as the only district where NGO activities were not prohibited, determined by organisations with an international background. Very active are especially the Christian organisations such as Caritas and World Vision¹⁷⁴. Today, Bandarban has some local NGOs, although there was only one in 1998 (Hume 1999: 50). The exact numbers of NGOs in the three Hill Districts is unknown, since there are many so-called phantom NGOs. Beside NGOs there are various associations to be found in the CHT, which are important civil society actors as well, although often not recognised¹⁷⁵. They range from welfare organisations for Tripura Women to those for blind Hill People, Buddhist orphanages and Tempo boat owners' cooperatives. Talking to local people, almost everybody knows someone who is somehow concerned with establishing an NGO at present. This fact can be related to two aspects. Since many Hill People have problems finding employment, NGOs are seen as a possible way of earning some income and of having a job for those who have a certain qualification. The second argument applied by many local interviewees has been the need to "do something for the people". After more than 25 years of insurgency the Hill People are welcoming the opportunity to be actively concerned with the progress of their area. At the same time the rise of NGOs is a trend where everybody who has nothing better to do wants to participate. The most successful example is Green Hill, which stresses that it is "a development organisation for the indigenous community". Green Hill has existed since the early 1990s and has established itself as the only notable local NGO able to face the advanced national NGOs. Their project area is considerably bigger than that of the others; they cover large areas of Rangamati district and partly include Kagrachari and Bandarban. Their activities range from micro-credits and handloom programmes to water and sanitation as well as afforestation and other forms of environmental development. NGOs are usually supported by politicians or leaders in society. Green Hill for example is backed by the MP of Rangamati, whose relatives established the organisation. This leader- and chairmanship within the local NGOs plays an important role for the representation of the organisations. Having the *raja* as the chairman, the NGO might have better chances to receive foreign funding. This is not just a matter of contact to foreigners but of trust in the authority as well. The same is true for those concerned with political leaders such as Rupajan Dewan's initiative, which relies on his good position in the JSS. Applying

¹⁷⁴ This is related to the fact that many ethnic groups in Bandarban, such as the Bawm and Lushai, have been Christianised and therefore have good contact to the global Christian community. Christianisation is actively going on in Bandarban, as local informants stated. The Mru are becoming more and more influenced by Christianity, the Tripura living in the south are Christianised as well.

¹⁷⁵ During the assessment of GTZ these forms of civil society organisations were not taken into account. Also human rights associations and peace activist groups were not recognised as appropriate civil society actors, since GTZ concentrated on development action rather than political content.

White's (1999) argumentation, as has been done in the last chapter, the organisational structure of these NGOs again leads to the question of the grassroots orientation. The hierarchies appearing between the beneficiaries and the initiators of these organisations need to be taken into account when discussing NGOs as a potent actor in peace-building. In the case of Green Hill, White's assessment that "increased size has inevitably meant increased distance from the grassroots" (1999: 321) has been the subject of criticism in the field. Many people assessed Green Hill as a negative example for NGOs, since they are too successful. People start to be suspicious, explaining the organisations' success as being due to corrupt practices. On the whole, the majority of interviewees tends rather to welcome smaller organisations, which are more grassroots oriented. This explained the active attitude towards founding own local initiatives. Although many people expressed their dislike of the phantom NGO phenomenon, the local initiatives are largely backed by the locals.

This leads to another considerable aspect which needs to be analysed in the local NGO context of the CHT: ethnic group cohesion. Most of the organisations have an ethnic background. They either emphasise their orientation towards the "indigenous community" or are directly based on a specific ethnic group, as is for example Mro Chet, a relatively well established organisation from and for the Mro community. The Tripura Welfare Organisation is another example. The exclusive orientation cannot merely be explained by a high level of grassroots orientation, since the communities themselves have emerged their organisation, but needs to be seen in the context of ethnic relations as well. Here the already mentioned Christian organisations play an important role, since they are based on ethnic communities due to their religious emphasis. NGOs and associations are thus often formed on the basis of a common identity. A notable representative for organisations with ethnic orientation is *Jhum* Aesthetics Council (JAC). The organisation is not a classical developmental organisation, but stresses the importance of maintaining the Hill People's culture. By organising an Indigenous Cultural Festival once a year, the organisation tries to present Hill People's culture to the masses; at the same time JAC promotes indigenous languages, scripts, music, drama and dance. Although a Chakma initiative, they also integrate cultural associations of smaller communities, such as Tanchangya and Pankhua, and function as a kind of network organisation for cultural groups in the CHT. In interviews the JAC members stressed above all the issue of Chakma's script, which they would like to see taught to as many Chakmas as possible in order to preserve the language, which has almost died out.

These culture related activities, which have the function first and foremost of retaining the inherent cultures of the CHT people, are a highly controversial issue with much political and

moral content¹⁷⁶. Some scholars argue that the preservation of indigenous culture needs to be taken seriously, because they are part of Bangladesh's cultural heritage. Some of the languages are spoken exclusively in the CHT and therefore "represent a world linguistic heritage of which the state of Bangladesh is the guardian" (CHT Commission 2000: 74). The networking activities of JAC, which are backed by Bengali artists as well as partly the Government¹⁷⁷, and their promotion of indigenous culture, contributes, as it has been argued in the field, to a better understanding between the different ethnic groups. Only those who have some knowledge about the way of life of the CHT people are able to respect their culture instead of relying on stereotypes¹⁷⁸. At the same time people have the opportunity and freedom to live and preserve their culture. But the discourse on the preserving Bangladesh's minority cultures involves another line of argumentation as well: the promotion of cultural heritage would lead to a "folklorisation" of culture. The CHT Commission argues that the Hill People traditionally have a holistic view of the world, where all different aspects of life are interconnected. Taking cultural features out of the social context means the production of artefacts or social performances which have an exclusively aesthetic function (CHT Commission 1991: 91). This argument needs to be seen in the context of government promoted initiatives such as the establishment of the Tribal Cultural Institute (TCI), and programmes of the Bangladesh Cottage and Small Industries Cooperation (BSCIC). Attempts to initiate so-called "weaving projects" in particular provide an appropriate example to illustrate this argument. TCI and BSCIC, two governmental institutions, have promoted traditional weaving techniques and "tribal culture", but the production has not been linked with other aspects of traditional culture (CHT Commission 1991: 91). The weaving projects often appear to be a full-time job, where young girls receive training in hand looming and sewing. The traditional way of producing the indigenous clothes however is the waist loom technique. The women do this work usually during their leisure time, at times when there is not much house or field work to do. I was told that the adopting of more "modern" techniques, like the hand loom, has led to the decrease in the quality of clothes. But also many local NGOs have adopted small-scale weaving projects, and in some villages women have formed groups for producing and marketing traditional dresses in order to earn some additional income. The marketing of the traditional dresses functions relatively well, as

¹⁷⁶ Here the introduction of indigenous languages in primary schools as the medium of instruction, to enable indigenous children to participate in school with more equal chances, and which has been stressed in the Rangamati Declaration, needs to be referred to (CHT Commission 2000).

¹⁷⁷ JAC has received once an amount of *Taka* 50,000 from the Prime Minister's Office.

¹⁷⁸ This assumption is also based on the empirical findings of Dekker et al. (1998). For stereotypes of the indigenous people see also Bal (2000).

tourists are especially attracted by the products. The outgrowth is two-fold: on the one hand has this led to the formerly described “folklorisation” of indigenous weaving products. Nowadays one can find Chakma clothes in shops in Dhaka for extremely high prices, since it has become a kind of fashion among the upper class to wear them. On the other hand the Chakma women in particular have started to “rediscover” their traditional dress, which is an important indicator for ethnic consciousness, due to its visibility¹⁷⁹. The dresses are thus a significant aspect in the construction of boundaries between ethnic groups. Wearing the traditional dress shows clear membership of one group, and demarcation from others. Attempts to revitalise or retain traditional culture does not just imply the folklorisation of culture or a better understanding, but at the same time its promotion enhances nationalist consciousness and maintains or establishes boundaries. This has consequences for civil society on the one hand, because it means that civil society is highly politicised. On the other hand ethnic identity, already a politicised matter, gains more importance. Such measures can therefore lead to a greater inclusion of groups, but at the same time they construct minorities in an essentialist way by “making them special” from outside. Nevertheless weaving projects do represent a source of income. The Chakma’s success has led the other indigenous groups which have a tradition of weaving to duplicate the model mainly for economic reasons.

What has become clear here, relates on the one hand to the emergence of self-conscious civil society in the CHT, but on the other the analysis shows that supporting civil societal forces enhances ethnic demarcation, since civil society organisations are usually ethnically segregated. Civil society is thus a complex and highly normative issue, which needs to be carefully assessed before intervention by donor agencies.

While this chapter has shown the main issues it is necessary to analyse when planning projects in a post-conflict region, the next one will deal with possibilities of implementing projects. This is, as the analysis has shown, a very sensitive topic. Planners need to look carefully into the often conflicting consequences the support of various measures might have, since ethnicity is one of the most important features characterising the Chittagong Hill Tracts society. Underlying this is the overall policy applied by donor agencies, which has a highly normative content. The most important demand in development cooperation is, according to the state of the art of peace-building activities, to avoid effects which could harm one or the other side in any way. How far such a paradigm can be put into practice will be the central question in the following chapter.

¹⁷⁹ Only some years ago the Chakma women, especially of the elites, had widely adopted the Bengali *sari* or

7. How to Put Theory into Practice – Supporting Peace in the CHT

Having analysed the local conditions in the CHT by focussing on ethnically determined features, the aim of this chapter is to concentrate on the question whether the instruments development cooperation offer can effectively be used in order to contribute to the support of a peace process. As mentioned already, the Peace Accord has been signed between the conflicting parties, and with this an important prerequisite for an ongoing peace process thus has been laid. But as the recent development in other conflict regions like Israel and Palestine shows, it seems to be more difficult actually to implement the Accord. The maintenance of “peace” implies manifold problems, which can destroy the positive impulse of a treaty very quickly. Thus not just the signing, but the implementation of the Peace Accord, constitutes the decisive process which ensures the establishment and maintenance of peace. The analysis has already shown that the reforms agreed upon in the Accord are difficult to implement. It is thus of crucial importance to support the positive impulses given by the legal framework of the treaty. It has been mentioned in the previous chapters, that development cooperation can contribute to destabilisation and can have negative side effects on the local setting, but can also support the peace process under certain circumstances.

As analysis has shown, the conflict in the CHT did not have such violent outbreaks as in many other cases. This does not mean that many people did not suffer in the CHT; villages were burned, villagers massacred, women raped, people fled and died during insurgency. A member of GTZ staff with experiences in Angola and Sudan once expressed her astonishment about how peaceful the CHT region appears. She would have expected to see destruction and devastation. Since 1993 the area has been relatively peaceful, and reconstruction and removal of the major effects has been largely done during recent years. The GTZ project thus concentrates on applying traditional instruments which focus less on direct intervention in the conflict setting than on “developing” the CHT. This attempt has been additionally justified by the provisions made by the BMZ¹⁸⁰ and is related to the assumption that development and peace are reciprocal processes, as Minister Wiczorek-Zeul has emphasised (Thiel 1999a: 8). The application of traditional TC instruments thus is expected to contribute to the stabilisation of peace in general.

The analysis has shown that the conflict in the CHT is between the state and a non-state actor. This type of conflict is characterised by the legal recognition of the state and the non-state actor as quasi-illegal. The question of power is thus crucial, the success of pacification depending on the legal recognition of the conflict parties; resolving these conflicts is most difficult (Martinelli

shalwar kameez. Nowadays the traditional Chakma dress, pinon and *khadi*, can be worn not just occasionally, but also for social events.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 5 for BMZ’s policy and provisions for the CHT project.

1999: 218). The legal recognition of the state-opposing party, the JSS, has taken place by applying a power-sharing approach implemented with the Peace Accord. Nevertheless are the legal questions not yet internally solved¹⁸¹. Accordingly in the present phase the major aim is to institutionalise and strengthen mutual recognition and understanding. But this is a difficult task for third parties, because the recognition of the legal status of an institution, which is in practice neglected on the governmental part, can lead to the assumption that the donor agency works against the partner country's government. It is thus crucial to discuss the problem of partiality. This includes not just the different perceptions of the conflicting parties towards the donor agency, but at the same time the agency is bound to the provisions made by the German government. Several practical presumptions derive from this issue. The second focus will lie upon the concrete implementation of different measures. Each measure implies problems, which are directly related to ethnic cleavages and therefore gain enormous importance in respect to the crucial question of neutrality.

7.1 Partiality and Neutrality – Making the Right Choice

The CHT are a post-conflict region, needing developmental measures, ones which do not concentrate on emergency aid and quick reconstruction (UNDP 1998). Instead, long-term, sustainable measures are needed, which support the consolidation of peace. Donor activities in the CHT are coordinated by UNDP (1998), which has carried out an assessment in order to establish concrete measures and recommendations for the donor agencies involved. Predicted measures of donor agencies vary, and in general supplement each other. This is a positive prerequisite for donor activities (Schlichte 2000: 50). The significance of donor coordination will appear again later on. The donor agencies have different approaches. An outstanding aspect is, as it has been stated already, the question of neutrality and partiality (Mehler et al. 2000: 156). The claim for neutrality is one of the most widely-recognised aspects in conflict-prevention. In general, there is the principle of remaining neutral when intervening in the conflict as a third party. But this principle can lead to a general dilemma of the development agencies' role, which needs to be reflected on (Spelten 1999: 14). This reflection needs to concentrate on the relationship between the various actors involved in conflict. The general aim is to decide who the beneficiaries of projects should be, who could be a possible counterpart and which action might affect which party either negatively or positively.

My empirical data show that some donor agencies clearly propagate support primarily for the “weaker” conflict party. For example CIDA's and DANIDA's representatives stressed the

¹⁸¹ See Chapter 6.2.

importance of focussing on the indigenous people's development. The indigenous people are, in their approach, clearly defined as the victims of the conflict. It is thus an ethical decision to be partial. GTZ needs to act in line with the government negotiations between Germany and Bangladesh, which clearly propose neutrality: "The German side underlined that project activities should benefit all people in the project areas in all phases, regardless of their ethnic origin. Furthermore it stressed that planning and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of activities should be organised in a participatory manner, ensuring the involvement of all ethnic groups and regional/local institutions concerned"¹⁸².

The call for neutrality, negotiated between the German and Bangladeshi government is at first sight a diplomatic and ethically justified solution. It considers well established relationships and partnership between the two governments in the field of development cooperation. The neutrality postulate in principle enables the German side to maintain trust between the governments, partiality hence is strictly avoided. This approach nevertheless has, it is postulated, contributed to a partial recognition. The difficulty lies in the fact that the conflict parties are not equal, but characterised by a hierarchical relationship. While the Bangladeshi government is the official partner within bilateral development cooperation, the opposing fraction (JSS) lacks recognition and power, although power is legally provided. The representatives of the Hill People are therefore dependent on the Bangladeshi government for fulfilment of their demands. Bilateral cooperation in principle can never be neutral in cases of intra-state conflict, where the state and non-state actors are opposing each other¹⁸³, when such provisions made by the donating country's government are taken seriously.

But how to put this demand for neutrality, which has to be fulfilled by the project planners as far as possible, into practice? In the following I will illustrate this difficulty by reference to some practical problems which appeared during the GTZ assessment.

Selecting an Appropriate Project Area

Already with the selection of appropriate project areas discussions started. The fact finding mission in 1999 had proposed selecting four *upazilas*: Baghaichari and Naniachar of Rangamati district and Laxmichari and Kagrachari Sadar of Kagrachari district. These *upazilas* were selected primarily for reasons of accessibility and logistics. Already prior to the assessment it emerged that these *upazilas* are almost exclusively inhabited by Chakmas. Portions of Marma and Tripura are

¹⁸² Summary Record of 1999 German-Bangladeshi Negotiations on Development Cooperation, para 3.2.2 cited in: GTZ Office Dhaka, 7th April 2000: Bangladeshi-German Technical Cooperation Project Appraisal CHT, p. 2.

¹⁸³ Schlichte also argues that development cooperation can never be neutral. Prior engagement, the choice of partners for negotiating and each engagement is never perceived as neutral by the conflicting parties (Schlichte 2000: 51).

living there as well, but none of the smaller groups, such as Bawm, Pankhua, Mru or Kheyang, as these smaller ethnic groups are largely concentrated in the southern district of Bandarban. Excluding Bandarban from the project area in general turned out to be not acceptable during internal discussions as well. The next challenge to the original selection of *upazilas* was Shantu Larma's request not to choose any *upazilas* where settlers are living. This is the case in Kagrachari Sadar, Laxmichari and Naniachar. Shantu Larma stressed that he would not agree with GTZ's project if any settlers should profit, since the status of the settlers is not yet clarified. The JSS still claims that the settlers should be rehabilitated outside the CHT, and that supporting them by implementing development projects would encourage them to stay in the CHT. Additionally it turned out that Baghaichari has neither sufficient road nor water way communication and, an aspect stressed especially in view of GTZ personnel's security, that Baghaichari's insecure border with Mizoram in India enables Mizo rebels to take shelter on Bangladeshi territory. All these different aspects were not taken into account during the first selection.

The plans were completely verified. After visiting all three districts and talking to authorities, GTZ agreed on the selection of five different *upazilas*. These were Rangamati Sadar and Bandarban Sadar for logistical reasons. In order to agree upon areas which are "needy", Rowangchhari of Bandarban district and Barkal of Rangamati district were selected. An additional alternative agreed upon was Ruma under Bandarban district, which has bad road communication and is one of the most neglected areas. The mission leader discussed the new decision with the Chairman of the Regional Council. In principle he agreed but then it turned out that Barkal *upazila* is neither safe, nor settler-free. The choice had to be changed again. Barkal was exchanged for Juraichhari, which is a remote and less-developed *upazila*, where the vast majority of population is indigenous. The choice was satisfying with respect to the fact that especially the Bandarban *upazilas* are inhabited by almost all different ethnic groups. Accessibility and a certain safety were guaranteed as well. Discussing this matter with local people, it was criticised that Kagrachari district was left out. Especially the Chakmas feared that they would not benefit sufficiently from the GTZ project then. Furthermore, Kagrachari is the CHT district whose people suffered most under the conflict. Especially the northern parts were badly affected. In Kagrachari the families to be rehabilitated and ex-combatants are concentrated, while Bandarban has been in principle less touched by the insurgency and military actions. The avoidance of "settler-areas" was justified with reference to "indigenous Bengalis" inhabiting the selected areas.

The problem shows that a broad variety of variables need to be taken into account already when selecting the project area. While the area of "normal" projects are usually selected according to infrastructure and needs, the CHT setting is more complex. The most important aspect is the demographic distribution of ethnic groups, which needs to be balanced in the selection. These

decisions are not just bound to premises arranged in the German-Bangladeshi government negotiations, but to the demands of the local actors as well. The ethnic distribution thus is an important factor besides needs, accessibility, logistics, border security, the absence of armed activists. When asked, many local people many claimed that their district was the most needy; people in Rangamati said: “You cannot give just the Marma in the South”, while people in Bandarban claimed that most development projects would be implemented in Chakma areas. More important than the distribution of indigenous groups is the settler issue. This highly politicised aspect has put GTZ directly into the gap between government and JSS. Although after the first discussions the agreement had been accepted in principle, the issue appeared again after the assessment. Especially the Ministry of CHT Affairs as well as ERD criticised the decision to exclude Kagrachari. Adding one *upazila* under Kagrachari district, which is close to the border to Rangamati, was considered. At the time of research no final decision had been made.

The problem of project area selection indicates the fact that the demographic distribution of ethnic groups within a territory is of elementary importance. In contrast to what is shown by my empirical data, the DAC guidelines (1997: 58) state that the selection of geographical areas for implementation makes it possible avoid making artificial distinctions between groups. However, the literature shows that territoriality is of special importance for ethnic groups, not just in the case of the CHT¹⁸⁴. Forsberg (1999: 98) thus raises the term “territorial identities”. The special meaning territoriality has for ethnic groups has been determined and constructed according to the spatial distribution of groups, whereas the identities, as a crucial category, are linked to territory. As the CHT example shows, this has practical consequences for projects. The planning process includes the selection of areas where the project is going to be implemented. This is important, because the amount of money allocated for a project, should be utilised in the most effective way. As in the case of the CHT, the allocation is not sufficient for the whole region. The areas thus need to be selected in accordance with practical considerations. For example the project office should be ideally established where sufficient infrastructure provides access to relevant institutions. The different project areas should be reachable for the personnel. This is not practicable when the project office is too far away. But when the different ethnic groups, which are pre-selected by the premise of neutrality, are scattered throughout the whole region, the practicability and efficiency suffers. Hence, unlike in the case of “normal” projects, the territorial aspects becomes interrelated with ethnic identities, and thus with the selection of beneficiaries. But the selection of beneficiaries is bound to ethical premises, such as an equal treatment of all ethnic groups, which is considered to be crucial for post-conflict intervention. The opposition of practicability and neutrality is a dilemma which is difficult to resolve within a single project,

when ethnic groups are spatially scattered. As a consequence, it is argued that infrastructure development is of vital importance¹⁸⁵ in order to improve accessibility. But there is a second highly significant line of argumentation as well. Crucial here is, as it has been stated and will be examined in the following parts of this chapter, the coordination of donor activities. In order to ensure the equal treatment of the various groups, the donor agencies need to complement their efforts to distribute their resources equally and to fulfil the demands of neutrality.

Selecting Counterparts

As a bilateral agency GTZ usually works with governmental counterparts. GTZ emphasises that the project is actually implemented by the governmental institutions of the partner country, while GTZ gives “assistance”. Although the main counterpart is the Bangladeshi government, GTZ has the possibility to cooperate with other agencies, such as NGOs. The problem of implementing agencies has led, as much as the question of project area selection, to manifold discussions. The question whether governmental or non-governmental institutions should be selected was less controversial during these discussions than making a decision between the various governmental actors presented in Chapter 6.1 and 6.2. Nevertheless non-governmental actors do gain a good deal of significance, since literature on peace-building emphasises their importance for sustaining peace. Strengthening the so-called “peace lobby” and civil society appears in the relevant literature as one of the main objectives (DAC 1997: 44-52; Hoffmann 2000; Hoffmann et al. 2000; Mehler 2000: 42; Debiel et al. 1999: 11-12; Kuthan 2000; Knehans 2000; Cameron et al. 2000).

In the following I will discuss two aspects. The first important issue is the selection of the governmental counterpart, with reference to Chapter 6.1 and 6.2, where it has been analysed that the various institutions are in a continuous struggle for cooperation with development agencies in order to improve their own power by getting developmental resources. The second issue is the selection of NGOs, which are, according to the analysis in Chapter 6.4, ethnically segregated. Both aspects show that development cooperation agencies need to reflect on their role as well as their policy, especially if they are bound to neutrality.

Reconsidering the analysis of the political and administrative institutions, the most important aspect is that there is a certain ethnic polarisation of institutions. The actors concerned are first of all those which represent the central government, and secondly those which represent the indigenous minority. The first category consists of the relevant line ministries and the Ministry of

¹⁸⁴ The special relationship between the Hill People and their “homelands”, especially with respect to the mode of cultivation, has been repeatedly mentioned.

¹⁸⁵ See Chapter 7.2.

CHT Affairs. The Regional Council in turn is the main indigenous representation and the core of the second category. The Hill District Councils can in general neither be put into the first, not into the second category, since the representatives of the three district councils have different affiliations¹⁸⁶. Establishing a project infrastructure thus is difficult. Each institution has claimed its responsibility during the assessment. The major conflict exists between the Ministry of CHT Affairs and the Regional Council. While the Ministry stated that it would be the responsible agency besides the line ministries, the Regional Council emphasised its “supervisory” and “coordinating” function. The third actor applying for partnership were the Hill District Councils, since they function as the “implementing agencies”. Whereas the HDC Chairmen of Bandarban and Kagrachari agreed with Regional Council’s functions, the HDC Chairman of Rangamati clearly stated that the RC is exclusively of nominal power and not an appropriate partner for development cooperation. How these conflict lines were formed has been shown in Chapter 6.2. It has also become clear, that the opposing parties are in a continuous struggle for the resources, development cooperation provides. The developmental resources provided by third actors thus imply inherent conflict potential. Very quickly, local actors develop strategies to get access to the resource, before the donor agencies have recognised this elementary impact on the local conditions. Anderson (1999: 43) refers to the significance of aid agencies for the creation of jobs. Agency staff need drivers, household personnel and interpreters. With the selection of individuals for employment in aid agencies, the struggle for resources starts already. The resulting distributional effect can increase tensions among groups. However, even before the project starts, development cooperation shows effects.

Discussing the matter of implementing agencies with representatives of various donor agencies, opinions were diversified. Some claimed that this competence-confusion needs to be internally solved prior any development activities¹⁸⁷. Others stressed that the HDCs are the only competent institution, since RC and MCHTA are newly created and struggling for capacities and other necessary skills. There was consensus that both agents, Regional Council and Ministry of CHT Affairs lack capacities. Capacity building for the Regional Council thus would have been an appropriate measure in order to ensure a balanced proportion of power among the institutions, in order to stabilise the main representative body of the indigenous population and make it workable. But BMZ clearly emphasised that the development activities of GTZ should not focus on Regional Council capacity building¹⁸⁸ (Revuelta 2000a: 5). Nevertheless is the RC the weakest body within the administrative structure because it is opposed by the other actors. The dilemma was demonstrated when GTZ organised a workshop after the assessment. Six persons were invited

¹⁸⁶ See Chapter 6.2.

¹⁸⁷ This opinion was especially stressed by the Dutch and the EC representative.

¹⁸⁸ At present UNDP has started a project which supports and strengthens the RC.

to give short speeches during the opening ceremony of the workshop: The District Commissioners and HDC Chairmen of Rangamati and Bandarban, and the Chairman of the CHT Development Board. The Chairman of the Regional Council was asked to chair the session. When the ceremony started, only the RC Chairman and representatives of HDC Chairman and DC of Bandarban were present. Neither the DC, HDC Chairman nor the CHTDB Vice-Chairman showed up, although all of them had confirmed their attendance. Those present gave a little speech, before the RC Chairman opened the session. Only a few minutes after he had finished, the HDC Chairman of Rangamati entered the room. As a matter of courtesy he was asked to say a few words, upon which he talked for more than 20 minutes and finally replaced the RC Chairman in opening the session. Many participants of the workshop were ashamed about this demonstration of power.

The development agencies have to face a situation of high political polarisation in post-conflict regions. The analysis has shown that the condition in Bangladesh is not just polarised, but characterised by an extreme minority-majority relationship. The question of partiality and neutrality is consequently one which entails enormously significant ethic features on the one hand, on the other the history of cooperation between Germany and Bangladesh needs to be taken into account. Remaining neutral is thus impossible due to the expectations the various actors have. The problem that actors attempt to instrumentalise development cooperation for their own purposes, appears in the literature as a crucial issue as well. Klingebiel emphasises in his evaluation of programmes in six crisis-affected countries¹⁸⁹ that developmental programmes in Ethiopia, El Salvador, Rwanda and Sri Lanka contributed to the regime's stabilisation (Klingebiel 1999: 23). This is related to the fact that bilateral development cooperation functions as a partnership between states. As stated in the beginning, the difficulty lies in the fact that intra-state conflicts take place between the state and a non-state actor. The state is not just legally recognised, but as the official partner of the development agency, the state is indirectly supported by donor contribution. Klingebiel thus assumes that in many cases development cooperation contributes to war and conflict, since it provides the necessary resources¹⁹⁰ (Klingebiel 1999: 25). Development agencies need to analyse the complex political dynamics very carefully, in order to avoid being instrumentalised by either one or the other side. The resource dimension within the process of development cooperation thus must not be underestimated.

The second possibility to implement projects is by cooperating with civil society actors. Civil society actors can contribute to peace and conflict management, where the governmental actors, because of being biased, are not appropriate actors (Klingebiel 1999: 37). It is expected that "certain elements of civil society may be able to play an important role in building bridges

¹⁸⁹ See Chapter 3.

¹⁹⁰ This has been the case in the CHT as well, like for example the road rehabilitation project, financed with Australian assistance. See Chapter 6.3.

between polarised groups, promoting dialogue and reconciliation” (DAC 1997: 37). It has been shown in the analysis that the NGOs are usually ethnically segregated. Especially the grassroots organisations have been formed predominantly on the basis of ethnic communities. Their aim is to provide support exclusively for their own group. This needs to be seen in the CHT specific context. The settlers came to the CHT mainly in the 1980s, during the most intensive phase of conflict. It is thus clear that there have never been any inter-ethnic organisational forms prior to the conflict on which donor agencies could rely. Non-governmental organisations which pay attention to the promotion of equal treatment such as IDF¹⁹¹ for instance, often come from outside the CHT. Despite their intention they are stereotyped by the indigenous people as being biased in line with former experiences and other organisations. As the literature on peace-building claims, networking organisations provide good possibilities for establishing so-called peace alliances (Hoffmann 2000: 69). Such a networking organisation has been presented in Chapter 6.4 already: *Jhum* Aesthetics Council (JAC) tries to create ties to various actors in society across ethnic boundaries. Not just the different ethnic groups are taken into account, but Bengali artists from the plains support the organisation as well. Only one group has been left out, the settlers in the CHT. This can be explained by the fact that JAC is an organisation with a relatively intellectual background. Not anticipating that the Bengali people settled in the CHT are less intellectual, they have nevertheless been mainly poor landless farmers. The question of success is thus dependent on the status, the networking organisations have in society. If they are formed and backed by upper class intellectuals, the chances of integrating the opposing group are less in the CHT case. An organisation which is not ethnically segregated could not be found in the CHT.

NGOs can in fact contribute to peace-building, for example as human rights activists or in the field of democracy, as the experiences from other countries show (Klingebiel 1999: 31). But at the same time especially religiously based civil society actors can exacerbate cleavages between different groups. This has been shown in several parts of this thesis. The same phenomenon could be observed for example in Rwanda as well, as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda shows in its report. The churches have contributed to the outbreak of violence, which culminated in the genocide in 1995 (URC 1999: 9). The normative conception of civil society as a developmental goal (Neubert 1995: 409), as prevalent in development cooperation leads to the assumption that civil society actors are per se “good”, since they do not belong to the conflicting parties. It is extremely difficult to find any comments in the literature on practical peace-building which voice criticisms of civil society actors. The analysis has shown that civil society is often ethnically as much polarised as the governmental actors, because it is usually based on communities and the communities are characterised by ethnic identity. An additional

¹⁹¹ The NGO Integrated Development Foundation (IDF) has been the subject of Chapter 6.4.

aspect is the view of development cooperation as a resource. As in the case of governmental actors, donor activities provide first and foremost new resources. Especially local NGOs, which badly lack funds, hope to receive foreign donations. The NGOs are in a continuous struggle for this resource. Since ethnic divisions crucially characterise social structure, the conflict over donations may turn out to be ethnically motivated.

Development cooperation agencies can thus never be neutral in (post-) conflict situations. The choice of project areas and counterparts always generates perceptions among the local participants that the development agency is favouring one side. This happens due to the complexity of the local setting, the complicated structures between different actors involved and existing hierarchies between the conflicting parties. Each decision which is to be made will be opposed by one or the other group. An approach which should be applied in such cases, is choosing very stratified regions, as well as a broad variety of counterparts. Most important, development agencies should not just cooperate with governmental institutions, which are, as the analysis in chapter 6.1 and 6.2 has shown, usually partial, because they are under the control of the majority. But local as well as national NGOs are biased, or at least perceived as partial, as well. A broad spectrum of actors thus needs to be chosen, in order to ensure the most equal possible distribution of benefits.

7.2 Are Activities Always Controversial?

GTZ and BMZ jointly agreed that the project design should predominantly include traditional instruments of development assistance. It is commonly expected that development activities in principle support peace processes. Prior to the assessment BMZ and GTZ agreed on choosing an area of activities which is least controversial in order to avoid any perception of being partial (Revuelta 2000a: 5). What this means, can be illustrated by looking at the most “controversial” sector discussed in the CHT: primary education. The indigenous fraction insists in principle upon introducing the indigenous languages in primary schools as the medium of instruction, in order to balance the chances for those children whose mother-tongue is not Bengali¹⁹². This attempt is opposed by many fractions within the Bengali majority, who argue that everybody in Bangladesh must be able speak Bengali, since it is the state language¹⁹³. Intervening in this matter forces development agencies to get involved directly in highly politicised matters. Education thus becomes instrumentalised for political purposes. This argument is revealed by examples from other conflict cases, such as a education project in Kosovo, as well (Leuthoff 2000: 152). In the following I will demonstrate this problem by discussing GTZ’s anticipated areas of activities,

¹⁹² It is commonly argued that the drop-out rates among the indigenous children in the first years of primary school is much higher than among the Bengalis. The Hill People children are often not able to follow the courses because they do not speak Bengali.

which it considered to be “non-controversial”. Additional significance lies in the project idea of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which had been very controversially discussed in the field and will be presented in this chapter later on.

The GTZ fact finding mission of 1999 discussed the main developmental problems with local leaders and the people concerned. It was established that education, primary health care and income-generation as well as capacity building for the local institutions are the areas most in need of intervention. Measures in primary education as well as capacity building for the local institutions were rejected because of their “controversial character”. The assessment thus concentrated on possibilities of supporting the health sector and income-generating activities, because it was expected that these would be non-controversial.

Supporting Health Facilities in the CHT

In the expectation that the provision of health facilities is independent of any ethnic features, an assessment of the health facilities in the CHT was made. The assessment did not take ethnic aspects, such as the ethnic origin of the staff and the patients, into account. But these appear at least rudimentarily in the literature: the CHT Commission’s findings conclude that the health facilities in the CHT are concentrated in areas where mainly Bengalis are living. Concentrated in the district and *upazila* headquarters, especially the indigenous population of remote villages has no or difficult access to the hospitals and health posts, the majority of patients (about eighty percent) are Bengalis, as a doctor interviewed by the commission stated. Additionally, during the insurgency the indigenous people in several areas needed extra permission to purchase medicine (CHT Commission 1991: 101). Literature additionally shows that the health situation in the CHT is more difficult than in the rest of Bangladesh. There is in particular less access to safe drinking water in the CHT than in the rest of Bangladesh (UNICEF 1999: 38). UNICEF’s data also reveal that the overall health status of the indigenous population of Bangladesh is worse than the national average (UNICEF 1999). The fact that the health situation among the indigenous population is worse than among the Bengalis has been explained in the field as being due to the superstitions the indigenous population have. It was argued that the Hill People in remote villages would trust the traditional healers instead of modern western medicine. Again, the indigenous population becomes labelled as backward.

That access to health facilities is an issue which can be directly ethnicised from the indigenous side as well, is shown by the experience of a GTZ member during an indigenous women’s group meeting. The women clearly emphasised in the meeting that they would not share GTZ provided

¹⁹³ For the discussion of languages’ significance see the previous chapters, especially Chapter 4.

health facilities with their Bengali settler neighbours. If they were provided with a health post, it should exclusively benefit their own community. Another highly ethnicised component of health care is family planning. This is a prominent example prevalent in many conflict regions¹⁹⁴. Both communities fear that birth control¹⁹⁵ might harm their community for demographic reasons. The more children the community produces, the more secure is the community's survival and strength in future. Birth control is thus, as has been emphasised by interviewees, not to be propagated among the indigenous population, since the experiences of state attempts to suppress the minorities demographically have made this issue very sensitive.

The data collected thus show that supporting health facilities can turn out to be controversial, because assistance can be utilised for a group's interests. Even there many aspects can be found which are or can become ethnicised. The selection of activities is interrelated with the selection of project counterparts. Due to the historical context of the delivery of health facilities in the CHT, it could be expected that cooperation with governmental health institutions might enhance the overall standard of these, but at the same time there is the danger of supporting the unequal distribution of access. In fact it can be feared that especially the Hill People in remote areas would not profit from strengthening the existing governmental health facilities. Instead the Bengali population, which is concentrated in accessible areas, is expected to profit in the first place. NGOs in turn are bound to their communities of origin. Remaining neutral thus implies facing the challenges of a historical unequal delivery of health facilities. But experiences from other cases show, that the delivery of health services can have a peace-building effect, because it is of interest for all conflicting parties. Anderson (1999: 29) refers to the case of UNICEF, which facilitates inoculations of children, on which all sides in warring areas agree. Health, and especially children's health is thus perceived as a shared value, an issue of common interest. Anderson further illustrates the case of southern Sudan, where health workers were allowed to cross lines when food providers were not, because people accepted everyone's right to receive health services (Anderson 1999: 29). The implementation of basic health care projects thus can have both effects, it can divide and unite societies. Most important is that the improvement of health services is integrated into a broader package of different measures. This has been emphasised by local interviewees as well. Support for health facilities alone influences the structural inequalities in post-conflict regions only marginally. As the DAC guidelines (1997: 59) emphasise, health

¹⁹⁴ The problem of birth control has reportedly been observed in Rwanda as well.

¹⁹⁵ The issue of family planning and birth control is a very difficult issue all over Bangladesh. Due to the dense population of the country, it has been assumed that birth control would directly contribute to the alleviation of poverty. The population problem has thus been identified as the most difficult development problem in Bangladesh. Due to international pressure, the government implemented a family-planning programme, which had devastating consequences, because socio-economic development, as a necessary prerequisite for birth control, was not taken into account. Among others, "compulsory sterilisation" has been practised, the boundaries

activities need to be implemented in collaboration with the state, the community and local NGOs, in order to ensure the incorporation of social and community well-being.

Possibilities of Income Generating Activities

During the assessment most of the local people claimed that income generating activities would be the area most in need of assistance in the CHT. Especially the indigenous population lacks possibilities to generate income, and most of the Hill People rely on subsistence production. The complexity of economic development, presented in Chapter 6.3, is characterised by an ethnically determined unequal access to resources. When development activities focus on the promotion of income generating measures, it is thus necessary to intervene in this complex structure. Again, the question arises whether a development activity can ensure equal treatment of all ethnic groups in the CHT, when the patterns of economic development are ethnically that diversified. The stratification which characterises the situation in the Hill Tracts has, as analysed in Chapter 6.3, the occupation of distinct niches, which enable reciprocal (not necessarily equal) exchange as a consequence. While some ethnic groups, like the Chakma and Marma have partly a tradition of plough cultivation, others such as the Mru rely to a significant extent on *jhum* cultivation. Other ethnic groups, such as the Bawm, have specialised in pineapple production. Trade and market is dominated by Bengalis. If income generation thus is to be assisted, the components of a project need to be appropriately adjusted to the specific needs of the indigenous groups and the Bengali inhabitants alike. The needs are thus ethnically segregated, the activities need to be planned accordingly. This has been done to a certain extent during the so-called confidence building measures¹⁹⁶ after the assessment. The mission tried to take specifically ethnic priorities into account, although in a small scale. Nevertheless, by supporting in this case a Bawm community with the horticulture component, it again created an unequal situation.

The most significant aspect are the hierarchical relationships and unequal access to resources of the majority Bengalis and minority Hill People respectively. Again, it needs to be asked if a donor agency should focus on a strict equal treatment of all ethnic groups, or if the disadvantaged groups, i.e. the indigenous people need special attention, in order to balance economic inequality.

between voluntary and forceful application of family planning measures vanished. Jessen (1990: 135-155) describes and criticises the problematic of implementing the family-planning programme in Bangladesh.

¹⁹⁶ After the assessment the GTZ team leader implemented so-called confidence building measures. The intention was to indicate that GTZ really attempts to work in the CHT. The justification was related to the fact that many local people complained about donor agencies coming to the CHT for assessments and workshops, whereby no progress results. The mission decided on three components. First, the mission leader distributed mosquito-nets partly through NGOs and partly through the governmental health centres. Additionally anti-malaria and deworming drugs were supplied to the government health centres. The second component formed a deworming measure for livestock (cattle, goats, pigs and poultry). The third component had been a horticulture

Although available data claim that the indigenous people are unequally treated, others argue that the majority of settlers rehabilitated in the CHT are not better off¹⁹⁷. The settlers belong, it is asserted, to those rural populations which have usually been landless in their region of origin and therefore the poorest among the Bangladeshis. The Hill People instead are socially more stratified, since they are concentrated in the CHT. Their social structure includes all social classes, from elite to rural landless population. The difficulty thus lies in the fact, that, although the Hill People are a disadvantaged minority within the state, this need not necessarily be the case within the CHT. A donor agency needs to take all these different aspects into account. The dilemma thus consists of the contradictory demands either to give assistance to the people of the CHT in general, or to favour those who are regarded as disadvantaged. But the disadvantaged status of communities is a question of perspective, which is socially constructed. Each group and its members are part of a polarised system which determines the perception of equality and inequality, advantagedness and disadvantagedness. Hence, the distribution of wealth is a highly subjective perception. Planning thus is dependent on the selection of sources of information about the local context. When cooperating with the governmental facilities, equal treatment is endangered by the bias the governmental institutions have. When specific, disadvantaged communities are preferred, others claim that seen from another perspective, they would be disadvantaged as well. Hence economy is one of the most complex issues which can be intervened in.

Additional significance lies in the fact that possible income-generating measures were predominantly assessed in view of agro-economy. But land is, as has already been shown, the crux of conflict. Experiences from other cases show that projects for land use can aggravate conflicts again (Klingebiel 1999: 36). The prior solution of land conflicts is thus crucial. The Peace Accord implies the formation of a land commission, whose task is to clarify the legal problems of land use. This commission is not in force yet¹⁹⁸, and many land-conflicts are not resolved so far. Still many people live on illegal land, others are waiting to get their land back. Also DAC (1997: 59) points out that the establishment of local land-use planning mechanisms are most important in order to identify and evaluate alternative agricultural practices. Fahrenhorst et al. (2000: 265) emphasise too, that purely technical assistance in regions where indigenous people are struggling over land, without integration into the broad context of land problems, enhances conflict. Of major importance is to face the conflict potential, instead of negating it. Then, another aspect relates directly to the analysis in chapter 6.3. The empirical data have shown that modes of land

project for 37 Bawm families implemented by a local NGO. This included training from the Department of Agriculture, planting a certain amount of saplings by each family and the supply of fertiliser (Revuelta 2000b).

¹⁹⁷ How data, especially numbers, are used for the construction of reality by different interest groups, is a most significant aspect. While most of the literature is clearly biased towards favouring the indigenous population, there are some examples which argue in the opposite direction by applying quantitative analysis: Huq et al. (1999); Abedin (1997) and Siddique (1997).

¹⁹⁸ At the date of research.

use are diversified. In fact, the CHT face an environmental problem, which needs, due to dense population, to be solved quickly. Since the dam-construction land for agriculture has been scarce. It has been shown in the analysis that appropriate modes of cultivation, i. e. alternatives to *jhum*, have not been developed yet. Various approaches are being tested. The GTZ consultant focussed almost exclusively on horticulture, alternative modes were left out. Exclusively promoting the adoption of horticulture, as the analysis has shown, thus implies that people adopt a mode of cultivation which is neither suitable nor sustainable for the long term. But the difficulty lies in trading the products, rather than producing them. The major problem thus lies in the relationship of production and market. Forms of income-generation such as horticulture projects thus need to be supplemented by a package of other measures, improving socio-economic conditions, as well as by supporting innovative methods of cultivation (Roy 1998). For example the formation of and support for trade unions, storage and preservation possibilities need to be ensured, if the ongoing process of economic marginalisation is not to be supported indirectly through development assistance. This has been considered in the Appraisal Report as well: “the Project cannot control the development of infrastructure and markets in the CHT” (Revuelta 2000a: 38). Whether infrastructure and market development can ensure the improvement of conditions for all parties, will be examined in the following.

Infrastructure Development for Whom?

A crucial role among the donor agencies attempting to act in the CHT is the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Having a tradition in assisting the development process in the CHT¹⁹⁹, ADB has planned to implement a Rural Development Project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As it is the biggest programme²⁰⁰ to be implemented at present, the project has been subject to various discussions with donor representatives as well as with local politicians. Four components are proposed: Rehabilitation and development of rural road and market networks, community development activities, microfinance and capacity building. Thereby the most important and controversial component is the first one, which has been commonly labelled “infrastructure development”. ADBs project attempts to target poor shifting cultivators, landless farmers and very poor marginal families (ADB 2000: V). It is expected of the road maintenance measure that it will “reduce the absolute number of people living in poverty” by “developing the basic physical infrastructure and providing income generating opportunities in the rural areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts” (ADB 2000: 37). The justification comprises the argument that the “highly active cash economy in rural Bangladesh ... generates a high demand for rural transport and supporting

¹⁹⁹ It has already been previously mentioned that ADB has financed CHTDB’s activities to some extent.

²⁰⁰ According to information given in an interview about USD 80 million has been allocated.

infrastructure. Surplus farmers depend on the transport and marketing systems” (ADB 2000: 27). Further it is argued that improved infrastructure provides access to delivery of health, education, administrative and communication services for the target groups (ADB 2000: 27). This attempt is not specific to the CHT, but appears in the DAC guidelines (1997: 59) as well. There it is stated, that the rehabilitation of roads is “an important part of efforts to combat social exclusion and foster the participation of marginalised groups in social and economic life” (DAC 1997: 59).

The project plan in principle is based on the argument, which has been put forward in Chapter 6.3 as well, that the indigenous population is economically disadvantaged due to the lack of marketing facilities and infrastructure. Especially those people living in remote areas are cut off from any chance to take part in market and trade. Increased infrastructure thus enables them to participate, since they will be able to transport their surplus crops to the market places. Additionally it is expected that increased infrastructure will generate the establishment of market places in remote rural areas, where market facilities are almost absent. The target groups thus have the possibility to participate actively in market and trade. The micro-finance component of the project will enable the poor families to invest in the production of agricultural goods, while community development activities include the upgrade of small-scale infrastructure, identified by the communities themselves (ADB 2000: 41).

ADB’s plan has been subject to much criticism. The most important counter-argument against the improvement of infrastructure claimed by many critics is that a better infrastructure in the CHT would enable traders and middlemen from the plains to exploit the indigenous population further. The analysis in Chapter 6.3 has shown that the market economy in the CHT is dominated by Bengalis, who come predominantly from the plains. These Bengalis have the necessary networks, facilities and relationships to organise the trade of goods from the CHT to the centres in the plains of Bangladesh in order to market them profitably. The Hill People as the producers are dependent on the existing structures, which enable them to sell their surplus products, but at the same time they depend on the conditions proposed by middlemen and traders. These existing structures in many parts of the CHT result from former infrastructure development projects²⁰¹. This counter-argumentation has especially been stressed by the Chairman of the Regional Council and other JSS members. Many of the rural population instead argue, as does ADB, that the improvement of infrastructure is a basic necessity for improving rural people’s living conditions, because they would have the possibilities to increase production, but no transport facilities. Many villagers need to walk more than a day to reach a market place.

²⁰¹ For the significant role infrastructure development played in the CHT during insurgency see Chapter 6.3, see also Arens (1997).

The controversy reflects the complexity of argumentation. Attempts to improve infrastructure thus need to be seen in the historical context, especially in relation to economic inequalities existing between the minority and majority within the state. This is a very sensitive issue. Infrastructure only makes sense when the structural causes of this inequality are challenged as well. An aspect repeatedly stressed in the field has been assistance to indigenous farmers cooperatives by organising storage, transport and marketing. The people of the CHT stressed in particular the necessity of their participation in any development efforts. The emphasis was put onto community development approaches. An example given by interviewees are the Caritas activities in Bandarban. Caritas is applying a micro-credit approach, which concentrates on specific communities. Each community has a different credit-programme which focuses on its specific needs.

The problematic aspects of the examples presented stress in principle the difficulty of establishing exactly how third parties can intervene in polarised societal structures, which are above all characterised by a high complexity of interethnic relationships. There are not just two conflicting parties; the wide variety of different actors implies a multiplicity of interests, which need to be taken into account and balanced. The premise that third parties should act neutrally can never be achieved in reality. Each measure, each decision has advantages and disadvantages for every group, gives incentives and disincentives. This is especially true for the classical instruments of development cooperation and technical assistance. As in most conflict areas, the causes for conflict in the CHT are complex and also related to the role development efforts, aid and assistance have played in the past. Many inequalities have been produced by developmental measures. A comprehensive and coherent approach is therefore necessary to reach the root-causes of conflict (DAC 1997:13). It is immensely difficult to balance the different interests, demands and criticisms uttered by the various local actors with in the limited scope a single project provides.

A standard recipe for projects in post-conflict regions cannot be presented. Each case needs to be carefully assessed in view of the conflict causes and dynamics (Fahrenhorst 2000a: 14). Intervention of third parties in the form of developmental projects becomes part of the conflict context as soon as projects are proposed. This role of development assistance must be taken into account. The foregoing analysis has shown some dangers of interference, which can appear in regions characterised by similar conditions as well. A coherent donor approach thus needs to fulfil various prerequisites. First attention should be paid to the geographic and demographic distribution of the different groups in a conflict region. The CHT example shows that the selection of a project area is dependent on more factors than in non-conflict cases. Especially the spatial

distribution of ethnic groups is important to consider. Second, a broad variety of counterparts is needed. It has been shown that in polarised situations neutral counterparts are rarely to be found. The governmental institutions are often biased towards the majority within the nation. NGOs and other civil society actors can be ethnically segregated, depending on their origin. Third, the selection of activities needs a careful assessment, taking the needs and opinions of various ethnic and interest groups into account. Even sectors, which are considered to be not ethnicised, can have features which produce unequal delivery of services. Thus, a broad spectrum of activities must be applied. Fourth, economic development needs a careful assessment as well. Societies characterised by high ethnic complexity tend to develop economic niches, income-generation measures need to take the ethnic specialisation into account. Related to this argument is the question of unequal distribution of resources and access to them. Provision with infrastructure requires taking ethnic segregation into consideration and can benefit all groups only in an integrated manner combined with a broad set of income-generation assistance measures. Most important thus, as the literature emphasises as well, is the coordination of various donor activities (DAC 1997: 19-29). There must be a broad consensus among the main donor agencies, based on an intimate understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflict, in order to avoid counterproductive impacts of assistance (DAC 1997: 20). The various activities of the different agencies need to be complemented. Diverse approaches, a broad spectrum of activities and the integration of different actors on the local as well as governmental level might ensure that the impact of assistance is more productive.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to combine sociological analysis of conflicts with conceptions of development cooperation in post-conflict regions by applying the case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The sociological aspect focuses on applying the concept of ethnicity as the major category for analysis. Using a constructivist approach, ethnicity is explained as a constructed aggregation of political, economic and social factors and is therefore able to explain the complexity of conflict. The fieldwork was carried out in two field trips in 1999 and 2000 and during an internship at the German Technical Cooperation. The internship took place within a GTZ Appraisal Mission, which explored the possibilities of implementing a project for supporting peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The methodological background is thus based on the participation in a process whose focus has been the development of appropriate tools and instruments for development cooperation in post-conflict regions.

On the international as well as national level, the conception of peace-building efforts in development assistance is currently much discussed and well developed. The concepts for intervention of development assistance in (post-) conflict in general lack guidance for practical accomplishment, since peace-building is a field of action just recently adopted in development cooperation. Germany's development policy in particular pays special attention to the issue. Development policy and peace policy are put together in the framework of Germany's current government.

Most important for a planning process is the careful assessment of the local conditions. This includes the history of conflict, in order to understand the dynamics and process which have led to a violent outbreak. The CHT are characterised by high ethnic diversity, a feature which stands in contrast to the ethnic homogeneity of the rest of Bangladesh. The rise of conflict can be traced back to three different historical phases. First, the introduction of colonial administration by the British empire needs to be considered. Second, the execution of hegemony by the Pakistani government over Bangladesh influenced the CHT, and the Pakistani development programme for the region contributed to conflict between the different actors involved. The emergence of Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism after the War of Independence in 1971 aggravated the conflict. The nation-building process in Bangladesh was based on the construction of a common identity by applying a common language, culture and religion. The people of the CHT are different in all these respects. A counter movement for the preservation of these cultural values evolved, and conflict was maintained over more than 20 years.

The conflict was ended by a Peace Accord signed in 1997. The treaty implies the recognition of the former resistance movement and provision of a certain regional autonomy by the establishment of responsible institutions, such as a Ministry for CHT Affairs, a Regional Council and the reform of the already existing Hill District Councils. The pacification of the CHT has enhanced the opportunities for different interested donor agencies to implement peace-supporting projects in the CHT, whose goal in the first place is to contribute to development, because the CHT were neglected during the period of insurgency. This is also the goal of GTZ, whose project will focus predominantly on basic health care, income generation and community development.

On the basis of the empirical data, different aspects of the local setting have been analysed by employing the concept of ethnicity. These include the administrative structure, dynamics and relationships between different political actors, the economic structure of the CHT and the

significance of civil society actors. The analysis of the administrative structure shows that the centralist administrative system of Bangladesh has affected the relationship between the governmental institutions and the people of the CHT negatively; it reminds one of the administration of colonisers over colonised. The result is a sense of distrust towards the administrative institutions. The political actors within the CHT and in relation to the state are in continuous encounter. The major constellation of opposition is that between the government party Awami League and Hill People's JSS. The newly created institutions are struggling for recognition and capacities, their provisions are hampered by party related conflicts. The ethnicisation of the political parties and the institutions results in a struggle for power, which hampers the implementation of the Peace Accord extensively. Internal struggles among the Hill People's political parties have additional relevance. Segments which are opposed to the present Peace Accord, create a sense of dividedness among the people and endanger peaceful development. The economic structure of the CHT is characterised by ethnic segregation. Changes in the patterns of land use initiated by the governmental development institutions in the region exacerbated the already existing land problem in the CHT. As a result of demographic features and traditional economic patterns, the economy is divided into Hill People who are producing for the national economy and Bengalis, who are trading the products. Due to infrastructural deficits, the result is an unequal distribution of resources. The same is true for the internal market structure. The local markets are dominated by Bengalis, the indigenous people participate primarily as consumers. Industrialisation efforts as well as infrastructure development are also characterised by ethnic segregation. The civil society in the CHT, which is above all represented by NGOs, is divided into two dimensions. First, there are several active big national NGOs. But these are largely opposed by the political leaders of the CHT people. It is argued that the models applied by these national NGOs is not appropriate to the CHT for cultural reasons. Second, an active local NGO scene emerged after the Peace Accord. Although locally widely backed and accepted, these local initiatives are usually ethnically segregated. Frequently they have been formed on the basis of ethnic communities and attempt to benefit predominantly their "grass-roots".

Resulting from the analysis of the local setting, practical problems have been discussed. The examples have been chosen according to the experiences during field work. The crucial aspect is apparently the question of whether the donor's attitude is neutral or partial, an issue which is discussed in the context of post-conflict intervention quite often. The German-Bangladeshi government negotiations provide certain premises, such as the equal treatment of all ethnic groups. From this, the question of project-area selection and counterpart selection derives. In

order to ensure an equal treatment of all ethnic groups, the donor agency needs to challenge the gap between the spatial scatteredness of the different ethnic groups and practical logistic considerations. The selection of counterparts implies problems directly related to the issues analysed in Chapter 6.1 and 6.2. The governmental and regional institutions are ethnically segregated and in a continuous struggle for competence and responsibility. Additionally development cooperation provides resources, for which the local actors compete. Choosing the right counterpart thus is difficult, because either one or the other side disagrees. In implementing activities through NGOs, the issues of ethnic segregation need likewise to be taken into account. The analysis in Chapter 6.4 has shown that the NGOs are either considered as “outsiders” or are bound to their ethnic community of origin. Therefore, a project needs to include a broad variety of actors, in order to ensure the claim for neutrality. Activities considered by the project, such as basic health care and income-generation, raise the question of how to avoid controversial issues. Both areas of activity show the problem that development assistance can be instrumentalised by either one or the other side. Projects focusing on both areas need to be planned very carefully, in order to avoid one-sided benefits. An infrastructure project implemented by Asian Development Bank is highly significant too. This much discussed project has been examined in this thesis because of its importance for the local setting. Local people fear that the improvement of infrastructure will benefit predominantly the Bengali traders, rather than the indigenous people, since the Bengalis dominate trading structures.

Finally, some general considerations concerning development cooperation in post-conflict regions resulting from the foregoing discussion are presented: these have, by supplementing various examples from other cases, been put into a broader perspective. The major findings are that a donor agency must ensure that it includes a broad variety of actors, beneficiaries and implementing agencies alike. Separate activities must be complemented by package of various measures designed to avoid instrumentalisation of development cooperation. A crucial aspect is the coordination and complementation of assistance. The different donor agencies need to ensure that their activities are supplementing each other, they need to develop common attitudes and a coherent policy. Nevertheless, the success of development-cooperation in post-conflict regions is highly dependent on the local setting. Each case needs to be carefully assessed and monitored, in order to figure out the relevant conflict characteristics. Only then it can be expected that specific activities can contribute to the maintenance of peace.

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APPENDIX

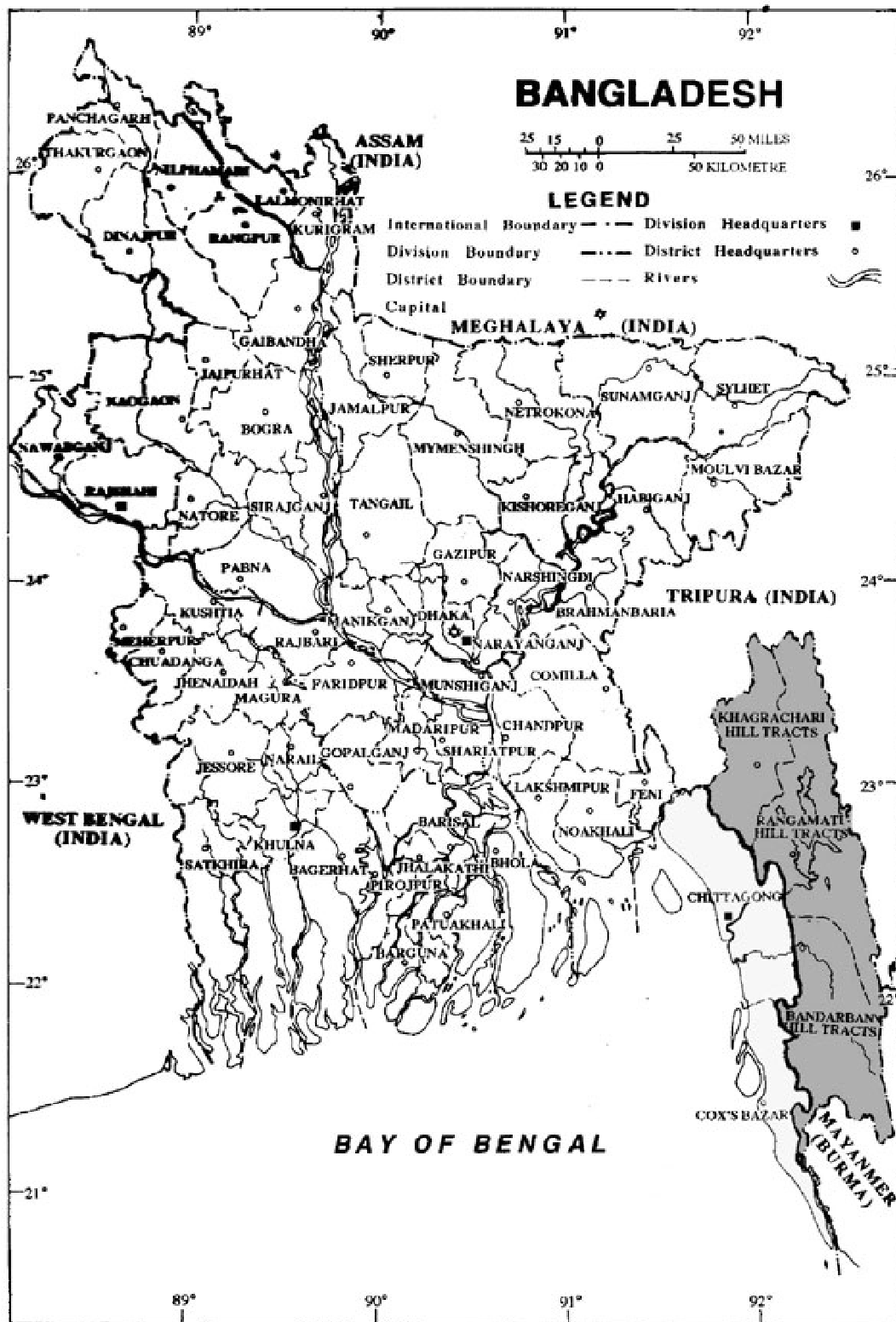
Glossary of Foreign Words

<i>bhat</i>	rice
<i>bini bhat</i>	jhum cultivated rice
<i>gusti</i>	clan lineages
<i>headman</i>	head of a mouza
<i>jhum</i>	shifting cultivation, slash and burn method of cultivation
<i>jhumia</i>	those people cultivating in the jhum
<i>karbari</i>	head of the villages
<i>khadi</i>	traditional Chakma dress which is a piece of cloth bound around the breast
<i>mouza</i>	union of several paras
<i>raja</i>	clan chief, king
<i>rajbari</i>	the king's residence
<i>sari</i>	long piece of cloth worn by women in South Asia
<i>shalwar kameez</i>	loose trouser shirt
<i>Shanti Bahini</i>	armed wing of the JSS, literally peace force
<i>Taka</i>	Bangladeshi currency, Taka 50 approximately equal to USD 1
<i>thami</i>	Marma skirt
<i>upazila</i>	organisational unit comprising several unions

List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Development Cooperation
BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
BMZ	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee
BSCIC	Bangladesh Small Cottage Industries Cooperation
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTDB	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board
CHTRC	Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council
CIDA	Canadian Development Cooperation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DANIDA	Danish Development Cooperation
DC	District Commissioner
DOF	Department of Fisheries
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
EC	European Commission
ERD	Economic Relations Division
EU	European Union
HDC	Hill District Council
HWF	Hill Women's Federation
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IDF	Integrated Development Foundation
IFRC	International Federation Red Cross Society
JAC	Jhum Aesthetics Council
JICA	Japanese Development Cooperation
JNA	Jhumma National Army
JSS	(Parbattya Chatragam) Jana Samhati Samiti, United Peoples Party of te Chittagong Hill Tracts
MCHTA	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs
MSF	Medicines Sans Frontiers
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer

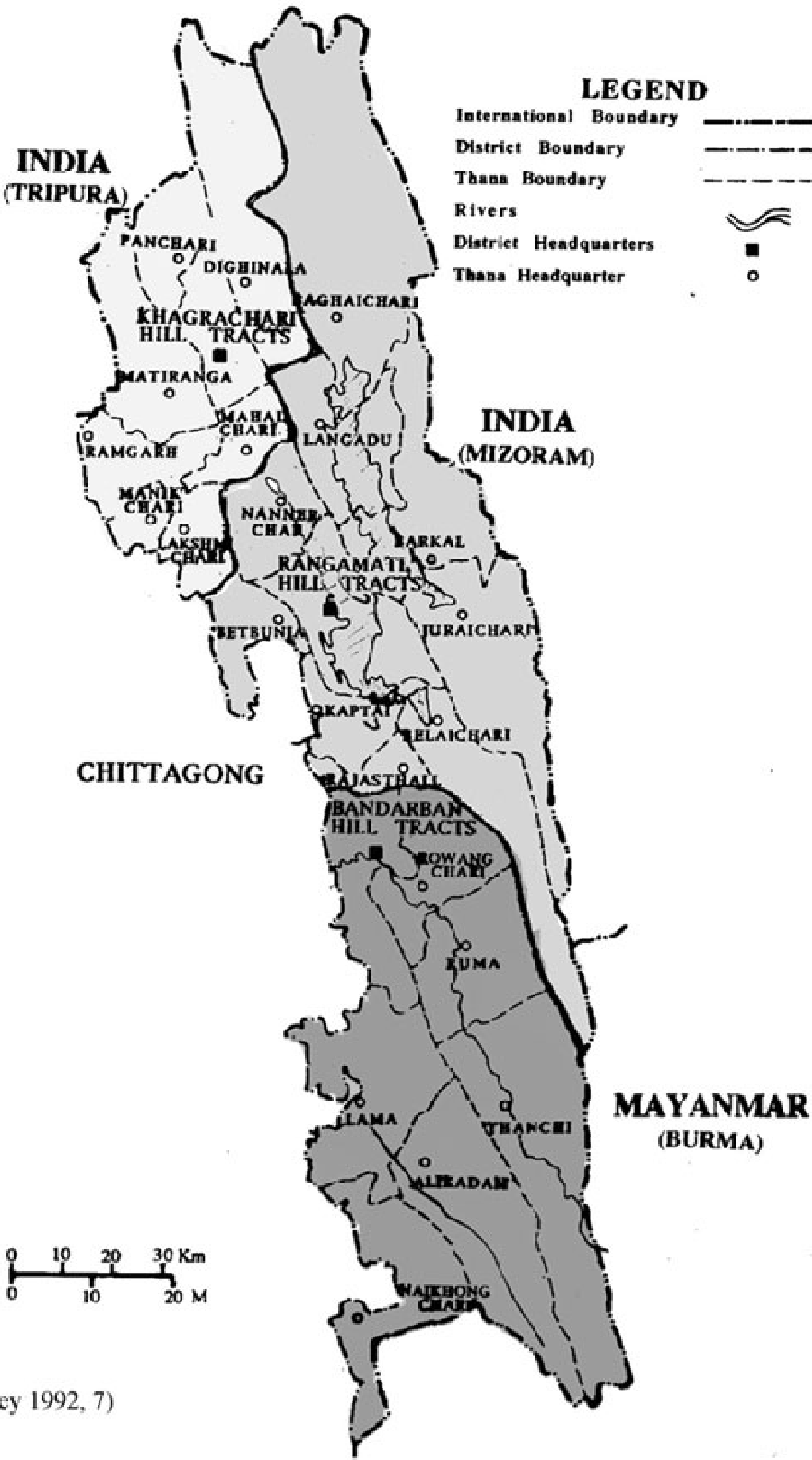
NORAD	Norwegian Development Cooperation
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCP	Pahari Chattro Parishad, Hill Students Council
PGP	Pahari Gono Parishad, Hill Peoples Council
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RC	Regional Council
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SALT	Sloping Agricultural Land Technology
SIDA	Swedish Development Cooperation
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, German Social Democratic Party
TC	Technical Cooperation
TCI	Tribal Cultural Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UMO	Upazila Medical Officer
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UPDF	United Peoples Democratic Front
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme



(Shelley 1992, 8)

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS OF BANGLADESH

KHAGRACHARI, BANDARBAN & RANGAMATI DISTRICTS



(Shelley 1992, 7)

