

Working together

Shisamondnay Forum has 17 members (10 male and 7 female) each representing a family. Both Hindu and Muslim families in Dhankhali Village where the forum is situated, live in wooden, well cared for buildings. Cyclones, flooding, drought and salinity all affect this area so Shushilan, supported by Christian Aid Bangladesh, have been helping the forum with cultivation so they are better qualified and get better crop yields. Shushilan has made them aware of the best research and ways of managing disasters as well as nutritional advice, health and sanitation. This means lives have improved as they know their crops are good quality so when they go to market they ask for a fair price for the crops. They like it that Shushilan investigates and collects other information to help them.



Shushilan has given them training for paddy field production. They gave saline tolerant seeds, provided advice e.g. It is better to store seeds in plastic not jute bags. It keeps them in a better condition and more protected. They can see the benefit of these seeds and are now collecting their own from the harvested crop which they are storing and sharing with others. They also feel they can discuss issues and resolve them together rather than going to Shushilan for advice or help. They meet every 15 days and discuss what training they feel they need. They want to be more organic in their farming methods and raise homesteads, as they have learnt of the benefits from Shushilan. The women appear to have a full voice in the forum and work together in the fields. This did not used to be the case. All are willing to learn and they want to share what they have learnt. Both Muslim and Hindus work together well here making the whole community aware of the problems related to climate change.

Shapna Shome has an air of confidence about her. She shared how life had changed through the forum.

“Earlier we could not come out of our house, now we can share and talk. The difference has been the forum. We work together and this is a real cultural change. Earlier we hid ourselves. Women feel better from the knowledge we have strength and can even go to Government offices to get our rights. No one would have done this earlier as we felt timid (shy.) Earlier we did not have the power or strength. We feel the committee is behind us to fight against any intimidation.”

Shapna explained how now both male and female children are starting to be treated the same.

“It is all for the children. We listen to advice about eating vegetables. Our children learn from us and are healthier. They do not play in the dirty waters and they wash their hands. With all this new knowledge, I know I should send my children to school.”

This confident forum is a great example of how, through training and sharing, life for the whole family can become better.

IMAGE: ©Commitment for Life: Shapna Shome