



Women Overcoming Poverty

Budget: \$20,000 for the second year of the project. Fully funded.

Update: Bangladesh has a population of 170 million people. More than 50% of the people live below the poverty line and those living in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged. This project aims to equip rural communities by improving literacy through functional education, self-help group formation, economic empowerment and encouraging behavioral change.

There continued to be strong participation in the 8-month functional education course and the follow-on savings groups that form as a result of these classes. Ten new groups were formed this year and the members are saving regularly and receive on-going training. Selected members and group leaders attended additional training in business development, management and reporting and then shared their knowledge with the other group members.

60 students have so far been integrated into government schools since the preschool program started. Another group of 30 students qualified for and were admitted to the government primary school and 30 more students have been enrolled in the pre-school to prepare them for school entry. Regular visits to the preschools (3x/month) maintain the high quality of care and teaching. Co-curricular activities are organised each quarter as well as meetings with parents to discuss their children's progress. The annual sports program held was enjoyed by all the students, families and local community members who attended.

Improved income means more families can afford to send their children to school to receive a formal education. Nela Begum's family is one example. Her husband's income was insufficient to support all their expenses so she enrolled in the classes and joined a savings group. She obtained a loan to start her own grocery shop and over time her business has grown. Her husband now helps run the shop (below) and their two young daughters are able to attend school. Mukta is another woman who completed the 8-month education course and formed a savings group. Her husband was a day labourer and rickshaw puller and it was difficult for them to make ends meet. With the loan she received, she purchased a second-hand motorized rickshaw (above, right), allowing her husband to take passengers to more distant places and earn more income. Her daughter and son can now look forward to an educated future.

Thank you for your support of the women who are educating themselves and are building a future for their families.

