

Save the Children  
in Bangladesh

## New and Notable

Mark your calendars for **World Women's Day** on March 8th. Activities will take place in at the Dhaka office and around the country.

**Posters** depicting each Strategic Objective of Nobo Jibon have been distributed to all program offices. Check them out!

Did you know that Nobo Jibon has a color? This edition of Nobo Jibon News is now in **Nobo Jibon purple!**

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## Introducing Prakash Silwal

**N**obo Jibon is thrilled to welcome a new Chief of Party to our team. His experience promises to make him an invaluable addition to the program. Last month, Michael McGrath introduced Mr. Silwal with the following message.

*From Michael McGrath:* Mr Silwal's background in the fields of Livelihoods and food security includes local level economic development with a focus on building skills, vocational training, SME, microfinance, labour market/market assessments, labour welfare, market linkages and rural/urban livelihoods, and the making markets work for the poor (M4P) approach. He has developed food security interventions focusing on cash for work mechanisms and agricultural development strategies, and implemented health and nutrition interventions, farmer cooperatives /agriculture extension work, and urban agricultural systems.

Mr Silwal is currently COP for a \$30 million child health program implemented by CARE India and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He has had experience as COP for two USAID funded programs in Afghanistan, one under CARE and one under Mercy Corps. They were both very substantial projects; the

Mercy Corps one was \$38.5 million, the CARE one for \$60 million. Mr Silwal received an award from USAID in Kabul for his work in Afghanistan. He has also been Project Director for projects funded by BPRM and UNDP.

Mr Silwal has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Piedmont College in Georgia, and an M. Sc in Environmental Toxicology from Clemson University in South Carolina. He speaks English, Nepali, Hindi and Urdu. He has worked in Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen and India.

His experience includes two years as Environmental Advisor to the Government of Nepal and five years as Director (Programs) for a private corporation that provides advisory support to NGOs on commercial agriculture. He has been consortium manager for an integrated emergency response program in Yemen. He has also worked as a development consultant in fields as varied as sustainable agriculture, medium and small scale forest enterprises, Non Timber Forest Products, and value chain development.

Let's give Mr. Silwal a warm welcome to Bangladesh, Barisal, and Nobo Jibon.

## Scaling Up Innovation

"Innovation," a buzz-word in employees, and by development, means the creation and application of new technologies, systems, and approaches in order to improve efficiency or outcomes. Innovation is a critical way to test new ideas or to put tested ideas into practice in new contexts. Nobo Jibon innovates by scaling up proven technologies and approaches in sustainable, integrated ways.

SO1 (MCHN) innovates by ensuring that proven health and nutrition interventions are sustainably implemented by trained volunteers and government

employees, and by integrating these interventions with food production (SO2) strategies. SO2 (Livelihoods) innovates by helping small-scale producers connect to points of value chain, so that they can access tools, inputs, and markets to scale up their businesses and improve their incomes. SO3 innovations include the use of volunteers to prepare communities for disaster and creat-



ing separate spaces for women and girls in cyclone shelters. This edition of Nobo Jibon News highlights some of the innovations within Nobo Jibon that are helping improve outcomes for beneficiaries.

# Volunteers a Surprise Success

**N**obo Jibon's community health volunteers are truly volunteers – they receive no compensation for their work – and MCHN program managers report that this is precisely why they are so effective. How can unpaid volunteers perform as well and as reliably as paid staff? At first, this seems counter-intuitive, but in fact *not* paying community health volunteers is one of Nobo Jibon's most effective project delivery innovations.

For years, Save the Children and other aid organizations have employed CHWs in rural Bangladesh as an effective way to deliver information, publicize vaccination drives and clinics, and refer sick people to professional health services. Traditionally, CHWs are given a small monetary incentive, but often fail to meet quotas, show reluctance to participate in meetings or receive trainings, and display a lack of enthusiasm for their responsibilities.

So Nobo Jibon decided to take a risk. What if CHWs were not paid at all? If the economic incentive, small as it was, were removed completely, would only the truly committed come forward? In fact, that is precisely what has happened. Nobo Jibon recruited CHWs as volunteers (CHVs), and it has proven to be a risk worth taking. Those who have volunteered have proven to be more reliable and enthusiastic than paid workers have been in the

past. Nobo Jibon's CHVs are a valuable resource, and because they are self-motivated, they are a sustainable resource as well. Therefore, Nobo Jibon has invested in CHVs, offering basic training for diagnosis of common illnesses, as well as basic tools and education to help them perform their roles more professionally and to expand the services they can offer. In rural areas where families cannot often afford to visit a doctor, community health workers are critical. Thankfully, Nobo Jibon has found a sustainable and cost-effective way to mobilize the high-quality, committed workers their communities so urgently need.

## Strategic Objective 1 Maternal & Child Health & Nutrition

Improved health and nutritional status of children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women

## Strategic Objective 2 Livelihoods Development

Market-based production and income generation

## Strategic Objective 3 Disaster Risk Reduction

Households protect their lives and assets and quickly resume livelihoods following natural disasters

## Making Dried Fish Better

**I**n Patharghata Sadar Union, making and selling dried fish is a common means for extremely poor women to earn a small income. However, most women lack the tools necessary to produce hygienic, tasty, high-value dried fish. In order to help these women improve their working conditions and increase their earnings, Nobo Jibon has introduced an innovative package of improved tools and techniques.

Fish driers generally work as day laborers sorting and processing fish for wholesale fish sellers. Their wages are the small and unwanted fish, which they take home at the end of the work day. The following morning, they cut the fish lengthwise and lay them out to dry for two or three days in a sunny place, usually a sandy riverbank. The fish are at least two days old when they are set out to dry, degrading the taste and quality of the final product. While drying, sand and other contaminants further degrade the quality of the fish, so that the price buyers are willing to pay is low.

In order to help women create a higher quality product and get a better price for it, Nobo Jibon provides aluminum plates and cups for scooping, mats for drying fish off the sand, rubber gloves to protect women's hands, and an ice box. This way the fish do not lose their freshness between the time they are collected from the wholesaler and when they are laid to dry.

Nobo Jibon has also helped women to form independent enterprise groups and helped to link



A woman sells improved dried fish to a retailer in Barisal. Photo: Jeff Holt

these groups with external traders as a way to sell their produce in larger volumes and for a better price. Women receiving this kind of support have increased their incomes by up to five times.

Save the Children piloted this approach to supporting fish driers in a previous Livelihoods project called ELL (Enhancing Lives and Livelihoods), where it enjoyed such success that it has been replicated in Nobo Jibon at a larger scale. And because in Nobo Jibon, almost all of the women who receive fish drying support also receive health and nutrition training, not only are they earning more money in a safer, more efficient, and more hygienic way, they are learning how the fish they dry can form an integral part of a healthy and nutritious diet for their families.

## News Flash: Bhola Storm Response

In the early morning hours of Thursday, October 11 2012, a large storm hit the southern coastal divisions of Bangladesh. High winds, flooding, and violent waves struck the low-lying areas, destroying vulnerable homes, flooding crops, and capsizing fishing boats. Across the three districts, the storm destroyed the property and livelihoods of families who rely on farming and fishing for their income. Nobo Jibon's emergency relief team assessed the damage in Barisal's affected district of Bhola and within days provided assistance and crucial supplies to those in greatest need.

After the violent storm for which most people received little or no warning, thousands of families found themselves with their main source of income destroyed and living in damaged or uninhabitable homes. In Bhola's affected upazillas of Monpura and Char Fassion, the storm damaged 2,200 homes and displaced nearly 13,000 people. Twelve peo-

ple were reported dead and over 100 missing. Nobo Jibon's disaster response team visited the region to identify those households most affected and what their most urgent needs were. Their analysis estimated that the storm affected at least 75 percent of the people in these two upazillas, where affected households' greatest needs were for basic household items such as water jugs, candles, blankets, and soap. Others also needed basic construction materials to rebuild their homes.

Following the initial damage assessment, Save the Children identified partner organizations with staff already on the ground to help distribute relief packages. Having conducted an extensive analysis of potential disaster relief partners in 2011, Save the Children quickly identified GJUS (Grameen Jano Unnayan Sangstha) as an implementing partner and signed an instant ser-

vice agreement for this disaster response effort.

On October 22, Save the Children, along with GJUS, Cyclone Preparedness Program volunteers, and local union and upazilla leadership volunteers, distributed relief packages at five locations throughout the affected unions: Monpura, Hazirhat, Uttar Sakuchia, and Daskin Sakuchia unions of Monpura upazilla, and Dhal Char union of Char Fassion upazilla. In total, Nobo Jibon distributed 2,000 packages of basic household items (1,700 in Monpura and 300 in Char Fassion). The following day, 75 poor and extremely poor households whose homes had suffered the most severe damage also received shelter kits and small amounts of cash to procure repairs locally.



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## RIMES Makes Early Warnings Earlier

Barisal residents know that when a cyclone warning sounds, they may have only a few short hours to secure their homes and belongings, pack essential supplies, and lead their livestock and families to safety. They know that an early warning and accurate information can mean the difference between a little damage and total devastation, between making repairs and rebuilding entirely, between surviving and dying. In order to give Barisal residents as much time and information as possible, Nobo Jibon is piloting a cyclone tracking and warning system called RIMES (Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System). The system was created following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to improve warning systems throughout the region.

RIMES uses satellite information, combined with local wind and rainfall data provided from the ground to predict, up to six days in advance, when and where a cyclone may strike. That's a great deal more warning than satellite data alone can provide. If data suggests that a cyclone may be on the way, RIMES issues easy-to-understand reports, detailing which communities and evacuation routes may be affected, and which infrastructure and agricultural areas may be threatened. These reports allow local authorities to easily project the potential impact of

a particular cyclone and coordinate national and local responses that may minimize the loss of life, livelihoods, and property.

However, the RIMES technology can only produce such detailed predictions for areas that report rainfall and wind data directly to the system. This is where Nobo Jibon comes in. Every twenty-four hours, Nobo Jibon's Youth Volunteers use specialized equipment to collect rainfall and wind data at pre-recorded locations, which they submit directly to RIMES via SMS. RIMES then combines this local information with satellite data and sends a detailed report to Nobo Jibon's Manager – DRR via email. If the report suggests that a cyclone may be on the way, the Manager – DRR alerts local authorities and initiates pre-determined actions to prepare for the potential disaster – long before national system warnings are issued.

Nobo Jibon beneficiaries work hard to build their livelihoods and protect them from cyclones and other disasters. The RIMES pilot innovation gives these households more information and more warning – more chances to prepare for and avoid disaster.



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons



## A Story of Success

### Ponds and Gardens Working Together

Maleka Begum lives in Arpangasia village under Arpangasia Union of Amtoli Upazila with her three children. In 2007, Cyclone Sidr washed away most of her family's land and increased the salinity of the rest, making it unsuitable for cultivation. After that, the land lay fallow. Her husband Delowar had to move to Dhaka to work on a private farm. Delowar sends Tk 500 – 800 home every month (about \$6-10 USD), but it is not always enough to meet the family's needs. When work is scarce, Maleka and the children must live on only two meals per day.



In February 2012, Nobo Jibon's implementing partner CODEC selected Maleka as an FtF Aquaculture project beneficiary. From the project trainings and demonstrations, Maleka learned how to dig ponds and raise portions of land to reduce its salinity. She also learned how to build protective dikes around the pond and grow vegetables on them. She put her new knowledge into practice right away, digging a thirteen decimal pond with a protective dike, and raising seventeen decimals of other land for vegetable cultivation. Soon, her hard work and increased productivity attracted the attention of the Aquaculture project staff, who nominated her as a household demonstration farmer.

The FtF Aquaculture Project provided Maleka with high-quality fish fingerlings in May 2012 so that not only her land, but her pond as well, could be productive. Maleka stocked 610 fingerlings of six varieties of carp in her pond. She then used her own savings to plant vegetables on the dike and raised plot. In all, she has invested Tk 35,500 in aquaculture and vegetable production this year.

By November 2012, her investment and hard work had begun to pay off. She earned Tk 41,600 from vegetable sales and Tk 12,590 from fish sales, for a total revenue of Tk 54,190 (about \$667 USD). She estimates that her total net income will be about Tk 69,190 (more than \$850) from this season alone. Maleka is also planning for the future. With her earnings, she has already invested in two hundred fingerlings to stock next season and plans to lease a neighbor's pond to grow even more fish next year.

For years, Maleka and her family depended on the unreliable and often insufficient income that Delowar sent from Dhaka, and they could seldom afford nutritious foods like fish and vegetables. Now, they have an affordable and reliable source of nutrition, and they never have to skip meals. The extra income from the garden and pond also allows Maleka to buy medicine, school supplies, and other daily necessities for her children. Delowar still works in Dhaka, but he is able to come home more often; when he does, he helps Maleka tend their land.

### Save the Children in Bangladesh

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Save the Children's mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

We have been working in Bangladesh since 1970 and today reach over 15 million people each year. With a staff of over 800 and a network of more than 100 partners, Save the Children is one of the largest child-rights organizations in Bangladesh.

In October 2011, four Save the Children organizations working in Bangladesh came together to deliver our programs as one Save the Children.

