



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**SHOUHARDO III Quarterly**

# Newsletter

Issue 3, April - June 2022

## Millions of people impacted by flood in Bangladesh 2022

**7.2 Million  
people affected**

**44, 254  
water sources damaged**

**2,19,405 I  
livestock affected**

**83,394  
cropland damaged**

**49885  
sanitation damaged**



The northeastern region of Bangladesh has experienced severe flash floods during May to June 2022. The cumulative amount of rain in the surrounding area and the adjacent Indian States is the highest that it has been for 122 years. This flood has wreaked havoc on people's lives and livelihoods in nine northeastern districts of Bangladesh, whereas Sunamganj and Sylhet are the severely affected districts.

“

**I lost my chicken and duck. I haven't eaten anything in the last two days. We are unable to cook because everything got washed away including our stove and utensils.**

- Neharun (35) from Patabuka village dokkhin Shripur.



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE

Many households were destroyed, and people took shelter in open spaces (on the side of the road/culvert/bridge), in flood shelters, boats, mosques, schools, and their union parishad.



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE

“

**We took shelter in this madrasa.<sup>1</sup> We are living with three more families here in a small room. The only toilet is on the ground floor, which is submerged. The females have to wait until it gets dark to use the toilet. Collecting safe water is the most difficult thing now.**

- Shilpi Akhter (26) from Tahirpur Sunamganj.



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE

The Bangladesh government, NGOs, and individual organizations in the flood-affected areas started immediate flood response. Government opened shelter homes, provided immediate food and relief support to the affected communities.

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Leaders developed by the SHOUHARDO III program have tried their level best to support the community. They share weather advisories, help in evacuation and transfer people to safe shelters and raise awareness to collect and store dry food.

“

**This is an unusual flood. I suggested the villagers to get prepared. Some people were able to collect dry food. I helped them to evacuate from the household to shelter or any raised platform. The whole village is affected but we helped each other**

- Lipi begum (30), SHOUHARDO III DRR leader



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE



Photo: © Apel Pavel/CARE

CARE Bangladesh has deployed project activities to address the immediate needs of the flood-affected communities in Sunamganj district, with funding support from USAID Bangladesh. More than 5,500 people received multipurpose cash grants, standard food packages, dignity kits, and hygiene kits. The affected communities also received water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) support including tube-well repair and re-functioning or alternative safe drinking water supply.

“

**The flood came and broke my house. I lost everything. There was nothing to eat. I am feeling good to get these materials. I can eat with my family now.**

- Rehana flood survivor  
Sunamganj



Photo: © Asafuzzaman Captain/CARE

# How a Gender Advocate Encounters Women Leaders in a Community

Written by: Syeda Ashrafiz Zaharia Prodhan



Photo: ©CARE

The writer, on her way towards the village



Photo: ©CARE

While we were talking, a large group of adolescent girls passed by in a boat on their way to school. There were also a loud bunch of healthy-looking children playing nearby with their fathers keeping an eye on them, while the mothers talked with us. “As well as all this development, we can also now call the chairman of our UP directly,” said Ms. Tazmahal (WE Leader).

Although my experience is limited to this one village, seeing the change in Bairabari makes me hopeful that similar changes must be occurring in other ‘Behind Villages’ as well. I sense that the main secret behind this transformation is a strong sense of unity and collective resiliency among the people of the village. As we were leaving for the next village, the villagers waved goodbye, wishing us a safe travel. “When you visit us next time, you will see many more changes here” - the WE Leader says with a smile. The boat started moving and I began to wonder, - if nothing else - they’ve learned that a strong sense of community can really make a difference.

The green fields in the village of Bairabari in Chauhali of Sirajganj district floated into view after our two-and-a-half-hour journey by boat and motorcycle. This locality had all the signs of a village that has been suffering from poverty. The Bairabari village was identified as a ‘Behind Village’ under the women empowerment result area in the Village Grading<sup>3</sup> Report in 2018.

I started a conversation with a mixed group of people (male and female) in a meeting; very soon, the women participants took the floor and led the entire discussion. I realized that I was in the midst of the female leaders of the village – Women Empowerment (WE) Leaders<sup>4</sup>, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Leaders<sup>5</sup>, the Village Development Committee (VDC)<sup>6</sup> Secretary, as well as young mothers, mothers-in-law, adult men, a young male vaccinator, and a female seed seller – this group was indication of strong leadership in the village.

They shared what their lives looked like before SHOUHARDO began work in the village and gave me examples of how their lives and livelihoods have changed in the seven years under the of SHOUHARDO III program. The women in the village have started savings even without the presence of Shanchay Sathis and were vocal about having control over their own savings. “We are independent in taking decisions about our wellbeing,” Sultana and Joshna confidently told me.

Some young mothers had become WE Leaders and were very enthralled in the discussions, highlighting the fact that they were consulted by their husbands when making household financial decisions. “My husband asks my opinion in every regard now,” claimed a smiling DRR Leader, Aleya. They even gave examples of positive changes in the relationship with their mother-in-law as a result of Adda sessions.



Photo: ©Ashraf/CARE  
The writer talking to the community women

## Banana Haylage Production Scaled Up in the Char region

Written by: Zohurul Islam

Scarcity of cattle feed during monsoon is a major issue for farmers and households with cattle, especially in remote char and haor regions of Bangladesh. To support Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) communities in this regard, the SHOUHARDO III program conducted a pilot study for eight months in Jamalpur, a northern char district in Bangladesh in 2021 to explore the production opportunities of Banana Haylage as an alternative cattle feed. Considering a positive responses from the community, the program facilitated the scaling up of the Banana Haylage technology in Kurigram, Gaibandha, and Sirajganj districts as well.



The program conducted demonstrations of the technology in four districts under the char region starting in January 2022. Nearly 30 Vaccinator LSPs were oriented on the process and are now teaching participants about haylage production at the household level. To make the new haylage technology sustainable, Vaccinator LSPs were selected to scale up the process since they are the built-in service providers in communities and can promote haylage as the cattle feed in addition to providing cattle vaccinations. The vaccinators have trained 373 participants, of which 226 have started producing haylage on their own to feed their cattle. In addition, two entrepreneurs from Kurigram and Gaibandha have invested in a small Banana Haylage plant for commercial production with partial financial support from SHOUHARDO III. The entrepreneurs are now selling the cattle feed in the local market.

## Journey of a Successful Public Leader: Seema

Written by: Md. Abdul Jalil



Photo: © Taposi Goswami/CARE

*"SHOUHARDO was a turning point in my life, I will not stop here. I will contest for the Chairman position in the next election. My path to leadership was not smooth and I had to face many challenges. I believe women's leadership can bring fair and positive changes in our communities and I will help for the development of women's leadership. This is the only way societal inequality will end."*

At the beginning of 2022, Seema Sharker from Ajmiriganj, Sylhet was elected as the Upazila Vice Chairman in the local elections. However, it has not been the easiest of journeys in the local government elections for Seema to reach this point in her life. Seema's husband passed away early in their marriage, and she was left to raise their two sons on her own. She was struggling to bear the expense of her family and was facing a severe economic crisis. Desperate to find an income source at such a critical time, Seema found the SHOUHARDO I program and began working as a Field Facilitator in 2008 where she earned a monthly income of BDT 8,600 (USD 93). She continued working for the program for two years, when she was able to fulfill her aspiration of helping the poor. She dutifully performed her responsibilities by preventing child marriages, speaking up about violence against women, and helping community members overcome their problems. Due to her sincerity and passion for this work, she quickly became a well-known figure in her village. Even after she stopped working with SHOUHARDO in 2010, Seema focused on helping communities realize their rights and undertook several successful community actions where her leadership qualities flourished.

# Advocating for Financial Inclusion of the Community Savings Groups

Written by:Abul Hossain

Since 2019, SHOUHARDO III program has formed more than 2,000 community savings groups, known as Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs). Through VSLAs, the Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) segment of the population can deposit their limited, irregular, and unstable savings and can also get access to small loans. SHOUHARDO III is advocating for the incorporation of VSLAs in Bangladesh's National Financial Inclusion Strategy, as well as the capacity building of Village Saving Agents beyond the program period. As a part of this advocacy, the SHOUHARDO team met with officials from the Bangladesh Bank (the Central Bank of Bangladesh) on May 30, 2022. The newly formed National Financial Inclusion Strategy Administration Unit is now working to look after the financial inclusion policy of Bangladesh. However, as the Central Bank does not work at the field level, they suggested working with the private banks and mobile financial service (MFS) providers who would be interested in working with Village Saving Agents. In this meeting, the Bangladesh Bank proposed that Village Agents/VSLAs would require a bank account through agent banking or MFS. Therefore, SHOUHARDO III, along with other USAID Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA), will write a formal letter to Bangladesh Bank to arrange meetings with potential banks and MFS who would be interested in working with VSLAs and Village Saving Agents.



Photo: © Tabbasum Hafsa/CARE



Photo: © Jahirul Haque/CARE

## E-Business Actors helping the Poor and Extreme Poor Communities

Written by: Zohurul Islam

SHOUHARDO III promoted 230 e-Business actors (Male 203, Female 27) to create the provision of getting access to information and communications technology (ICT) for the Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) communities in the char and haor regions. The e-Business actors, all of whom are youth, are helping people in the establishment of employment linkages, online CV preparation and application submission, skills training, dissemination of job information, educational support for adolescents and youth, COVID-19 vaccine registration, and local digital marketing.



Photo: © Bipul Prosad/CARE

Azizur (22) is an e-Business actor from Royganj who provides support to the PEP population in his locality. With facilitation support from SHOUHARDO III, Azizur shifted from providing offline computer-related and photocopy services to online services. Moreover, the program helped him increase his customer base by connecting him with SHOUHARDO III participants. As a result, Azizur's monthly income is around BDT 13,000 (USD 128), an increase of about BDT 6,000 (USD 64) prior to his involvement in the program.

# SHOUHARDO III Cash Assistance Saves Rashia's Family

Written by: Harunur Rashid



Rashia (40) is a widowed woman from Tahirpur Upazila of Sunamganj who successfully utilized the various cash support she received from SHOUHARDO III to lead an economically independent life with her two sons and a daughter.

In 2016, Rashia and her family were included in SHOUHARDO III interventions under the Extreme Poor (EP) category. Inclusion in the program allowed them to better manage their family expenses. Unfortunately, when the world came to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Rashia and her family's income source was severely affected. In 2021, her eldest son was included in the Deep Haor Remote Char Livelihood Recovery Assistance (DHRC-LRA) of SHOUHARDO III where he decided to purchase a rickshaw van as an income-earning opportunity. Seeing the success of her eldest son, Rashia used her savings to buy another rickshaw van for her younger son. In just three months, her two sons earned a total of BDT 30,000 (USD 322) which helped them recover from the effects of the pandemic. Working as a family unit has helped Rashia and her family own assets worth over BDT 150,000 (USD 1,610) and they are finally enjoying financial stability after experiencing struggles throughout their lives.



## On-going Studies under SHOUHARDO III

Written by: Sairana Ahsan

SHOUHARDO III has five ongoing research projects during April, May, and June. The study, 'Harvesting the Outcomes of Two Local Service Provisioning Models (Sanchay Sathi and MSDs/MSRs) in SHOUHARDO III Program Areas,' was published in June. Analysis of the Sanchay Sathi dataset is underway. Data collection for another ongoing study titled, 'Exploring the Most Significant Changes of the Deep Haor and Remote Char Livelihoods Recovery Assistance (DHRC-LRA) Interventions Through Qualitative Documentation' commenced during the Q2, where a total of eight success stories were collected. This will be featured through a narrative analysis of the most significant changes in the DHRC-LRA intervention. The consultant recruited for the program completed data collection for the study titled, 'Capturing the Effectiveness of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Interventions of SHOUHARDO III' in May and the full report was finalized in June. The other consultant-driven study, titled "Exploring the Role of Boys and Men of SHOUHARDO III in Catalyzing Women Empowerment (WE) and Reducing



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during the Extension Phase (2020-2022)," started data collection in May and produced the full report in June.

# It's Not an End, rather a New Beginning

Written by: Abdul Mannan Mazumder



Photo: © Tazul Islam/CARE

SHOUHARDO III is a five-year program that started in September 2015. With an extension of two years, the program will end in September 2022. SHOUHARDO III wishes to see the motivation, capacity, linkages, and best practices sustained and replicated by the program participants beyond the program period to ensure sustainability. To leave the legacy behind and hand over the outcomes of the last seven years, the program has started conducting exit meetings at different levels e.g., villages, unions, upazilas, districts, divisions, and national. Representatives from Community Groups (CG), Local Service Providers (LSPs), Community Level Facilitators (CLFs), local elites, Union Parishads, private companies, government extension workers, and Nation Building Departments (NBD) have been participating in these exit meetings. As of June 2022, the program has conducted 1,041 exit meetings at different levels and received amazing responses and commitments from the communities and stakeholders towards the sustainability of the SHOUHARDO III interventions.

## SHOUHARDO III Exit Meetings (as of June 2022)

Divisional-	1
District-	3
Upazila-	4
Union-	89
Village-	944

## End Note

1. Madrasa is the Religious Educational Institution
2. Eid-Ul-Azha is the religious festival for Muslims, when they sacrifice their animals to get mercy of the God.
3. Village Grading is a tool used to assess the progress made by Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) individuals and communities, and to determine the status of the program implementation. Villages can be labeled 'Strong', 'Moderate', and 'Behind'.
4. WE Leaders are Community-level Facilitators (CLF) who work as volunteers towards improving service seeking behavior, reporting violence against women (VAW) cases, and act as the local VAW prevention system.
5. DRR Leaders are Community-level Facilitators (CLF) who work as volunteers to support the community to review and update the Risk Reduction, Adaptation, and Contingency (RRACP) plan and inform communities about disaster preparedness measures.
6. VDC is an umbrella organization consisting of a minimum of eleven members from PEP families. The VDCs prepare a yearly action plan, Community Action Plan (CAP), that addresses common economic and social issues.

Contact SHOUHARDO III  
+880 1306907327 + (880) 2-55058377-83  
bgd.shouhardoinfo@care.org  
<https://shouhardo.carebangladesh.org>

Collaboration: Colleagues of Dhaka Office, Partner NGOs, Rangpur and Kishoreganj Field Office  
Edited by: Tasfia Natasha Kalam and Abigail Rigole  
Reviewed by: Zinat Ara Afroze  
Design by: Apel Pavel