

Newsletter NGO COMMEET August 2019

- Visit to Balagram, Bangladesh, by COMMEET members Rabiul Islam and Sigfried Janzing and visit to Muhammad Yunus, February 2019

From 3 – 15 February 2019 COMMEET's representative for Bangladesh, Mr. Sigfried Janzing, visited Balagram Union Parishad, Jaldhaka Upazila, in the district of Nilphamari, in the north-west of Bangladesh. Together with our Bangladesh partner Mr. Rabiul Islam, Sigfried worked with the Balagram community, encouraging and preparing the implementation of the *10-steps method for community empowerment* by embedding Technical and Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship Education, working in this way towards sustainable regional development.

Possibilities for realizing this COMMEET pilot in Bangladesh were recognized and we agreed to return for another visit in July. Rabiul and Sigfried were kindly welcomed at the Dutch Embassy in Dhaka. Moreover, they were very pleased to be welcomed on 14 February by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, Chairman of the Yunus Centre, at Grameen Bhaban, Mirpur Dhaka. Muhammad Yunus is the founder of the Grameen Bank and a pioneer of microcredit and microfinance. Yunus looked forward to future cooperation as he was very positive about the potential of the COMMEET strategy. He was happy to announce his cooperation at any moment that the COMMEET Pilot on TVET-improvement in the Balagram Community would get started.



- Second meeting with Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Friday 29 March, Paris

On Friday 29 of March Jo Spaubeck, Ed Koster, Jos Hermans and Sigfried Janzing of NGO COMMEET met with Prof. Muhammad Yunus at Centre Yunus Paris, Les Canaux, during a visit of Yunus to France and Luxembourg. It was a follow-up meeting where a broader team of COMMEET presented itself. Further cooperation for the future was explored and the COMMEET members had the opportunity to explain about the NGO's backgrounds, goals and practical steps in Northwest Bangladesh.



- Visiting UNESCO-UNEVOC Headquarters BONN in March 2019

On 29 March a delegation of six COMMEET colleagues visited UNEVOC headquarters in Bonn, to coordinate our strategies on TVET-development and Entrepreneurship Education. We were cordially invited by Mr. Shyamal Majumdar, UNEVOC-CEO and his Chef-de-Bureau Mrs. Kenneth Barrientos (see the picture below).

During the meeting we discussed the growing network of NGO COMMEET and how it could contribute to UNEVOC strategic goals.

Mr. Majumdar welcomed the introduction of the TVET-Toolkit. He confirmed that this can become a very useful instrument in promoting Sustainable Regional Development.

Furthermore, Mr. Majumdar was very enthusiastic about our Pilot project to introduce this Toolkit in the local Community Balagram in Bangladesh. He offered his full support to make this pilot a success, because he believes in this new approach of Community Empowerment for better TVET.

On the other hand, UNEVOC's management asked attention for COMMEET's external presentation. They advised COMMEET to redesign its website by paying extra attention to the central issues:

WHY?

WHAT?

HOW?

And we, the COMMEET staff will certainly take this advice to heart.



- Welcoming numerous new colleagues at NGO COMMEET in April 2019

In April we sadly said goodbye to our dear colleague Monic Zwamborn who has so diligently supported the Community Empowerment philosophy and its practical implications. Monic was a perfect secretary during the first two years of COMMEET's existence; moreover, she was a wonderful colleague, who was always available for colleagues that needed her careful advice. From now on Monic will continue her partnership with COMMEET as a project colleague.

We also said goodbye to Monic's husband Ron Zwamborn, who served the NGO as a professional meeting host. Moreover, he worked as COMMEET's Acting Chair during the first 4 months of 2019. Ron remains a participant of the NGO as well and will be available for chairing strategic meetings.

We welcomed a lot of new participants in COMMEET inside and outside the Netherlands:

- Peter Ramakers will be co-chairing COMMEET, next to Jos Hermans
- Maarten Schrevel will take the lead in the Secretariat
- Ed Koster is going to support Rob Braeken in the field of Treasury.

For these and other appointments, please visit our website.

- Preparing Application for UNESCO Partnership in June 2019

In our working contacts with UN-bodies and especially with UNESCO, we noticed that our mission of working on Community Empowerment as a means of promoting Sustainable Regional Development is understood perfectly well all over the world. But we are a young NGO

and miss the necessary capacity for action. That is why we need to grow, not only in the number of staff, but also in experience and acknowledgments. Most important in this field is a UNESCO acknowledgment in its official Partnership Programme. This is why we have prepared and submitted the COMMEET application for a UNESCO-partnership during the summer months and are waiting and hoping for a positive reply from the Paris Headquarters this autumn.

- Revisiting Bangladesh for setting up the TVET-pilot in July 2019

The last ten days of July were dedicated to a renewed visit to the Balagram Community by Sigfried Janzing and Jo Spaubeck, together with Rabiul Islam. Target: to kick-start the TVET-Toolkit pilot together with the community, consisting of teachers, citizens, OfP NGO members, a women group leader and a local politician. The community dialogue identified three needs, which were described as input for the Community Development Agenda (CDA, step 4 in the Toolkit).

1. Raising and embanking the road to Bluebell primary school (300 meter) for enabling children to visit school during monsoon, when big areas of the country are harassed by floods (2019 – 2020)
2. Collecting and gathering plastic waste in the village to sell it for recycling (plan for 2020)
3. Establishing a ready-made garments local industry for job opportunities (research 2020).

The plan for the road to Bluebell school will be written by Rabiul and his team in August / September. Road construction should start in October when the rainy season is over. A team of 5 community members was established to support Rabiul Islam. Sigfried and Jo will stay in touch with Rabiul on a monthly basis.

So, the total pilot is planned to take about two years. But after one year COMMEET wants to start up a second project in Kano, Nigeria, followed by other communities around the world in the years to come. For this reason, a successful Skype meeting was organized during the Bangladesh visit with Ali Bukar Ahmad in Kano and Vasiliki Kioupi in London.

Jo and Sigfried furthermore visited

1. The Yunus Centre to meet CEO Lamiya Morshed and her staff, learn more about Social business and the Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing
2. The Dutch Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries, meeting with president Faruque Hasan to discuss future cooperation
3. The Dutch Ambassador, Mr. Jeroen Steeghs, to keep him informed
4. Mahmudul Hassan Khusru, CEO of Dataford Ltd. (Bangladesh branch of Dubai based Infocort) and Angel investor for Robo2mation in Bangladesh, who we met through Skype in April.

IUBAT, VC. Dr. Abdur Rab and dr. Selina Nargis to discuss cooperation, the establishment of SDG Academy at IUBAT and discuss the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding.

