



Lives on the Edge of Climate Change

STRUGGLE HOPE and the FUTURE

**Lives on the Edge of Climate Change:
Struggle, Hope and the Future**

The book has been published under the Blue Economy and Inclusive Development for Climate Justice (BID4CJ) with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government. The project is being implemented by Oxfam in Bangladesh along with its partners Breaking the Silence (BTS), Community Development Center (CODEC) and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA). The contents of this book do not necessarily reflect the views of donors or partners.

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Lives on the Edge of Climate Change

Struggle, Hope and the Future





Aerial view of the dense Keura forests on the horizon, once thrived in Hasher Char, now, much of it is barren. Dhalghata, Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. 30 April 2025.







Bangladesh is at the forefront of the global climate crisis. Its people and ecosystems face mounting pressures from rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Yet, amid these challenges, communities across climate-vulnerable regions continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience, ingenuity, and leadership.

The Australian Government is proud to support the Blue Economy and Inclusive Development for Climate Justice (BID4CJ) project, implemented by Oxfam and its partners in climate-vulnerable coastal areas of Bangladesh. This initiative reflects our commitment to building a more inclusive, equitable, and climate-resilient future, particularly for women and marginalised groups.

Efforts like the BID4CJ project play a vital role in supporting vulnerable coastal populations to adapt to climate impacts while restoring critical ecosystems and promoting green and inclusive livelihoods. It is encouraging to see local innovation, community-led solutions, and the rise of women leaders who are mobilising others in the fight for climate justice.

This photobook seeks to document and elevate these stories of change and progress. I am pleased to see initiatives that aim to spotlight the real and human dimensions of climate change in

Bangladesh—stories of struggle, but also hope, courage and action.

We believe that climate action must be locally driven, gender-responsive, and environmentally sustainable. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh and other partners to promote climate justice, gender equality and sustainable development. Together, we can support communities in building a future where development is not only resilient but also inclusive and just.

Her Excellency Ms Susan Ryle

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh





In the world's largest delta—where rivers meet oceans and lives meet uncertainty—millions of people face the devastating impacts of a crisis they did not cause. Bangladesh's coastal communities, while contributing the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, bear the highest burden of climate injustice. For them, climate change is not a distant policy debate—it is daily life.

Bangladesh is in a climate emergency with increased and frequent disasters hitting. While powerful nations debate policy, frontline communities are left to rebuild their homes and futures, again and again. This crisis is not just about the climate—it's about inequality, neglect, and whose lives are valued. This photobook, "Lives on the Edge of Climate Change: Struggle, Hope and the Future," is a tribute to those lives. It tells twelve deeply moving stories from the frontlines of climate vulnerability—of embankments collapsing during Eid, of families repeatedly displaced by river erosion, of women walking miles for clean water, and of entire communities living in harmony with nature even as that balance becomes more fragile each day.

The book illustrates how rising sea levels, salinity intrusion, floods, cyclones, and river erosion are not just climate phenomena, but deeply personal experiences that shape lives, livelihoods, and

entire generations. From broken families in Satkhira to the vanishing forests of Maheshkhali, each story echoes the pain of loss, the resilience of adaptation, and the fierce will to survive.

But this book is not just about suffering. It is about resilience, innovation, and hope. It is about feminist climate leaders mobilizing their communities, green entrepreneurs reviving local traditions into climate-smart livelihoods, and collective efforts to restore ecosystems that provide protection and prosperity.

These stories remind us that the path to climate justice must be inclusive, equitable, and led by the people most affected. Ultimately, this book challenges readers to reflect on climate justice, gender inequality, and the urgent need for inclusive, sustainable solutions. Through compelling photographs and storytelling, this publication calls on the key stakeholders including those from the global north to listen, learn, and act. Because the future of our planet depends on what we do now to save the environment and communities like those featured in these pages. Let's act now, leaving no one behind.

Ashish Damle

Country Director, Oxfam in Bangladesh





Bangladesh stands at the frontline of the global climate crisis where the rising tides of injustice meet the resilience of its people. Breaking the Silence (BTS) is proud to stand beside the most vulnerable, especially women and children, in this struggle, rooted in a locally led approach that elevates community voices and prioritizes inclusion and equity.

For over three decades, BTS has worked to ensure child rights, prevent gender-based violence, and amplify the leadership of marginalized communities. With the Blue Economy and Inclusive Development for Climate Justice (BID4CJ) initiative, we have extended our commitment to addressing the intersectionality of climate injustice and gender inequality. Through this, we are facilitating a Feminist Climate Justice Movement in Bangladesh that centers the realities, leadership, and solutions of coastal women and youth, who are not just victims of climate change but also its fiercest defenders.

The photobook “Lives on the Edge of Climate Change: Struggle, Hope and the Future” is a testament to this movement. It captures not only the hardship of communities facing sea level rise, salinity intrusion, and displacement but also the dignity, innovation, and collective power that arise in response. These stories, grounded in feminist

principles, challenge us to reimagine justice not as charity, but as co-creation.

This effort, supported by Oxfam in Bangladesh and the Australian Government, represents our shared vision of a future where development is both climate-resilient and gender-just. It reflects our belief that true climate action must begin with those living its consequences led by their stories, shaped by their knowledge, and empowered by their agency.

Let this book travel beyond borders and break silences, so that the voices of our coastal communities are heard across the globe, and their visions of justice become shared calls to action.

“From the shores of struggle to the tides of change, let’s rise together for Feminist Climate Justice.”

Roksana Sultana

Executive Director, Breaking the Silence



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Blue Economy and Inclusive Development for Climate Justice (BID4CJ) project is an initiative focused on empowering coastal communities in Bangladesh through ecosystem restoration and the development of inclusive green businesses. Coastal regions such as Satkhira, Khulna, and Cox's Bazar are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and non-inclusive development. These challenges disproportionately affect marginalized groups—especially women, adolescents, and people with disabilities.

In response, the BID4CJ project (running from February 2023 to June 2027) aims to restore local ecosystems and promote climate- and gender-just economic growth. With the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government, the project is being implemented by Oxfam in Bangladesh along with its partners Breaking the Silence (BTS), Community Development Center (CODEC) and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA).

The BID4CJ project focuses on empowering coastal communities through three key objectives. First, it strengthens the capacity of women and marginalized groups to engage in decision-making and ecosystem

governance. Second, it ensures fair and inclusive ecosystem restoration. Third, it promotes green businesses rooted in gender equity and environmental sustainability.

The project delivers on three outcomes: fostering feminist climate movements to access climate finance and influence policy; restoring ecosystems to enhance their value while reducing climate risks; and building resilient livelihoods through inclusive, community-driven business models involving the private sector and government. By working with research institutions, media, and partners, BID4CJ champions a development model that tackles both environmental and social inequalities.

Broken trees submerged in the water due to flooding, threatening the survival of critical coastal ecosystems, jeopardizing biodiversity and reducing the natural protection they offer against environmental risks. Datinakhali, Burigoalini, Munshiganj, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 7 April 2025.

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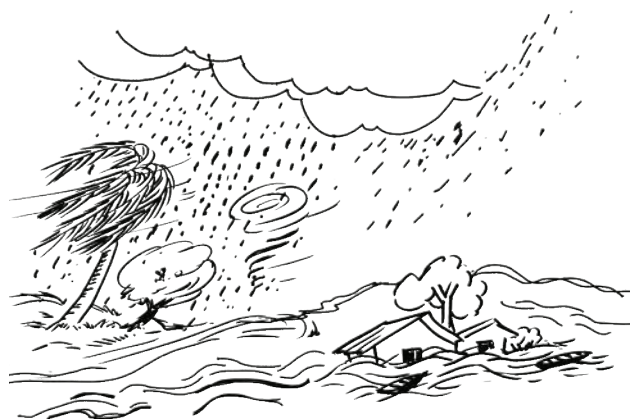
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Broken Dam,
Shattered
Dreams



Jorina (43) standing on the edge of the broken embankment on the Khulpetua river. Anulia, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.



Aerial view of the broken embankment that collapsed, sweeping 150 to 200 feet of land into the Khulpetua river. Anulia, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.

Homes, roads, dams, and buildings are often affected by severe salinity. Salt contamination in the soil prevents trees from thriving.

Celebrations of Eid include sharing sweets, gatherings, and expressing joy. However, for the people of the Ashashuni upazila, last Eid-ul-Fitr brought unimaginable hardship. As a result of a broken sluice gate underneath (used in shrimp farms for water drainage), a section of the embankment collapsed on 31 March 2025. As a result, 150 to 200 feet of land were swept into the Khulpetua River. The high tidal pressure caused by rising water levels and river erosion caused flooding along riverbanks due to inadequate protection. Moslem Sarder (75), an elderly boatman in the area who lives with his wife Monira and children, recalls the devastating moment, “After Eid prayers, we saw water entering our villages, and we had to run to save our homes, belongings, and cattle.”

The area is highly disaster-prone due to its coastal location and vulnerability to climate change. Major threats include rising sea levels, salinity intrusions, frequent cyclones, riverbank erosion, and prolonged waterlogging. Living on the riverbanks for many years, people have been directly impacted by river erosion. While the banks of the river are steadily eroded by the river and climate patterns continue to shift over time, the lives of those in the affected regions remain largely unchanged. Moslem says in an ironic tone, “Those of us, who cannot leave Ashashuni, have been moving from one side to another, circling the river.” His family lived on the other side of the river for many years. After losing their land and home to river erosion, they moved here to survive. However, their current house may also be wiped out by the river. The relentless erosion not only threatens their homes but also shatters their hopes, leaving families like Moslem’s in a constant state of uncertainty and despair.



Sharmin [19] repairing a floor of her in-law's house destroyed by a flashflood. Anulia, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.

Community members, with help from the local authority, built temporary barriers and sandbags to prevent further flooding. They tried to construct a ring embankment, but rising water pressure made it challenging. Since then, people on both sides of the river have faced limited mobility. "Without schools and markets on the other side, our children's education and livelihoods are at risk. We either have to cross the river by boat or walk over the broken embankment, which is very dangerous," says Jorina (43), a fisherwoman who crosses the river daily to sell her fish.

Climate disasters and their lasting environmental damage have repeatedly harmed the infrastructure in this area. Homes, roads, dams, and buildings are often affected by

severe salinity. Salt contamination in the soil prevents trees from thriving. For years, embankments have been built and rebuilt, yet climate change continues to worsen the destruction. "Every year, flash floods destroy our house walls, and we repair them ourselves. It's become a tradition, as we live surrounded by shrimp farms that overflow during floods," says Sharmin (19), a young woman living with her husband and in-laws.

Generations of people living near the Khulpetuya River, surrounded by shrimp farms, have faced insecurity and unsafe living conditions. Sustainable and climate-resilient construction practices are essential to address recurring infrastructure damage. "To keep water out of the villages, we need a sturdy dam built with blocks that can resist river erosion," says Nurjahan (54) another resident, emphasizing the need for a long-term solution.

Building elevated homes and roads with salinity-resistant materials could also help communities withstand environmental challenges. Collaboration among stakeholders is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. "We belong here and nowhere else, so we want everyone to help us and improve our situation," Moslem emphasizes further. By working together, local authorities, NGOs, and community members can pool resources and expertise to develop effective, sustainable solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of the area. This collective effort will ensure that the voices of those directly impacted are heard and that the strategies implemented are both practical and resilient.

Boatman Moslem Sarder (75) standing by his boat with his son by the riverbank. Anulia, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.







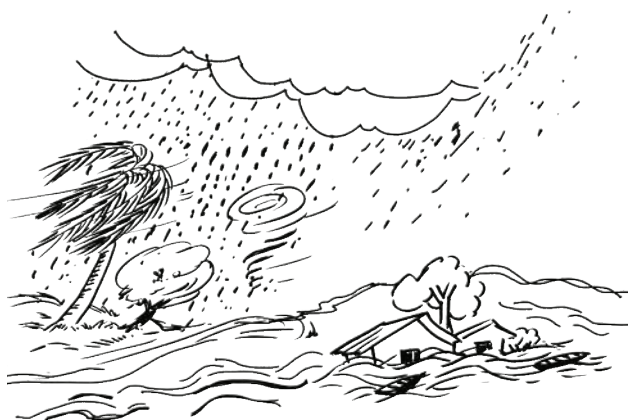
House of Abdul Sattar, damaged by flash floods caused by the Khutpetua river embankment breaking. Ballavpur, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.

Silent Struggle: Diseases and Distress





Md Akbor Chowdhury (55), a day-laborer suffering from skin allergies. Gabura, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 24 April 2025.



A fisherwomen drawing fishing net in the river, bearing prolonged exposure to salinity. Khulpetua river, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 17 April 2025.

High salinity in water is believed to be a major contributor to the outbreak of skin diseases.

In the isolated coastal union of Gabura, a silent health crisis is gripping the community. Over time, residents have experienced a disturbing rise in skin diseases and allergic conditions—ailments that remain largely undiagnosed, untreated, and dangerously overlooked. Among the many suffering is Salma Khatun (35), battling severe skin allergies for four years without relief. Despite trying a wide range of medicines, both over-the-counter and traditional, her condition has only worsened.

“I don’t even know where these allergies came from,” she says. “I’ve taken homoeopathic tablets, used creams, and tried homemade remedies. Nothing helps.”

Salma’s story is echoed by countless others from young children to the elderly, many complain of persistent itching, burning, swelling, and skin rashes that refuse to heal. The one thing they all seem to have in common is their environment—particularly the water they live and work in.

“We work in shrimp farms and saltwater,” Salma explains. “We bathe and wash in the same water, we clean our food utensils with it. Unfortunately, that water is extremely toxic and polluted. All our household and human waste ends up in it, too.”

Many coastal regions like Gabura have been facing the devastating impacts of climate change. Due to its proximity to the Sundarbans and the Bay of Bengal, the region has seen increasing salinity over the years due to rising sea levels, frequent tidal flooding, and the encroachment of saltwater into freshwater sources. Once fertile lands have been



Image of feet induced with rashes, which is believed to be caused by exposure to saline water. Gabura, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 24 April 2025.

converted into shrimp farms. This shift, while economically beneficial for some, has brought environmental and health challenges.

High salinity in water is believed to be a major contributor to the outbreak of skin diseases. Constant exposure to saline water can damage the skin's natural protective barrier, leading to dryness, inflammation, and severe allergic reactions. However, while the physical toll is visible, the underlying tragedy lies in the lack of access to healthcare.

"There are no government clinics, no hospitals, not even local doctors or health workers in Gabura," says Md Akbor Chowdhury (55). "The nearest health center is across the river

in Shyamnagar, and getting there is expensive and time-consuming. Most people just can't afford it." Akbar himself often suffers from skin allergies, and is an earth-digging day-laborer.

Without access to medical facilities, many residents turn to untrained local vendors or traditional healers. These practitioners often provide steroid-based ointments or medicines without prescriptions. While these may offer temporary relief, long-term usage can result in worsening conditions.

The crisis affects not just adults, but children as well. "Along with skin issues, our children suffer from water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and cholera," says Jahanara (53). "We don't have clean drinking water or proper sanitation. It's very hard to keep them safe." Without proper nutrition and healthcare, children are more vulnerable to infections and recover more slowly.

Gabura stands as a stark example of how environmental degradation, contaminated water sources, and the absence of basic healthcare infrastructure intersect to create a public health emergency. What's unfolding is not just a health condition epidemic—it is a human rights issue rooted in neglect and inequality.

For now, Salma, Akbor, Jahanara and many others continue to live in silent suffering—itching, scratching, and waiting. The challenge is not just identifying the source of these diseases, but deciding how long communities like Gabura will remain unheard and untreated.

Salma Khatun (35) suffers from skin allergies due to working in saltwater, despite trying various medicines. Gabura, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 24 April 2025.



Fish farmers clearing moss from a saltwater-filled gher bearing prolonged salinity exposure. Gabura, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 24 April 2025.



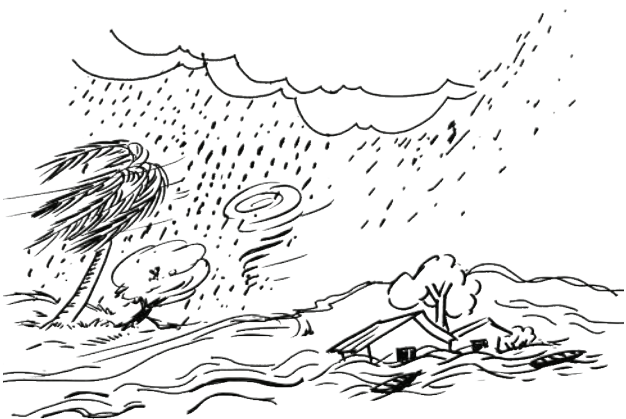


A photograph showing a man and a woman in a rural setting, likely a rice field, carrying large, heavy bundles of harvested rice straw on their heads. The man, on the left, is wearing a white t-shirt and a blue and white checkered sarong. The woman, on the right, is wearing a colorful patterned sari. They are both barefoot. The background is a lush green field with trees. The text 'The Hidden Burden: How Climate-Induced Migration Affects Women' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The Hidden Burden: How Climate-Induced Migration Affects Women



Bashopati Munda (28) beams with a smile while struggling with farming and household duties.



A woman helping a man to carry a stack of paddy on his head. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shymannagar, Satkhira. 18 May 2025.

As they cope without male support, women provide valuable insights into the induced migration and their coping mechanisms.

// got married young, and none of my family lives nearby. The only family close to me is my husband's uncle and his wife, who live next door. Since my husband works far away in Koyra, I'm in charge of the children, the house, and everything else," says Bashopati Munda (28).

Living in the Kaikhali union along the coastal belt by the Palnadi River, near the Indian border and the Sundarbans, the area is frequently hit by cyclones, heavy rains, and tidal waves that damage crops, homes, and deepen poverty. Natural disasters and stagnant income growth contribute to economic struggles of the region. Agriculture and shrimp farming were once primary sources of income.

For the past three years, Bashopati's family has been cultivating paddy on leased land. Before this, most of the land was used as ghers (shrimp farms), making it difficult to grow paddy. "We used to work in ghers, earning 150 to 200 taka a day, barely covering our expenses. Gradually, we realized that those ghers were damaging our soil and increasing water salinity. We also had to buy rice and vegetables since we couldn't produce them on our own. Hence, we shifted back to agriculture, which was common in the area before the 90s. Now, we sell half of the rice that we grow and keep the rest," explains Bashopati.

They managed to grow crops in subsequent years despite damage in the first year. Waterlogging during the rainy season often affects crops, making agriculture difficult for families. Flooding also poses challenges to shrimp farmers. The men therefore took jobs outside. "Having no land and few jobs in the ghers, I had to leave behind my family and community. I



Anandini Munda (35) supports her family by tailoring, while her migrant worker husband is away. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shymannagar, Satkhira. 18 May 2025.

visit and stay in my village for two months a year now,” shares migrant worker Md Abdus Salam Sheikh (30), who shifted his workplace to Koiya Bazar, Batiyaghata, Khulna.

Bashopati says, “We women are left behind to handle homemaking and farming duties, while the men are away most of the year. During the monsoon, we cannot grow anything on our land, so we spend the money earned by our male members at that time.” As a result, it has become a continuous cycle of struggle entangled with migration, and women must carry on at home and on the field.

Many non-farming women take on other jobs to support their families while their husbands migrate. “My husband works in Satkhira for years. The money he sends helps, but it’s not enough,” says Anandini Munda (35). With no land and three children to raise, she borrowed a sewing machine from a neighbor and learned tailoring. “I sew clothes for the women and girls in the village,” she reflects. “Mostly for weddings or Eid. It’s not much- just a few hundred takas here and there.”

As they cope without male support, women provide valuable insights into the induced migration and their coping mechanisms. “As the rainy season approaches, we must collect and store crops quickly, or we’ll lose everything. Even our children help with this urgency.

It’s mentally and physically draining, but we have no choice. We must ensure our family’s survival, from preparing for disasters to harvesting crops independently,” Bashopati highlights the pressures of managing farming and a family.

Women like Bashopati and Anandini encounter numerous challenges as they juggle childcare, household duties, and contributing to family incomes. The lack of support from husbands or male relatives further restricts their access to essential resources, intensifying their struggles.

Migrant workers from different parts of Shyamnagar, working in a brickfield. Koiya Bazar, Batiyaghata, Khulna. 28 May 2025.





Farmers sit by stack of paddy, sharing a meal and some quiet time together. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 18 May 2025.

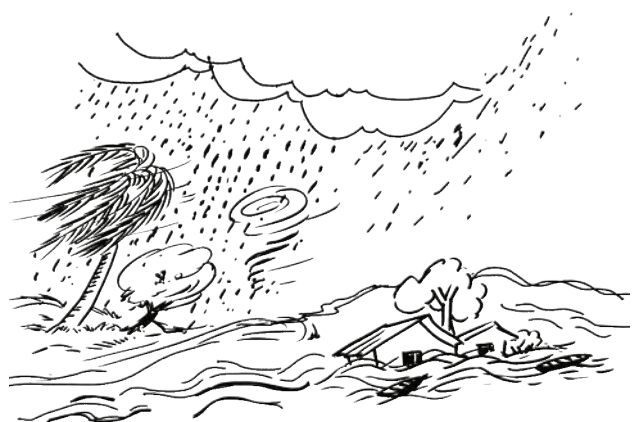


Echoes of the Past, Fears for the Future





Bonojibi Sharifa (60) standing at the door of her house. Chunkuri, Harinagar, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 23 April 2025.



As the years passed, Sharifa's hardships only deepened. The forest that had once been her lifeline is now a source of growing distress.

Bonojibi Sharifa (60), with her grandchildren standing on her wooden boat by their house. Chunkuri, Harinagar, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 23 April 2025.

Sharifa, a 60-year-old Bonojibi woman, lives on the edges of Chunkuri, a remote village located near the Sundarbans. Her home, perched on the coastal belt, faces numerous challenges: crumbling roads, limited mobility, and an ever-growing vulnerability to natural disasters such as cyclones, tidal waves, and floods. In a region far removed from any large community support, survival here has always been a daily struggle.

Thirty years ago, Sharifa's husband abandoned her, leaving her to raise five children on her own. Relying entirely on the forest for sustenance, she recalls the past with a mix of sorrow and resolve. "My husband and I used to cut wood, collect fish, and gather crabs together from the Sundarbans," she reminisces.

"When he left me and moved to India, I was forced to leave my in-laws' house with my children, with no one to turn to. Women like me, whose husbands either leave or get killed by tigers in the forest, have no choice but to work tirelessly, day and night, to feed our families. But no matter how hard I worked, my earnings were never enough to secure a future for them, never enough to send them to school. We often went hungry, and now, they too rely on the forest just as I did. With their own children to care for, our struggle becomes an endless cycle," Sharifa adds.

As the years passed, Sharifa's hardships only deepened. The forest that had once been her lifeline is now a source of growing distress. "The forest has changed so much over my lifetime," she reflects. "Cyclones come more often, the waters rise higher, and fish are harder to find. The temperature climbs

every year.” With deep insight, she continues, “I think these changes have come because of us. We took and took from the forest, but never gave back. The very forest that once protected us now bears the scars of our greed. It has become a victim of our actions.”

The Bonojibi way of life, once harmonious with nature, has been thrown into disarray. “Our connection with the forest is so deep that we cannot imagine life without it,” Sharifa says, her voice tinged with despair. “But with each passing year, the land beneath our feet grows more unstable. Our houses are destroyed by floods, our access to the forest becomes more distant, and our earnings—what little we had—are vanishing.”

Sharifa feels the weight of this loss more acutely as she grows older. The forests she once relied on for survival are shrinking before her eyes, and the security she once took for granted has crumbled. With each new storm, she is reminded of her vulnerability, but even more so, she worries for the future of her children and grandchildren. “For me, life has almost passed,” she says quietly. “We’ve built and rebuilt our homes countless times, but how long can this last? What will happen to my children, my grandchildren? Will they be able to carry on the way I did? Will they face the same struggles?”

Her story is not just one of personal loss—it is a stark reflection of the larger, more global issue at hand. The human toll of climate change is painfully clear in Sharifa’s words, a mixture of regret for the past and anxiety for what lies ahead. As the forest disappears, so does the way of life for communities like hers. Their dependency on the very

ecosystems that are now under threat highlights the urgent need for sustainable practices and preservation of the environment.

Sharifa’s life, marked by abandonment, relentless toil, and the erosion of her homeland, is a symbol of the struggle faced by so many who live at the intersection of poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation. Her story underscores the necessity of safeguarding natural resources—not just for the sake of biodiversity, but for the survival of families like hers who depend on them to live.

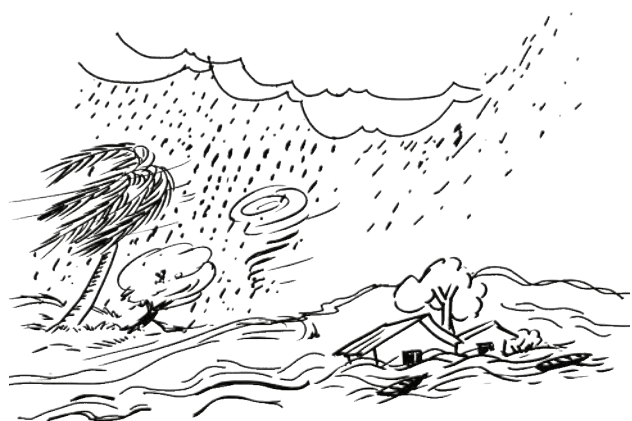




**Water Scarcity:
A Continuous
Challenge**



A young girl is riding a bicycle to collect water from distant locations with empty water pitchers. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.



With their primary water source now undrinkable, they have been forced to rely on contaminated ponds with extreme salinity.

After gathering fresh drinking water from a distant location, a woman travels with her child to her community. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.

The 2009 Aila cyclone wreaked havoc on coastal communities, leaving behind widespread devastation. It severely impacted the region's freshwater sources, damaging nearly all of them and turning many ponds saline. One of the hardest-hit areas was Samabay Gucchagram, where the local pond, once the sole freshwater supply for surrounding families, became completely unusable.

For the past two decades, the 147 families in this area have faced an ongoing struggle to secure safe drinking water. With their primary water source now undrinkable, they have been forced to rely on contaminated ponds with extreme salinity. The water they consume is not only unsafe but also carries the risk of waterborne diseases, leading to widespread health issues. The lack of clean water has left these families vulnerable to a range of illnesses, compounding their daily hardships.

In addition to the physical toll, the scarcity of safe drinking water has deeply affected the community's way of life. The women and children of Samabay Gucchagram spend hours searching for clean water, often resorting to distant, unreliable sources. The ongoing struggle for something as basic as safe drinking water highlights the urgent need for sustainable solutions to address the long-lasting impact of climate-induced disasters on vulnerable coastal communities.

"Every day, I walk 1.5 to 2 kilometers just to collect drinking water, often paying for it along the way," says Monira Khatun (36), expressing frustration at the limited water reservoirs provided by local rainwater harvesting systems, which fail to meet the community's needs.



Monira Khatun (36) washing utensils in dirty pond water as there is no local source of freshwater in her community. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.

In disaster-prone regions, water collection from distant locations is traditionally seen mostly as a woman's responsibility. Monira lives with her two children in her parents' home while her husband works away. She juggles raising her children, working at a local shrimp farm, and, of course, collecting the water. The strain of balancing these responsibilities is immense. "After a long day working on the farm, I return home to cook, clean, and care for my family,"

Monira explains. "If we don't collect water on time, our home is chaotic—crying children and family members who can't understand why the water isn't ready."

Due to these challenges, Monira, along with other women in their community, tried solving the water crisis in 2024. The pond was partially restored that had been damaged by salinity.

However, that was not the end of the journey. The Chuna River, one of Bangladesh's saltiest rivers, runs alongside the pond, separated only by a fragile embankment.

During the rainy season, the embankment frequently broke, causing the pond to be contaminated again. The community found themselves back at square one.

Now, along with the necessity of repairing the embankment, they are in need of reinforcing the pond's surrounding area, to make it more sustainable in the long term. "We're eagerly waiting for it to be restored before next rainy season," Monira





shares, hopeful that the pond will again fill with fresh water. The work can't just stop there. Plans need to be in place to install a Pond Sand Filter (PSF) so that community members can safely use the water. Trees need to be planted around the pond to help keep it cool during the hot summer months. However, maintaining the pond and protecting it will require a collective effort from the entire community, not

just the women. "Protecting the environment is a shared responsibility," says Monira. "We've come to realize that it's not just about us—it's about all of us, regardless of gender. Men in the community have to recognize the effort and contribute. It will be a slow but steady process, and we are looking forward to see the change."



Monira Khatun (36, third from left) waits in line with others to collect fresh drinking water from a distant water pump. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.

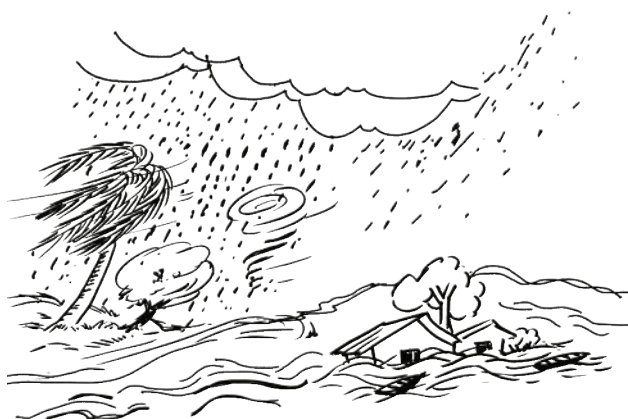
Aerial view of houses in midst of dried up cracked lands due to climate conditions such as rise of temperature, and humidity. Khalishabuniya, Gabura, Shyamnagar. 19 April 2025.



Extreme Climatic
Conditions and the
Scorched Earth



Khadiza (17), a madrasa student, smiles brightly while holding a baby goat in her arms. Gabura, Shyamnagar. 19 April 2025.



A parched, cracked field in coastal region due to rise of temperature and lack of water sources. Khalishabuniya, Gabura, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 19 April 2025.

Their action, though subtle, is a strong statement of resistance—a silent uprising against the shifting environment.

Due to intense climate conditions in Gabura, existence here is a constant struggle against natural disasters. This river-front isolated land is assaulted by merciless cyclones, tidal waves, and incessant inundations. The land is lost day by day as river erosion keeps devouring its banks. Fresh water is virtually unavailable even at depths of 250 to 300 feet. Since Cyclone Aila inundated the area with saltwater, pure drinking water is a long-forgotten commodity. In spite of these daunting difficulties, the residents here greet each other every day with unwavering resilience.

With fewer tube wells available, households depend on ponds contaminated with salinity, formed by storms and surges. Women experience reproductive health complications, children experience malnutrition, and girls and women trek miles to bring water. Khadiza (17), a madrasa student, explains the ordeal, “The nearest pond is more than five kilometers away. As the drought dragged on, the ponds dried up and cracked, and village wells became brackish. For our family, we need to fetch a minimum of 30 liters of water per week for consumption. We go to various sources at varying times. Vans carry water for the rich, but for us and families like us, we carry it ourselves.”

She continues, “During menstruation, there is no spare water to clean ourselves or our clothes. Sanitary napkins are not affordable for my family, and the climate makes it all the more worse.” With the altered climate altering rainfall patterns, their lives are now spent looking for water rather than their studies. “We end up missing school for days at a time. We have families who are relying on us. Daily, the journey to the ponds is long, and we must wait hours under the scorching sun,” Khadiza explains.

The villagers of Gabura suffer unimaginable tribulation, their resilience tried every day. Ashrafunessa (50) explains how the climate has shifted, “It no longer feels like we have six seasons. Either it gets unbearably hot in summer or devastatingly cold in winter. The rainy season now only brings destruction—of houses, cattle, trees, land, and water. You look at the ground and you find layers of salt and cracked ground, begging for water.” It seems that life was simpler. There were fewer calamities, and nature’s cycles more predictable. Her words convey the unspoken anguish of previous generations, now dwarfed by the relentless force of climate change.

Seeds of Resistance in Burigoalini

In Upazila Burigoalini, paddies glitter under the scorching gaze of an unforgiving sun. Parimal Mandal (35), wipes sweat as he toils along with his sister Maloti Rani Mandal (32) and wife Namita Rani Mandal (30), barefooted and toiling in the heat, they struggle to clear mud from their cropland — transforming it into a pond to store rainwater and raise fish during the monsoon season. The heat is increasing, but they persevere, for this land has been the livelihood of their family forever.

“This soil nourished my father and his father before him,” Parimal describes. “But now, even the rains no longer come when we need them to. Salt water from nearby shrimp farms has seeped into the canals and poisoned the earth.” But in spite of the relentless advances of the shrimp farms, there are some in Burigoalini who refuse to give up. They are resisting. We do not wish to toil over another’s gher,” Namita says with

a defiant tone. “We desire to cultivate rice, feed our children, and send them to school.”

Against the odds, they have held meetings, planted salt-resistant rice, and managed to save the remaining freshwater sources for irrigation. With the monsoon rains looming, farmers work together to mend gates at canals and prepare seed beds. Their action, though subtle, is a strong statement of resistance—a silent uprising against the shifting environment. Every inch of tilled soil and every drop of water transported is a tiny triumph in their battle to live.

Fight for Survival

Climate change in Bangladesh is not a number—it is the everyday reality of millions. As the groundwater levels decrease and saltwater enters, the lives of people are being redefined. Their battle is not merely for resources, but for dignity, education, and a future that honors their unwavering resilience. These people are not merely surviving, but they are resisting, adapting, and fighting for a tomorrow that will accommodate their strength and hope.

Farmers clearing mud from their cropland, to transform it into a pond to store rainwater and raise fish. Aadi Burigoalini, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.







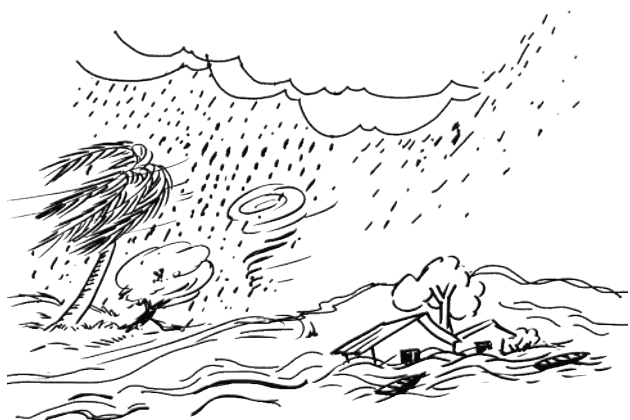
Community members wade through the flooded waters, trying to salvage what they can from the submerged land. Feni, Chattogram. 29 August 2024. Md Sariful Islam/Oxfam



When the
Forests Fall



Salinity levels are causing the death of trees, evident in the fallen debris scattered in the water. Burigoalini, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.



A man carrying cut-down trees from the dense Keura forests, once thrived in Hasher Char. Dhalghata, Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. 30 April 2025.

Each year, a little more
of the forest disappears
– sometimes overnight,
sometimes over the
months.

At the edge of the Bay of Bengal, where the sea kisses the land and the wind carries the scent of salt and mangroves, lies the small fishing village of Suritala in Dhalghata union of Maheshkhali, with around 100 families. Mobina (50), a fisherwoman and mother of five, had lived up here casting nets into the sea, drying fish on the sun-baked sand, and taking refuge behind the dense green curtain of Kerabons – the Keura forests, located on the south side, Hasher Char, which had long stood like silent guardians against storms and surges. But the guardians are vanishing.

Each year, a little more of the forest disappears – sometimes overnight, sometimes over the months. Mobina says, “Men from Maheshkhali come to Hasher Char with boats and cut the keura trees, load them in silence and take away.” Hasher Char, once a green sanctuary teeming with birdsong and an untapped gem for eco-tourism, now stands barren in many areas.

Without the trees, the tides no longer pause, and the storms are fiercer than ever. Each monsoon now comes with dread. “Our homes – built with thatch and plastic – fell apart easier than before. Saltwater crept into the entire community, and fish grew scarce,” she adds. When the sea devours the shore, it takes away their livelihoods, their shelters, and their hope.

In many parts of Maheshkhali, ecological damage has been caused by deforestation. For instance, looking over the horizon beyond Badarkhali Bridge, one can easily see that once, this bridge connected two realms – on one side, the wild kerabons and jhaubons; on the other, a forest that breathed for the community. Now, the forests are gone. In their place stand unplanned shrimp farms, which are also used for



In Charpara, where kerabons and jhaubons once thrived, vast patches of forest are being cleared. Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. 28 April 2025.

salt-harvesting. Such farming businesses have taken root where the trees once grew.

In Charpara, once lush with kerabons and jhaubons, many patches are cleared – not by organized criminals, but by their own neighbors. Firewood is needed. Timber is needed. There is no alternative. The forest is their storehouse in crisis, and the crisis is unending.

And then there is this dangerous salty ecosystem in Satkhira's Shyamnagar region– the forests, trees and agricultural land that vanish in silence. The majority of the area is filled with

unplanned shrimp farms, salt-harvesting lands and thousands of witnesses.

All these places tell a story, a story of unchecked power, lack of conservation and supervision, ignorance from the authorities who still turn away, and systems that forgot the last-mile communities.

Organizations and institutions have been documenting tree and agricultural loss, taking photos, and sharing their stories. Cox's Bazar and Satkhira environmental groups have mapped forest patches, reported illegal logging, and are constantly attempting to make people aware of the problems. These regions must have strong and sustainable advocacy, laws enforced with care, not just signatures. Forest officers must walk the trails, not just file reports.

Climate adaptation education is a necessity for youth, not just leaving them to inherit disasters. The climate crisis is already here in places like Sutariya, where policymakers need to look beyond cities and statistics. "When the forests fall, we fall," Mobina says.

In coastal Bangladesh, where illegal deforestation, rising seas, and climate inaction are colliding, it is a wake-up call. There is a real, immediate, and human crisis. Action is needed, not just empathy: community-driven awareness, government regulation, sustainable alternatives, and, above all, respect for frontline voices like Mobina.

Fisherwoman Mobina (50) stands alone by the sea where the community is battling the effects of ecological damage. Dhalghata, Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. 30 April 2025.



An old, abandoned cyclone center in Matarbari, surrounded by salt-farming lands and gher. Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar. 28 April 2025.



Brick kilns built by clearing croplands or natural forests are harmful for the ecological balance. Koiya Bazar, Batiyaghata, Khulna. 28 May 2025.

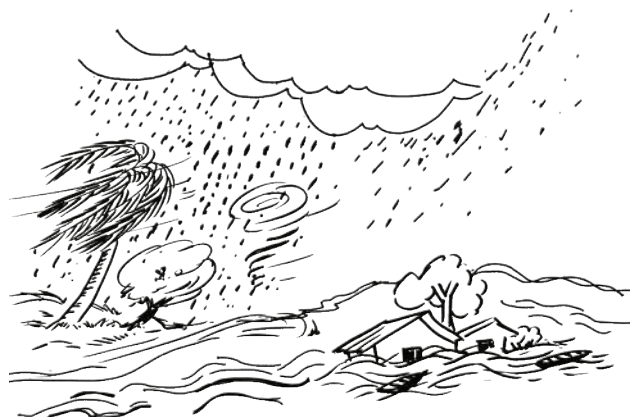




**Ripples of Change:
Water, Women,
and Hope**



Binodini (35) collecting water from the RO system installed in the community to mitigate the water crisis. Dhankhali, Ramjannagar, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 24 April 2025.



The stories from Ramjannagar and Koikhali remind us that sustainable change begins with local leadership and inclusive innovation.

Shurodhani Munda (28) prepares her son for school in the morning. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

For decades, the people of coastal Bangladesh have quietly battled a persistent water crisis. Ironically, their struggle isn't due to a lack of water—water is everywhere. The real issue lies in the fact that much of it is undrinkable. Saltwater, pollution, and the aftermath of frequent natural disasters have contaminated the once-reliable water sources, making them unsafe for daily use. Rivers, ponds, and wells that were once vital to these communities have become hazardous, forcing residents to search for alternative, often unreliable, sources of clean water.

This paradox—water in abundance but none of it safe to drink—has left these communities facing a continuous struggle for health, survival, and basic needs. Reliance on contaminated water exposes families to waterborne diseases, creating serious health risks and hindering economic growth. What should be a basic necessity has become a luxury, and the long-standing fight for access to clean water remains an urgent and ongoing challenge.

Salinity from rising sea levels crept into rivers and ponds, further poisoning the fields. For families like those of Binodini (35) from Ramjannagar union, fetching drinking water once meant hours of walking, balancing plastic jugs, and relying on muddy pond water for cooking and cleaning. “But recently, things have begun to shift, since the River Osmosis System was installed,” she says excitedly. “We take the saline water from the pond, and this system cleans it. Make it sweet. Drinkable. The water we drink now is clean for us and our children. The stomach problems have started to ease up.”



Women collecting water from the only freshwater pond in their community. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

The River Osmosis System, a solar-powered reverse osmosis (RO) unit installed through an Oxfam Bangladesh-BTS-Codec partnership under the project called “Blue Economy and Inclusive Development for Climate Justice (BID4CJ)”, has turned the tide in Ramjannagar. Unlike traditional pond filters that often fail during floods, the RO system can handle higher salinity and provide consistent, safe drinking water year-round.

Also miles away in the Munda community of Koikhali union, another progress had unfolded — led by the same project. “Many houses now have access to clean water, and they do not have to walk anywhere to collect that anymore,” says Shurdhoni Munda (28). “We collect from the sky,” Supriya Munda (19) smiles, gesturing at the barrels. “The Rainwater

Harvesting System — or RWHS — has changed everything for us.” Their community had installed these simple systems to catch, filter, and store rainwater during the monsoon, when clean water was most abundant. Before RWHS, women in the Munda community would walk over three kilometres to fetch drinkable water.

Now, thanks to the initiative, they have water close to home. The system was built by the community, for the community, with women and girls like Shurdhoni and Supriya at the center. They don’t just carry water anymore. They manage it and maintain the tanks themselves. “The water stored is now sufficient for at least 6 to 8 months for a family of 4 members,” Shurdhoni explains.

Still, both communities know more needs to be done. “We need training,” says Binodini in Ramjannagar. “More of us should know how to fix the RO machine if it breaks. And we need more units.”

It is imperative to involve local people in water committees, especially women, who bear the brunt of the water problem. The experts suggested combining RWHS, RO systems, and sand filters to create water resilience year-round.

The stories from Ramjannagar and Koikhali remind us that sustainable change begins with local leadership and inclusive innovation. As the climate continues to shift, communities like these are not just surviving — they are shaping the future, one drop at a time.

Women collecting water from a pond at Samabay Gucchagram. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 June 2024. Abdul Khaleq/BTS

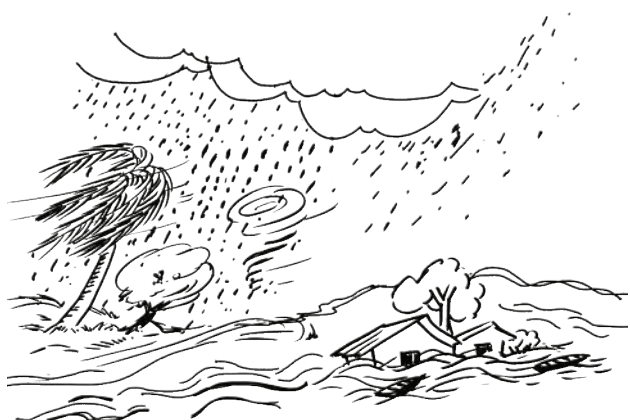


A woman wearing a yellow sari with a colorful floral pattern and a red headscarf is standing in a greenhouse. She is holding a green hose connected to a blue water barrel on a wooden stand. She is watering a series of terracotta pots arranged on a metal frame. The greenhouse has a wooden structure and a net covering. In the background, there are trees and a fence.

Sustainable Agriculture: Cultivating Resilience



Farmer and green entrepreneur Nilkamal Sarkar (32) posing with organic vegetables produced using eco-friendly fertilizer. Khutikata, Kashimari, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 23 April 2025.



Sandha Rani Sarkar (50) uses a pipe connected to a water barrel to water potted seeds, adapting to climate challenges and rising soil salinity. Khutikata, Kashimari, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 23 April 2025.

A region rapidly warming, with rising waters and erratic rainfall disrupting the balance, these women work to restore rather than deplete the environment.

In the low-lying coastal belt region, where rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns are daily realities, a quiet revolution is taking root—one mangrove at a time. At its core is Anjuman Ara (39) a mangrove seed and plant seller based in Shyamnagar. As a mother of three and the sole breadwinner of her family, Anjuman once ran a small snack shop. Over the past two years, her growing connection to trees and plants, along with training on climate justice through the BID4CJ project, have transformed her livelihood and elevated her social standing.

Anjuman Ara began by collecting seeds from riverbanks and experimenting in her backyard. Today, her nursery is a living catalogue of salt-tolerant plants and climate-friendly mangrove species, fruity and colorful trees that thrive in saline environments. With passion, she speaks about the potential of salt-tolerant plants and various mangrove species to combat the region's escalating heat and prolonged dry spells, saying, "These plants are more than just trees; they are shields for the land, the people, and our future." Through her tireless efforts to protect and conserve the environment, she has become a respected climate activist, known for training others in mangrove nursery activities.

But the story doesn't end with reforestation. Alongside ecological restoration, a wave of sustainable agricultural opportunities is emerging. In different communities, people are actively harvesting honey, prompted by the blossoms of mangrove trees, thanks to the project's training and support. After repeated attempts, failures, and overbearing efforts by women in climate-vulnerable locations, vegetable gardens and cattle farming are flourishing.



Purnima Munda (28) poses in her salt-tolerant vegetable garden. Koikhali, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

“The Sundarbans offer us a chance to thrive sustainably, and not just survive,” says Shafali Bibi (40), a honey collector from Datinakhali. For over 20 years, she and her husband have collected honey, initially selling it to local Mahajans for minimal returns. Despite years of effort, they struggled to expand without guidance. However, with the support of the project, Shafali’s story took a transformative turn. She now travels nationwide, showcasing her honey at fairs and selling it online across the country. “I’ve trained over 30 women within and beyond my community in honey harvesting,” she shares. With further support and a larger training space, she plans to empower even more women to build livelihoods that honor and protect the Sundarbans.

“Cultivating vegetables in our region is a great challenge due to the saline soil, making it crucial to understand which crops can thrive here. Many people lose hope after a few unsuccessful attempts, but gardening in this environment requires more than just basic skills. It involves deep patience and enduring perseverance that can drain both physical and emotional energy,” explains Purnima Munda (28), a housewife from Koikhali, who has overcome these obstacles since last year, with knowledge from the project trainings.

Her success in vegetable gardening not only benefits her own family by providing fresh produce, but also creates an unexpected opportunity for earning money. Purnima now sells surplus vegetables to her neighbors, many of whom struggle to find affordable, locally grown food. By doing so, she has not only improved her family’s food security but also contributed to the local economy, helping those in her community who are in need.

A region rapidly warming, with rising waters and erratic rainfall disrupting the balance, these women work to restore rather than deplete the environment. They are dedicated to creating eco-friendly livelihoods through an ethical approach, where products are organic, climate-conscious, and benefit the entire community. Their efforts demonstrate that solutions to climate change can often be found in the deep, intertwined roots of sustainable agricultural practices, offering hope for a more resilient and harmonious future.

Anjuman Ara (39) stands happily in her salt-tolerant mangrove nursery holding seeds in her hands. Badoghata, Munshiganj, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.



Bottles of collected honey from the Sundarbans. Datinakhali,
Burigoalini, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.



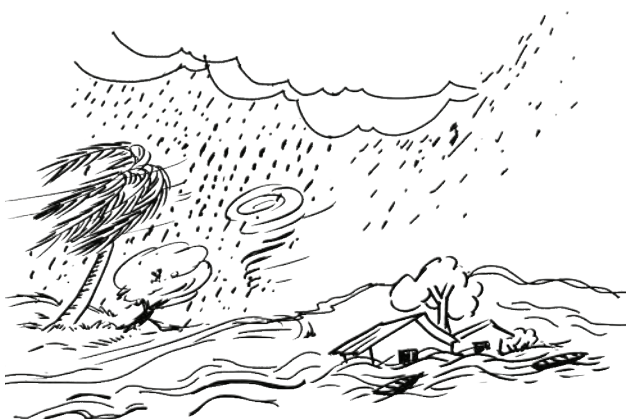


A photograph of a man and a woman in a rural setting, both smiling and holding large, shallow, woven baskets. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark brown polo shirt with a small logo on the chest and a woven cap. The woman, on the right, is wearing a red and white patterned sari with a red border. They are standing in front of a background of green trees and foliage. A semi-transparent white box with a red vertical bar on the left side is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Ethical Green Entrepreneurship: Driving Climate Resilience'.

Ethical Green Entrepreneurship: Driving Climate Resilience



Nilima Rani Das (40) smiles brightly while making baskets using date leaves. Gopalpur, Bhurulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.



Niranjan Das (50) and his wife Anchali Rani Das (35) posing happily with their eco-friendly baskets made of cane and bamboo. Gopalpur, Bhurulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

Specializing in biodegradable and eco-friendly products such as baskets, mats, and fruit holders, the couple has reinvigorated their craft through training from the BID4CJ project.

Climate-vulnerable coastal regions in Bangladesh are embracing green entrepreneurship, driven by Oxfam Bangladesh's BID4CJ project, which empowers locals to create sustainable, ethical businesses that foster climate and economic resilience.

Transforming Agriculture: Turning Waste into Value

Nilkamal Sarkar (32) from Kashimari village exemplifies the power of combining traditional knowledge with sustainable innovation. After receiving training from the BID4CJ project in 2023, Nilkamal learned how to produce vermicompost—an eco-friendly fertilizer made by composting organic waste with earthworms. “Climate change and salinity have caused severe losses to our crops, and we were relying heavily on chemical fertilizers,” Nilkamal shares. “The training showed me that it is possible to create harmless, organic fertilizers and even turn it into a business.”

With his family's support, Nilkamal began producing vermicompost, turning organic waste into valuable natural fertilizer. Today, they supply this green alternative to farmers across the nation, enriching and revitalizing the soil while reducing harmful chemicals. “We've learned how to turn garbage into gold,” Nilkamal proudly states. “It's beneficial for both the soil and our family.” He has already taught 10 entrepreneurs the art of vermicomposting and plans to mentor even more, helping to transition his community towards sustainable farming practices and away from harmful chemicals.



Vermicompost, made from earthworms and organic waste, cow waste, etc., is a valuable gardening and agricultural resource. Khutikata, Kashmiri, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 23 April 2025.

Reviving Bamboo and Cane Traditions: Crafting a Sustainable Future

In the village of Gopalpur, Niranjana Das (50) and his wife, Anchali Rani Das (35), have fused tradition with sustainability in their cane and bamboo handicraft business. Specializing in biodegradable and eco-friendly products such as baskets, mats, and fruit holders, the couple has reinvigorated their craft through training from the BID4CJ project. “We always knew how to make these items, but we didn’t know how to turn them into a business,” says Niranjana. “For years, we pursued other livelihoods while our family tradition struggled to survive.”

Thanks to the project, Niranjana and Anchali have improved their product quality and market reach, transforming their traditional skills into a successful green business. Anchali, a weaver by trade, now trains other women in the community, teaching them how to craft these sustainable products. “This is our family legacy, and it’s also our income,” she says. “We’re proud to know our work doesn’t harm the environment.”

Nilima’s Dream: Sustainable Date Leaf Handicrafts

For Nilima Rani Das (40), green entrepreneurship was always a personal dream. Growing up in Gopalpur, she was inspired by her father and grandmother, who crafted products from date leaves. But financial constraints and a lack of opportunity kept this dream out of reach—until she joined the BID4CJ project.

With intensive training and workshops, Nilima was able to turn her passion for date leaf crafts into a thriving business. She now makes and sells date leaf handicrafts, including baskets and holders, to local markets and NGOs. “This isn’t just a way of living for me—it’s a dream come true,” Nilima reflects. “And because it’s made from local sustainable materials, it’s also environmentally friendly.” Nilima’s success has enabled her to mentor other women, showing them how they too can transform their hobbies into sustainable businesses.

Nurturing Nature: Planting for a Greener Tomorrow

In the low-lying area of Datinakhali, near the Sundarbans, Nurjahan (62) plays a vital role in reforestation efforts aimed





Australian
Aid



মেসার্স গাজী অয়েল মিল
নিরাপদ তেলের মিল
(Safe Oil Mill)



প্রকল্প সংক্রান্ত যেকোন অধিকারতা ও মতামত প্রদানের জন্য QR কোডটি স্ক্যান করুন

সরিষার তেলমেশিন

at mitigating the impacts of floods and storms. Working at a local nursery, Nurjahan helps raise indigenous seeds such as keura and neem. These seeds are used in the BID4CJ project's reforestation initiatives. These trees serve as natural barriers against high tides and winds, bringing hope to a village plagued by climate challenges.

"Tree planting is crucial," says Nurjahan. "They cool the air, prevent soil erosion, and protect our homes during storms. They're like children—you care for them, and they give back in abundance." Nurjahan's work extends beyond her livelihood;

it's a labor of love and a contribution to her community's long-term resilience.

Building Justice and Conserving Nature

The stories of Nilkamal, Niranjan, Nilima, and Nurjahan are powerful examples of how local action can create a sustainable, ethical future. With the potential inclusion of their products in Oxfam shops, these entrepreneurs can access global markets, connecting people and the

planet in meaningful ways. In a world where the climate crisis exacerbates inequality, initiatives like BID4CJ provide ground-up solutions that foster prosperity, reduce dependence on the Sundarbans' resources, and promote environmental stewardship. Through green entrepreneurship, these individuals are building a more resilient, just, and sustainable future for all.



Md. Salam Gazi (40) received machinery and training from the project to transform his oil production and mill environment-friendly. Brahmarshashon, Bhurulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

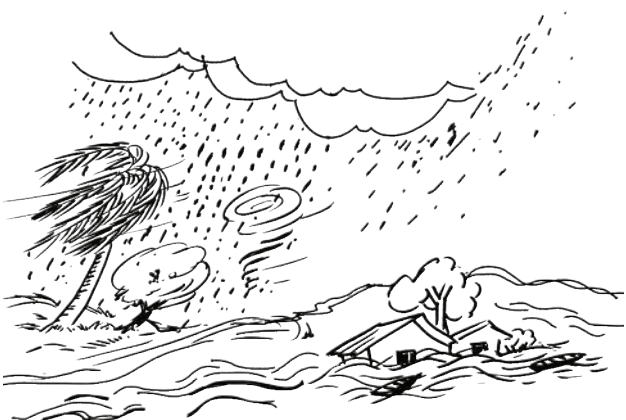
Anchali Rani Das (35) making eco-friendly basket using bamboo. Gopalpur, Bhurulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

Climate Feminists: Breaking Barriers





Portrait of gracefully smiling CBO leader and climate activist Badrunnahar Kali (50). Purba Konakhali, Chokoria, Cox's Bazar. 29 April 2025.



We listen, discuss, and organize community gatherings to mitigate climate change. We prepare residents for disasters and collaborate with families to reimagine their shared responsibilities.

CBO leader Daulatunnesa Dola (42) conducting a meeting with the community women. Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.

A quiet uprising is taking place in disaster-prone regions far from bustling cities and out of the spotlight—not among the popular elite, but instead at village gatherings and community spaces. Two women are at the center of this course of action: Daulatunnesa Dola (42), a vocal community-based organization (CBO) leader and Badrunnahar Kali (50), an ex-corporate professional turned climate activist.

Though their lives have never intersected, their work is bound together by the unyielding pursuit of advocating for gender justice, climate justice and inclusive development through awareness building.

Dola: The Strength of Samata Gucchogram

Dola grew up in a village under Shymanagar, where girls were expected to stay quiet in public. But she always spoke up, raising her voice about the community's vulnerability to disasters. She also stood up for women against social, religious, and family pressures. These early experiences shaped her strong resilience in the face of climate change and gender inequality.

Dola leads a CBO consisting of women and men from at least 50 households which focuses on climate issues affecting the community, and promotes equal participation of women in climate action. "Strengthening the bond on climate justice while addressing violence and discrimination against women, the CBO focuses on raising awareness about their reproductive health and promoting education for all children

in the community,” Dola explains. “We listen, discuss, and organize community gatherings to mitigate climate change. We prepare residents for disasters and collaborate with families to reimagine their shared responsibilities. We further encourage small yet profound changes—like budgeting together or prioritizing their children’s well-being.”

Dola faced ridicule but remained steadfast in her mission to empower women. She reflects, “I am helping women believe that they can fight for their rights, demand respect, and be equal role models. Feminism is a collective approach, and together, we can turn women from victims of climate crises into survivors of climate justice.”

Kali: A Voice of Change in Purba Konakhali

In Chokoria, hundreds of kilometres away, Badrunnahar Kali’s story unfolds. An ex-corporate professional in Dhaka who left substantial performance bonuses and strategy meetings 8 years ago to move to her husband’s ancestral village. Some considered it a step backwards. Others questioned her interest in serving the community, “Are you planning to run for the election?”

However, Kali wanted to change how women are treated, how their voices are ignored, and how their opinions are not taken seriously. She focused on building connections and addressing women’s challenges. During COVID-19, she helped people register for vaccines and observed gender inequalities, which fueled her determination to raise awareness.

She then guided local women in gardening, farming, climate preparation, and mobile literacy. “I counsel both men and women for hours to resolve family conflicts. My aim has always been to reduce the climate crisis impacts by engaging men and women in climate initiatives.” Kali advocates collective decision-making and accountability, which disassembles traditional gender roles. By taking collective action, the community’s resistance to environmental pressures is reinforced, and respect and equality between genders are also promoted. “I have been able to work with local stakeholders on advocacy and policy interventions now and then to ensure justice for my community,” she states with deep conviction.

Carrying the Change Forward

Dola and Kali may have never met, but their impact ripples through the fields and households in their communities. Along with the inherent power they both carry, Oxfam Bangladesh’s BID4CJ project has paved their way towards transformative leadership through awareness trainings on climate and gender justice designed to support women and increase self-awareness. Through their feminist climate movement, they encourage others to participate. For them, climate action is a task for all, through addressing gender equality and climate consciousness. By drawing on diverse perspectives and experiences, this inclusive approach promotes social justice and enhances climate resilience.


Potrait of happily smiling CBO leader and climate activist
Daulatunnesa Dola (42). Dokkhin Pashchim Atulia,
Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 20 April 2025.





CBO leader and climate activist Badrunnahar Kali (50) walking inside her community. Purba Konakhali, Chokoria, Cox's Bazar. 29 April 2025.

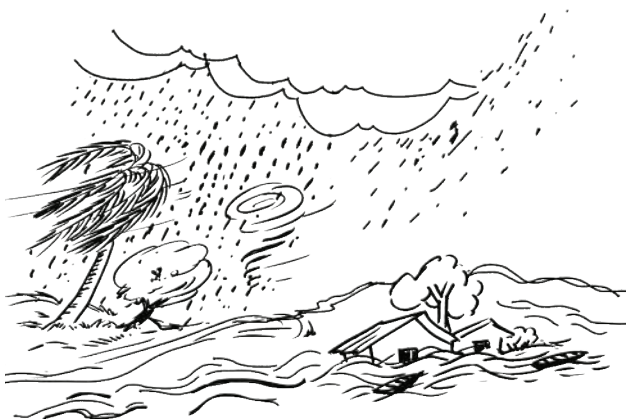


A group of women and a child are seated in a circle on red plastic chairs in a community meeting. The women are dressed in traditional Indian attire, including sarees and headscarves. One woman in the center is wearing a pink sari and is gesturing with her hands while speaking. To her left, a woman in a blue and white sari is holding a young child. Another woman in a grey sari is holding a notebook. The background features a red curtain with a white and yellow leaf pattern. On the wall to the right, there is a mural of a woman in a green sari fishing in a river. On the wall to the left, there are several posters and a small electrical panel.

Justice in Action: Frontline Leaders for a Changing Climate



A staff member engaging with community members during a meeting facilitated by BID4CJ project. Pashchimpara, Ballavpur, Ashashuni, Shyamnagar. 22 April 2025.



Initiatives they have taken have not gone unnoticed. Resources are limited, and local elites have shown resistance.

BTS staff Salma Parvin (middle) engages with CBO members during a meeting facilitated by BID4CJ project. Mundapara, Koikhali, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. 21 April 2025.

On the small island of Maheshkhali, off the coast of Bangladesh, the effects of climate change stand out and are immediate. The threat of rising sea levels, saltwater flooding, vanishing livelihoods, and erratic weather is no longer distant but a daily reality. Despite these mounting dangers, people's action remains hopeful.

Taking the lead in this effort are dedicated local Community-Based Organisation (CBO) members and leaders like Apurba Dey and Khin Khin, guided and enabled by Oxfam Bangladesh's BID4CJ project, aiming to bring climate justice and community well-being within reach of the masses.

"After completing my studies at Chattogram, I returned to my village in 2021. Since my childhood, I have witnessed people affected by severe cyclones, rising temperatures, and environmental devastation, such as deforestation and land acquisition for shrimp farms. These experiences have deeply influenced me and motivated me to act," says Apurbo Dey (23), a certified medical assistant and CBO leader from Choto Maheshkhali.

"We established a network of youth to support victimized communities. Through public sessions and community movements, I became more involved in the project. I now lead an 18-member CBO, founded last year, that raises awareness about climate change, promotes environmental sustainability, and encourages civic action."

Khin Khin (34) on the other hand, was born into a family of traditional wool-weavers at Rakhain Para, and explains, "When our village is affected by climate change and seawater,

weaving becomes difficult due to saltwater intrusion. Our mobility is restricted and our livelihoods are threatened. We lack cyclone shelter, and the entire Choto Maheshkhali union suffers from these challenges.”

“Much of the surrounding area has been turned into shrimp farms, increasing flash floods and vulnerability. These cyclical climate calamities compelled me to act. I began organizing community meetings with women, local leaders, and youth, which soon turned into action. Through the project, I joined the CBO in my village. I have since worked on climate resilience for poor households, particularly women and indigenous people,” she adds.

Apurbo and Khin Khin independently and together provide assistance with a variety of effective activities to build community knowledge and resilience. “We attend CBO meetings once a month to review intricate climate concepts with the project team, where we receive effective roadmaps to achieving our climate and gender equality goals. We conduct community sessions, where, whether it’s sea level rise, deforestation or global warming, we try to inform people of the likely reasons behind it. Climate rights are included there as well, so people know they deserve a safe world,” says Apurba.

“We need local and national authorities to prioritize women’s safety and inclusion. We need to ensure girls get an equal education and the chance to make their own choices in life,” Khin Khin states. CBOs also aim to create women’s safe spaces to share how climate change affects them through food insecurity, displacement, or health issues.

The sessions are finalized on community-crafted safety plans, such as cyclone preparedness, clean water availability, and emergency response systems. Partnerships have also been developed by CBO members and leaders with NGOs, media professionals, and researchers to represent the voice of the Maheshkhali people. They participate in district forums under the BID4CJ climate justice network. In these forums, they bring to the forefront the distinctive challenges of island communities.

Initiatives they have taken have not gone unnoticed. Resources are limited, and local elites have shown resistance. Still, the confidence they have been able to establish with the people, and the actual successes they’ve been able to achieve—such as raising awareness, improving disaster management, and youth empowerment—fill them anew with resolve.

Through the tireless efforts of Apurbo, Khin Khin, and their network, residents on this island remain informed, prepared, and enabled. Aside from tackling climate change, they are also pushing back against systems causing inequality and insisting on a just, sustainable world. As Khin Khin concludes, “Climate justice is not just about the environment. It’s about dignity, equity, and not leaving anyone behind.”







