

POSITIVE CHANGE IN GENDER NORMS AND HARMFUL BEHAVIOR FOR INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Towards a Gender-Equal and Violence-Free Future



The Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF), in partnership with UNFPA, has been implementing this project since September 2022 to bring about positive changes in gender norms and reduce the acceptance of gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, particularly among vulnerable groups. This initiative aims to foster inclusive and resilient communities through increased awareness, capacity building, and active community involvement.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Promoting Gender Equality:** Create an environment free of violence and gender biases by empowering women to make decisions without fear or obstacles.
2. **Community Engagement:** Actively involve the community in awareness-raising activities to prevent violence against women and promote a culture of gender equality.
3. **Capacity Building:** Enhance skills and capacities in service delivery to improve the lives of women and the community.

FACT & FIGURE

Sl.	Fact	Figure
1	Name of the program	Positive Change in gender norms and harmful behavior for Inclusive and resilient communities
2	Duration	September-2022 –December 2026
3	Supported By	UNFPA
4	No. of project participants	Total: 1620 (Male-946, Female-674)
5	No. of staff	09
6	Working Location	Bagerhat, Bangladesh



KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

1. **Day Observation:** Organized community-wide events to mark significant days like International Women’s Day, raising awareness of women's rights and gender equality.
2. **Capacity Development and Training:** Conducted workshops and training sessions to enhance the capacity of community leaders, teachers, religious figures, and local government representatives.
3. **Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Programs:**
 - Courtyard Meetings
 - Tea Stall Sessions
 - Bi-Monthly Sessions to foster grassroots engagement and dialogue on GBV and gender equality.
4. **Workshops:** Facilitated training closing sessions with discussions on mental support for GBV victims and the development of a GBV Companion for Non-GBV Persons.

ACHIEVEMENT IN 2023-24

Sl	Activity Name	Subject	Batch	Number	Who Participated
01	SBCC Session (Courtyard,Tea Stall Session.My Monthly Session)	In these sessions, the concept of GBV, SBCC, gender equity, woman empowerment and gender norms were discussed	90	2700 (Male: 1473 & Female: 1227)	Community People And Civil Society
02	16 Days of activism	GBV related information	01	300 (M 185, F 115)	GO NGO stakeholders
03	Day Observation:	Celebration of Rokeya Dibos:	01	150 participants (Male: 61, Female: 89)	GO, NGO ,stakeholders, Community People And Civil Society
04	Workshop	Day-long Workshop with elected chairman, members and representatives to bring positive changes in communities	01	25 (Male-15, female-10)	Elected Union Parishad Chairman and Members

05	Workshop	Workshop on Referral Pathway for the Referral Focal Persons”	01	25 (Male-11, female-14)	Referral Focal Persons Committee
06	Training	“Training on Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)”	01	25	police officials from different police stations of Bagerhat

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

1. Community Awareness and Understanding:

- Open discussions on GBV have fostered a better understanding of the issue and encouraged collective action.
- Community members are now actively challenging harmful social norms and practices.



2. Advocacy for Change:

- Engagement with influential community figures resulted in improved attitudes and behaviors toward preventing and addressing GBV.
- Their advocacy has enhanced overall community well-being and contributed to sustainable development.

3. Enhanced Support Systems:

- Participants in workshops and trainings expressed gratitude for the information provided and emphasized the importance of continuous support for survivors of GBV.
- Public acknowledgment and local media coverage have amplified the project’s impact.

CHALLENGES FACED

- **Cultural Resistance:** Pushback against changing harmful gender norms and practices.
- **Low Awareness:** Limited understanding of gender equality in rural areas.
- **Male Engagement:** Insufficient participation of men in awareness sessions.
- **Capacity Gaps:** Stakeholders lack skills for gender-sensitive approaches.
- **Stigma:** Fear and social stigma deter survivors from seeking help.
- **Coordination Issues:** Complex stakeholder collaboration hinders progress.
- **Sustainability:** Long-term behavior change requires ongoing engagement.
- **Resource Limitations:** Restricted funding and staff affect activity scale.
- **Reluctant Leaders:** Some influencers resist supporting gender initiatives



PARTICIPANT REFLECTION

Mrs. Meera,
Village of Bishnupur,
Sadar Upazilla, Bagerhat.

"Karukarjo is not just a business; it is a movement—a testament to what women can achieve when they are given the opportunity to dream, work, and thrive. My journey started with a simple aspiration to support my family, but it grew into a mission to empower others. Through the courtyard sessions organized by RRF and UNFPA, I discovered that financial independence is not just about earning money; it's about reclaiming our dignity, breaking stereotypes, and securing a future free from violence and dependency.



I realized that women could excel as both homemakers and earners without compromising their values. With the support of my family and community, I started Karukarjo, a space where women collaborate, create, and contribute to society while respecting our cultural heritage. Today, Karukarjo employs 15 women, who now stand tall as financially independent individuals supporting their families.

Every stitch, every piece of Nakshi Katha or carpet we create, symbolizes the strength and resilience of women who dared to dream. If every woman adopts this mindset, we can transform our society—eliminating violence, fostering equality, and driving development.

I urge all women to believe in themselves, to take that first step, and to encourage others. Together, we can shape a brighter future for our families, our communities, and our country. Economic independence is not just a goal; it's a pathway to respect, safety, and progress for all."