



**Islamic Relief  
Bangladesh**



# Story of Hope

**Child Rights Program  
Islamic Relief Bangladesh**

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## Content

SL	Title	Page
1	Dr. Shariful: Becoming Doctor Defeating Poverty	4
2	Mukta Begum: Voice of the Widows	7
3	Bayzid Sheikh: An Indomitable Boy	10
4	Turnabout of Hajera Begum	12
5	Touching Dream	14
6	Tania: From Clip Maker to Child Laborer	17
7	Poverty Defeated	29
8	Empowered Anjoli	21
9	Dream of Rashida Begum	23
10	Abu Bakar wants to be a Teacher	25
11	Kohinur's Struggle	26
12	Nazma Begum: The Floating Hotel Woman	28



**Dr. Shariful is checking his patient**

I am Shariful Islam. My days on this planet were very uncertain and full of darkness right from the moment I was born on 09 April, 1997 because I was born in a family that lived from hand to mouth. My father used to work in a hotel and later he took the job of a cook in a mess of a college hostel. Our days were passing in sheer poverty. The situation worsened when my father died all on a sudden of a heart attack on 10 May, 2000. I was a child of three years at that time.

Such a death of my father was unexpected as he was very young in age. The terrible blow shook the family upside down as he was the only earning person of our family. After his death, nobody stood beside us. My mother became totally helpless with her two sons & two daughters. She was just like a ship without a captain. She couldn't even think of what she would do with her four children. Her main concern was to manage three meals for her children. I can still remember that we have passed many days with one meal or without any meal. We used to wear cloths of others. Ensuring treatment, education and recreation was far behind of thought. Now when I look back at those days, I can't help experiencing a cold flow rumbling up and down my backbone imagining the difficulties my mother had to face in those worst days of her life.

But my mother was a very spirited and honest woman. She struggled relentlessly to rear us up. When I was six, my mother admitted me into class I in our village primary school. When I was in class II, my mother sent me to my aunt's house so that she could somehow manage my educational expenses. But after one year, I had to come back to my village primary school again.

One day, when I was in class III, two persons came to our house and told my mother about the Orphan Sponsorship Program of Islamic Relief Bangladesh. I think that day brought blessings to my life. In 2004, I got enlisted for sponsorship support, and Rajbari Field Office started to give me financial support for my education from 01 December, 2004. I also got training in different co-curricular activities such as scouting, basic computer, cultural activities, etc. from IRB which enhanced my confidence.

I continued my study; day by day, my class performance improved. Inspiration from my mother and support from IRB played vital role here. I was committed to study attentively and do better results in examinations so that I can bring me and my family out of usual sheer poverty one day. I tried my level best to get scholarship in class VIII, and by the grace of the Almighty Allah, I came victorious.

In class IX, I got admitted into Pangsha George Govt. High School and took science group which was the starting of a new era in my life. After two years of working hard, I got GPA 5.00(out of 5.00) in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination. At that time, I decided to be a doctor. I got myself admitted into Kushtia Government University College for higher secondary education. After two years of struggling, I again secured GPA 5.00 (out of 5.00) in Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination. Then I went to Rajshahi for medical admission coaching.



**Dr. Shariful is doing an operation**

I dreamt to be a doctor and to add the designating letters 'Dr.' before my name. I struggled really hard to fulfill my dream, and the dream came true on 26 October, 2014, when I got selected for admission in Rajshahi Medical College. I couldn't hold myself and burst into tears seeing the result. I have tried heart and soul for securing MBBS degree and completing internship; and finally, I have been successful.

In this eventful journey, Islamic Relief was beside me. I am really grateful to my donor and Islamic Relief Bangladesh. In this journey of unbelievable struggle my mother was the source of inspiration for me. Sometimes, life seemed to be very difficult but I forgot everything thinking of the face of my mother. She has done everything for me. I will never forget my past and will try to extend supporting hands for them who are in need.



**Mukta Begum is receiving 'Joyeeta' award**

Only a widow can realize how difficult life is in this patriarchal society. If she is from poor family, life becomes almost impossible. With the death of husband, the in-law's house becomes a hell for most of them. The poor father can do a little for his widowed girl. Same is the story for Mukta Begum. But she had an indomitable will; she dreamt to change her own life, and the lives of other widows. Her tireless effort and irresistible mindset brought success for her. Now she is an empowered woman and an example for many others.

Mukta Begum, beneficiary ID#0545, is a member of **Alternative Orphan Family Sponsorship Programme through Sustainable Livelihood** (ALO-IR USA) project. She was born in a poor family of Tushvandar Union under KliganjUpazila in Lalmonirhat district. She was the eldest among her three siblings. Her poor father married her off at the age of 13 when she was a student of class VIII. Her husband, Badiur Rahman, was a copyist in Aditmari Upazila land registry office. He had 12 decimals of lands too. After marriage, Mukta Begum started living in her in-law's house at Vinnagari village of Bhada Union under AditmariUpazila of Lalmonirhat district. Life was not so bad for her; days were being passed in weal and woe. With the passage of time, she became mother of two daughters- Vanya & Varsha. With the income of her husband and the crops from their lands, they were managing their needs.

But the fate jeered at them. In 2005, her husband died of a stroke. At that time, her 7-years-old eldest daughter was reading in class III, and the youngest was only three years old. Mukta Begum fell in great danger. Her husband left no savings. The cultivable land was not enough to ensure three meals for the family. Mukta Begum saw nothing but darkness around her. Her father provided her some support which was not sufficient. Furthermore, the elder brother of her husband tried to displace her from the in-law's house. She was tortured mentally and deprived of her rights. At one point, she had to leave her in-law's house. But her poor parents were unable to shelter her for long time. Finding on other way and thinking of the future of her two daughters, she decided to return to her in-law's house again. Her mother-in-law played a supportive role in this case. But ensuring three meals for the family was tough.



During the stay at her parents' home, she took training on tailoring. She decided to take it as her profession but she didn't have any money for buying a sewing machine. She borrowed money from others, took some from her father and purchased a machine. She earned around BDT 2,000 monthly from dress-making. She started moving on. But misfortune didn't leave her. Her mother-in-law, her place of dependence and security, died in 2010. She again got a great shock. Her mother-in-law was protecting her from all odds and evils. Now the family again became the target of torture and criticism. Finding no way, she married off her eldest daughter at an early age. Mukta Begum felt heart-broken for herself and also for other widows.

In 2015 when Islamic Relief Bangladesh started its ALO-IR USA project in Adimari, Mukta Begum and her younger daughter Varshagot selected as beneficiaries. As a part of the project activity, the female guardians of orphan children of the village formed a self-help group called *VinnagariNari* (Women) *Swabalamban* (Self-dependent) *Dol* (Society), and Mukta Begum was selected as the General Secretary by all. With others she received trainings on leadership development and entrepreneurship development from the project. These trainings changed her totally. Her inherent leading capacity bloomed. She didn't confine herself in the development of her own family. She came forward for the development of other widows of the group. She used to give them suggestions, help them in purchasing income generating assets, inspire them to send their children to school, etc. In the group meetings of every week, she started discussing problems of personal life as well as finding the solutions along with project issues. The group members began to trust her. They sought her advices at times of their problems. Her fame spread in the village.

In 2016, she became elected as the General Secretary of Bhadai Union Swabalamban Nari (Women) Forum, the platform of all *Nari Swabalamban Dals* under Bhadai Union. This position brought more scopes for her to work for the widows, and Mukta Begum took the opportunity. If any widow in the Union faced any problem, Mukta Begum met her, listened to her and tried to give a solution. Not only that, she started working to stop children and women violence, raise awareness to use clean water and sanitary latrine, ensure education for orphan children, etc. She also works for giving vaccines to the livestock of the widows by the Upazila Livestock Office. For her outstanding activities, she got selected as a member of Union Corruption Prevention Committee and Union Standing Committee. Such recognition boosted her will of work. She made linkage with Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and various government offices of the Upazila such as Upazila Social Welfare Office, Women Affairs Office, etc. Using these networks, she began to work for ensuring various Govt.-provided facilities for the widows. She made a list, prepared required papers, and submitted those to relevant persons and offices. For the initiatives taken by her and also for her able leadership, 122 widows of Bhadai Union are getting various facilities such as widow allowance, VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) card, and warm cloths during winter, etc.



**Mukta Begum with her women cooperative society team**

News of activities carried out by Mukta Begum got spread. As a result, she became elected as the President of Upazila Swabolombon Women Forum in 2017. Mukta Begum took initiative to register the forum with Upazila Cooperative Department, and took necessary steps. As a result, their forum has been registered as Aditmari Women Cooperative Society Limited. Under the vibrant leadership of Mukta Begum, this cooperative society is maintaining 44 Swabalamban Dals under 5 Unions of Aditmari. This cooperative society has BDT 2, 12, 82,495 which is being used for various income generating activities of 650 orphan families who have been able to curtail their poverty and lead a better life. Their children are going to school and people, who neglected them earlier, are giving them respect and honor, which they never thought of earlier. On June 24, 2017, the only son of one of the beneficiaries of Aditmari Women Cooperative Society Limited died of a road accident at Peerganj Upazila in Rangpur district. Hearing the sad news, Mukta Begum arranged a meeting of the society, discussed the issue and took decision to help the member financially. From the risk fund of the society, they donated the member BDT 10,000.

For her activities, Mukta Begum was selected for the ‘**Joyeeta**’ award given by Aditmari Upazila Administration in association with Directorate of Women Affairs. Bangladesh government introduced the initiative in 2011 to honor those women working for women empowerment. Now Mukta Begum is a popular face in the Upazila who is seen in any women-related activity. She is a pioneer of establishing rights of widows in the area.

It's like a dream to **Bayzid Sheikh** (BAN002111), an orphan boy of Fakirhat under Bagerhat district of Bangladesh; he is going to be graduated very soon. When his father died, he was only in class II. His mother could hardly manage three meals for the family; educational expense was a distant issue. But now he is in the final year of his 4-year Bachelor (Honors) degree at Rupsha Degree College. "This has been possible only for the assistance of Islamic Relief Bangladesh. If I were not a beneficiary of IRB's One to One Sponsorship Programme, I wouldn't have come here today." he admits. He aspires to be a government official, and he is taking preparation for that.



Bayzid is busy with his study

In April 2005, when Bayzid was only 7 years old, he lost his father Mr. Nazrul Sheikh, who was a farmer by profession; with the poor income, he was somehow managing the 4-member family. But for the sudden death of the sole earner, the family fell in terrible danger. Ranjida, his mother, was dumbfounded; she saw darkness all around her. Thinking about the future of her two sons – Bayzid (7) and Sajib (4) – she got worried; how she would manage food for them. The 22 decimals of cultivable land, they had, was leased to other. The only living room was without roof; his father could have constructed the brick walls only. None except his maternal uncle stood beside them at that time; he would provide them with some rice which stopped after three years. Education of Bayzid and Sajib was about to stop. His mother says, "*Tinbela peter bhat kibhave jogar hobe seta niyei amar chintar anta chhilo na, poralekha toe durer kotha. Ami swpnew bhabini amar chhele eto dur porashuna korte parbe.* (Managing three meals for the family was my main concern. Education was a far distance. I never thought that my son would study so far".

At such a time in August, 2007, Bayzid got enlisted with IRB's One to One Sponsorship Programme. The help and assistance of the programme brought changes in the life of Bayzid and their family. For the financial support (26 Euro/per month) of IRB, the education of Bayzid and his brother didn't stop. His mother also received training on cow rearing from IRB, and bought a cow. The leased land was retrieved and came under cultivating by them. They also planted banana and grew vegetables in the nooks and corners of their home yard. Now they have 02 cows and 400 wood trees. Bayzid also cultivates fish. "*Our life changed after being involved with IRB. Our*

*miserable situation got improved day by day. Our roofless house was thatched with canister. A cow shed was also built. We got nutritious foods. Educational expenses were also met. My mother started smiling again.” Bayzid uttered.*

Bayzid had keen interest in education. He was very attentive to his studies. After helping his mother in day-to-day activities, he prepared his lessons. IRB staffs and his teachers also took care of his studies. He also got a stipend from school in class VIII. He passed Secondary School Certificate examination in 2012 with GPA 3.31 (out of 5.00) and Higher Secondary School Certificate examination in 2014 with GPA 4.73 (out of 5.00). His younger brother Sajib also completed ‘*hafezo*’ (memorized the holly Quran) this year; now he has got admitted in class IX (science group) in Al-Hera Alim Madrasha. With tears in eyes Bayzid’s mother says, “*Even in my dream, I never thought both of my sons would be educated. If IRB didn’t help us, our family would have been destroyed.*” She has also learnt doing basic accounting, giving her own signature and writing the cheque book from mothers’ group facilitated by IRB. She has got various trainings and awareness on child rights, health, hygiene, sanitation, dowry, child marriage, women empowerment, etc. too. She did not have any savings earlier; but now she has some savings in the bank account of Bayzid.

Since 2017, Bayzid is engaged with “**Pilgongo Dokkhinpara Youth Development Organization**” they are involved in various social and voluntary activities such as repairing damaged roads, stopping early marriages, tutoring dropped-out children, raising awareness against drug addiction, etc. At present he is working as a messenger for Unicef. Bayzid wants to carry out such activities throughout his life. He wishes to stand beside the orphans, as IRB has done for him, in future.

Bayzid is thankful to IRB and the donor for their assistance both for him and their family. Recently he has been called for a written examination for a government job. He is eagerly waiting for that. He is confident that he would get the job. He wants all to keep him in their prayers. “My debt to IRB is immense. I will never forget that. I will try to repay it by standing beside orphans like me. May Allah bless IRB and the donor.”

Hajera Begum lost all her hopes when she had to stop the study of her two children for poverty and engage them in work for extra income to ensure three meals for the 4-member family. Her VI grader son started working in a utensil factory and VII grader daughter began making umbrella with her.



**Hajera Begum is making umbrella for her business**

Hajera Begum had a small business of making umbrella but she didn't have money to invest there. So, she took orders from others and made umbrellas for them; they paid her wages on day basis which was very insignificant. She struggled to meet the basic needs of her family. Bearing educational expenses was a far cry. So, she had to stop the study of her two children. But she could not take it easily. She had a dream to educate her children. So, mentally she was down.

In such a situation, her daughter Shila got selected as a participant of the "Elimination of Hazardous Child Labor" project. With the project support, Shila got readmitted and started schooling. Hajera Begum also received a cash grant of BDT 14,000.00 and invested the money in her umbrella making business. Earlier she worked for someone else and only got the labour cost. Now she made direct contact with renowned big umbrella companies and took order from those companies. Her income increased. She created job opportunities for others; two women are working in her factory. *"Earlier I had to work for others. But for the help of Islamic Relief, I have established my own business. We are living a better life than before."* said Hajera.

She is also a member of “*Hasna Shabolombi dol*”, a self-help group consisting of the mothers of the project participants. From the SHG, she got training on preparing business plan, starting business, etc. She also saves some money with the SHG; she has a savings of BDT 9000.00 with the SHG. She learned about child rights, child abuse, child protection, early marriage, dowry, importance of education, health, hygiene, etc. As she knows about the risks of early marriage, she doesn't want to marry her daughter off before 18 years.

Hajera Begum's daughter Tamanna is now studying in class IX. She wants to ensure higher education for her. Earlier Hajera Begum didn't have any land of her own; they used to live in her father-in-law's house. Now, she has bought some land taking loan from bank; she is paying the instalment with the profit from her business. Hajera Begum thanks Islamic Relief for standing beside her when the light of hope seemed to be dimming, and supporting her family



**Hajera Begum with her daughter  
Tamanna**

Nighar Sultana (BAN000513) is near to fulfill her dream of becoming a fashion designer. She is doing her graduation in fashion designing in Northern University, Dhaka. Her present condition is the outcome of struggle by herself & her mother. Her story can be treated as an example of success to anyone.



**Nigar Sultana is studying fashion designing**

Nighar Sultana, a sponsored orphan girl from Rajbari, was born on 13 May, 1996. She was the second child of her parents. Her father Md. Abdul Aziz (Late) had a profession of selling vegetables. With his small income, the family was somehow passing the days. But situation worsened when her father died of a road accident on May 19, 2000. Nighar sultana was only four at that time, and her elder sister was 07-year-old.

The whole family fell into deep crises after the death of her father as he was the lone earner of the family. No one came to help them. Her mother, Bilkis Khatun, had no specific income source. So, it was difficult for her to maintain the 3-member family. But no one extended helping hands. Her mother did different types of activities – worked as maid, sewed quilts, etc. - to maintain the family. They have passed many days taking only one meal or without any meal. They had to wear old cloths given by others. But her mother, a hard-working & spirited woman, left no stone unturned to manage the family and rear the two daughters up. At the age of six, her mother admitted her into class one of the village primary school.

“One day, when I was in class one, two persons came to our house, and briefed my mother about Islamic Relief Bangladesh and IRB’s Orphan Sponsorship Program. After following required process and checking relevant documents, I got enlisted for sponsorship, and started receiving financial support since March 2003. My mother became member of Self-help Group (SHG), received training on different income generating activities – tailoring, small business, homestead gardening, etc., and started a grocery shop and tailoring.”

“I was attentive to my studies. My mother was my inspiration. Her misery, hardship and struggle inspired me to do better. I used to go to school regularly and completed all home tasks. The class teachers took extra care of me. My class performance was satisfactory, and result was good. In class-ix, I got myself admitted into Alhaj Shabuddin Ahmed Ideal Academy, and took science. I also received all-out supports from my teachers here. IRB’s Rajbari FO provided me different supports - scouting, computer training, etc. All these things worked as tonic for me to carry on my education, do good results, establish myself and stop misery of my mother. After two years of struggle, I passed SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination in 2013, and got GPA 4.19 out of 5.00 by the grace of the Almighty.”

“Then I got myself admitted into Chittagong Govt. Girls’ Polytechnic Institute in Garments Designing & Partex Making. My efforts continued. After four years of working hard, I passed Diploma in Textile Engineering and got GPA 3.39 out of 4.00. I set up my mind to be a fashion designer, and to pursue my dream I took admission at Northern University in Bangladesh for doing BSc into Textile Engineering. I have already completed seven semesters out of ten.”





**Nigar Sultana with her mother and sister**

“At present, we are leading a comparatively better life. In 2015, my mother got a job as a service staff in Pangsha Mohila College; she earns BDT. 5000.00 Per month. Income from the grocery shop is also continuing. So, our economic condition is raised, and we are comparatively well-off now; we have a living house of our own. We are getting three meals now. My elder sister has passed MA and got married. They are leading a happy life now.”

“In this eventful journey of my life, I am profoundly grateful to Islamic Relief Bangladesh. Without the continuous support of IRB, it would not have been possible for me to stand here defeating the hurdles of my life. IRB extended supporting hands when my mother was struggling for a breath. My mother’s unimaginable struggle for keeping me in right track is beyond any evaluation. After completing my studies, I wish to set up a boutique house so that I can create employment opportunity for poor & disadvantaged people.”

Tania, now in class X, dreams to be a teacher but when she was a student of class VII, her study stopped due to poverty. Her father's income was not enough to ensure three meals for their 5-member family; meeting educational expenses was a far cry. So, she had to start working in a clip-making factory with her mother in order to ensure food for the family members. But when the "Elimination of Hazardous Child Labor" project was started in Kamrangirchar, Tania got selected as a project participant. And the project support & assistance helped her to refuel her dream. Stopping working in clip factory, she got herself readmitted into a school and gave her full concentration on study.



Tania restarted her study

Tania has been elected the President of Surujbag-1 Child Club (CC) for her activeness, intelligence and smartness. On every Tuesday, they sit in meeting; they keep attendance, write down agenda and take meeting minutes. If any member is absent, they try to find out the reason behind. They take care of the educational progress of the CC members.

Tania is aware of the rights and protection of children. She has knowledge about health, hygiene, nutrition, child trafficking, laws for child, early marriage & its risk, etc. From the CC, she learned how to conduct a meeting, take care of others and solve problems of the members. With the help of the CC members, Tania works to improve the environment of their community through cleaning garbage, raise social awareness on various child rights & protection issues, prevent early marriages, etc. From the Child Club, Tania has also got opportunity to participate in various cultural programmes that helped her to express her opinion and raise voice.

*"Now I know about child rights & child protection. I discuss these issues with my friends. I know how to prevent unjust activities against children. I can give my opinion strongly." said a confident Tania. She added, "I don't want to get married early. I want to materialize my dream. My parents are also aware of the importance of education."*

With the project financial assistance, Tania's mother started her own clip-making business. Her income is not bad; she is able to provide the educational expenses of her children. Her son, who



**Tania's mother started her own clip business**

was also involved in child labour, reads in class V.

*“My & my brother’s study stopped for want of money; we didn’t have money to pay school fees and buy educational materials.*

*For the help of Islamic Relief, we could re-admit ourselves into school and continue studies.*

*At present, I am giving tuition to students and earning some month; with this money, I meet my*

*educational expenses and*

*fulfil other necessities. When I will be a teacher, I will tell my students this story. I hope Islamic Relief will take more projects of this nature to fulfil the dreams of some other Tania.”*

Lipi Begum lives in *Kutirpar* village beside the river of Teesta under Aditmari sub-district of Lalmonirhat district. The area is naturally flood-prone. Every year, lives & assets of poor people like Lipi Begum are damaged by flood.

15 years ago, her husband died. He left only 12 decimals of homestead land. The sudden death of her husband threw the family into deep trouble. Finding no other alternative, she started working as a maid servant to ensure food for her two daughters & one son.

In 2015, when the ALO project started at Aditmari Upazila, Lipi's family got selected, and became



**Lipi Begum started cow rearing business**

a member of SHG (Self-help Group). She was very regular and motivated in group activities. So, she became elected as the President of their SHG. As a leader of the SHG, she received training on group dynamics, leadership & group management. With the assistance of the project staffs, she developed her business plan considering her resources, skill, experience, capacity and natural & social context. Then she received training on entrepreneurship development & business management.

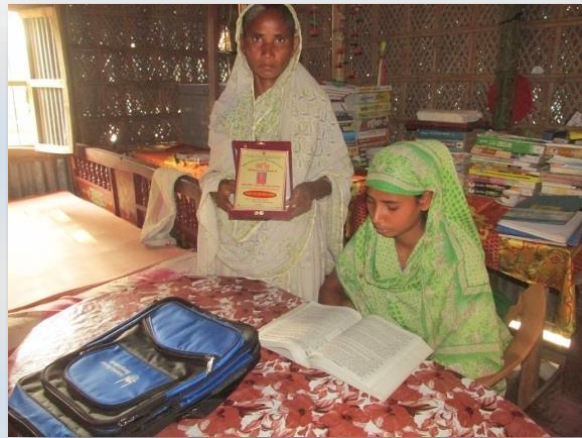
She received cash grants of BDT. 18000.00

from the ALO project and purchased two cows. After some months, she sold the cows at BDT. 65000.00 and took lease of 27 decimals of land. Gradually, she returned the grants to the SHG account, again took interest-free loan (Qard-al-Hasana) of BDT. 50,000.00 from the SHG found and purchased two cows. She also started vegetable cultivation in homestead land to meet the supply of nutrition for her family. Taking Qard-al-Hasana from SHG, she also installed a sanitary.

Lipi's mobility has increased now. *"I go to Aditmari Upazila frequently to deposit our SHG savings to bank, contact IRB officials, Upazila Social Welfare officials, contact government officials as well as with Union Parishad, community health clinic, school teachers and other non-government officials"*, said Ms. Lipi.

She has won “**Joyeeta**” award 2019 from Upazila administration as an entrepreneur. For her leadership quality, Lipi Begum was also elected as a Treasurer of Union Self-help Women Forum and member of Upazila Self-help Women Forum.

Lipi Begum’s monthly family income is approximately BDT. 10000.00. Now she could manage the educational cost of her children, and meet other necessities of the family. She has assets worth of BDT. 200000.00. One of her daughters has obtained Master degree, and another is studying at twelve grades; only son is a nine grader. *“I dreamt my children will be good human beings and bring good for our family & society”*. She expressed her gratitude the donor of the ALO project.



**Lipi Begum is holding her 'Joyeeta' award**

Anjoli Rani is an inhabitant of Purbo Doiljor village under Aditmari sub-district of Lalmonirhat district. She was married off when she was 16 years old and became widow at the age of 25. Her husband, an agricultural day labor, left only 66 decimals of agricultural land for the family. She fell in trouble. She could not go outside from house for some family rulings because of being a young widow. Her income was very small; she got some paddy from the agricultural field. Her parents & in-laws sometimes supported her financially. But this was not sufficient enough for her & her son.

Considering her vulnerability, she got selected as a participant of ALO project. She became a member of SHG, and started attending the meetings of SHG as well as depositing a small savings in SHG account. She was very regular in group activities. So, she got elected as the General Secretary of the SHG.



Anjoli delivering speech in a meeting

*“We received various awareness messages from our SHG meetings. Personally, I received trainings on group dynamics, leadership and group management. I also got entrepreneurship development & business management training (EDBM), skill development training and livestock rearing training. After receiving EDBM training, I developed a business plan considering my resources, skill and experiences and capacity taking assistance from project staffs”, shared Anjoli. I received cash grants of BDT. 18000.00 from the project to start IGA. My child was given BDT. 500.00 Per month as educational stipend.*

“We formed Union Self-help Women Forum (USWF) of Shaptibari Union consisting of all the SHGs under this Union. I have been elected as the Chairperson of the forum. Afterwards, we - the forum members - sat together and identified our next plan of action. We requested the UP Chairman and managed an office room for our USWF in UP complex. We also got allocation for 50 orphans HHs from different government social safety net facilities. During this time, I also got membership in Upazila Self-help Women Forum (UzSWF) and was elected as an organizing secretary in the executive committee.”



**Ms. is receiving 'Joyeeta' award**

others aware.” Anjoli described.

In 2018, Anjoli Rani was selected as one of the best social workers in Aditmari Upazila, and got ‘**Joyeeta**’ award. This reward has encouraged her to do more for vulnerable & disadvantaged women like her. *“I am grateful to Islamic Relief Bangladesh. I dream no girl child in our community will be abused or married off at an early age. Women will get their entitlements from family and society.”*

“We have tried to motivate our orphan guardians to be aware of their rights such as child rights, women rights and specially land rights. Being encouraged, few of our orphan guardians claimed their rights to their fathers or fathers-in-law. Child abuse reduced in our orphan households. No early marriage took place in the orphan families under ALO project. I have also got my husband’s assets from my brother-in-law. I participate in different government and non-government programs, raise voice and make

Mst. Rashida Begum (46), a widow of West Rajib village of Tapamodhupur Union under Kaunia Upazila, is now an idol to the community. Her son, Md. Sumon Mia (18), reads in class XII and daughter Ms. Syama Akter (13), reads in class VIII. Rashada Begum aspires that her two children will fulfil her dream when they will be well-educated and established in family & society.

Rashida's husband had only 14 decimals of homestead land & 20 decimals of cultivable lands which was not enough to produce crops to fulfil their yearly needs. So, her husband worked as a day-laborer. He had an approximate monthly income of BDT. 6000.00. It was hard for him to maintain family with this small income. Rashida was in constant problem to maintain her family. In 2015, her husband suddenly died for heart failure. For the treatment of her husband, their 20 decimals of cultivable land were given lease to a neighbor for Tk. 10,000. To bear the family expenses, Rashida started selling

labour. She had to struggle to ensure three meals for the family. Her in-law's family was also no supportive. She and her children also faced difficulties from the community for being widow and orphan. Rashida was searching for ways to get rid of this problem. She came to know about enlisting orphan families by Islamic Relief Bangladesh for a project. She approached to the IRB staff and request to enlist her name as a beneficiary. After careful scrutiny, she was selected as a beneficiary. She received different types of trainings from ALO project. When she got cash grant of BDT. 14,000.00 from the ALO project, she took mortgage of 13 decimals of land. She cultivated Egg plants in that land. She used to sell it in every week and earn BDT. 2,400.00 that continued for three months. Till the reporting month, Rashida has earned BDT. 28,800.00 from her Egg plants. With the money of selling brinjals, she has purchased a bull for BDT. 16,500.00 and 10 ducks. She takes care of her cow & ducks as per the instructions given by the Upazila Livestock Officer in a training arranged by the project. At present, she has 15 ducks & 12 chickens; every week, she sells 10 eggs



**Rashida is processing brinjals for sale**



**Taking care of cows by Rashida**



and earns near Tk. 80.00 which helps her to return the cash grants in the SHG account. She also saves some money in her personal SHG account; she has saved Tk. 1200.00 so far. She has also received training on rearing poultry. She vaccinates her poultry timely; so, the mortality of her poultry birds is very low.

She attends the weekly SHG meetings regularly. Now she is aware of early marriage, child protection, disaster preparedness, hygiene, health and nutrition. She has installed a sanitary latrine & ensures hand-wash of her family members after defecation and before & after having meals. She participates in the guardian's meeting in school and talks to the teachers about the progress of her children's progress. The stipend provided by the project helps her children continue their education smoothly. *"I had no ability to fulfil all the requirements for the education of my children even before 2017. Now, I can afford which has been possible only for Islamic Relief Bangladesh. I am leading a happy life with my two children."* said Rashida.



Abu Bakar with his mother Minu Begum

Md. Abu Bakar is 12 years old. He is a member of TSC child club. His mother - Minu Begum - is a member of the TSC SHG. Minu Begum has two children - one girl & one son. Her husband passed away in 1992 from an accident. Due to extreme poverty & lack of income source, Minu Begum migrated to Dhaka. She started selling flowers in the campus of Dhaka University to manage livelihood for her two children. But it was very difficult for her to ensure three meals daily for her children. Sometimes the whole family had to starve. Her children also sold flowers

on streets.

In 2007, when IRB started the project 'Building a Protective Environment and Livelihood for Street Children', Abu Bakar got selected as a project participant. He received educational stipend from the project which created the opportunity of schooling for him. Minu Begum received BDT 12,000.00 as cash grants from the project and skill training on small business; she started selling books, magazines & stationaries on the footpaths of Dhaka University. She has a profit of BDT 3000.00 from her small footpath shop. She deposits BDT 1000.00 per month.

Minu Begum regularly attended SHG meetings and became aware of child rights, child protection, early marriage, health & hygiene. Abu Bakar also received training on child protection, health, child rights, child abuse, early marriage, violence against children, etc.

Minu Begum is a symbol of hard-working

woman in an urban slum. Everybody likes her for hard work, good behaviour and positive attitude. Minu is leading a comparatively better life now. Her son Abu Bakar reads in a Madrasha; she dreams he will be a teacher in that Madrasha. Minu Begum said, *"I will never forget the support I received from Islamic Relief Bangladesh. If IRB did not support me, our family would get damaged."*



Minu Begum is selling books at Dhaka University

Mst. Kohinur Begum, a member of Jamuna Bapari Para Swabalaban Dal, a Self-Help Group, lives in Jamuna Bapari Para. Her husband died in 2004. After the death of her husband, she stayed at her in-law's house for five years despite the physical and mental torture of her husband's brothers. Such days were passed when her children had not got meal for three consecutive days. She was forced to leave her in-law's house, and started living in her father's house for the last six years. Her husband was solvent enough; he married off her two daughters during his lifetime. But after

his death, Kohinur fell in deep trouble with her three young children. There was no earning person. Her eldest son Sohorab was a student of class VIII; he had to stop his study and start working in a biscuit factory. She also worked as an agricultural labourer during harvest.



**Kohinur Begum is making puffed rice with her daughter**

Considering her vulnerability, Kohinur got selected as a beneficiary of ALO project. Her third daughter Jannati got educational stipend from this project for 4 years. At first, she got

grants of BDT 20000.00 with which she purchased a cow. She also received training on cow rearing. She reared goats, hens, chicken and ducks too. She returned the money to the SHG and took Qard-al-Hasana of BDT 20000.00. She took lease of 30 decimals of cultivable land adding some more money from her personal savings. She grows paddy in her leased land twice a year, and gets about seven mounds of paddy. She does not sell the paddy; she makes rice from paddy; she need not buy any rice throughout the year. The straws, rice dust & broken bits of rice got from paddy are used as food for her cows & poultry. She also does the business of making and selling puffed rice throughout the year; she earns a good amount of money from this business.

Kohinur has four goats, a cow with a calf and some poultry. The cow is pregnant at present. Her family is food secure now; she can ensure three meals for her family members round the year. Every week she saves BDT 20.00 with the SHG. She has a savings of BDT 2600.00. Her children are also continuing their study; Jannati is in class V, and her youngest son Abdul Kader reads in a Hafezi Madrasa. Like other project beneficiaries, Kohinur goes to her daughter's school to know about the educational progress of her daughter. The teachers are also responsive; they take special care of the orphan children. She is also aware of child rights, women rights, child abuse, child marriage, health, education, sanitation, hygiene, waste management and other social issues. She has learnt all these from the meetings & awareness sessions of their SHG. Now she tries to make other women conscious of these issues. She dreams to make her children educated so that they don't have to be deprived like her; they can claim their own rights. She is very thankful to IRB and the donor for standing beside her.



**Kohinur Begum also do cow rearing**

Mrs. Nazma (42) lives on the street near High court gate in Dhaka with her husband Md. Aslam (43) and 2 daughters - Sharmin (15) & Mokta (11). Sharmin reads in class VIII and Mokta goes to a non-formal school run by an NGO. Mrs. Nazma runs a small floating hotel near the gate of High court.

She got selected as a beneficiary of 'Building a Protecting Environment and Livelihood for Street Children' project in 2017. She received training on how to run a floating hotel - maintain register of sale, purchase and credit sale. After the training, she received BDT 12000.00 as cash grants which she used for purchasing food items for her business. From her business, she gets profit of almost BDT 300-450.00 daily. Her husband and children also help her in running the hotel business. She also deposits some money from her income.



**Mrs. Nazma with her floating hotel**

She is now aware of child protection, child abuse, drug abuse, etc. She has also learnt about nutrition, hygiene, health & sanitation from the meetings of SHG. She wants to educate her daughter to the highest level. She is committed not to marry her daughter off at an early age as she has learnt from the SHG meeting that a girl doesn't become physically & mentally fit for marriage before 18 years.



**Mrs. Nazma in IRB self-help group meeting**

She said, *“The training on running small business I received from IRB has changed my way of running my floating hotel. Earlier I could not prioritize which has more demand and which will give me more profit. But now I can realize that.”* She expresses her gratitude to IRB and the donor.





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