

*“Moanoghar (Hill Home) is the ultimate symbol of serenity and peace of the lifestyle of the hill peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). We dream of every children of the region having the peace, serenity and quietude of “Moanoghar” in their life.”*

*(Founding statements of Moanoghar in 1974)*

# Moanoghar

An Ideal Refuge for Distressed Humanity



*Students of Moanoghar*

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**Status:**

Moanoghar is a non-political, non-profit and voluntary social organization, located in Rangapani, Rangamati sadar.

It is registered with the Department of Social Welfare (No. Ranga-18(871)/80 on December 9, 1980) and NGO Affairs Bureau (No. 1637 on 14 April 2001).

**Background**

Moanoghar was founded in 1974 in Rangapani, Rangmati Hill Tracts by a group of socially engaged Buddhist monks and laypersons with the objectives of providing shelter and education to children in distress and misery, victims from the construction of the Kaptai hydro-electric dam in 1960s and the recent liberation war in 1971. But to appreciate its mission, a brief note on the socio-economic condition of the Chittagong Hill Tracts would be relevant.



*Moanoghar administrative office*

The construction of the Kaptai hydroelectric dam was a serious blow to the hill peoples of the region. Its creation presumably submerged under water one-third of all cultivable lands, uprooting thousands of people. The region, being hilly and mountainous, cultivable lands were already scarce. Furthermore, compensation arrangements for the victims were not properly implemented; as a result a vast majority of them received very little or did not receive any compensation at all.

At the aftermath of independence of Bangladesh, the situation in the CHT significantly worsened due to growing influx of refugees and internally displaced peoples of the nine month long liberation war. It is in this backdrop, Moanoghar was founded in 1974 by individuals associated with the Parbatya Chattal Bouddha Anath Ashram

In the following years and decades, the situation of the CHT further deteriorated; during this period of ethno-political turmoil, which literally left thousands of victims, Moanoghar proved itself as a safe heaven for hundreds of children affected by the nightmare of the conflicts.

### **Mission and Vision:**

Moanoghar was established with a vision of social engagement and activism for the



service of the poor, deprived and the destitute – particularly the children. Children are the most vulnerable of society. But, they also hold the promise of the future.

Moanoghar’s activism and service is rooted in the Buddhist concept of universal love and peace. The philosophy of non-violence is the key to realize this; among individuals, but also communities and societies, as well.

*A snapshot of Moanoghar campus with students*

Moanoghar also aspires to be the image of rich diversity, social harmony and peaceful co-existence of the people of diverse backgrounds in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

While its ambition is to retain and nurture this rich diversity, it also strives to impart this message of tolerance, compassion and mutual understanding to the outside world, which is very much reflective of the collective traditions and heritage of the CHT and its people of indigenous origin.

### **Objectives:**

The main objective of Moanoghar is:

- to provide general and vocational education and primary health care to indigenous poor, orphan and destitute children of CHT.
- to contribute in social, religious, educational, cultural and economic development of the indigenous people of CHT.
- to undertake programs of public welfare and to inculcate the idea of universal solidarity and peace among the peoples in CHT and Bangladesh.



*A Students hostel*

- to eradicate illiteracy and initiate income generating and employment projects for the people of CHT.
- to eliminate the root cause of poverty and offer the people their righteous shares in the resources of the society.

### **Brief Overview of Moanoghar**

At present there are 650 children living in Moanoghar from class I to XII, aged between 7 to 18 years. Out of this total number of children 425 are boys and 225 are girls. In addition a further 580 children attend the school from the neighbouring communities. Very much reflective of the rich ethnic diversity of the CHT, the children come from 12 different ethnic groups; Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Mro, Chak, Tanchangya, Pangkho, Khyang, Khumi, Lushai, Bawm and Barua (ethnic Bengalis who follow Buddhism)

As part of process of imparting education and providing shelter to the children, Moanoghar run and manages a number of other initiatives. A brief presentation of these initiatives is given hereunder:

- **Moanoghar Residential High School:** The school is providing education to more than one thousand children both residential and non-residential as of 2007.
- **Moanoghar Indigenous People's Language and Culture Preservation Program:** This project is run with the objectives of preservation and development of language and culture of the indigenous peoples of CHT. Five indigenous languages are taught as part of the regular curriculum of the school at present.

Also, there a number of 'cultural troupes' of the children, in addition to publication of regular school magazines, research journals and other publications.



*A cultural troupe of the children*

- **Moanoghar Mini-Hospital and Community Health Programme:** The hospital offers charity health care services to the people of the region. Moanoghar also operate community outreach services on primary health care. At present, the medical staff of Moanoghar go to three different nodes 2 days a week at each node and provide free medical prescription service, medicines and awareness orientation on sanitation and reproductive health.
- **Higher Education Stipend Program:** Under this scheme, Moanoghar provides monthly stipends for tertiary level students. More than 400 students have so far received stipends under the programme. After a gap of several years, the

programme has resumed from last year and currently 25 students are provided interest free loans. The refund of these loans serves for providing support to additional students.

- **Moanoghar IT Education Centre:** Moanoghar has an IT education lab with 35 PCs and other accessories. Children are taught basic computer lessons as part of regular school curriculum. In addition, special IT courses are provided to the young people from the neighbouring communities during week-end with token fees.



*Moanoghar IT Education Centre*

- **Moanoghar Library:** The library has a rich collection of books exceeding 10,000 volumes on Buddhism, Children, Education and CHT & Indigenous peoples. The library is a point of reference and resources in the region.
- **Moanoghar Pali College:** It provides students with courses on Buddhism and Pali language.
- **Moanoghar Technical School:** It offers courses on vocational and small entrepreneurship. The following courses are offered at present; mobile phone repairing, basic electronics (TV & Fridge repairing), carpentry, weaving, sewing & tailoring. 115 children are enrolled in the technical school this year.
- **Fishery, Nursery, Agriculture & Afforestation:** These are income generating projects of Moanoghar, implemented by the students of Moanoghar on lands/fixed assets that Moanoghar own.

As of now, more than **3000 students passed SSC** (school level education) from Moanoghar. A further **500 students have completed tertiary level of education** and are established in various fields of profession.