

Alberta-raised money Aug 30/84 reaches Bangladesh class

Supplying knitting and sewing machines to the Bangladesh Mahila Samity, a fellow member of the Associated Country Women of the World, has also rewarded the sponsor, the Alberta Women's Institutes.

Beryl Ballhorn, public relations officer for the AWI said the project has helped women in Bangladesh acquire new skills, while AWI members gain new friends and a feeling of kinship with the Samity members.

The project began following the ACWW Hamburg meeting in 1980 on the suggestion of former president Marie Plaizier, whose daughter had been in Bangladesh's capital, Dacca, and was aware of the need for training.

When the AWI learned the Mahila Samity needed knitting and sewing machines to train women to help support their families and gain some independence, \$4000 was collected. Arrangements with the Canadian International Development

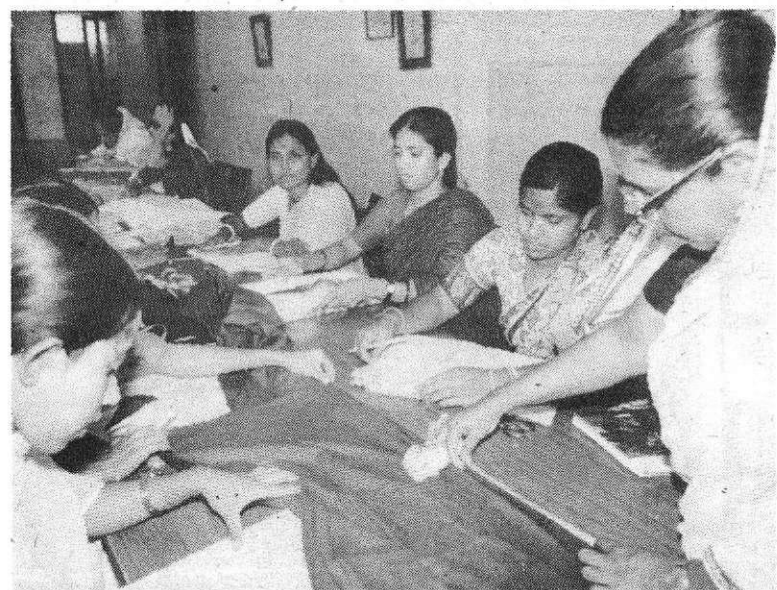
Agency, which is responsible for administration of the project, were handled by Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. Through CIDA's matching grant system, AWI's \$4000 swelled to \$16,000.

Ballhorn said trainees are interviewed and selected for admission. Classes are held for six months under trained instructors and Samity supervisors. After six months of training, three days a week, the women are certified. Some are then employed in garment factories while others enter domestic projects of their own. Their work is also sent to the Mahila Samity sale centre.

There are six training shops in operation, two in Dacca where 22 sewing machines are used, one in the village of Manikid and two at Joar Shahara. Thirteen knitting machines are in the Dacca centre, one at the remote interior corner Shaskikar and one at Chandpur. Ballhorn said that gives 240 women the opportunity to receive training annually.

The project is closely supervised and now that progress reports have been received, the final \$3000 has been sent by FWIC. It will be followed by CIDA's final payment to Mahila Samity covering administration costs.

Although the project is over as far as AWI is concerned, Ballhorn said it is gratifying to know the training opportunities will continue in Bangladesh.



Learning to cut out garments is serious business for these Bangladesh women.



Mahila Samity photos

Bangladesh women learn to use sewing and knitting machines provided by the Alberta Women's Institutes to the Mahila Samity.