SKS News

1st Year, 3rd Issue (July-September 2019)

Improve *Char* Livelihoods to Help Attain SDGs: Analysts

Lawmakers and development activists yesterday stressed the need for setting up an institution to improve the livelihood of *char* dwellers in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Around 60 lakh people who live in the *char* areas lead a vulnerable life due to a lack of access to education, communication and health care facilities.

Planning Minister MA Mannan attends a national dialogue on "repositioning char development for attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka. Photo: Star

An independent foundation should be formed to replace the *Char* Development Board, said Planning Minister MA Mannan. He spoke while addressing a national dialogue on "repositioning *char* development for attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", organised by Shamunnay, a non-profit organisation, at The *Daily Star* Centre in Dhaka.

The minister recommended people's representatives, including lawmakers and upazila chairmen, lobby with the government to form the *Char* Development Institution. "This type of body will be effective for holistic transformation of the *char* lives."

Abu Sayeed Al Mahmood Swapon, a whip of the parliament, alleged that hundreds of projects were implemented for river training or *char* development but money was wasted. He demanded a special development body for *char* areas. "Without the livelihood development of backward communities like those in *char, haor,* hill and coastal areas, SDGs will not be achieved," he said.

Md. Faridul Haque Khan, a lawmaker, said there is a need for a combined development plan for the *char* areas to use the allocation for development. He said the allocation of Tk 100 crore for *char* areas was returned to the government exchequer in the last fiscal year due to a lack of policy about the utilisation of the fund.

MA Matin, another lawmaker, said there is no safety in *char* areas owing to weak communication system. Robbery is very common in the areas. He suggested setting up cottage industries and fishery projects for income-generating activities for the people in the *char* areas. Dairy farms and dairy product purchase centres will be very effective along with educational institutions to ensure government services in the *char* areas, Matin said.
(See page 4)

AGM 2019 of SKS Foundation Held

The 46th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SKS Foundation was held on 20 August 2019 at Credit & Development Forum (CDF), Dhaka. All the 22 members of the General Committee attended the Meeting with Chairperson Md. Ayub Ali in the chair. The Meeting reviewed the last one-year performance in line with the Annual Budget and Work-plan 2018-'19. The Meeting specially reviewed the SKS Foundation *Strategic Plan*

2019-2024 and approved it accordingly. The Annual Budget and Work-plan 2019-2020 were also discussed with due emphasis and approved in the AGM. The Meeting also passed necessary direction to the executives for the dynamic performance of the Organization in supporting its valued program participants.

Co-compost Plant Installed

WaterAid – SKS Delegation Visited Saidpur WASH Facilities

A delegation of high officials from WaterAid UK, WaterAid Country Office and SKS Foundation visited the Co-compost Plant and other WASH facilities in Saidpur Municipality, Nilphamari on 26 July 2019. The Co-compost Plant has been installed at Saidpur Municipality in partnership between WaterAid and SKS Foundation, supported by Saidpur Municipality. Thomas Palakudiyil, Regional Director-South Asia; Ian Stuart Gavin, Regional Program Manager from WaterAid UK; Dr. Khairul Islam, Country Director; and Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation visited the Plant along with other officials while Amzad Hossain Sarker, Mayor, Saidpur Municipality hosted the visit.

Amzad Hossain Sarker, Mayor, Saidpur Municipality is in discussion with the delegation at his office.

The delegation visited the Plant and observed the Dying Bed, Polishing Pond, Mixing Zone, Turner Point Recharge Center, etc. The team also visited the household waste collection program through entrepreneurship and the Saidpur Modern Public Toilet. They spoke to the entrepreneurs and observed the Public Toilet management system. The delegation also visited hygiene activities and community toilets and discussed with CBO leaders about community toilet management.
Finally, the delegation met the Mayor at his office and discussed about the present and future WASH activities of the Municipality and especially the proper operation & sustainable management plan of the
(See page 3)

SKS News

SKS Stood Beside

(From page 4) under different unions. Since different diseases especially water-borne diseases became a common phenomenon among the flood-affected people, SKS Foundation organized Medical

Camps at the places where flood-affected people took shelter. In the Medical Camps, the people got treatment facilities for fever, itching, diarrhea, dysentery and other general sickness. As many as 34 Camps continued medical services for 11 days while it provided treatment services to 4,799 persons.

Considering basic needs of the people, SKS provided food support and non-food items to the flood-affected people. The emergency food package included Rice, Pulse, Salt, Soybean oil, Oral Saline, Flatened Rice, Molses, and cash (for their need-based expenses) were distributed among severely affected families, who were selected in consultation with respective Union Parisad. Alongside, non-food items including Sanitary Napkin, Soap, Torch Light, Bucket, Mug, Plate, Glass, Towel, Bed Sheet,and vegetable seeds, etc were distributed among the severely affected families. During distribution SKS Foundation ensured gender friendly environment.

SKS distributed 175 Sharees among flood-affected widows, elderly, women with disabilities and divorcees of Boali and Ramchandrapur union.

The Deputy Commissioner, Gaibandha, Panel Mayor of Gaibandha Municipality, UNO and SKS Senior management took part in distribution of food items among the affected families under Sadar upazila.

Different development partners including Oxfam, ActionAid, UNFPA, Islamic Relief, Tom Tailor Group, Li & Fung BD, BSAUA BD came forward and stood beside the flood-affected people in partnership with SKS Foundation. Alongside, household

SKS Foundation provided financial assistance to the poor, ultra-poor, persons with disabilities, elderly, widows and Matriarchal families in Kamarjani Char, Sadar Upazila, Gaibandha in partnership with Oxfam in Bangladesh funded by ECHO.

damage and loss of assets, SKS Foundation allocated more Tk. 1,650,000 and supported the affected people with health, WASH & food facilities. SKS in partnership with the donors supported 25,048 affected families ensuring their safe water, sanitation & hygiene facilities. A total of 4,836 food package and 6,175 non-food packages were distributed while total 121,044 populations were covered under the emergency support during the flood. In addition, SKS distributed Tk. 6 crore as loan for the rehabilitation of the affected families under its Microfinance Program.

SKS Distributed Sacrificial Meat among Flood Victims

Flood-affected poor families in 6 unions under Shaghata and Fulchari upazila, Gaibandha got sacrificial meat on 13 August 2019 centering *Eid-ul-Adha*. SKS Foundation implemented the meat distribution activity under its Qurbani program with support from Islamic Relief Bangladesh. The meat distribution function was held on the premises of *Nutonkuri Biddyapeeth* at Bharatkhali under Shaghata Upazila with Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation in the chair. Shaghata Upazila Chairman M. Zahangir Kabir formally inaugurated the meat distribution activity to 2,881 flood-affected poor and distressed families as the Chief Guest. Golam Motasin Billah, Head of Programs, Islamic Relief Bangladesh was present as the Special Guest. Each of the families got 2 kgs of meat to celebrate the *Eid-ul-Adha*.

Workshop on Child Journalism Held

Community Radio *Sarabela* organized a day-long Workshop on Child Journalism for local children to enrich their knowledge on broadcasting news of the general & marginalized people, held on 13 September 2019 at SKS School & College, Gaibandha. KM Rezaul Haque, Press Club President, Gaibandha, and Editor, the *Dainik Madhukar* inaugurated the Workshop as the Chief

Guest. Thirty children including 12 girls from Gaibandha, interested in child journalism, participated in the Workshop. Different issues i.e. overview on child journalism, tools & techniques of news writing & presentation, sound receiving & editing, etc were covered in the Workshop. At the end, certificates were given to the participants.

Co-compost Plant Installed

(From page 1) Co-compost Plant in partnership with WaterAid and SKS Foundation. The delegation expressed their satisfaction defining that Co-compost Plant under Saidpur Municipality was going to be an exemplary one.

The delegation is visiting the Co-compost Plant.

Training of GBViE Platform Held

A Training on Prevention of Gender-based Violence during Emergencies of the newly formed Gender-based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) Platform was held on 22-24 September 2019 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha. Total of 32 participants including the Chief Executives and senior officials of the platform partners including national & local NGOs of Gaibandha & Kurigram district attended the Training, organized jointly by ActionAid Bangladesh and SKS Foundation with support from UNFPA. Taslima Akhter, Deputy Manager, WRGE, ActionAid Bangladesh conducted the Training as the chief facilitator.

The 3-day Training covered the specific topics like gender, gender & sex, gender equality, gender role, gender-based violence, disaster, types of violence during disaster, violence prevention and post-disaster services focusing gender security at the center. At the end, an Action-plan was prepared covering October-December 2019 based on the area & situation of gender-based violence.

Public Toilet Complex Opened at Fulchari *Hat*

Advocate Fazle Rabbi Mia, MP, Deputy Speaker, National Parliament, inaugurated the newly constructed Public Toilet Complex at Fulchari *Hat* on 4 July 2019 as the Chief Guest. Mohammad Abdul Halim Tolstoy, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Fulchari was present as guest of honor while huge no. of local people gathered at the Event. SKS Foundation constructed the Complex in partnership with Fulchari Upazila Parishad and Fulchari Upazila administration with support from Oxfam in Bangladesh.

The Public Toilet Complex has been constructed to ensure the safe sanitation facility as around 5,000 people travel daily to & from the *chars* through the Fulchari *Ghat*. The Fulchari *Hat* (weekly bazar), organized at the Fulchari Ferry *Ghat* is the main connecting channel for commercial dealings of the people of 3 *char*-unions under Fulchari upazila, Gaibandha. However, there was no hygienic sanitation facility at the *Hat* before. The newly opened Public Toilet Complex has ensured safe sanitation and drainage facilities having separate chambers for women and men coming to the *Hat*.

SKS Opened 7 New Microfinance Branch Offices

With a view to reaching financial support at the door-step of the poor & the marginalized, SKS Foundation opened 7 new branch offices in 7 upazilas under its Microfinance Program. The upazilas included Sadar & Peerganj of Thakurgaon, Beerganj of Dinajpur, and Tunirhat & Tentulia of Panchgarh district, Rangpur and Rayganj & Shahjadpur of Sirajganj district, Rajshahi division. The branch offices launched their opening from September 25-29 while representatives from local administration, LGIs, banks, educational institutions, commercial & development organizations were present in the Inaugural Ceremony along with participation of the poor & marginalized people. These new areas were selected based on the socio-economic status of the respective communities at the remote & pocket areas and the enclaves.

SKS Stood Beside the Flood-affected People

Heavy monsoon rainfall since 9 July 2019 throughout the country and upstream regions adjacent to Bangladesh border, a flow of large-scale water led to a massive flood in low-lying areas of Northern, North-eastern and South-eastern Bangladesh. A greater shock in the northern districts turned the marginalized people marooned especially in the *chars* and low-lying areas.

A. B. M. Abu Hanif, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha and Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation visited flood-affected areas of Gaibandha.

Under Gaibandha district, the *chars* & river basin areas of Sadar, Sundarganj, Fulchari and Shaghata upazila got severely inundated. The agricultural fields got submerged by the flood and all types of standing crops went under flood-water. Food crisis got high among the affected people. Tube-wells & latrine got damaged and went under flood-water. Safe water & sanitation facilities lost strikingly turning the Public Health situation unhealthy. Many of the affected people started suffereing from fever, diarrhoea, dysentery, etc.

In different places, the embankment got washed away resulting the total transportation system disrupted seriously. The livelihoods of the affected families got fully disrupted. People tried hard to save their livestocks by keeping those on the available flood shelters, embankments, roadsides and their relative's house. In this situation, people faced big challenge to get any income options and anage food for the family members.

Based on its capacity, long experience and using the organizational facilities i.e. Warehouse, Mobile Water Treatment Plants, Rescue Boats, Flood Shelters, etc, SKS Foundation started providing humanitarian support to the affected people of all the inundated upazilas of Gaibandha during & after flood. SKS Foundation Disaster Management Team collected information from community, upazila & district level and provided orientation to the Team. Alongside, SKS shared its response plan, Budget, Implementation strategies, participant criteria, etc to the DC, DRRO, Upazila Chairmen, UNO, PIO and UP chairmen. SKS Foundation

immediately started providing drinking water using its Mobile Water Treatment Plants and water boating and thus distributed around 50,000 liters of safe drinking water. The Disaster Management Team installed 54 Tube-wells and 36 latrines at the shelters and other raised places targeting around 5,000 flood-affected people in collaboration with DPHE. Based on a quick assessment, SKS, with technical support from DPHE, repaired 200 damaged Tube-wells & 500 latrines and purified 484 contaminated Tube-wells while it provided 2,000 kg bleaching powder to disinfect households and the surroundings of the affected communities. A total of 50 Women Federation leaders received training from DPHE and purified the Tube-wells at the affected communities (See page 2)

Improve *char* livelihoods

(From page 1) René Holenstein, ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, appreciated the government measures aimed at improving *char* livelihood and expected continuous initiative for the *char* areas. He is hopeful about the role of elected public representatives to improve people's livelihood.

Khondker Ibrahim Khaled, chairman of the National *Char* Alliance, a platform that advocates for the welfare of *char* dwellers, said if non-governmental organisations work in coordination with lawmakers and local elected public representatives, *chars* will develop.

While presiding over the event, Dr. Atiur Rahman, chairperson of the Shamunnay, said *char*-dwellers are very vulnerable and lead miserable life. They are also the victim of the climate change, he said. The former governor of the Bangladesh Bank added that the extreme poverty rate in the *char* areas is double the country's extreme poverty rate of 11 percent.

Aroma Dutta and Shameem Haider Patwary, both lawmakers; Rasel Ahmed Liton, chief executive of SKS Foundation; Khairul Islam, country director of the WaterAid Bangladesh, and AKM Musha, country director of Concern Worldwide, also spoke.

Source: ***The Daily Star, 2 July 2019***

SKS Exposure Visit to Nepal

SKS Foundation organized an Exposure Visit to Nepal from 21-26 August 2019. Total of 30 persons including the Executive & General Committee members and some senior officials of SKS Foundation took part in the Visit. The Visit observed & experienced water and environmental interventions and income generating ventures at the community level and some tourist spots in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

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