

Golden Dream

Major flooding from the sea over 70 kilometres away, has left the ground unusable in a small village in South West Bangladesh. Christian Aid partner, The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh, worked with the villagers to find ways to help them should flooding happen again. Previously flood water drained away naturally but a dam was built



to stop sea water entering the delta. This altered the flow so now water can't drain away sufficiently, leaving the ground salinated and unable to sustain crops. At one point the people dug up the bulbs of water hyacinths or lilies to eat. They are not nutritious but fill up the stomach.

The first thing CCDB suggested was to set up the Sonalir Shopnaw Mohila forum. The forum members were then encouraged to build a small hut to meet in and to decide what they felt was needed for their community. This process has taken a while but now the hut is well used for climate change adaption training and basic literacy. Inside they keep books on climate change, a megaphone to use as an early warning system, torches, bottles of water and a radio. The forum members meet once a month to discuss any current issues and are well informed about climate adaptation.

The first project involved raising the platform for the pump to 6ft above ground level. This means that if a flooding happens the villagers can still get water. CCDB have given the forum saline tolerant seeds and encouraged them to diversify away from crops. They have also tried growing turmeric on floating gardens made from layers of water hyacinths.

The Vice President of the forum, Shova Biswas, explained how she had been in the forum for 3 years and how support and training from CCDB has changed their lives.

"We have been able to save money and become more self-reliant through selling fish and chickens. We are using saline resistant seeds but the yield is not always so good. They have made us more aware of the issues and the benefits of working together. CCDB also helped with some basic education. Now, I can write a little English and read Bangla. This helps my children."

Shova hopes one day that she can travel and tell her story. "Being a lady from a poor area we have already gained and, in the future, can gain more. This forums name means 'Golden Dream' and I hope our dream will be fulfilled."

IMAGE© Commitment for Life Shova Biswas speaking for the forum