

# A small initiative brings big change to their lot

Women of erosion-hit families make exportable doormats from garment waste

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

They no longer stand in queues for relief. They are standing on their own feet as well as getting honour as decision-maker in the family.

These women members of erosion victim families on Teesta basin areas in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari district make exportable doormats using reject garments cut pieces, thanks to the initiative for livelihood training by Care Bangladesh.

About four thousand families living in several chars (landmass emerged from river) in Teesta basin areas of the district often become homeless by river erosion during the rainy season. That time they usually take shelter

on embankments and lead a very miserable life.

Under a programme styled 'Souhardo', NGO Care Bangladesh arranged three-month-long skill development programmes that include weaving doormats using reject garments cut pieces with the help of simple local tools made of bamboo and wood.

Aiming at providing modest livelihood facilities to the women of erosion victim families, 'Souhardo' project started in 2004.

After the project ended in June this year, Care Bangladesh arranged continuation of the programme.

Two years ago, a Rangpur-based private entrepreneur (wants not to be named) with the logistic support of Care

Bangladesh set up a doormat-producing factory at Dalia village near the Teesta barrage in Khalisha Chapani union under Dimla upazila.

Following success within a short time, they set up three other factories in the district.

Visiting the factory at Dalia village on Wednesday, this correspondent found rural women weaving doormats in a simple tin shed house with earthen floor in a happy mood.

The multi coloured doormats produced in the factories have already attracted several European buyers, especially from Germany. Every week, truckloads of doormats from the four factories are transported to the capital for export to Germany.

Once extremely poor, one

hundred women working in four factories have changed their lot.

"We had 15 bighas of land. But we became beggars overnight as Teesta devoured them. We had to pass days half-fed and even unfed," said Ayesha Begum, 40, wife of Siraj Ali of Chhoto Khata village.

"After receiving training, 25 women including me are making doormats at the factory in Dalia and earning good wage. My two children go to school now," said Ayesha, mother of four children.

Bilkis Banu, wife of Shafiqul Islam of Dalia village said she has bought a small piece of land for making house with her income from working in the factory.

Several women including Anwara, Rubina, Lovely, Suraiya, Sabina and Rozina said they can now play vital role in making family decisions and get honour from husbands.

A worker gets Tk 10 as wage for making a 90-centimetre-long doormat.

By making 20-25 doormats a day, they can earn Tk 200-250 daily.

The private company regularly exports doormats to Germany and each doormat sells there for 5-6 dollar.

"Since 2004, more than six thousand beneficiaries were provided training in Dimla on different trades including doormat making," said Mofizul Islam, programme officer of Care Bangladesh.

"We provided training to beneficiaries and persuaded a local private entrepreneur to set up doormat making factories. They are getting good profit by exporting doormats abroad," said Nazmun Laila, field facilitator of Care.

Doormat making can help bring solvency to much larger number of poor people in rural areas if more entrepreneurs come forward with the initiative, said a Care official.

"I shall do everything to promote such initiative," said Dimla UNO Mizanur Rahman.



PHOTO: HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU

Kansat wholesale mango market in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj district still sees large supply of the late variety of the summer fruit, but the sour variety, popularly known as ashari, fails to attract customers.



PHOTO: STAR

Women workers, belonging to river erosion victim families in Teesta basin, making export quality doormats with reject garments materials at a factory at Dalia village in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari district.

## Shibir leader arrested in Bagerhat

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Detective Branch of Police arrested Bagerhat district unit president of Islami Chhatra Shibir from the house of district assistant secretary of Jamaat at Nikaripara of Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The arrestee was identified as Md Ibrahim Hassan, 26, son of Nurul Islam of Sonatala.

Tipped off, a team of police raided the house of one Mollah Abdul Wadud and arrested Ibrahim while he was holding a secret meeting with his cohorts, said Iman Ali, a sub-inspector (SI) of Detective Branch of police.

The others present at the meeting, however, managed to escape, the SI added.

Police said Ibrahim was arrested on information that the Shibir men were holding a clandestine meeting to carry out subversive activities.

## Thieves are thieves, they never belong to party

14 trees fell for fund to observe mourning day!

A CORRESPONDENT, Narail

Men allegedly belonging to the ruling party stole 14 matured trees from beside Singhasholepur-Mirzapur road in Narail Sadar upazila on August 11 night.

The trees worth over Tk 1 lakh belonged to villagers who participated in a social forestation programme run by the Narail branch of NGO Proshika.

Several villagers alleged that prior to cutting the trees, union Awami League organizing secretary Ashok Kumar Biswas and UP member Nazrul Islam told them that they needed to procure funds by selling the trees to observe 35th death anniversary of the father of the nation.

"The beneficiaries of our

forestation programme informed me that union Awami League organizing secretary Ashok Kumar Biswas and UP member Nazrul Islam cut down the trees," said Proshika district coordinator Komol Krisna Bala.

Proshika officials, however, refused to answer why they did not file a case or officially inform the police about the stealing of 14 trees.

On information from the locals, police on Friday morning foiled a bid to steal more trees. But before the law enforcers arrived, the thieves hastily left the scene with a tree. The police recovered a freshly chopped tree and filed a case implicating five villagers with the incident.

"I had heard about the theft on August 11. Villagers

informed me that some Awami League activists stole the trees in the dead of night," said Singhsholpur UP Chairman Md Khairuzzaman Khair.

Asked about the matter, both Ashok Kumar Biswas and Nazrul Islam denied their involvement in the tree theft.

Union Awami League General Secretary Shahidul Islam said that Narail upazila Awami League committee has already been informed about the theft and alleged involvement of some party activists in it.

"Stern organisational action will be taken if it is proved that any of our activists are involved in the theft," upazila Awami League General Secretary Achin Kumar Chakroborty said.

## Robbers loot houses in Sylhet, Narsingdi

UNB, Sylhet

Robbers looted goods worth about Tk 3 lakh from the house of an expatriate at Sundaura village in Companyganj upazila early yesterday.

Locals said a gang of 8/10 robbers entered the house of expatriate Masuk Mia breaking open the door and took all the members of the house hostage at gunpoint at about 2am.

The robbers then looted valuables, including 8 tolas of gold ornaments, and cash.

Hearing hue and cry, local people rushed to the spot and caught a robber later identified as Sajjad, 53.

Other members of gang managed to flee away. The robber was later handed over to police.

Housewife Sharupa Begum filed a case against 10 people with the local police station.

In Narsingdi, a man was killed and another injured as robbers sprayed bullets on the chasing villagers at Bhawaliapara in Monohardi upazila early Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Harun Mia, 24, son of Phul Mia of the village.

Police said, a gang of armed robbers numbering 10/12 swooped on the house of Ramzan Ali of the village, breaking open the door and took the house members hostage at gunpoint at about 3am.

Later, the robbers looted valuables including gold ornaments and cash worth Tk 2 lakh.

Hearing the hue and cry, locals rushed to the spot and chased the bandits. Sensing danger the gang opened fire on the locals, killing Harun Mia on the spot and injuring Rohis Mia critically.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Injured Rohis Mia was admitted to Monohardi Health Complex. A case was filed in this connection.

## When fortune smiles

Once unemployed Babul Mia now owns a 'mobile rice mill'

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

A villager in Nageswari upazila of the district has changed his luck through innovative use of shallow pump machine.

Bablu Mia, 34, son of Mazahar Ali of Balashipara under Nagwewari sadar union, was a nearly unemployed person only two years ago.

Two years ago, the uneducated young man collected about 35 thousand taka from different sources including temporarily handing over possession of his 20 decimals of land to others.

Then he purchased a 16 horsepower shallow pump machine with Tk 26500, set it up on his land and sold water for irrigation in 16 bighas of land of his villagers. He took Tk 60 per hour as service

charge for water supply.

Then he got the idea of setting a small rice mill in a small trolley that can be moved easily using the shallow machine. About Tk 70,000 was invested to prepare the mobile rice mill.

He can husk up to 80 maunds of paddy with his rice mill everyday and takes Tk 25 or one kg of rice for husking one maund of paddy. After reducing the cost, his daily income from the mobile rice mill service stands at Tk 150 to Tk 250.

People often call him to their houses for getting relief of making rice. He responds to their calls and goes to another nearest unions with his rice mill.

While visiting the area Kachari Payradanga village under Nageswari union recently, this correspondent

talked with Babul Mia and some beneficiaries of his mobile rice mill.

He made 15 kg, 20 kg, 20 kg and 15 kg of rice by husking paddy of Misiran Bawa, 70, Jahanara Begum, 17, Nasiran Bibi, 60, and Amiran Begum, 59, of the village.

The mobile mill service helps to save their time and relieve them of the trouble to go to two-kilometre away Nageswari Bazar for making rice, the beneficiaries said.

"There is much demand of such mobile rice mill to poor people in remote areas. Unemployed people can do the mobile rice mill business as income source. I have a plan to develop the mill. But I am not getting a way to receive bank loan for the purpose," Babul Mia said.

He is married and father of one daughter and a son.



PHOTO: STAR

Women husking paddy with Babul Mia's 'mobile rice mill' at Kachari Payradanga in Nageswari upazila of Kurigram district. Babul's innovation has come as a boon for local women as it rids them of the trouble to carry paddy to kilometres away for husking.



PHOTO: STAR

Virtually abandoned after construction of a few pillars four years ago, this incomplete bridge across Shib River in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi district remains a mockery to locals.

## No RU Senate session held in last 9 years

A RU CORRESPONDENT

No Senate session was held at Rajshahi University (RU) in the last nine years although it is mandatory for the Senate members to assemble at least once a year. The Senate election was also not held in the last five years.

According to RU administration sources, the last Senate session was held in June 2001 and the last Senate election was held in February 2005. The two-year tenure of the Senate ended in 2007.

Sources said, the current administration seems indifferent to holding any Senate session and polls during its two-year tenure while the previous administration backed by BNP-Jamaat led government took no move during its tenure.

Important academic and administrative activities are being hampered for absence of Senate session, and holding of election, sources concerned said.

Several teachers of the university have raised questions over the legality of the administration as the university authorities are carrying out various activities without approval of Senate violating the University Act 1973.

Quoting the Act, the teachers said that the university authorities must call at least one Senate session a year where the annual budget will be placed and approved besides taking all other important decisions. And for this they have to hold the elections on completion of the Senate's two-year tenure, they said.

According to the Act,

another vital role of the Senate is to finalise a three-member vice-chancellor panel to choose chancellor, they added.

Teachers claimed that the current and the previous administrations of the university have been recruiting teachers and manpower on political consideration and spending university fund without approval of Senate. "This is a gross violation of the university rules", said a teacher.

Contacted, RU Vice-chancellor Prof Abdus Sobhan blamed the previous administrations for not holding Senate polls and sessions on time.

"The present administration is trying to create a favourable atmosphere to hold the Senate polls and sessions," Prof Sobhan said.