



## Community Radio is for community development



Information and Broadcasting Minister is speaking to the Radio Sarabela 98.8 FM

Underscoring the role of Community Radio, Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said, “Community Radio is for community development”. The Minister said this during an exclusive interview by Radio *Sarabela* 98.8 FM while he was on an official visit to Gaibandha on 19 September 2021.

Speaking to the Senior Station Manager of the Radio *Sarabela* 98.8 FM, a sister concern of SKS Foundation, the Minister explained, “Development of marginalized people stands on community development. Therefore, the government has emphasized on Community Radio to educate and aware community people on their basic needs, deeds & ways to face challenges. Community Radio is a very feasible means to make community people alert providing disaster information prior to & during any disaster”. Dr. Hasan Mahmud mentioned, “The holistic development of the country lies not only in city-centric development but also village-based multifaceted development.” Through Radio *Sarabela*, the Minister appealed to all Community Radios in Bangladesh to inculcate patriotism, develop ethics, and spread environmental good practices in the community.

## Vaccine must reach the *Char* people

“In the light of our EPI experience, the people of *Char* must be provided with vaccine at their doorstep as there are many social and economic challenges in such remote areas. The good news is that the government has taken initiatives to produce vaccine in the country as well as increase the availability of vaccines to ensure vaccination to the marginalized people of the country. As a result, it will be possible to meet the demand for vaccines soon.” Former Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, MP, said this while giving speech as chief guest in a virtual seminar titled ‘Vaccination Rights of People in remote *Char* areas’ organized by Shamunnay and the National *Char* Alliance on 31 August 2021.

Ramesh Singh, Country Director, CARE Bangladesh and Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid Bangladesh were present as special guests in the Seminar presided over by Dr. Atiur Rahman, Chairman of Shamunnay and Founder of the National *Char* Alliance. (See page 3)

## Food & Fodder Bank is helping the helpless

“We must get rid of relief-dependent culture and move to self-reliant culture to establish our rights as human, and the true Human rights will be established when the community people will stand themselves by their own inner strength than waiting for others’ help. To stand by own, Food & Fodder Bank can be a model to make a self-reliant community. Therefore, a formal recognition and institutionalization of Food & Fodder Bank is needed to cover more distressed people in an indigenous manner.” Dr. Atiur Rahman, an Economist and Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank, said this as chief guest in a Virtual Seminar focusing on the effectiveness of Food & Fodder Bank.



Guests are speaking on the effectiveness of Food & Fodder Bank at the Webinar

SKS Foundation organized the Webinar titled Effectiveness of Food & Fodder Bank in Overcoming Food Uncertainty during Disaster on 28 September 2021 under its REECALL 2021 project supported by Oxfam in Bangladesh. Sadequr Rahman, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), Gaibandha was the guest of honor while Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, presided over the Seminar. (See page 3)

## SKS Foundation AGM 2021 held



The General Committee members are in the 50<sup>th</sup> AGM of SKS Foundation

The 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SKS Foundation was held on 25 September 2021 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha. All the 22 members of the General Committee attended the Meeting with Chairperson Md. Ayub Ali in the chair. The Meeting reviewed the last 1-year performance of the Organization in line with its Annual Budget and Work-plan 2020-2021. The Meeting specially focused light on to the program intervention amidst COVID-19 pandemic. The annual finance & audit reports were critically reviewed and necessary directions given on strategic issues. The Annual Budget and Work-plan 2021-2022 were duly discussed and approved in the AGM. The Meeting also passed necessary direction to the executives for keeping up the Organization’s spirit to help its valued program participants in line with the Mission of SKS Foundation.

## SKS opened 22 new microfinance branches



Launching ceremony at newly opened Ruhia branch, Thakurgaon

SKS Foundation has expanded its microfinance services to new locations opening 22 branches targeting to include the excluded poor & disadvantaged in financial support. The new branches were launched from 19th September to 28th September 2021. By opening the branches, SKS is now on the ground in the respective areas and providing a customized and diverse range of financial services such as saving, credit, and term deposits to the most vulnerable families due to poverty and affected by various emergencies including COVID-19 distress. Giving priority to the spread of micro-finance, the financial choices of the marginalized people will enable them to work their ways out.

## SKS prepared community prior to flood

Flood and river erosion are usual and routine monsoon disasters in Gaibandha as three mighty rivers flow through the district carrying on-rush water from the upper stream which causes flood and forces low-lying areas' people to take shelter elsewhere. Taking this phenomenon into consideration, SKS Foundation conducted some early preparedness activities covering 6 unions i.e. Kapasia, Tarapur & Belka of Sundarganj upazila and Gidari, Ghagoa & Kamarjani of Gaibandha sadar upazila in partnership with Save the Children. The activities were undertaken to let the community prepare to face the upcoming flood and its consequences.



One of the six bamboo-made foot-bridges at Belka of Sundarganj upazila, Gaibandha

As distraction of road communication becomes a challenge to shift people from inundated areas to high land areas, the community people assessed their needs, constructed 6 bamboo-made foot-bridges and 3 wooden foot-bridges with their partial contribution.

Alongside, as securing a safe place for sheltering livestock becomes a major problem, a cattle shelter was constructed to help people take their livestock into a safe place during flood. Considering that people run out of food being jobless during flood, 950 vulnerable families were provided with Tk. 3,000 cash support through mobile banking as well as a package of 9-item Hygiene Kits. Distribution of Hygiene Kits at different communities took place from 2-15 September 2021.

## SKS School & College resumed

The SKS School & College campus has got back its life again as the students returned to the classroom after a long waiting due to COVID-19 school closure. Teachers, students, and staff got delighted seeing each other, which they were missing the most. SKS School & College resumed on 12 September 2021 maintaining the health safety protocols strictly. Wearing masks, stepping at a disinfectant tray, getting temperature check, washing hands, sitting at a safe distance- maintaining all these, the SKS School & College authority welcomed students back to in-person learning.



Students are back to in-person learning at SKS School & College

Principal, Addus Sattar said, "Along with the government guidelines, SKS School & College authority has organized several measures to handle the pandemic, and rules are being monitored and followed in the classes and campus. Although their experience is likely to be completely different from normal school life, we must maintain all health protocols for all of our wellbeing, and ensure safety first."

Swastika Sarkar Archona, a six-grader expressed her excitement, "I feel like the very first day of my school because I was away from my classmates, teachers, and school staff. Now, I am back to my normal school life that I had been waiting for."

Tayeba Bintay Tuba, a college student, who got admission a year ago, said, "I've lost a year of education. Everything appears new to me and completely different because of the safety arrangement of the Institution. As a new comer, I have met my teachers and classmates for the first time and they are nice."

Dropping her 8-year-school child in grade one, Md. Jonaid Hassan Mahim and Ms. Jasmin Khatun at the school gate said that they're relieved. During their children's long stay at home, they had faced a hard time in getting their children engaged in study. Now, they're back to school and into their study in turn.

## Partnership banking launched

(From page 4) Chairman of NRBC Bank said, "This Partnership Banking Program is to provide single-digit loan facility to rural people. Our goal is to take the city services to the villages and prevent moving people to the cities for employment. This innovative service is to accelerate the government's urbanization program in the villages and take forward the work of building Sonar Bangla." Senior Officials from SKS Foundation, respective branch officials, distinguished clients, and local elites joined the ceremony at the respective branches.

## SKS provided Tool-set to 12 trained youths



The 12 trained youths are with the Tool-set

SKS Foundation provided Tool-set to 12 marginalized youths trained in Electrical House Wiring under its Youth Employability Project (YEP) supported by VSO in Bangladesh. The Tool-set distribution ceremony was held on 30 September 2021 at the conference hall of SKS Head Office, Gaibandha. Md. A Salam Sikder, Assistant Director, Department of Youth Development, and Md. Khademul Islam, Upazila Youth Development Officer, Gobindaganj, Gaibandha were present respectively as chief guest and special guest, and handed over the Tool-sets to the trained youths. The Tool-sets covered a drill machine, plus, nose plus, cutting plus, screwdriver, hammer, measurement tape, tester, and helmet.

## Food & Fodder Bank

(From page 1) Sadequr Rahman said, “The Food Bank is a groundbreaking concept. The Food Bank has been helping helpless people in different forms.” He continued, “Before establishing the Food Bank, there was a tendency to borrow at a high-interest rate, which is not now happening there. It has prevented many people in char land from being starving during flood and other crisis period.” He emphasized on the government, private and individual collaboration for institutionalization and expansion of the Food & Fodder Bank model.

Upholding the essence of the Food & Fodder Bank in his presentation, Baharam Khan, PC- REECALL 2021, SKS Foundation described that the Food & Fodder Bank idea had come with the help of marginalized people who run out of both food and money during any disaster. Under REECALL 2021 project, SKS Foundation is covering the most disaster-prone 15 villages of Fulchhari and Saghata upazila, Gaibandha where 442 flood-distressed families are directly getting benefits of Food Bank storing and getting benefit of their rice or money during emergency.

Prof. Dr. Ahmed Parvez, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Disaster Management, Patuakhali University of Science and Technology, SM Bipplob Islam, Gaibandha District Correspondent of Boishakhi Television, and Most. Yarun Begum, a CBO President of Fulchhari Upazila, Gaibandha took part in discussion as Panelists. They said, the project has promoted the concept from family to the community at the local level as a collective effort. With introduction of Food Bank, borrowing money from money lenders at high-rate and selling advanced labor and cattle at cheaper rate has decreased. Now, no one goes to starving at least.

The Chair of the Seminar called upon all concerned to uphold the concept and effectiveness of the Food & Fodder Bank. He said, “In crisis, helpless people have solved their own problems without waiting for relief- this is the true strength of society. The Food & Fodder Bank model is just standing on the power of people’s collective effort.”

## Vaccine must reach the Char

(From page 1) Dr. Atiur Rahman said, “Gradually the chain of vaccine supply is getting stronger. It’s a huge task to reach people immediately after getting the vaccine. Government, non-government, social organizations must work together to cover the hard-to-reach areas including Char lands. There is no alternative to mass vaccination to revive the country’s economy. Vaccination policy should be one of the most important issues in upcoming days.”

Ramesh Singh said, “None of us are safe now amidst the Corona disaster. A significant part of the people living in the Chars are out of vaccination program. Government and non-government organizations need to work together to ensure that the people of Char are vaccinated.”



Dr. Ruhul Haque, MP is speaking on the vaccination urgency of Char people

Hasin Jahan said, “The interest of the people of Char in getting vaccinated has increased more than before. We must reach to the people of Char to ensure their vaccination. Therefore, there is a need to come up with a real sensible strategy.”

A survey conducted on 34 Char areas to understand the real scenario of vaccine to be reached at the people in remote Char areas was presented in the Seminar. Representatives of Char Alliance from different parts of the country attended the Seminar.

## ToT to combat the spread

(From page 4) The Chief Guest, Dr. Md. Mahbub Hossain said, “Developing good habits and health practices takes significant time. We need to stay in and keep others clean to prevent the spread of diseases.”

Appreciating the initiative and wishing participants to succeed in the Training, the Civil Surgeon said, “This initiative will contribute to the health department as well as to improve WASH and IPC facilities that will strengthen Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)”. The special guests made their valuable remarks on the objectives of the Training and appreciated health professionals for their services in this pressing situation of COVID-19.

The Working Session of the ToT focused on the content i.e. Introduction & the importance of IPC in healthcare facilities: Role of WASH; IPC in HCFs: Hand hygiene and Standard precautions; PPE and environmental cleaning: Transmission- based precautions; and Medical waste management and Hands-on session (PPE, Mask, Handwash, etc.) to strengthen the capacity of the 32 participating trainers.

The ToT was facilitated by the Medical Experts from IEDCR Dr. Md. Ferdous Rahman Sarker, Senior Scientific Officer, & Dr. Md. Omar Qayum, Curator, and Dr. A S Nurullah Awal, Health Advisor, WaterAid Bangladesh.

## Preventing child marriage for national development underscored



Police Inspector (operation), Gaibandha Sadar Thana, is speaking in the Consultation

Speakers in a Consultation underscored the need for preventing early marriage anyhow for national development through protecting the children from malnutrition and reduce their mortality rate. “Social awareness and motivation are very important and essential for sustainable prevention of early marriage and child pregnancy in a bid to build a happy and prosperous country”, they said.

The speakers came up with the comments while addressing the Consultation on Prevention of Child Marriage at the hall room of Gaibandha Public Library & Club of the town on 26 August 2021. SKS Foundation arranged the Consultation under its Action for Socio-economic Security & Rights for Excluded and Marginalized Women & Girls Project supported by *Manusher Jonno Foundation*.

Presided over by Md. Rajab Ali, Police Inspector (operation), Gaibandha Sadar Thana, the function was also addressed, among others, by Dr. Armina Khatun, Medical Officer, civil surgeon office, Gaibandha, Riktu Proshad, General Secretary, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad district unit, KM Rezaul Haque, senior journalist, SM Biplob Islam, district correspondent of Boishaki TV, Jahurul Islam, Marriage Registrar, Boali Union, Md. Rafiqul Islam, school teacher, ATM Bazlul Karim, Badiakhali UP Secretary, and so on.

The speakers upheld, the government alone or any single organization is not capable to check child marriage until all the stakeholders like officials, community leaders, teachers, public representatives, social workers, NGO activists and journalists come forward with positive attitude in this regard.

Dr. Armina Khatun said, ‘child and early marriage is a curse and it has a bad impact on population growth and women’s health and also causes the untimely death of women’.

Police Inspector Md. Rajab Ali in his concluding speech emphasized, ‘for stopping early marriage, raising awareness of the people including the char dwellers here and building rigorous movement in the society without delay is a must. ‘The government had been implementing various programs like free education, distribution of sub-stipend and free text books, increasing number of female teachers to stop child marriage and ensure for girl children.’

An Open discussion session was also held following a presentation on the project focusing the challenges and potentials of preventing child marriage. A number of recommendations raised by the participants.

## ToT to combat the spread of communicable diseases

SKS Foundation organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), Disinfection, and Waste Management targeting to improve WASH and IPC facilities at Health Care Facilities (HCF) to strengthen COVID-19 response and to build the resilience of health care facilities in Gaibandha. The government health professionals including 24 doctors, 7 nurses, and a hospital ward master participated in the Course. The Training was organized under the “Improving WASH and IPC facilities to strengthen COVID-19 response and to build the resilience of health care facilities in climate-vulnerable areas of Bangladesh Project”, supported by WaterAid Bangladesh, IEDCR, WHO, DPHE, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The ToT was held on 6 September 2021 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha.



ToT on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) is taking place

With Dr. A. M. Akhtaruzzaman, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha, in the chair, Dr. Md. Mahbub Hossain, Superintendent of the Gaibandha General Hospital, graced the opening session of the Course as the Chief Guest. Dr. Tanveer Ahsan, Director, TA-HUB, Dr. Md. Ferdous Rahman Sarker, Senior Scientific Officer -IEDRC, and Dr. A S Nurullah Awal, Health Advisor, WaterAid Bangladesh were present as Special Guests. In the welcome speech, Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Ph.D., Deputy Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, underscored the importance of the training and improvement of health care facilities to combat the spread of communicable diseases. (See page 3)

## Partnership banking launched at 22 microfinance branches

SKS Foundation and NRBC Bank launched their Partnership Banking program at more 22 microfinance branches of SKS Foundation to bring banking service to the doorsteps of marginalized people and making the supply of capital money easier with more institutional security.

Inaugurating the branches on 9 September 2021 through a video conference, Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation, and S M Parvez Tamal, Chairman of NRBC Bank, delivered speeches upholding the mission of banking through microfinance branches. The Chief Executive of SKS Foundation said, “We are happy to deliver the banking service to the disadvantaged people in remote and disaster-prone areas. This initiative will work to improve the lives and livelihoods of the village people with financial inclusion creating new entrepreneurs and employment.” (See page 2)