"Tumi ki kaaz koro"? I said, "Brac e kaaj kori". He replies promptly, "Tomago Brac to amader shob dhani beez ar jomi shesh kori disse! Sakri korba koro, desher kawthao to bhabti hobe!"

Helaluddin's words grounded me and made me see where I stood in the big picture. I remembered how at our meetings, we were struggling to find the right expression for getting involved with the grassroots initiatives. The truth is, many of us don't really know anything about who these people are, what they expect from the community and how much they need to be happy!

Maheshwarchanda wants to receive approbation as a role model of success. They want to share how they succeeded in driving hunger and unemployment out through intensification of vegetable production and diversification of income earning in poultry raising, fisheries and vegetable production. They also envision a development of micro-enterprises in the villages, primarily through creating successful female entrepreneurs in producing and selling vermicompost, which can also help diversify the local economy and reduce environmental risks. Bangladesh Golden Agri Seed Associates (BGASA) encourages the rural poor to develop mini and micro seed enterprises, as well asprovides assistance in company formation and small-scale business management. BGASA has been working closely with Maheshwarchanda throughout its journey. It has trained farmers and farmwomen in seed production and assisted network members in obtaining credit from financial institutions. Some trained farmers and farmwomen have now become proficient in vermicompost production. They are now producing vermicompost at household levels and using it for vegetable and rice production with success. These farmers are no longer using chemical fertilizers and pesticides in their fields.

Helaluddin sent us home with a big sack of his garden-grown plump eggplants, two huge pitchers of "Khejur er Goor", two bottles of fresh "Khejur er rosh" and an immense sense of satisfaction. He rode along with us all the way to the station. We exchanged phone numbers and promised to keep in touch. This is one promise I know I will keep. As we waited for the bus, Mukta Bhai started humming:

"Rakhte jodi apon ghor e
Bishsho ghor e petam na thai
Dujon jodi hoto apon
Hoto na mor apon shobai".

Rubaiya Ahmad is an IT professional and a volunteer at Bangladesh Golden Agri-Seeds Association (BGASA).

WAITING

Marzia Rahman

I sit quietly and think,
I think about the past,
I imagine about the future.

Past cannot bring any joy,
Future cannot show any hope,
Present is nothing but full of pain and pangs.

There is nothing to look back,
There is nothing to look forward,
Life seems to come to a standstill

I sit quietly and wait,
I wait for something to happen,
I wait for someone to come.

Nothing happens, nobody comes,
Day becomes night, night becomes day,
And life remains the same,

BATTLE OF MINDS

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