



# WOMEN



*A Driving Force for Urban Resilience*



Women: A Driving Force for Urban Resilience

A Photo- documentation of comprehensive disaster risk reduction approach towards urban resilience

2017

© CARE Bangladesh

RAOWA Complex (Level: 7-8), VIP Road, Mohakhali, Dhaka 1206, Bangladesh

Office: + (880)-2-9889009, Fax: +880-2-9889041

Email: [bgdinfo@care.org](mailto:bgdinfo@care.org)

[www.carebangladesh.org](http://www.carebangladesh.org)

Manuscript: Mamunur Rashid  
Sadaka Tamanna

Editor: AFM Shahidur Rahman

Contributors: Palash Mondal  
Biswojit Kumar Roy  
Nargis Begum

Photo credits: Sakib Imtiaz  
Sadaka Tamanna  
Asafuzzaman Captain

Supported By: C&A Foundation

Disclaimer:

This document is an output of CARE Bangladesh's 'Building Resilience of the Urban Poor' (BRUP) project funded by C&A Foundation. The project aims to increase resilience of urban low income populations putting women in the driving seat, promoting women leadership and strengthening institutional capacity to disaster risk reduction. However the views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by C&A Foundation, which can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.



# WOMEN



*A Driving Force for Urban Resilience*







**H**osne Ara, a 30 year old bricklayer. She came to Gazipur in search of a better life years back. Living in a seventy square feet accommodation with another seven family members, she faced all odds possible in a life.

As CARE Bangladesh's 'Building Resilience of the Urban Poor' (BRUP) initiative started in the slum where she lived in 2015, she joined the groups with apprehension and hesitation. And yet, in last few years, she rediscovered the meaning of trust, social cohesion, the value of unity and the need to speak out. She is now a symbol of resilience in her neighbourhood.

This book tells the stories of Hosne Ara and another 2000 women like her. These women learnt the meaning of being organized and the value of savings. They have set up small enterprises. They learnt how better planning and the implementation of small but meaningful infrastructures can make neighbourhoods safer. Their initiatives ensured running water at the

doorsteps, sanitary latrine near the houses. Many of them work as the 'Registered primary respondent' for the Fire brigade to fight hazards like fire or building collapse. These confident women now are widely connected to the government and relevant institutions. Now they are not afraid to take up any challenge.

This is their story. Story of the women from slums who are at the centre of resilience building in an urban context.



About 8000 people live in six slums in Gazipur where BRUP worked. Poor infrastructure, unhealthy living condition could not stop the residents from coming here for a better life. Thousands of them thrive industries nearby. The women living here are among the most resilient people around. CARE Bangladesh's BRUP initiative started to work on resilience building with 2000 thousand women and children of them in 2015.













The primary challenge was the urban poor themselves. They were as if lost, divided and alone. Most of the time, they came to live in the slums while seeking better work opportunities. Quite frequently evicted from the slums, they were unable to build any cohesion with their neighbours. Many of them were seen sitting alone, and taking their fights all by themselves, which made them even more vulnerable.

The other challenge for BRUP was to overturn the concept of women seen as the victims of disasters. It worked to turn it around and helped them prove that they were the driving force of resilience.







Slums in Gazipur offer abysmal quality of life to its residents. Houses do not have sanitary latrine or water supply; makeshift tin shed houses are erected on low lying lands or water-bodies.

Children often (far left) play on the bamboo made narrow alleys risking falling off - which is not uncommon; while, garbage is dumped (top left) from all over the places near the slum, causing serious health concern.

Houses built on the bank of Bangshai river (bottom left)) accommodate around one thousand people. Mostly tin shed houses without any basic facility. Residents clean their belongings in the open using dirty water.



An intense work for three years in the slums resulted in fantastic outcomes. The emergence of financially resilient women is just one of them.

Forty five year old 'Khairunnesa' is seen serving tea in her shop (right). With financial support from BRUP 300 women like her are now financially resilient, running small businesses like grocery store, tailor shop, beauty parlor, vegetable shop, and small restaurant.







Many families lost their savings that they kept under the pillows in a fire. Since this mode of savings is a big risk, women in the community lobbied with the banks for easier access. BRUP then worked with some local banks to come to the communities for convenient banking procedure. They opened accounts free of cost account with simplified banking formalities. Now 300 support receivers have bank accounts in nearby branches.

Jhorna, 30, maintains a savings scheme in the bank and is seen depositing monthly savings installment (bottom left).

“Regular savings has helped my family to start many things afresh. Now we can plan for a better future for our children”

-Jhorna







Lost everything, 60 year old Sahidul Mia (top), looks at his possessions - gutted in a fire last night. Fire is the most common and deadly hazard in the slums. Most of the community members looked like him before, as they lacked social cohesion before the BRUP started here few years back.



30 year old factory worker, Sabur is seen walking past (top) the debris piled all over the places in a slum. Living in rampant pollution from garbage and fire caused from cotton godowns are day to day realities for Sabur and residents like him.





Residents of Uttar Tetultola slum are working together to rebuild houses - gutted earlier. They volunteered to help each other in building their dwelling places, a wonderful sign of trust and support - the core of social cohesion. They mobilized all materials from the local government as well.





Members of Community Development Committees (CDC) are packaging the emergency relief for their neighbours who lost everything in a fire. Residents of Uttar Tetultola raised funds from within the slum to support their neighbours.





Community leader Sufia is showing the devastating impact of the fire to the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) of Gazipur District.

Later she also speaks to the Member of Parliament, Ward Councilor, and representative from Tusuka Group - a private sector stakeholder. The community received good support from the government after their intense advocacy.



Parul is seen carrying the relief she received.  
Another **108** families from the community  
received it too.











Risking lives, the fearless women volunteers running rescue operation in the Tampaco Foils factory fire in 2015. About two hundred women and men like them received firefighting trainings under BRUP and all are 'Registered first respondent'.







“ Many thought clean community is something for the rich neighbourhoods. But we changed the idea and led the cleaning drive in our slums. ”

Says thirty Eight years old Rejia, who is leading the 'Cleaning Day' event. Besides everyday cleaning of the garbage, the community undertakes 'Cleaning' campaign in every three months involving the community. (right) A slum dweller is taking her kitchen garbage to a designated bin (far right). 2000 women like her make clean slum drive a reality in Gazipur.











CDCs have institutionalized resilience within the communities. They worked to build cohesion within community, undertook plans, and mobilized the whole community.






One key success of this resilience building work is the scaling up of the tested models by the local government. In one such case, the garbage management system is extended into 17 communities of Gazipur City Corporation.









“ We were not allowed to talk or giving opinion before. Now we women speak up and demand our rights without fear. ”

BRUP is working to create safe environment both at home and in workplaces. The BRUP facilitated resilience building process has turned 2000 women into efficient disaster managers both at home and community. Their participation in various stages has strengthened different platforms.









EKATA member Mukti Begum (34), has led many government official's field visits like this one with support from her community. She is seen showing Nadirpar community, Konabari to Mr. Reaz Ahmed, DG- Department. of Disaster Management.



BRUP worked to strengthen the institutional resilience of Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) by organising advanced trainings and giving them search and rescue equipment. Here, the FSCD professionals participates in a training organised by BRUP.











Community members provided climate smart solutions where climate change challenges are tougher. Transparent roofing for more sunlight (left), fuel efficient stove (right), solar bottle street lights are some of the innovative solutions promoted by them in their slums.









Community managed  
and constructed  
sanitary latrine and  
bathing facility with  
running water -  
separate for men and  
women.



Not a small feat by any standard.

Communities planned and executed the construction of 24 facilities like these around the slums with support from BRUP initiative.







Resilience – a comprehensive concept needs to be weaved like a fabric in all aspects of a society. And with a stronger physical resilience, a community can withstand many climate change challenges.



Safe drinking water at doorsteps (right) is one key aspect of quality life and physical resilience. And yet, safe drinking water at doorsteps is a high value service. Now 3,200 people living in slums enjoy safe drinking water at an affordable costs in their houses from overhead tank, connected with pipelines. Led by women, the slum dwellers started this process with the identification of issue.

They also installed built-in fire hydrant to fight incidents of fire in the community (bottom).



“The water in the line is pure and sweet. We don't have to be in long queues anymore to collect water. Such a big relief!”







Physical resilience ensures infrastructure with access for all. Community women with support from BRUP, planned infrastructure (top left) like the construction of stair with steel railings in the communities. This helps people from all ages and persons with disabilities. The same place before the construction. (top right)



Women in the communities expanded the information centers into resources centers where they wanted to ensure various services under a single roof. Health workers from Smiling Sun, Marie Stopes and Bondhu Foundation now come to these centers to support them.

This was possible as the women lobbied with these organizations and the local government in a number of joint workshops facilitated by BRUP. Residents of slums now get health services from here.





All the significantly visible community based work on resilience started with a strong, participatory planning process. BRUP facilitated community members to intensely engage in the process that helped them bond well too.



With visuals and long meetings, they identified the risks and hazards affecting them. The members then used customized 'Urban Risk Assessment' tools and listed the initiatives needed to address risks and hazards.







To put women at the center of resilience building, BRUP introduced 'Gender Vulnerability Analysis'. The women are undertaking the analysis to understand their mobility and empowerment status. They undertook similar analysis to assess their progress periodically.



BRUP had put '[Participatory Community Reflection]' system in place. The women in the community are using this to check the strength of their platform and committee. It also assesses their leadership status.



BRUP worked to transform women from perceived 'worst victims' of disasters to the 'force of resilience'. It used EKATA approach to build community cohesion, facilitated access to services and created spaces for women to make decision.

EKATA Facilitator **Mitu**, 21 (right) is using learning tools to make her community understand the impact of hazards like garbage.

While the CDC Chairperson **Sufia**, 36, explains the need for social cohesion as a building block for resilience. (far right)





A woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow sari over a patterned orange and black blouse, is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a wall with handwritten text in Bengali. A blue rectangular overlay on the left side of the image contains a white quote.

“ We need to  
work collectively to  
get the fear out of us.  
And we must believe  
that the community is  
with us. ”





BRUP facilitated regular planning sessions for the communities. Through this process they identified group specific risks and hazards.

The community women (left) are analyzing their vulnerabilities and hazards. While the children (right) are using participatory method to explain their priorities.

















Lack of cohesion amongst the residents is a major challenge in urban slums. As their stay in the slum quite often ends abruptly - due to sudden forced eviction, frequent change in their jobs, fire and flood hazards, they hardly have time to know each other. The basic fabric of society: communication and trust, is rarely created.



Women played key role to build cohesion, ownership of their area, and create bond among them. A pain-staking, time consuming, yet rewarding process made all happy and work together at the end.

Here in the picture (right), the community is celebrating community day and playing pillow passing in a picnic organized by them.





Shila (right) and Nurjahan (far right) – members of Urban Community Volunteers, work as the first line defence in the communities. A total of 600 youth trained members like them are extended force of FSCD. They also have basic search and rescue equipment with them.

Many of them played significant role, thus hailed by the national and international media for their effort to rescue victims.





“ I am on the top of the world. This gives me confidence that I am equally good to take part in a rescue operation in any disaster.”

- Nurjahan





“ Together we stand to overcome the challenge of shocks and stresses and remain vigilant to fight them to be resilient.” ”

Chant the children of the slum who are staging a play on the impact of climate change on urban lives. BRUP facilitated a number of plays by the children in the process of the work for three years to raise awareness on fire, earthquake and environmental pollution along with some pressing social issues affecting resilience.













Gazipur is the heart of industrialization with many big industries located here. The risks of fire, building collapse, pollution are extremely high. So the community with support from BRUP, organized a number of seminars on the technical issues around these risks.

BRUP created a pool of experts with support from Housing and Building Research Institute, to build technical capacity on Safe Construction following Bangladesh National Building Code.









BRUP lobbied with the Gazipur City Corporation to scale up its successful community resilience practices in all of its 57 wards. The city corporation was keen to implement these practices in all of the wards.

It created Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC) and developed Risk Reduction Action Plans in each Ward.

The local government staff (far left) is seen working on a plan, and then presenting the plan in the plenary (bottom left), while an advocacy meeting is presided over by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Gazipur City Corporation (top left).

সুঁচিহীন সারসংক্ষেপ					
প্রধান পুরোজ	পূর্বাভাস করা	কিভাবে করা?	সুঁচিহীন কার্যক্রম		WDMC-র কার্যক্রম
জনাবদ্বারা	প্রধান পুরোজ	হ্যাঁ	জানাবদ্বারা	কাজের	
প্রাথমিক	প্রধান পুরোজ	হ্যাঁ	প্রাথমিক	কাজের	
প্রাথমিক	প্রাথমিক	হ্যাঁ	প্রাথমিক	কাজের	
প্রাথমিক	প্রাথমিক	হ্যাঁ	প্রাথমিক	কাজের	
প্রাথমিক	প্রাথমিক	হ্যাঁ	প্রাথমিক	কাজের	











**CARE Bangladesh**

RAOWA Complex (Level: 7-8), VIP Road,

Mohakhali, Dhaka 1206, Bangladesh

Office: + (880)-2-9889009, Fax: +880-2-9889041

Email: [bgdinfo@care.org](mailto:bgdinfo@care.org)

[www.carebangladesh.org](http://www.carebangladesh.org)



**C&A Foundation**

