**News from the community of Dacope**

**Sponsorship Progress Report 2017**

Dear supporter,

Greetings from Dacope!

Thank you very much for your generous and regular contribution in the last year for which we have had a very successful and inspiring year. Your support is worth mentioning towards the advancement of the community.

We welcome you to the latest extents of progress of the community, Dacope, where the children and community people are hoping for better lives with your valuable efforts.

People of Dacope are now leading more dignified lives as they are now more aware of their rights and getting the services they are entitled to.

Shuvashini Mondol (36) will share how she is earning money after getting the training on fish-farming next to being a member of our Reflect Circle.

You will look how the people of the community are fostering revolution in agriculture with the support of Lokokendra.

You will be introduced with Tania (14), an enthusiastic adolescent who will share her feelings about all the community people producing pumpkins on their rooftops.

ActionAid Bangladesh has supported Boishakhi to achieve her rights and ensured better childhood development that facilitated her becoming more competant in academy.

It is really making great changes to many children and their families in Dacope where ActionAid Bangladesh is working with your support.

Thank you so much for sponsoring the children living here.

Happy reading,

Warmly,

Monika Biswas

Manager- Child Sponsorship

**ActionAid foster Shubhashini’s economic empowerment**

*“I am living happily with my two daughters now. I can now contribute to my family, including my children’s educational expenses. My family members and community value my decisions. I want to make my daughters self-dependent by educating them. Earning money by fish-farming has helped my dreams to become reality”* – were the words of Shubhashini Mondol (36), an active member of Bondhon Reflect Circle supported by ActionAid at Dacope upazilla. Her husband is Sunil Mondol is a landless farmer. Besides cultivating paddy in the *Mahajan’s (moneylender)* field, he works as a day laborer.

*“Running the family used to be very difficult with the crops we were left with after giving the Mahajan his high interest. Moreover, we had to lend money from the Mahajan for our elder daughter’s marriage. The younger one was studying in college. Financial deficit of the family became extreme and it was very difficult for us to manage our daughter’s tuition fees with the loan hanging on us.”* – said Shubhashini.

Being engaged in the Bondhon Reflect Circle Shubhashini started her journey with ActionAid Bangladesh in 2013*.“Next to being member of the circle we were taught various techniques to increase our incomes so that we can become self-dependent. We were trained on alternative income sources as well. I received training in fish-farming and was given 20kgs of Rui, Katla and Mrigal carps after completing my training to start farming fishes. After releasing the carps, I released lobster carps too. Now I earn selling fish. Besides, I personally sell fish at the market on each weekly market day. Thus I’m earning 2500-3000 taka every month. I have repaid my loans and providing my daughter’s tuition fees. We don’t to seek money from others now. I am very happy. Many other women farmers like me are selling their produced crops in the market. As a result, they are becoming self-dependent as well as providing for their families.”*

Along with Shubhashini 66 other women from the circle were trained on various traits with contributions coming from ActionAid Bangladesh by the Agriculture, Fisheries, Youth Development and Livestock office. 22 people were trained on vegetable farming, nine on fish farming, 17 on poultry production, six on animal husbandry, five on tailoring and seven on designing handicrafts. After the training, three women were given sewing machines, five got fish carps, four got sheep, and 10 women received assistance in vegetable farming. Seeing their advancements, 20 others started vegetable farming on their own initiatives. As a result, they can help their family financially and are living better life.

*“I feel like women too can earn money when given the scope. I thank ActionAid Bangladesh, Ulashi ShreejoniSangha and Lokokendro for giving us this opportunity.”*

**Agricultural revolution eventuate in Nolian**

*“I am successful today doing farming. I am living a much better life than before with my son. We couldn’t afford eating thrice a day. Running the family with my day laborer husband’s sole income was very difficult. Now I have successfully overcome food deficiency by farming Boro rice through ERL project. I want to ensure education for my son.”* – The above words were said by Sumona Begum (34), a member of the Pui Women Agricultural Advisors’ team in Nolian village, under the Shutarkhali Union in Diacope Upazilla.

Because of the high level of salinity in this area’s soil, only one kind of crop could be cultivated here annually and eight to ten mounds of paddy could be produced per Bigha. Then on May 25th 2009, cyclone Aila hit Shutarkhali Union with its apocalyptic force. Communication was severely hampered, the soil became more saline and crops could not be produced. As a result, the farmers here got poorer.

At that point in time (June 2009), Ulashi ShreejoniSangha, in association with ActionAid formed Reflect Circle in Shutarkhali, where I joined as a member. Reflect Circle later formed Lokkendro ~~Forum~~ on May 2012. The members of the forum discussed about various problems of the area and tried to solve those. Meanwhile, Ulashi ShreejoniSangha, in association with ActionAid Bangladesh, and Lokkendro, formed Sunflower Agricultural Advisors’ Team in our village. I got myself included as a member of that team. To make the members of the team economically self-dependent, they gave us suggestions and taught us methods on how to increase income. Besides, the members were trained about alternative ways of earning by the Upazilla Agriculture, Fisheries and livestock officer. All the team members including me got training on cultivating Boro rice through ERL project by ActioinAid and after the training we were given 25000 taka from the project fund for making exhibitory plots.

Upon receiving the money, the members of the team uniformly decided to lease a five Bigha plot to exhibit the cultivation of SL8H Boro rice. We spent a total of 30000 taka for preparing the plot, which included the lease, fertilizers, medicines and seeds. Besides, I got 11000 taka from ERL project through personal initiative. With this money, I leased 1.5 Bigha plot and cultivated Boro rice in it. Farming through personal initiative cost me 11800 taka. I implemented the ideas about fertilization, medicines etc. which I got from the training.

From the combined efforts, we produced 150 mounds paddies from which my share was 12 mounds and it was worth 12000 BDT excluding all expenses. From personal effort, I produced 45 mounds, worth 45000 taka. So, in total I had 57 mounds paddies, whose net worth was 57125 taka. My profit here without considering production cost was 45200 taka. After cultivating paddy, I planted pumpkin, spinach, ladies-finger and different vegetables in my backyard. There I have used organic fertilizer, Varmi compost fertilizer, and Mahogani oil. 16 other female farmers of the village were inspired from my success and showed interest in farming Boro rice.

Sumana Begum said – *“My family was in a financial deficit. We never thought that we could start farming Boro rice in Nolian. Now everyone in the area is saying they’ll produce Boro rice, all the houses will be filled with new crops, we’ll overcome our food insecurity and our husbands will no longer need to go elsewhere for work.”*

Md. Masum Ali Fokir, chairman of Shutarkhali Union Parishad said – *“The way Lokkendro Forum, through their ERL project inspired the woman farmers in producing SL8H Boro rice is truly amazing. We thank them for taking such a brave step. Because of their hard work, this area will see a revolution in farming and the rights of women will be more established day by day. This revolution is the result of a long struggle. Willpower, hard work and determination have taken women to this position today. I will do anything to help them retain this state except the support of ActionAid Bangladeh.”*

**Lokkendro Forum in People’s Welfare**

*“I am living happily with my family. My family has got rid of its financial deficits. Besides bearing my son’s educational expenses, I can often buy him new clothes now, as well as taking care of additional expenses for the family. These have been possible since I got the ration card from Lokkendro Forum.”* –these were the words of SandhyaBaidya (46), member of Padma Reflection Circle, Kalinagar village, under Kamarkhola Union.

In May 2009, ActionAid started LRP-37 activities under Kamarkhola union’s climate project. Here, Reflect Circle was formed with marginalized women as members. Consequently, Padma Reflect Circle was formed in Kamarkhola union’s Kalinagar village. SandhyaBaidya became a member of Padma Reflect Circle. From the beginning of their journey, Padma Reflect Circle has taken steps to battle with various problems of the area and later on formed Reflect Circle, a larger platform to ensure the rights of the most financially deprived people in the society. Lokkendro Forum has been working on the government’s social safety net issues in community level.

At one point the Union Parishadcirculated a notice about giving away ration cards valid forsix months to the poor people of each ward of the Union Parishad as a part of the government’s ‘KhaddoBandhob’ workshop. SandhyaBaidya informed Lokkendro Forum about the notice. The forum called an emergency meeting to discuss about this issue with the members. They decided that they should discuss this matter with every community and circle and must ensure that every person included in the Lokkendro Forum can get this ration card, while continuing the advocacy with the Union Parishad. Upon decision of all the circles and communities, Lokkendro Forum made a list of 123 people and submitted it to the Union Parishad. They didn’t stop at just submitting the list, rather kept regular communication with the chairman and members of the Union Parishad. 58 people from the community declared solidarity with this step by the Lokkendro Forum and Circle. Union Parishad analyzed the people in that list with the presence of Upazilla Social Welfare Officer and other honorable people of the area and brought 82 people under their allowance.

On this matter, Baidya said – *“By the supreme leadership of Lokkendro Forum and community, 82 people, including mehave got the opportunity to receive ration card. I can now contribute to my family. There was nobody in my family to guide me butLokkendro Forum became my guide. Now I dream of being established in the society. It is undoutably ActionAid who facilitated my strong will and determination that has brought me to this position today”.*

**I dream of being a teacher**

Hello friends! I am Boishakhi (15), a dweller of Sreenagar villager of Kamarkhola union. I like to go to school regulary and love reading books. I am a student of eight-th grade now. I live with my parents and two siblings. My father is a farmer and my mother is a home maker. I dream to be a teacher in future.

I wake up early in the morning. Then I get fresh, have my breakfast and go to school. The best part of my day at school is singing the national anthem at assembly. After coming home from school I attend Poet Sukanto child space run by ActionAid Bangladesh thrice a week. There I draw picture, learn singing, read story books, do physical activities and prepare school lessons as well. Besides learning about development issues, we take part in various debate competitions and discuss about our aims. I enjoy spending time in the child space very much because here I can learn a lot by interacting with the other children and participate in various activities. After coming home from the child space, I do my homeworks and have dinner with my family.

I’ve won first prize by taking part in school level debate competition organized by ActionAid Bangladesh because of my informative speech. Beyond school, I also won prize at upazilla level debate competition. I recognize the contribution of AAB’s child space as my inspiration. I’ve acquied third position in my class at Kalinagar J.C. high school. Being a teacher is my aim in life-said Boishakhi.

ActionAid Bangladesh are implementing their activities in Sutarkhali and Kamarkhola union of Dacope towards achieving the rights of poor and marginalized children. Along with the development activities they are initiating education, health care and right based activities through various training to ensure our healthy childhood development. Therefore, we are becoming more skilled compared to the others.

**Other example of our works:**

Along with the activities implemented in Dacope area we have also achieved the following remarkable success with your valuable support:

* To ensure sustainable livelihood and eco-friendly environment through accessing government and non-government services for 109 farmers including 79 women and 30 men, a number of nine union level and one upazilla level meeting was organized. As consequence, a number of 90 people could receive training, regular suggestion and seed support from government agriculture office.
* To secure the right of the community women and children invarious spheres, upazilla citizen platform initiated discussion meeting with government social welfare and different service providers. As a result a number of 17 women could access old allowance, fivecould receive sewing machine and 32 women could receive trade based training for income generation. Consequently, the families are living a happier life.

Minoti Rani (32) from Kalinagar village mentioned, *“I’ve received training on poultry farming from Ulashi Shreejoni Sangha and also received financial support for doing poultry farm. I have now 50 chicken at my farm and 32 of those are laying egg regularly. I’m continuing my children’s education with support of my income that I’m generating. My opinions and decisions are now more valued in the family and community earlier than before.”*

* Under the URL??? project to ensure sustainable agricultural for coastal areas, a number of five farmer advisor groups received training from upazilla agriculture professional. They were provided 25000 BDT for creating five exhibition plot individually and 125000 in total. Effective linkage and communication with the upazilla agricultural officer throughout the process. This will encourage others to replicate.
* A number of community people received training on crab cultivation and became engaged with income generation.
* To develop Lokokendra self sufficient with the technical support of Ulashi Srijon Sangha and financial support of ActionAid, Kamarkhola Songrami Lokokendra was provided 27400 BDT for implementing their action points.
* Refresher training was organized for union and ward disaster management committee to assess disaster risk and sketching resilience for fighting disaster by them. Shyamol Roy (45) of Shutarkhali village mentioned, *“I’m a member of ward disaster management committee. I’ve received refresher training on disaster risk and resilience especially in terms of livelihood from Ulashi Srijon Sangha and ActionAid. Next to the training I’ve conveyed my learning to 42 women and men for that they would develop their disaster risk reduction planning and action points”.*

**Our Future Plan:**

The works those are planned for being implemented by ActionAid for the development of the children and their family as well as community are as following:

* Open budget meeting at union level and ward meeting for ensuring effective participation of community people.
* Campaign activities will be initiated with the relevant stakeholders i.e. upazilla social welfare, cooperative, youth development, women’s welfare etc. for ensuring the access of the people with disability into various government services. Lokokendra Forum will assemble the information on existing services provided by various service providers and analyze the gap by validating data and discussion with circle and people with disability will be held based on the findings.
* Social audit will be initiated for generating lessons and report will be shared with relevant stakeholders for ensuring the accountability and spreading the knowledge and creating evidence.
* Campaign activities will be carried on for promoting effective taxation principle and encouraging taxation by people accordingly.
* Campaign activities will also be initiated with local MP, WDMC, UDMC, UNO and other relevant stakeholders for ensuring gender responsive inclusive budget considering the poor especially. CRA and RRAP will play supportive role in terms of generating key note.
* Effective linkage will be formed between the community journalist and Diacope press club through sharing the good practices towards ensuring sustainable agriculture that will be taken into the account of the policy makers, media and encourage mass people.
* Quarterly meeting with the like mind organizations will be conducted for planning activities in a coordinated way.
* For promoting women friendly government service advocacy initiatives will be continued through citizen platform.