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Completion Report

BGD-SYM-WOP-P03, Central northern Bangladesh
Reporting Period: January 2020 to June 2020

Women Overcoming Poverty

Budget: Year 3: \$20,000. Fully funded.

The Project:

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 was to equip rural communities by improving literacy through functional education, self-help group formation, economic empowerment and encouraging behavioral change. COVID-19 lockdown occurred part way through the final six months and delayed the completion of some activities. Our partner is working to overcome some of the backlog.



Outcomes and Impact:

- The ten newest functional education groups (200 people) continued their 8-month course until lockdown was imposed in March 2020. Catch-up classes are planned in coming months.
- Self-help groups were advised on how to access social support and benefits, which enabled them to contact various support services during the COVID-19 crisis. Sessions were also held on hygiene and social distancing practices to help prevent infection.
- Over the entire project, 30 self-help groups were formed and are at various stages of achieving sustainability and independence. During this time, 993 group members participated in a range of project activities.
- Total savings for each group has increased significantly over the three year period and there are now 383 income generating activities stemming from these groups.
- Capacity of two local community based organisations established was also strengthened so they can continue to provide support and governance for self-help groups and to partner in joint social investment opportunities.
- 600 women completed functional education courses over the project period of 3 years, gaining literacy and numeracy skills that can be applied to daily family life.
- 115 children have successfully completed pre-school and have integrated into government primary schools.
- Significant positive changes in social, environmental and health practices are evident in the lives of group members. Resilience to setbacks has been strengthened and many have grown in their leadership skills.



Halima Begum and her husband (left) have two sons. They own no land and struggled each day to get by on her husband's day labouring job. In the offseason he pulled rickshaws. Sometimes they went hungry. To improve their life, Halima enrolled in a functional education class and after eight months formed a savings group with the other women. She started to save regularly using her weekly earnings from keeping egg-laying chickens and ducks. She then applied for a loan to buy her husband a horse and van to transport goods and passengers, giving him more financial security and freedom. After the loan is repaid, Halima plans to find their own home to live in and continue their sons' education. She is happy they will have a brighter future.

Thank you for supporting women who are educating themselves and building a future for their families.

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PO Box 553 Doncaster, VIC 3130

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