



story of significant change

a case study publication of GUK

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গণ উন্নয়ন কেন্দ্র
Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)

Progressive women leadership



She is Aysha Begum. She was born at rail colony of Gajaria union under Fulchari upazila in 1947. They are 4 sisters and 2 brothers. She is the second among them. Her father Asanulla was a small businessman and mother Amena Begum was a housewife. Aysha Begum was very clever and intelligent from her childhood. She continued her study up to class eight by her own initiative. In 1961, when she was a student of class eight, she got married with Bulisheik of Nayapara Char under Gajaria union. After marriage she showed interest to continue study but her husband and members of father-in laws' house stopped her. Aysha Begum was passing good time with 3 sons and 1 daughter as economic condition of her father's-in-law was somewhat well. But they became afraid due to sudden river erosion. One day in 1986, their houses went into the river. Cruelty of nature made Aysha worthless. She and her husband could not decide where they should go. At last she came to her father's home at Baushi with husband and children. Borrowing some money she engaged her husband in a small business and started to dream of a new life. But a new tragedy came to her family when her husband died.

She became upset but did not come back. A new struggle she started for living by engaging herself as a volunteer in a project of cottage industry implemented by social welfare department. In 2008 she formed 'Shohag Mohila Samity' by her own initiative with the help of Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK). She was elected group leader of the Samity with the support of all. Apart from this, she engaged herself with different social organizations. She received various awareness training through the Samity. She played active role in arbitrations in the village on the ground of social responsibilities. In such way her leadership, dignity and honor in the society enlightened. Defeating all 8 contestants she was elected a member contesting in the union parishad election in 2011 for the reserved seats for women from ward no. 7, 8 and 9 of Gajaria union as people of the area gave her all-out support. In her ward, I have come to this position only with the help of the people, so I will work for them for the whole tenure.

Story Collector Protima Chakraborty

Date 11 July 2011

Place Baushi, Gajaria, Gaibandha

A society gives something great while someone does good for the society. A bright example of that is people's representative Aysha Begum. Facing a huge obstacle with patience and bravery she made the way easy to fulfill her dream.

A symbol of success

A name Hamida Begum is an example of fighter for changing life. Hamida Begum was born in 1977 in a poor family at the village of Bage Chithulia of Mollarchar union under Gaibandha Sador upazila. They are 3 sisters and 2 brothers. Her father is a poor farmer and mother is a housewife. Hamida Begum could not continue her study after class eight due to poverty as well as social constraints obstacles. She got married with Mosaraf Hossain of Bage Chithulia in 1995. Her husband is a poor farmer. They were passing days with poverty. They never could have meals three times a day. They had to struggle for livelihood. She became mother of 4 Children of whom 2 daughters and 2 sons. Once she came to know about GUK's activities at her locality. Afterward she became a member of 'Janopad Mohila Samity' in 2002 formed by GUK. After becoming a member of the Samity, her livelihood started changing. She received trainings on income generating activities. Thus knowledge and skill of Hamida was being enhanced.

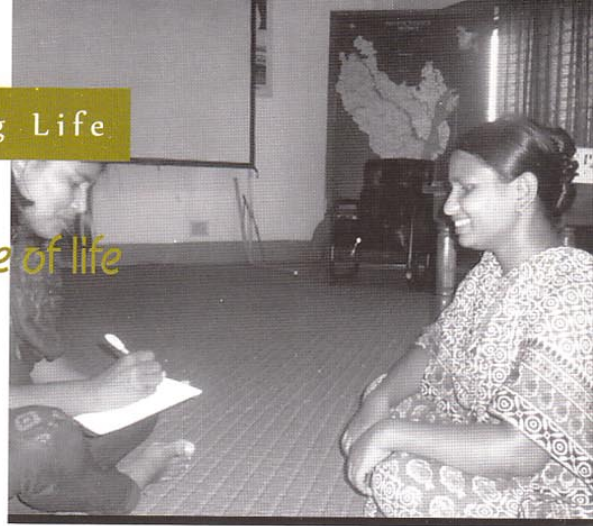
At one stage, she got 10 hens, 6 tree plants and vegetables seeds. She also gathered knowledge on leadership through attending different meetings arranged by GUK. She is nominated as group leader of 'Janopad Mohila Samity'. She stands beside local people especially women expecting no benefit when they face any type of problem. Without participation of Hamida Begum as if no programme at the locality is successful. She started thinking to be a representative of people and that is why she submitted nomination paper in the union parishad election in 2011 for the reserved seats for women from ward no. 1, 2 and 3 of Mollarchar union. Although due to some family related problems she withdrew her nomination, she is getting prepared for next UP election to contest as member directly from the ward number 2. Hamida Begum attended an international seminar on climate change held in Netherlands from June 11-25, 2007 as a representative of Bangladesh. Besides, she was present as chief guest in 3 'Nari Samabesh' arranged by GUK at different places of Gaibandha in 2012.

Hamida Begum, who was nothing but a house wife of a remote char island is now a women leader. Struggling with extreme poverty she has come to this position only through strong mental strength, commitment and dedication for people.

Story collector Dharitrindu Barman
Date 10 October 2011
Place Bage Chithulla, Mollarchar.
Gaibandha

Winner in the struggle of life

Hasina was born in an extreme poor family at the village of Thansinghapur under Gaibandha Sadar Upazila. Hasina got admission in class one in NFPE School run by Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) in the year of 1995. After completion class three from here she got admission in high school in the year 1998 in class six. Hasina was growing up by this way struggling against poverty. Only in the age of 17 she had to marry. As a result, oppression came in Hasina's life. Once, Hasina sought help of GUK for a job. She joined at GUK as a support staff on 12th January in 2008. From the very beginning she is delivering her duties honestly and firmly. Sweeping rooms, providing tea and water, guest entertainment, operate photo copier machine and maintaining staff's personal files were her responsibilities. In 2010 GUK established GMLT team in the purpose of creating working environment & enhancing capacity of female employees as well as reviewing various policy of the organization for making those women friendly. She became very interested hearing various discussions in the GMLT team's meeting while entertaining. Observing her interest, the management team took her as a member of GMLT team and included her in different training such as HIV aids, gender, cleaning etc. for capacity building. She also got opportunities to participate various rally and conference. As a part of this she attended south asia social forum conference in Dhaka in 2011. Being a member of GMLT team Hasina's capacity has been developed and her responsibilities also changed. The organization has established a child care center to meet the



objectives of GMLT. Now Hasina is fully responsible for maintaining the child care centre. She has been promoted as child caretaker from the position of support staff. By this promotion type of duties of Hasina has been changed and also her salary increased. She looks after all children who come to the child care centre with their mother. It is also her duty to make the centre as child friendly. Hasina has taken full responsibilities of a six months aged child of the centre for whole day. Hasina has started to dream anew about her life. She again has began study getting admission in class nine in Bangladesh Open University. She wants to go ahead by studying and to change her position and status. Already Hasina has become the owner of some assets and now she has her own house. Her acceptably in the family has increased and peace has come to her conjugal life.

Story Collector Ismat Jahan (Ity)

Date 05 May 2011

Place Nashratpur, Gaibandha

Seeing her change like this, her younger sister has been encouraged and paying concentration to study. She also wants to be self reliant like her sister, hasina. Her neighbors are also influenced to see her change. Facing a lot of obstacles Hasina has brought a remarkable change in her life. Hasina has become successful in the struggle of life.

Poverty defeated

Meherun Begum was born in an extreme poor family at the village of Baguria under Kanchipara union. They are 3 sisters and 2 brothers. Her father was a day labor. Many days they had to pass without food. She could not read in school. She got married with Abu Bakkar of Gholdaha at the age of 15. But she did not get rid of poverty. Her husband is a rickshaw puller. She became mother of 2 sons and 1 daughter. Once she heard about GUK and got involved as a member of 'Sharna Mohila Samity' in 2009. She received training on income generating activities especially on beef fattening. Then she got tk.14,500 from the samity and bought an ox at tk.10000, 10 hens at tk.1500 and fodder for the cow with the remaining money. After 1 year she sold the ox at tk.18000 and bought 2 young cow. At present she has 2 milking cows, 1 ox, 2 calves market price of those is around tk.10,000.



She gets nearly tk.90 per day by selling milk. Her husband used to drive rickshaw of others, but she bought him a rickshaw. She also has taken lease a land of 10 Katha where she grows paddy. Her daughter got married. Younger son is reading in school. She is now passing good days.

Story collector Jalal Uddin

Date 21 October 2011

Place Gholdaha, Kanchipara, Fulchari, Gaibandha

Meherun Begum has been able to drive away poverty and to improve her livelihood because of hard labor and self-confidence. Poverty is no longer with her. She hopes that her younger son will receive higher education

A tale of changing life of a woman

Mina Rani, an extreme poor house wife of the village of Godar Hat under Gaibandha Sador upazila. She studied in school up to class six. She got married with Nirmal Chandra in 2000. They had no wealth except household. Poverty was always with them. They could not have meals 3 times daily. They had to fight with poverty for living. Mina Rani became mother of 2 Children in this adverse situation. She started to think about how to overcome this situation. One day in 2008, she came to know about GUK. She showed her willingness to become a member of a Samity formed by GUK. She got a chance and was enrolled as a member of 'Shimul Mohila Samity'. She received various training on income generating activities. Then she got 3 goats, 10 hens and financial support from GUK for small business. Wheel of her life started to move from here. Her husband started business of fish which is still going on. Once she sold 4 goats at tk.12,800/= and bought a cow as well as a sewing machine. At present she has 3 goats, 1 cow,



1 calf as well as hens. Now they earn nearly tk.9,000/= per month by selling milk, eggs and from business as well as tailoring. They have made a tin shed house of 3 rooms. Their children are studying in school. Mina Rani is now passing a very happy life with her family members.

Story Collector Mizanur Rahman

Date 11 October, 2012

Place Godar Hat, Gaibandha Sador

One day who could not have meals 3 times daily, now she is the owner of a cow with a calf and 3 goats. Besides she is engaged with tailoring and her husband with business of fish. Poverty is no longer with them. Both their son and daughter are studying in school. She encourages others to be self-reliant.



A story of struggling woman

Mojiran Begum born in a poor family in 1983 at the village of Shidhai under Mollar Char union. They are 4 sisters and 2 brothers. She is the fourth among them. Because of poverty she could not read in school. She got married with Abul Hossain in 1999 when she was 16 years old. Now she is a mother of 3 daughters. They had no property. It was too difficult for them to run the family with poor income of her day labor husband. One day Mojiran Begum came to know that GUK is working with extreme poor women for their development at their locality. Then she became a member of 'Zoba Mohila Samity' in 2008. After getting involved in the Samity she learnt to put signature, received training on various issues such as income generating activities, vegetable gardening, disaster management, leadership and so on. Then she got 1 young cow, 10 hens and vegetable seeds through the Samity.



Once she sold the cow and started a grocery business in small scale. Her business was being bigger gradually. From the profit of the business she took lease land of 3 bighas and bought 2 oxen. She is now owner of 2 cows, 2 goats, a grocery shop and 13 bighas of land including house hold. Presently she earns around tk. 15,000/= per month on an average from the shop and land. Now she is passing very happy life with her family members.

Story collector F B M Shafiqul Islam

Date 13 October 2012

Place Shidhai, Mollar Char, Gaibandha Sador.

Mojiran Begum is now economically established once who had no property. At present she has cows, goats, a shop as well as land. Her monthly income is around tk.15000 on an average.

Poverty is no longer in her life. It has been possible because of her hard labor and proper planning. Now she is a bright example of success which inspires others.



A symbol of success

Parul Begum was born in 1976 at the village of Dakhin Dhanghara under Ballamjhar union. They are 5 sisters and 5 brothers. She was the second among them. Her father was a poor day labor. It was too difficult for her father to run the family of 12 members. Due to poverty she could not read in school. They even could not have meal 3 times daily. She got married with Abdul Mazid of the village of Moddha Folia under Gaibandha Sador upoazila at the age of 12. He also was a poor day labor. She became mother of 5 Children. They had no property except household. It was very hard for her husband to maintain the family of 7 members. They were passing days with immeasurable poverty. At that time she came to know about GUK and in 1988 she got involved as a member of 'Alor Sandhan Mohila Samity' formed by GUK. Afterwards she took tk.500/= as loan and started stock business of paddy engaging her husband. She took loan from GUK for several times and invested in business. Her business started to be larger gradually. From the profit of the business she has bought a pond of 10 decimal nearby her house where she rears fishes.



She also has bought another land of 7 decimal adjacent to her house and taken lease 1.5 bighas of land. She also has 1 milking cow, 2 calves and an ox. She has made a brick-built house. She has also bought a sewing machine which is operated by her daughter. She earns around tk.12,000/= per month on an average from the business. After passing H.S.C, her son is doing job at GUK and also studying in B.A. All her 4 daughters are studying, one in B.A, one has passed H.S.C and waiting for getting admission in honors course and two others in primary school. Parul Begum is really happy now.

Story Collector Liazu Aktar

Date 16 October, 2012

Place Moddha Folia, Gaibandha Sador

Once illiterate Parul Begum had to fight with poverty. Starting with only tk.500, She has been able to overcome poverty because of mental strength, hard labor and sincerity. She has become an example of success at the village. She wants to go only ahead in future. Many others are being encouraged to see her success.

A tale of overcoming adverse situation

Rani Begum, a house wife of the village of Bhashar Para under Kanchipara union. She got married with Malek Mia who was a carpenter. They have 1 son and 1 daughter. They had no wealth by their own. They live on the embankment. They were passing painful days with poverty. They had to fight with poverty for living. At that time she came to know about "Pathhara Mahila Samity" formed by GUK at a nearby house. She took decision to get involved in the Samity. One day in 2005 she was enrolled as a member of the Samity. Issues discussed in weekly meetings of the Samity attracted her. She gathered knowledge on various issues through these meetings. She also received training on sewing. After that she bought a sewing machine and started grocery business in small scale at the nearby embankment of her house with the financial support of GUK. Recently her husband has started a business of furniture.



At present they earn around tk. 6,000 per month on an average from the business as well as the sewing machine. She now also maintains a life insurance where she pays tk. 200 per month as premium. In her ward, she has been able to overcome poverty through getting involved in the Samity.

Story collector Manoshi Das

Date 11 October 2012

Place Bhashar Para, Kanchipara, Fuichari.

Once Rani Begum had nothing, but is now passing a very happy life with her family members. She has become an example of self-reliance at the village. Many others of the village are being encouraged to see her success. She said that GUK has showed her the right direction of life.



Success lies in strict sincerity and firm faith

Zulekha Begum was born in 1971 in a poor family. They are only 2 sisters. Her father is a poor farmer and mother is a housewife. She could not continue study after class nine due to poverty. She got married with Shahidul Islam of Baniarjan under Gaibandha Sador upazila in 1986 at the age of 15. His income was not enough to run the family well. They were passing days struggling with poverty. She became mother of 4 Children. Zulekha Begum was thinking to do something for her family. Once she came to know about GUK's activities at her locality. Afterward she took initiative to start a Samity named 'Doshe Mile' consisting 10 families like her with the help of GUK in 1987. After becoming a member of the Samity, she received various trainings on income generating activities, leadership, women empowerment, women and environment, women and agriculture etc. Thus knowledge and skill of Zulekha Begum was being enhanced. She got involved with various income generating activities. Besides, she gathered vast knowledge on leadership through attending different meetings arranged by GUK.

She is nominated as group leader of 'Janopad Mohila Samity'. She gradually got involved with different social organizations such as 'Paribarik Nari Nirjaton protiradh Jot', 'Shamajik Uddakta Dal' etc. Through involvement with these organizations she is playing an important role to protest violence against women, to establish social justice and to run various social development works. She participated a 13 days long training on 'women's role in protection the environment' in Pakistan in 1992. Apart from this, she attended 19 days long 'World Women's Conference' in China 1995 and 10 days long conference of 'Paribarik Nari Nirjaton protiradh Jot' in Srilanka in 2007. She stands beside poor people when they face any type of problem. On the ground of social responsibilities as well as to accelerate development activities she is thinking to contest as councilor in the next election of Gaibandha Pourashova.

Story Collector Md. Mijanur Rahman

Date 11 October, 2012

Place Baniarjan, Gaibandha Sador

Change can be made in any case through Initiative, confidence and stern mental strength. A bright example of that is Zulekha Begum once who had to struggle with poverty. She is now socially as well as economically established. She wishes to act for people during the whole life.

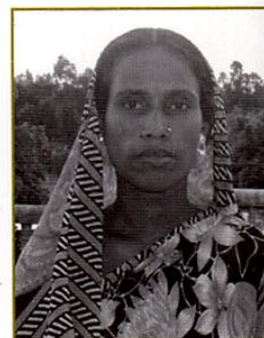


16 women winners at the summit of their electoral battle

A journey of development of GUK aimed at reducing poverty and empowering women started at Gaibandha district in the year of 1985. GUK started its prime work by organizing the deprived and unprivileged poor men and women of the remote village of Gaibandha district. At that time the northern area of Bangladesh was lagging behind compared to other parts of the country of which Gaibandha district was almost totally deprived from any development or modern amenities. Women were lagging behind largely and they had to spend all day long rearing their children around the compound of their houses. They were confined around their domestic wall because of religious bigotry, superstition, and prevailing social hindrances. They enjoyed the marriage ceremony close to their houses and talking through sewing cloths with needles as a sole source of their entertainment. This way of entertainment was not for all women.

In such a dreadful captive period of women GUK stood by their side by organizing women group comprising 10 to 15 women members in the localities. Women members sit together in a group once a week. In this way, they organized meetings from one village to another. The women groups considered these meetings as a women unity fair but there was a history behind this fair that was different obstacles from male members of family and society and threat of seducing women. Even aged women did not tolerate such an assembly of women lest men should get the scope of upholding the flag of masculine spirit and women should lose their character. In spite of that they did not lag behind rather they marched forward with their new spirit and formed big women organizations from little groups even managing their children and family which are known as Village Development Committee (VDC).

Women started to get opportunity of their learning about political right and empowerment through these organizations. By dint of their empowerment and learning they took initiative to compete in UP election. By this time 14 courageous politically empowered women like Bilkis, Sara, Rowsonara, Jarina, Mita were crowned with victory in competing the UP election in the year of 1997 and 2002. Electoral wind is blowing in the sail of UP election this time like previous year. The big women organizations in the locality are selecting candidates and



Local government and women empowerment

bagging people's support through VDC meetings. The workers of GUK are discussing on voter education in the VDC meetings.

There was planning of 93 women members participating in the UP election in 12 Unions primarily being supported by Oxfam Novib, Gaibandha Sadar and Fulchari Upazila of Gaibandha district and implemented by PRIDE project. But 52 members got nomination as per rule of election. Only 15 days remained towards holding election.



In one side the game of influential persons of competitive society and on the other side, power of black money. In being such a crucial period, the organized candidates were quite at a loss about what to do. Just at that time, GUK provided with training on political empowerment of women, capacity building for competing election and enhancing awareness on electoral rules and procedures to the women candidates in the concerned working areas.



The battle of bagging votes and people's support against powerful candidates were going on after receiving training. In this way, like organizing, planning and forging good bondage among people 16 women with leading stature like Azija, Ambia, Haowa, Nasreen achieved victory by getting more than 2500 votes.



Having led the big organizations from small one the Captive wives around four walls have taken the responsibilities of nation building from main stream of local government management to day. In addition to this, they are also contributing in the process of women empowerment and leadership focusing. Positive change happened through this process of organizational empowerment, leadership focus, forging good relation and working spirit. Those 16 elected women organized in the grass root level are a glowing example of this UP election - 2011.

Data collection

Area Managers of concern union

Date

July 20, 2011

Location

12 union of Gaibandha district

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