



Integrated Development Programme (IDP)



INTRO PAGE:

BRAC's Integrated Development Programme (IDP) works to build the resilience of communities constrained by geographical, social, and climate-induced challenges. It deepens the delivery of essential services, expands livelihood opportunities, and enhances coping mechanisms for sustained well-being.

The following pages introduce IDP's origins, core Philosophy, theory of change, operational modalities – along with narrative content you can adapt for diverse purposes.

We invite you to explore, and share your thoughts.

For questions or suggestions, please contact: idp.communication@brac.net

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ORIGIN STORY

The story of Integrated Development Programme (IDP) begins where BRAC itself began - in the haors (wetland) of Sulla, Sunamganj, in 1972. As BRAC's first post-war initiative, often called "**the Mother Project**," it marked the start of a lifelong commitment to stand beside people left behind - those living in poverty, isolation, and exclusion.

Over the years, BRAC expanded into health, non-formal education (NFE), water and sanitation (WASH), livelihoods, and microfinance - always striving to include those furthest from opportunity, aligning its work with national progress toward the SDGs. **Yet a culture of reflection remained: was it enough? Had years of work in Sulla created lasting change?**

BRAC's **Research and Evaluation Division (RED)** explored these questions. Their studies revealed that while Bangladesh made progress in education, health, and income, BRAC's own SDG-related progress was uneven geographically. Hard-to-reach regions - **the "pocket areas" of poverty** were still being left behind.

To address this, BRAC prioritised disadvantaged communities and designed a holistic approach to reduce multidimensional poverty. Thus, the **Integrated Development Programme (IDP)** was born.

BRAC's research revealed unequal access to its services among participants, prompting **affirmative action to prioritise left-behind and disadvantaged groups**. From this reflection emerged Integrated Development Programme (IDP) - **a holistic, integrated approach designed to reach hard-to-reach communities**. Three key factors drove its creation:

Three key findings shaped its creation:

UNEQUAL REACH:

Despite decades of work, coverage in Sulla remained around 10%. Conventional sector-based approaches failed to reach the last mile.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY:

Poverty in the region was acute and multidimensional. Education levels were low, health facilities scarce, and although union parishad buildings existed, services were absent. No single intervention could address such overlapping challenges.

LACK OF INTEGRATION:

Most of BRAC's programmes worked in silos, missing opportunities for collaboration and deeper impact.

Formally launched in **2012** and operational by **2013**, IDP began in Derai and Baniachong upazilas. Its model enabled one frontline staff member to deliver multiple services, supported by strong sectoral supervision to maintain quality.

Community meetings led by programme organisers helped identify household needs and priorities, fostering collaboration among teams that once worked in silos. Despite initial tensions, a rapid RED study validated the pilot's effectiveness - reducing costs by 34% while significantly expanding outreach and impact.

Today, Integrated Development Programme stands as a comprehensive model for holistic, community-driven development - confirming that when problems are complex, only integrated solutions can create lasting change. It continues to serve as a learning ground for young professionals to understand programme integration in practice, demonstrating that one person and one vision can do many things.

Note: This origin story was developed based on interviews with Ahmed Mushtaque Raja Chowdhury and Anna Minj

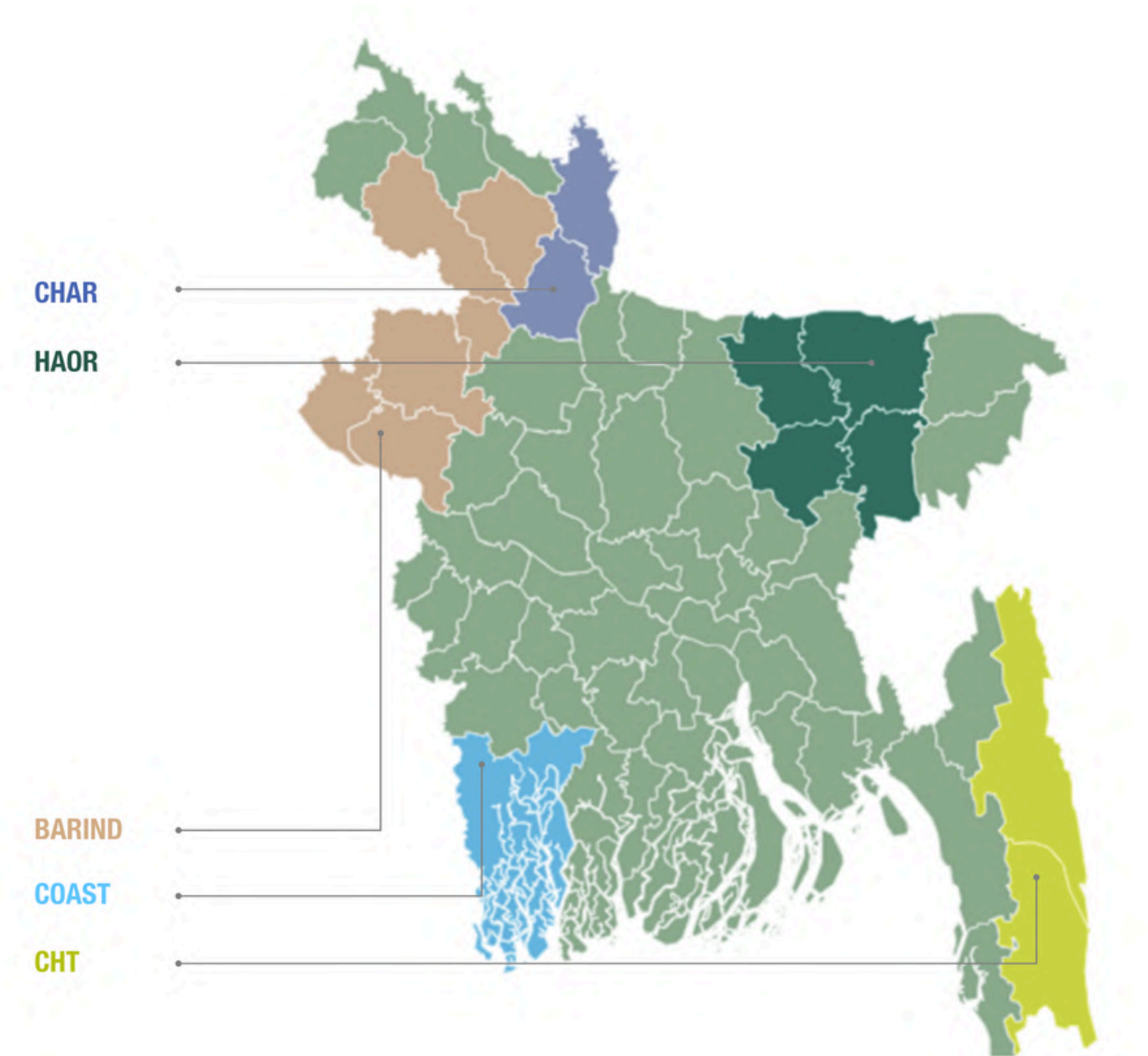
DEFINING HARD-TO-REACH: THE COMMUNITIES WE STAND BESIDE

At BRAC, we believe progress must reach every life - no matter how distant or disadvantaged. Yet, there **are places where entire communities remain outside the usual pathways of development**. These are the **hard-to-reach, defined not only by geography, but by layers of invisibility, exclusion, and vulnerability**.

They live in **haor (wetlands), chars, coastal plains, the Barind region, and hilly terrains such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts**. Seasonal isolation and poor infrastructure make access difficult, leaving them disconnected from mainstream services.

But distance isn't the only barrier. In these areas, roads turn to mud, clinics are a day's walk away, schools barely function, and clean water is scarce. Government and NGO presence is minimal, and voices often go unheard.

Many are also socially marginalised - indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and caste groups who have long borne the weight of exclusion, often without representation in local or national planning.



CORE THOUGHT

BEGINNING AT THE LAST MILE



At BRAC, we don't just reach the last mile, we begin there. Where rivers swell and roads vanish, where hills rise between a child and a classroom, and where women wait generations for the dignity of choice. Because development should never stop where the map ends.

Real change rises from the peripheries, not the centre - from the haor, char, hills, Barind, and coastal belts, where people have long adapted and led against the tide.

Integrated Development Programme (IDP) was built for those long left out - communities isolated by geography, exclusion, and climate vulnerability. IDP doesn't offer a single solution; it builds pathways that are integrated, resilient, and locally led.

In these regions, a single shock can undo years of progress. A tidal surge can erase homes, a landslide cut off access, or failed rains collapse incomes. These are not rare disruptions but part of daily life, making poverty cyclical, persistent, and intergenerational.

IDP connects what poverty has kept apart - health, education, livelihoods, water, financial inclusion, women's empowerment, youth development, and local governance. These services are linked through one system of opportunity that supports people at every stage of life.

Our frontline colleagues aren't visitors, they are part of the fabric of change. With empathy and humility, they co-create solutions with Indigenous women, climate migrants, people with disabilities, and families left behind.

Guided by BRAC's science of delivery - innovate, pilot, perfect, and scale, IDP builds resilience, helping communities prepare, adapt, and thrive amid floods, droughts, market shocks, and crises. Every action has purpose, every step is integrated, every outcome shared - enabling families to rise from poverty with dignity and strength.

"Beginning at the last mile" is more than a strategy. It's a commitment to courage, empathy, and consistency. It drives us to build a society rooted in hope, dignity, and human potential, just as Abed Bhai envisioned an equal world for all.

**WHO
WE ARE**



Vision:

To build a resilient society free from poverty, inequality, and marginalisation.

Mission:

To partner with people living in vulnerable conditions to enhance their livelihoods, build resilience, and strengthen their capacity to cope with adversity through access to essential, integrated services.

Programme descriptor:

Despite Bangladesh's notable progress in poverty reduction, millions remain trapped in extreme and multidimensional poverty, particularly in remote and marginalised communities underserved by essential services. Integrated Development Programme (IDP) works to build the resilience of these communities by deepening access to critical services, expanding livelihood opportunities, and enhancing coping capacities against social, geographical, and climate-induced challenges.

WHAT WE DO

Integrated Development Programme (IDP) carries forward BRAC's legacy of delivering holistic development through a community-centric approach. At its core are women-led **Village Development Organisations (VDOs)** - local service hubs that foster community participation, women's empowerment, and locally driven solutions for vulnerable households.

IDP delivers integrated services through these hubs across key areas of life - education, health, skills, legal awareness, and access to safe water and sanitation. Services reach targeted households through four delivery channels: **direct interventions, synergies with BRAC-wide programmes, linkages with government schemes, and private sector engagement.**

Aligned with **Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10**, IDP works to close service gaps and promote inclusive, resilient development.



Programme Organiser's reach at wider community



Gender equality and women empowerment



Wash



Healthcare



Education



Skills Development



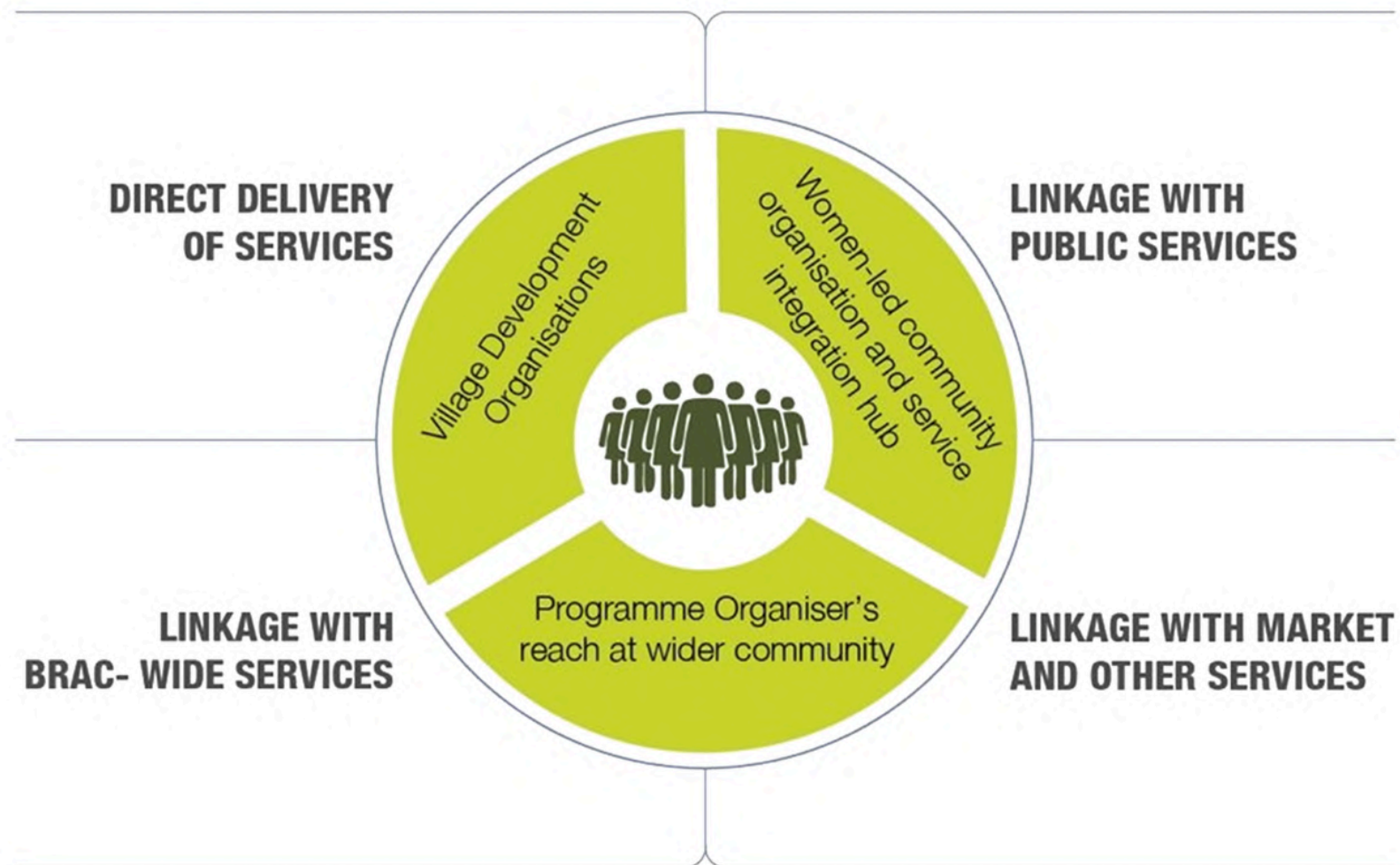
Agriculture and food security



Ultra-poor graduation

**HOW WE
DO IT**

INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY HUB AND APPROACHES



Holistic approach

Recognising the multidimensional nature of poverty, IDP works through women-led Village Development Organisations (VDOs), using an integrated approach to deliver essential services to the most hard-to-reach communities.



Right targeting

Acknowledging that the most vulnerable often remain unseen, IDP uses participatory community assessments to identify and support households facing geographic, social, and climate-induced challenges.

Climate integration

Understanding that climate change intensifies inequality, IDP promotes locally led adaptation – empowering VDOs to lead community-driven resilience aligned with BRAC's Climate Resilience Framework (CRF) and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP).

Turning knowledge into action

Recognising that empowerment begins with awareness, IDP equips women and girls with knowledge, leadership, and confidence to act - transforming information into action and driving collective, community-led change.

HOW WE OPERATE

IDP's operations are centered on community participation, contextual solutions, and adaptive learning, structured around three pillars: Survive, Grow, and Sustain - to help marginalised households graduate from poverty with resilience.



Survive: Expands access to essential services and builds agency among women and marginalised groups, addressing health, nutrition, education, and WASH needs.

Grow: Promotes sustainable, climate-adaptive livelihoods through improved access to skills, entrepreneurship, financial services, and markets.

Sustain: Builds the capacity of households and communities to manage risks, respond to shocks, and protect progress through Climate Information Services and better natural resource management.

IDP continued to evolve, deepening services in hard-to-reach communities, strengthening collaboration within BRAC, and learning from both challenges and achievements. The programme expanded to new geographies: the Haor wetlands, northern chars, Barind, CHT hills, and the coastal belt - areas marked by social isolation, remoteness, climate stress, and limited public services.

Rooted in the grassroots, IDP integrates multiple services to meet diverse community needs through a pragmatic, participatory approach. Despite persistent challenges of isolation, poor infrastructure, and climate shocks, IDP remains committed to building community resilience through long-term, coordinated action.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS



Stakeholders are central to the success of IDP.

Operating in some of Bangladesh's most hard-to-reach, climate-affected, and socially excluded communities, it builds partnerships that strengthen and expand service delivery. Our stakeholders include government agencies, BRAC programmes, donors, civil society organisations, community groups, media, and the private sector - each playing a vital role across our areas of operation.

IDP STAKEHOLDER LANDSCAPE BY REGION

REGION	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	INFLUENCE/ INTEREST	ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS	ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
Haor	<p>UNO, UAO, UFO, ULO Religious leaders and Union Parishad chairs</p> <p>Non-VDO community members</p>	<p>High influence</p> <p>Moderate influence but limited programmatic engagement</p> <p>High interest but low decision-making power</p>	<p>Coordination meetings, household visits, community dialogues, mobile communication, government portals</p>	<p>Strong offline coordination; community-driven outreach</p>
Coastal Belt	<p>Govt. departments, DLOs, youth networks</p> <p>Local and national media</p> <p>Local NGOs and religious leaders</p>	<p>High influence and interest</p> <p>Shapes narratives</p> <p>Highly engaged through campaigns and digital media</p>	<p>Seminars, joint events, social media, facebook groups, WhatsApp</p>	<p>Dual-channel engagement — offline collaboration + digital campaigns</p>
Char Region	<p>Union Parishad members, Upazila officials and local leaders</p> <p>Donors and private sector Donors</p> <p>VDO members, char communities</p>	<p>High influence</p> <p>High interest, but varying interest</p> <p>High interest</p>	<p>VDO meetings, legal aid clinics, community radio, visual storytelling (VDO clips, WhatsApp), government referral networks, field visits</p>	<p>Participatory communication; emphasis on local voices</p>

REGION	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	INFLUENCE/ INTEREST	ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS	ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
Barind Tract	Local govt. - DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) and Livestock Dept., Microfinance partners CBOs (Community-based Organisation), NGOs	High influence) High interest actors	Meetings, training sessions, joint campaigns, reports, emails, digital dashboards	Integrated outreach with strong offline and online coordination
Chittagong Hill Tracts	Karbari (headmen), religious leaders, local govt. Programme participants, ultra-poor households	High influence Low influence, high interest	House visits, temple meetings, community clinics, mobile communication	Relationship-based, culturally sensitive engagement in local languages Joint planning with Indigenous leaders

OUR STORIES

Story from HAOR

LUJJU'S JOURNEY FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



Forced into marriage at 11, I fled abuse to protect my unborn child. Step by step, I learned, worked, and rebuilt my life from nothing. Today, I stand proud as a Joyeeta - proof that courage can change fate.

Lujju Begum (29), Derai,
Northeastern Bangladesh

Synopsis:

I was married at 11 and left to fend for myself when I fled abuse during pregnancy. In our flooded haor, where opportunities are scarce, I started over, claiming my rights, learning new skills, and finding the strength to rebuild my life. Today, I stand on my own land, proud and independent, honoured as Joyeeta - proof that I found my way from survival to strength.

Story:

I was only 11 years old when I was forced into marriage. Before I could even understand what it meant to be a wife, I became a mother-to-be and a victim of violence. During pregnancy, my husband and in-laws would beat me. One day, for the safety of my unborn child and myself, I fled to my parents' house in our remote haor village in Sunamganj.

In those days, there was no doctor, no school, no market in our remorse village - just endless stretches of water. I was terrified and desperate. Then one day, a BRAC community health worker arrived at my door. For the first time, I received antenatal care and safely gave birth to my daughter.

A few years later, a BRAC field staff invited me to a Village Development Organisation (VDO) meeting. There, I met women who shared my struggles - survivors, dreamers, fighters. I began attending regularly and learning about homestead gardening, the risks of child marriage, and disaster preparedness. Each meeting gave me strength and direction.

One day, I learned something that changed my life: I could claim my mahr (husband's lawful obligation to give his wife money or assets as part of their Islamic marriage contract) through free legal aid from BRAC. I did and received BDT 10,000 (USD 82). With that, I bought cattle and began training in livestock rearing.

From there, I never looked back. I took a small loan of BDT 5,000 (USD 41) to grow rice, pomelo, and vegetables on unused land. Later, I expanded with a BDT 150,000 (USD 1,237) investment - growing my farm, repairing my house, and even buying a truck.

Today, I'm recognised as a Joyeeta - honoured by the Government of Bangladesh for resilience and success in overcoming violence and poverty. I live in Derai upazila, near the Kalki River in Sunamganj, where floods return every year, sweeping away crops and hope. But I've learned to rise with the waters. From surviving violence to running my own business, I now stand proud as a Joyeeta. My dream is to see my daughter wear a doctor's coat and rise even higher than I ever could.



Story from Coastal Belt

PROMILA'S JOURNEY FROM DESPAIR TO DETERMINATION



“When my husband lost his legs, I thought our world had ended. But with livestock, I began again - saving, rebuilding, believing. Today, he drives his own van, my daughter studies at college, and I've learned: even from loss, life can bloom again.”

Promila Mitri, Khulna, Southern Bangladesh

Synopsis:

I studied only till class three before being married at 13. Poverty and loss shaped my life, but I refused to surrender. When my husband lost both legs in an accident, I became our family's strength. I raised livestock, saved, and even bought him an electric van so he could work again. Today, my daughter studies English honours, and I know no hardship can break us - because I've learned to rise, again and again.

Story:

I studied only up to class three before I had to help my mother with household chores. By the time I was 13, I was married. Life changed after marriage, but poverty never left our side. Before turning 18, I gave birth to my first and only child - a daughter.

Life was moving along somehow until 2018. One evening, my husband, Bimol, met with an accident while returning from the fields. I rushed to the hospital, unaware that both his legs would have to be amputated. He was the main earner in our family and that day, our world fell apart.

I began working in other people's houses to keep us afloat, but it was never enough. Then, I heard about a group of women in my village who gathered to discuss their struggles and find solutions. I joined them through the Village Development Organisation. During one of the meetings, the community identified my family as one of the most vulnerable. Through the Ultra-poor Graduation Programme (UPG), I received cows, chickens, and ducks - a small start, but my first glimpse of hope.

I raised the animals with care, sold milk, eggs, and calves, and saved every bit I could. I reinvested my earnings in more livestock, slowly building a steady income.

But while I was working, my husband spent his days alone at home. His isolation pained me the most. I wanted him to feel part of life again. With my savings, I bought him an electric van. It gave him purpose. Now, he earns his own income, meets people, and smiles again. I am proud that he no longer feels left behind.

Our income has grown, enabling me to support my daughter's education. In communities like ours, where opportunities are scarce, daughters are often seen as burdens. But I refused to accept that. I vowed my daughter would study, stand tall, and prove otherwise. Today, she's doing just that, pursuing English Honours at Boyra Mohila College in Khulna.

There were times when illness or setbacks pushed us back toward poverty, but each time, I found the strength to rise again. Today, I feel resilient. Whatever crisis comes, I know we will face it - together.

Story from Barind

IN THE DRIEST LAND, SHE MADE LIFE FLOW AGAIN

I grew up in drought-prone Bondhupara, walking hours each day for water. As head of our women's group, I helped bring clean water to over 100 people. Now I teach others to grow food with reused water — proof that even in dryness, hope can flow.

Esterina Hemrom, Bondhupara,
Naogaon, Northern Bangladesh



Synopsis:

I grew up in drought-prone Bondhupara, where finding water meant walking for hours each day. I was exhausted, but I never gave up. As chair of our Village Development Organisation, I helped bring a deep tube well to our community, giving over 100 people clean water. Now, I guide women to grow vegetables using recycled water. I've learned that even in the driest land, hope can flow again.

Story:

I am Esterina Hemrom, from Bondhupara village in Naogaon district. For as long as I can remember, life here has been shaped by drought. The heat in the Barind region grows harsher every year, and the rains come too little, too late — never enough to refill our wells.

Fetching drinking water used to be the hardest part of my day. I walked 40 minutes each way, several times a day, to reach a distant pipeline set up by the local government. The long walks left me exhausted and took away time I needed for my children and home. Sometimes, we had to use unsafe water for cooking, risking our health because there was no other choice.

Then, hope came to our doorstep through BRAC. With match funding from the community, a deep tube well with an electric pump was installed right in my courtyard. Now, my family and 25 other households — 104 people in total — can collect safe drinking water within five minutes of walking.

As the **chair of our Village Development Organisation (VDO)**, I worked with 25–40 women from our community to make this possible. Together, we contributed funds, oversaw the installation, and continuing to manage maintenance costs. Through our VDO, we also promote **WASH practices** — raising awareness about clean water, sanitation, and hygiene to prevent waterborne diseases.

But our work didn't stop there. I now help other women reuse household wastewater to grow climate-resilient vegetables in their homestead gardens. These small gardens bring nutritious food to our tables and income to our homes.

Today, I feel proud — not just for having clean water, but for helping my community build a healthier, stronger, and more hopeful future. I've learned that when women lead together, even in the driest lands, life begins to flow again.

Story from Chittagong Hill Tracts:

WHEN WATER FLOWS, SO DOES FREEDOM

In our village of Mong Pa Khai Para, I once walked for hours each day for water. Now, through a system we built together, clean water reaches our homes. For women like me, it means freedom, safety, and time to live. We turned a daily struggle into a story of resilience and self-reliance.

Kyaw May Ching, Mong Pa Khai Para,
Bandarban, South-Eastern Bangladesh



Synopsis:

In our remote village of **Mong Pa Khai Para**, life has changed in ways I once only dreamed of. I used to walk hours each day to fetch water, but now, clean water flows right to our homes through a **pipled system** we built together. As a community, we shared the costs, carried materials, and took ownership — bringing safe water to **141 Marma households**. For women like me, this means freedom, safety, and time to work, rest, and care for our families. We turned our daily struggle into a story of **resilience and self-reliance**.



Story:

I used to walk for 40 minutes each way to fetch water. Every trip was exhausting, carrying heavy jars across uneven paths, often more than once a day. Now, with a water tap right beside my house, it takes just a few minutes. I finally have time for other things — tending to my livestock, collecting cow grass from the field, cooking on time, and keeping my home clean. I wash vegetables with fresh water from my own tap. And most importantly, I now have evenings free to sit and talk with my mother and husband.

Our community in Mong Pa Khai Para worked hard along with BRAC to make this change possible. The piped water system was built through our collective effort and ownership. Together, we contributed about BDT 1,13,333, nearly 15% of the total cost, and volunteered to carry materials, install tanks, and help with construction.

The system includes a deep borehole and two large tanks with a 10,000-liter capacity, placed atop our three-story school building. From there, water now flows through underground pipes to 12 tap points across our village.

We also formed a seven-member committee to manage electricity bills and maintain the system. This initiative, developed with our participation and financial contributions, now provides safe, reliable water to 141 Marma households in remote Kurukpata Union, Alikadam, Bandarban. For us in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, access to water has never been easy. Nearly half of our 1.8 million people belong to 11 Indigenous communities. For generations, we've struggled with limited access to safe water — a challenge deeply tied to health, education, livelihoods, and equality.

Today, things are different. For women and children who once walked kilometers each day for water, the new piped system brings freedom, safety, and time — to work, study, rest, and simply live. It also promises to reduce waterborne diseases. I feel proud that our community turned a daily struggle into a story of strength and self-reliance.