

Luxembourg students in Bangladesh: When the West meets the world's climate frontline

Through the Connected Schools Project organised by Friendship NGO, a team of 12 students and teachers from Luxembourg recently visited Bangladesh's chars and interacted with local residents to learn what life in a climate-prone area looks like



This November, the world came together in Belém for yet another global climate dialogue—COP30. It concluded with great splendour. Every year, world leaders, activists, and policymakers take part in this dialogue. Yet the question remains: what tangible outcomes emerge from such lavish discussions?

People living in the char areas face a constant threat from riverbank erosion and flooding. They have limited access to education, healthcare, and electricity, which contributes to higher rates of poverty compared to the mainland. Many char residents are poor, often landless, and forced to migrate regularly due to erosion.

Although the Western world is far more responsible for carbon emissions than countries in the Global South, the truth is that they know very little about what a climate-hit life actually looks like. They rarely get the chance to witness this reality with their own eyes.

However, a group of young students from Luxembourg—one of the world's richest countries — recently had such an opportunity. Through the Connected Schools Project organised by Friendship NGO, they visited Bangladesh to witness what life in char really looks like.

The team consisted of 12 members — three teachers and nine students from the three participating schools. They arrived in Dhaka on 30 October and departed on 7 November. During their trip to the north, they visited Friendship's intervention areas, including schools in Batikamari and Sannasir

'No human being deserves to live like this'

So, what does life in a climate-prone char look like through their eyes?

"Back in Luxembourg, where we come from, we often talk about climate change, but it is all very theoretical and feels distant. By interacting with vulnerable people and listening to their stories — what they have lost, how many times they have had to rebuild their houses, and the new techniques they must come up with — we have witnessed the reality firsthand," said Casia, a teacher at Lycée Guillaume Kroll.

"It is quite clever and impressive actually but very heartbreaking at the same time," she added.



The reason people living in chars are still happy is not that they are free from suffering, but because they have learned to live with it. Photo: Courtesy

Noah, a student from Lycee Technique d'Ettelbruck, observed that people there do not have anything but they are still happy.

"No human being deserves to live like this," he said.

When asked how she felt about meeting her European friends, the smile on Israt Jahan Eti's face showed that her excitement outweighed her struggles.

"For the last few years, we have been communicating with our European friends virtually. This time we meet them in person, and this multiplies our joy, gives a strong feeling of togetherness, and reinforces our commitment of working collectively for the planet", said Eti, a Grade 10 student at Friendship Secondary School at Sannasir char.

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Secondary School at Sannasir char.

The reason people living in chars are still happy is not that they are free from suffering, but because they have learned to live with it. Bangladesh has earned a reputation as a global leader in climate change adaptation.

However, all the students believe that adaptation alone is not the solution.

"Adaptation is fine as an immediate response. But in the long run, it can be counter-productive. It can make things worse. If they always simply adapt, it means the rest of the world is not caring at all," explained Lara.

Agreeing with her, Noah added, "It justifies the polluters' deeds for who they are suffering. One should not suffer for another's wrongdoings."

Friendship's commitment to climate

For Friendship NGO, this trip was nothing new. Its decades-long journey has been defined by a deep commitment to climate resilience and supporting vulnerable communities.

After a successful pilot in 2021 involving six French schools and three Friendship schools in Bangladesh, the Connected Schools Project expanded from 2022 to 2024. It has engaged students from France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Belgium, and Cambodia.

The project aims to go beyond geographic, linguistic, cultural, and technological boundaries, fostering understanding, collaboration, and reflection on climate change.

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"The project has raised students' awareness about environmental issues, encouraged empathy, and supported ethical, interdisciplinary learning. They learned about climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and environmental practices while also improving their digital, language, and communication skills," mentioned Esmeralda Chupin, Friendship connected schools project coordinator in Luxembourg.

Notably, the organisation recently won the Earthshot Prize 2025 in the 'Fix Our Climate' category for its integrated, community-led development model. The recognition came for its approach of combining nature-based and locally-led solutions to build climate resilience.