

A report on

Gender Analysis and Impact Assessment in BGP Area (Patuakhali)

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Background

The Blue Gold Program started in March 2013 and extends over a seven years period. Its operations concentrate on the polders of three districts in the Southwest of Bangladesh namely: Patuakhali, Khulna and Satkhira. The Program covers 160,000 households where an estimated 150,000 households will have direct benefits from the Program.

The overall objective of the Blue Gold Program is to “reduce poverty for 170,000 households living in 115,000 households of selected coastal polders by creating a healthy living environment and a sustainable socio-economic development”. The specific objectives are: (1) To protect the communities and their land located in polders against floods from river and sea (climate change adaptation) and to optimize the use of water resources for their productive sectors; (2) To organize the communities in cooperatives which will have to become the driving force for the natural resources based development (agriculture, fisheries and livestock), whereby environment, gender and good governance are effectively addressed; (3) To increase the household income derived from the productive sectors; and (4) To strengthen the institutional framework for sustained water resources development and related development services in the SW/SC coastal zones.

From the start of Blue Gold gender has been integrated in the program’s interventions. In the revised Theory of Change (2016) Gender Equity has been more explicitly included within the Result Pathways.

Integrating gender perspectives into a water management and food security program as Blue Gold is well in line with policies of both the government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the government of the Netherlands (GoN). GoB has its National Women’s Development Policy of 2011 (which was also quoted in Blue Gold’s Program Document) which recognizes the (important) role of women in agriculture and food security, as well as in environmental conservation and disaster risk management. This policy requires that each line ministry in Bangladesh has its own gender policy. Also GoB’s current Five Year Plan 2016-2020, prepared by the Planning Commission, lists empowerment of women and reducing gender

inequality as one of the drivers for development. This 7th FYP explicitly recognizes women's crucial role in agriculture in order to achieve food and nutritional security in Bangladesh.

For the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs women's rights and gender equality are among the priority issues in its foreign policy (New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investments "A World to Gain"). In addition, EU development policy aims that the large majority of projects and programs (85% by 2020) are gender sensitive, with gender equality as a significant objective or result. The Multi-annual Strategic Plan 2014-2017 of EKN Dhaka includes the commitment to integrate gender issues in all its programs.

The global phenomenon of feminization of agriculture is also experienced in Bangladesh, which is another reason for explicit attention to gender issues within the Blue Gold program.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a research on the gender situation in the project area of the Blue Gold Program, including on the impact of this program on gender. The research was commissioned by the Blue Gold Program and was conducted in 15 October- 2017 to 15 January-2018 by four Masters students of the Patuakhali Science and Technology University. Blue Gold is a collaboration program between the government of the Netherlands (donor) and the Government of Bangladesh. The program is implemented by the Ministry of Water Resources, through Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB, lead agency) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). Blue Gold Program started in March 2013 and extends over a seven years period, until June 2020. Its operations concentrate on the polders of three districts in the Southwest of Bangladesh namely: Patuakhali, Khulna, Satkhira.

This research focused on identifying the actual women's position in mobility, communication, food, decision-making, access to control over assets, income, leadership, etc. in both the new polders and old polders under the Blue Gold program in Patuakhali. BGP is still working to reach its goal towards gender equity. Besides, it has been started to analyze its impact by comparing the situation in some old and some new polders. BGP has been worked in old polder since 4 years and in new polder it has been only 6 months. This report represents impact of Blue Gold Program in only Patuakhali district. The old polders of the research are located in Amtoli and Patuakhali subdistricts and new polders located in Kalapara of Patuakhali district. Old polder included 43/1A, 43/2F polder and new polder included 47/3, 47/4 polder. Impact analysis is done by applying focus group discussion (FGD), case study, key Informant Interview (KII). Interview were conducted with WMG general members (male and female), Executive Committees members, Community people, local elite persons; women headed families, Union Parishad female & male members, and relevant Blue Gold staff members by the four researchers. By comparing the current gender situation in the new polders with those in the old polders it has been found that situation in the old polders is better than new polder in terms of women empowerment, socio-economic

condition, and nutritional knowledge and in agricultural sector. Further many people of those areas said that Blue Gold Program is a blessing to them.

Objectives of this research, as formulated in the Terms of Reference:

- To assess the impact of the interventions of the Blue Gold Program on gender equity, gender relations, gender norms, the situation of women and women's empowerment
- Better understanding of gender inequalities situation for women and its causes, how they intersect and how these inequalities can be overcome with in the BGP area.
- To provide recommendations for improving the Blue Gold interventions in the new polders, especially the gender related activities and gender mainstreaming for increasing gender equity and contribute to improved livelihoods in the BGP area.

Methodology

- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** In the study area total 52 FGDs had been conducted. Among this 33 in old polder and 19 FGDs conducted in new polder.



- **Key Informant Interview (KII):** This study chosen such person who is acquainted with the area properly such as religious leader, UP members, community leader, polder coordinator, SAAO (Sub assistant Agricultural Officer) and AEO (Agricultural Extension Officer) from DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) and total 52 KII was conducted.
- **Case study:** Case study has been conducted on potential women who are become self-dependent after getting training from BGP. The study covered forty case studies in total with both failure and success in different polders--.
- **Sample Size:** All groups (FGDs) were selected by Blue Gold Program. Blue Gold Program selected these groups to compare between old and new polder according to their activities, location, vulnerability and population density. All WMGs consisted with both potential and non-potential male and female. The Annex 1 shows the distribution of these groups in different polders.

- **Methods of Data analysis:** The obtained data from the survey had been analyzed by Microsoft Excel. Percentage was calculated from the number of participant's responses per leading question during discussion.

Details

Women empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well-being. Blue Gold Program has been working to achieve this goal. The title of our research work is Gender Analysis and Impact Assessment in BGP Area at Patuakhali and Barguna. This study followed three methodologies for collecting data such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII) and Case study. This study used various indicators to collect data for focus group discussion such as involvement and decision making in WMGs, Involvement of women in income generating activities, decision making in family, situation of women in mobility, access to services, community involvement and leadership and benefit from the BGP. It has been found that the percentage of participation of women in WMG meeting in old polder is 53% (155 female out of 292 attended participants of FGD) and in new polder is 30% (50 women out of 166 attended participants of FGD) who were the member of BGP. Both men and women join in BGP to learn new technologies of farming, to learn about proper water management, to improve their economic condition and to develop their community etc. In old polder, 68% (105 women out of 155) women actively take decision in any WMG meeting. They not only speaking out in meeting but also influence decision making process. For example, a member of WMA group named Shahana Begum could not raise voice earlier in front of men and could not take any decision during meeting but gradually she realized the importance of raising voice that if she do not talk with anyone, she will not learn anything. Then she started to give her opinion to the meeting. At present, other members of that group give value to her decision and also respect her a lot. On the other hand, only 25% (13 out of 50) women of new polder actively participate in decision making in WMG meeting. Women feel shy to deliver speech in front of older men but they discuss

among themselves because maximum men consider women as fool. In old polder about 78% women and in new polder about 39% women are involved with various income generating activities such as farming, homestead gardening, rearing poultry and livestock and many of them has sewing machine etc. For example, there was a female in old polder named Farida Banu who has been earned 10000 BDT. per month after joining BGP by using sewing machine and she bought it from income she generated due to BGP.

Apart from it, Rabeya Khatun, a member of FFS in new polder got training about cattle fattening from BGP. Then she bought a cow at 25000 BDT. and after 6 months she sold it at 40000 BDT. She thinks that it is a great achievement for her. About 48% Husbands in old polder and 13% in new polder help their wives in household activities like bringing water during cooking and child care. For example, Peyara Begum, a successful woman of old polder said that if the husband and wife work together, the financial condition of the family will be improved. She added that when she started her income generating activities such as poultry farming, she get support from her husband and always get help in the household activities. At present, her husband also respects her a lot. Now women play a good role in crop production and many women in old polder can sell their products herself in market by going physically. Percentage of women involve with decision making in family is higher in old polder (62%) rather than new polder (19%). Though women can participate in decision making about child education, and also contribute in educational cost, rarely they decide about child marriage especially in case of daughters. Women spend their income mainly in household activities(child education and regular household requirements) and buying household accessories from hawkers, and also save some money. It has been found that some women of old polder invest their income in buying agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizer and equipment, livestock and poultry. And sell those when the market price of those products is high. Thus they increase household income. For example, a woman of old polder named Manjuma Begum said that, earlier the financial condition of her family was not good at all and she was tortured by her husband , but after involving the income generating activities, she also contribute money to the family and now her husband respect her and do not beat them. Women of old polder are now so much conscious about going outside for work after

getting BGP training (81%). They can go outside easily for marketing, neighborhood, UP and hospitals if needed. On the other hand women of new polder are less likely to go outside (27%). Few male and female members of WMGs in both old and new polder have access to government handout services such as spade, seed, fertilizer, net, rice and Department of Agricultural Extension services. They also engaged with various community based organization such as Brac, CODEK, Uddipon, Nobojinon, Sushilon, World Fish, Muslim Aid, Speed Trust etc. They get training and financial support from these organizations. About 79% women of old polder have savings in different organization like EBK, Grameen bank, ASHA etc. And all the group of WMG has their own fund in BGP. Besides in new polder 20% of them have savings. Apart from this in old polder, all WMGs have female leaders in their community and people support them. But in new polder, some people have misconception about female leadership because they think that female leadership is not possible. In old polder, BGP provide various training and women empowerment activities are mostly emphasized. After joining BGP, women have been more empowered than earlier. Women are respected by the family and society because of involving with various income generating work. Besides this, women involvement in agricultural sector and infrastructural improvements by BGP help to increase crop production. BGP also change the socio-economic condition and lifestyle of people. For Example, agricultural production has been increased, financial condition has been improved than earlier, consumed nutritious food which they did not get earlier. In a word, the way of living has been improved than earlier. In new polder the women have little benefitted up till now.

Comparison (Old & New polder)

Determinative		Old polder (%)	New polder (%)
Involvement and decision making in WMGs	Participation of women in WMG meeting	53	30
	Decision making in WMG meeting.	68	25
Involvement of women in income generating activities	Income generating activities	78	39
	Sharing household activities by men	48	13
Decision making in family		62	19
Situation of women in mobility		81	27
Community involvement and leadership	Women involvement in community based organization	More women involved with organization or stakeholders	Few women involved with organization or stakeholders
	Women leadership	Percentage of women in leadership position is higher and many male members support it.	Percentage of women in leadership position is lower and some of them have misconception about it.

Challenges faced during survey by researcher

- Unwillingness of the female members to attend WMG meeting.
- Religious sentiment.
- Time commitment of program staff.
- Speaking in different local language.
- Shyness of women.
- Overload of household work.
- Male dominant society.
- Long time interview schedule.

Result and discussion

1. Involvement and decision making in WMGs:

From this study, it has been found that most of the member join WMG group to gather knowledge about proper water management and improve their agricultural production, to learn new technologies of farming, to improve their economic condition and to develop their community etc.

At the beginning of WMG, women could not raise their voice. But nowadays they do not feel shy to raise their voice because of the mix group of WMG. Although maximum time male were the main decision makers of WMG but the women were not lagging behind in this sectors and they could deliver their dialogues when needed. The women participation percentage was higher in old polder (**53%**) and **68%** women actively took decision in WMG meeting.

On the other hand, about **30 %** women were participated in WMG meeting where only **25 %** women of new polder were actively participated in decision making in WMG meeting. In

addition, it has been noticed that in mix group of WMGs in the new polders most of the women remain silent and few of them do not talk at all in meeting. Because they were not habituated to raise their voice in front of men.

A member of new polder named *Akhteruzzaman* said about Blue gold Program in perception of decision making-

‘ Blue Gold Program will eliminate the inertia of women’.

2. Involvement of men and women in income generating work and unpaid care work (household activities):

From the study it has been found that in **old polder**, most of the women of WMG involved in income generating work. About **78 %** women were involved with various income generating activities such as farming, homestead gardening, rearing poultry and livestock etc.

In **new polders**, very few women were involved in home stead gardening and farming (only **39 %**)_because they have no idea about appropriate cropping system.

The women of **old polder** highlighted that they balance between household and income generating activities by using their resting or leisure time. They are more conscious about the advantage of women participating in income generating work.

In case of sharing the household activities the situation of old and new polder were different. About **48%** Husbands in old polder and **13%** in new polder help their wives in household activities like bringing water during cooking and child care.

A WMG member in an old polder named *Peyara Begum* said about Blue gold Program in context of sharing household work-

"If the husband and wife work together, the financial condition of the family is being improved".

3. Decision making in families:

Most of the women in **old polder** of WMG involve in income generating work. Most of them produce agricultural crops and sell them in market by going physically. Very few women earn money by their livestock.

In **new polder** very few women involve in vegetable production but not sell them in market.

The study investigated that in **old polder** women can take decision about agricultural production, crops selection and marketing (70 %). And Percentage of women involve with decision making in family in old polder (62%). Few of them said that they could take decision about spending money without their husband permission. Women spend their income mainly in household items and child education and also save some money for themselves.

In **new polder** the scenery is different (only 19%) women were involved with decision making in family). If women take decision without their husband permission they have been beaten by them and one of the main reason is that of using drugs by husband and poverty. Maximum women give their own income to their husband because their husband bought their required things.

A member of old polder (FFS) named *Hosneara* said about Blue gold Program-

"BGP has improved our economic condition".

Mayalokkhi, a member of old polder (LCS – Female) said that-

"BGP made us self- dependent".

4. Situation of women in Mobility:

Most of the women of old polder are now so much conscious after getting BGP training (**81 %**). They can go outside easily for marketing, neighborhood, UP and hospitals if needed.

On the other hand, in **new polder** women are less likely to travel outside (only **27 %**) but most of the women communicate with UP members, school teachers of their children and

doctors when needed. Most of the women are totally depended on their husband for buying requirements such as foods, cloths etc. and men also think women should not go outside, if they want to work then it can be done at home. This situation is changing day by day because of BGP training such as agricultural training, poultry rearing and nutrition based training.

Zakia, a woman of old polder (WMG-EC) said that-

‘The quality of life of women has changed very quickly with the help of BGP’.

5. Access to services:

Few member in both old and new polder have access to government handout services such as spade, seed, fertilizer, net, rice and whenever they need they get the DAE services. DAE is a stakeholder of Blue Gold Program and the service has been provided by Sub Assistant Agricultural Officer (SAAO). SAAO provide training to FFS, MFS and CAWM group about agriculture. Blue Gold Program give seeds, fertilizers via DAE services as exhibition. Most of the people of study areas have access to market and traders. Although maximum women go to the market in old polder but it is rare scene in new polder.

Maximum women in old polder can directly contact with the traders at home.

About 79% women of old polder have savings in different organization like EBK, Grameen bank, ASHA etc. And all the member of WMG in BGP has group fund.

Besides in new polder 20% of them have savings.

6. Community involvement and leadership:

Women involvement in various community based organization or stakeholders is higher in old polder than in new polder.

Besides in old polders, all WMG groups have female leaders in their community and people support them.

But in new polder, some people have misconception about the fact because of religion and social barriers.

Abdul Matin, a man of old polder (LCS) said that-

‘Women should be a leader because they can handle any matter easily’.

7. Benefit from the BGP:

In old polder, BGP provided various training which contributed to women empowerment such as family nutrition, leadership, decision making and income generating activities. Most of the groups of WMG like FFS, MFS, CAWM and WMA got BGP training (Gender, nutrition, poultry, livestock and fish farming, agricultural, marketing, savings, accounting etc).

Golenur begum, a member of old polder (FFS) said about BGP training that-

"It is more important to gather knowledge than getting something "

After joining BGP, women became more empowered than earlier. They can raise their voice now. They are now respected by the family and society because of involving with various income generating work. Basically they got success in homestead vegetables, poultry and livestock farming.

A member of old polder (FFS) named *Rashida Begum* said about Blue gold Program that-

"We get more honor in the family than ever before"

The old polder mostly benefited from BGP infrastructural improvements such as embankments, canal digging and improve water management. Their production doubles compare to the previous year because of this improvements. Earlier the crops was wasted due to flood. But now it is not happened. They are able to produce three types of rice in one land. This is the biggest achievement from BGP according to them. Nowadays maximum families

need not buy vegetables from market because they can cultivate it themselves. After all, BGP change the socio-economic condition and lifestyle of people.

A member of old polder (FFS) named *Abdur Rahim* said about Blue gold Program that-

“Our rice production is doubled due to BGP infrastructural improvements”.

The situation is different in **new polder** than old polder. In that area saline water damages the crops at a great extent and they have no idea how to overcome this problem. They cannot cultivate anything in their land in six months of the year. Women in this area are not engaged in income generating work like old polder. Though women have low mobility yet poor women go outside for work. BGP is working for their empowerment. Many women are beaten by their husband but in old polders it is comparatively less. The members are also hopeful that BGP will reduce their problems as soon as possible. In few groups of new polder, BGP has been worked for 6 months and the members got training about nutrition, fish farming, cattle fattening. By the training of cattle fattening, they get more profits at a lower cost. They also learned how to get benefit from fish farming by using new technology.

A.B.M. Humayun Kabir, Chairman of Baliatoli Union is hopeful about BGP and said that-

"Blue Gold Program will cause revolution in agricultural activities by digging canal and BGP is a blessing for this area".

Recommendations

Recommendation for gender mainstreaming in new polder:

Based on empirical results and discussion, the overall conclusion of this study is that the level of women's empowerment is not satisfactory at the household level in new polder. It also highlights the fact that formal and non-formal education, exposure to information media and spatial mobility are the most influential factors that enhance women's empowerment. In contrast, the traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices are deeply entrenched in women's lives that hinder their empowerment. To move forward, some concrete steps need to be undertaken by Blue Gold Programme aimed at stimulating the process of female empowerment. Interventions should be in the nature of legislative, planning, programme or structural steps to provide greater opportunities for the sustainable development of women at all levels and to reduce discriminatory practices against women as well as all types of gender-based stereotypes. However, strategies to combat the lack of empowerment must address not only the immediate needs of rural women (practical gender need) but must also focus on the root cause of women's powerlessness (strategic gender need).

- ❖ As BGP are working in the coastal areas, can provide income generation training with financial support in the areas of home gardening, nursery development, cattle fattening, fish culture, craft production and embroidery to advance their skills aiming at economic self-reliance. Adequate extension facilities through female agents could be helpful to achieve the goal of increased income effectively.
- ❖ Launching of vigorous conscientising campaigns by organizing rallies and public meetings ensuring participation of all rural people could be an effective tool to create massive awareness about gender. It can be carried out on the eve of special significant days using posters, paper caps, placards, festoons etc. Moreover, all agencies can organize various cultural programs (e.g. dramas, songs, jatra) jointly based on folk traditions and culture frequently to stress the importance of both sexes being involved in development.

- ❖ BGP can also conduct workshops with local community and religious leaders to formulate strategies in shaking off gender discriminations and stereotypes from the community.
- ❖ The extension agents of different departments, besides doing their assigned extension activities can serve as very good individual media to spread gender awareness message to the villagers along with community leaders, religious leaders, school teachers and local elite. They can also support women in social participation. They can jointly organise meetings, group discussions, speeches and counselling for motivating rural people about gender equality and encouraging women to participate in community development.
- ❖ The electronic media(Multimedia projector) can play a more proactive role in raising awareness by broadcasting dramas, folk songs, puppet shows and advertisements focusing exclusively on a positive image of women. Some other media such as posters, newsletters and booklets could also be effective for literate people.
- ❖ Establishment of women's self-help groups as vehicles for female empowerment is necessary in the rural areas.
- ❖ Issues related to women's empowerment should be given priority in the interventions of village councils and of religious groups at the local level. This can be achieved effectively only if all these agencies function as a close network under one umbrella.

Recommendations for infrastructural improvements in new polder:

Polder	Group	Union	Demands
47/3	WMG (Ad- hoc)	Tegacia, Azimuddin (Mithagonj)	1. Reduction of water salinity
	Community	Mithagonj	1. Reduction of water salinity. 2. Proper management of Swiss gate. 3. They need tube well.
	WMG(GM)	North chorpara (Mithagonj)	1. Canal excavation 2. Inlet and outlet 3. Reduction of water salinity
	UP	Mithagonj	1. Swiss gate repair 2. Canal excavation
47/4	Community	Baliatoli Union	1. Reduction of water salinity 2. Proper management of Swiss gate 3. Canal excavation
	WMG (Ad- hoc)	Baliatoli Union	1. They want to learn how to cultivate three crops in a land per year.
	FFS	Baliatoli Union	1. Repair Swiss gate 2. Repair road 3. Agricultural Machinery
	Community	Baliatoli Union	1. Embankment
	WMG (Ad- hoc)	Baliatoli Union	1. Embankment

Conclusion

This report represents that the situation of old polder is comparatively better than new polder. Due to BGP, the production of agricultural sector is doubled than earlier. Area has been improved in these factors such as family nutrition, leadership, decision making and income generating activities etc. after implementing intervention of BGP. People think that the BGP will be gone but the knowledge given by the BGP will remain. In new polder there are many problems like water salinity, poor water management, frequent disease of poultry and livestock etc. In this area women are restricted to go outside and they are beaten by their husband. However, they are hopeful that BGP will reduce their problems as much as possible.

ANNEX 1: Attended participants in FGD

FGD NO	POLDER	GROUP NAME	UNION	Attended participants
1	43/1A	WMG, EC	West Sonakhali	10
2	43/1A	COMMUNITY	East Keorabunia	12
3	43/1A	FFS	East Shakharia	12
4	43/1A	WMA	East Shakharia	6
5	43/1A	WMG(GM)	North Atharogachia	10
6	43/1A	CAWM	South Sonakhali	10
7	43/1A	MFS	West Shakharia	10
8	43/1A	LCS	Chawra	10
9	43/1A	CAWM	South Atharogachia	9
10	43/2A	LCS(MALE)	Boro Bighai	7
11	43/2A	FFS	Soto Bighai	10
12	43/2A	LCS(FEMALE)	East Soto Bighai	7
13	43/2A	UP	Middle Keorabunia	8
14	43/2A	COMMUNITY	East Boro Bighai	8
15	43/2A	CAWM	West Boro Bighai	10
16	43/2A	EC,WMG	West Titkata	10
17	43/2A	UP	Soto Bighai	5
18	43/2F	MFS	South East Kalibari	8
19	43/2F	EC, WMG	North Dalachara	9
20	43/2F	LCS	Khekuani	8
21	43/2F	EC,WMG	South Gojkhali	4
22	43/2F	MFS	North Gojkhali	9
23	43/2F	LCS	Angulkata	8
24	43/2F	CAWM	South Khekuani	9
25	43/2F	FFS	South West Kalibari	7
26	43/2F	WMG	South West Kalibari	11

27	43/2F	COMMUNITY	Fakirkhali Gojkhali	10
28	43/2F	WMA	South Gojkhali	7
29	43/2F	WMG (GM)	South Dalachara	9
30	43/2F	COMMUNITY	North Dalachara	8
31	43/2F	FFS	Khekumai	12
32	47/3	FFS	Tegachia	10
33	47/3	WMG(AD-HOC)	Tegachia	5
34	47/3	COMMUNITY	Mithagong	12
35	47/3	WMG(GM)	North Chorpara	11
36	47/3	WMG(UP)	Tegachia	5
37	47/3	COMMUNITY	West Madhukhali	10
38	47/3	WMG(AD-HOC)	Safakhali	4
39	47/4	UP	Baliatoli	5
40	47/4	COMMUNITY	Baliatoli	12
41	47/4	WMG(AD-HOC)	Baliatoli	7
42	47/4	FFS	Baliatoli	12
43	47/4	COMMUNITY	East Esmadhukhali	6
44	47/4	WMG	Haripara	12
45	47/4	WMG(AD-HOC)	Surdugi	10
46	47/4	COMMUNITY	Majerpara	9
47	47/4	WMG(GM)	Soto Baliatali	9
48	47/4	WMG(GM)	Mithagonj	8
49	47/4	COMMUNITY	Boro Baliatali	9
50	47/4	FFS(FEMALE)	West Dhulasor	10
51	43/2A	WMA	Khatachia	4
52	43/2A	WMG(GM)	Boro Bighai	10

“Women play a vital role in the development of socio-economic condition of family and their contribution in the progress of child education is immense; The story of Payara Begum”



Payara Begum made this “Hajal” for chicken Polder 43/2A old

Payara Begum is a house wife. At the beginning of her marriage life their financial condition was very bad and their standard of living was low. She always regret for this misery. She wanted to work hard to improve their financial condition. But her husband was indifferent about it. Once her husband wanted to stop the education of their daughter due to lack of money and wed her. At that time the girl was in class seven and she wanted to continue her study. Then Payara Begum supported her daughter. She has overcome all the barriers and social prejudice and started hard work to continue the study of her daughter. Initially she faced many problems to find work. Gradually she associated with different organization. Payara Begum said,

“I invited everyone in the village to attend meeting instead of only 10 TK.”

She worked in different organization like BRAC, CODEK, Nabojibon and Sushilon. But she earned a little amount that is insufficient to overcome her miserable condition. Neighbors used to tell her husband “*Your women become clever day by day and she won’t come home again.*” Payara Begum became depressed and looking for the way to continue the study of her daughter. She then said,

“Blue gold come to my life as a wonder light”

She got seven day training about poultry farming from BGP. Apart from this she got training about new technology of agriculture, livestock, fish and poultry farming, home-stead vegetable, women empowerment, nutrition etc. She also learned about making “hajal” that increase her poultry production. She started cultivating fish in small pond just as it learned from BGP and became benefited. From BGP she learned how to vaccinate chicken and now she earns 5000 taka per month from it. Moreover, the health status of Payara Begum and her family members has been better than before due to nutritional training.

In this way, her income continued to grow. Now she earns 5000 TK from aquaculture and 4000 taka from poultry farm per month and profit in agricultural sector also doubled. At present her daughter study in Dhaka Eden College in masters.

Quotations:

Changes in Practice...

“Now I get respect from my family and society due to Blue Gold Program”

When asked about her dreams...

“My dream is to ensure a better future for my children”

Case study of new polder

“Women initiative can improve financial condition of a family, She only need support and training about new technology; *The story of Jakia Begum*”



Jakia Begum in front of her agricultural field

Jakia Begum lives in North Chorpara. She is a general member of Blue Gold Program (BGP). This program is run in 47/3(new) polder at Mithagang union in Kalapara upazila of the Patuakhali district under Bangladesh Water Development Board. BGP started working in this area in 2017 and Jakia was a new member of BGP.

Jakia was a woman of 40 years old. After married, their financial condition was very bad because her husband earned a little. His income was very little to bear total family cost. They have two sons.

Though they had thirty decimals inherit land but they did not cultivate anything. She established a homestead garden on 7.2 decimal lands which include red amaranth, coriander, pepper, radish and bean etc. in mixed cropping system. She also encouraged her husband for farming. Jakia and her husband worked together for cultivation. Since twenty years they are involved with agricultural production. In this way she overcomes poverty.

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Vegetable cultivation over pond

At present, their financial condition has been improved than earlier. Besides agricultural production, Jakia Begum also cultivates china puti, telapia and pungus fish in her pond. She has four goose and two cows. Previously, they had thirty decimals land, recently they buy thirty decimal more land. They also repair their house.

All family members respect any decision she take. She also has two DPS in Bank. She deposit 100 BDT in ASA society and also deposit 200 BDT in Grameen bank per month. Though she is involve in income generating activity but her mobility is low.

She told us that

“Though I Am engaged with farming for many days but i face many problems during cultivation.”

She informed that Sometimes her ducks had died. Insects densely attack her vegetables and sometimes she does not get the amount of money she invests. She also told that during winter season the salinity level is very much increase that’s why she cannot cultivate any crops properly.