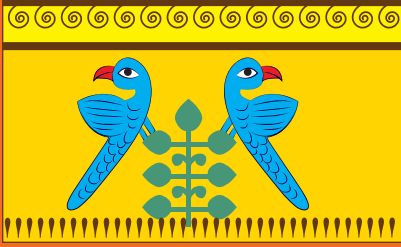
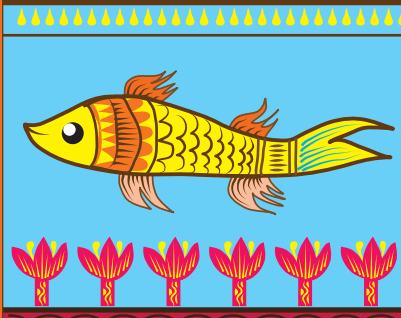




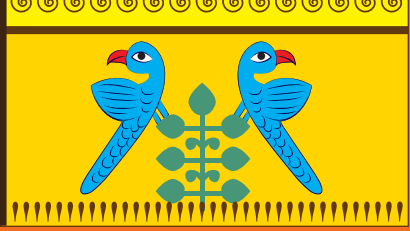
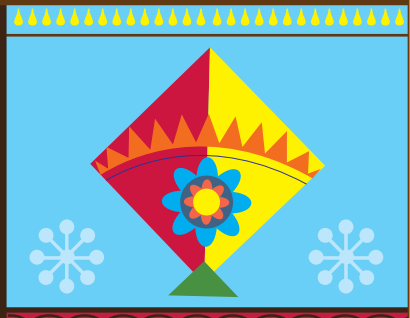
USAID
আমেরিকার জনগণের পক্ষ থেকে



World Vision



HOMEMADE STORIES
with love, care & respect





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ACCESS:

The ability to access, use, and/or own assets, resources, opportunities, services, benefits, and infrastructure.

PARTICIPATION:

The ability to participate in or engage in societal affairs and systems of power that influence and determine development, life activities, and outcomes.

DECISION-MAKING:

The ability to make decisions free of coercion at individual, family, community, and societal levels. This can include control over assets and ability to make decisions in leadership.



SYSTEMS:

The availability of equal and inclusive systems that promote equity, account for the different needs of vulnerable populations, and create enabling environments for their engagement.

WELL-BEING:

The sense of worth, capability status, confidence, dignity, safety, health, and overall physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. This includes living free from gender-based violence, HIV, and all forms of stigma and discrimination.



At the end of the day, during dusk, birds come back to their nests, just as humans come back to their homes. A home, a place where people find shelter, comfort, happiness, and peace. While a nest is made by both the male and female birds, a home is made by the husband and wife. Men and women contribute to turning the house into a piece of heaven on earth. Everything made at home is pure and full of love and care.

However, the shocking fact is that fifty percent of women aged between 15 and 49 of Bangladesh have experienced physical or sexual violence by their intimate partners during their lifetime, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report. Women's participation in the labor force in Bangladesh is still low, and their ability to make decisions on health and finances, and personal mobility is minimal. According to the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), only 6% of women in rural Bangladesh feel empowered compared to 53% of men. WEAI also reports that only 13% of women reported having agency in household decision-making.

After 50 years since its independence, Bangladesh still lags behind to ensure the protection and safety of vulnerable women and girl children from gender-based violence (GBV). In these 50 years, Bangladesh went from a fledgling nation struggling with the devastation of war to a nation of promise and boundless potential. While Bangladesh has shown remarkable progress in various socio-economic areas, the country has a lot more to do to empower women at home and workplace.

Being a man, I always feel that we are the ones who first need to realize that if we want to achieve a prosperous world, it can't be possible without women's participation. And it must be acknowledged and valued. The 'Homemade Stories-with love, care and respect' are the reflection of the life-changing stories of 9,814 couples (husbands and wives) who have participated in the MenCare training conducted by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance funded 'Nobo Jatra – New Beginning' project, World Vision Bangladesh. Through the male engagement for gender equality approach, it has been possible to show the world that coming out of the gender-stereotypic perspective isn't easy, but when we can, it enables us to build an equal world for all.

This book would not see the light without the dedication of the World Vision Bangladesh and World Vision US. teams. My sincere thanks to Drs. Jacqueline Ogega and Leticia Nkonya for their continuous support, Alex Bekunda, Saeqah Kabir and the Nobo Jatra team for their constant support. I would also like to thank Juliet Mondol and Asif Iqbal for their hard work in bringing these stories to light.

Let's indulge ourselves by reading these stories made at home with love, care, and respect.

Tony Michael Gomes

Director - Communications
Advocacy and External Engagement
World Vision Bangladesh



WORLD FOR FOR



At World Vision (WV), we work to ensure 'Life in all its fullness' for every child. Inspired by our Christian faith, we have been assisting vulnerable children, families, and communities regardless of nationality, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation to overcome poverty and experience this fullness of life.

In just the last two decades, Bangladesh has achieved consistent growth, lifted much of its population out of poverty, and improved women's participation in education and the labour force. These achievements, however, only throw into sharper focus the disparity between Bangladesh's glowing accomplishments and the ever-present gender-based violence.

WV Bangladesh aims to be gender-responsive and disability-inclusive, promoting equity and equality within the organization and all its programs/projects. The MenCare approach enables inclusive change and transformational shifts in gendered social norms and relations to ensure Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).

Through the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance funded 'Nobo Jatra – New Beginning' project, World Vision Bangladesh implemented a male engagement for gender equality activity. 9,814 couples (husbands and wives) participated, resulting in improved gender relations within families, increased male engagement in caregiving and unpaid household work, and equitable participation in social and economic activities.

This book represents the stories of change where men play the most crucial role in promoting alternative and positive masculinities, shared decision making, equitable division of labor in caregiving or unpaid tasks, healthy and gender-equitable relationships, nonviolence, and elimination of harmful practices such as child marriage.

We all are working together towards a better future, where girls and boys, women and men have equal access to resources in their households, input in decision-making for their families, equal participation, inclusive systems that help to prevent GBV, and equal well-being.

Today, the MenCare approach has been scaled and implemented throughout all of WVB's programmes/projects, reaching over 27,711 families.

Join us as we build this new world of equal opportunity together.

Suresh Bartlett
National Director
World Vision Bangladesh



DREAMWORKS FOR



As a Christian humanitarian organization, World Vision is dedicated to working with children and vulnerable adults worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice.

Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is critical to achieving this mission of serving the most vulnerable. That is why we have prioritized GESI as a strategic imperative in “Our Promise Going Further”.

This booklet is a critical step in our ongoing efforts to improve our knowledge sharing and evidence of impact on gender equality and social inclusion. Equally important are efforts in capacity-building using World Vision’s GESI toolbox, which includes its GESI Approach and Theory of Change, GESI key concepts and reference guides, GESI Promising Practices, GESI measurement methods in the DME Toolkit, GESI capacity-building and training, and the GESI management policy.

World Vision USA is committed to continue our partnership with World Vision Bangladesh in our ongoing efforts to build capacity and improve awareness on transformational programming for gender equality and social inclusion.

Dr. Jacqueline Ogega

Senior Director Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
World Vision USA.

“

Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in our work helps to ensure that equal rights are afforded to all vulnerable groups, including women, girls, persons with disabilities, the elderly, refugees, persons living with HIV, persons living in extreme poverty, and other vulnerable groups.

”

Leticia Nkonya, PhD.

Technical Advisor, GESI
World Vision USA





Nobo Jatra – ‘new beginning’ is a seven-year (2015-2022) USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance funded food security resilience activity implemented by World Vision Bangladesh in partnership with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of the Government of Bangladesh and Winrock International. Nobo Jatra’s goal is to ‘improve gender equitable food security, nutrition, and resilience of vulnerable communities in the Koyra, Dacope, Shyamnagar and Kaliganj sub-districts of southwest Bangladesh. Gender equality and social inclusion is considered a cross-cutting theme critical to the implementation of all project activities. It was also an integral stand-alone pillar with a targeted intervention of constructive male engagement for gender equality.

Nobo Jatra’s deeply contextualized male engagement for gender equality approach is aimed at addressing the needs of couples (husbands and wives) to improve gender relations within families, prevent gender-based violence including child marriage, and improve male engagement in caregiving and unpaid household work. Over six months, couples met with a facilitator every 15 days, to reflect on and change their attitudes, perceptions and values around a range of gender equality issues. These included domestic and care work, household decision-making, women’s mobility and autonomy, equitable participation in social and economic activities, violence against women and girls, and access and control over resources. The couples practiced exclusive and conceptualized exercises that included learning about the importance of men’s support and contribution as partners, the benefits of shared decision-making around household budgeting and investments, and promoting healthy marital and family relationships and well-being by emphasizing its impact on family. Each activity was interactive, participatory, and reflective – allowing participating individuals the opportunity to reflect on their own values, discuss their personal experiences, and explore equitable alternatives to preexisting perception of harmful gender norms and associated practices. In total, 9,814 couples graduated through Nobo Jatra’s male engagement activities in 2019.

This book presents short stories on the notable impacts of the male engagement approach on families and children. These stories are based on World Vision’s Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) approach and theory of change that highlights five domains: access, participation, decision-making, systems, and well-being. The success stories are based on evidence captured in 2022 as part of the documentation process of the male engagement approach as a GESI promising practice. This documentation is part of the GESI Transform project funded by World Vision USA.

World Vision Bangladesh believes in enabling and promoting equality and inclusion across genders and people with disabilities. The GESI initiative is an integral component across the organisation’s programmes, projects and within its organisational structure. In 2021, World Vision Bangladesh reached 27,711 couples through the MenCare approach.



Debki & Binoy's Family, Khona, Dacope

**Home is where
ACCESS is!**

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Anjana & Nihar's Family, Khona, Dacope

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Tumpa & Bikash's Family
Chandipur, Shyamnagar

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SYSTEMS are!**

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Anjali & Subash's Family
Bazargram, Kaliganj

**Home is where
PARTICIPATION is!**

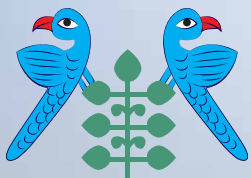
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Lolita & Dinbondhu's Family
Daspara, Dacope

**Home is where
WELL-BEING is!**

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Debki & Binoy's Family Khona, Dacope



HOME IS WHERE ACCESS IS

Debki (37) and Binoy (47), a couple from Khona, Dacope, are now walking on the path to a happy life but things were not always like this. Debki was married to Binoy at the age of 12. As a child bride, Debki had a tough time accessing food within the family and had no money of her own. Binoy and his parents controlled Debki's life which led to an unhappy marriage. According to their social norms, women do not inherit properties from their parents, and only the men are allowed to go outside to earn money. Besides, Debki's illiteracy and her society's customs did not allow her to understand the importance of exercising her right to share decision-making around their household budgeting and investment. She used to feel excluded and unworthy in her own family.



The situation changed with time, due to the increasing need for financial solvency in their family. As their children were growing up and responsibilities towards the family became a bigger issue, they had to face new challenges in life. Then Debki and Binoy enrolled in the male engagement for gender equality activity funded by USAID's 'Nobo Jatra - new beginning' project implemented by World Vision. Through the male engagement sessions, the couple understood the importance of shared decision-making around household budgeting and investments. The sessions helped Debki and Binoy by enabling Binoy to understand the importance of Debki working and earning an income, thereby promoting gender equality. Since then, Debki became active in contributing to her family's financial well-being. She started learning embroidery from the Department of Youth Development and became a skilled tailor.





Now, Debki has a thriving embroidery business and she works with the Government's Department of Youth Development to train other women in embroidery. In the recent past, Debki has traveled to the capital Dhaka to work as a tailor for 9 months. Binoy is Debki's proudest supporter and does a fair share of housework including caring for the children while Debki is away working.



Both Debki and Binoy agree that when couples make decisions together then the whole family can thrive. The couple is an inspiration to others in the community and encourages other families to follow their example.



নারী-পুরুষের
উভয়ের সমতা থাকে
সংসার সুখের
নারী-পুরুষের গুণে
উভয়ের সমতা যদি
থাকে তার সনে

“My wife Debki runs a successful business. She earns well and provides for our family. The ‘Joyeeta’ award is a testament of all the struggles she went through to be the woman she is today – I could not be more proud.”

- Binoy Mondol



In 2020, Debki won the ‘Shreshtho Joyeeta’ award from the Government’s Department of Youth Development for being financially resilient through her embroidery business. Her story is now an inspiration for her community. This award has brought her not only fame and recognition in her society but also an honorable and acknowledgeable position in her family.



Anjana & Nihar's Family Khona, Dacope

The couple Anjana (28) and Nihar (42) live in Khona, Dacope. They got married in 1998 and are blessed with two sons, Arpan Bairagi (11) and Aranya Bairagi (7). Anjana was only 14 when she was married to Nihar. As a child bride, Anjana struggled to adjust to marital life and adapt to her expected responsibility of doing all the housework. Although life seemed to go well, due to their social norms, she could not make any decisions about herself and her family. Nihar made most of the decisions in the household. He also involved his family in making some of the decisions, but not his wife Anjana.

HOME IS WHERE DECISION-MAKING IS

The ruling power was in the hands of her husband and in-laws. She was always excluded, and not allowed to make any decisions including decisions related to her own health and well-being. The decision to have a baby a year into the marriage was made by Nihar and his family and she had to go along with what was decided. Anjana struggled with the pregnancy as she was a child herself and she felt unworthy.

"I used to feel numb and helpless! It was my life, but the control was not in my hands!" This is how Anjana expresses her feelings about the days of her post-marital period.



“
For me, home is having a voice
within the family. Having the space
and confidence to contribute to
decisions that affect my loved ones.”

-Anjana Bairagi



Through the male engagement sessions, Nihar learned to value Anjana's input in their shared decision-making, especially since she knew a lot about the family's needs. Nihar saw that their finances improved with Anjana's input, and this helped the couple think differently- which was exclusively provided to the couple through the training that highlights the value of shared decision-making, especially financial decisions in household expenditures.

Since participating in the male engagement sessions, Anjana and Nihar have a strong concept of working together as a team to overcome challenges and ensure a healthy future for their family.





“ I am more focused on my children and their future. I invest my money for my children's education and spend quality time with them – now more than ever before! ”

-Nihar Bairagi

“ If husband and wife work as a team and make decisions together, the family can move forward in the right direction. ”

-Nihar Bairagi



In the past, Nihar's income was barely enough to cover the family's expenses. Anjana and Nihar decided that they needed to have an additional source of income for the family to stay resilient. The couple pooled their respective savings to purchase the motorized van. The income from driving the van significantly helped the family to lead a better life.

The Male Engagement training sessions empowered Anjana through knowledge and awareness on the importance of playing an equal role in the decision-making for the well-being of her family. Now she moves forward with confidence and is a role model in her community for her success in leading her family the right way. She enlightens community people and they pay attention to her valuable words carefully.



“
People value what I say. When I encourage others to build relationships based on mutual respect and advocate against child marriage (as a child bride myself) – people listen to me. I also encourage others to look after pregnant mothers as I was only a child when I got pregnant and understand how important it is to be healthy during this time.”

-Anjana Bairagi





Anjali & Subash's Family Bazargram, Kaliganj

HOME IS WHERE PARTICIPATION IS

The couple Anjali (28) and Subash (40), who lives in Bazargram, Kaliganj, are now living a prosperous life with their three sons: Manik Das (17), Shona Babu Das (8), and Mohon Das (2). But at the beginning of their marriage, it was a different story. Anjali was only 11 years old when she was married off to Subash Das in 2004. She used to be terrified of her husband because of his temper. He was an abusive husband who had no respect for her and frequently beat her, often losing his control even over minor reasons after returning from work (he was working in a salon then). Many times, she thought to leave her in-laws' house forever and start going to school again. However, she was just a child and according to the social norm, once a girl is married, there is no way back home. Therefore, day after day she was losing her self-confidence and living an unhappy married life with the burden of all of the household activities, without any participation of her husband. There was no harmony in their family. She accepted everything as her fate. A fate of not having any access to work for fulfilling her own dreams, or going outside for work; a fate of becoming a slave in a house where she was bound to stay.

কোনো কালে এম
হয়নি ক' জয়ী
পুরুষের শ্রম, শক্তি
প্রেরণা দিয়েছে, বিজ
শক্তি দিয়েছে
বিজয়-লক্ষ্মী নারী।

At Nobo Jatra's Male Engagement sessions, the couple, and Anjali's in-laws, have learned various lessons which helped them to see things from new perspectives. The training explained inclusive ideas of gender roles at household to them such as: equal distribution of workloads, gender relation at household and how to divide time and efforts for decreasing individual workloads etc.

After participating in male engagement sessions, Anjali is a woman empowered—confident and knowledgeable.

Now when she looks back at who she was in the first few years of her married life, she says, "I wish my mother could see me now!"



“
When husband and wife share equal responsibilities, peace and prosperity grows in the family!
”

-Subash Das



Of all the changes Anjali has experienced since her involvement with Nobo Jatra, she is most surprised by the transformation in her husband Subash! In the past, the couple struggled to live a harmonious life free from violence within their home. After completing the male engagement sessions, Subash is a calmer and more caring father and husband who helps with household chores including childcare.



“
I learned so much from my three daughters-in-law who attended the male engagement training. Now I know that the key to happiness is the active participation of husband and wife in financial and household activities.
”

-Anjali's Mother-in-Law





In addition to participating in the male engagement activity, Anjali has been involved with the Nobo Jatra project in many ways. To start, she is an ultra-poor graduation participant and received training on basic literacy and business skills, capacity building to establish two small businesses and a cash transfer to set up both businesses. As an entrepreneur, Anjali has multiple small businesses including as a tailor and a health and nutrition entrepreneur selling products at the village level. Anjali attributes her success to the mutual love, respect, and trust she has built with her husband Subash. Together, they now dream of building a bright and stable future for their family.

“He bought me a sewing machine,” Anjali says proudly. “When I am working on the machine or go to the community to sell health and hygiene products, he takes care of our younger child.”



Anjali is the Secretary of Bazargram Cooperative Society and Subash is the General Secretary. She says: "This was only possible because I have his full support and respect!" The couple is an example to others in the community because of their equal partnership and respect towards each other. Even during the Cooperative Society's Annual General Meeting with 500 members, the couple shared responsibilities when organizing the meeting. "Subash organized the food while I took care of logistics."



“I believe that, if there is a will, there is a way. We should not be upset with difficulties in our lives rather, we have to find a way. When four hands are at work instead of two, the family’s financial condition will eventually get better, and everything else too.”

-Anjali Das



“For me, home is where we can share our lives in peace and prosperity.”

-Subash Das





Tumpa & Bikash's Family
Chandipur, Shyamnagar

HOME IS WHERE SYSTEMS ARE

Bikash Devnath (33) and Tumpa (29) Devnath, a married couple living in Chandipur, Shyamnagar, were victims of unfair social systems. They got married in 2016 and are blessed with one son named Arko (5). Bikash works at a local clothing store as a salesperson and Tumpa is a schoolteacher. When Tumpa got married, she had already completed her undergraduate university degree and was preparing for her masters' degree admission. Her husband Bikash was not as educated and women being more educated than their husbands is rare in rural Bangladesh. As a result, people around the couple made things complicated by taunting Bikash about Tumpa's education and qualifications. They would often tell him Tumpa would act "superior," that she was "dark-skinned," and that he "did not deserve a wife like her." People's reactions heightened Bikash's inferiority, which often caused him to be resentful towards Tumpa. "I didn't have the confidence to talk to my husband before," says Tumpa. "We had an understanding gap. I used to feel helpless fighting with this growing complication in our relationship."

সাম্র্যের গান গাই -
আমার চক্ষু পুরুষ-রমণী
কোনো ভেদাভেদ নাই!
বিশ্বে যা- কিছু মহান সৃষ্টি
চির-কল্যাণকর
অধিক তার করিয়াছে নারী,
অধিক তার নয়।

Bikash would often verbally and physically abuse Tumpa, taunting her dark complexion as well. Their only son, Arko, was greatly affected by this violence and became traumatized. Bikash also would not help Tumpa to do any housework or in taking care of Arko, which made her feel completely unsupported and insecure.

These insecurities were all addressed when Bikash and Tumpa attended the male engagement training and learned about the strength of a family as a unique team. The training exclusively reflects on societal norms and beliefs that perpetuate and reinforce inequitable relationships and power dynamics within families. In particular, the couple reexamined rigid gender roles for men and women and accepted that Tumpa's remarkable education was not a negative thing.



Bikash began to see the world through Tumpa's eyes and understood how the discrimination and taunting hurt her. He now tries his best to make things easier and treats her with respect and understanding. Besides working as a salesperson, Bikash also helps with household chores when he is at home. He keeps the house tidy, takes Arko to school, and encourages him to practice handwashing with soap and water before and after meals. Since Tumpa also is a working mother, Bikash tries to reduce pressure on Tumpa as much as possible. The change in his behavior has helped Arko overcome his trauma.



"He is a lot happier now," says Tumpa about Arko. "Now that he sees his parents happy and getting along, he has recovered from his past trauma. He plays and studies like other children his age." The couple has one dream now: that their little Arko will be a good person who achieves great things in life.





Tumpa contributes a significant amount of money to the family. Besides working as a local schoolteacher, she also tutors children at home and earns money from tailoring. Remarkably, Tumpa even pays healthcare expenses for her father-in-law. In Tumpa's words: "These trainings have helped open my husband's eyes to my plight, and now he cares more for me and lets me grab opportunities that give my life meaning and helps us earn a diversified income that helps our family."



Tumpa and Bikash's relationship has become a model for others in their village. They have changed the mode of a social system that created complicity in their relationship. Whenever they hear about violence against women or child marriage incidents, they intervene using lessons they learned from the Nobo Jatra project.





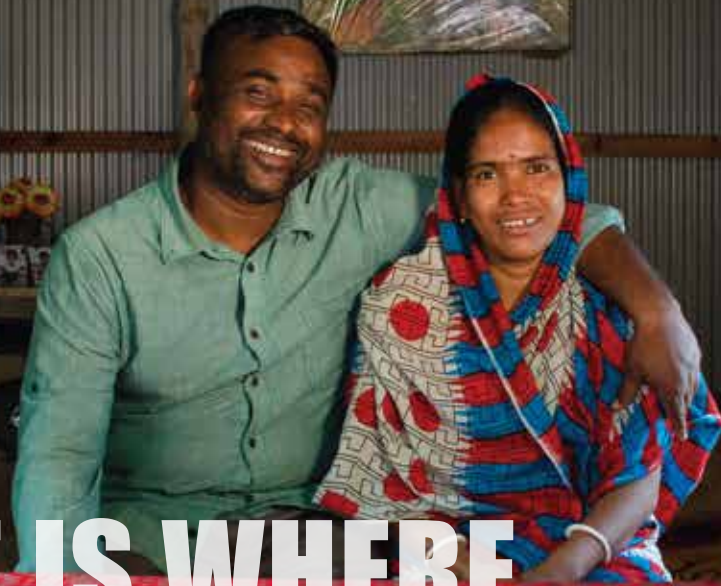
“Home is the place where we plant our dreams and grow them together.”

-Bikash Debnath





Lolita & Dinbondhu's Family Daspara, Dacope



HOME IS WHERE WELL-BEING IS

“One day when I was younger, I came home from school and saw my father beating and scolding my mother. This made me so upset that I could not prepare for my exam the next day.”

-Tisha Das

Lolita Das (42) and Dinbondhu Das (48) live in Daspara, Dacope with their 2 children Sourav (18) and Tisha (11). Though they are living a peaceful happy life now, this was not the picture at the beginning. Lolita Das has come a long way in life overcoming turmoil and uncertainty along the way. Lolita's family married her off when she was 13 and a half years old, and she had a difficult time adjusting with her husband and in-laws. The physical abuse by her husband Dinbondhu added to her suffering. Because of the family violence, Tisha and Sourav had a difficult time in their early days of life. Poverty and violence were blended and destroyed the peace of mind of each of the members of the family.






“
One day, my husband gave me a pair of gold earrings – I was so surprised! The earrings were not just mere jewelry to me; it was the first glimpse of a future I was hoping for!
”

-Lolita Das



Lolita's perseverance was bolstered by her belief in God and love for her family. Participating in the male engagement sessions further empowered the couple helping them to establish more equal relationships and mutual respect. The training includes exclusive activities that reflect on healthy marital life, conflict resolution within couples, building trust and a sense of protection, gender-based violence, and its impact on children and family. The couples, especially the husbands are sensitized to the role of a man as a partner to stop domestic violence.





*“Home is like a temple for me –
where I find my peace!”*

-Dinbondhu Das


Things started to change with their new beginning. Dinbondhu realized family is the place where he belongs and the key to the happiness of a family is well-being. Which is the sense of worth, capability status, confidence, dignity, safety, health, and overall physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. A home where there is no violence or any form of stigma and discrimination.

Dinbondhu was severely injured in an accident; his rickshaw van was damaged and he had to be hospitalized for six months.

After his recovery, Lolita got a loan from a cooperative society and bought a battery-operated van (a local form of transport) that costs \$142.

Dinbondhu was able to resume working and earn a steady income for the family. To show how happy he was, he bought Lolita the gold earrings! This generous act by

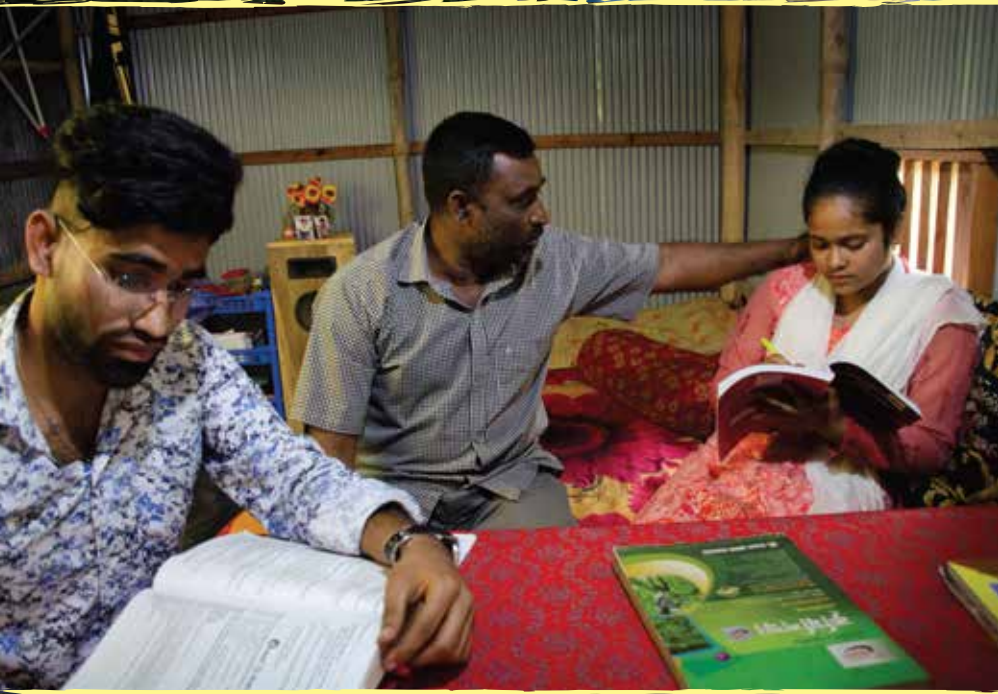
Dinbondhu made Lolita feel respected and valued as a life partner.



After cyclone Amphan hit southwest Bangladesh in 2020, the couple lost their home. During that difficult time, the couple took joint decisions and supported each other to recover from the crisis. With Lolita's guidance, Dinbondhu took out a loan and rebuilt the house. She once felt she had no voice in her own family; now Dinbondhu admits he could not make any decisions without her support.

“
Now there is peace and harmony between my parents. They are happier and my father even gives my mother nice gifts!”
-Tisha Das

“
I realized that no matter what I do, I am helpless without my wife beside me. The relationship between a husband and wife is like a bicycle – if the rear wheel is punctured, the front wheel can't move anymore.”
-Dinbondhu Das



Now, Lolita and Dinbondhu run a household with shared responsibilities. He looks after the outdoor chores, and she takes care of things indoors. She gets their daughter Tisha ready for school, and he takes her to school in his van. After attending the training, Dinbondhu knows both of his children deserve equal attention from their parents. He says, "My son and daughter both are equal to me. I will do everything to ensure they both reach university. I saw what child marriage does to families, especially young girls. My hardships in life have taught me that they have to reach their highest potential first before they are ready for marriage."



The children also noticed a big change in the relationship between their father and mother. Tisha is excelling in school and Sourav is applying to university. Most importantly, the family spends quality time together – that reflects peace and prosperity!

“

We have a pet bird named Mithu. We feed her and care for her. Before our father never paid any attention to us. Now he is caring and loving as we are to Mithu.

”

-Sourav Das



Seeing the peace and prospects in her family, Lolita looks back for a while and says: "The life I am living now, if I had this from the beginning, my family would be much better off now."



সোদিনে সুদূর নয়
যেদিনে ধরণী
পুরুষের সাথে
গাছিবে
নারীও জয়ে!

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আমার চক্ষে পুরুষ-ধরণী
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চির-কল্যাণকর
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