



**FOOD FOR
THE HUNGRY**



BANGLADESH

Mymensingh and Ukhia

**Year-End Community Summary
Fiscal Year 2023**

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Walking with
Mymensingh



2021

2024

Walking with
Ukhia



2021

est. 2032



Communities:
5



Total Households:
17,724



Total Population:
79,600



Program Participants:
9,092

BANGLADESH

While FH partner communities in Mymensingh and Ukhia are at very different places in their journeys out of poverty, it's plain to see how deeply invested all the families are in community transformation. Leaders, parents, and youth in both regions are working together toward ending child marriage. Because of poverty, parents often feel they have no choice but to marry off their teenage daughters so their limited resources will be enough to feed their younger children.

In Mymensingh, FH continues to engage community members in campaigns against early child marriage. This year, children in Kids Clubs also participated in these prevention campaigns. In Ukhia, school enrolment is notably low and student dropouts often fall prey to child labour or early marriage. FH is working to boost caregiver engagement in their children's primary and secondary education as well as encouraging parents to send their little children to preschool. This focus on strengthening education will help combat child marriage as children grow.

As Mymensingh moves nearer to completing their FH partnership, it's encouraging to see how community ownership of their development has grown. For example, caregiver engagement in their children's lives has increased by over 11 percent in just two years. Another remarkable achievement was the inauguration of a Community Based Organizations (CBO) office building in 2020. CBOs are efficiently running microcredit programs, extending support to those in need, particularly to individuals interested in developing small businesses. One CBO also initiated a "Welfare Fund" that supports local humanitarian activities, including healthcare treatments.



Children and leaders celebrate Child Development Day.

IMPACT STORY

From Conflict to Contentment

Story collected by Afroza Begum and written by Aldrin Hawee Char Borobila, Bangladesh

Feeling shattered

Before partnering with FH Bangladesh, Taslima wasn't happy with how her family life was going. Her bamboo house leaked badly during the rainy season and didn't keep out dangerous pests, like poisonous snakes. The only education option in the area for her three children were religious schools that taught religion but excluded other subjects. She and her husband, Mustafa, frequently fought. The tension in their home was toxic.

In Taslima's words, "My family was struggling physically, financially, mentally, spiritually, and socially. Our overall standard of living was very low. My husband's work was inconsistent. We couldn't even afford adequate clothing because our primary concern was putting food on the table. When my family and I confronted these challenges, we were emotionally shattered."

Taslima embraces healing, harmony, and hope

When FH started a partnership with their community, Taslima joined an FH-initiated Savings and Loans group for women. From relationships with FH staff members who encouraged her, to a wide range of trainings including women's rights and literacy, to practical skills training, this experience transformed every aspect of Taslima's life.



“FH couples training was particularly impactful. Prior to this training, frequent quarrels marred our family life, leaving us unhappy. However, this training enabled my husband and me to better understand and respect each other, value each other's opinions, and make decisions collectively. As a result, our family now enjoys peace and harmony.”

— Taslima

She took couples training and learned how to communicate better with Mustafa and encouraged him to try something new to make more money for the family. They stopped fighting and started working together. She started raising chickens and ducks, selling their eggs so that, together, she and her husband could feed their children and send them to school. Taslima learned new health and hygiene practices that improved their family health.

She gained the confidence to take up leadership roles in her community and share what she was learning with others. Speaking of their family life today, Taslima exclaims with a smile, "Now we are incredibly happy!"



EDUCATION

Getting Girls to Graduation



“My daughter, Farzana, has made remarkable progress—she can now write her name, takes pleasure in drawing, and learns something new every day at the preschool! Before this school was established, our village had no educational facility which led to children spending their time idly.”

— Fatema, sponsor child mother



4 new preschools established with 113 children attending

11 preschools equipped with mats, baskets, coloured pencils, and chalkboards for each student, as well as shared learning materials as seen in the photo ☑

150 secondary students participated in essay writing competitions



188 adolescent girls received skills-based vocational training, e.g. poultry, goat, or cow rearing

135 people established 3 Early Marriage Reduction committees to involve community stakeholders in ending child marriage

240 Leader Mothers and 1,714 Cascade group members trained on early childhood stimulation; they shared these lessons with their families



HEALTH

Boosting Women's and Children's Health



192 Leader Mothers trained on nutrition during pregnancy, and postpartum/antenatal care; they trained 2,039 group members

4 overhead water tanks and submersible pumps installed to provide safe drinking water

300 women and teen girls attended education sessions on menstrual hygiene



3 breastfeeding areas were established in the Halদিাপালং and Khuniাপালং community clinics in response to challenges faced by lactating mothers

277 children received their annual health check-up

470 community members attended handwashing demonstrations



“Each month, FH provides me with a valuable healthcare lesson that I learn and share with 12 mothers in my “neighbour circle”. Through my explanations, they have become much more informed. Expecting mothers from the village now seek my advice on health matters. I have earned the respect and affection of the people. My husband is my strongest supporter, encouraging me to continue this work.”

— Yasmin, Cascade Health group leader

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Setting Up for Success



88

Savings and Loans group leaders from 48 savings groups **provided training on leadership, problem solving, conflict management**

2

meetings conducted in Ukhia with 160 guardians, teachers, and leaders to **learn more about FH values and programs**

914

children attended a Child Sponsorship Day and 582 attended a Christmas Day celebration with **messages on preventing child marriage, cell phone addiction, and drug use**

927

children each **given 10 notebooks and 12 pens**

357

community members took part in **FH's Holistic Community Assessment of the socioeconomic situation** in Khuniapalong community, Ukhia

197

Community Development Committee (CDC) leaders **met to address gender violence, child marriage**, and motivate male family members to include women in FH activities



"Initially, I struggled to identify problems and develop strategies for resolution. After receiving [FH] leadership training... I learned that two students were at risk of stopping their education due to a lack of uniforms. I swiftly took action by engaging local leaders and teachers. Together, we collected funds [for uniforms]... Today, these students are excited and happy to attend school in their new uniforms. This experience has fueled my passion to serve the community even further."

— Abdus, CDC leader, Ukhia

CHILD MARRIAGE NO MORE!



"I successfully passed the Higher Secondary Certificate exam! Despite my family's suggestion to get married, I declined their offer and communicated my strong desire to complete my education before considering marriage. This determination was instilled in me through my participation in a [FH-initiated] campaign that highlighted the harmful consequences of child marriage. Being part of the campaign opened my eyes to the advantages of completing my education."

— Samira, 17-year-old sponsor child

FH Bangladesh just completed the first of a three year Child Marriage No More pilot project during which they collected and analyzed participant data. And the findings are encouraging! Initial results indicate that, rather than being rooted in moral or religious norms, the primary drivers of child marriage in Mymensingh are lodged in social (what we think others do or think) and normative (what we think others expect us to do) expectations. In other words, parents are making decisions about child marriage based on what they believe their neighbours expect—about two-thirds of the participants reported fearing sanctions if they didn't marry off their girls before the age of 15.

Armed with this context-specific knowledge, FH staff and local participants are ready to design interventions to shift the communal mindset on child marriage, keeping people's moral and religious beliefs intact while liberating parents to do what they actually think is best for their children.

“I now dream about the betterment of my village, considering each family in my community as my own. I extend my support to families through their ups and downs... My ultimate aspiration is to transform my village into a model community, and I am committed to continually working towards fulfilling my responsibilities as a leader.”

— Forkan, CDC president for Holdiapalong community in Ukhia



Thank You

FH Canada, FH Bangladesh, and the families of Mymensingh and Ukhia thank you for your incredible support of their ongoing development journeys! With your partnership, child marriage is decreasing, maternal health is improving, and leaders are learning to identify and address challenges in their communities.