



# SEEDS OF CHANGE



**actionaid**



**SEEDS**  
**OF CHANGE**

# Acknowledgment

---

This is a publication by ActionAid Bangladesh. ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to further human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe everyone has the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

## **Date of Publication**

November, 2024

## **Story Collection**

Nazir Hossain

## **Editing**

Amit Ranjan Dey, Shabbir Rahman, Tazrian Rahman

## **Photography**

Fahad Kaizer

## **Cover and Design**

Faisal Ahmed, Md Israt Abu Toimur

## **Technical Support**

Impress Telefilm Limited

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form by any means, including photocopying, recording or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author/s.

Copyright © 2024 ActionAid Bangladesh. All rights reserved.

# Table of Content

---

1) <b>Shahida Parvin</b> Equal Rights for All	04	11) <b>Shakila Khatun</b> Sewing for Survival	90
2) <b>Parvin Akter</b> Protecting Animals, Saving Lives	14	12) <b>Halima Khatun</b> Ensuring Safety for All	100
3) <b>Khairunnesa</b> Freedom from Financial Restraints	22	13) <b>Lipika Rani Sarker</b> Benefits of Organic Farming	110
4) <b>Arifa Akter</b> Looking Ahead for a Brighter Future	30	14) <b>Provati Rani Mandal</b> A Woman's Quest for Sustainability	120
5) <b>Fatema Akter</b> Together for Organic Farming	40	15) <b>Saraswati Rani</b> Advocating for Women to Lead	130
6) <b>Ashtami Majhi</b> A Reliable Source in Emergency Response	50	16) <b>Monika Rani Baulia</b> Journey of Liberation	140
7) <b>Masuma Khatun</b> Resilience in the Face of Adversity	58	17) <b>Namita Gayen</b> Opportunities for Growth	150
8) <b>Jharna Parvin</b> Dreaming Against All Odds	66	18) <b>Rexona Khatun</b> United We Stand	160
9) <b>Rinku Rani Ghosh</b> Abolishing Child Marriage	74	19) <b>Rabeya Khatun</b> Inspiring Change	170
10) <b>Latifa Begum</b> Redefining Life	82	20) <b>Raushanara Parvin</b> Road to Empowerment	180

# PREFACE

---

ActionAid Bangladesh is excited to publish this book titled ‘Seeds of Change’, a collection of inspiring stories of marginalised rural women. These women have weathered complex situations and navigated struggles at different stages of their lives, especially when faced with disasters like the cyclone Remal. However, with determination, perseverance and the support of various community initiatives, they have not only stood back up but have built themselves up to be stronger.

Women in Bangladesh play an important role in agriculture and livestock, making up a large part of the workforce. Unfortunately, their contributions go mostly unrecognised. They have to face many challenges in their life such as limited access to resources, education, and decision-making opportunities. Climate change has made access to these basic rights even more difficult.

ActionAid Bangladesh is committed to women’s rights and empowerment, particularly for rural women and aspires for gender equity. As part of its ongoing efforts, 1,500 marginalised women divided into 30 self-reliance women’s groups, have been provided training and financial support under the project titled “To Address Climate Justice and Gender Disparity in Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira District.” Launched January 2023, the project is being implemented in various villages within Shyamnagar Upazila. 800 women have already received training in various climate-resilient agricultural techniques, homestead gardening, cooperative models, and income diversification strategies. Additionally, many have received financial support for agricultural losses caused by Cyclone Remal.

The various training support programmes and financial assistance provided by ActionAid Bangladesh have played a crucial role in helping women recover and thrive post the devastation of Cyclone Remal. These initiatives focus on personal development in key areas such as Leadership Development, Vaccination, Women-Led Emergency Response (WLER), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Climate-Resilient Agriculture. Agroecological practices reduce women’s climate vulnerabilities.

The stories in this book reflect the outcome and impact of these activities, demonstrating how women have used their new skills to rebuild their lives, advocate for their rights, and uplift their communities. These stories are more than just personal triumphs, they are remarkable examples of how collective resilience can lead to community development.

As you read these stories, we want you to reflect on the journeys of these inspiring women. May their tales encourage you as well as

policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to support gender equality programmes and join in meaningful conversations about women's rights and empowerment in agriculture, livestock, and other fields.

Together, we can build a future where every woman has the chance to grow, contribute, and lead.

**Farah Kabir**

Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh

# SHAHIDA PARVIN

■ Jawakhali Adarshagram  
■ Self-Reliant Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazilla



স্বাধীনতা সশ্রদ্ধে



A woman wearing a vibrant red headscarf and a matching red garment is smiling warmly. She is holding a long, green, ribbed vegetable, possibly a bitter melon, in her hands. The background shows a lush green field with many similar plants growing on trellises, suggesting a vegetable garden or farm. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the woman's face and the vibrant colors of her clothing and the plants.

# Equal Rights for All

Shahida Parvin did not fully comprehend how to deal with the destruction caused by Cyclone Remal. She did not lose hope when her house, the only shelter for her family was demolished beyond repair.

Upon receiving financial support in the form of cash assistance from ActionAid Bangladesh, Shahida began to repair her house and rebuild her life piece by piece. By joining ActionAid's Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group, Shahida has gained invaluable knowledge and skills. She is now applying what she has learned and is seeing clear results in her life.

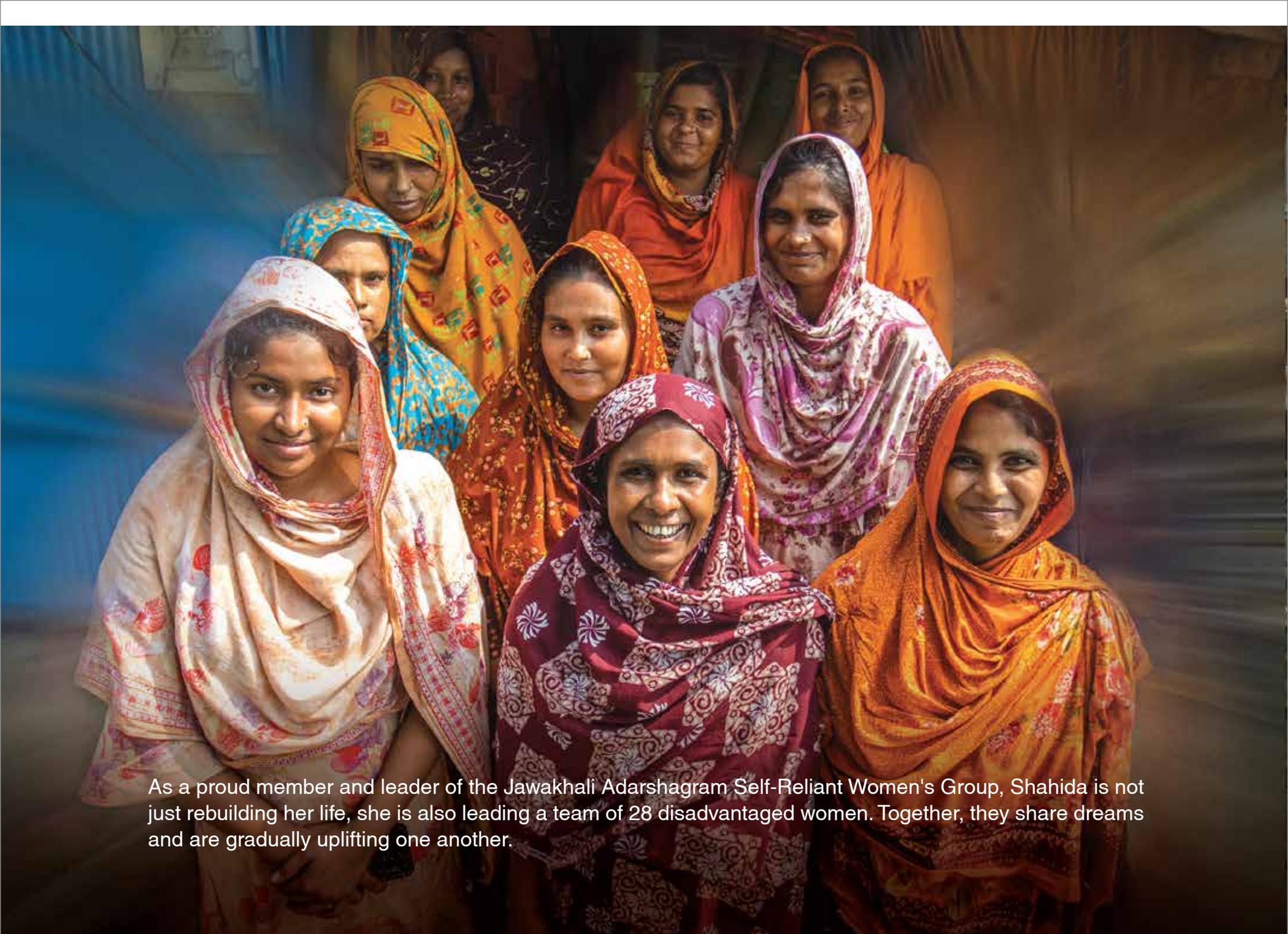


As Shahida continues to enrol in other programmes run by ActionAid Bangladesh, she has further learned about livestock and poultry rearing. She now has 10 ducks and 8 chickens, which help her to meet the protein needs for her family of four. Shahida looks forward to purchasing goats with the earnings from her poultry sales. Inspired by what she learnt about various environment friendly farming techniques, Shahida also began cultivating a variety of vegetables in her yard.



A woman wearing a vibrant red shawl and headscarf is smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a small, fluffy white duckling in her hands. The background is a textured, greyish-brown wall, possibly made of mud or stone. The overall mood is positive and hopeful.

# EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL



As a proud member and leader of the Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group, Shahida is not just rebuilding her life, she is also leading a team of 28 disadvantaged women. Together, they share dreams and are gradually uplifting one another.



Shahida and her group members now understand that they have the right to express their opinions regarding family matters. Daughters deserve the same rights as sons, and both boys and girls in the family have equal rights to education and nutritious food.

Leadership Development Training from ActionAid Bangladesh has helped Shahida develop strong communication skills and build relationships with various government institutions related to agriculture, livestock, social services, youth development, and healthcare.

Previously unaware of their rights to access low-cost healthcare services from government hospitals, Shahida and her fellow group members now visit hospitals for treatment and return with the medicines they need and deserve.



“ I now know my rights as a woman, so I'm raising my daughter to be aware of her rights as well. I want her to be educated and surrounded by progressive women. That's why I'm helping her develop leadership qualities from an early age. ”

ماتھری پاروین

# PARVIN AKTER

■ Mahmudpur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazilla

সার্বভৌম অর্থব্যয়



# Protecting Animals, Saving Lives

On her daily walk to vaccinate livestock reared by other villagers mostly women, Parvin Akter often recalls how an ActionAid Bangladesh training programme changed the direction of her life. Parvin's endeavour to properly administer vaccinations has also altered the entire landscape of livestock farming in her local area. Previously she had no income of her own, but now by providing vaccinations Parvin has become self-reliant and established a strong position for herself in society. She not only helps the women of her village with livestock farming, but her story as a working woman also greatly inspires others.

Following her only son's enrolment at ActionAid's child space, Parvin joined the Mahmudpur Self-Reliant Women's Group. Through her participation in various training programmes, she learned many new life skills. Parvin didn't stop at just learning for herself – as a group leader she now trains all members of the group.





Parvin learnt about livestock vaccination, climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, emergency response, gender-based violence (GBV), leadership development and community adaptation that enhanced her means of livelihood. Additionally, she received training from Jaytiya Mahila Sangstha which taught her to bake delicious cakes and biscuits in her own kitchen.

A photograph showing two women in traditional South Asian clothing. The woman on the left wears a blue patterned shawl and a blue tunic, while the woman on the right wears a pink shawl and a grey tunic. They are both focused on administering a vaccine to a brown goat. The woman on the right is holding the goat's head, and the woman on the left is injecting the vaccine into its neck. The background shows a simple outdoor setting with a wooden fence.

So far, she has administered two doses of various vaccines to 1,000 poultry and livestock.

By earning income from providing vaccinations, she can now cover various household expenses. Additionally, she is able to save BDT 200 monthly in her group's savings scheme. She can even afford to make various bakery items at home for her son using her own money.

“ It brings me great joy to stand by the women of the village through the vaccination of livestock. People now give me a lot of importance. They come to consult with me on various issues. On the other hand, with my own earnings, I can buy ingredients to make cakes and biscuits for my son. I no longer have to ask my husband for money to manage many household expenses. This is also a matter of pride for me. ”





Reflecting on her journey with ActionAid Bangladesh, Parvin considers herself one of the luckiest marginalised women who gained a variety of specific skills from ActionAid programmes to empower herself economically and socially. Her understanding of her rights has not only fostered her independence but also enabled her to advocate for herself and others in her community.



পারভীম আকতার



# KHAIRUNNESA

■ Jawakhali Adarshagram  
■ Self-Reliant Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazilla

স্বয়ংসহায়



# Freedom from Financial Restraints

When all her ducks and chickens were killed by the destructive Cyclone Remal, Khairunnesa lost all hope since her poultry farming was the main support for providing an income for her household. She became frustrated, not knowing how to find means of survival in the coming days. But, with financial support from ActionAid Bangladesh, Khairunnesa found new means of survival. She resumed her poultry farm which enabled her with a financial income once more. Inspired by how Khairunnesa recovered from the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, many of her neighbours are now rearing ducks and chickens to become financially independent.

Starting almost from scratch, Khairunnesa's determination and hard work paved the way for her to bounce back. Her inspiring journey tells the story of how she rebuilt her life.





# FREEDOM FROM FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS

“ I was very upset when my ducks and chickens died in the cyclone. But after receiving financial assistance from ActionAid, I have become self-reliant by raising ducks and chickens again. I sell big ducks for BDT 1,200 each. I feel confident and encouraged with every step I take, knowing that I do not have to ask anyone for money.”



By joining the Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group, Khairunnesa has learned how to cultivate climate-resilient crops. Now she grows different types of vegetables in her small garden that meets her family's needs.

Through her participation in the Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group, Khairunnesa has also received training and knowledge in various fields, especially regarding gender-based violence, child marriage, and leadership development.





“ Support from ActionAid Bangladesh helped me to stand strong during a very difficult time in my life. Together my husband and I, contribute to the household finances. We are trying to build a better future for our children. Besides, it makes me very happy to see that many others are following in my footsteps, and have also started raising poultry and taking measures to change their lives. ”

খাইরুনnesa



A portrait of a woman wearing a red headscarf and a red top, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and appears to be an outdoor setting with some structures.

# ARIFA AKTER

■ Dadpur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

আমি আমার



# Looking Ahead for a Brighter Future

During Cyclone Remal, more than twenty of Arifa Akter's ducks and chickens died. Her house was damaged, leaving her devastated. At such a difficult time, the financial support provided by ActionAid Bangladesh proved to be a blessing in her life. With renewed enthusiasm, she began poultry farming again. After a few months, she was able to sell her poultry, which resulted in becoming the main source of her family's income and support for her husband, who has a disability.

By enrolling in the Dadpur Self-Reliant Women's Group, Arifa has earned valuable knowledge about many important aspects of life. Now she knows about women rights which helped her realise her own rights. Arifa has also learnt about emergency response during a natural disaster, and now has an idea about where to find services and shelter at government and private institutions. Besides, she has learnt how to cultivate climate-resilient crops at home.







The profits from the sales of poultry and crops have strengthened her financial condition, allowing her to support her five-member family on her own. She is now planning to buy a few goats and start a livestock farm. Additionally, she helps her husband farm fish in a pond adjacent to their house.



She began saving money by selling the ducks and vegetables produced in her yard and is planning to buy a few goats soon. She believes that additional earnings from goat farming will strengthen her financial situation, allowing her to support her family of five all by herself.



Participating in various training sessions and meetings conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh has significantly increased Arifa's confidence and enhanced her skills. Being financially independent has added value to her opinions regarding family matters. Women in the neighbourhood now also come to Arifa to discuss various issues related to family problems with her.



Arifa received trainings in different fields, particularly on emergency response, leadership development, women's rights, gender-based violence, child marriage, healthcare and others. She looks forward to continuing her involvement with ActionAid Bangladesh for a better future.





“ActionAid Bangladesh’s financial assistance and training programmes have greatly transformed my life. I have been able to start rearing ducks and chickens again. My financial situation has also started to improve significantly. I now realise that living as an independent woman is truly honourable.”

আরিফা আক্তার

# FATEMA AKTER

■ Mahmudpur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

স্বাধীনতা সশ্রদ্ধা





# Together for Organic Farming

Fatema Akter, a young woman from a rural area in Satkhira, is making an effort to bring change to the lives of women in her community. As a leader, she has motivated her fellow group members to utilise the benefits available for them. All Fatema needed was an opportunity to unlock her potential as a leader, which was provided by ActionAid Bangladesh through its leadership development training.

As an active member of the Mahmudpur Self-Reliant Women's Group, she has received various trainings in leadership development, climate-resilient agriculture, gender-based violence, personal skill development, community adaptation planning, and more. The knowledge Fatema gained from such programmes run by ActionAid Bangladesh has enabled her to understand her rights as a woman and encouraged her to advocate for her community.







On behalf of the Mahmudpur Self-Reliant Women's Group, Fatema has assessed the damage caused by Cyclone Remal in her village and advocated for assistance to help the affected individuals. Various members of her group have received financial support, and she has monitored whether they are utilising this assistance properly.



Having received training in preparing vermicompost and organic pesticides, she is now cultivating vegetables in her backyard. By fulfilling her family's needs and selling the surplus vegetables, she has increased her savings. Additionally, she is raising hens and cows.



She has also taught the women in her group how to prepare organic fertilisers and pesticides and how to apply them. The fellow members of her group are benefiting from using these organic fertilisers and pesticides.







“ I used to lack the courage to speak in front of people. Through various training sessions and programmes from ActionAid Bangladesh, I have now gained the skills to lead a women's group. Now I can discuss various issues raised by my group with different government and private institutions. ”

ফাতেমা আক্টর

# ASHTAMI MAJHI

- Gopalpur Self-Reliant Women's Group
- Shyamnagar Upazila

অষ্টমী মজি





# A Reliable Source in Emergency Response

As soon as black clouds gather in the sky, Ashtami Majhi becomes alert, fearing that a big storm may be on the way. If there's any news of a cyclone, she springs into action without hesitation. Ashtami begins to warn everyone and reminds them of what to do in the face of disaster, just as she did during Cyclone Remal. After receiving training from ActionAid's Women-led Emergency Response (WLER), she has become a reliable name in disaster management through her commendable activities.

During Cyclone Remal, she raised awareness among nearby residents and members of the Gopalpur Self-Reliant Women's Group. Being aware of the warning signals, Ashtami informed everyone about what to do in case of a disaster. She helped guide people, especially the elderly and disabled, to reach cyclone shelters. At the same time, Ashtami encouraged people to take their livestock to shelters.





She checked on the people in the cyclone shelters and distributed dry food, water, and other essential supplies among them. Ashtami took the initiative to address the various problems faced by the people during their stay at the shelters. In particular, she paid special attention to ensuring the safety and security of women there.

After the Cyclone Remal, Ashtami distributed dry food among nearly 1,000 people. She advocated for financial assistance for the affected individuals from various government and non-government organisations by assessing the damage caused by the disaster.





“ It felt very good, being able to stand by people before and after the disaster. The villagers respect me more now than before. They come to consult me on various issues. I have gained a different kind of importance in society, especially among women. ”



Along with her WLER training, she has also received training from ActionAid in leadership development, community adaptation, and gender-based violence. These trainings have not only helped enhance her personal skills but have also played a significant role in empowering the women in her community.

“By joining ActionAid’s women’s group, we have benefited in many ways. Earlier, we didn’t understand much, especially about women’s rights. We were also unaware of the services available in various government and non-government institutions. Now we go to the agriculture office, land office, social services department, and union parishad to avail ourselves of these services and encourage others to access them as well.”

ଅସ୍ତମି ମାଝି

# MASUMA KHATUN

■ Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

কোমর লেইলি



# Resilience in the Face of Adversity

During Cyclone Remal, three of Masuma Khatun's goats died, and the roof of her house was destroyed because of a tree branch that collapsed on her house. She became quite disheartened and worried about how to recover from all the damage. After receiving financial assistance from ActionAid Bangladesh, Masuma started raising ducks and goats again. With the income from the livestock, she started rebuilding her house and bearing much of her household expenses. Slowly and steadily, Masuma managed to get back on her feet.

By joining the Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group, Masuma received various types of trainings and learnt many lessons that helped change her life. She now understands the importance of vaccinating livestock and has a clear idea of which vaccine to administer for which disease and when. She ensures that her livestock are vaccinated on time.







■ Masuma Khatun



After suffering losses from Cyclone Remal Masuma thought everything was over, but now she helps her husband who is a day labourer, by contributing to financial expenses through the sale of duck eggs, chicks, and goats. She is also gradually increasing her savings for the future of her two sons. She dreams that her sons will receive a proper education and relieve their parents hardships one day by getting a well-paid job.



Masuma has also learnt about cultivating climate-resilient crops through her participation in the Jawakhali Adarshagram Self-Reliant Women's Group. Seeing many others from her group succeed in growing homestead vegetables, she is also growing various vegetables in her small garden that helps to meet the needs of her family of four.

“ I was very upset after suffering losses in the cyclone. With the financial support and various training from ActionAid Bangladesh, I started everything anew. By leveraging my confidence, I was able to bounce back by raising ducks and goats. I now consider myself as an independent woman. ”

আমি এখন স্বাধীন নারী



# JHARNA PARVIN

■ Nakipur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

স্বস্তি





# Dreaming Against All Odds

Jharna Parvin's days before Cyclone Remal were well spent, as she had successfully managed her household by raising ducks and goats. However twenty one of her ducks died in Cyclone Remal, and after the storm her goats also perished. Losing her sources of income left Jharna deeply saddened. In this situation, ActionAid Bangladesh extended financial assistance to her which encouraged Jharna to fight for survival again. By purchasing goats and ducks, she began to dream once more of supporting her family with her own earnings.

Currently, Jharna is raising six ducks and five goats. By selling these ducks and goats, she is managing a significant portion of her household expenses, just like before. The money from selling ducks and goats is the main source of income for her family. She sells goats worth BDT 10,000 to 15,000 a year, while she sells ducks worth BDT 30,000 to 40,000 in the same period. With her earnings, she has purchased land for her home and constructed a concrete house.





Through her involvement in the Nakipur Self-Reliant Women's Group 2, Jharna has learned about climate-resilient crop cultivation. Now, she cultivates various vegetables in her garden that helps to meet her family's needs and also sells them to neighbours for extra income.





By joining the Nakipur Self-Reliant Women's Group 2, Jharna has received training in various fields, especially women's rights, preventing child marriage, and violence against women. She is applying the knowledge gained in these areas to her real life.

Additionally, she was able to repay the loans she had taken from the women's group savings for different household needs, with her own earnings.



“ I dreamt of having my own house one day. My desire has been fulfilled through raising ducks and goats. After Cyclone Remal, I was able to survive because I had ActionAid Bangladesh by my side. ”

স্মরণ পারভীন



# RINKU RANI GHOSH

■ Chandipur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

রিন্‌কু রানী ঘোষ



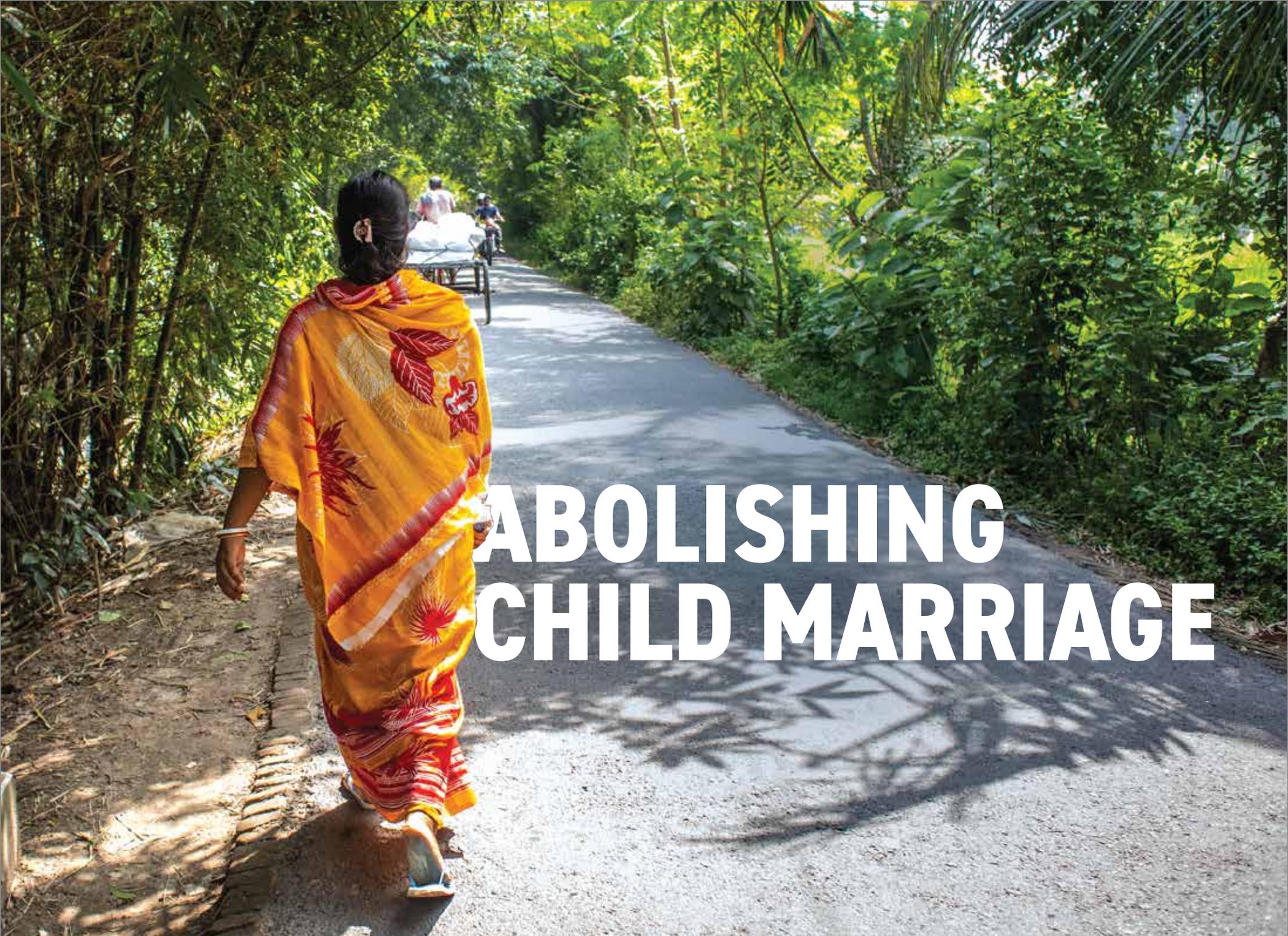


# Abolishing Child Marriage

Thanks to her tireless efforts in advocacy and education, Rinku Rani Ghosh has changed the narrative in her community towards ending violence against women and child marriage. Rinku dedicated herself to educating her fellow group members and the people of her village about women's rights and the harmful effects of child marriage. However, bringing everyone to this stage was not an easy task. With the help of ActionAid Bangladesh, these changes have created a paradigm shift in cultural practices, allowing women in Rinku's village to live free from violence and ensuring that child marriages are abolished.

By becoming a member of the Chandipur Self-Reliant Women's Group-2, Rinku received various training sessions, particularly focused on women's rights, gender-based violence, and leadership development. These training sessions have enabled Rinku to educate the women in her group about their rights and empower them to advocate for themselves.





# ABOLISHING CHILD MARRIAGE

With the knowledge gained through ActionAid Bangladesh's training, Rinku has educated women and girls about their right to live free from violence and their access to legal aid and protection services. She has also worked with men and boys to promote behavioural changes, which have significantly helped prevent violence against women in her locality.

Rinku took the initiative to educate the women and girls in her community about the negative impacts of child marriage. She also raised awareness within their communities about the importance of delaying marriage until adulthood.



“Women and girls in my village did not know about their rights. They were also unaware of the negative impacts of child marriage. As I took steps to educate them about these two important matters in their lives, women in my village now face less violence at home. Additionally, child marriage has been completely eradicated in our village. Seeing the results of my hard work encourages me to bring more positive changes to the lives of women in my village.”



Furthermore, Rinku made significant efforts to repair the Pressure Sand Filter (PSF) set up along the pond, which is currently the only source of drinking water for her entire village. The PSF had remained partially functional for a long time. Realising the urgent need for repairs to alleviate the villagers' struggle to collect clean drinking water, she raised awareness among the community to take the initiative to repair it. She then collected signatures from the villagers on a memorandum and submitted it to the upazila chairman.





Rinku also participated in a variety of training programmes on climate resilience and justice, as well as community adaptation planning.

रिंकु रानी घोष

# LATIFA BEGUM

■ Nakipur Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

অতিথ্য হুগাব





# Redefining Life

Latifa Begum suffered the consequences of Cyclone Remal. The hurricane caused a significant amount of destruction on her house when a tree collapsed on it and killed most of her ducks and hens. With all the disaster and death surrounding her, Latifa felt hopeless. Her husband had left her earlier to marry another woman, and that pain still lingers. Latifa started working as a day labourer and moved in with her mother, tenaciously caring for her two children while managing the household chores on her own.

At the time of Latifa's immense adversity, ActionAid Bangladesh reached out to her with financial assistance. She used the support to buy ducks and chickens and began poultry farming. Over time, she got back on her feet once she started making money from selling poultry and eggs, gaining the strength to move forward.





# REDEFINING LIFE



Becoming a member of Nakipur Self-Reliant Women's Group-2 has proven to be a blessing, helping her regain the strength to live and manage her household without her husband. As she continued to participate in various training programmes provided by ActionAid Bangladesh, she experienced empowerment through gender-based violence awareness, leadership development, and personal skill development.



“Truly speaking, ActionAid Bangladesh inspired me to never give up at any point in life. It taught me that a woman can still survive on her own even when her husband leaves. All these hardships made me strong as well as changed the direction of my life. At this critical juncture, I feel encouraged to live a life of honour and dignity.”



On the other hand, her training in climate-resilient agriculture opened a new avenue for cultivating vegetables in her garden. The knowledge she received about preparing compost fertiliser from chicken manure improved her vegetable farming. Latifa also earns additional income from the various types of vegetables grown in her yard.

“Most of my earnings from poultry and vegetables are spent on managing the household and educating my son and daughter. I hardly buy anything for myself. But this time, I fulfilled a long-cherished desire by buying an earring for myself.”

ଅତିଥିତା ଜଗତ



# SHAKILA KHATUN

■ Atulia Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-1  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

করীম হোসেন



# Sewing for Survival

Shakila Khatun currently earns between BDT 2,000 and 3,000 each month from tailoring clothes for her neighbours. During festivals, particularly Eid, her income can reach around BDT 5,000. This income from tailoring has made her self-sufficient, and all her future plans now revolve around her tailoring service. For Shakila, it's not just about tailoring clothes, it's about tailoring her dreams for a better life.

After enrolling in the Atulia Self-Reliant Women's Group-1, Shakila underwent three months of training in tailoring provided by the Department of Women Affairs, the government body responsible for women's welfare in Bangladesh. At the end of her training, she received financial assistance to purchase a sewing machine. Shakila can make various types of women's dresses and even a few items for men.

Her determination to become an earning woman has paved the way for her independence, allowing her to support her family with her income. Her status as a working woman has brought her honour and elevated her position in society.



# SEWING FOR SURVIVAL





“ Now I can earn a decent amount of money by tailoring clothes for my neighbours, especially women. They feel comfortable coming to a female tailor. I make dresses according to their requirements and preferences, incorporating designs and styles I learnt during my training. I feel immense joy when someone pays me for my work. ”



Through her involvement in the Reflection Action Circle (RAC) conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh, Shakila received various training aimed at empowering marginalised women and enhancing their skills. She gained knowledge about women's rights, gender-based violence, child marriage, healthcare, education, legal aid, economic inequality, climate change, and more through training sessions and community meetings. This education has enabled her to take an active role in transforming her community and advocating for their rights.







Like many others in her area, Shakila was also affected by Cyclone Remal. The small house which was built on her father's land was damaged and most of her poultry died. With financial support from ActionAid Bangladesh, she repaired her home and purchased chickens and ducks. The poultry she is now raising not only meets her family's protein needs but has also become an additional source of income.



“ I do not own a house, I live in one built on my father’s land. I dream of buying land and building my own house one day. To achieve this dream, I am working hard to save a significant amount of money. I am grateful to ActionAid Bangladesh for standing by me during my difficult times and guiding me on the path to self-reliance. ”

শাকিলা খাতুন

# HALIMA KHATUN

Atulia Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-2  
Shyamnagar Upazila

স্বনির্ভর মহিলা





# Ensuring Safety for All

As soon as the news broke about a strong cyclone on its way, Halima Khatun, the leader of Atulia Self-Reliant Women's Group-2, held an emergency courtyard meeting with her group members to determine the course of action before, during, and after the cyclone. Guided by the leadership skills she developed through the Women-Led Emergency Response (WLER) programme from ActionAid Bangladesh, Halima and her fellow group members made immediate door-to-door visits to educate community members about cyclone risks and safety measures. They evacuated vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, to the nearest cyclone shelter. Halima also checked on community members, especially those who might need extra assistance due to age or health conditions, during their stay at the cyclone centre. She paid close attention to the fair distribution of food, water, and medical supplies among those in need.

With her unwavering dedication and compassion for protecting her community from the cyclone, Halima emerged as a beacon of hope in the face of disaster.



# ENSURING SAFETY FOR ALL

A photograph of two women standing outdoors, engaged in conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a solid red shawl and a patterned pink and purple sari. The woman on the right is wearing a red shawl with a large yellow and blue floral pattern and a matching sari. They are standing in front of a building with a corrugated metal roof. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a blue tarp.

After Cyclone Remal, Halima led damage assessments to identify the most affected households in her area and advocated for assistance in reconstructing the damaged homes. Additionally, after the immediate response phase, Halima advocated for women's rights and the resources needed for long-term recovery and resilience building.



“ It makes me really happy that I can devote myself to my community when they require assistance. Standing by the side of people in their dire condition is an opportunity to work for a greater cause. I would like to continue my endeavour to support my community for a better future. ”







Halima has also received several training sessions from ActionAid Bangladesh, particularly on gender-based violence, child marriage, leadership development, and community adaptation planning. She has learnt how to cultivate climate-resilient crops and is growing various types of vegetables in her garden.



Previously unaware of their rights to information, Halima and her group members now know where to access various services at nearby government and non-government institutions, particularly the offices of agriculture, livestock, and social services. They also visit the upazila health complex and government hospitals to access free medical treatment and medicine.

A portrait of a woman, Lipika Rani Sarkar, wearing a yellow top and a maroon sari with a floral pattern. She has a red bindi on her forehead and is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with stone structures.

# LIPIKA RANI SARKER

■ Ramzannagar Gazipara  
■ Self-Reliant Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

লিপিকা রানী সর্কার



# Benefits of Organic Farming

After Cyclone Remal destroyed her barn and killed most of her chickens, Lipika Rani Sarker found her uncertain about what lay ahead.

Lipika's enrolment in the Self-Reliant Women's Group of Ramzannagar Gazipara, brought her some hope for a light at the end of the tunnel. She received financial support from ActionAid Bangladesh to restart poultry farming by purchasing 500 chicks and support to repair her barn. After rearing the chicks till they are old enough for sale, she sold them all and bought more. From this sale and purchase, Lipika earned a small profit, but more importantly she gained a lot of confidence to pursue her poultry venture.

Lipika also began growing a variety of climate-resilient crops in her garden. Her two main ventures in poultry farming and vegetable cultivation helped her earn an annual income ranging from BDT 50,000 to 60,000 — a sum enough to cover household expenditures and also save money throughout the year.









# **BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FARMING**

“ After Cyclone Remal, when all my chickens died and my barn was destroyed, I was extremely disheartened. I couldn't figure out how to overcome this calamity. It was at this critical point in life, that ActionAid Bangladesh provided me with financial support and guidance on proper poultry rearing techniques. With this knowledge, I was able to raise chickens successfully again and earn an income by selling them. ”



A woman, Lipika Rani Sarker, is shown in a lush green vegetable garden. She is wearing a bright yellow short-sleeved top and a maroon sari with a floral pattern. She is focused on tending to a plant, possibly a green bean, which is supported by a wooden trellis. The garden is filled with various types of gourds and other vegetables. The background is a dense wall of green foliage, creating a vibrant and productive atmosphere.

ActionAid Bangladesh offered Lipika a range of training sessions on women's rights, gender-based violence, leadership development, healthcare, legal aid, and climate change. Joining the Ramzannagar Gazipara Self-Reliant Women's Group provided Lipika with valuable knowledge on cultivating climate-resilient vegetables and producing organic fertiliser from chicken droppings and cow dung. Using this homemade organic fertiliser, she grows different vegetables in her garden and adjacent field, including sweet gourd, ribbed gourd, sponge gourd, cucumber, green beans, ladyfinger, and taro stem.



Through her participation in courtyard meetings and training sessions with the women's group, Lipika acquired knowledge about various poultry diseases and the importance of proper vaccination. Her husband assists her in ensuring that all her poultry are vaccinated on time.

A woman, Lipika Rani Sarker, is standing in a large, open-air poultry farm. She is wearing a brown sari with a pink and yellow border and a yellow blouse. She is holding a large red plastic bucket. The farm is filled with many white chickens and several red plastic feeders. The structure is made of wooden poles and has a thatched roof. The lighting is natural, suggesting it is daytime.

In addition to her daily activities with the poultry farm and vegetable garden, Lipika campaigns against child marriage in her village whenever possible, conducting door-to-door visits to educate people, particularly women and girls, about the negative impacts of child marriage.

# PROVATI RANI MANDAL

- Ramzannagar Gazipara
- Self-Reliant Women's Group
- Shyamnagar Upazila

প্রত্যন্তী রানী মন্ডল





# A Woman's Quest for Sustainability

Provati Rani Mandal has faced many difficulties in life, yet her determination and commitment to her family have changed her fortunes. Trained through her enrolment in the Self-Reliant Women's Group of Ramjannagar Gazipara, Provati learnt new methods of resilient climate cultivation to improve her family's livelihood.

With the knowledge she gained from the training provided by ActionAid Bangladesh, Provati began cultivating vegetables in the barren areas of her garden and in sacks, utilising previously unused spaces to produce vegetables. This vegetable farm not only helped in fulfilling her family's nutritional requirements but also gave her an opportunity to sell the surplus produce to her neighbours for an additional income to support her household.





A woman wearing a red sari with a yellow and pink border and a red bindi on her forehead is holding a large woven basket filled with green cucumbers. She is standing in a lush green garden with a blue netting structure in the foreground. The background is filled with various green plants and trees.

“ I never imagined that I could grow so many vegetables on my own. The training taught me how to utilise every available space effectively. Now, I can feed my family and earn money at the same time. I am grateful to ActionAid Bangladesh for their support. ”

A woman wearing a red sari with a yellow border and a matching headscarf is working in a vegetable garden. She is leaning over, tending to large green leafy plants. The background shows more greenery and a blue netting structure. The overall scene is lush and green, indicating a healthy garden.

Apart from the vegetable garden, Provati has also utilised the edges of the pond by planting different vegetables there. After learning about the importance of water conservation, she built a canal system to sufficiently distribute water to her plants in the case of a drought.

Through continuous work and commitment, Provati has improved not only her family's diet but has also economically empowered herself by selling vegetables to add to the family's finances for her children's education and other needs.







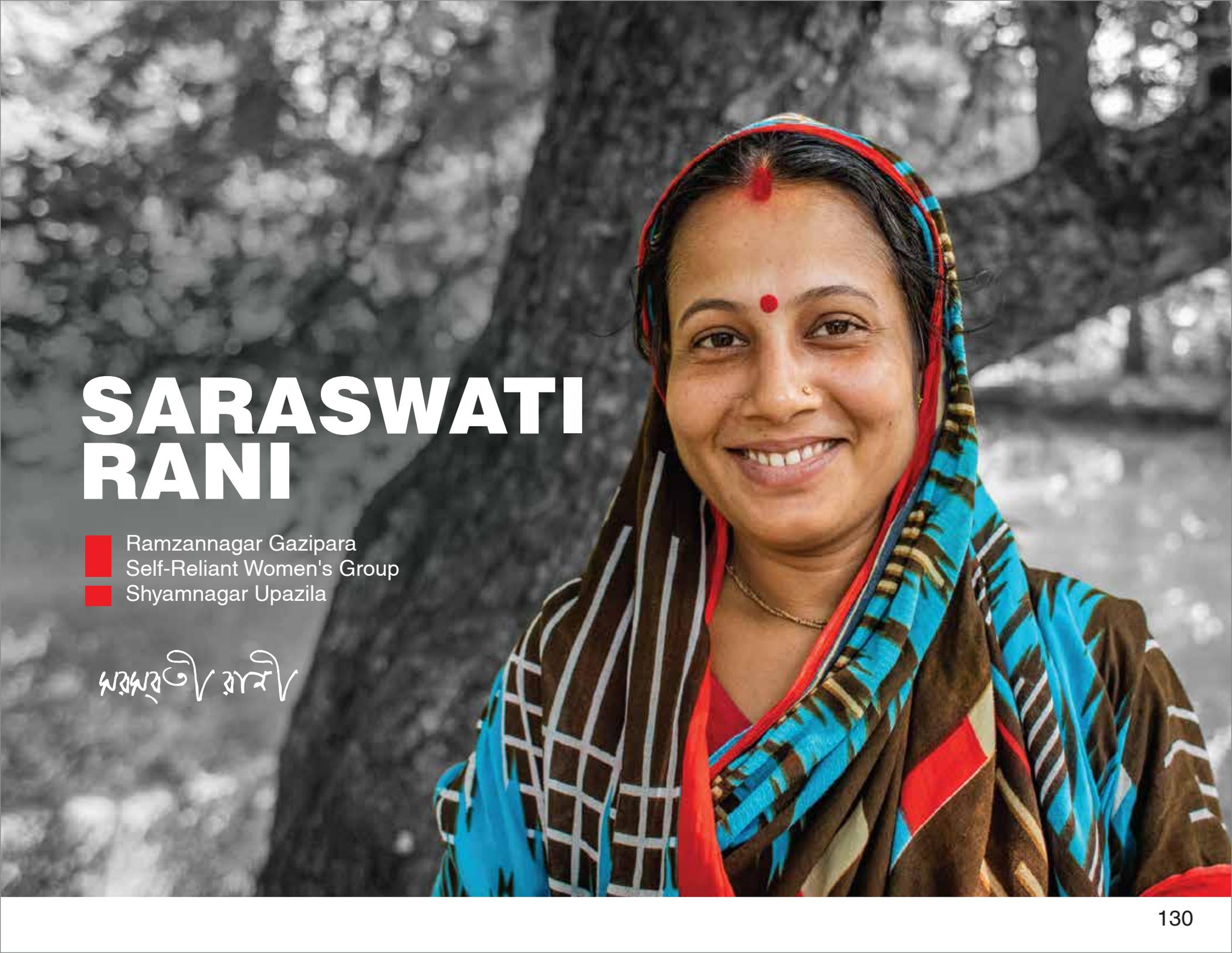
Provati also received training on preparing organic fertiliser, natural pesticides, climate adaptation and more. She received training on women's rights, violence against women, child marriage, and rainwater harvesting for homestead use.

Provati's story has inspired other women in her community. She shared the knowledge on climate-resilient practices and sustainable agriculture issues with her women's group. She shared how teamwork and support for one another have really helped the group form a network.



“ Together, we can achieve so much more. When we share our experiences and knowledge, we all grow stronger. ”

ଅତ୍ୟାତୀ ସାମୀ ଅନୁଭ



# SARASWATI RANI

- Ramzannagar Gazipara
- Self-Reliant Women's Group
- Shyamnagar Upazila

স্বায়ত্বশীল নারী



# Advocating for Women to Lead

Saraswati Rani is an active member of the Ramjannagar Gazipara Self-Reliant Women's Group and has emerged as an important figure in her locality, particularly at the time of a natural disaster.

Upon receiving information that Cyclone Remal was heading in their direction, Saraswati became vigilant, knowing exactly what to do from the training she received through the ActionAid Bangladesh's Women-Led Emergency Response programme. She rallied fellow group members, informing them about the looming cyclone and what the necessary measures were for protection.

Saraswati prioritised taking the vulnerable members of her community, especially the elderly, children and people with disability to the nearest cyclone shelters. She led the distribution of dry food and clean drinking water among the people at various cyclone shelters. Saraswati paid special attention to the needs of women and children, ensuring their safety and comfort during such chaotic times.





A woman with a red bindi on her forehead, wearing a red sari with a brown and blue patterned shawl, stands outdoors. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background shows a simple building with a wooden lattice window and some greenery.

“ I have learned about disaster preparedness and response from the Women-Led Emergency Response (WLER) training conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh. The knowledge gained from this training has enabled us not only to protect ourselves, but also to effectively support our community. ”



Saraswati also received training on leadership development, gender-based violence, child marriage, climate-resilient cultivation, community adaptation plan and other important issues. She learnt about water conservation techniques and sustainable agricultural practices. Inspired by what she learnt, Saraswati grows vegetable in her small garden and motivates other families to do the same.







Saraswati took the initiative in damage assessment when the cyclone had passed and advocated for financial assistance from various government and non-governmental organisations for affected families.

During her journey with the Ramjannagar Gazipara Women's Self-Reliant Group, Saraswati not only improved her own skills but also played a praiseworthy role in the development of the women around her.



“ The respect and trust the villagers have in me have changed my life. They ask for my advice on important issues, which encourages me to lead them. I hope for a future where my community is strong in the face of disasters and thrives in harmony, with women in leadership roles ”

सरस्वती रानी

A portrait of a woman, Monika Rani Baulia, wearing a purple and blue patterned headscarf and a purple top. She has a red bindi on her forehead and is looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with vertical structures.

# MONIKA RANI BAULIA

■ Manikkhali Self-Reliant  
Women's Group 2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

অবিরোধী শান্তি/শান্তিবিধা



# Journey of Liberation

Monika Rani was unable to support her family financially, until a training on vaccination provided by ActionAid Bangladesh opened doors for Monika Rani. She has now become an important figure in her community, going beyond her involvement as a member of the Manikkhali Self-Reliant Women's Group 2.

Before Monika received support from ActionAid Bangladesh, she had no effective means of income. Today, she provides vaccination services for poultry in her village, helping to protect over 300 chickens and ducks, as well as more than 15 goats, from various diseases. Through her hard work, she earns about BDT 400 a day.









“ My involvement in the Manikkhali Self-Reliant Women's Group 2 has increased my confidence. It helped me find a way to earn a decent income. My financial contribution to my family has brought value to my contribution within the household. I can now share my opinions regarding family matters ”

Vaccination training was not all that Monika undertook, she also attended other programmes on leadership, gender-based violence, and community planning etc, thus enabling her to support herself and other women in her community. Two other important lessons she also learnt about are preventing child marriage and preparing for disasters.



With the continuation of vaccination services, Monika has also gained knowledge in poultry farming. She started rearing chickens and ducks at her home, which not only fulfilled the protein demand of her family but also provided her with extra income. She even grew vegetables in her garden by using sustainable farming practices she learned from the training. On top of that, Monika is also a skilled tailor. She ventured into making clothes for her neighbours, adding additional income for her family through her sewing machine.







Monika Rani Baulia became a role model for the members of the Manikkhali Self-Reliant Women's Group 2. Her story shows that if women are provided with the appropriate support and training, they can not only uplift their lives but also their communities.

■ Monika Rani Baulia

# NAMITA GAYEN

■ Manikkhali Self-Reliant  
Women's Group 2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

স্বাধীনতা গায়ত্রী





# Opportunities for Growth

Cyclone Remal took a heavy toll on Namita Gayen, destroying the paddy in her field, damaging her vegetable garden, and destroying the fishery in her pond. Nothing could be more saddening than having all her sources of income wiped out by a natural disaster.

The training in climate-resilient agricultural practices through the Manikkhali Self-Reliant Women's Group 2 helped her get back on her feet. With renewed motivation and knowledge from the ActionAid Bangladesh programmes, Namita and her husband have grown vegetables in sacks and unused spaces in their yard. The lessons she learnt about organic fertiliser production and sack cultivation has proven to be a blessing. They have also cultivated vegetables along the edges of enclosures and conserved water through canals for use during drought.









Cultivation of pumpkin, brinjal, Indian spinach, bitter gourd, okra, ribbed gourd, sponge gourd, cucumber, green beans, taro stem, and many other vegetables in large quantities brings a happy smile to Namita's face. In addition to providing them as a source of nutrient for her family, Namita also sells these vegetables for BDT 2000 every morning.



“ Each morning when I look at our vegetable garden, I am reminded that nature gives back when we learn to work with it. There are always new opportunities for growth. Each new skill is a step toward a more secure future for my family and our community. ”

ସଫଳତା ମାତ୍ର





Fish farming and livestock rearing are two other important income sources for Namita. She has 20 chickens, 6 ducks, and 8 goats that generate additional income. She is also a trained tailor and is skilled at sewing clothes for customers.

Through her participation in the Manikkhali Self-Reliant Women's Group 2, Namita has also received training on leadership development, gender-based violence prevention, child marriage prevention, healthcare, and climate adaptation, among other topics.



Namita's story is a unique example of women's resilience in the face of climate disasters. With determination, education, and support from ActionAid Bangladesh, Namita has not only recovered from devastating losses but has also created a more sustainable livelihood for her family.

Namita's journey inspires other women in her community, encouraging them that with proper knowledge and right support at the right time, it is possible to rebuild their lives and rise again even after the most challenging setbacks.

# REXONA KHATUN

■ Sonakhali Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

রক্সনা খাতুন





# United We Stand

With her prior knowledge gained from participating in Women-Led Emergency Response (WLER) training and group activities, Rexona was able to support her community during Cyclone Remal. As soon as she learned that a cyclone was approaching her area, Rexona and members of Sonakhali Self-Reliant Women's Group quickly alerted the villagers and initiated immediate preparedness measures for saving their lives and properties from the upcoming storm. She also drew the attention of the people to necessary precautions for the protection of livestock.

Rexona distributed emergency supplies and helped the vulnerable members of the community, especially the elderly, children, and disabled people, to reach the nearest cyclone shelters. At the cyclone centre, she provided dry food and drinking water to the people who were taking shelter and paid special attention to the needs of women and children during their stay at the cyclone shelter.

Rexona was there for the affected individuals even right after the cyclone, as she had actively advocated for the rehabilitation of the sufferers of Cyclone Remal.





“ When the threat of Cyclone Remal loomed over us, I knew that unity within the community was our greatest strength. Sharing knowledge and resources would help us save our lives and collectively overcome any disaster that comes our way. ”

রক্সনা খাতুন







After joining the Sonakhali Self-Reliant Women's Group, Rexona learnt about various services available at different public and private organisations for women like her. For instance, on the advice of the agriculture office regarding which variety of paddy is suitable for saltwater, she saw a bumper crop in the paddy field next to her house.



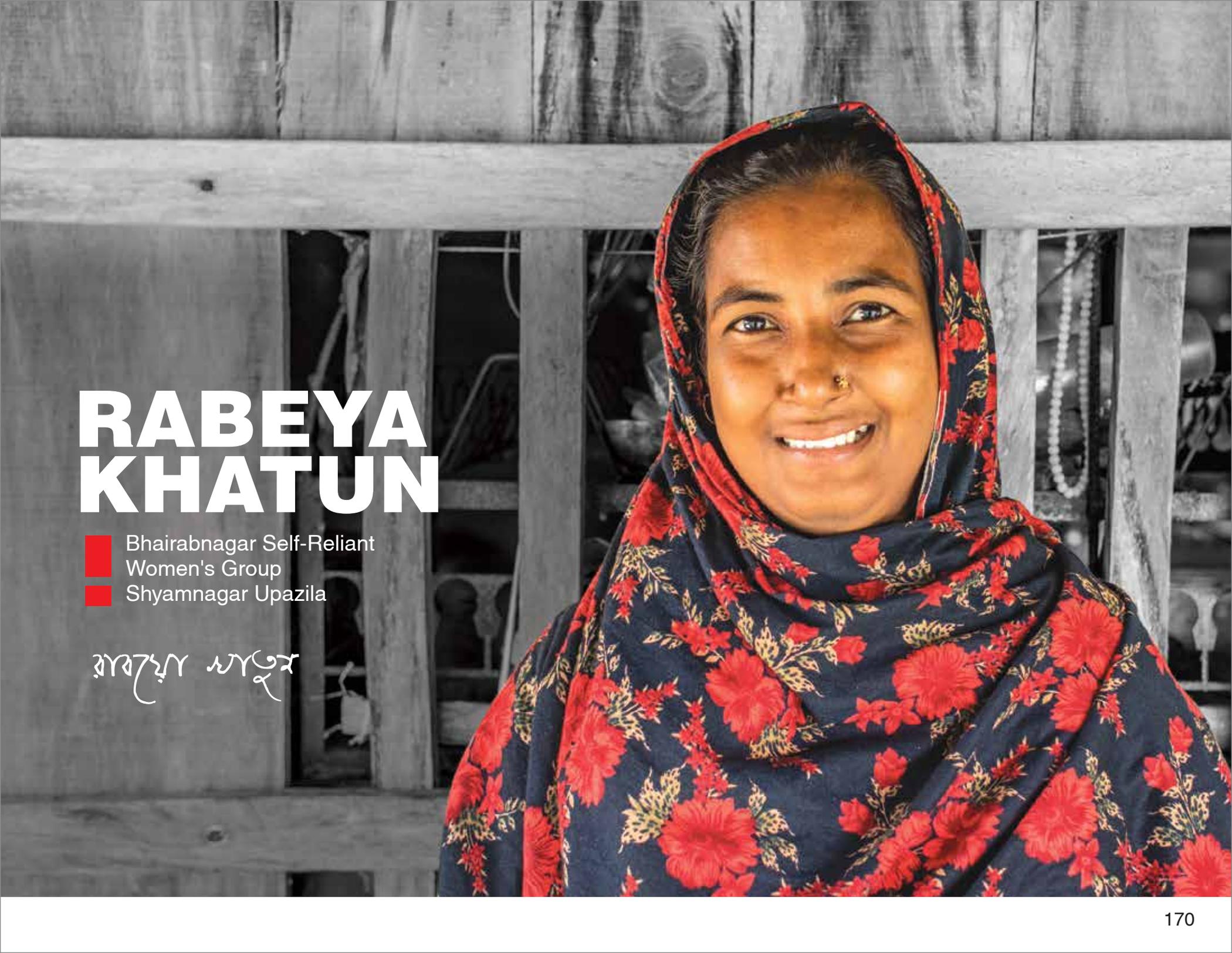
Moreover, Rexona's fish farming activity in the enclosure became successful with the support of the fisheries department. She received timely support on all aspects of fish farming—from recommendation of suitable carps in saline water to feeds and medicines at proper doses for better growth.



With training on gender-based violence from ActionAid Bangladesh, Rexona was motivated to work for change in her community to address violence. She organised meetings among the wives and mothers-in-law to share an understanding of how peace and harmony are necessary for the betterment of their families. She also conducted discussions with the husbands regarding the family violence so as to make them understand the benefits of peaceful living. She was able to reduce violence-against-women incidents in her village through her initiative.



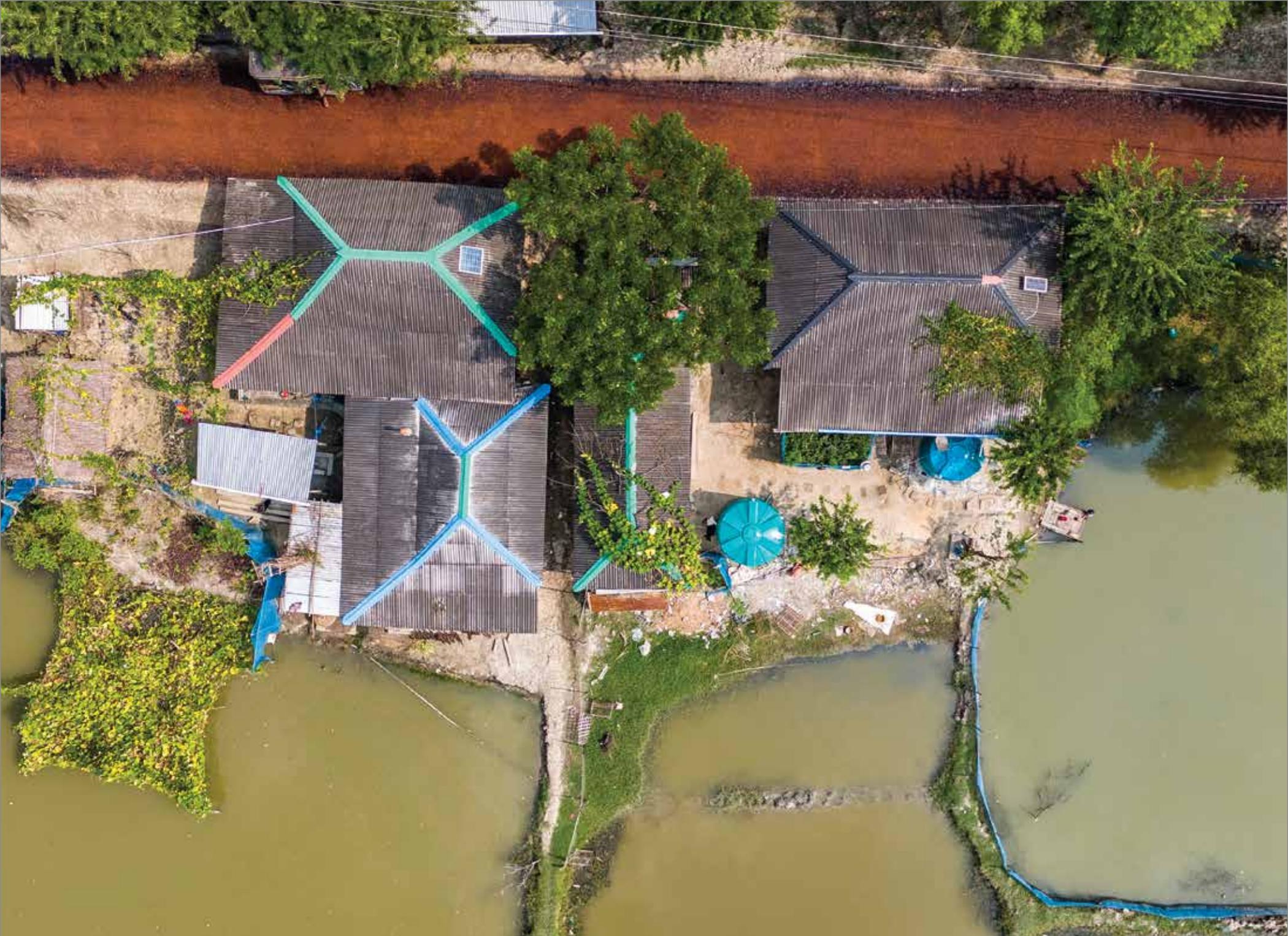
Previously unaware of climate-resilient cultivation techniques, Rexona has started growing a wide variety of vegetables and fruits in her yard with the knowledge she acquired from ActionAid Bangladesh training. Not only does this provide nourishment for her family, but it also allows her to make money from selling the produce. Her current financial stability enables her to save money through the deposit scheme initiated by the women's group.



# RABEYA KHATUN

 Bhairabnagar Self-Reliant  
Women's Group  
 Shyamnagar Upazila

কোর বিজিএ



# Inspiring Change

Rabeya Khatun, leader of the Bhairabnagar Self-Reliant Women's Group in Shyamnagar Upazila, has experienced a remarkable transformation in her life through participation in the Reflection Action Circle (RAC) run by ActionAid Bangladesh. Participation in this programme has empowered her on a personal level and also trained her to become an advocate for her community.

One major benefit Rabeya gained from being active in the RAC is advocacy skills. Through interaction and sharing within the circle, she gained an understanding of her rights and the rights of others.

With this new understanding, she has become a stronger voice for the people in her community, and she has been able to deal with the problems that have been ignored before. Walking in the shoes of an advocate, she has not only transformed herself but also inspired others to speak out and seek solutions.



Rabeya expanded her network by connecting with community members and various organisations, which helped them work together and shared resources. She has benefited from this network which served as a way to receive the different services from the different public and private organisations. She was able to get a water tank from the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) through her engagement with the Bhairabnagar Self-Reliant Women's Group.

A woman wearing a dark blue headscarf with a vibrant red floral pattern is focused on tending to her vegetable garden. She is surrounded by lush green plants, including what appear to be eggplants and other leafy vegetables. In the background, a rustic wooden building with a corrugated metal roof and a window with a wooden lattice is visible. The scene is set outdoors, likely in a rural or semi-rural area.

Additionally, she received training on gender-based violence, women's leadership, women-led emergency response, and community adaptation planning. Learning about climate-resilient agriculture, Rabeya now grows a variety of vegetables in her garden and engages in fish farming in a saline water enclosure adjacent to her home.



Rabeya also incubates eggs to hatch chicks and sells them for about BDT 2,000 to 3,000 per month.







■ Rabeya Khatun

A woman wearing a blue headscarf with red and white floral patterns is smiling and holding a small white duckling in her hands. She is wearing a gold bangle on her right wrist and a ring on her left hand. The background shows a wooden structure, possibly a roof or a wall.

“Through the Reflection Action Circle (RAC), I discovered my voice and learned that advocating for my community is not just a responsibility but a powerful way to inspire change. I started as a participant in the RAC, but now I stand as an advocate for my community. This journey has taught me that we all have the option to make a difference.”

কৌশলী খাতুন

A portrait of a woman, Raushanara Parvin, wearing a pink floral headscarf and a matching pink floral top. She has a nose ring and is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a dark, textured wall.

# RAUSHANARA PARVIN

■ Patorkhola Self-Reliant  
Women's Group-2  
■ Shyamnagar Upazila

রশ্মানারা পারভিন



# Road to Empowerment

Raushanara Parvin from Shyamnagar Upazila in Satkhira is a perfect example of rural women's empowerment. Her journey to self-reliance started with a four-day training programme provided by ActionAid Bangladesh after she became involved in Patorkhola Self-Reliant Women's Group-2.

Before she became involved with ActionAid Bangladesh, it was really hard for her to take care of her family without any income. But after she finished her training, Raushanara stepped into her new role as a vaccinator. In the past couple of months, she has taken the lead in vaccinating animals, including ducks, chickens, and goats, not only in her community but also in the neighbouring villages. She has also increased awareness of vaccinations, thereby making the local farmers knowledgeable about how they can protect their livestock from diseases.









Raushanara is now earning an income of BDT 5,000 to 6,000 per month from vaccination services, which has helped her meet the household expenses as well as save for the future.

A woman wearing a pink floral headscarf and a matching pink floral top is holding a brown chicken with a red comb. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a rustic, slightly blurred indoor setting.

Other than vaccination services, she raises around 200 poultry chickens, 30 local chickens, and 9 ducks on her farm. The income from the sale of poultry has increased her earnings to nearly BDT 12,000 a month. This financial independence has given her the strength to invest in her daughters' education.

A photograph of two women standing outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blue headscarf with a floral pattern of red and green flowers. The woman on the right is wearing a pink headscarf with a floral pattern of purple and white flowers. They are both looking down at a white notebook with a blue cover that the woman on the right is holding. The background shows a rustic wooden fence and some trees.

Raushanara has participated in various other training programmes by ActionAid, including women's leadership and WLER, community adaptation planning, and advocacy. She also played an important role in rehabilitating the victims of Cyclone Remal through preliminary damage assessment and raised demands for assistance at different levels from government and private organisations.

Her income from vaccinations and poultry sales has allowed her to save money in a deposit scheme run by her women's group. More importantly, it has changed her status within her family and society, where her opinions and decisions now matter.





“ I believe a woman should work and earn for her family; at least one should try to find a way to generate income. Now, with my own income, I can spend better than before on my household. I dream of raising my children with a proper education, which I believe is the key to unlocking a happy and prosperous life. ”

রশ্মিনারা পারভিন







House SE(C) 5/B (old 8), Road  
136, Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212  
(+880-2) 55044851-57  
[aab.mail@actionaid.org](mailto:aab.mail@actionaid.org)  
Copyright of ActionAid Bangladesh  
Content, Design and Photography by Impress Telefilm Limited