GTZ is a limited liability company under German law and belongs wholly to the Federal German Government. It is a non-profit enterprise and receives the majority of its commissions from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), but other ministries avail themselves of its services, too. International institutions and foreign Governments also commission GTZ to implement projects and remunerate such services directly (Reimbursable Technical Cooperation).

There are approximately 1,230 employees at the Head Office in Eschborn near Frankfurt. Roughly 10,700 staff members including, 8,300 national experts and support staff work in some 125 countries. At present there are offices in almost 65 countries.

In Bangladesh, GTZ has a long record of Technical Cooperation (TC) with its counterpart and partner-organisations. We have witnessed more than a quarter of a century of partnership in different sectors and areas.
What is "Technical Cooperation" and what does it mean?

"Technical" comes from the ancient Greek *techne*, meaning skill or ability. This is reflected in the development policy of the FRG, which states that "technical assistance aims to boost the performance capacity of individuals and organisations by imparting and mobilising knowledge and skills and by enhancing the general conditions, in which these are applied."

To achieve this ambitious objective, GTZ has to operate along the guidelines and priorities as set by the BMZ:

- poverty reduction
- protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources
- education and training
- women in development

with the underlying principle of providing help for self-help.

While these guidelines remain valid, the new German Government defines development policy as peace policy and puts the promotion of peace, crises prevention and conflict management as well as global structural policy at the center of its approach.

In Bangladesh the bilateral TC started in 1967/68 with a central cattle breeding station in Savar. Other projects which came up in due course were related to food security, agriculture, telecommunication, railway technologies, health and family planning, assistance to marginal farmers,
geological advisory services to Petrobangla, training of power plant technicians and industrial promotion, to name a few.

Generally speaking, and this does not only apply to Bangladesh, in those days many projects had a stronger "hardware" component and they were often managed by expatriate advisors, who assumed line and executing functions instead of remaining advisors to counterparts.

In the course of our partnership and in line with the international discussion, new approaches such as basic need and appropriate technology appeared on the development agenda. Gender issues and environmental aspects gained more and more ground and are now integral part of development cooperation. So are questions such as ownership of projects, participation of beneficiaries, good governance, human rights, development oriented national policy and the role of NGOs, all being factors regarded as essential for sustainable development.

Consequently the German TC has undoubtedly become more political and "software" oriented. Today our bilateral TC-partnership in Bangladesh mainly focusses on the following sectors:

- Health and Family Planning (Bogra; HPSP);
- Comprehensive Primary Education (Kurigram and Bogra);
- Rural Infrastructure (rural roads, markets/growth centers, community development) in Tangail and Rangpur; and
- Promotion of the Private Sector (DCCI; SME, Product Design Center).
In addition, TC is being provided to the seed sector and to Bangladesh Railways.

What is our experience of development partnership with Bangladesh?

• Have we – our Bangladeshi counterpart institutions and GTZ – achieved our objectives?

• Have we reduced poverty, protected the environment, enhanced the economic and social conditions of the poor, helped individuals and organisations to develop their creative skills?

• What does our experience tell us?

In the following and in a very summarised way some conclusions in terms of our achievements, but also constraints and problems are reflected:

Achievements

1. In terms of measurable impact in the sectors we have

➢ contributed to Bangladesh's achievement to significantly reduce the population growth rate (1.8 %) through mainly training and institution building;

➢ facilitated the exchange of goods and services in the rural areas by establishing rural growth centers and by maintenance of rural roads;

➢ improved basic health services for the rural poor and households by community based assistance;
strengthened the primary education system by means of a comprehensive approach, which ensures parents' participation in the management of schools;

increased national food production by supporting the seed sector to produce high quality seed;

contributed to the worldwide replication of the Grameen approach by funding exposure programmes and strengthening the training potential of Grameen Bank;

improved communication and transport by assisting the telecommunication system and training of Bangladesh Railway's manpower in the maintenance of line locomotives; and

created employment opportunities and generated income through support to the DCCI and promotion of small and medium-enterprises.

2. In terms of visible changes related to institutions/attitudes our achievements are:

building up knowledge and skills at different levels (i.e. GoB-institutions, NGOs, self-help groups);

strengthening capacities and managerial capabilities in the private sector and training small and micro entrepreneurs;

to embed the idea of participatory planning and implementation of projects in our partner institutions and target group organisations; and

empowering the beneficiaries, partner NGOs and other local institutions to increasingly articulate their demand for public (extension) services and private suppliers.
Constraints, Problems, Concerns

1. The people

The most important actors are those people and groups who have taken the improvement of their living and working conditions into their own hands. They should assume as much responsibility and influence as possible in the preparation and implementation of development projects, because ultimately only they themselves can produce necessary and sustainable changes.

>> However, the political environment is sometimes opposed to participation <<

2. The political level

Our TC is part of a political process which serves to bring development policy concepts of the FRG in line with the interests of the GoB. The responsibility of the GoB for the development of the country is the basis for any lasting success. The main responsibility is to create favourable national framework conditions with a view to allow individuals, groups and projects to mobilise and implement their creativity.

>> Experience shows that due to slow reforms and sometimes lack of will to implement reforms at different levels, projects and beneficiaries cannot always act in an effective and efficient manner, thus missing their objectives <<
3. Implementing Agencies

One of the most important prerequisites for successful TC is to cooperate with the right implementing agencies. Because of the complexity of development issues, today a "diversified counterpart structure" is needed in most projects, seeking to involve as much as possible suitable NGOs and other actors in the implementation. Some members of implementing agencies, rather than creating favourable conditions, still see their primary role in regulating economic and social activities.

>> We have to contend with the reality that it is sometimes difficult to put institutional diversification into effect. Sometimes the projects are forced by their objectives to involve a specific executing agency, even if this agency shows little interest in cooperation <<

4. GTZ

TC is supposed to contribute to development efforts. This expresses GTZ's conviction that partner responsibility is essential.

>> Despite decades of cooperation we have not yet managed to make our partners understand that there is no such thing like a "GTZ project." Furthermore our partners often expect funds without TC <<