



STRENGTHENING CLIMATE-SMART VEGETABLE AND FLOWER VALUE CHAIN IN BANGLADESH

Transforming Futures



With financial and technical support from Heifer International Bangladesh, the Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF) is implementing the "Strengthening Climate-smart Vegetable and Flower Value Chain" (C4VFVC) project, which began in July 2023 in two upazilas of Jashore district, Bangladesh. This region, characterized by dry weather and fertile floodplain soils, presents favorable conditions for crop production, specifically vegetables and flowers. However, it also faces environmental and socio-economic challenges, including salinity intrusion, flooding, cyclones, and storm surges. The project aims to bolster the agricultural sector by enhancing climate-smart practices, improving production and market access, and promoting community resilience.

PROJECT GOAL

The project’s overarching goal is to improve the sustainable living income of 60% of the 55,000 targeted farmers by 2027 through strengthening climate-smart vegetable and flower value chains in Jashore.

FACT & FIGURE

Sl.	Fact	Figure
1	Name of the program	Strengthening Climate-smart Vegetable and Flower Value Chain Project
2	Duration	July 2023 to June 2027
3	Supported By	Heifer International Bangladesh
4	No. of Project Participants	5500 (vegetable farmers-4500 and flower farmers-1000) all are female
5	No. of staff	13
6	Working Location	Jashore District (Chowgacha & Jhikargacha Upazilla)

KEY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

To achieve this goal, the C4VFVC project is structured around key objectives aimed at strengthening community structures, increasing productivity, supporting renewable energy use, and enhancing market systems. The project's primary activities are organized under seven focus areas:



1. Training and Capacity Building

- **Empowering Farmers and Community Leaders:** The project provides extensive training, such as Heifer's 12 cornerstone practices, safe production techniques, flower cultivation, and gender and social justice, to build social capital and technical skills.
- **Cooperative Leadership Development:** Cooperatives receive financial management and leadership training, strengthening their capacity to support member farmers.

2. Demonstrations and Technology Implementation

- **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Farmers are introduced to eco-friendly practices, including vermicomposting and modern production techniques, through field demonstrations and Farmer Field Days (FFDs).
- **Market-Driven Innovations:** New flower varieties like Lilium are being tested for market suitability, with results shared at FFDs.

3. Renewable Energy Solutions

- **Solar-Powered Irrigation:** The project supports solar irrigation to reduce costs and emissions, complemented by awareness campaigns on renewable energy benefits.

4. Entrepreneurship and Market Linkages

- **Passing on the Gift (Interest-Free Loans) and Market Integration:** Farmers receive entrepreneurship support, including interest-free loans, to encourage business growth and linkages with traders, suppliers, and export firms.
- **Collaborative Platforms and Exposure Visits:** Market management committees and stakeholder groups facilitate connections with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and other key partners.

5. Formation and Strengthening of Cooperatives

- **Building Collective Bargaining Power:** The formation and registration of self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives enable collective negotiation power, further supported by operational and business plan development.

6. Equipment and Resource Allocation

- **Provision of Essential Farming Tools:** Electric vans, sprayers, and composting equipment are distributed to support efficient farming and transportation.

7. Advisory and Stakeholder Engagement

- **Community and Government Partnerships:** Engagement with government departments, agricultural inputs companies, and other stakeholders reinforces the project's objectives through advisory meetings and public awareness efforts.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN FY 2023-24

The project has made notable progress across several targets:

- **Farmer Training and Cooperative Formation:** Trained 1,898 SHG members in cornerstone practices, trained 1960 SHG members on Gender and Justice, trained 1,570 farmers in vegetable production, and 365 farmers in flower production. Additionally, four cooperatives were established, each receiving leadership and financial training.
- **Renewable Energy and Agricultural Tools:** Four solar irrigation pumps, eight electric vans, and sprayers were distributed to enhance productivity and reduce environmental impact.
- **Market Linkage and Awareness:** Achieved partnerships with market actors and conducted awareness campaigns on renewable energy, boosting farmer capacity and visibility.



IMPACT ON COMMUNITY AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

The C4VFVC project has catalyzed positive changes in both farmer practices and community dynamics:

- **Mindset Shifts and Leadership Growth:** Training and exposure to new practices have shifted mindsets, increasing support for SHG savings and loans while fostering community leadership.
- **Improved Production Quality and Market Linkages:** Farmers now utilize higher-quality agricultural inputs, bolstered by stronger connections to DAE and market stakeholders. Solar irrigation has lowered costs and reduced emissions, while group marketing has increased pricing power.
- **Enhanced Financial Access and Social Capital:** Cooperatives provide accessible loan options for rural farmers, enhancing financial inclusion and community resilience through Heifer's cornerstone training.



CHALLENGES

Despite the achievements, the project faces several obstacles:

- **Community Resistance:** Family and local leaders often discourage SHG participation in savings and loan activities.
- **Leadership and Ownership Gaps:** Some cooperative committee members lack commitment, hampering the effectiveness of leadership and management.
- **Operational Constraints:** Electric van leasing and sprayer machine utilization have been problematic, affecting transportation and pest management efforts.
- **Volunteer and Skills Deficit:** Recruiting skilled volunteers remains challenging, impacting cooperative operations. Additionally, the premature introduction of financial activities has led to prioritization over other developmental activities.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTION

My name is Mukti Khatun from Panisara village in Jhikargacha, Jashore. Life has always been challenging, as my family was poor, with only daughters and no sons. I studied up to class three before starting work in others' fields. I married into a financially struggling family and eventually returned to live with my parents, raising our three children together. To survive, I initially made garlands from flowers picked on others' lands and sold them. Later, we sold my husband's family property to buy 28 decimals of land to grow flowers, though cultivating roses was tough, and we had to take loans from NGOs.

When the RRF BD-2017 project came to our village, I joined the Joba Flower Production Group and learned invaluable skills through RRF's Self-Help Group and training on Heifer's 12 cornerstones. Techniques like bed planting, bio-pesticides, and organic manure transformed my work. RRF supported my flower demonstration with BDT 9,000, and this year, I earned BDT 75,000 from flower sales. Now, my sons are in school, and my daughter has started her education. I dream of expanding my flower business and securing low-interest loans. Thanks to RRF, I am now a successful flower farmer, and my family is finally thriving.



Name: Mukti Khatun
Husband Name: Israel Sardar
Age: 38 years
Entrepreneur of Panisara
village of Jhikargacha in Jashore
district.