

Partnership Development Justice

NETZ
বাংলাদেশ



Know how:
Education for a just world
Annual Report 2023

Together for Bangladesh



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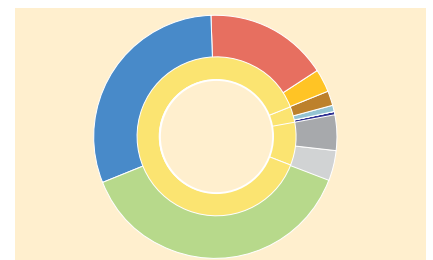
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Dear people committed to a just and equitable world,

Tania Aktar weighs a ball and a brick in her hands. The ten-year-old shows everyone that it is great fun to explore the difference in mass between the two objects. She and other children take centre stage at the open day, which focuses on natural sciences. Although the children's lives are challenging in different ways, they all learn together at their school. During lunch, the girls and boys ensure that even those who can't bring anything from home get something. And they pass on clothes – but not in front of the others to avoid embarrassing anyone.

Children like Tania know a lot about how to create a more equitable world. 48,145 children at schools supported by NETZ can learn without worries – and, as many parents in Bangladesh say, develop their sense of being human despite difficult starting conditions. This sense of being human also includes standing up for others and challenging injustice. This is what 21,100 human rights defenders at secondary schools and in village communities across Bangladesh and 2,397 people interested in global issues in Germany are doing, for example. People who must live in extreme poverty and are excluded from positive developments want to know: In NETZ projects, women learn how to generate new income. In doing so, they secure food for 89,214 people and 2,849 homes.

NETZ also learned a lot in the first year of our strategy 2030. For example, we have compiled our experiences from the new project region in the south-west of the country – such as how people can adapt to salinisation and deal with natural disasters. In this region, which has been severely affected by the climate crisis, nature is forcing a rapid change in thinking. This also applies to how we interact with each other: Increased conflicts, for example over water, are bringing forth new skills. People are engaging in non-violent conflict and dialogue, especially with government agencies.

While our partner organisations and we feel and live solidarity and unity, the global trend of division is also growing louder. Coexistence is being questioned as a burden and is to be reduced – within societies and between them. The cuts to the development funds in the German federal budget are one example. Our annual report shows: We are not deterred by this, remain close to the people and work with them to achieve concrete improvements. At the same time, we walk hand in hand with a community that knows: Being there for others is not a burden – it is uplifting! Because it teaches us time and again what it means to be human. In this sense, we are thankful for having the chance to work together.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Max Stille,
Executive Director



Niko Richter,
Director

Priority Area 1

Climate-resilient livelihoods

Members of the Hasnahena women's group in the village of Khanpukur display their seed bank. They cultivate a variety of local rice, spinach, and pulse crops.

Successes 2023

89,214 people

secure their food through established local self-help structures.

In 9,955 cases

women's self-help groups successfully claimed the social benefits they were entitled to from the authorities.

23,205 women,

who previously lived in extreme poverty now earn a sustainable income for themselves and their families.

9,355 women

educate themselves on the topic of agriculture and finance as well as women's rights and apply their knowledge in everyday life.

What we have planned for 2024

NETZ aims to provide more support to people living in regions with saline soils that are barely usable for agriculture. The goal is to create alternative income opportunities outside of agriculture through vocational training and counselling.



Solidarity in the fight against poverty is a core principle of the NETZ project focus ‘Climate-resilient livelihoods’. Village groups not only form the essential basis for each individual participant, but their commitment benefits the entire community.

The Hasnahena women’s group in the village of Khanpukur has set everything up: On a table you can see their seed bank, small colourful tins of grain and pulse seeds. Next to it is a large tub full of saved rice for times of need. And in front of it are clay nesting bowls in which ducks can incubate their eggs undisturbed. “We built all of this together,” says group chairwoman Loki Khatun. And it was all accomplished in just two years.

The Hasnahena group is one of 1,246 women’s associations that were active in the NETZ project focus area ‘Climate-resilient livelihoods’ in 2023. These are solidarity groups of women who were among the most disadvantaged. They had no means to find their own way out of poverty and deprivation, as is common in rural western Bangladesh. That’s why they’ve come together, and, with start-up support, they are establishing their own small agricultural initiatives to generate income and provide for themselves and their families – more than 23,000 women did so last year.

Loki Khatun’s retrospective illustrates what this means: before the group was founded, she herself was one of the poorest women in the village. Like all her fellow women, she had no land or crops to grow and lived on begged food and occasional hard labour for wealthy families. But shortly after the project started, she received several ducks as part of the initial startup support and soon achieved success with her poultry farming.

She earned her first income and, with project support, also planted a large vegetable garden.

The key for her and other group members: sticking together and learning together. The women expand their agricultural knowledge in training courses on animal farming and cultivation methods, and they meet weekly to share experiences. The Hasnahena women’s group independently plans work steps such as joint savings (small amounts of money and rice in the “rice bank”, which already holds 162 kilograms). They have also made pottery nesting bowls. These not only helped the project participants themselves to successfully breed ducks, but they are also sold in the village, generating additional income.

Meanwhile, other families in need benefit from the support of the women’s group: they can borrow from the rice bank. „This support is important – and it also ensures peace in the village,” says group chairwoman Loki Khatun, referring to their „seed bank”: „We store the seeds of pumpkins, beans, spinach varieties, and cucumbers. All of them are high-quality vegetables that we save here and that provide us and our families with wonderful food.“



The women in the group use duck nesting trays for their own breeding and sell them to others in the village to earn additional income.

Very good

The majority of project participants have deliberately built-up savings. In cases of illness, crises or natural disasters, they rely on these savings. They do not have to go without meals, nor are they forced to borrow money and go into debt.

To improve

Acting locally is a priority. This also applies to participants who purchase productive assets as part of the project. However, it is not always possible to buy livestock at local markets, which is crucial, as animals from other regions

are often more susceptible to disease.

Challenging

It is crucial for the project participants to provide their families with a secure economic foundation. As the pace of development varies

from household to household, some women still lack the capacity to engage with the authorities.

However, these interactions are also essential to address the structural causes of poverty in a sustainable way.

Leading the way

In 2023, ten project participants were elected to the Union Council (Union Parishad) of their localities. They now specifically advocate for the interests of disadvantaged people.

Partnership

NETZ is continuously strengthening its trusting cooperation with experienced local partner organisations – for example, through jointly organised training courses in the agricultural sector.

Participation

Projects extend their impact into the village community: participating women and families share their knowledge, enabling neighbours and acquaintances to find their own path out of poverty.

Empowerment

Contrary to societal norms, women not only take responsibility for their families but are also publicly recognised as important decision-makers.

Priority Area 2

Inclusive quality education

At the schools supported by NETZ, children not only study arithmetic, reading and writing. Students also learn about the animals and plants of their homeland, healthy nutrition and traditions such as classical dance.



Successes 2023

8,042 children

successfully complete primary school after grade 5 and are enrolled to attend secondary school.

394 primary schools

provide children with inclusive quality education. These include **34** Anandalok schools, **120** village schools und **240** state schools.

48,145 children

participate in pre-school and primary school education.

6,107

teachers, school social workers and members of school boards

are trained in new teaching methods and child-centred pedagogy.

What we have planned for 2024

We aim to support 28,800 children at an additional 180 state primary schools. For the first time, we will also be supporting educational institutions in the southern coastal district of Bagherhat, which is especially affected by climate change.



A place for learning, community, and personal development: NETZ-supported schools offer more than traditional classroom teaching. They embody a modern, creative approach to sustainable knowledge sharing.

I want to go to school like the others,” Surjo Pahan repeatedly told his parents. But for his mother and father, school was a burden: the family lives in poverty, belongs to an indigenous community, and is therefore marginalised. Surjo himself is affected by a physical disability. “School or no school, it won’t change his fate,” his parents used to say, keeping their son at home. As day labourers, they never imagined that Surjo would one day become an eager and curious student, now close to achieving his dream of finishing school. But it became possible – thanks to a committed teacher and school social workers at the NETZ-supported school in the village, who reassured the parents: there is a right to education for all children. And that’s not all: the project offers support services, making school attendance possible despite costs, for example for transport.

A school for all: Surjo with two classmates during Bengali lessons.



School is about more than just maths, reading, and writing. The NETZ partner organisations in Bangladesh see learning and knowledge transfer at primary schools as a means of personal development. This begins with the pre-school lessons offered at the schools. The goal is to convey content in a creative way. To achieve this, teachers receive regular training in child-centred pedagogy, adopt new approaches, and engage in dialogue with the children. School social workers play a crucial role, providing individual support for girls and boys like Surjo. They establish contact with parents and the neighbourhood and encourage the children. In this way, they ensure that the children attend lessons regularly.

One example is Rima Aktar. The young woman from the village of Uttarampur supports girls and boys from marginalised families who attend the NETZ-supported state primary school in the village. She helps the children with their homework and talks to parents who are unable to provide sufficient support for their children due to the struggle to make ends meet.

With their child-centred approach, the Anandalok schools serve as role models: the focus is not on traditional, teacher-led instruction. In the classroom, pupils often work in groups or pairs. Rather than rote learning, children and teachers discuss topics together and explore them further through role-playing activities.

NETZ supports three types of schools

Anandalok schools provide education for up to 180 children each (from pre-school to fifth grade). The village communities take responsibility for the schools.

State primary schools promote inclusive education. This means that children from families living in poverty can also take part in lessons. Social workers support them to prevent dropouts.

Village schools offer education in particularly underserved areas, accommodating 30 girls and 30 boys.

+ Very good

Thanks to dedicated teachers and social workers, less than three percent of children dropped out of primary school. This is a significantly lower rate than the national average in 2023.

→ Leading the way

The training of pre-school teachers at NETZ schools has been recognised by educational authorities nationwide and can serve as a model for teacher training at state education centres.

✈ To improve

Children from indigenous communities are marginalised in many ways – their educational situation is particularly precarious. NETZ is continuously

working to provide even greater support to these girls and boys on their educational journey.

🧠 Challenging

Educational projects are set to

be expanded to the coastal region of southern Bangladesh. In addition to pure educational work, the drinking water supply at new schools will also be ensured.

🤝 Partnership

Project participants such as teachers and parents, engage in discussions with other non-governmental and governmental actors on educational initiatives. This structured dialogue fosters new ideas.

🌐 Participation

NETZ schools embody child-centred, participatory learning methods. Children are encouraged to think independently and learn to take on responsibility through student councils.

👤 Empowerment

Parents and community members participate in school committees. They can positively influence the quality of local education, which leads to greater transparency in the daily work of education authorities.

Priority Area 3

Equal human rights

Human rights groups use various methods to address conflicts and resolve them non-violently. One such method is “actor mapping”: the group members write down the individuals involved in the conflict, along with those close to them. This forms the foundation for understanding the positions and needs of the conflict parties and for holding discussions.



Successes 2023

28,605 people entitled to social benefits

now receive social benefits that were previously denied to them.

5,520 students

at **184** secondary schools promote the rights of girls and women in student forums.

650 human rights violations

are documented and reported to state authorities.

21,100 volunteer human rights defenders

work in **824** human rights committees to combat discrimination and violence.

4,137 adolescent and adult activists

receive training on topics such as human rights, gender equality, and democratic dialogue with authorities.

500 female students

take part in self-defence courses and pass on their knowledge to at least ten of their peers, including classmates, friends and siblings.

What we have planned for 2024

Conflicts, injustice, and abuse of power threaten many social groups, particularly women and girls. Supporting those affected is an important task.

We therefore aim to extend our support to 234 human rights committees and 72 highschools.



Whether it's health, land disputes, or violence against women – human rights defenders support the local community in solving pressing issues. Their focus is always on the most disadvantaged people.

Radiyatul Jannat and Soruf Kumar are well aware of the challenges in their village of Dargapara: Hindus, Muslims, and indigenous people live separately from each other. Mistrust runs deep, and respect is scarce, leading to violence and conflicts over land and resource use. Many women have virtually no rights; dowry practices and early marriages lock even underage girls into this system. Meanwhile, state authorities are often overwhelmed or deliberately turn a blind eye, further fuelling structures of injustice. But it doesn't have to be this way! Radiyatul and Soruf, both 14 years old, are actively involved in the human rights group at their highschool, which was established through the NETZ human rights programme. There, they learn about the mechanisms of discrimination and abuse of power, and how these can be overcome. "We've learned a lot about human rights, women's rights, and civil rights," says Soruf.

"It's in the textbook too – but it wasn't until I joined this group that I understood what it really means for us," adds Radiyatul. They both take what they've learned and share it: in the schoolyard, at home, and in their neighbourhood. In doing so, they contribute to vital peace work within their community.

Young people, adults, senior citizens, housewives, labourers, and teachers – they are all involved in NETZ's human rights work. This work is diverse, with a local focus:



Very good

During the parliamentary elections in Bangladesh (January 2024), 647 human rights defenders were actively engaged in preventing rights violations and documenting cases.

Leading the way

Ronita Bala, an active member of the NETZ human rights programme, was awarded the prestigious "Begum Rokeya" Women's Rights Prize by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. She was honoured for her

dedication to promoting literacy, supporting marginalised social groups, and fighting against early marriages.

To improve

Digitalisation presents new challenges for human rights

human rights defenders and their village groups initiate efforts to tackle the most pressing local issues with the participation of the community – always with a special focus on the needs of marginalised and discriminated groups. They support this reappraisal and serve as an important link between the administration and citizens. The human rights groups help people assert their rights and address their concerns.

For example, in Doulatpur, the local human rights group successfully put an end to illegal drug trafficking. The village had become a hub for criminal activity, attracting criminals and leading residents into addiction. After speaking with a person affected, the village group involved the authorities and pressed them to take action. Smugglers were arrested. The individual, who received support, overcame his addiction and is now a member of the group himself.

In a community in the Taraganj region, the human rights group provided critical support to a family living in poverty who experienced immense suffering twice over. Their five-year-old daughter was abused by a neighbour. When the parents tried to report the incident, police officers dismissed them, allowing the perpetrator to escape. The village group organised protests, brought in higher authorities, and called for a human chain. Eventually, the police took up the case, and the perpetrator was charged. The village group continues to support the family as they work through the trauma they endured.

In the village of Poisafela, there is an infirmary. The problem: there was never any staff present, and the residents were unaware of the opening hours or who was in charge. The local human rights group organised a public meeting with the infirmary staff and the local administration. As a result, the authorities installed a notice board listing names, phone numbers, and fixed opening hours. Since then, no one has found themselves facing a locked door. Knowing what to do and where to turn is essential in supporting the local population through human rights work.

Challenging

According to observers, the space for civil society initiatives in Bangladesh has been further restricted. This has also made it more challenging for NETZ partner organisations to operate and network.

Partnership

South-South networking is strengthened through exchange visits to Nepal, joint working groups, and on-site discussions with human rights activists.

Participation

Young people committed to defending human rights participate in dialogue meetings with local authorities, where they express their concerns and demands.

Empowerment

The visibility of women as decision-makers in society is being strengthened. NETZ supports groups in making their valuable work known beyond the region.

Priority Area 4

Just transformation



Mafiya Begum with her husband on the banks of the Atrai River. Here, they have created 'floating beds' to grow rice. Even during extreme floods, rice cultivation is no longer an issue.

Success 2023

14,970

students

learn about climate change and its consequences in class. **270** educational institutions supported by NETZ establish and plant school gardens.

2,198 female project participants

develop adaptation strategies as part of a situation analysis on climate change and implement them independently.

2,849 female project participants

receive training on how to adapt their homes, which are threatened by the climate crisis. They insulate walls, reinforce cattle sheds, and create natural protective barriers using trees.

60 village groups

launch tree-planting campaigns, prompting **45** district administrations to also plant palm and neem trees to protect against drought and storms.

In **58** municipalities

deep wells for safe drinking water are being constructed at the initiative of village groups. In **33** municipalities, initiatives have been launched to repair the sewage systems.

What we have planned for 2024

Coastal regions in southern Bangladesh, where people have little or no access to clean drinking water, are coming further into focus. NETZ will continue to carry out analyses and studies on the impact of climate change on the livelihoods of the most affected groups – serving as a foundation for our future work.



The climate crisis is a massive threat. How can we prepare for it? In NETZ projects, people analyse imminent dangers. They learn how to prevent damage – and how to secure food, education and their rights.

“The balance is being lost,” is how Mafiya Begum describes climate change in one sentence. She demonstrates what this means outside her home in the village of Paikora. The Atrai River flows here, shaping the region and historically providing work for traditional fishermen. However, the water levels now fluctuate drastically between extremes: the river either rises metres high, flooding settlements and destroying farmland, or drops so low that barely anything can be caught, and fields can no longer be irrigated with river water.

Before this became a critical issue for Mafiya, a small farmer, and her family, she took action. During an agricultural training session organised by a NETZ project, she learned about climate-resilient farming methods and immediately put them into practice. She began growing climbing vegetables like pumpkins on the roof and in raised beds, and nurturing seedlings in mobile plant sacks until they were strong enough to be planted. Mafiya Begum also found a solution to a pressing problem: the lack of space to grow rice seedlings during floods. Together with her husband, she built “floating beds”: using banana tree trunks tied together, layered with brushwood, water lily leaves, and soil, they grew rice seedlings. The rectangular beds, one by two metres in size, float on the river for weeks and are naturally watered at the same time. Once the floodwaters recede, the rice seedlings are transplanted into the fields, where they continue to mature.

How people are adapting to climate-related changes in living conditions is just one of many examples. The commu-

nity is driving this transformation with great initiative, and the most important resource for it is knowledge. Project participants gain this knowledge through trainings in climate-resilient agriculture, which is a key part of the on-site work alongside climate and environmental protection measures. One example: saving water. Water supplies are becoming scarce in more and more regions due to increasing drought. Women are learning techniques to tackle this challenge. They grow mustard and other crops that require less irrigation, cover fields with straw to reduce evaporation, and water plants sparingly using self-made drip irrigation systems.

The climate crisis is already being discussed by children and young adults in schools. At NETZ-supported educational institutions, students explore climate change and its effects, such as the rising threat of dengue fever, as part of their science lessons. They not only learn about the risks and protective measures, but also share their findings with the village community during project days.

Contact with local authorities and government agencies is also crucial: Village groups consolidate the experiences of people in remote regions who suffer from floods, droughts, and heatwaves, and advocate for support. They hold the state accountable for providing assistance to those affected, in line with national climate strategies.

Climate-resilient tree: The papaya is commonly cultivated in NETZ projects. It grows quickly, is resilient, and produces high yields.



Very good

Climate justice is a central theme in all NETZ projects. The commitment of project participants, students, and human rights activists fosters greater societal awareness of the issue.

Leading the way

Women's groups in NETZ climate projects highlight the value of local agriculture through their work. By establishing “seed banks” and using indigenous varieties, they enhance crop diversity and demonstrate

how sustainable cultivation can succeed independently of large international agricultural corporations.

To improve

The effects of the climate crisis threaten people's livelihoods and

put past achievements at risk. In the case of weather-related disasters, the primary focus is on swift reconstruction.

Challenging

While project participants plant a variety of fruit and

crop trees around their homes, large landowners are increasingly cultivating mango and lychee trees on their land. These monoculture plantations require less upkeep and reduce income opportunities for agricultural workers.

Partnership

The fight against climate change requires many efforts. Project participants engage in dialogue with researchers and raise awareness about the situation on the ground.

Participation

The needs and knowledge of local people are essential for addressing the climate crisis. Adaptation to its effects is shaped in collaboration with those affected.

Empowerment

Local women, men, and children are taking action and actively protect themselves from the climate crisis. They serve as role models in contrast to an international climate policy that acts too hesitantly.

Priority Area 5

Disaster response

In the event of disasters, NETZ provides immediate emergency aid. Established preparedness structures cushion the impact and prevent people from falling back into poverty.

Floods and other extreme weather events regularly affect large parts of Bangladesh. In 2023, Cyclone Mocha struck the country's southeast coast, while river levels in the north rose dangerously high.

Relief structures established through NETZ projects helped mitigate regional challenges: Two Anandalok schools and three highschools were repeatedly used as flood shelters during the floods. Other primary schools in Gangachara and Rangpur, which were damaged by the water, were repaired.

In 2023, a total of 671 women received training in disaster management. Additionally, 405 people in NETZ project regions were trained as volunteer Disaster response workers. They support their communities with preparedness measures and maintain close contact with state civil protection authorities.



Disaster response training during a project.

Our local partner organisations provide immediate updates on the situation during disasters. In emergencies, they supply those affected with food parcels, hygiene products, and medicines.

How learning and knowledge shape the work of NETZ



Worm composting for agriculture.

Learning by doing

During agricultural training sessions, project participants and staff from our partner organisations work together to set up garden beds, climbing plants, or worm composting systems. In this way, agricultural knowledge is taught in a very practical way, adapted to the local conditions.



Students exhibit their handmade creations.

Inspire

In science lessons, children experiment with natural materials. They learn about the local flora and fauna through play and display their handmade models at school. On campaign days such as World Literacy Day, classes take part in demonstrations and show how important the right to education is for every child.



In dialogue with local authorities.

Be visible

Project participants engage others – for example, in the field of human rights. Representatives of public authorities are invited to training sessions to learn more about fundamental rights and how they apply in everyday life. For administrative bodies, gaining practical experience in human rights work is valuable.



Since its founding, our association 'Aktionsgemeinschaft Faire Welt' has been supporting NETZ. Every year, we donate a portion of the proceeds from our fair-trade products sold in the one-world shop. Climate justice is a major focus for us, as Bangladesh is one of the most severely affected countries. In 2023, we organised talks and school visits here in Weimar. It is important to us to raise awareness about the situation in Bangladesh – and about the impact NETZ is making together with local stakeholders.

Erna Arenhövel
Weimar



As a student teacher, I am a voluntary member of the NETZ working group on education. Last year, we organised several workshops for children and young people, mostly focusing on the Bangladeshi textile industry and Eurocentric perspectives. It was important to me to bring global and political issues of the present into the otherwise largely "apolitical" school environment. It also gave me valuable experience for my future work as a teacher.

Cedrik Wagner
Lichtenau



Measuring impact: Monitoring on site

In NETZ projects, families build their economic livelihoods, students pursue their education, and marginalised groups assert their rights. While these people are the actual actors, NETZ carries a huge responsibility as a result. This means that we constantly evaluate how NETZ projects are working, what is particularly effective, and where adjustments are needed. In other words, both NETZ and the communities on the ground learn with each project.

In 2023, independent experts from Bangladesh conducted an evaluation of 193 primary schools in remote rural areas, supported by NETZ through an education project from 2016 to 2019. The conclusion: "Impressive and sustainable successes" were achieved. These successes include safe school buildings, motivated teachers, extracurricular activities, and targeted support for children from disadvantaged groups. The holistic approach has significantly improved both the educational infrastructure and the quality of education at all school sites. The project also promoted dialogue and cooperation between civil society and authorities, making a substantial contribution to the dissemination of effective educational strategies. The evaluators particularly highlighted the involvement of the local population (in school management committees and education development committees). And: almost all children continue their education at local highschools.

A comprehensive project documentation published in 2023 with a focus on human rights highlighted the key successes of peacebuilders and their approach to non-violent conflict transformation.

The magazine, featuring detailed insights and colourful impressions of the work, is available at: <https://bangladesch.org/united-for-peace>



Another interesting external perspective in 2023 came from a visit by Engagement Global to Bangladesh. Two staff members visited NETZ's partner organisations on-site and engaged in conversations with project participants.



Political dialogue and networking

Civil society as a guardian of human rights



Development Must Consider the Needs of People and Nature

The gap is widening: prestigious projects like railway connections, bridge construction, and new power plants in Bangladesh are taking shape. While this strengthens the country's international standing, it also raises concerns about environmental and climate protection, as well as minority rights. Poverty reduction, a persistently urgent issue, is receiving little attention. As Bangladesh moves towards fixed targets on the international development index, civil society representatives stress the need to uphold human rights principles to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Development focused solely on economic indicators shifts attention away from the unfair distribution of income and extreme poverty, which continues to affect millions in the country. UN Special Rapporteur Olivier De Schutter highlighted this during his visit to Bangladesh in 2023, noting that "a group of the "new poor" is emerging. This is the result of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and severe inflation, as well as deeper structural issues. Analysts continue to point out that it is increasingly difficult for civil society actors to access spaces for open dialogue and participation; the scope for action is severely restricted. Bangladesh, as one of the countries most affected by the climate crisis, and faces ongoing challenges in dealing with its consequences. At the same time, environmental pollution and smog are on the rise. The resources of indigenous communities, which are being displaced by the creation of new special economic zones, are dwindling. In light of these challenges, the Bangladesh Forum organised a parliamentary visit to Bangladesh by members of the German Bundestag in 2023, and facilitated visits from Bangladeshi civil society to Germany and Europe.

Goals for 2024

The Bangladesh Forum will address Bangladesh's forthcoming graduation from its current status as a „Least Developed Country" and the related social challenges in various forums. Additionally, a visit by German political decision-makers to Bangladesh will be organised and accompanied.

The Bangladesh Forum Germany

The Bangladesh Forum consists of church-based development organizations, development and human rights organizations, academics and Bangladeshis living in Germany. It supports the concerns of civil society in Bangladesh. NETZ is entrusted with the coordination of the forum.



NETZ and its partners in Bangladesh have endeavoured for many years to advance poverty reduction and tackle the key challenges that threaten to undermine wellbeing and prosperity, including the climate crisis. NETZ is helping to build a „future-proof" Bangladesh where educational opportunities are open to all, where discrimination in every walk of life is a thing of the past and where civil society plays an active role. I warmly welcome the longstanding collaboration between the EU and NETZ and the impactful work that the organization is doing in Bangladesh. I take this opportunity to wish NETZ and its partners every success in your continuing endeavours.

Charles Whiteley
Ambassador of the European Union in Bangladesh



As a journalist, I have previously reported on human rights and peace work in our region. People from the villages come together, discuss conflicts, and find ways to address them. This work is immensely important. It stands as a symbol against violence and helps safeguard against the growing unrest, instability, and mistrust within society.

Azadul Islam Azad
Mohadevpur

Activism & Global Learning

Together for more justice



As part of her visit to Germany, Bangladeshi women's rights activist Meghna Guhathakurta (left) made a stop at St. Ursula Gymnasium in Freiburg.

Cross-continental solidarity: This encapsulates the ethos under which a multitude of volunteers at NETZ operate from Germany to promote human dignity and justice. The educational work challenges global power structures and fosters collaborative learning.

Talks on human rights across Germany, film screenings offering rare insights into the lives of young women in Bangladesh and sewing a dress for a church service: this is how diverse the commitment of NETZ supporters was in 2023. The focus of many campaigns, educational, and solidarity events was on the topic of gender equality. In workshops, discussion evenings, and project days, volunteers spoke about women's rights and feminism, reaching many people across Germany.

To mark the tenth anniversary of the "Rana Plaza" disaster, NETZ commemorated the collapse of the textile factory in Bangladesh in various ways. Online events and a special issue of the NETZ magazine highlighted the consequences for survivors, the bereaved, and the still precarious conditions in the global textile industry. Active members of the Evangelical St. Mark's Church in Butzbach initiated a series of events on the subject, screened the film "Made in Bangladesh," and presented a self-sewn patchwork dress made from used textiles as a symbol during a church service.

The 2023 NETZ General Assembly and Bangladesh Conference was held under the motto: "Who's in charge here? Feminist development policy meets women in Bangladesh". Academics, development experts, and numerous guests discussed the opportunities and contradictions of a value-based "feminist foreign and development policy", as outlined by the German government. They explored role models, the discrimination of women, and also shifted perspectives – illustrating the transformative power of the women's movement in Bangladesh, which has contributed significantly to positive developments in the country.

Edda Kirleis (Netzwerk Gender-Training) and NETZ Country Director Habibur Rahman Chowdhury's conclusion on the podium was clear: support from civil is crucial to achieving gender equality.

Climate change was also a prominent topic at many events. At the Michael-Ende-Gymnasium in Tönisvorst and the one-world-shop Germering, Habibur Rahman Chowdhury spoke about the importance, as well as the dangers, of rivers and water in Bangladesh. He also showcased how women-led households in affected areas are confidently facing these challenges through climate-resilient agriculture.

Our year 2023 in numbers

More than 2,300 volunteers

are active for NETZ throughout Germany.

2,397 children, young people and adults

take part in 37 events of global learning.

203 new supporters

have been campaigning for nutrition, education and human rights with NETZ since 2022.

32 parishes nationwide enable

a total of **1,542 children** in Bangladesh to attend school with the carol singers.



Development education

In 2023, volunteers and full-time staff involved in NETZ's educational work organised 37 events at educational institutions, one-world shops, church congregations, adult education centres, and city libraries. In addition, there were numerous events independently organised by various groups. The events, including those held in collaboration with the Weitblick student initiative and the Development Policy Network of Hesse, addressed topics such as climate change, children's rights, education, gender equality, and working conditions in the textile industry.

In an online discussion with participants from across Germany, Bangladeshi scholar Dr Hasan Ashraf critically examined the textile production chain and the Supply Chain Act. The textile industry was also a key focus during project days at the "Adorno" and Nord high schools in Frankfurt, "Otto Hahn" high school in Bergisch-Gladbach, and at Heidelberg College.

In autumn, NETZ invited the renowned Bangladeshi researcher and women's rights activist Meghna Guhathakurta. During a tour of Germany, she engaged in discussions with hundreds of attendees from Karlsruhe to Frankfurt to Weimar at lectures, action days, and evening discussions on topics including equality, rights and emancipation, climate change, and conflict.

Young, dedicated women captured the experiences and sentiments of women in Bangladesh during an educational trip. As part of the "Feminist Perspectives" series, they showcased the resulting film documentary at several events, including at the House of Democracy and Human Rights in Berlin, sparking discussions among the audience. They also led two seminars titled "Patriarchal Structures in Bangladesh" at the Women's Academy in Ulm.

Solidarity actions

The commitment to fundraising campaigns for the work in Bangladesh and India is significant and a strong sign of solidarity with the most disadvantaged people. In 2023, supporters used anniversaries, milestone birthdays, and other occasions to collect donations. Deutschorden-Gymnasium Bad Mergentheim and Michael-Ende-Gymnasium Tönisvorst organised charity runs and bike rides. One-world shops, church communities, and local initiatives held creative fundraising events, donating collections and proceeds from a clothing market to NETZ projects. Carol singers from 32 parishes in Germany enabled 1,542 children to attend school through their efforts – often with a personal touch, as shown by the Heilig Kreuz parish in the northern Black Forest, where children sent letters to their partner school, Matia Das, in Bangladesh. Supporters in 2023 once again included the Vienna Development Aid Club and the AK 5% Düsseldorf self-taxation group. The latter gained special insights into supported projects in Bangladesh during a live video conference:

students active in human rights groups and Akramul Haque, Director of the NETZ partner organisation DAS-COH, presented the projects supported by the AK group. Service clubs in Germany and Austria, such as the Rotary Club Villach, also supported the work in Bangladesh.

Several supporter groups celebrated milestones in 2023 and have been long-standing contributors: the one-world shops in Alzey (40 years), Schwalbach and Weimar (30 years each), and the Fair Zülpich association (20 years). NETZ visited them in person to offer congratulations and acknowledge their crucial support. The Development Aid Club celebrated its 50th anniversary, an event NETZ attended in Vienna. The one-world shop in Tauberbischofsheim, another long-standing supporter, teamed up with the "Gesangsoase" to organise a Christmas carol service as a unique fundraising initiative. Many church communities remain engaged, such as the St. Bonifatius parish in Wetzlar, which has supported children in Bangladesh through carol singing for 25 years. The interactive NETZ engagement map on the German-language website showcases supporters and events in different regions, making it easier to foster connections.

Public relations

With information on politics, society, economy, and culture in Bangladesh, as well as global development issues and the organisation's activities, NETZ's public relations work reaches a wide audience. The NETZ homepage is a unique German-language source of information with reports, interviews, background texts and analyses. We also share updates through monthly newsletters and press releases. In 2023, German and international media reported on our work a total of 59 times. The NETZ magazine is the leading German-language publication on Bangladesh. In 2023, issues were published on the 10th anniversary of the 'Rana Plaza' disaster and on non-violent conflict transformation in human rights work.

Volunteer service

Since 1991, NETZ has been sending young people to Bangladesh to learn and work with our local partners. As in previous years, the volunteer programme was suspended in 2023 due to the security situation in Bangladesh. NETZ is actively lobbying the relevant authorities to reassess the situation and is working to resume the volunteer service between Bangladesh and Germany as soon as possible. André Schönhardt has been serving as a federal volunteer at the NETZ office in Wetzlar since August 2023.



Through their Advent carol singing and the donations raised, volunteers in Tauberbischofsheim supported the NETZ priority area "Climate-resilient livelihoods".



Women's rights activist Meghna Guhathakurta during her tour of Germany in Wetzlar.



NETZ visits the Evangelical St. Mark's Church in Butzbach.



School project day on the topic of the textile industry.



Children from the Heilig Kreuz church community have sent letters to their partner school in Bangladesh.



Active and creative in educational work: the NETZ working group on education.



The youngest take part: Event at Weimar-Schöndorf Elementary School.

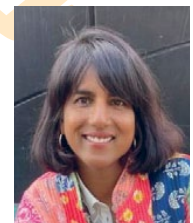


Together with the one-world shop Alzey, NETZ presented the exhibition "Every Tenth of a Degree Counts".



For many years now, I have walked the streets with carol singers to bring people the blessing for the New Year and collect donations for NETZ. Supporting our partner school in Bangladesh has always been a matter close to my heart. Because education breaks the vicious circle of poverty, disadvantage and dependency. I am also very grateful that NETZ speakers frequently visit our community to talk about living conditions in Bangladesh.

Susanne Schmid
Wetzlar



Because of my Bengali roots, but also as a European, it is important to me to stay connected to my country of birth through NETZ and to support its important work. I do this both personally and professionally through my work as a teacher at the Hugo-Eckener School in Friedrichshafen, where we have been supporting an Anandalok school in Bangladesh for more than ten years.

Delara Steguweit
Friedrichshafen

How we work

Organisational structure

Three principles of NETZ



Partnership

We work together and at eye level with the people on the ground. We reflect and break through donor-recipient relationships and live appreciation.



Participation

Our projects focus on the specific situation on the ground and are based on the knowledge and ideas of the local people, for whom we work. They themselves implement the projects.

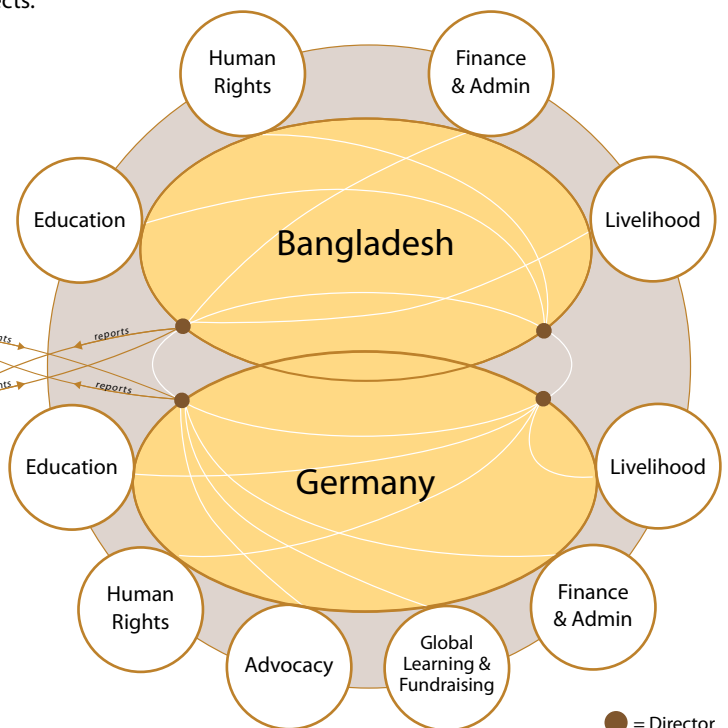
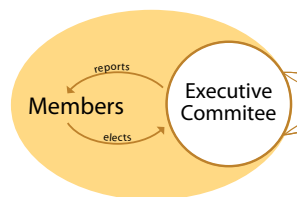


Empowerment

We stand for self-determined, emancipated and sustainable development – for people who lived in poverty, who were marginalised and who experienced violence.

Association

NETZ Partnerschaft für Entwicklung und Gerechtigkeit e.V. (Partnership for Development and Justice) is a registered association (Reg. No. VR1790, Register of Associations at the Local Court of Wetzlar) and pursues exclusively charitable and non-profit purposes. The association has 254 voting members (May 2024). As the supreme body, the annual general meeting decides on the principles of NETZ, amendments to the statutes and the acceptance of the annual financial statements. It elects the honorary Executive Committee (EC) for a period of two years and the honorary auditors, who may not be members of the EC. The EC decides on the annual budget, principles of project funding and the policies of the association. The EC appoints the management, which is bound by the approved budget and policy documents, the statutes of NETZ and the decisions of the EC and the general meeting.



Offices and employees

NETZ employs 15 (12 positions) full-time staff in Germany and 22 in Bangladesh. The monthly gross basic salary in Germany is 2,940 euros for a full-time position and increases according to the degree of responsibility and competencies. Every two years, the salary is increased by 70 euros up to a maximum of 350 euros. In addition, all full-time employees receive 120 euros for each dependent child. In 2023, the gross annual salaries of the directors were 62,380 and 63,940 euros.



The new NETZ Executive Committee, since the 2024 annual general meeting with two chairpersons (from left): Dagmar Leboch, Martina Herzog (Finances), Ingo Ritz, Anna Cijevski, Dr Kathrin Quellmalz (Chair), Dr Bernhard Höper (Chair), Manfred Krüger.

Contact points for protection and complaints:

NETZ consistently advocates for human dignity and ensures ethical standards in the organizational environment in Bangladesh and Germany :

www.bangladesch.org/en/protection-and-grievance-redress

Gender/Discrimination

NETZ does not tolerate any form of sexual harassment, gender-based violence or discrimination. This is based on our gender policy with a binding code of conduct.

Gender focal person:

Sara Khatun (Dhaka office)

gender@netz-bangladesh.de

Child protection

NETZ is actively committed to the welfare of children and does not tolerate any form of child abuse, maltreatment or exploitation.

Child Protection officer:

Md. Abul Akram Tuhin (Dhaka office)

childprotection@netz-bangladesh.de

Commitment that lasts: The NETZ Foundation

The NETZ Foundation ensures the sustainability of work in Bangladesh: it complements the direct funding of ongoing projects, provides protection against unforeseen risks, and promotes innovative approaches to poverty reduction. The foundation is managed in a fiduciary manner; the foundation's assets are invested exclusively in ethical, ecological, and social financial products. You can support the NETZ Foundation with unrestricted foundation, with a revocable gift or with a bequest.

www.bangladesch.org/en/netz-stiftung/



Financial Report 2023

Income 2023

The association's income in 2023 amounted to 4.74 million euros. Donors entrusted NETZ with a total of 518 thousand euros. Donations and membership fees form the foundation and are a prerequisite for applying for other funding, and thus for the overall work of NETZ. Government funding in 2023 amounted to 3.67 million euros, with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) remaining the main donor. Both total income and government grants were approximately one-third lower than in 2022. The key reasons for this include the postponement of project funds to the following year and the fact that no new projects could be launched in Bangladesh in 2023. Church grants for NETZ's work amounted to around 189 thousand euros, while grants from private institutions totalled 315 thousand euros.

Expenditures 2023

NETZ allocates its funds to two statutory purposes: (A) development cooperation, particularly with Bangladesh, and (B) global learning and international understanding. The expenses for (C) advertising, association and administration serve both of these statutory purposes. In 2023, NETZ spent 3.85 million euros – 88% of total expenditures – on development cooperation with Bangladesh, India, and Nepal (A). Of this, 38% was directed towards the priority areas of 'Climate-resilient livelihoods' and 'Just transformation', 31% towards 'Inclusive quality education', and 16% towards 'Equal human rights'. The costs associated with political dialogue, focusing on promoting the issues of Bangladeshi civil society, accounted for 3% of expenditures. Global learning and international understanding (B) accounted for 128 thousand euros, or 3% of total expenditure.

9% of total expenditures, amounting to 408 thousand euros, were used for donor communications, applying for public funding and grants, reporting, as well as general administration and organisational work (C). Personnel and operating costs are directly allocated to the respective area in accordance with the standards of the Donation Seal of the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) in line with the actual expenditure of time and money. Personnel costs in Germany amounted to 760 thousand euros (2022: 674 thousand euros).

Situation and opportunities 2024

NETZ does not receive any structural funding and makes project commitments to partner organisations, and therefore to the people in the projects, before the necessary donations for a project have been fully secured. NETZ can only meet its responsibility towards the people in the projects through its deeply connected and highly dedicated network of supporters, as well as its consistently successful project work, with significant on-the-ground commitment. In 2023, NETZ was able to reliably fulfil its commitments and maintain the long-term financial stability of the organisation. Additionally, reserves were further built up to safeguard partner organisations and offices, at least in the short term, during times of crisis. Since 2022, the NETZ Foundation has supported project work and development. Thanks to this solid foundation, NETZ can focus on continuing its important development work and will make every effort in 2024 to mobilise further financial support for urgent civil society initiatives in South Asia, despite declining budgetary funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Income in €

1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

Income in € 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023			2023		2022
			Earmarked revenues to be used for		
			Development projects	International understanding	
		in %			
Donations (excluding carol collections)	518,483.06	11.0	518,366.56	116.50	653,274.75
Financial Donations	518,483.06		518,366.56	116.50	653,274.75
Membership fees	19,166.04	0.4		19,166.04	18,389.67
Government grants	3,674,440.56	77.5			5,669,023.78
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	3,502,480.56		3,472,480.56	30,000.00	5,456,221.23
zivik Funding Programme (financed by German Foreign Ministry)	168,060.00		168,060.00		211,002.55
The Federal Office of Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions	3,900.00		0.00	3,900.00	1,800.00
Donations from church-institutions	188,700.00	4.0			453,260.31
Action Committee Service for Peace	3,700.00			3,700.00	1,000.00
Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service	11,000.00			11,000.00	115,830.00
Kindermissionswerk: Carol singer campaign	151,500.00		151,500.00		204,933.31
Misereor	22,500.00		22,500.00		131,497.00
Grants from private organizations	314,848.03	6.6			352,279.77
AK 5%, Düsseldorf	7,837.50		7,837.50		7,800.00
Apo-Bank Foundation	0.00		0.00		4,967.00
Childaid Network Foundation, Königstein	0.00		0.00		16,892.76
Ensinger-Foundation, Nufringen	103,490.00		103,490.00		53,245.00
Development Aid Club, Vienna	116,825.53		116,825.53		114,351.27
German Doctors, Bonn	0.00		0.00		27,855.75
24 Gute Taten	0.00		0.00		67,800.99
Familie Nowak Foundation, Usingen	25,000.00		25,000.00		0.00
Schöck-Familien-Stiftung	12,000.00		12,000.00		4,564.00
Rivera Foundation, Bochum	12,445.00		12,445.00		15,225.50
Rotary Clubs in Germany	37,250.00		37,250.00		39,577.50
Other: Income of the Dhaka office	4,097.89	0.1	4,097.89		6,350.00
Participant fees for meetings and encounter programs	3,785.00	0.1		3,785.00	509.50
Sales of magazines and media, fees, rental income	7,070.00	0.2		7,070.00	6,308.55
Other operating income (wage continuation, health insurance, etc.)	6,787.02	0.1	6,787.02		17,551.05
Interest	1,881.08	0.0	1,881.08		0.00
Total income	4,739,258.68	100	4,660,521.14	78,737.54	7,176,947.38



Project participants in Bangladesh and India raised a further **100,648.48 euros** in 2023 to finance their projects.



In 2023, People active for NETZ have spent more than **27,800 hours** working voluntarily for justice.

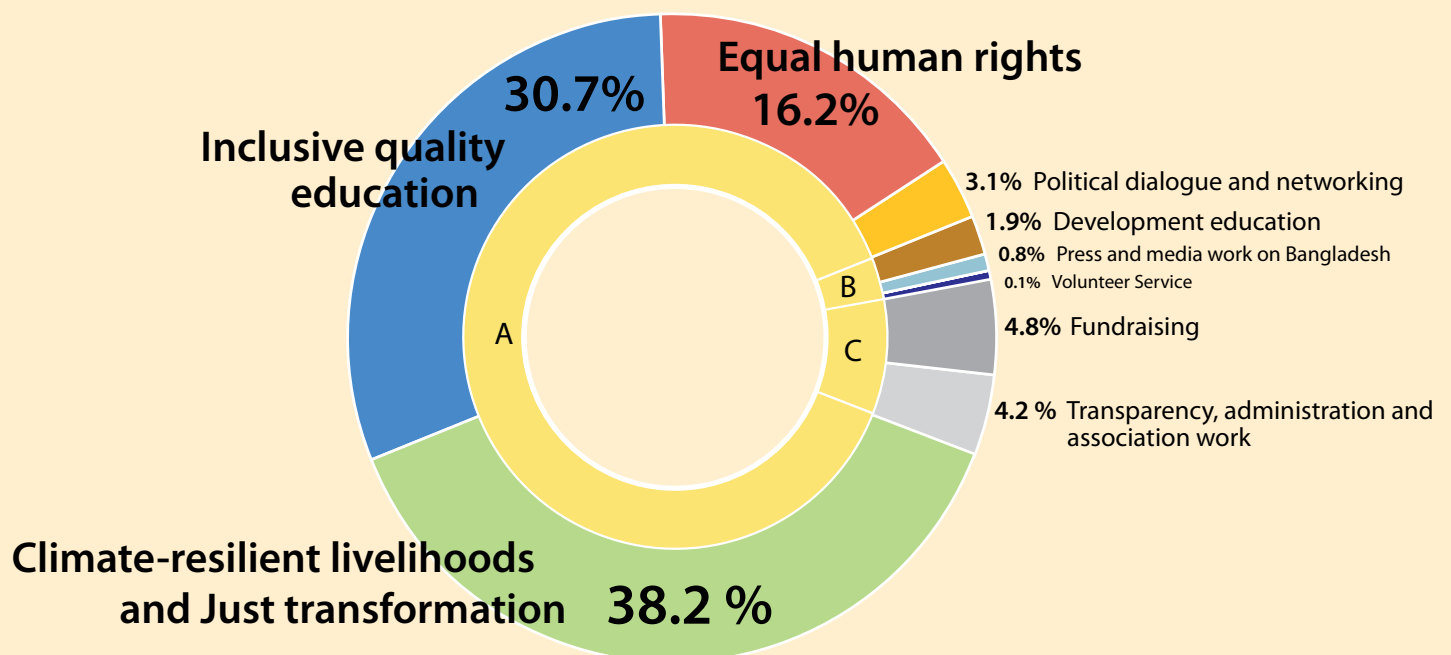
Expenditure in €

1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

	2023	in %	2022
A Development cooperation	3,988,068.63	88.2	5,934,719.83
Financing of development projects	3,847,599.88	85.1	5,791,093.99
Climate-resilient livelihoods	1,726,738.01	38.2	2,941,492.71
Inclusive quality education	1,388,489.42	30.7	1,803,456.55
Equal human rights	732,372.45	16.2	1,046,144.73
Political dialogue to strengthen civil society in Bangladesh	140,468.76	3.1	143,625.84
B Global learning and international understanding	128,406.71	2.8	117,914.98
Development Volunteer Service in Bangladesh and Exchange Programs	3,344.70	0.1	6,660.26
Development education in Germany	86,356.87	1.9	77,462.92
Press and media work on Bangladesh in Germany	38,705.14	0.8	33,791.81
C Administration, fundraising, association	408,276.34	9.0	377,729.55
Fundraising and public relations	216,159.95	4.8	197,912.72
Transparency, administration and association work	192,116.39	4.2	179,816.83
Total expenditures	4,524,751.68	100	6,430,364.36

Allocated personnel costs in €

A Development cooperation	403,950.28
B Global learning and international understanding	73,539.88
C Administration	121,407.88
Fundraising and public relations	161,552.76
Sum	760,450.80



Balance sheet as of 31 December 2023 in €

	2023	2022
AKTIVA		
Fixed assets	2,325.00	4,245.00
Office equipment	2,324.00	4,244.00
Apartment	1.00	1.00
Current assets	1,628,225.18	1,460,873.30
Bank, cash and advances for expenses	1,626,018.31	1,456,666.43
Receivables and other current assets	0.00	2,000.00
Rental deposit	2,206.87	2,206.87
Total assets	1,630,550.18	1,465,118.30
PASSIVA		
Own contribution as of 31 December 2023	1,553,718.55	1,339,211.55
Operating reserve	500,000.00	400,000.00
Free reserve	121,172.55	99,721.55
Reserve for development cooperation	654,370.03	569,370.03
Association capital	270,119.97	219,559.23
Results brought forward	8,056.00	50,560.74
Provisions	22,833.43	27,667.67
Other provisions	22,833.43	27,667.67
Current liabilities	53,998.20	98,239.08
Income tax and social security	8,379.20	7,072.69
Towards personnel	0.00	447.39
For projects in Bangladesh: Liabilities to partner organisations	45,619.00	90,719.00
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	1,630,550.18	1,465,118.30

Balance sheet 2023

NETZ's fixed assets amount to 2 thousand euros for office equipment and an apartment donated to the association. NETZ's current assets, including bank and cash balances, amounted to 1.6 million euros as of 31 December 2023. At the End of 2023, the operating reserve was 500 thousand euros, and the free reserve amounted to 121 thousand euros. The reserve for development cooperation projects amounts to 654 thousand euros and the association's capital to 270 thousand euros. Both items were summarised as a reserve for development cooperation until the 2022 balance sheet and are now listed separately to for simplification. The operating reserve was thus increased by 100 thousand euros, the free reserve by 21 thousand euros and the reserve for development cooperation by 85 thousand euros. The results brought forward amounts to 8 thousand euros. Other provisions, particularly for vacation days not taken, amount to 23 thousand euros. At the end of 2023, NETZ had current liabilities of 54 thousand euros – of which 46 thousand euros are

due to projects in Bangladesh. Further liabilities exist for payroll tax and social security in the amount of 8 thousand euros.

Annual financial statements 2023

The annual financial statements of NETZ have been properly prepared in accordance with the German Commercial Code (HGB) and the guidelines of the DZI and the Code of Conduct on Transparency, Organisational Governance and Control of the Association of German Development NGOs (VENRO). Christine Radestock, the volunteer auditor elected by the General Assembly of Members, reviewed the 2023 financial accounts at the Wetzlar office on 15 May 2024. Her audit report confirms that the expenditure was made in accordance with the statutes and the principle of economic efficiency. The members' meeting on 13 May 2023 commissioned SBBR GmbH Wirtschaftsprüfungs-gesellschaft Jens Hilberseimer, Wetzlar, to audit the 2023 annual financial statements. On 26 April 2024, the auditing com-

pany reported based on the findings of the audit that the annual financial statements of NETZ e.V. for the 2023 financial year comply with the requirements of German commercial law and give a true and fair view of the net assets, financial position and results of operations in accordance with German principles of proper accounting. The independent auditors Aziz Halim Khair Choudhury, Chartered Accountants, Dhaka, have audited the annual financial statements of NETZ's country office in Dhaka for the year 2023 and certified its regularity on 17 April 2024.

Charitable Status

NETZ is recognized as a charitable and non-profit organization due to the promotion of development aid and international understanding according to the last exemption notice of the tax office Wetzlar (tax no. 3925051825) dated 11 March 2022 and is exempt from corporate and trade tax. The exemption is granted retroactively every three years.

Transparency



The NETZ-team in Dhaka and Wetzlar



Seal of Approval

The German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) has awarded NETZ the DZI Seal of Approval every year since 2002. Tested and recommended: The DZI certifies NETZ with the award of this seal after a thorough examination:

- transparent, efficient and effective structures and processes
- seriousness of the fundraising
- a low share of advertising and administrative expenses in total expenses

Is my donation making a difference?

Working effectively and cost-efficiently is a core principle at NETZ, driven by our responsibility to the most disadvantaged people. Your donation does make a difference! This is ensured by professional project planning and oversight from our teams in Bangladesh and Germany. NETZ adheres to the VENRO Code of Conduct on Transparency, Organisational Management, and Monitoring, the VENRO Code Development-Related Public Relations, as well as the

guidelines of the Initiative Transparent Civil Society and the International Statement of Ethical Principles of the German Fundraising Association. We keep you informed about our work through our website, newsletters, and quarterly donation updates. At NETZ, personal dialogue is key, whether at events organised by us or our supporters. That's why we do not work with commission-based fundraisers, nor do we purchase donor lists or invest in expensive advertising campaigns.

From every euro received in 2023

	88 ct
	went to projects in Bangladesh, India and Nepal
3 ct	
went to global learning and International understanding	
	9 ct
	went to administrative work, advertisement and NETZ association

Turn 1 € into 6 €

For every euro you donate to support people in Bangladesh and India, we are able to use 6 euros on the ground. This is possible because NETZ applies for government and non-government grants, making full use of available funding. Take part – together, we can turn one euro into six!

NETZ is member of

- Association of German Development non-governmental organizations e.V. (VENRO)
- Bangladesh Forum Germany
- Action Group Service for Peace (AGDF)
- Development Network Hessen e.V. (EPN Hessen)

Promoting equitable education



For **65 €** a year, a child can attend primary school.
Your regular donation makes a lasting impact.
With **34 €**, a set of books can be provided for the school library, bringing the joy of reading into free time as well.

Donation account/IBAN

Volksbank Mittelhessen
(BIC: VB MH DE 5F)



DE82 5139 0000 0000 0062 62

www.bangladesch.org/en/donation

NETZ Partners and Projects

