



Community-Based Adaptation FAST FACTS

BANGLADESH

Coping with climate risks through empowering women in selected areas of coastal Bangladesh

Grantee: Gram Bikash Shohayak Shangstha (GBSS)

Type of organization: NGO

Number of participants: 40,519

Location: Mirmadan and Purba Alipura Villages of Alipura Union & Banshbaria and Dhandania Villages of Banshbari Union; Dhasmina Upazila; Patuakhali District

Project Partners: Union Parishad/UDMC; Alipura and Banshbaria Union of Dhasmina; Upazila Administration/UzDMC, Dhasmina, Patuakhali

CBA Contribution: \$47,970

Co-financing: Community \$35,003, Union \$841, GBSS \$7,551

Project Dates: July 2011 – December 2012

BACKGROUND

The Community-Based Adaptation Programme (CBA) is a five-year UNDP global initiative, largely funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) along with other donors. Delivering through the GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP) and UNDP Country Office, the goal of the Project is to strengthen the resiliency of communities addressing climate change impacts. UNDP partners with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to enhance community mobilization, recognize volunteers' contributions and ensure inclusive participation around the project, as well as to facilitate capacity building of partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). Testing the Vulnerability Assessment Reduction (VRA) and other community-engagement tools, the Project is generating invaluable knowledge and lessons for replication and upscaling. The Government of Japan, the Government of Switzerland, and AusAID provide additional funding.

This CBA project aims at restoring livelihood opportunities and improving the adaptive capacity of vulnerable women in Alipura and Banshbaria Unions in southwestern Bangladesh. The area is surrounded by the Tetulia and Sutabaria rivers and is situated at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal in one of the most remote areas of Patuakhali District. Due to its close proximity to water bodies, villages and farmland in the area are at risk from rising water levels, salinity intrusion, floods, droughts, and cyclones. Rice cultivation is the main income source for approximately 95 percent of households with a small portion engaging in fishing as well. Recent cyclones have severely damaged crops, decreased fish stocks and compromised fresh water sources. These impacts have reduced yields and put households at risk of food scarcity and limited economic growth. The surrounding wetland region is rich in biodiversity and economic potential, and is critical in controlling floods and water surges. However, it also faces massive destruction from recent severe cyclonic events. Given the risk of natural hazards, isolated geography, lack of infrastructure, low economic development and dependence on natural resources, the project area contains one of the most vulnerable communities to climate change in the district, and it is at risk of losing villages and livelihoods. In the face of these challenges, villagers are selling possessions, taking high-interest loans, and becoming more dependent on government relief services, all of which are temporary solutions that can negatively affect long-term adaptive capacity.



Inundation due to Heavy Rain and High Tide

Women in the project area are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts given their limited access to resources and limited stake in decision-making. The degradation of natural resources makes it increasingly difficult for women to perform household responsibilities, such as collecting firewood, securing potable water and making food for their family. As a result, women must travel further from the home and work harder to gather supplies that detract from other productive activities like vegetable farming. Their dependency on degraded natural resources makes women especially vulnerable to diminished livelihoods and increased poverty.

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CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS

Climate change projections for Bangladesh predict an increase in temperatures, reduced and erratic rainfall, and more frequent rainstorms. In recent years, the coastal zones have experienced increased drought, intense storm surges, rising sea levels, increased flooding and unpredictable cyclones that contribute to increased saltwater intrusion, riverbank erosion and flooding. In the project area, villagers have noticed warmer temperatures, more frequent cyclones and rising water levels, especially at high tide. Productivity in agricultural lands will continue to decrease as salinity increases eventually rendering once fertile fields to unusable plots. Fish stocks are also likely to continue to decrease as frequent storm events damage the natural resource base. Increased extreme weather events reduce women's ability to support their family with traditional homestead-based, income-earning activities (e.g. vegetables, pond fish culture, chickens, etc.).



Skill Development Trainings for Household Resource Generating Activities

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ADAPTATION MEASURES

The main objective of this project is to restore livelihood opportunities for women by improving ecosystem-based adaptation. Increasing the capacity of the vulnerable groups improves their ability to reduce risk and cope with climate change impacts. The project consists of the following activities:

- Establishment of "Women Resource Center" and "Women Groups" at the village level to build a support system while providing new skills (financial management including negotiation skills, operational skills needed to run a CBO) for marginalized women;
- Establishment of a women-operated grain and seed banks;
- Development of a nursery and plantation;
- Exploration and support of income-generating opportunities including cattle and goat breeding; and
- Holding discussions, workshops, and presentations to increase awareness about climate change and adaptation.

Building on the social support network of women, this project will strengthen and formalize their collective power to advocate for increased access and control over local resources and increased stake in local and family level decision-making. The Women Resource Center will also provide a bridge for various community outreach organizations that provide support to women in the areas of livelihood opportunities, health and sanitation, agriculture and other issues for women in the changing climatic conditions.

FOCUS ON...

Global environmental benefit

Understanding the interconnected relationships between climate change, people and ecosystems is essential in adaptation. A strong emphasis on natural resource and land management will support increased biodiversity and ecosystem function. Conserving and managing biodiversity, especially forested areas, not only helps vulnerable farmers who are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods but also helps to strengthen the resilience of the natural system to handle increased cyclones and storm surges in the future.

Community participation and sustainability

While women have knowledge that is useful in planning and implementing community level adaptation strategies, they do not always have the opportunity to voice their ideas. Using a gender-inclusive participatory approach to project development and planning, strong efforts were made to include women and girls in all areas of the project to ensure that their concerns and needs were addressed. Local knowledge from women has been invaluable in shaping the project and will continue to be important throughout implementation. Women Groups will be trained on the operations and management of a seed and grain bank that will protect harvests, reduce grain costs, and improve food security at the household level. Combined with improved agricultural strategies the grain and seed banks will support and reinforce new agricultural systems.

Policy influence

Lessons learned and project activities will be shared with local government officials and CBOs to increase knowledge and support of community-based adaptations within the project area and also in neighboring villages.

For more information about CBA or CBA projects visit: www.undp-adaptation.org/project/cba

Further information, lessons learned, and experiences gathered from climate change adaptation activities globally can be found at the Adaptation Learning Mechanism: www.adaptationlearning.net



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