



**USAID**  
আমেরিকার জনগণের পক্ষ থেকে



**World Vision**

# NOBO JATRA - NEW BEGINNING

USAID's Development Food Security Activity



## Success Story

**Audio bangles improving  
nutrition in south west  
Bangladesh**



**World Food  
Programme**



**WINROCK  
INTERNATIONAL**



Trying to stay healthy, eat well and seek basic health care is not always easy for pregnant women in south west Bangladesh. Almost 27 percent of the population live on less than \$1.90 per day – classifying them as ultra-poor. Frequent natural disasters and rising salinity levels further compromise household food security. Early marriage is pervasive and the average age of first pregnancy is 16.9 – only 38% of women are able to access primary health care services essential to ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby.

It's not surprising that 26.8 percent of children under 5 are stunted and one of every five women between the ages of 15 and 49 are underweight.

Critically, the first 1,000 days between a mother's pregnancy and her child's second birthday sets the foundation for all the days that follow. 'Nobo Jatra – new beginning' a five-year development food security project led by World Vision and funded by USAID – has taken a number of innovative approaches targeting women during pregnancy till the child transitions from exclusive breastfeeding to complementary foods.

Akhi, a young mother, was enrolled in the Nobo Jatra project during her 3rd month of pregnancy. To

start, Akhi received a COEL bangle – programmed to transmit weekly audio health messages – that are tailored to the exact stage of her pregnancy. Akhi describes the bangle as,

*'my own personal doctor advising me to have vegetables, meat and milk. It also tells me and Tushar, my husband, when to visit the community clinic for checkups. My mother in law also listens to the messages'*

The COEL bangle is light weight and designed to be worn by women throughout their pregnancy. Often, it can serve as the only source of health information for pregnant women and for this reason, Nobo Jatra specifically selected 1,000 households that are particularly remote, in hard to reach areas. COEL bangles are also designed to beep when they are exposed to smoke – alerting the pregnant women to move away. Often, families are not aware that smoke can be harmful to health – and the bangles are an effective way to get this message across.

As an ultra-poor household, Akhi's family were also included in Nobo Jatra's nutrition safety net cash transfers. Through an e wallet registered to

Akhi, \$26 dollars is transferred each month for a period of 15 months – and is used to purchase nutritious foods for the household. Akhi and Tushar also save some of the money for medical expenses.

Mili, a frontline health worker, also visits the household on a weekly basis to provide nutrition counselling, particularly focusing on Akhi's nutrition during pregnancy and how this also affects the baby.

*'Every week I visit this household to talk about the importance of the right kind of nutrition and when to go for checkups. I also counsel the household to help them understand that Akhi needs to eat well, rest and look after herself during pregnancy.'*

Throughout the pregnancy, Tushar has been a pillar of support to Akhi – primarily as he has listened to the messages from the COEL bangle.

*'These messages may seem simple, like take rest after eating during pregnancy, but for us we don't usually practice this. Since listening to these messages we have changed.'*

Akhi delivered a healthy baby boy, Sopnil at the local Government hospital and the family continue to receive cash transfers – which they use to buy food at the local markets. Mili continues to visit the family on a weekly basis – and has found them to be committed to improving nutrition practices, taking Sopnil to Growth Monitoring Promotion sessions each month at the local community clinic.

Nobo Jatra is dedicated to transforming the lives of communities in south west Bangladesh – by focusing on pregnant women and children under 2 to improve nutrition outcomes leading to healthier, more self-reliant families.





### **About 'Nobo Jatra-new beginning'**

'Nobo Jatra-New Beginning' is a five year USAID Food for Peace Title II Development Food Security Activity that seeks to improve gender equitable food security, nutrition and resilience in southwest Bangladesh. World Vision Bangladesh, together with the World Food Programme and Winrock International and 3 local partner NGOs, undertook the program in September 2015, integrating interventions in MCHN, WASH, agriculture and alternative livelihoods, DRR, good governance and social accountability and gender to achieve its objectives. Nobo Jatra is being jointly implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) of the Government of Bangladesh in four upazilas under two districts – Dacope and Koyra upazilas in Khulna and Shyamnagar and Kaliganj upazilas in Satkhira – and it aims to reach 856,116 direct beneficiaries.