

Planting resilience, one sapling at a time

What does a tree mean to a family living in poverty?

It can mean fruit on the table when food prices rise. Shade during increasingly intense summers. Medicine when a family member falls ill. Sometimes, it can even become the savings account a family never had.

Through a collaboration between Aarong and BRAC's Ultra Poor Graduation Programme (UPGP), 40,000 families in 34 districts will receive 80,000 saplings across Bangladesh during May and June 2026. Aarong is investing 100% of proceeds from its bag sales in tree-planting efforts across Bangladesh.

Aarong, BRAC's largest social enterprise and a leading fashion and lifestyle brand in Bangladesh, has long believed that fashion and artisanal craft should never come at the cost of people or the planet. For over five decades, this ethos of sustainability and slow fashion, valuing what lasts over what is fast, has shaped everything from the artisans Aarong works with to the materials it chooses. This initiative is a natural extension of that philosophy, and of a broader ambition: encouraging customers themselves to become more responsible stewards of the environment, not just through what they buy, but through the impact their choices can create.

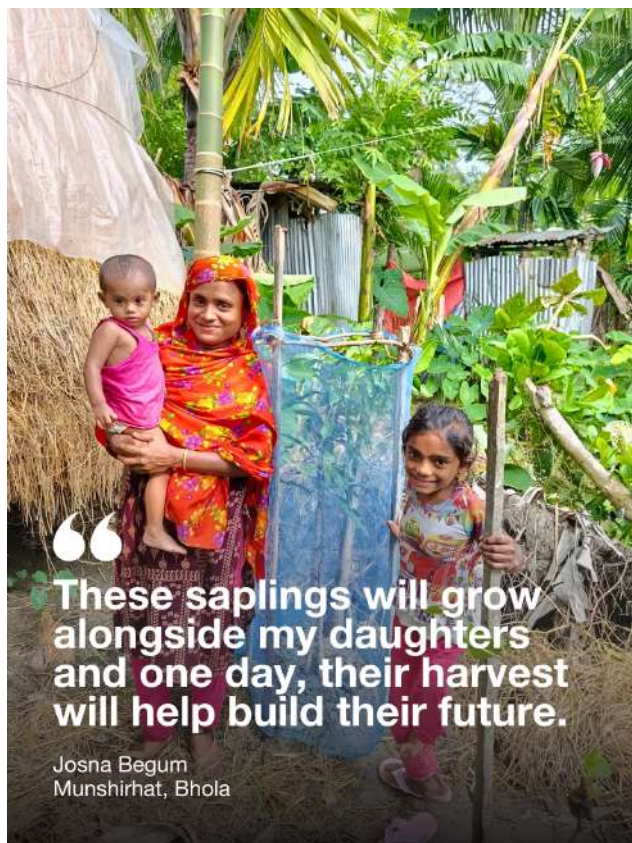


What makes this initiative different is that the trees are not simply being planted and left behind. By distributing saplings directly to UPG participants, the initiative places the trees in the care of families who have a vested interest in helping them thrive. These contributions are being transformed into living assets that can benefit both the environment and the families caring for them. The fruits, shade, medicinal benefits and future income generated by the trees will belong to the households themselves, creating a strong incentive to nurture them over the years. In

doing so, Aarong is investing not only in planting trees, but also in ensuring they are cared for and able to deliver lasting environmental and economic benefits.

The initiative recognises that planting a tree is only the beginning. To help ensure the saplings survive and deliver long-term benefits, participants are supported through a structured seven-step plantation process covering everything from site selection and soil preparation to transplanting and protecting young trees. By investing in the care of the saplings, not just their distribution, the collaboration seeks to increase the likelihood that each tree will grow into a lasting source of nutrition, income and security for the families nurturing them. **After all, a sapling creates value only if it survives.**

For many families, building assets is difficult. When income is limited, most resources go towards immediate needs. There is little left to save, and even less to invest in the future. A tree offers something different. With care and patience, it grows in value year after year.



The saplings being distributed have been selected with this in mind. Fruit-bearing trees such as mango, jackfruit, coconut and sapodilla can supplement household nutrition while creating opportunities to earn additional income from surplus produce. Neem and Arjuna provide medicinal benefits that families have relied on for generations.

Some trees are investments in a more distant future. Mahogany, often referred to as a natural fixed deposit, generating approximately **15,000-20,000 BDT** in a decade. For a family living in poverty, that future return can represent far more than money. A tree that continues to grow in value can become a source of security when it is needed most.

A child's education. A medical emergency. Repairs after a storm. The future is uncertain, but a mature tree can help families face it with greater confidence.

The trees may look small today. But each one represents something bigger: a family's hope for greater stability, a healthier environment, and a future with more choices than the present. It is also a quiet reminder that every customer who chooses an Aarong bag is choosing to plant something too.