



Women Overcoming Poverty

Budget: \$19,778 for the first year of the project. Fully funded.

Update: Bangladesh has a population of 170 million people. More than 50% of the people are living below the poverty line and those living in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged. The aim of this project is to equip rural communities by improving literacy through functional education, self-help group formation, economic empowerment and encouraging behavioral change.

During this period another 200 women have completed the 8-month functional education course. They can now read and write their name, address and simple documents as well as do basic arithmetic. This brings them a sense of dignity within their community. 40 savings groups continued to meet on a weekly basis. Awareness sessions were carried out in the areas of women's and children's rights, disaster risk reduction, disability mainstreaming and government entitlements.

Teaching materials and teacher support was provided for 3 local preschools. Training sessions were conducted in business development and loan management as well as on communication, advocacy and networking.

Some group members have had to withdraw their savings due to floods and other urgent needs which has been a major challenge for savings growth. There was confusion in some areas where new groups were formed where people had been previously cheated out of their savings. Trust was established over a period of time and now there are 10 new savings groups.

Shilpi (pictured above, right) is one of the many local women to complete the educational course. Her husband is a farmer and sometimes pulls a rickshaw van. They have 2 children and were finding it impossible to manage the family expenses. Shilpi went on to complete a sewing course and formed a local savings group. After saving some money she look out a loan to buy a sewing machine. She started practising by making clothes for her family and then received work from her neighbours. She has opened a mini shop in her home, sells cloth and also teaches other women to sew, giving her extra income. She is now able to maintain her childrens' education costs.

Thank you for supporting these women who are being educated and working hard to raise their families.

