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# Preface

Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities (SHOUHARDO) III is a Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) funded by the United States Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), with complementary funding from the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). SHOUHARDO III is a five-year program that aims for improved gender equitable food and nutrition security and resilience of the vulnerable people living in the Chars and Haors in the northern part of Bangladesh by 2020. SHOUHARDO III is currently implementing a two-year extension phase (SHOUHARDO III Extension/S3X) until September 2022. In this phase, SHOUHARDO III focuses on two areas: (1) testing, identifying, and promoting service provision models by public, private, and community-based organizations and service providers; and (2) mobilizing communities to engage with the local service providers (LSPs) to ensure a sustained benefit.

However, with COVID-19 still affecting Bangladesh and many countries worldwide, SHOUHARDO III faced hurdles in rolling out the extension-phase interventions. For nearly five months (April to August 2021) the Government of Bangladesh imposed a strict country-wide lockdown due to a surge in COVID-19 positive cases that compelled the program to postpone the implementation of activities on the ground.

Bangladesh continues to be vulnerable to climate change due to its impact on the people, especially from Chars and Haors, along with high poverty rates, remote and waterlogged locations, and the lack of basic services and facilities. The first wave of COVID-19 that started in 2020, resulted in many community participants facing income insecurity because of the loss of their income-generating options. In the same year, Bangladesh was also affected by flooding in the north where SHOUHARDO III operates. The pandemic has since disrupted markets and transportation, and created a crisis in wage labor selling. Additionally, the second wave of COVID-19 in 2021 occurred amid incomplete and fragile economic recovery, and exacerbated the overall situation and status of the Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) population including a further loss of employment opportunities. Ultimately, this worsened PEP's capacity to fight COVID-19.

Due to the recurring waves of COVID-19 infections and the lockdown measures and movement restrictions, SHOUHARDO III started adopting the “stop & go” approach in its implementation; rather than a phased approach as initially envisioned for the extension period. SHOUHARDO III managed to implement activities face-to-face, engage key stakeholders on mobilizing LSPs, and engage community groups for half (i.e., six months) of FY21.

SHOUHARDO III adjusted most of its interventions in FY21. For example, since the pandemic started, SHOUHARDO III reached 20,054 program participants to access telemedicine services especially in far-flung areas. This was done by advocating the local health authorities to reach out to the PEP communities. With its extensive networks in the communities, SHOUHARDO III mobilized 9,470 Community Level Facilitators (CLF) who are participants themselves (in addition to the Village Development Committees/VDCs) to assist the LSPs in reaching the communities to provide relevant, and tailored services. The CLFs also supported the poor, disabled, and elderly community to benefit from Social Safety Net programs. As most of them are already from the program area, they did not have to leave their station and managed to follow the lockdown restrictions on local travel.

The Field Trainers (FTs) who directly engaged with program participants and community groups also operated at a limited scale to provide need-based support primarily on accessing apps and hotlines for livelihoods and health concerns, as well as weather-related information. As a result, the Participant-Based Survey (PaBS) in FY21 reported that 77% households received service from LSPs while 80.2% reported increased access to public services from the Government such as Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Department of Livestock Services (DLS) and Department of Fisheries (DoF). CARE's partnership with International Development Enterprises (iDE) and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) to implement water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities respectively, paid off this year with notable achievements.

This annual learning publication outlines some of the key program results and lessons learned from October 2020 to September 2021, including the impact of and adaptation of various approaches due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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# Acronyms

ANC	Antenatal Care	PNGO	Partner Non-Government Organization
AR	Annual Report	RFSA	Resilience Food Security Activity
PaBS	Participants Based Survey	RIMES	Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance	RRACP	Risk Reduction, Adaptation, and Contingency Plan
BMD	Bangladesh Meteorological Department	SHOUHARDO	Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities
CC	Community Clinic	STREAM	System for Tracking Results and Evidence for Adaptive Management
CHCP	Community Health Care Provider	SWIRL	Scaling up WASH Interventions in Remote Location
CLF	Community Level Facilitators	ToC	Theory of Change
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension	UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
DHRC	Deep Haor and Remote Char	UDCC	Union Disaster Coordination Committee
DHRC-LRA	Deep Haor and Remote Char Livelihoods Recovery Assistance	UDV	Union Disaster Volunteer
DCRM	Disaster and Climate Risk Management	UP	Union Parishad
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women	VAW	Violence Against Women
FFWC	Flood Forecasting and Warning System	VDC	Village Development Committee
FY	Fiscal Year	VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
GMP	Growth Monitoring and Promotion/Growth Monitoring Promoter		
GoB	Government of Bangladesh		
HH	Household/s		
HHN	Health, Hygiene and Nutrition		
iDE	International Development Enterprises		
IFA	Iron and Folic Acid		
LEB	Locally Elected Body		
LSP	Local Service Provider/s		
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation		
MoH&FW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare		
NBD	Nation Building Department		
PCSBA	Private Community Skilled Birth Attendants		
PEP	Poor and Extreme Poor		
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women		



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# On-Farm Livelihoods

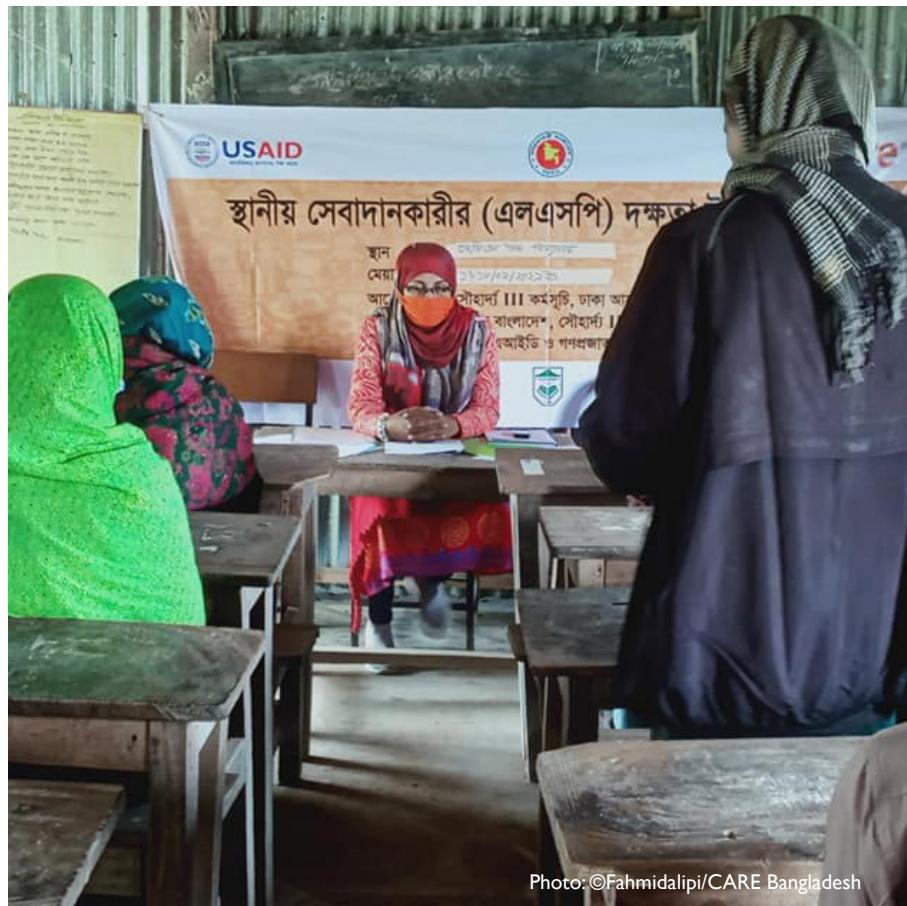
SHOUHARDO III has developed Local Service Providers (LSPs) to provide support and services to local farmers and bridge the gap among the communities and the public and private sectors. The LSPs are providing services such as selling seeds, feed, fingerlings, providing livestock vaccination support, and offering technical advice to farmers in remote communities. SHOUHARDO III also aims to improve farmers' access to agricultural markets, information, and extension services. Once the program phases out, the aim is to ensure communities will continue to receive such support, from and through the communities, in collaboration with the private sectors and GoB service providers. These linkages, business skills, and group-based community activities will lead to long-term sustainability.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## Village Entrepreneurs' Forum Bring LSPs Together for Sustainable Livelihood Approaches

The Village Entrepreneurs' Forum (VEF) is a sustainable service-provision approach that brings community-based service providers together to ensure that communities living in SHOUHARDO III working areas continue to receive and provide livelihood related support services, even after the program phases out.

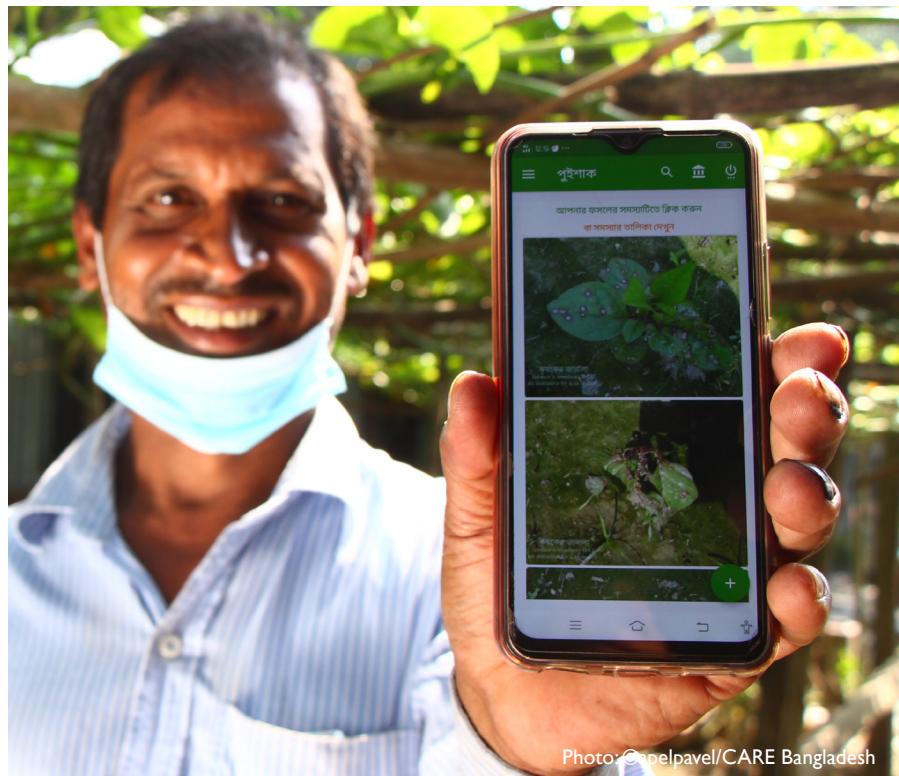


In total,  
**4,648** LSPs from  
**894** villages across  
all the targeted  
**115** unions and  
**23** upazilas  
received a  
two-day long  
**“LSP Skill  
Development  
Training”**  
between  
November 2020  
and March 2021

## Capacity Building of the LSPs

During the extension phase, SHOUHARDO III program is strengthening the capacities of agriculture producer groups for their improved productivity of market-driven crops.

This training sought to improve the business skills, service quality, and networking capacity of LSPs in providing agricultural and business promotional support and services to the community in the Char and Haor areas. Through both formal training and on-the-job support from program field staff, the farmers have learned contemporary production technologies, including optimum planting time and density, fertilizer, irrigation, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and uses of improved seed varieties.



## The Cobbler Who Transformed into a Cattle Vaccinator

Kartik Rabidas (28) from Dowarabazar, Sunamganj, was once a struggling cobbler who now earns BDT 10,000-12,000 (USD 117- 141) per month after receiving training to become a cattle vaccinator. Rabidas was searching for an alternative livelihood to increase his income and received a five-day long vaccination training from the SHOUHARDO III program, facilitated by the Department of Livestock (DoL) and Square AgroVet Ltd, in February 2020. After attaining the necessary skills, he started treating common diseases of poultry and cattle.



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

As a result of this transition, not only has Rabidas's livelihood improved, but communities in eight to ten nearby villages are receiving quality livestock services including vaccines, medicines, and improved semen with Artificial Insemination (AI) services from him.



Photo: ©ZahirulIslam/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## Service Delivery to Farmers Equate to Higher Food Production

### SHOUHARDO III developed 1,849 on-farm LSPs



**797**  
Micro Seed Retailer/  
Micro Seed Dealer



**619**  
Vaccinator



**251**  
Fish Fry Hawker



**182**  
Collector

These LSPs are intermediary service actors to reduce the high transaction costs of private enterprises in remote areas to address the PEP consumers' demands.

As a result of linkages by the LSPs, both government service providers and private companies are supporting farmers with high-quality seeds, feeds, vaccines, and training through result demonstrations.<sup>1</sup> The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), demonstrated 69 improved varieties of crops to farmers, including rice, maize, ground nut, mustard, sunflower, mung bean, and okra.

Altogether 74% of the PEP participants had higher food production as improved varieties and management techniques were adopted. In addition, 99% of participants used at least three improved business practices, including sorting, grading, storing, and packaging.



Photo: ©apeipavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©SabedAli/CARE Bangladesh

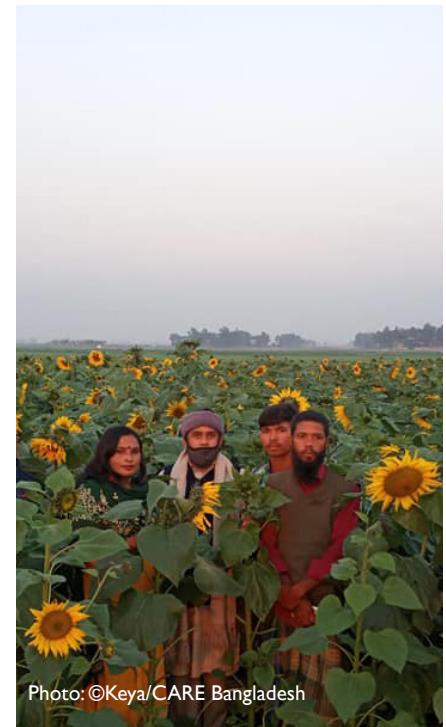


Photo: ©Keya/CARE Bangladesh

## Taking Advantage of the Online Market in Cattle Selling



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

A screenshot of the Bikroy.com website. At the top, there are navigation links: 'Bikroy.com' (with a logo), 'All ads', 'বাংলা' (Bangla), 'Chat', 'My account', and a yellow 'POST YOUR AD' button. Below the header, there is a large image of a brown cow standing outdoors. To the left of the main image is a smaller inset photo of the same cow from a different angle. At the bottom of the listing, there is text in Bangla: 'সিরাজগঞ্জের ঐতিহ্যবাহী গুরুর হাট' (Sirajganj's traditional bull market).

Considering the increased popularity of e-shopping amid the nationwide lockdown and movement restrictions, SHOUHARDO III initiated and hosted an e-cattle market for the ‘cattle seller program participants’ from Sirajganj. The pilot included 30 cattle from different sellers. Several cattle owners were enthusiastic in selling their cattle using the online platform and uploaded all the necessary information needed for the buyers. Through this online platform, the participants sold 12 cattle.

While a number of buyers and sellers preferred online purchase over the local market, the program identified two major challenges associated with the e-cattle market:

- (1) high transportation costs
- (2) complex payment procedure

Due to the nationwide lockdown, transportation costs increased and online buyers preferred to pay only a smaller percentage of the purchase price upfront. These challenges need to be taken into consideration when planning scale-up options.

*“Due to the nationwide lockdown, it was very difficult to sell cattle at the local market with a good price, but thanks to online platform, I have sold my cow at a fair price and earned a profit of BDT 6,000 (USD 70.9) which is higher than that of local market price, I am very happy.”*

- Shefali,(39), Belkuchi, Sirajganj

## Converting Waste Products to Environment-friendly, Nutrient-rich Cattle Feed

The SHOUHARDO III program explored alternative cattle feed production opportunities and ran a pilot study for eight months in Jamalpur; this proved to be especially helpful as grass feeding is not possible during the rainy seasons. The program has found that a nutritious, compact, and easily storable cattle feed can be generated from banana stem, a waste product generated during the banana harvesting process. The fresh and matured banana stem can be collected from farming households after harvesting the banana and used for haylage production as the alternative cattle feed.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

Md. Eyasin and his wife Rasheda Begum are processing banana stem haylage through a small scale commercial production plan.

*“This banana stem haylage is a nutritious livestock feed and good in quality. Several livestock farmers from my community fed this haylage and reported better growth of their cattle.”*

- Md. Eyasin, Bakshiganj, Jamalpur

VIDEO 1: Watch a video on the production of cattle feed using banana stem:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtZC0AA2In8>

VIDEO 2: Watch Deepo TV’s coverage on banana stem haylage approach:  
<https://fb.watch/9lz2pjD8Ui/>



Photo: @apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# Non-Farm Livelihoods

SHOUHARDO III aims to facilitate diversified and sustainable livelihood options for the PEP participants, including reducing the community's dependency on farming-related income-generating activities. The program works with males, females, and youth and establishes pro-poor financial services for the participants through Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA).



Photo: ©ParveAhmed/CARE Bangladesh

## Village Savings & Loan Association (VSLA): An effort towards sustainable pro-poor financial services

SHOUHARDO III adopted CARE's community-based savings-led financial model known as the Village Savings & Loan Association (VSLA). Under this model, members from a community (female, male, adolescent and youth) come together and form a savings group and hold meetings periodically to purchase shares<sup>2</sup> worth a particular value (determined by the group). Group members are allowed to take out an interest-bearing loan against their saved amount, leading all members to receive an equal amount of profit along with their capital savings during the annual share-out meetings at the end of the VSLA cycle.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

The project also trained Village Agents, named *Sanchay Sathi*, to form and maintain the groups for a fee. *Sanchay Sathis* were trained and equipped by the program to ensure the sustainability of the intervention. This year a total of 461 *Sanchay Sathis* were trained. Savings from the adolescent VSLA groups helped them mitigate their emergency educational needs and mobilize capital to engage in income-generating activities, particularly for the school dropout adolescents.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

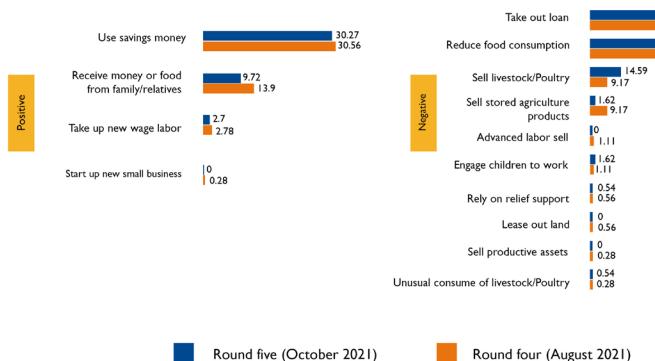
## Impact of VSLA on the Lives of Participants

When the COVID-19 lockdown forced the PEP to stay at home without any additional source of income, the VSLA group savings assisted them in overcoming the financial hardships resulting from the pandemic.

*“VSLA group has been a great help to us. When everyone was forced to stay inside their home during the pandemic, our income also stopped. We didn’t receive any government or non-government support; we are using our savings to handle our predicament.”*

- Shadhona Rani, Chair of Shapla VSLA, Baniachang

From the Recurrent Monitoring System (RMS)<sup>3</sup>, which tracks the emerging impact of the COVID-19 crisis with targeted participants, respondents shared that they have struggled with a lack of cash and income opportunities in 2020, with approximately 25% of 425 households on an average taking out loans. Learning from the devastating experience regarding the shortage of cash and income opportunities after the first government imposed COVID-19 lockdown, some decided to save some money in 2021 to cope with more lockdown measures or new floods.



## Status of SHOUHARDO III VSLAs

Total Number of VSLAs:

**1,914 active VSLA groups**

Sanchay Sathis formed 685 groups in FY21



Total Number of Trained Sanchay Shathi:

**461** (all female)



Total Number of Members:

**36,488**

452 male, 30,507 female, and  
5,529 adolescents



Share-out received by the female members (average):

**BDT 1,680 (USD 20) each**

## Deep Haor and Remote Char (DHRC) Initiative

The aim of the Deep Haor and Remote Char (DHRC) Livelihood Recovery Assistance (LRA) intervention is to provide cash support to meet the urgent and basic needs of the participants to prevent any additional loss of assets and livelihoods. This is meant to increase their resilience to the compounding shocks and stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Till September 2021, the program has supported **2,836** participants (2,200 Female, 636 Male) with non-farm livelihoods training



**9,939** participants (8,716 Female, 1,223 Male) with on-farm livelihoods training



**15,551** participants (13,462 Female, 2,089 Male) received the first installment (BDT 8,400 (USD 98.10) each) of their LRA cash support

**11,836** participants (10,217 Female, 1,619 Male) received their second installment



**354** participants received smartphones

Small business enterprises were more successful as a result of the LRA which helped them to develop a business plan leading to starting/re-starting their business. The program is closely following up with the participants to help their businesses succeed by continuously facilitating the update of their business plans based on challenges faced, assessing available opportunities, and providing the necessary skill training, when and if needed.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## Engaging women in business lifts family out of poverty

Sakia, a mother of three, from the Khalapara village of Mithamoin, Kishoreganj, started her own grocery store business that has earned a daily profit of BDT 500–600 (USD 6 -7) only. Sakia was desperate to make her grocery store business successful as she hardly managed to prepare three meals a day for her family on just her husband's limited income.

After being selected as a recipient of the DHRC-LRA intervention, Sakia received the first installment of BDT 4,900 (USD 58) cash support from SHOUHARDO III and took it as her only way to escape from poverty. The program assisted her during the business plan brainstorming process, linking her with other local grocery store owners and business prospects in the area. She received the appropriate technical training from a LSP based on her specific needs.



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

*"This has changed our lives completely. In the past, we could hardly manage food every day. On most days, we couldn't even eat three meals. Now we not only meet all our necessities, but we are also able to save some for the future."*

**Sakia no longer considers her family as poor as the cash grant has changed the life of the whole family.**



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# Youth & Adolescent Empowerment



1198  
Job Applications  
462  
Registrations completed  
Visited

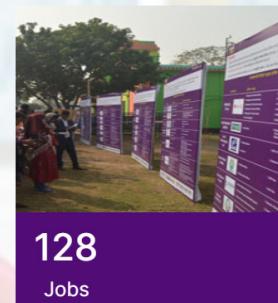
SHOUHARDO III organized its first online job fair connecting more than 1,200 local youth from across all program areas with 48 renowned companies and potential employers. Forty-five percent of participating youth (540 out of 1,200) received an employment offer from the participating companies, after completing online interviews with these companies.



Date: 24 Mar 2021  
Time: 10.30 AM  
Digital Job Fair for Skilled youth  
[Registration For Job Fair](#)  
Help Line  
□ 16479

চাকুরী মেলা।

বিশেষত: কারিগরী ক্ষেত্রে দক্ষ যুব নারী পুরুষদের জন্য একটি আদর্শ প্লাটফর্ম, যা যে কোন সরকারী বেসরকারী দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন প্রতিপ্রদানকারী সংস্থা ব্যবহার করতে পারবেন কর্ম সংযোগ স্থাপন ও যোগ্য কর্মী নিয়োগ প্রদানের ক্ষেত্রে।



The most significant learning from this initiative is the importance of connecting the youth with potential employers beyond their village or districts. In addition, the program's agenda of linking youth with locally available business resources (entities, companies, personnel) has enabled a strong rapport to be built for future career opportunities. One of the key challenges faced was unstable internet connections interfering with online form fill-up and interviews. For reference, the job fair portal can be accessed here:

<https://bdjobs.com/jobfair/care>



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

*"It was such a great experience. I managed to apply and sit for a job interview at my hometown, without having to spend any extra money on transportation. I am grateful to SHOUHARDO for this opportunity."*

- Shafiqul Islam, a youth participant from Bakshiganj, Jamalpur



Photo: ©capelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©capelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©capelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©Ruhul Amin/CARE Bangladesh

# Disaster Risk Reduction

The program mobilized Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) leaders to prepare and review village level Risk Reduction and Contingency Plans and adapt accordingly. The DRR leaders are also the frontline community members in raising the communities' demands to Union Parishad, Union Disaster Management Committees, Nation Building Department, and the private sectors for attaining necessary DRR-related services such as early warning information collection and dissemination, Risk Reduction, Adaptation and Contingency Plan (RRAC) review, and shelter identification. They also disseminate early warning and advisory services to the SHOUHARDO III communities for better management of adverse weather.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

SHOUHARDO III developed 2,841  
**community-based Disaster Risk Reduction  
(DRR) leaders** (1,894 female, 947 male), equipping  
them with the knowledge to support their  
communities in preparing for various disasters

## Tackling Disaster-related Risks through Community-Based Approaches

Through this activity, the program is ensuring that sustainable community-based disaster preparedness expertise exists within communities who will then be able to support in reducing disaster-related vulnerability in their localities long after the program phases out. According to the program's Beneficiary Based Survey (BBS) in FY21, around 93.6% (970 out of 1,050) of households received risk and early warning information from the community.



Photo: ©apelpave/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©KalponaRoy/CARE Bangladesh

*"We are providing flood warning messages and helping families take shelter who have lost their houses due to river erosion. Additionally, for ensuring further support, we are also assisting the Union Parishad (UP) in compiling a list of families whose houses got destroyed due to river erosion."*

- Mahmudul Hasan, DRR leader Jamalpur

## Climate Adaptive Interventions

The adverse effects of climate change, such as flooding and river erosion, are influencing the lives of the vulnerable people living in the Char and Haor areas of Bangladesh. SHOUHARDO III has undertaken different adaptation measures to reduce vulnerability at the household and community levels. In total, 56,582 people are using climate information provided by the program.

### Climate-Smart Agriculture

SHOUHARDO III facilitated awareness raising sessions for program participants on climate-smart agriculture practices and linked them with LSPs, private sectors, and GoB service delivery agencies to ensure the receipt of continuous support.

The program introduced submergence/flood tolerant rice varieties, floating seed-bed, sack gardening, dyke farming, and raised pit cropping in vegetable and seedling production to tackle climate change challenges and to ensure continued crop production even in adverse climate situations.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

SHOUHARDO III also facilitated farmers in harvesting a viable third crop like mustard and maize to increase food and nutrition security. In addition, the program promoted goat rearing using macha (or a raised platform), bio-fertilizer in crop production, and botanical and cultural pest management methods in cultivating the crop to reduce environmental pollution.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

The program has provided support to re-construct certain infrastructure, including homestead plinths, school cum flood shelters, and brick mound protection walls to adapt to and mitigate the climate risk for the people who live in the most geographically vulnerable areas.

### Homestead Plinth Raising



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©Wahid Abdullah/CAREBangladesh



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

The program has raised 2,425 household plinths in the Char and Haor regions to protect houses from inundation of floodwater; including 1,744 households in the Char Region as a flood recovery activity sponsored by USAID Bangladesh. The GoB funded the remaining 681 plinth raising. This intervention enabled the households to cultivate vegetables and to rear livestock and poultry on the raised grounds year-round ensuring food security even during natural disasters. This long-term resilience approach is helping communities cope with flooding and protect their valuable household assets.

*“Now that my house is raised, I can grow vegetables in my backyard. We can eat and sell vegetables. We no longer need to be worried about the damage caused by flood.”*

- Rasheda (30), Participant of SHOUHARDO III, Nageshwari, Kurigram

## School Cum Flood Shelter

The program helped to transform 14 primary schools into flood shelters<sup>4</sup>; primarily implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, and Jamalpur districts. Around 6,483 households (4,148 of which are PEP households) are living in these villages and they are now able to seek safe shelter temporarily during the monsoon floods along with their cattle.



Photo: ©SabedAli/CARE Bangladesh

## Brick Mound Protection Wall

SHOUHARDO III constructed eight Brick Mound Protection Walls in the Haor districts of Kishoreganj, Netrakona, and Habiganj. Approximately 1,646 households (844 of which are PEP households) are living safely on these mounds, and using their extended and raised space for vegetable cultivation, livestock rearing, and other purposes.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# Health and Nutrition

SHOUHARDO III health and nutrition activities aim to bring sustainable changes in the healthcare seeking behaviors of individuals, families, and the communities by strengthening Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC), community and local health systems, and the development of local service providers.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## Private Community-based Skilled Birth Attendants (PCSBA): Improving maternal and child health services at the SHOUHARDO III communities

CARE collaborated with the Government of Bangladesh's (GoB) Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB) in conducting the six-month long training on ante-natal and post-natal care, safe delivery, and other necessary services. PCSBAs work at the community level under an Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer (UH&FPO) and contribute to achieving the Government goal to reduce maternal and child mortality.



SHOUHARDO III trained **75 female Private Community Skilled Birth Attendants (PCSBAs)** to ensure the delivery of child and maternal health and nutrition services in the most remote villages in northern Bangladesh

## Life as a PCSBA

Mahmuda (34), from Kishoreganj District, received training as a Private Community Skilled Birth Attendant (PCSBA) and has been working in her community since August 2021.

*“I worked as a Community Health Volunteer (CHV) for nearly four years, and then provided Growth Monitoring Promotion (GMP) service for three months. However, I was ignorant of how to deliver a child, I could not provide specific suggestions for any complexity during pregnancy. Now I have learned them and I feel confident to suggest actions that could save the lives of both the mother and child.”*

– Mahmuda, PCSBA



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## Cash Support for Pregnant and Lactating Women

SHOUHARDO III provided monthly cash support of BDT 500 (USD 5.99) to pregnant and lactating women to ensure that their additional nutritional needs are met without putting any added burden on the PEP families.

This support was provided to **5,556 women**, 2,770 from Char and 2,786 from the Haor areas, between December 2019 to June 2021 in the ten most remote upazilas where SHOUHARDO III is operating.

*"We have five members in my family. Our financial condition is not good, the earning member is only my husband and he is a day laborer. We cannot buy and eat nutritious food every day due to the irregular income. I received cash support from SHOUHARDO III, bought food and fed my son milk, fruits etc. Now my son's health condition is much better than the other children."*

- Rima Begum (23) from Baliyaghata, Uttar Sreepur, Tahirpur, Sunamgonj



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## COVID-19 Cash Support

In 2020, following the onset of COVID-19 and the GoB enforced lockdowns, those relying primarily on daily income sources to meet their needs were more significantly impacted. To assist them in overcoming this sudden and unexpected economic shock, SHOUHARDO III provided cash support of BDT 12,000 (USD 140) to nearly 17,000 participants in two installments.



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# Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

SHOUHARDO III is working with Union Parishads to improve village statuses to 'Open Defecation Free (ODF)' which means the communities that have shifted to using hygienic toilets. The program is also raising awareness on the harm of arsenic contamination. Waterborne diseases has reduced and medical expenses related to waterborne diseases also decreased. The program also collaborates and negotiates with local government institutions to provide WASH services to the PEP families.



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A total of **454 villages have been declared ODF** in SHOUHARDO III program areas from October 2020 to September 2021

## WASH Local Service Providers

To increase the chances of sustainable service provision, the program is developing the capacity and skills of WASH LSPs who are providing their services in the communities in exchange for a fee.



*"I provide Arsenic testing and tube-well repairing services, which is a rare profession for women in my community. Thanks to SHOUHARDO III's training for building my capacity. I believe I will be one of the successful LSPs in my community soon."*

— Shabnur, Water Quality Tester, Habiganj

The program developed **62 WASH LSPs** to provide their services for testing arsenic contamination in water, repairing tube-wells, and producing latrine ring slabs for a given fee.

Since the establishment of their businesses, the **62 WASH LSPs** have conducted **658 arsenic tests for 670 tube-wells** and earned **BDT 97,300 (USD 1,138.27)**, with an average income of **BDT 2,300 (USD 26.90)** per LSP.



The LSPs are conducting arsenic tests in front of the customers and getting an immediate result which has helped in gaining the trust of the community. WASH LSPs have turned their business into an income source and communities are benefitting from the additional services that are available to them.



## The Promotion of Improved Hygienic Latrines as a Pathway to ODF Villages

SHOUHARDO III partnered with iDE Bangladesh for the 'Scaling-up WASH Innovations in Remote Locations' (SWIRL) initiative, which is greatly contributing to ensuring affordable, flood-resilient, and user-friendly sanitation technologies for the people (including the PEP) of the Haor and Char regions. SWIRL focuses on ensuring improved latrines for all. Communities are purchasing improved latrines and related accessories from latrine producers and their sales agents at affordable prices. Incorporating community latrine entrepreneurs is the way to sustain the sanitation market even after the program phases out.



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

Since April 2020 to August 2021, 75 producers/service providers were trained to provide affordable, quality and subsidized sanitation services to the community and 869 sales agents were developed with an agenda to promote the use of improved latrines. With higher numbers of service providers and sales agents, community members' access to installing improved latrines has increased.



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

*"This latrine is well constructed and no insect touches my foot, hand, and body, and it doesn't cause my family any illness. There is no smell, no one can tell that there is a latrine nearby. Regardless of men and women, we can use this latrine without fear."*

– Najina (32), participant, SHOUHARDO III program, Nagessori, Kurigram



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# Women's Empowerment

To address food security for the PEP, SHOUHARDO III activities seek to understand and transform traditional gender roles. The program has learned that working with only women will not achieve the desired societal transformation, and thus has facilitated men's and boys' engagement through discussing and promoting gender sensitive ideas at the family and community levels.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## **Social Media Campaign: It Ends with Me— An innovative way to discuss Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Eliminating Violence Against Women (E-VAW) openly**

CARE Bangladesh launched the “It ends with me” social media campaign on International Women’s Day 2020. The core focus of the campaign was to mitigate the reinforcement of harmful norms and practices for new brides and young mothers, including physical, economic, and psychological violence against women by mothers-in-law, primarily in Bangladesh.



## **Campaign reach**

In FY21, the Facebook platform alone reached an audience of **3,738,437** engaging in online debates and discussions about women’s empowerment and gender-based violence.

The total reach of the social media campaign was more than **12.1 million on Facebook**, with a reach of **44,000 on Instagram** and **770,000 on Twitter**.

## E-VAW Exhibition and Storytelling Platform

For social awareness and community mobilization for Eliminating Violence against Women (E-VAW), an E-VAW exhibition and storytelling platform was organized in Ashtogram Upazila of Kishoreganj and Nageshwari Upazila of Kurigram districts. The platform featured stories and narratives of primary and secondary survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) from men's perspectives and their journey of change. The program reached an audience of more than 9,000 (6,000+ of whom were women) physically and virtually.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh



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## Raising Awareness on Violence Against Women Through Popular Theater

SHOUHARDO III facilitated 82 ‘Popular Theaters’ in the remote villages in the program areas. The theme of these acts were designed to express solidarity and cohesion with the greater community on issues including (a) child marriage; (b) domestic violence; (c) usage of mobile in fueling violence against women; (d) rape; and (e) dowry. Audience members were able to relate the theater content to their personal experiences and expressed regret in practicing some of the harmful norms in their lives without understanding the consequences completely.



*“After watching this theater, now I can realize that child marriage is a burden to a girl, both physically and emotionally. Through this, a young girl is burdened with more responsibilities than she is able or ready to take. Moreover, the drama conveys a very important message that if the in-laws provide mental support as well as a conducive environment to the new bride, she can survive and adapt to the new situation more easily.”*

- An audience member’s reaction after watching the popular theater

## Bringing Mothers and Daughters-in-Law Closer through Quarterly Adda

With an aim to prevent domestic violence, SHOUHARDO III took the opportunity to emphasize improved relationships at the household level by addressing the conventional and perceived image of a ‘good wife’. The program observed from its previous *Addas*, or interactive and informal conversations, that the most impactful approach to achieve the target of this intervention is to facilitate more *Addas* between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The objective of the *Addas* is to break the culture of silence in household relationships and create a healthy boundary for partners by ensuring an improved culture of dialogue.



Photo: ©Sabina Yesmin/CARE Bangladesh

In FY21, the program facilitated 1,200 *Addas* and reached 24,502 mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. As a result of this intervention, the program observed several major changes at the household level:

- **Increased acceptance of daughter-in-law's opinions**
- **Strengthened family relationship**
- **Mutual consultation and decision-making**
- **Improved couple relationships and shared responsibilities with other family members**
- **Mutual respect for generational gaps and understanding**

*“I was a new bride once. Now I’m a mother-in-law. A friendly relationship with my daughter-in-law has made our family a perfect one. ‘Adda’ was a great help in this regard.”*

- Najma Begum, from Ghagra village, Mithamin upazila, Kishoreganj, is a regular member of the SHOUHARDO III’s *Adda* team



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

# Governance & Community Engagement

Since its inception, SHOUHARDO III has advocated for the incorporation and representation of the Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) communities in public forums. The program is facilitating the communities (demand side) to negotiate public services and make the service providers such as Union Parishads (UPs) and Nation Building Department (NBD) (supply side) more responsive and accountable to the needs of the PEP. In this regard, SHOUHARDO III mobilized communities to form Village Development Committees (VDC)<sup>5</sup> in each of the 947 program villages.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

Communities are also actively participating in the planning sessions of the Union Budget at the ward level, the Union Development, and Coordination Committee.

To make the field administration responsive to the needs of the PEP communities, the program facilitated Program Advisory and Coordination Committees (PACC)<sup>6</sup>.

In FY 2021, about 30% of Village Development Committees succeeded in including one development plan in the Union Parishad budget.

In 2021, VDCs successfully negotiated the making of 84 decisions in favor of the PEP people by Union Parishads.

According to a survey conducted by SHOUHARDO III, 78% of respondents from the program areas (both participants and non-participants) acknowledged the presence of VDC.

This survey also revealed that 76% of VDCs supported communities in implementing village development activities.



## Community Score Card – CARE's Unique Model for Ensuring Accountability

The Community Score Card (CSC) process is a tool developed by CARE to help bring together both service users and service providers to identify bottlenecks associated with and determine solutions for the service delivery system. It was found that the tool promoted community participation and open dialogue and improved relationship with the service users. Moreover, service users were empowered to lead community monitoring of the services which helped increase community ownership while facilitating accountability, transparency, and responsibility from service providers.



Photo: ©CARE Bangladesh

SHOUHARDO III facilitated the CSC process in 48 selected Community Clinics to improve the quality of primary health care services operating at the community level as an advocacy tool for the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The users' communities of these 48 Community Clinics have started receiving improved health services as a result of the process.



Photo: ©ShantaPop/CARE Bangladesh

## TransAcct- Accountability, Monitoring, Learning, and Adaptive Mechanism

SHOUHARDO III ensured transparency and accountability as well as improved participatory decision making in the program. The program developed hotline management guidelines, streamlining queries, complaints, and feedback from participants including promoting the use of the hotline, complaint box, and information banners on entitlement, and rights of participants.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

All queries related to the COVID-19 cash support response were addressed by the TransAcct guideline to provide instant support to the participants regarding any SHOUHARDO III related matters. Urgent matters that required action or further clarification from the technical teams were documented in a database. This database has helped SHOUHARDO III address issues that communities were facing at the start of the COVID-19 response strategy development.



Photo: ©apelpavel/CARE Bangladesh

## SHOUHARDO III Advocacy Efforts

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as schools were closed and millions of adolescents were bound to stay at home, there was a fear that child marriage was rising. SHOUHARDO III conducted a study on the matter to understand the extent to which this might be happening.



The program conducted webinar-based research to explore the status-quo of child-marriage prevention mechanisms and strategies in the program communities. This remote research identified and captured the best strategies and practices adopted by the communities and young girls against their child marriages that were slated to take place.

SHOUHARDO III arranged ten webinars between September and December 2020 with around 240 participants attending (adolescent girls, their parents, local and central GoB authorities, local and national media, law and grassroots NGO representatives, and SHOUHARDO III community leaders). These webinars presented a complex web of stories that fuel the successful prevention of child marriages and provide evidence to improve the prevention strategies during the pandemic.



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# Conclusion and Key Reflections

SHOUHARDO III faced many challenges throughout FY21. The year required agility in numerous capacities of programming to navigate the unprecedented times brought on by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the already established results and networks across the communities aided the program teams in better navigating this challenging time.



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In order for SHOUHARDO III program to achieve its lasting impact in the communities, the program will need additional time to sustain the results that it generated over the last six years. This time will also be required to regain momentum to strengthen service models and community engagement efforts. FY22 onwards will be used to reach LSPs' maturity so that they can operate in the communities while receiving support from the private and public sectors. The program will figure out the sustainable locally-led solutions and mobilize the communities to keep continuing their efforts after the program phases out. At the same time, the program will continue its advocacy efforts through dialogues based on priority areas such as youth development and gender equality. The program will be continuously sharing the results, lessons, and scaling-up of best practices for the wider CARE community, other organizations, and donor societies.



## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Results of a newly released technology are demonstrated for the wider community and their farmers to motivate locals to use those technologies. Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) usually set demonstration of newly released variety/technology to show its results.

<sup>2</sup> A 'share' is the amount of money VSLA members deposit as their savings. Each VSLA member can buy a maximum of five shares at each meeting.

<sup>3</sup> SHOUHARDO III conducted the RMS to explore the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 on the participants' lives and livelihood. In 2021, the participants adopted both positive and negative coping strategies- the highest one being taking out loans (negative) and the second one being utilizing their savings (positive). Details: RMS-2021-infograph.pdf ([carebangladesh.org](http://carebangladesh.org))

<sup>4</sup> The school cum flood shelters are buildings that have 2.5' brick walls from plinth and corrugated sheet fencing and roofing. They have four rooms (two rooms around 20' 8" x 17' 8", one room around 31' x 17' 8", and one room around 10' 4" x 17' 8"). Before construction, an Upazila Education Officer has provided a no objection certificate stating that the school can be used as flood shelter during floods.

<sup>5</sup> AVDC is an umbrella organization consisting of a minimum of 11 members from PEP families. The VDCs prepare a yearly action plan called a Community Action Plan (CAP) that addresses common economic and social issues. VDC is a critical development agent involving people in different village strata through the community consultation process.

<sup>6</sup>The PACCs consist of government officials from 13 line ministries such as Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock, Ministry of Disaster and Relief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and Ministry of Youth Development.



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