

Highlighting our work on Women's Empowerment



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## Vulnerabilities of SW Bangladesh What role will CARE-B play?

In December 2011, CARE undertook a macro-level vulnerability and poverty analysis in the South-West (SW) of Bangladesh, the area of the country most affected by climate change.

This region is an ecologically rich delta with water and natural resources with many poor people, including small and marginal farmers, who are ecosystem dependent. They now find it difficult to ensure their food and livelihood security.

The region has been facing the catastrophic consequences of extreme weather events, flooding, changes in seasonality, environmental degradation, decreased soil fertility due to saline intrusion, and poor access to drinking water.

Agricultural productivity has almost collapsed, impacting on income and employment opportunities. This has resulted in household instability and large-scale migration.

The majority of the migrants are men, with women left behind to maintain livelihoods with fragile economic resources, and limited social safety net arrangements.

The people and communities of the region are experiencing environmental degradation in the form of waterlogging, sea levels rise, soil salinity and large-scale and ecologically harmful shrimp farming.

The lives and livelihoods of the poor are significantly constrained by a lack of income and employment opportunities. Currently, their livelihoods depend on fishing in the Sundarbans (mostly crab), honey collection and selling their labor in the shrimp farming industry.

Natural growing trees are declining and fodder for cattle has almost disappeared. The research indicates there has been a loss of biodiversity, loss of agriculture and fishery resources. This has been affecting the quality of nutritional intakes of the people in particular children, malnutrition may become an epidemic in the region.

Fishing communities' livelihoods are threatened due to declining numbers of fish as well as restrictions from the government. Most of them are now engaged in crab fishing from the Sundarbans, but there are some challenges, including attaining legal permission, token payment at different levels including bandits and exploitation by traders.

The absence of salinity-free safe drinking water has become a major problem in addition to poor sanitation and hygiene practices that spread water-borne diseases. There is a need for developing access to safe drinking water as well safe hygiene and nutrition practices.

A collective advocacy campaign needs to take place for better management of natural resources, conserving the ecosystem and biodiversity of SW Bangladesh.

There are many opportunities for CARE-B to design interventions in the SW region particularly in identifying alternative and adaptive livelihood opportunities, gender-transformative approaches and more value chain-based income and employment opportunities including on-farm and off-farm activities.

CARE implemented the Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change (RVCC) project between 2002-2006, one of the first community-led adaptation projects in Bangladesh.

With this project CARE developed 50 new adaptation modalities, and began the development of the community-based adaptation (CBA) framework.

CARE currently has EMPHASIS (Jessore and Satkhira), SMPP II (Satkhira), FRESH, Aila Response, UPPR Phase II and MYCNSI operating in the Southwest and CARE-B is looking at opportunities to expand our programming in the region.

Given our depth of programming experience in the SW CARE-B is well placed for a greater focus on the region. This will assist us in realizing our **impact vision that the most vulnerable people and communities prone to disasters and environmental change build resilient livelihoods.**

We will bring you more news on this front.

**For more information please contact Selim: [selim@bd.care.org](mailto:selim@bd.care.org)**

## SHOUHARDO II puts KM/Advocacy into practice



Mymensingh Regional team for SHO II recently organized Training on Knowledge Management and Advocacy, facilitated by Program Quality Unit and the Advocacy team, over March 19 & 20. The two-day workshop was participatory, inclusive of PNGOs and driven by around 30 active participants!

The MRO has now created their own KM/Advocacy Plan to work towards. In the words of one participant: "Knowledge management and advocacy must go together!"

# Advocacy and community engagement to stop violence against women

A reflection from COVAW

While writing this piece the story of 15 year-old Hena Akhter from Shariatpur village, who was raped and brutally whipped to death last year, is in the back of the COVAW team's mind. We try to reflect what progress we actually made in this field.

Violence against women (VAW) is recognized as a major violation of a woman's human rights. Many efforts both nationally and internationally are taking place to address this serious abuse. However, if we look into the VAW situation, we are not making much progress.

Field-based reports indicate that this situation will continue until the social mind-set that accepts violence as a way to resolve conflict is changed. Meaning, we really need to have powerful message and means to realise this change.

With this in mind COVAW started with key questions:

- How to bring two politically charged issues: gender inequality and domestic violence together in one discussion? To see gender inequality as the root cause of domestic violence against women, not dowry or child marriage that were previously held as root causes.

- How to communicate the economic cost of violence with the grassroots? Communities are neither trained, nor asked, or encouraged to understand information that previously only resonated with policy makers.

- As COVAW used the existing platforms of PROTIRODH, ARSHI, and SHOUHARDO the underlying question was to find out how much we already knew and how much we could begin to explore as we worked against VAW?

With all the points above our goal was for extensive dissemination of COVAW findings, touching multiple levels: targeting key stakeholders, institutions, and people from the grassroots to national level. This built an extensive communications and advocacy network for CARE Bangladesh.

This network can be utilized in the future for further advocacy work with policy and decision makers for our Women's empowerment impact group.

The questions, ideas and skills of COVAW front line workers helped design a behavior change communication tool with fresh ideas on gender norms behavior and practices that contribute to domestic violence.

What is very unique in this tool is that it explicitly encourages men-boys-women-girls to ponder and question how womens' lower social status actually harms families, communities, and societies. This is then linked to examining ways for achieving newer, more equitable relationships between men and women.

The next step was to take this learning from the village-based platform members to the broader community through social mobilization using edutainment. What is powerful in this mobilization process is that it has two wings: one rooted in the ground, the other at the policy making table at the national level. COVAW has dealt broadly with diverse types of knowledge in communities with different languages, assumptions and perspectives.

Through strategic communications work highlighting this evidence base we have created the political space and institutional channels to start a meaningful dialogue on VAW.

It was through this approach that CARE-B was able to advocate from a position of strength for action against VAW, **this is a domain of change in our work on Women's empowerment.**

# CARE-B celebrates International Women's Day!

'Connecting girls, Inspiring futures'



Left: CARE-B presents 'Cost of Violence against Women' seminar at Dhaka University

Above: Staff, citizens and PNGO's march on the streets of Dhaka for IWD

# Women's Capacity Development Program



CARE-B's Human Resources Development & Management department (HRD) has initiated a Capacity Development Program for front and mid level female staff in this year.

Through this program, each participant will have the opportunity to identify and develop her specific development needs. She also has the scope to develop both short and long term plans for her career growth.

A total of 10 participants from SHOUHARDO II (6), FSUP (2), PRODUCE (1) and Program Support (1), has been selected for the program. Features of the program include:

- It is a need based development program
- Self-directed learning process
- Long distance learning approach
- Duration of the course is 6 months
- Workshop will be arranged for 5 days (2 times)

- A guide will be assigned
- A test will be arranged after completion the program

CARE-B is keen to promote the leadership potential and professional growth of our female staff through this initiative.

**If you would like learn more please contact the HRD team.**

## The Story of Shetu

Shetu Barua is 23 years old and is the main income-earner for her family. Shetu has been a driver for CARE Bangladesh in Cox's Bazaar for the past 5 years.

As a result of her hard work she was able to purchase her elder sister a sewing machine to inspire and help her to be self-sufficient and is supporting her younger brother from her own income.

In addition to this, she managed to purchase 20 decimals of land and built a tin-shed house on that land (her family used to stay at her uncle's place before this).

Shetu's decision for choosing driving was because she wanted to see the world outside, meet people and learn about many different things. It is not very common in Bangladesh to see



women work as drivers.

Shetu's dream is to begin studies at Open University and move ahead in her career and life. Best of luck Shetu!

## CARE-B in the Media

SHOUHARDO II: "Mothers strong voices pave the way on hunger", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8/3/12  
<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/mothers-strong-voices-pave-the-way-on-hunger-20120307-1ukko.html>

'Mere self-sufficiency or spoon-feeding doesn't guarantee food security', *Daily-Sun*, 22/3/12  
[http://www.daily-sun.com/index.php?view=details&archie=yes&arch\\_date=22-03-2012&type='Mere-self-sufficiency-or-spoon-feeding-doesn't-guarantee-food-security'&pub\\_no=92&cat\\_id=2&menu\\_id=17&news\\_type\\_id=1&index=0](http://www.daily-sun.com/index.php?view=details&archie=yes&arch_date=22-03-2012&type='Mere-self-sufficiency-or-spoon-feeding-doesn't-guarantee-food-security'&pub_no=92&cat_id=2&menu_id=17&news_type_id=1&index=0)

'On International Women's Day CARE charts big improvements in Bangladesh', *Women News Network*, 8/3/12  
<http://womennewsnetwork.net/2012/03/07/international-womens-day-care-bangladesh/>

SDVC: 'Chaff cutter machine saves 40pc paddy straw', *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, 1/3/12  
<http://www1.bssnews.net/newsDetails.php?cat=0&id=231389&date=2012-03-02>

COVAW: 'The Price of Violence', *Forum: The Daily Star*, 8/3/12  
<http://www.thedailystar.net/forum/2012/March/price.htm>

Protirodh: 'Amiyo Rani: Profile', *21 Anniversary Supplement: The Daily Star*, February,  
[http://www.thedailystar.net/suppliments/2012/anniversary\\_2012/section3/5.htm](http://www.thedailystar.net/suppliments/2012/anniversary_2012/section3/5.htm)

'Joya Shikdar: Profile', *21 Anniversary Supplement: The Daily Star*, February  
[http://www.thedailystar.net/suppliments/2012/anniversary\\_2012/section3/2.htm](http://www.thedailystar.net/suppliments/2012/anniversary_2012/section3/2.htm)

In the  
upcoming  
April edition

It's over to you! Interested in sharing your latest news, photos or ideas or want more information about a topic seen in *Action and Reflection*? Contact Soman: moodley@bd.care.org, Anahita: anahita@bd.care.org or Mansur: mansur@bd.care.org

