

YPSA ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT
2023-2024

Making a Difference



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MESSAGE FROM FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Greetings from YPSA, an organization focused on sustainable development. This story-based Annual Impact Report 2023, titled Making a Difference, highlights YPSA's major achievements from the past year. The year unfolded amid global challenges, including wars in different countries, internal armed conflicts, migration crises, and a global economic downturn. Despite these difficulties, I remain very optimistic that in the coming years, YPSA will use these experiences and lessons learned to expand its impact through sustainable, innovative, and community-driven programs, supported by our valued development partners.

I extend my sincere thanks to all members of the YPSA family, including our dedicated staff, volunteers, target communities, government agencies, and development partners, for their unwavering support and cooperation. A special note of appreciation goes to the editorial board members, the managing editor, and all contributors who worked hard to prepare this Annual Impact Report.

Heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to each of you for standing with us throughout YPSA's journey. We truly believe that your continued support will help us realize the rights of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized groups and together, build a developed, prosperous Bangladesh and a world based on equality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Arifur Rahman', written in a cursive style.

(Dr. Md. Arifur Rahman)

Founder and Chief Executive, YPSA



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BACKGROUND OF YPSA



Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), an organization in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN-ECOSOC) since 2013, is a voluntary non-profit organization for sustainable development registered with the different departments of the People's Republic of Bangladesh including NGO Affairs Bureau contributing to national goals for making a difference in the lives of the population since its establishment in 1985. YPSA, a fleet of more than 1600 full-time professional staff specializes in the six thematic areas of Health; Education; Human rights and Governance; Economic Empowerment; Environment and Climate change; and Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Response as well as has extensive experience in the field of Capacity Development, Procurement, Contract Management, Resource Mobilization, Financial Management and Research, Monitoring & Evaluation. YPSA has membership with more than 70 national and international organizations and networks including UN-DGC; UNCCD: FAO Rural Youth and Food Security Global Network, Italy; INFOYOUTH Network, UNESCO-INJEP, France; UNDCCP, Austria; UNFCCC, Germany; UNYU, USA. Besides, YPSA is experienced in establishing formal partnerships with various departments of the United Nations such as ILO, IOM, WFP UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, World Bank, and UN-NGLS.

CORE VALUES

- Patriotism and commitment to national interest, sovereignty and national pride
- Justice, transparency and accountability
- Mutual respect and gender friendliness
- Quality and excellence
- Humility and confidence
- Respect for diversity
- Support for environment and ecology

VISION OF YPSA

YPSA envisions a society without poverty where everyone's basic needs and rights are ensured.

MISSION OF YPSA

YPSA exists to participate with the poor and vulnerable population with all commitment to bring about their own and society's sustainable development.

LEGAL STATUS

YPSA is a voluntary, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization for sustainable development registered with the different departments of the People's Republic of Bangladesh including NGO Affairs Bureau, Register of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and Micro Credit Regulatory Authority, Department of Social Welfare, Copyright Office. The details of registration-related information are given below.

- NGO Affairs Bureau: NAB/916-95-26/02/1995, Renewal date 26.02.2030
- Social welfare Department: Cht: 1475/89, 10/09/1989
- Society Act Registration: CHC-227/2004, 29/02/2004
- Micro Credit Regulatory Authority: MRA 0000339 Certificate No: 00299-01249-00335 23/10/08

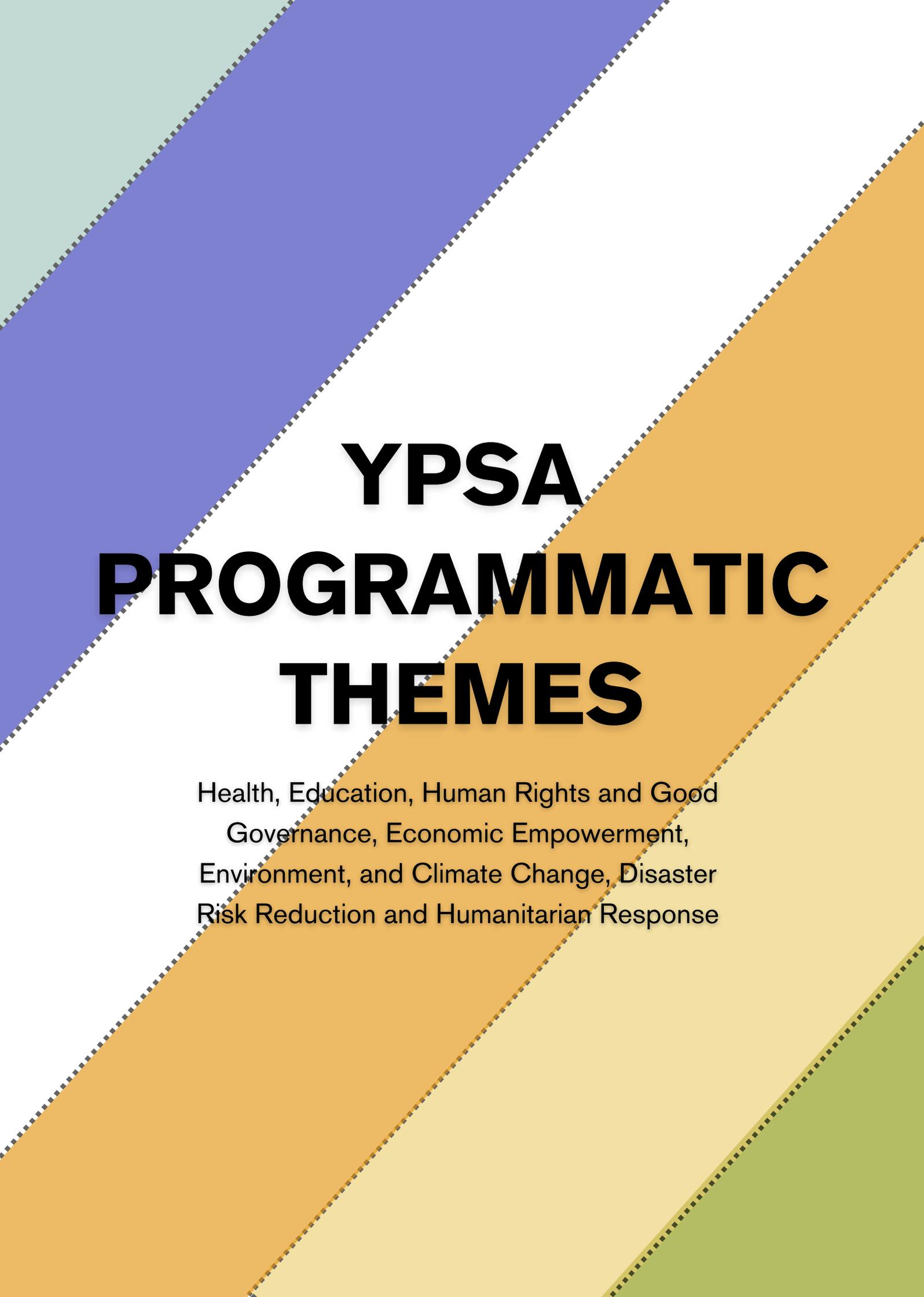
GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

YPSA is governed by **an Executive Committee** consisting of seven members and elected by general members according to its constitution. The Executive Committee formulates the strategic directions and principles of the organization, and the **Chief Executive** conducts the overall management and representation of the organization.

DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

● Bangladesh Government ● PKSF ● USAID ● UNFPA ● UNDP ● VSO ● Action Aid Bangladesh ● Oxfam ● BRAC ● Save the Children ● Concern-Worldwide ● DAISY Consortium, Switzerland ● IOM ● Bangladesh NGO Foundation ● Plan International Bangladesh ● WINROCK International ● HI (Humility Inclusion) ● Japan Embassy ● Displacement Solutions ● HSBC ● BSRM Foundation ● Prime Minister's Office/A2I ● ICT Division/GOB ● World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) ● Relief International ● World Vision ● Global Affairs Canada ● Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) ● Habitat for Humanity in Bangladesh ● The Kadorie Charitable Foundation (KCF) ● British Council ● World Food Programme (WFP) ● Democracy International ● Help-Age International Bangladesh ● New Venture Fund /Climate Justice Resilient Fund ● Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)/UNFPA ● BSR ● Australian High Commission ● Unilever Bangladesh ● Solidar Suisse ● ADD International ● Summit LNG Terminal Co. (Pvt) Ltd. ● DW Akademie ● SUNY Korea ● International Rescue Committee, Inc. (IRC) ● Share-Net International ● Human Relief Foundation-HRF, UK ● The Federal German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) ● Muslim Aid UK ● Qatar Charity ● EMK Center ● Pathfinder International ● KODDI, Korea ● ICDDR/B/NASC ● US Forest ● Muslim Aid USA ● The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) ● BBC Media Action ● Water.org ● Vital Strategy/Bloomberg ● Green Fund ● NCTB-GOB ● The Asia Foundation ● UNESCAP ● Build a Water Project ● APNIC Foundation ● Community Partners International (CPI), USA ● Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)





YPSA PROGRAMMATIC THEMES

Health, Education, Human Rights and Good
Governance, Economic Empowerment,
Environment, and Climate Change, Disaster
Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Response

Health

YPSA operates on the belief that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare. This access is a fundamental human right and a key part of a developed nation. In Bangladesh, a country facing major health challenges due to its high population density, marginalized communities are hit hardest by problems like communicable and non-communicable diseases, malnutrition, poor sanitation, and insufficient reproductive health services.

To tackle these issues, YPSA uses a two-pronged approach of direct action and advocacy. YPSA works to support national health goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to create lasting, community-driven health solutions. This includes raising awareness about preventive healthcare, improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices, and making sure services reach the most vulnerable groups. These groups include women, children, adolescents, the elderly, people with disabilities, and migrants.

A strong example of this dedication is YPSA's work from 2023 to 2024. During this time, YPSA implemented four dedicated health projects that directly benefited 98,666 individuals. This outreach shows a clear commitment to inclusivity, with 55% of beneficiaries being female and 45% male, ensuring that health services meet the specific needs of all community members.

Education

Guided by the recognition of education as a fundamental right, YPSA is committed to making universal education a reality for everyone in Bangladesh. YPSA's education initiatives support government efforts, with a special focus on those who often get left out of the mainstream system.

The program takes various approaches. It works to boost literacy among marginalized groups through both formal and non-formal methods. It also improves enrollment and quality in formal schools, and it helps youth and adolescents develop technical and life skills for career growth and entrepreneurship. A key part of this work is commitment to inclusive education. YPSA uses ICT to ensure that people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups can access quality learning opportunities.

This commitment also extends to emergency and humanitarian situations. Alongside its main programs for Bangladeshi children, YPSA runs vital Emergency Education projects for forcibly displaced Rohingya children. These projects provide a safe space for learning and psycho-social support.

The impact of this strategy is clear in its reach. During the 2023-2024 reporting period, YPSA's nine educational projects directly helped a total of 26,514 people. The breakdown of beneficiaries shows a focus on building foundations and futures: 68% were children, 27% were adolescents, and 5% were adult men and women. This ensures that entire communities gain knowledge and skills.

Human Rights & Good Governance

YPSA believes that good governance and protecting human rights are essential for achieving equality, justice, and democracy. This principle matches the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, which places human rights at the heart of state policy.

YPSA acts as support to the government. Its initiatives are purposefully designed to make sure the state fulfills its duty to protect and promote human rights for its most at-risk citizens. The organization focuses on empowering marginalized and special groups, such as women, youth, children, and ethnic minorities. It promotes equality before the law, safeguards their basic rights, and helps them access essential services.

YPSA takes a broad approach that includes providing community legal aid, educating people about human rights, advocating for policy changes, and strengthening local governance institutions. The scale of this commitment is clear from the 2023-2024 reporting period, during which YPSA ran 22 projects on human rights and good governance. These efforts reached an impressive 8,331,219 people, ensuring greater inclusion for women, who made up 54% of the beneficiaries, compared to 46% men.

Economic Empowerment

YPSA sees economic empowerment as a key factor for sustainable development and reducing poverty. Our initiatives aim to build a strong, inclusive, and technology-friendly economy. We focus on creating opportunities for those who are often overlooked: youth, women, and special groups such as people with disabilities and marginalized communities.

YPSA's programs support decent jobs and entrepreneurship through skill development, vocational training, and access to resources. We work on improving digital skills, promoting resilient livelihoods, and helping with micro-enterprise development. By boosting financial skills and connecting people to market systems and financial services, YPSA helps individuals gain sustainable incomes and financial independence.

The results from the 2023-2024 reporting period show the success of this targeted approach. Through 14 economic empowerment projects, YPSA directly reached 212,457 individuals. Our strategy specifically aimed to uplift the most disadvantaged groups, with 66% of the beneficiaries being female and 34% male.

Environment and climate change

As a nation recognized as one of the most vulnerable to climate change, Bangladesh is experiencing an increasing cycle of crises. This includes more frequent natural disasters, environmental damage, food shortages, and disrupted livelihoods. These issues, caused by global warming, show up in coastal areas as sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion. Across the country, erratic weather patterns, severe floods, and river erosion also take hold.

In response to this urgent threat, YPSA partners with the government and local communities. We focus on both climate change adaptation and reduction. Our programs aim to strengthen the resilience of the most at-risk populations. We support community-based adaptation methods, disaster risk reduction, sustainable environmental management, and climate-smart livelihoods. This approach helps communities prepare for shocks and encourages them to take part in environmental protection.

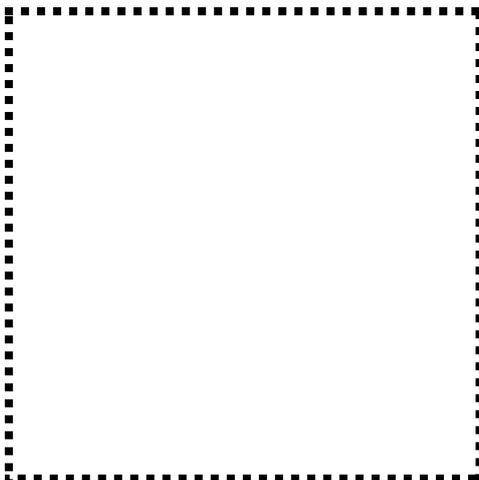
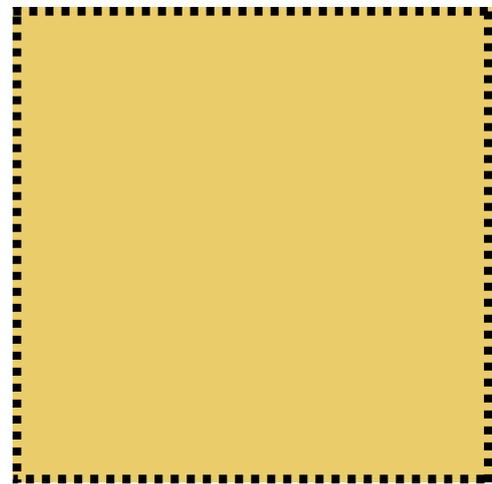
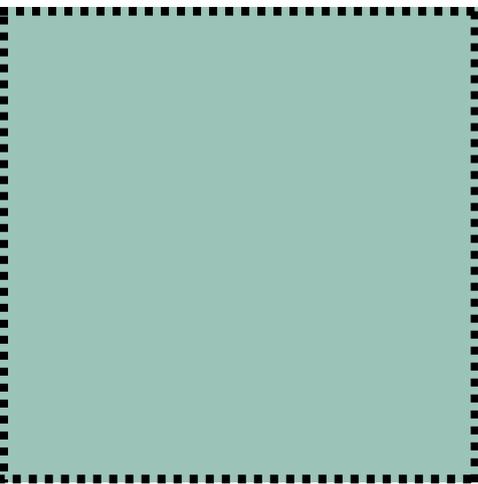
The results of this commitment were clear during the 2023-2024 reporting period. YPSA carried out nine dedicated projects related to the environment and climate change, reaching a total of 36,539 individuals. We emphasized involving women, who often face greater challenges from climate change, in resilience-building efforts. As a result, 52% of the beneficiaries were women while 48% were men.

Disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response

Situated in a vulnerable delta, Bangladesh is highly at risk from the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Climate change makes this situation worse. On top of these natural threats, there are more man-made disasters, leading to complex humanitarian challenges.

YPSA works on the front lines of these crises. They coordinate closely with government agencies and humanitarian partners to provide essential disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency response. A key part of this mission is offering basic humanitarian aid to the displaced Myanmar nationals (Rohingya) in Cox's Bazar. This aid includes access to shelter, food, water, sanitation, and protection. At the same time, YPSA carries out proactive DRR initiatives. These include community preparedness training, early warning systems, and projects to improve infrastructure resilience. Such efforts help protect vulnerable host communities in Bangladesh from both sudden and gradual disasters.

The wide range of this life-saving work is evident in the 2023-2024 reporting period. During this time, YPSA launched five major projects focused on disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance. These interventions reached a total of 191,498 individuals. In line with YPSA's commitment to supporting the most at-risk groups, who are often women and children, 53% of the beneficiaries were female and 47% were male.



STORIES OF CHANGE

JASMINE'S JOURNEY FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

Jasmine, a bright young woman from a destitute family in Sitakund, grew up in poverty, often deprived of basic necessities like food and shelter. Despite her hardships, she dreamed of a better life. Her life took a fateful turn when Fatima, a woman from her village, promised her a job in the city's garment industry. Filled with hope, Jasmine left her village for the first time, unaware of Fatima's hidden intentions.

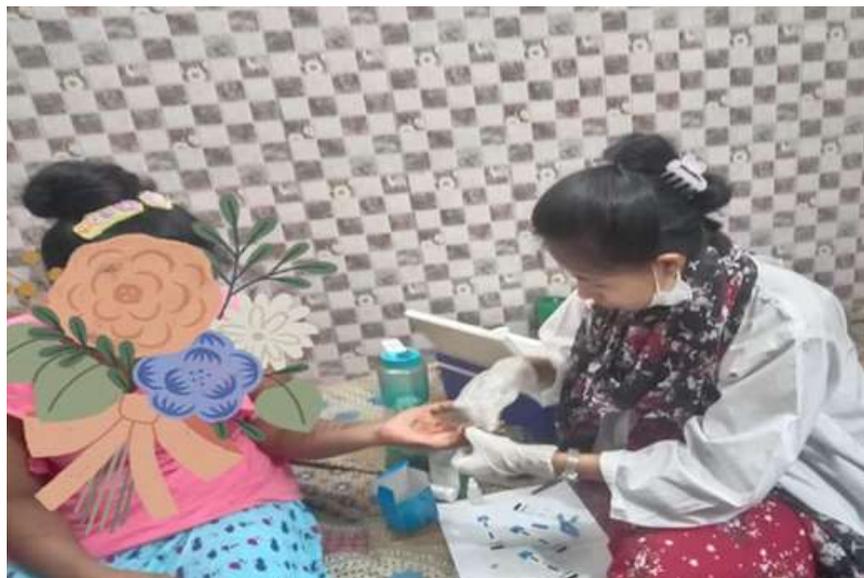
Upon arriving in the city, Fatima betrayed Jasmine by handing her over to Nasima Dalal, a broker. Instead of a job, Jasmine was forced into exploitation, becoming a victim of sexual abuse. Her physical and mental well-being shattered, she lived on the streets, battling starvation, illness, and despair.

A customer later offered Jasmine marriage, which initially seemed like an escape. However, her husband turned out to be abusive, exploiting her earnings and neglecting her needs. When Jasmine became pregnant, she could no longer work and sank deeper into poverty. Tragically, her child succumbed to neglect and deprivation.

As Jasmine grieved, she discovered Nasima's plan to sell her to another broker. Overcome by fear, she attempted to flee but faced brutal torture and further starvation. Her life became a cycle of unending torment until she learned about Shiuli, a peer outreach worker supporting women in the sex trade.

With a glimmer of hope, Jasmine secretly reached out to Shiuli, who, alongside local authorities, orchestrated her rescue. Jasmine was placed in a counseling center and enrolled in the mother list program, where she received psychological support, life skills training, and vocational guidance. Gradually, she rebuilt her confidence and embraced her newfound freedom, healing from the traumas that once defined her life.

Jasmine's journey is a testament to resilience and the power of hope, showcasing how support and determination can transform even the darkest of circumstances.





FROM STRUGGLE TO SOLUTION: JORNA AKTER'S FIGHT FOR SAFE WATER IN GULIAKHALI

The village of Guliakhali, located beside the Bay of Bengal in Sitakund, Chattogram, is home to some of the poorest fishing families. Life here is extremely difficult, particularly due to severe WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) challenges. Most villagers rely on unsafe sea water for cooking, bathing, washing, livestock care, and, in some cases, even drinking. With no accessible safe water sources, the community lives under constant threat of cholera and Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD). The situation is worsened by open and unprotected wells, forcing residents to walk long distances in search of water.

"It's been years that we are suffering from the consequences of uncovered and unclean wells. We often get infected with cholera and other diseases," says Mrs. Jorna Akter, a 46-year-old resident of Guliakhali.

Jorna comes from a struggling family—her husband, Mr. Babul, works as a rickshaw puller, and together they are raising five children, including one son with a disability. To support her family, Jorna engages in productive work such as livestock rearing. Despite her hardships, she is widely respected for her social contributions and serves as the president of YPSA's Women Group.

Determined to change the suffering of her community, Jorna took a loan from YPSA and installed a safe water network beside her home with the support of YPSA Alive WASH project. She has made this facility open to all, and now more than 200 families come daily to collect clean water from her source.

Jorna feels proud and fulfilled when people arrive at her home for safe water. With her strong community spirit, she now dreams of installing a public toilet to further improve hygiene and dignity for her neighbors.

FROM ISOLATION TO INTERACTION: RIAZ'S REMARKABLE PROGRESS

Md. Riaz, a 4-year-old child from Champa-1 CBLF (Community Based Learning Facilities) in Camp-13, has experienced a remarkable transformation in his development since receiving the ECD (Early Childhood Development) HomeKit in May 2023. Despite facing challenges due to his special needs, HomeKit has played a crucial role in enhancing his overall intelligence and growth.

Within just a few days of receiving the kit, positive changes in Riaz's behavior became evident both at home and in the classroom. His mother and teacher noticed significant improvements in his engagement with creative activities. Riaz began taking care of his toys and enthusiastically using the materials from his HomeKit. His favorite activity is playing with the block set, where he has mastered creating various shapes and even learned to make different types of soaps. Additionally, he has developed the skill of holding a pencil, showcasing his newfound abilities.

The impact of the ECD HomeKit goes beyond Riaz's individual development. He now actively participates in social interactions and enjoys playing with other children, fostering a more social demeanor. These positive changes have brought immense joy and satisfaction to his mother, grandmother, teacher, and other family members.

Riaz's family expresses deep gratitude to YPSA and Sesame Workshop for providing the play and learning materials. They highlight how HomeKit has kept Riaz engaged and occupied at home throughout the day. During meetings, parents have shared their enthusiasm, emphasizing the significant positive impact of the ECD HomeKit on their children's holistic development.



BREAKING BARRIERS: SUFIDA'S PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

In 2017, Sufaida and her family fled to Bangladesh, seeking refuge from the challenges of their homeland. As the eighth member of a family of ten, Sufaida faced significant hardships in the refugee camp due to her physical disability. She struggled to walk and needed assistance even for short distances, leaving her family deeply concerned about her well-being and future.

In 2023, during a learner's survey in Camp-13, Sufaida was identified and enrolled as a learner at the Community-Based Learning Facility (CBLF) Mahua-II, implemented by YPSA with support from Save the Children. Initially, her parents hesitated to send her, fearing the center might not accommodate her needs. However, Sufaida's enthusiasm and eagerness to learn convinced them to give her the opportunity.

At first, attending CBLF was challenging for Sufaida. She relied on others to help her reach the facility and often seemed withdrawn and upset. She hesitated to interact with her peers or facilitators, isolating herself emotionally. Recognizing her struggles, the facilitators at CBLF worked tirelessly to create an inclusive and supportive environment. Through their patience and kindness, they encouraged Sufaida to engage and participate. Inspired by the facilitators, the other children extended their friendship, making Sufaida feel welcomed and included.

Handicap International (HI) provided Sufaida with essential learning materials and assistive devices, enabling her to participate more effectively in class activities. Gradually, her confidence grew, and her demeanor transformed. She began to smile more, engaged with her classmates, and eagerly look forward to attending CBLF.

Today, Sufaida has made remarkable progress. She can now walk without assistance and attends classes regularly. Her enthusiasm for learning has made her one of the top performers in the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) Package-II, surpassing many of her peers. Her parents, once filled with worry, now express immense pride and gratitude.

They wholeheartedly thank YPSA, Save the Children, and Handicap International for transforming their daughter's life. Sufaida's journey from dependence and despair to independence and joy stands as a beacon of hope, showcasing the power of education, inclusivity, and community support in creating lasting change.



TAYABA'S JOURNEY: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES THROUGH EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

“I always try to help my children study at home. Every day after Maghrib (evening) prayer, Tayaba sits to study with her siblings. She can now write letters in both English and Burmese. Besides, she can also write numbers for mathematics,” says Fatema Khatun with satisfaction.

Fatema is the mother of 10-year-old Tayaba Khatun, who has hearing and speech impairments. Tayaba lives with her parents and five siblings in a small shed at a Rohingya refugee camp in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar.

Tayaba's journey began when she was identified by a Rohingya facilitator working at YPSA during a survey conducted by YPSA and SCI (Save the Children International) on December 1, 2018. After a discussion with her parents, she was admitted to the nearest Learning Center (LC).

Before joining the Learning Center, Tayaba spent most of her time playing indoors because other children in the community often bullied her due to her inability to communicate effectively. Adults in the community also held negative attitudes toward her impairments, sometimes using harsh words that deeply concerned her mother. Fatema worried whether Tayaba could study in any learning facility with her impairments. However, her hope was restored when she was assured by YPSA representative that Tayaba could study at their Learning Center.

In the beginning, it was difficult for Tayaba to attend classes with around 35 children. She felt shy and afraid, having no friends in the class. The facilitators at the center played a crucial role in helping her adjust. They encouraged her to communicate with other children and participate in various classroom activities. The facilitators also designed group activities that accommodated her needs, fostering a positive and inclusive environment.

Over time, Tayaba made friends and became familiar with all her classmates. Since then, she has been enjoying her time at the Learning Center and rarely misses a day. As her teacher, Ruhul Amin, said, “Tayaba attends the Learning Center very regularly, and it's located near her house.”

To ensure Tayaba's active participation, adjustments were made to the teaching process and seating arrangements. Ruhul Amin explained, “We developed low-cost materials to make lessons easier for Tayaba. Also, the seating arrangement was modified so she can easily see and hear all the instructions provided in the classroom.” Additionally, Tayaba receives one-on-one sessions after class as needed.

Fatema is overjoyed with her daughter's progress. “It makes me so happy when I see my daughter going to school and playing with her friends like other children,” she says.

SEEING BEYOND SIGHT: ANIKA'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

Anika Tahsin, a determined young girl from Chittagong, has spent her life overcoming challenges posed by her visual impairment. Born into a family of six, Anika's father works abroad while her mother is a homemaker. Her family, though supportive, often struggled to meet her unique educational needs due to a lack of accessible resources and tools. Anika's educational journey began at Chittagong Mohammodia Government Primary School and later continued at Muradpur Government Blind School for grades six to eight. Despite her disability, she persevered in her studies and appeared for the SSC examination at Rahmania High School. However, the road was far from smooth.



Anika described her struggles poignantly: "As a woman with a disability, we always have to depend on others for every aspect of life. I didn't have access to any accessible materials prepared for visually impaired students. I relied on my sighted friends or family to record books or notes for me, but they often didn't have the time or enthusiasm. I had no device to read accessible materials or knowledge about assistive technologies like smartphones. Studying and preparing for exams was a constant battle."

"Now that I have a smartphone with all the necessary software and training, I feel much more confident about my studies and my future. It is a great help for people like me. I am deeply thankful to YPSA and ABC (WIPO) for such an outstanding project."

Her life took a transformative turn when she became a beneficiary of an innovative project implemented by YPSA with support from ABC (WIPO). Anika received a smartphone equipped with relevant software to access accessible reading materials. She also underwent specialized training on how to use the device effectively. With these tools, Anika experienced a newfound independence. She could now access study materials on her own and take control of her educational journey. Her confidence soared, and her outlook on her future became brighter.

Anika's story is a powerful example of how access to assistive technology and inclusive education can empower individuals with disabilities to overcome barriers and achieve their dreams. It highlights the importance of creating a supportive ecosystem for people with disabilities, enabling them to unlock their potential and live with dignity and independence. Through projects like this, YPSA and its partners are paving the way for a more inclusive society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, can thrive.

BREAKING THE SILENCE: AREFA'S JOURNEY TO INCLUSION AND CONFIDENCE

Arefa Begum, a resident of Camp-16, Block-A, Sub Block-A1, is the eldest of three daughters born to MD. Rofiq and Rahima Begum. Her family, originally from Buchidong Town, Myanmar, faced immense challenges, including societal stigma surrounding mental health. Arefa and one of her sisters suffer from mental health issues, displaying behaviors such as being unusually quiet, talking to themselves, and struggling with coherent communication.

Due to her mental health condition, Arefa encountered significant hurdles in accessing education. Although she initially enrolled in a nearby madrasa, her condition and the lack of support from her community forced her to discontinue her studies. This discontinuation not only disrupted her education but also deepened the sense of isolation faced by her family.

In response to the educational challenges faced by children like Arefa, the YPSA BPF project introduced Community-Based Learning Facilities (CBLFs) in refugee camps. During a learner survey, Rahima Begum expressed hope that the CBLF could support Arefa's educational aspirations. Recognizing the potential of this initiative, Arefa's family enrolled her in the CBLF. This marked a significant turning point. Arefa received a range of educational materials, including a school bag, water bottle, notebooks, pens, pencils, and more. Her mother and teachers noticed her eagerness to learn, as she would sit through both the first and second shifts of the CBLF and spend time at home with her books.

Arefa overcame geographical and societal barriers that once hindered her education. The proximity of the CBLF and the support from dedicated teachers enabled her to actively participate in learning activities tailored to her needs. Enrolling in the CBLF gave Arefa a sense of purpose and belonging. Her active participation and growing confidence inspired her peers and contributed to her personal development. Arefa's family played a pivotal role in her educational journey, showcasing a shift in their attitudes towards education. Their willingness to embrace opportunities provided by the CBLF reflects their commitment to Arefa's success.

Arefa's commitment to her education is evident in her actions. Despite being enrolled in the second shift at the CBLF, she attends classes from the first shift, displaying her dedication and enthusiasm. Her consistent attendance and active engagement highlight her determination to overcome barriers and inspire others. Arefa's enrollment in the CBLF has had a ripple effect, contributing to increased community awareness about inclusive education.





Guests hand over prizes to winners at the Adolescent Fair

YOUNG LEADER ZAHED HASAN EMPOWERS HIS COMMUNITY THROUGH ACTION AND UNITY

Zahed Hasan, a 19-year-old from Rangipara, Barabkund Union in Sitakund Upazila, Chattogram, is the youngest of three siblings and a first-year mathematics student at the National University. His journey of community leadership began when he participated in YPSA's cultural and sports programs as an 8th grader. Inspired by YPSA's awareness activities and leadership training, Zahed took the initiative to create positive change in his village. In August 2022, under the guidance of YPSA and in collaboration with PKSF's "Adolescent Program," Zahed led the formation of a youth club in his village. The club, comprising 30 local youths, aimed to combat social prejudices and instill values of unity and responsibility. Zahed's leadership quickly became the driving force behind the club's impactful activities.

The youth club organized monthly discussions and competitions, encouraging young participants to embrace cultural and creative pursuits. Zahed firmly believed that engaging in such activities kept adolescents away from negative influences. The club initiated impactful projects, including cleaning the village graveyard and addressing alcohol abuse. Through collective action, the village became alcohol-free, a significant achievement led by Zahed and his peers. Zahed's dedication and vision earned him recognition as the president of the Upazila Coordination Meeting, where he played a pivotal role in forming more youth clubs across the region. These clubs, inspired by Barabkund's example, fostered awareness and community service among adolescents, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Zahed has also participated in various life-skills training programs through YPSA, which enhanced his ability to address social challenges. His efforts now extend beyond his village, as he collaborates with other youth leaders to tackle issues and promote development across Sitakund Upazila. Zahed dreams of a Sitakund where every village is free from addiction and rich in cultural and social progress. Through his leadership and the active involvement of the Barabkund Youth Club, he is steadily turning this vision into reality, proving that young minds can bring transformative change when guided by purpose and determination.



Art competition for teenagers held on Language Day

JAHANARA BEGUM STRENGTHENS GRASSROOTS JUSTICE THROUGH WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Jahanara Begum, an elected representative of Wards 1, 2, and 3 of Mayani Union Parishad in Mirsarai Upazila, Chattogram, is a shining example of the impact of women's leadership at the grassroots level. With over three decades of service in her community, she has gained trust as a resolute mediator and problem-solver. First elected in 1997, Jahanara has been re-elected for four consecutive terms evidence of her commitment and effectiveness. Her involvement in the Village Court Activation Project, implemented by the Local Government Department in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, the European Union, UNDP and YPSA, marked a significant step in her formal role in justice delivery.

Though initially unfamiliar with the legal framework of village courts, Jahanara had long resolved disputes informally. On February 11, 2024, a complex land boundary dispute was brought to the village court. As part of the judicial panel, Jahanara represented the respondent, bringing fairness and trust to the proceedings. While the issue remained unresolved after the February 18 hearing, her role highlighted the value of women's participation in community justice.

Jahanara's success is supported by a progressive Union Parishad chairman, who ensures women have a voice in decision-making. Her story exemplifies how empowering women in governance strengthens local justice systems and promotes equitable access for all. Her leadership not only inspires confidence in the judicial process but also paves the way for other women to lead and bring transformative change in grassroots governance across Bangladesh.



TURNING THE TIDE: YOUTH UNITY AND ACTION FOR PEACEBUILDING IN EIDGOR



Md. Aziz is the founding chairman of Eidgor Swopnotori Youth Club at Eidgor of Ramu Upazila. Eidgor is one of the nearest places to the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area. For this reason, Eidgor is one of the crime-prone areas in Cox's Bazar. After the Rohingya influx, the risk and crime incidents increased than before. Mr Aziz was an unemployed youth like most of his friends in this area. He had feelings and interest in social development work, but he could not understand and find a way to involve others in social development activities. In 2016, he learned about the YPSA CEVEC project's work in his area, and he contacted the relevant persons. He also informed his friends and relatives to form a youth group in his area. As a part of the project activity, they formed a youth forum at the Union level.

As they are willing to work for social work and YPSA's CEVEC project activities are also for social peacebuilding, they were involved with the project activities. Through the YPSA CEVEC project's activities, he and his friends became knowledgeable about PVE issues. After knowing about PVE issues, they organized human chains, community dialogues, and tree plantation events to engage the community people and make them aware of PVE issues. Through these activities, they gather the community people and disseminate PVE messages. Later on, they got training on organizational management, registration process, and resource mobilization. After receiving the training, they updated their club constitution, and preventing violent extremism was set as one of the main agendas of their club. After setting all the documents, they submitted their documents to the Department of Youth Development for registration. After visiting their club activities, the government department provides club registration. Attending the training, they learned about resource mobilization, and as a part of this, they involved some of the businessmen and jobholders as a club member so that they could use their resources.

As another part of resource mobilization, the club members took a lease of a place for apple palm cultivation (locally known as 'Boroi'). They have benefited from the cultivation and helped the needy people by donating food items and making them aware of their vulnerability to engaging in violent extremism. The club members also support the community people in accessing legal support, treatment support, financial support, etc., and through these activities, they have been disseminating PVE messages to aware the community people. If Mr Aziz were alone, he may not have been able to take the PVE initiative to this much largely, but when they become united the opportunities are created. That is why unity is strength."

A JOURNEY FROM ADDICTION TO REDEMPTION WITH THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

In a small neighborhood, three friends-Muhid, Anowar, and Ashrafal were very close. However, their friendship hit a rough patch when Ashrafal started taking drugs. Unlike Muhid and Anwar, Ashrafal got involved in bad activities, misbehaved with his family, and often fought with his friends. This behavior made him lose respect and trust from everyone around him. One day, Muhid and Anowar were invited to join the sessions by the Champions of Change (CoC) project. This project aimed to teach adolescents how to make positive changes in their lives.

During the sessions, Muhid and Anowar learned that taking drugs harms your body and creates chaos in families. It often leads to fights and causes people to lose respect in society. They also found out that drug use weakens the immune system, leading to various diseases, and often pushes people into criminal activities to get money for drugs. This opened their eyes to the dark side of drug use.



After learning this, Muhid and Anowar decided to help their friend Ashrafal. One day, they talked to him at the playground and shared what they had learned. They explained how drugs were hurting his health, his relationships, and his future. At first, Ashrafal didn't want to listen and was hesitant to change. But Muhid and Anowar didn't give up. They kept encouraging Ashrafal to stop taking drugs and to go back to school with them. Slowly, Ashrafal started to listen. He realized that his friends were right and decided to make a change.

With their support, Ashrafal stopped using drugs and returned to school. His life began to improve. He repaired his relationships with his family and friends, stopped getting into fights, and regained the respect he had lost.



WHEN KNOWLEDGE REPLACES MISINFORMATION

Sayem Muhammad Ridwanul Haque, known as Ayman, is a 21-year-old youth from Joomer Chora village in Palangkhali union, Ukhiya. Once deeply influenced by superstitions, Sayem actively opposed vaccinations based on unfounded rumors, even rallying other youths to join his cause.

This mindset began to change when the Community Communication Skill Development for Social Awareness in Cox's Bazar Project introduced various awareness initiatives in his area. Through engaging audio and video exhibitions and interactive yard meetings, the project aimed to combat misinformation and address critical issues in the community. Sayem and his peers attended these sessions and gradually realized the importance of vaccinations and other social issues. Not only did they choose to get vaccinated against COVID-19, but they also became vocal advocates, encouraging others in their village to do the same.

Beyond vaccinations, Sayem and his friends have taken proactive steps to address broader societal challenges. They are now actively involved in raising awareness against child marriage, dowry practices, and drug use in Joomer Chora. Additionally, they have resumed their studies, motivated by the stories of self-reliance and community progress highlighted in the project's audio content. Sayem's transformation from a believer in superstitions to a socially aware youth leader showcases the power of education and community-driven initiatives in fostering positive change. Today, he and his friends are role models, inspiring others to work collectively for a better future.



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“মুক্ত মনন” লার্নিং সেন্টার

বাস্তবায়নে: ইয়ং পাওয়ার ইন সোশ্যাল একশন (ইপসা)

সার্বিক সমর্থন: সলিডার সুইস

সাগর পল্লী, লদভী, কক্সবাজার।



BABY AKHTAR'S JOURNEY TO A NEW WORLD

On a foggy morning in Chaufaldandi, Baby Akhtar was spotted near a fishing boat, his tiny hands busy picking and cutting fish. Life revolved around the bustling Shuntki Mahals, where the smell of fish, sweat, and dampness painted the picture of his world. Morning after morning, fishing boats arrived under the bridge, and the rush to transport fish to the drying yards began. This routine was all Akhtar knew—a life confined to the hard realities of labor.

Despite a school within walking distance, Akhtar and his peers remained unaware of its existence. Their days were spent carrying fish, a future seemingly trapped within the constraints of this harsh reality. Enter the YPSA-Free Kids Project, which disrupted this cycle and offered Akhtar a glimpse of a brighter future. The project's team reached out to his mother, emphasizing the transformative power of education. They assured her that Akhtar's schooling expenses would be covered, inspiring hope and opening doors to possibilities beyond the fish-laden paths of Chaufaldandi.

Today, Akhtar is a proud student of South Rakhine Para Government Primary School. His life is no longer confined to the Shuntki Mahals. He participates enthusiastically in school activities, excelling in sports competitions and academic events. His story, along with those of children like Jannatul Ferdous and Abdur Rahim, represents a newfound hope in Nazirartek and Chaufaldandi. Through the YPSA-Free Kids Project, supported by Solider Swiss, these children now dream of brighter futures. No longer burdened by fish baskets, Akhtar's world is filled with the promise of education and endless opportunities.

RISING FROM DESPAIR: HABIBULLAH'S PATH TO A NEW BEGINNING

Md. Habibullah (pseudonym) faced harrowing experiences after being deceived by human traffickers. Promised a safe journey to Malaysia, he endured physical abuse, starvation, and betrayal. Left stranded at the Malaysian border, Habibullah was eventually caught by police and spent 18 months in prison before returning to Bangladesh in 2022. Upon his return, he found his family had fallen apart, and his mental state deteriorated. Anirban member Md. Forkan referred him to YPSA's shelter home, where he began receiving regular counseling services. Recognizing his dire circumstances, YPSA collaborated with the Kawarkhope Union Parishad to provide safety net assistance, allowing Habibullah to resume his old profession of installing deep tube wells.

However, his challenges persisted. Lacking personal tools, Habibullah had to rent equipment, leaving him with little earnings. Seeing his struggles, Forkan connected him to the Friends of Ukhiyar Ghuna Club, which supported him with 7,000 BDT on September 25, 2022. With this money, Habibullah purchased his own tools, freeing him from the constraints of borrowed equipment.

Equipped and motivated, Habibullah began expanding his services, earning a reputation for quality work. He now operates across Cox's Bazar, earning between 40,000 to 50,000 BDT per month. This steady income has allowed him to rebuild his life. Recently, he purchased land where he plans to build a new home and has also opened a bank account, depositing 5,000 BDT monthly to secure his future.

Habibullah attributes his transformation to the YPSA FSTIP team and Anirban member Md. Forkan. He expresses deep gratitude for their support, saying, "Without them, this positive change in my life would not have been possible." Habibullah's journey from despair to self-reliance exemplifies the power of community support and personal resilience in overcoming adversity.



SEWING HER DREAMS: JOSNA'S TRANSFORMATION THROUGH YPSA SUPPORT

Josna Akter, born in 1976 in a poor family in Rahartarpul, Bakalia, Chattogram, faced relentless challenges from an early age. Losing her father during childhood, Josna's family struggled to make ends meet, with her mother working as a domestic helper to sustain them. Poverty forced Josna to quit her education, and at the tender age of 15, she married Md. Abdul Jalil, a day laborer. Life after marriage offered little respite. Josna continued to grapple with poverty and the harsh realities of life. Despite her circumstances, she remained mentally strong, determined to change her fate. Driven by this resilience, she decided to learn sewing but lacked the resources to practice efficiently.

Her turning point came when she met Md. Mosharaf Hossain, a Credit Officer from YPSA's Bakalia Branch. Recognizing an opportunity, she joined YPSA as a savings member and secured an initial loan of 30,000 BDT.

With this support, she bought her first sewing machine and began her tailoring journey, experiencing a transformative change in her life. Josna's entrepreneurial spirit soared after attending a two-day Entrepreneur Development & Business Management (EDBM) training course under the YPSA-Sarathi Project. Empowered with new skills and confidence, she took a second loan of 130,000 BDT and established Joni Tailors, a tailoring shop in Rahartarpul.

The results were remarkable. Josna's life steadily improved as she built her business and overcame the hardships she had once endured. Now a successful entrepreneur, Josna dreams of expanding her tailoring shop into a garment factory, inspired by her progress and newfound confidence.

"I feel a miracle change in my life. I'm happy now and have bigger dreams for the future," she says, embodying the spirit of resilience and hope that drives her aspirations.

PALSON BAHAR: A JOURNEY FROM PERSECUTION TO RESILIENCE

Palson Bahar, originally from Bahar Chara in Mongdu, Myanmar, lived a peaceful life with his family until October 2017. That peace was shattered when government oppression forced them to flee. Their homes were burned, and they endured severe torture, compelling them to undertake a perilous journey to Bangladesh.

Since arriving in Bangladesh, Palson has been living in Camp 19, Block-B, with his son, daughter-in-law, and young grandchildren. The journey left him physically injured, making daily life a struggle. With no family members able to work, they depend entirely on rations provided by the World Food Programme (WFP).

The camp environment, while offering safety, presents numerous challenges. Access to medical care is limited, with long waits at health centers and frequent shortages of essential medicines. Palson's disability exacerbates these difficulties, restricting his mobility and independence. Support from the Senior-Friendly Center, implemented by YPSA, has been transformative for Palson and his family. The center provides versatile health services, home visits, and vital resources tailored to the needs of seniors like Palson.

Palson shared that these interventions have significantly improved his quality of life. He learned that physiotherapy could alleviate his pain without relying on medication, and the walking stick and waist belt have made mobility more manageable. Life skills sessions provided insights into personal safety and healthy living, enabling him to adopt better habits and make informed choices about nutrition.

Grateful for the impact of these services, Palson expressed his heartfelt appreciation to YPSA and the organizers. He hopes these essential services will continue, helping others like him navigate the challenges of life in the camps with dignity and resilience. "These services have changed my daily life and brought hope. I pray for the well-being of everyone involved and wish them success in this life and the hereafter," Palson said, reflecting his gratitude and optimism.

WEAVING A NEW FUTURE: HOW TANJILA RECLAIMED HER LIFE



Tanjila Islam, a 22-year-old Junior Folder Man at Pacific Blue Jeans Ltd., embodies resilience and transformation. Born in the Faridpur district to a financially struggling family, Tanjila's education ended in class nine due to a lack of awareness about its importance. In 2020, she married the man she loved despite his poor financial condition, but her husband's family did not accept the marriage.

Tanjila's life took a difficult turn when her father-in-law betrayed her, promising acceptance but instead subjecting her to mental and emotional torture. Her husband was manipulated into marrying another woman and was subsequently sent to Malaysia. After just 10 months, her marriage ended, leaving her without support from her in-laws or her father's family. With no other recourse, Tanjila returned to the garment factory for work. Reflecting on this period, she says, "The factory has truly sheltered me. Otherwise, I had nothing else to do. Now I am self-sufficient and can think about my future."

Her turning point came through the RISE Project, which provided her with skills and knowledge to shape her life. She learned essential life skills such as budgeting, saving, and digital financial services. For the first time, Tanjila implemented a savings plan and developed a monthly budget, seeing a noticeable increase in her savings.

Regarding the training, she shared, "I had no savings before, but now I have a savings plan and will start a DPS next month. Budgeting has become a regular habit, and I've realized its benefits."

Tanjila also overcame her apprehensions about digital financial services. She now confidently uses digital payment systems and appreciates the convenience they offer. Additionally, the training addressed her mental health challenges, helping her manage depression and stress stemming from her divorce. "Before, I would have been disappointed, but now I am more tactful in solving problems. I know what to do when I face trouble," Tanjila shared.

As a Peer Educator, she finds fulfillment in helping others understand and apply the lessons from RISE training. She proudly emphasizes that the training taught her the importance of financial independence and that every woman has the right to control her earnings. Tanjila's journey highlights the transformative power of skill-building initiatives like the RISE Project. From facing social stigma and personal struggles to achieving financial independence and emotional resilience, Tanjila is not just rebuilding her life but inspiring others to do the same.

CULTIVATING DREAMS: HOW SHAHEDA AKTER HARVESTED SUCCESS

Shaheda Akter is a 22-year-old woman from Ward 01 of Whykong Union in Teknaf Upazila who has overcome significant financial hardships to become a successful entrepreneur. Coming from a large family that struggled to meet basic needs, she was forced to discontinue her education after completing her SSC exams due to financial constraints. Facing limited opportunities, she felt helpless about improving her family's situation until she was identified by the YPSA-YHCRCCAC project as a potential beneficiary.

After joining the project, Shaheda received comprehensive training in agriculture, livestock management, and small business operations. With financial support of 17,000 BDT provided in two installments, she started cultivating vegetables on her family's land and began poultry farming. She grew a variety of crops, including beans, brinjals, bitter gourds, peppers, coriander leaves, pumpkins, and gourds, while also rearing poultry for eggs, chicks, ducks, and swans. To diversify her skills,

she also completed a tailoring course under the project's TVET program and purchased a sewing machine with her earnings, allowing her to generate additional income by stitching clothes for her family and neighbors. Shaheda's hard work and determination have yielded impressive results. In the past year, she earned approximately 100,000 BDT from sales of agricultural produce and livestock, with a net profit of around 45,000 BDT. Her monthly sales now range between 15,000 and 20,000 BDT, generating a steady profit of 5,000 to 7,000 BDT. Her total business assets currently exceed 150,000 BDT, and she has secured her future by opening a fixed deposit account in a private bank, where she saves 2,000 BDT each month.

Reflecting on her journey, Shaheda expresses deep gratitude for the support she received from the YPSA-YHCRCCAC project. The training, financial assistance, and guidance provided by the project enabled her to become self-reliant and transform her family's financial situation. Today, she stands as an inspiring example of how skill development and strategic support can empower rural women to achieve sustainable success and build a brighter future for themselves and their families.



GOATS PAVE THE WAY FOR RAFIQU'L'S FINANCIAL STABILITY

Rafiqul Islam, a 60-year-old resident of Bhuiya Bari in Gobindpur Village, Barakul Union No. 7 of Hajiganj Upazila, Chandpur District, lives in a modest home with his son and four daughters. With no land of his own, Rafiqul once relied on cultivating others' land to support his family. However, due to age and declining health, his mobility is limited, and the costs of his medical care add a substantial burden to the family. While his youngest daughter had to discontinue school after Class VIII due to financial hardship, Rafiqul's only son, who has completed SSC, now supports the family through his job at a bakery. Supporting a family of five, including his father's medical expenses, Rafiqul's son struggles to make ends meet.

Rafiqul's plight came to the attention of "Bhuiya Bari Mahila Samiti", a community group under YPSA's Economic Development Programme. After learning about his struggles, YPSA and BNF identified Rafiqul as a priority case and provided him with training in goat rearing. On November 3, 2023, through an event in Barakul Union organized by YPSA with BNF's support, Rafiqul received a pair of goats to help improve his economic situation. One of his mother's goats has since given birth to two kids, and the other is currently pregnant. Rafiqul plans to sell the kids once they are older, hoping the additional income will help him save for his daughter's wedding.

This newfound opportunity has brought hope to Rafiqul's family. His children and neighbors are encouraged by his success, and Rafiqul himself is optimistic that goat rearing could bring him long-term financial stability and freedom from poverty.



WHEN FISHING FAILED, A SEWING MACHINE SAVED MY FAMILY

At 35, I live with my family of five in South Charpara, Nayapara, Ward No. 4, Kutubzom, Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. My husband, a fisherman, was once the sole provider for our family. We struggled daily to provide food, clothing, and education for our children, barely making ends meet. My husband used to fish in an area called Chirar Mukha, but when authorities unexpectedly restricted fishing there, our primary income was cut off, plunging us into severe poverty. My husband tried to adapt by fishing further into the sea with a small engine boat, but the additional fuel costs only made it harder.



Around this time, I learned about YPSA, which was helping families affected by the new fishing restrictions. YPSA was enlisting affected fishermen for skills training, and my husband suggested I attend a dressmaking and tailoring course. I agreed, grateful for the opportunity, and completed a 54-day training program over three months. Thanks to YPSA, the LEP Project, and Summit, I received a sewing machine to help launch my tailoring business.

Today, I earn between 8,000 to 10,000 BDT monthly from community orders. Our children are now back in school —my son is in Class 8, my daughter studies in a madrasa in Class 6, and my youngest son is in Class 2 at the local primary school. My income has brought stability and peace of mind to our household, sparing us from the constant uncertainty of fishing income and the dangers of the sea. I am deeply grateful to YPSA LEP and Summit for giving us hope for a secure future.



THE UNSTOPPABLE STITCH – ROMANA'S JOURNEY FROM ABANDONMENT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Romana Parvin, owner of Ruma Fashion Tailors in Lamar Bazar, North Solimpur, Sitakund, Chattogram, has transformed her life from hardship to empowerment. Married off at 16 after completing her SSC, Romana soon discovered her husband's true financial instability. Instead of giving up, she tapped into her sewing skills and sought her father's support to acquire a second-hand sewing machine, allowing her to begin tailoring from home. Her initial earnings, around 5,000 BDT monthly, helped support her growing family. However, Romana's journey was not without challenges. Her husband's frustration over financial strain, compounded by the birth of their second daughter, led him to abandon her and remarry, leaving Romana to raise her daughters alone.

In 2011, Romana moved back to her father's home, established a small tailoring shop, and sought financial assistance from YPSA. She initially received a 12,000 BDT loan, followed by an additional 11,000 BDT in 2015, which allowed her to expand her business. Despite community criticism and cultural stigma around women entrepreneurs, Romana's resilience helped her grow her monthly income to 20,000-22,000 BDT, enough to sustain her family and marry off her eldest daughter in 2020.

The COVID-19 lockdown temporarily closed her shop, forcing her to sell a sewing machine and face significant financial hardship. Determined to rebuild, she approached YPSA again in 2021 and secured a 150,000 BDT loan to lease a new shop and purchase additional sewing machines. Her commitment to quality work at affordable prices brought in more customers, allowing her business to thrive.

In February 2023, Romana joined YPSA's apprenticeship program as a Master Craftsperson (MCP), training two underprivileged girls and expanding her business further. With a monthly income now reaching 40,000 BDT, Romana continues to empower other women, demonstrating the impact of skills and resilience. She remains dedicated to helping other marginalized girls, using her experience to support YPSA's RAISE project. "I want to support underprivileged girls so they, too, can stand strong," Romana shared, proud of the legacy she's building

SAFE AND SMART DAIRY: YPSA'S PUSH FOR HEALTHIER MILK ALTERNATIVES



YPSA is actively implementing the RMTP (Dairy and Meat) Project in the Upazilas of Chattogram, Sitakund, and Mirsarai, focusing on the production of safe dairy products.

Recognizing that milk is an ideal food for all ages, YPSA has identified a significant challenge: elderly individuals and some children often struggle to digest whole milk due to its high fat content. In this context, low-fat milk emerges as a beneficial alternative.

Low-fat milk contains significantly less fat and fewer calories compared to whole milk. For instance, an 8-ounce serving of low-fat milk contains just 2.5 grams of fat and 100 calories, whereas whole milk has 8 grams of fat and 150 calories. Moreover, low-fat milk offers a slightly higher calcium content, making it a healthier choice for those who need it most.

Entrepreneurs Akbor Hossain from Chattogram and Md Razib from Mirsarai have taken the initiative to produce low-fat milk for both formal and informal markets. With support from YPSA, they received a cream separator, which enables them to produce pure Ghee from cream. Initially unaware of the technical aspects of milk processing, they benefited from the expertise of Rabiul Islam, a technical advisor from YPSA, who provided them with valuable insights. Currently, Akbor and Razib collect approximately 500 liters of pure, antibiotic-free milk daily.

After separating the cream, they produce around 450 liters of skim milk containing less than 1% fat. This low-fat milk is packaged in various sizes—250 ml and 500 ml—and kept chilled for freshness. They fulfill consumer orders through online and mobile platforms, ensuring timely delivery. Through the production of low-fat milk, YPSA's RMTP Safe Meat & Dairy Products Market Development Sub Project contributes to improved public health and nutrition, making a positive impact on the community.



THE MAN WHO TURNED SOIL INTO OPPORTUNITY

Md Jamshed, the dedicated owner of BANALATA Nursery in Mirsarai Bazar, has cultivated his passion for horticulture into a remarkable success story. After spending ten years honing his skills while working for others, he took the courageous step of establishing his own small nursery with support from his community. His journey took a significant turn in 2022 when he connected with the RMTP project officials and became a registered nursery holder. This partnership proved transformative when his nursery was selected as a demonstration site for the Mother Stock Development Program, providing him with specialized training in advanced techniques like budding, grafting, cutting propagation, and mother stock development. Armed with these new skills, Jamshed revolutionized his nursery operations. What began as a modest operation with just 50 species of plants blossomed into a thriving 1-acre nursery boasting an impressive collection of 200 species, including about 50 exotic fruit varieties such as coffee, cashew nuts, avocado, rambutan, and persimmon.



His expertise and expanded offerings quickly made BANALATA Nursery a trusted resource for local farmers, with approximately 3,000 farmers sourcing high-quality seedlings from him each year. The nursery's monthly sales now average around Tk 3 lakh, a testament to its growing reputation and demand.

Beyond business success, Jamshed has become a community leader, elected president of a local group of nursery keepers who collaborate and share knowledge. His nursery also provides stable employment for five workers, contributing to the local economy. Looking ahead, Jamshed remains optimistic and committed to further growth, valuing his ongoing partnership with YPSA as a key driver of both his personal success and the agricultural development of his community. Through hard work, continuous learning, and community engagement, Md Jamshed has truly grown his passion into a flourishing enterprise that benefits many.



GIAS UDDIN'S JOURNEY FROM DESPAIR TO DIGNITY

Md. Gias Uddin, a 45-year-old man from Natunpara village in Barabkunda union of Sitakunda Upazila, shares his remarkable journey to self-reliance despite facing significant challenges. Born to Saber Ahmed and Chakina Begum, Gias demonstrated bravery and intelligence from a young age, but family crises limited his education after primary school. To support his family, he worked at a shipyard in Chittagong, saving money in hopes of starting a larger business.

Tragically, Gias's life changed when he suffered a severe accident at work that resulted in the loss of his right leg. "When I became physically challenged, I felt embarrassed and struggled to socialize," Gias recalls. The stigma he faced from others further isolated him, and he found it difficult to manage his family's needs after opening a small shop that barely provided enough income. In a pivotal moment, Gias met an employee of YPSA's Inclusive Finance program, who introduced him to the Inclusive Development Program. With YPSA's support, he received a loan of Tk 20,000 at a low service charge to expand his shop. Gias successfully repaid this loan and took out additional loans, including Tk 50,000, which he used to purchase bicycles and sports boards for rent.

Today, Gias operates a thriving business, renting out 25 bicycles and two sports boards, earning an average of Tk 6,000 to Tk 8,000 per month from this venture. His shop now generates an impressive monthly income of Tk 15,000 to Tk 16,000. With a grant of Tk 6,000 from YPSA through PKSf, he purchased a refrigerator, allowing him to sell mango juice, soft drinks, and ice cream, catering to customers of all ages. Gias's hard work has transformed his family's financial situation. He saves about Tk 3,000 per month in the bank, ensuring he can provide for his children's education and nutrition. He has also participated in income-enhancing and technical training through YPSA's Inclusive Finance program and has become a member of the Sitakunda Disabled People's Organization (DPO), organized by YPSA. Additionally, YPSA provided him with a pair of crutches to aid his mobility.

"With the continued support of YPSA, I aspire to grow my business further," Gias shares with hope. "My social standing has improved significantly, and I am now respected in my community. People gather at my shop, and I wish for more support for individuals with disabilities, like that which I received from YPSA and PKSf. Together, we can help others achieve self-reliance just as I have."

BREAKING FREE FROM TOBACCO KAWCHAR'S PROFITABLE TRANSITION

Mr. Md. Kawchar Uddin, a 38-year-old farmer from Kakara Union, has six family members who rely on his agricultural work for their livelihood. For the past four to five years, he cultivated tobacco on 5 to 7 bighas of land under pressure from tobacco companies. Despite his efforts, he found that tobacco cultivation yielded no significant income.

Recently, Mr. Kawchar was selected to participate in the Tobacco Control Project, which aims to promote alternative crop production to replace tobacco. Through this program, he received training on sustainable farming practices and learned about the harmful effects of tobacco cultivation on health and the environment. With the economic and technical support provided by YPSA's Tobacco Control Project, Mr. Kawchar successfully cultivated strawberries and various alternative crops. He reported earning Tk 160,000 from strawberry cultivation and Tk 80,000 from vegetables, significantly more than he ever made from tobacco.

Recognizing the benefits of diversifying his crops, Mr. Kawchar realized that by adopting alternative crops, he could grow 3 to 4 different crops on the same land each year, a feat not possible with tobacco cultivation. As a result, he has made the decision to abandon tobacco farming entirely. In the future, he plans to cultivate strawberries on 1.5 bighas of land and explore a variety of other crops as alternatives to tobacco. Mr. Kawchar Uddin's transition to sustainable farming not only promises improved income for his family but also contributes to better health and environmental outcomes for his community.





YOUTH BUILT A DAM OF HOPE IN COX'S BAZAR

The "Tran Noy, Beri Bandh Chai" (We don't need relief, we need embankment) social action project in Choufaldandi, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, has brought a transformative change to the lives of thousands of flood-affected residents. Through strategic advocacy with the administration, community mobilization, and youth empowerment, the initiative has succeeded in reducing the devastating impact of floods by securing the construction of a permanent dam.

The project began with a survey conducted by youth volunteers trained in climate awareness by YPSA. These volunteers meticulously assessed the flood's damaging effects on the local population. The survey revealed that a significant portion of Choufaldandi's residents suffer from flood-related challenges annually. Motivated by these findings, the youth spearheaded a campaign to demand the construction of a dam. They organized a human chain, drawing massive participation from local stakeholders, including youth, farmers, teachers, and women.

This collective action led to a pivotal meeting between the Union Parishad Chairman and the Executive Engineer of the Cox's Bazar Water Development Board. The concerted efforts of the community and the youth paid off. As a direct result of their advocacy and mobilization, tenders for the construction of the dam were issued.

This development has benefited around 20,000 people in the area, providing them with a permanent solution to the recurrent flood problems. The success of the "Tran Noy, Beri Bandh Chai" initiative has been met with immense gratitude from the local community. The residents of Choufaldandi have expressed their heartfelt thanks for the project, which has significantly improved their lives by mitigating flood risks and fostering a stronger, more resilient community.



A JOURNEY OF HOPE AND TRANSFORMATION FOR ABDUS SALAM'S FAMILY

Once upon a time, in the coastal region of Bangladesh, Abdus Salam and his family lived a life marked by hardship, constant displacement, and poverty. Abdus Salam's father had inherited a house, cattle, and fishing equipment that once sustained their livelihood. However, repeated natural calamities and the relentless erosion of the sea took away their homes, livestock, and wealth. For years, Abdus Salam's physical health deteriorated due to prolonged malnutrition and starvation. His weakened condition made it impossible for him to find work, leaving him with no choice but to beg for his family's survival. He wandered from village to village, hoping for a meager amount of alms to cover basic expenses. However, his circumstances continued to worsen as he became unable to walk and spent most of his time bedridden.

Over the past 16 years, Abdus Salam's family had been displaced nearly 8 times. They experienced water flooding their homes repeatedly due to rising seas and frequent tidal surges, particularly during the full moon. Their belongings were lost, and with each displacement, they had to start from scratch. Due to their frequent displacement and poverty, they lived without any furniture or possessions, struggling to make ends meet.

At the end of each month, Abdus Salam's family only managed to collect around 5,000 taka through begging, a paltry sum that barely met their basic needs. Abdus Salam and his wife, Rozina, had no inherited land or stable source of income. They lived in a small, one-room house built with bamboo, polythene, and thatch on the sandy dunes near the sea in Koyarbil. The house was fragile, and when it rained, the water seeped inside. Their only shelter was a small space where they cooked and lived, with no furniture or comfort. Their children attended the local school but often had to join their mother in begging when school was out.

One day, local Union Parishad (UP) members mentioned the possibility of Abdus Salam and his family receiving a house under a government program. However, when Abdus Salam inquired further, the UP members were unsure of any forthcoming assistance. In the meantime, Abdus Salam's family had paid 35,000 taka to a local influential figure for permission to stay temporarily on the sandy beach, but they knew this arrangement could be revoked at any moment. In a deeply emotional interview, Rozina shared the hardships they endured daily: their struggle to provide food, the lack of proper housing, and the inability to afford medicine for Abdus Salam or support their children's education. As she wiped away her tears, she expressed her hope for a better life—a desire for a safe home and a future free from the constant threat of natural disasters. Like many coastal residents, she longed for a stable, disaster-free place to live.



Recognizing their dire situation, the YPSA-CJRF project conducted a beneficiary survey to identify families in need of relocation. Abdus Salam's family was selected after the survey results showed that they met the project's criteria. Community Teams and Youth Forums, formed by the YPSA-CJRF project, further endorsed their selection. With support from local government officials, including the UNO, AC Land, and UP representatives, it was confirmed that Abdus Salam's family was eligible for relocation assistance.

Under the YPSA-CJRF project, Abdus Salam and his family were provided with a disaster-resilient homestead, including a durable house, a hygienic latrine, a source of safe drinking water (a deep tubewell), and an electricity connection. Rozina also received a sewing machine along with a three-month training program to enhance her livelihood opportunities. The new home provided the family with safety and stability, far from the dangers of the sea and frequent displacements.

Abdus Salam and his family were deeply grateful to the YPSA for providing them with a new life, and they now live in a safe, resilient home with hope for a brighter future. They no longer have to beg for survival, and Rozina's new skill in sewing allows her to contribute to the family's income. Their story is one of resilience, transformation, and the positive impact of community-driven projects that offer hope to the most vulnerable families.



FROM DROPOUT TO DREAMER: JEMINA'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE



Jemina Akhter, an 18-year-old from Cox's Bazar, is the second eldest of seven daughters in a family struggling to make ends meet. When COVID-19 devastated her father's income, their sole means of survival, Jemina was forced to drop out of school, leaving her uncertainty about how to support her family. A turning point came when her friend Musa, a member of their local youth club, shared a Facebook post about the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). The program offered a five-month residential training course, a one-month internship, and vocational skills—all free of cost. Jemina seized the opportunity, applied, and was selected as part of YCC's first cohort.

"The training transformed me," Jemina reflects. "I learned time management, gained confidence to speak publicly, and discovered the importance of leadership, environmental conservation, and gender equality." For her vocational training, she chose tailoring, a skill that would soon become her livelihood. With seed money from YCC, she purchased a sewing machine and began working from home, stitching clothes, shoelaces, and washable sanitary napkins. Today, she earns BDT 3,700 monthly and stays connected with fellow YCC graduates through the program's youth network.

Jemina's ambitions don't stop there. She dreams of opening her own tailoring shop, teaching her sisters the trade, and most importantly returning to school. She says "YCC gave me hope, Now, I know I can build a better future."





THE RESILIENT GARDENER: KHALEDA'S PATH TO FOOD AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

Chowfaldandi Union, a village in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, is no stranger to disaster. Cyclones like Hamun and Rimal have repeatedly struck the area, causing significant damage. Khaleda Akhtar, a 33-year-old resident, lives with her family on a small plot of land, facing the challenges of a disaster-prone environment.

Khaleda struggled to meet her family's needs and secure their future in the face of frequent cyclones and limited resources. She said, "I have learned that many types of vegetables can be grown all year round in a small amount of land. Cultivation of vegetables takes relatively less time. I can cultivate vegetables in the same land several times a year. By doing this, I can meet the nutritional needs of the family. Besides, I can earn by selling extra vegetables in the market. Besides, I can stay free from diseases by eating vegetables."

YPSA implemented the Women's Leadership in Climate Resilience (WLCR) program in Khaleda's union. Through this program, Khaleda joined a women's group and participated in courtyard meetings and a 5-day training program on livelihoods. The training equipped her with skills in disaster-resilient vegetable farming, mushroom cultivation, and poultry raising. Empowered with the newfound knowledge, Khaleda rented a small piece of land and started growing vegetables like beans, bitter gourds, and tomatoes. She utilized the training lessons to make her own pesticide, ensuring a safe and sustainable farming practice.

Khaleda's hard work has paid off, "Now me and my family are better than earlier." She not only meets her family's nutritional needs with fresh vegetables but also earns income by selling the surplus in the market. This newfound financial independence provides a safety net against future hardships.

THE EMPTY HEART THAT FOUND SHELTER

Sufida (pseudonym), a 53-year-old woman, resides in Camp 20, Block M-24, Balukhali, Ukhiya, alongside her remaining family members. Originally from Jumkatha village in Baharchara, Tanashak Upazila, Mongdu district, Myanmar, Sufida once led a peaceful life with her family of seven. However, the eruption of violence in Myanmar shattered her world, forcing her to flee to Bangladesh. Four years ago, violence swept through her hometown, claiming the lives of her two sons and their wives. Her husband, Monjur Alam, aged 65, was brutally attacked and sustained a severe head injury. After suffering from fainting and dizziness, he ultimately succumbed to his injuries. Witnessing the tragic deaths of her loved ones left Sufida emotionally and physically devastated.

On August 31, 2017, just a day before Eid-ul-Adha, Sufida, and her surviving family members fled to Bangladesh amidst pouring rain. Overwhelmed by the trauma, she fainted during the journey, and her grandson and relatives carried her across treacherous terrain. Upon arrival, they faced immense hardships, including hunger and sleepless nights. Local Bangladeshi residents provided them with food, offering a lifeline during their darkest days. Adjusting to life in Camp 20 has been a challenge for Sufida. "I don't feel as cheerful as I used to back in Myanmar," she said. Most of her relatives are gone, and her heart feels empty. Despite receiving basic rations like rice, she often craves nutritious foods like fish and meat, which are beyond her financial reach.

Initially, she had no shelter and endured several days without proper housing. Organizations like IOM provided temporary shelter, but natural hazards damaged it after a year. Though some support was provided for repairs, it was insufficient to restore her living conditions fully. In September 2023, YPSA selected Camp 20 for its Mid-Term Shelter (MTS) repairing initiative. Following a baseline survey, Sufida was identified as a beneficiary of the project. With the support of YPSA and HRF, her shelter was repaired, significantly improving her living conditions. For the first time in years, she expressed happiness and gratitude, stating, "If YPSA and HRF continue this kind of support for vulnerable people, it will greatly benefit our community."

While grateful, Sufida emphasized the ongoing needs of her community. She highlighted the importance of Non-Food Items (NFI), cash support, and livelihood programs to improve their living standards. She also expressed concern about the lack of security lighting, which makes it unsafe for women and girls to access toilets, tube wells, and bathing spaces at night. She believes that installing solar streetlights would enhance safety and provide much-needed relief.



FROM A YOUNG VOLUNTEER TO COMMUNITY LEADER: WAKIA'S JOURNEY IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

In the landslide-prone hilly area of Ward No. 7 under Chattogram City Corporation, thousands of families live with the constant risk of landslides. Among them is Rabeya Akter Wakia, a 22-year-old young woman who chose not to remain silent in the face of danger—she chose to act. Wakia, an Urban Volunteer of Chattogram City Corporation, has long been a familiar and trusted face in her community, always ready to help before and during disasters. Yet, like many volunteers, she once lacked formal training and essential tools to respond effectively. Each monsoon season deepened her resolve to protect her neighbors—especially children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Her journey began with YPSA's Proyash Project, where she received training from the Fire Service and Civil Defense and became part of her area's urban volunteer team. This early experience ignited her passion for disaster preparedness and community service.



In 2024, under the Child-Centred Anticipatory Action Project—supported by Save the Children, funded by GFFO, and implemented by YPSA—Wakia's skills and leadership grew further. She received advanced training on anticipatory action, weather forecasting, evacuation procedures, and the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD). Equipped with this knowledge, she began actively delivering early warnings, coordinating with authorities, and guiding vulnerable families to safety during landslides and flash floods. The project also equipped volunteers with raincoats, gumboots, flashlights, whistles, megaphones, and umbrellas—practical tools that transformed their ability to act. For Wakia, this meant she could now reach households even at night, spread alerts through a megaphone, and lead safe evacuations—without fear or hesitation. Her dedication has earned her recognition beyond her community. Officials from the Chattogram City Corporation and the DC office, including the Assistant Commissioner (Land), now contact her directly during emergencies.

Today, Wakia sees herself not just as a volunteer, but as a protector, a voice, and a leader. With confidence, training, and the right tools, she has become a frontline responder—helping her community not only during disasters, but also in the crucial hours before they strike. For Wakia, this transformation is her proudest achievement.



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