

Witnesses Account: Contributing towards Hyogo Framework for Action – “Building a Culture of Safety and Resilience”

Community Based Disaster Preparedness - Bangladesh

Since September 2007 Islamic Relief in Bangladesh has been implementing disaster risk reduction project supported by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid through its DIPECHO program. The purpose of the project is to increase awareness, resilience and the capacity of communities to deal with any future disasters thus contributing towards the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015).

The project provides easy to understand information and education materials to local community members. The training incorporates local indigenous knowledge and ensures strong community involvement. Through this project, authorities, individuals and communities are empowered with the knowledge and capacities of effective disaster management. This will help to reduce the impact and losses incurred by future disasters.

One of those to benefit from this project is *45-year-old Piyara Khatun, a mother of nine* who lives in the village Nashirpur, Nasirnagar Upazila. Piyara was married when she was only 13-years-old. Since her family owns no farming land Piyara is forced to make a living as a daily labourer – earning an average 100 BDT (i.e. 1 EURO) per day when she gets work.



Piyara Khatun with some of her children

Piyara’s homestead is located on the banks of the river Langan. This is a precarious place to live as the banks of the river are eroded more and more every year. The area also suffers from frequent floods. As recently as in 2007, the land around their home was submerged, greatly eroded, and the house was badly damaged.

The area where Piyara lives was identified by community groups and volunteers, as being especially vulnerable to disasters. In order to prevent Piyara’s house from collapsing, the land around her home was raised to protect the house from future floods. Her home and the land around it was also renovated and extended.

In addition, Piyara and the rest of her community benefitted greatly from awareness raising initiatives that taught the community how to prepare effectively for future disasters.

Piyara was so happy with the work that had been done to protect her home against disaster that she is now committed to spreading the message of disaster preparedness to other communities. Along with her daughters-in-law she travels throughout the community disseminating key messages. She is constantly updated with information thanks to the regular training she



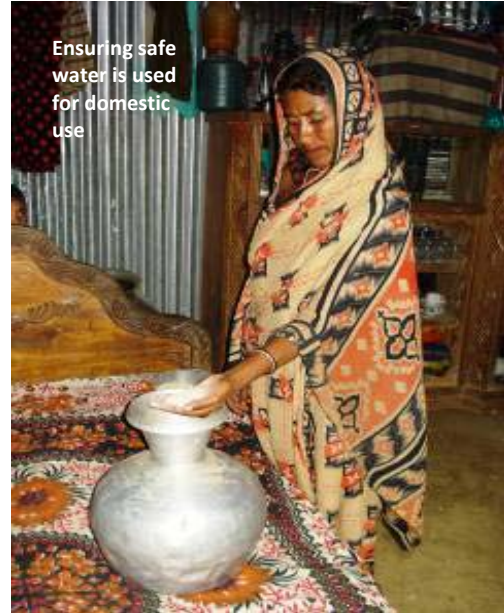
Family of nine feeling safer with community assistance and elevated homestead

receives from Islamic Relief staff and community volunteers.

Piyara is also putting other initiatives she learnt at the disaster preparedness training into practice. Every day she stores a handful of her rice in a safe place so that if a disaster strikes her family would have an emergency supply of food at hand. She has also begun to cultivate her garden which was extended with support of Islamic Relief. She is now able to sell the vegetables she grows, which provides an additional income for her family.



Producing her own vegetable



Ensuring safe water is used for domestic use

The extra money that she earns by selling vegetables that she produces she ensures is put to good use. Piyara explained, *“I have managed to install a slab latrine, have repaired the tube-well and have even strengthened all the rooms of my houses due to the extra amount of money that I am able to make now. I have also planted trees besides the slopes of our homestead which reduce the erosion of the land caused by the impact of the waves.”*

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