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World Vision

USAID's Development Food Aid Project 'Nobo Jatra – new beginning'

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Foreword



Dear Nobo Jatra friends,
The World Vision led, Nobo Jatra-new beginning' project completed a productive first quarter of 2017 contributing further to the overall project goal to improve gender equitable food security, nutrition and resilience of vulnerable people within Khulna and Satkhira districts of Bangladesh.

Interventions across all project components are currently in full swing at the field level. Thanks to our fantastic cadre of frontline staff, we are consistently reaching our beneficiaries with an integrated portfolio of interventions. These include Growth Monitoring Promotion (GMP) sessions, nutrition counselling, activating and mentoring Union and Ward WATSAN committees, establishing Climate Smart Agriculture plots and a wide range of trainings on specific AIGAs and VDC and UDMC disaster preparedness roles and

responsibilities.

The unwavering support of all our stakeholders, partners and colleagues has helped us to achieve this crucial momentum over the last quarter. In that spirit, this issue of the newsletter celebrates a number of successes whilst also providing a snapshot of our progress. As always, we keep the focus on our valued and resilient beneficiaries, with special emphasis on women, children under 2 and youth.

Rakesh Katal
Chief of Party, Nobo Jatra
World Vision Bangladesh

Nobo Jatra's January-March 2017 journey at a glance



14 lead farmers and CSA plots established



1866 Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) beneficiaries registered
378,530 beneficiaries registered



27408 Children under 2 reached through 1728 Growth Monitoring Promotion (GMP) sessions



129 WATSAN Committees (Ward and Union) reformed
385 WATSAN Committees (Ward and Union) mentored



3395 households received nutrition counselling sessions



133 Village Development Committees formed

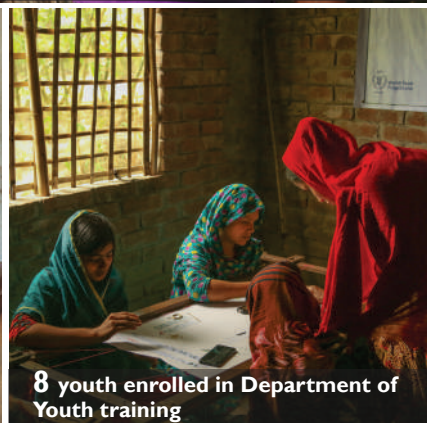


393 Union and Ward Water and Sanitation meetings organized

5189 SBCC groups formed for essential hygiene actions



89 Alternative Income Generating Activity trainings held



8 youth enrolled in Department of Youth training

Nobo Jatra Upazila launch events

The formal launches of the five year U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Food Aid Project 'Nobo Jatra' took place from March 6-15th 2017.

The launch events in each Upazila were attended by eminent members of the Government of Bangladesh, local Government representatives as well as development partners and practitioners, international and local NGOs, implementing consortium partners, local partner NGOs, local media, leading academia as well as other influential stakeholders.

Special guests from the Government of Bangladesh lauded the launch of the Nobo Jatra project in all four Upazilas and praised the unique collaborative nature of the partnership between the Government of Bangladesh, USAID, World Vision Bangladesh and sub grantees World Food



Programme and Winrock International. Following the devastation caused in the south west region by Cyclone Aila, Nobo Jatra is the first comprehensive and multi sectorial project to launch in the area covering a diverse portfolio of activities designed to address critical local challenges such as water, sanitation and hygiene, maternal and child health and nutrition as well as gender inequalities. Representatives



from local government emphasized their commitment to the Nobo Jatra project and the goal to bring visible changes to the lives of 856,116 beneficiaries covered across Dacope, Koyra, Shyamnagar and Kaliganj Upazilas.

International Women's Day 2017

“Let us pledge - Do not marry daughters at a child age, - Do not support child marriage and Do not tolerate child marriage.”

Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Dacope

With a clear goal to 'improve gender equitable food security, nutrition and resilience of vulnerable people within Khulna and Satkhira districts in Bangladesh' Nobo Jatra celebrated International Women's Day 2017 on 8th March across all four project Upazilas. Colorful processions, interactive discussions, speeches and an oath against early marriage and dowry formed the crux of Nobo Jatra's recognition of International Women's day with more than a thousand participants joining in



total across all four Upazilas. In keeping with Nobo Jatra's remit to work in close collaboration with a number of key stakeholders, the events comprised eminent members of the Government of Bangladesh, local Government representatives as well as development partners and practitioners, international and local NGOs, implementing consortium partners, local partner NGOs, local media, leading academia as well as other influential stakeholders. Adolescents girls, a key target group for Nobo Jatra, also joined the celebrations and participated in discussions on the dangers of early marriage and dowry. Ensuring the involvement of adolescent girls and engaging with them to raise awareness on issues that are relevant in their local context is critical to Nobo Jatra's gender strategy to transform women's access to opportunities so that they have equal scope to shape their own lives and contribute to their families and communities.

- Representatives from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs emphasized the critical 'role of women' in the



“Bangladesh is going to be Middle Income Country by 2021 and women have made huge contributions to achieve this milestone. Most of our garment’s workers are women. We must treat men and women equally in all works and opportunities.”
Upazila Chairman, Dacope

development of the country.

- The Government of Bangladesh has prioritized gender equality in its seventh Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), setting a gender vision of “a country where men and women will have equal opportunities and rights and women will be recognized as equal contributors in economic, social, and political development.”
- Consistent messages from all stakeholders emphasized working in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, NGOs and the local community

to focus on the prevention of early and child marriage highlighting the practice as an impediment to the development of the region.

“We will make a movement to stop early marriage from Kaliganj and we will be succeed anyhow with the help of GO, NGOs and others concerned institutions”. Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Kaliganj

Children’s Day March 2017

‘Today’s children are leaders of the future. So we have to give them opportunity and guidance in the right direction, so that they can utilize their capability.’

Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Shyamnagar

Nobo Jatra celebrated Children’s Day on 17 March 2017, across Dacope, Koyra, Shyamnagar and Kaliganj Upazilas. True to Nobo Jatra’s spirit of partnership and

collaboration, celebrations were held jointly with each respective Upazila Administration, the Department of Primary and Secondary Education, Department of Women Affairs and Shushilan (a local partner NGO for Nobo Jatra). Art competitions were convened for children from different schools across each Upazila with mass gatherings, rallies and discussion

sessions also held throughout the day. Free medical check-ups were also organized by local Government authorities for children and this initiative was hugely appreciated by local communities as shown through the large numbers of children who availed the serve on the day.

World Water Day 2017: Why waste water?



Every year on 22 March, World Water Day is globally celebrated to raise awareness about water crisis's and overcome the challenges associated with accessing safe water, both critical challenges in Nobo Jatra's working areas in the south west coastal region of

Bangladesh. Deficiencies in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene conditions in Khulna and Satkhira heavily influence nutritional outcomes in local communities. Leveraging a family and community-centered approach, Nobo Jatra uses SBCC on essential hygiene

actions to target care-givers and other family members, along with large scale construction of new and rehabilitation of existing water facilities and latrines to improve the overall WASH scenario for project beneficiaries.

Nobo Jatra celebrations to mark World Water day were convened across all four project Upazilas in collaboration with stakeholders such as the Khulna district administration, Khulna WASA, the City Corporation, Upazila administration, journalists, academics and civil society. Special emphasis was placed on school going children to raise awareness on WASH related issues through quiz events and an art competition. To increase buy in from all parties and also raise the profile of the celebrations, rally's and interactive discussions were also organized throughout the day.

Household Mobile Phone Usage: A snapshot from Nobo Jatra working areas

As part of a comprehensive Maternal Child Health and Nutrition portfolio of interventions, Nobo Jatra addresses chronic malnutrition by targeting 23,600 pregnant women with monthly Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) of BDT 2200 to meet immediate nutritional needs, while improving nutritional intake, access, and availability for the long term. Hand in hand with the CCT, are mobile health messages that will be used as a critical channel by Nobo Jatra to deliver vital health information to new and expectant mothers and their families that will subsequently promote nutrition behavior change.

Previous results from Bangladesh have shown improved health behaviors, including higher rates of exclusive breastfeeding, delivery in clinics or with skilled birth attendants, adherence to recommended pre- and post-natal care visits, and recommended vaccinations for mother and child .

As of January 2016, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission estimates 131.956 million mobile phone users across the country and the Government of Bangladesh is increasingly committed to integrating digital health into their portfolio of activities.

A short quantitative survey was designed in house with a sample of 400 pregnant women (100 per Upazila) to capture key information on mobile phone ownership, access, usage and purpose.

- 99% of respondents indicated that they have a mobile phone in the household

- 93% stated that that they had used the mobile phone for phone calls within the previous three days of the survey.

Of the 29.9% or 120 participants who responded yes to receiving promotional messages, an overwhelming 95% had received SMS's, with 8.3% receiving Voice Messages and 7.5% of respondents admitted to receiving both SMS and Voice Messages.

A young mother's journey to become an icon for female farmers



Adorned in a colorful sari, Neelima Rani, 30, has a sparkling smile and cheerful manner. A mother of two daughters, both of whom attend the local village school, in Koyra Upazila (sub-district) located in the south west coastal region of Bangladesh, Neelima is a pioneer in her local community. In large part, this is thanks to her role as a lead farmer for a climate smart demonstration plot established by the USAID funded 'Nobo Jatra – new beginning' project led by World Vision Bangladesh. Rewind one year, and Neelima's circumstances alter drastically. A dedicated housewife and mother, working hard at chores whilst also trying to help her husband, Haridash, grow a small amount of vegetables in the land the family own. With the high levels of salinity in the water symptomatic of south west Bangladesh along with limited

knowledge on how to effectively grow produce, the family faced an almost daily struggle to feed their two young daughters. Often times, Neelima reminisces, yields did not produce enough for the family to eat, let alone sell at the local market.

'My consuming worry was for my daughters; how to feed them and provide them with basic necessities. We struggled to exist for so long.'

In 2016, a glimmer of hope presented itself to Neelima's vulnerable family when she was identified as a lead farmer by her local community for a Nobo Jatra established climate smart demonstration plot. This was a remarkable and unexpected opportunity as rural Bangladeshi women often find it difficult to explore roles beyond that of conventional housewife due to entrenched social norms. Neelima's neighbors and the

wider village community felt that she had the good will of the people and a deep set motivation stemming from her family's economic vulnerability to excel in this new role. "It was like being thrown a lifeline when we had no hope left. I am forever grateful to those who felt I can do justice and help our village by becoming a lead farmer" Neelima embraced her new role as student, earnestly participating in training provided by Nobo Jatra on sustainable production techniques including practices and inputs that are climate resilient and promote resource conservation. Climate Smart Agriculture forms the crux of Nobo Jatra's portfolio of activities under Agriculture and Livelihoods given the south west coastal region's unsustainable levels of salinity, persistent

flooding compounded with natural disasters such as Cyclone Aila and climate change effects including erratic monsoons and a rise in sea levels.

Neelima's confidence is palpable especially when speaking about all the new knowledge acquired through the training.

'We learned to use organic fertilizer instead of the chemical variety that we had been using all along. We also understood how to select and buy good quality seeds that would give us the best crops. Before we had no idea and just went with what everyone else did including our own parents and grandparents.'

It gets even better, once completing the training, Neelima effectively

became the community focal point for 200 general producers within her jurisdiction. Not taking this responsibility lightly, Neelima began to passionately teach others what she herself had learned, effectively preparing the next line of farmers. As a leader of a producer group comprising 25 members, 12 of whom are female, Neelima is truly a beacon of hope and possibility to both men and women in her community.

In her new role, Neelima organizes group members for trainings, has already started to facilitate training sessions and will gradually lead sessions independently. This is a

remarkable achievement given the prevalent social norms in rural Bangladesh that rarely recognize women as farmers let alone exalt them to a position as leader and role model. The producer group led by Neelima is growing seasonal vegetables for their own consumption and also selling these products in the local market bringing in a regular source of income – truly a huge reward given the lack of sustainable income opportunities in the region.

Yet another shining light in Neelima's unique story is Haridash's unwavering support in her journey. With Haridash's help and encouragement, Neelima



"I am proud of my wife. Things have changed for us economically and also within the house. Something has changed within me too – now I help my wife with chores that I never would have even six months ago. I even help collect water on the days that Neelima has her producer group meetings!"

applied her newly acquired skills and the couple began to grow tomatoes and okra.

"I am proud of my wife. Things have changed for us economically and also within the house. Something has changed within me too – now I help my wife with chores that I never would have even six months ago. I even help collect water on the days that Neelima has her producer group meetings!"

The couple now look to the future with hopes and dreams

especially for their daughters. Neelima has ambitions to establish and run a successful agro farm using all the skills and practices that she has learned as a lead farmer. For the first time ever, Neelima is planning for the future, considering how to develop a standard collection point for wholesale and retailers to ensure that the produce from her producer groups are marketed at full capacity. With support from World Vision Bangladesh through the Nobo

Jatra project, Neelima has been able to drastically alter the course of her family's path and transform into a respected and valuable community leader. Beyond her role as a lead farmer, Neelima is often consulted by neighbors on healthcare issues. Throughout the incredible and rewarding journey, Neelima's sights have never wavered from her children and the future.



“I want to help all the women in my village and beyond to learn skills and receive training from Nobo Jatra to grow our own produce and stand on our own two feet. All women can have hope that there is a future without hunger and uncertainty. We must all pull together and do this for our children, our future generations.”

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