1. Collaboration with BIRTAN on pro-poor technology

Part of the collaboration between Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) and SHOUHARDO III, the institute introduced a low cost and innovative chimney solar dryer for ultra-poor participants. BIRTAN installed solar dryers on demonstration in the houses of SHOUHARDO III participants in Sirajganj and Netrokona districts with a half-day demonstration to ensure efficient use of the dryer. The chimney solar dryer is built with low-cost materials and combines heat collection with constant airflow for efficient drying. The dryer allows farmers and others to use the sun to efficiently dry fruits, vegetables, fishes and other foods for long-term storage. Farmers can add value to crop surpluses and extend access to fruits and vegetables throughout the year.

2. Pro-poor interventions through private sector engagement

In order to reduce the number of middlemen in the maize supply chain, SHOUHARDO III initiated coordination efforts with several national-level feed mills like Aftab Bhumukhi Farms Ltd., CP Feed, and ACI Feed. This year, Aftab Bhumukhi Farms started bulk maize collection from Jamalpur. Being a large-scale company, Aftab needed local traders for representation at the district level of Jamalpur. In this regard, the program identified Mr. Belal, a local district trader, to coordinate between participants and Aftab on providing guidance about quality maize production. As a result of this initiative, farmers received payment within one week after maize collection, compared to previous up to 60-day period waiting time, the collected maize met required quality and none of the supplies was wasted where Aftab sent inspector regularly to check on the maize supply, and through collective selling, farmers earned about additional BDT 500 (USD $6) per metric ton with accurate weighing of their produce.

3. Pro-youth government support

In Sirajganj district, SHOUHARDO III collaborated with the Government of Bangladesh’s Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and Institution of Marine Academy. The new skills development training started on 29 June, 2019 with a formal inaugural session conducted by the Marine Academy. Program’s regional team including implementing partners attended this inaugural session. Currently, 120 youth participants are receiving skills training on electrical house wearing (30), led machine shop (30), welding (30), plumbing and pipe fitting (30). An initiative like this will not benefit program participants but will also open the opportunity for other youth of Sirajganj to access quality skills training and decent employment. The employability skills development approach integrates soft skills, including goal setting, business/career planning and management, financial literacy, decision making and problem solving.

4. Participants reflect on their performance through Village Grading

The Village Grading exercise is part of the intensive community engagement efforts of SHOUHARDO III. This activity provided space for participants to reflect and assess how they are doing given the amount of interventions they received from the program. The program is moving towards community-led approach whereby the participants create their aspirations and goals. From there, the program supports them in setting priorities based on what the participants and communities do best moving forward especially after the program closure whereby they are expected to function on their own with appropriate support from relevant systems. Out of the 947 villages: 48 (5.07%) ranked Strong, 774 (81.73%) Moderate and 125 Behind (13.20%); PNGO-wise, ESDO in Jamalpur district has the most number of Strong villages (9 out of 48), MJSKS in Kurigram with the most number of villages with Moderate ranking (171 out of 774) and POPi covering Kishoreganj and Netrokona has the most number of Behind villages (58 out of 125); Health, Hygiene and Nutrition purpose area turned out to be with the most number of Strong ranking among the villages (483); Women’s empowerment has the most number of villages that ranked Moderate (629), and Resilience purpose area has the most number of villages that ranked Behind (509).

5. SHOUHARDO III swiftly responds to floods

In Bangladesh, following a heavy rainfall, the upstream water level in transboundary river basins of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Ganges-Padma river system in the northeastern region, and the Surma-Kushira river system in the north-eastern region started rising since the first week of July 2019. SHOUHARDO III teams on the ground, led by the Partner NGOs communicated with Union Parishad as well as Union Disaster Management Committee to collect information about flood situation. The program participants through the community/group leaders provided necessary support to flood affected people on early warning dissemination, search and rescue and linkage for emergency support. Among the immediate response, the Partner NGOs supplied safe drinking water through mobile boats for people who sought shelter in different areas. SHOUHARDO III conducted a rapid needs assessment and planned for a response which is being coordinated with USAID.