

Witnesses Account: Contributing towards Hyogo Framework for Action

Community Based Disaster Preparedness - Bangladesh

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 aims to build resilience amongst communities to disasters by; ensuring disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority, by enhancing early warning systems, building a culture of safety and resilience, reducing underlying risk factors and strengthening disaster preparedness. Islamic Relief is working towards achieving these aims by implementing a Disaster Risk Reduction programme in Bangladesh.



Bangladesh, the most densely populated country in the world with 1,000 people per square kilometre, is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters including floods, cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis. The impact of these disasters is made worse by the high level of poverty, growing uncontrolled urbanization, environmental degradation and impacts of global warming. Most of people are unable to afford or are insufficiently aware about actions that could be taken to reduce the impact of such disasters.

In partnership with European Commission Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) and its DIPECHO program, the Islamic Relief is implementing an earthquake and flood preparedness programme. The focus of this project is to help vulnerable communities improve their capacity to deal with disasters by increasing their knowledge and awareness about imminent risk. One of those beneficiaries to have benefitted from this project is **Shahidar Rahman**. He has been headmaster of Parbotipur Reyazuddin Primary School since it was opened in 1984. He has helped many students to achieve high positions, and has acted as a guiding light to all of them.

Shahidar has been a driving force behind Disaster Risk Reduction project work: *“Staff came to our area and informed us about the disaster risk reduction programme and established a committee to work on it. I agreed to be part of the committee.”* He continued: *“My motivation for being involved in this project was that local people need to have the necessary information and level of awareness before a disaster strikes.”*

“Things have been changing ever since we started the project in this area,” he explained. *“People at all levels from the community are learning a bit by bit about the different steps they need to take before, during and after a disaster.”*

“I feel that it is important that children are involved in this project. We [community elders] may not be here for long, but children are the future community leaders. In the future they will take part in the development of the community and they need to let others know about disaster preparedness measures,” Shahidar said.

Shahidar feels proud that he is a part of the community efforts initiated by Islamic Relief and now he carries out training, community meetings and disseminates information. He is looking forward to receiving more training from Islamic Relief. *“Islamic Relief should keep up the good work they are doing now and keep people updated about disaster preparedness techniques. It is now important that even more girls and women participate in the project.”*



Shahidar Rahman – School Headmaster



Involvement of all sections of the local community and their participation is an important component of this project. Community based groups have been established as part of the project where each member has a different role and responsibility within the project. By setting up these groups at a grass roots level, local people are able to take their concerns directly to local government - thereby ensuring that *Disaster Risk Reduction becomes a national priority, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action.*

This community participation approach has also led to the creation of Union disaster management committees, Ward disaster management committees and a Youth volunteer network. These different groups ensure that all sectors of society – women, young people, those living in rural locations – are all able to participate in and learn from the project. In line with the objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action, this means that a journey to *develop a culture of safety and resilience* is initiated at the grassroots with local people being able to identify and assess risk, and contribute to disaster preparedness programmes.

24-year-old Luna Anjuman Lipi is a housewife and mother of two young children from West Mulattol, Rangpur, and district located in the North of Bangladesh. Luna also has another side to her life. She is also a youth volunteer with Islamic Relief’s Disaster Risk Reduction project.

“I have always been interested in voluntary activities and the development of my local community,” she explained. *“My husband is a health worker and he also encourages me to take part in these activities. So when Islamic Relief staff came to look for young volunteers for their project, I was happy to grasp the opportunity and join them.”*



Through this project Luna has learned how people can better prepare for a disaster and how better preparedness can reduce the impact of a disaster. She has also learnt about first aid techniques through the programme and now knows the best way to treat a person injured in a disaster.

Luna also disseminates the information she has learnt to those living in her area so that they can also better prepare for future disasters. She explained how the project has made a difference to her community, *“People now know about disaster preparedness and first aid. They are now well aware what they should do and how they should prepare themselves whenever there is a sign of an impending disaster.”*

“I am happy that the children are learning about these safety measures as well,” she said. *“Now they know how to take care of themselves if there is a disaster situation. Hopefully in the future they will also be able to disseminate this information to other people, which is a very positive thing.”*

“People have very high hopes for this project,” Luna said. *“If we can do something for the people who are vulnerable to the Monga [hunger season], such as livelihood training, that would really help those who live in this community.”*

For any further information about this project please contact: **Syed Shahnawaz Ali**, DIPECHO Project Manager - Islamic Relief Bangladesh - shahnawaz.ali@islamicrelief-bd.org
Information about other DIPECHO Projects in South Asia please contact: **Indira Kulenovic**, DIPECHO TA South Asia, DG ECHO – Indira.KULENOVIC@ec.europa.eu or ta02@echo-india.org