



IMPACT STORY



WOMEN AND GIRLS BECOME EMPOWERED THROUGH THE SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME IN COX'S BAZAR

“Participating in the Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Programme has made me confident,” says Sabiha Begum*, 24, a seamstress, turkey farmer and community outreach volunteer from Ukhiya Cox’s Bazar. “Now, I am known to my relatives and neighbours as a self-reliant woman. I am contributing to my family and the wider community, and I can support my daughter’s studies. I have requested that my two sisters also enrol in this programme.”

Begum now works for World Vision Bangladesh, a local NGO, where she delivers courses COVID-19 and other social issues on a regular basis. She also participated in sewing classes at DanChurchAid’s (DCA) Multi-Purpose Women’s Centre and a turkey farming course at a local NGO. She is now able to supplement her income by working part-time as a tailor. She was able to build a house with this money, where she currently lives with her daughter and has space for turkey farming in her yard.

“I have faced so many challenges in my life,” Begum recounts. “I was forced to marry when I was 12 and was physically and psychologically abused by my husband who left me when I was six months pregnant. This forced me to move back to my parents’ house, where I gave birth to my daughter. Meanwhile, my two sisters were also left

* Not her real name. pseudonym has been used to protect her identity

PHOTO ABOVE: Sabiha Begum in front of the Second Chance Education learning centre in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Mahmudul Karim

PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

The UN Women project “Reducing Social Tension through Women’s Leadership and the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Cox’s Bazar” (2020-2022) is implemented under the Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Programme with financial support from the Government of Sweden. The responsible party DanChurchAid works to empower refugee and host community women and girls by leading skills-development trainings and learning sessions.

In 2018, UN Women and the BHP Foundation partnered to develop and launch the Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning (SCE) programme for young and adult women who had missed out on education. This collaboration brings together the BHP Foundation as an innovator for marginalized people and UN Women as a global champion for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Since its establishment, the SCE programme has been piloted in six prototype countries: Australia, Cameroon, Chile, India, Jordan, and Mexico with other countries currently in the start-up phase. The programme is now in its fourth and final year of the pilot phase, with a 12-month cost extension until June 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has achieved its objective of registering 67,000 women by September 2021. Among the 28,031 graduates, 15,846 began working, largely as self-employed or entrepreneurs.

by their husbands and moved into our house. My father was the only income-generating person, and we were facing financial difficulties supporting such a big family. When my father passed away suddenly, we fell into deep poverty. I was depressed and because I was illiterate, I couldn't find work. One of DCA's volunteers referred me to the Second Chance Education Programme where I learned basic literacy and numeracy. This encouraged me to overcome my frustrations and helped me gain confidence."

"[THE SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME] SUPPORTED ME IN OVERCOMING MY FRUSTRATIONS AND HELPED ME GAIN CONFIDENCE."

—Sabiha Begum, seamstress, turkey farmer and community outreach volunteer

Since February 2020, UN Women, with financial support from the Government of Sweden, has implemented the Second Chance Education and Learning Programme in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The aim of the programme is to support women and adolescent girls in learning basic literacy, numeracy, and language skills to enhance their self-reliance and confidence in decision-making. Volunteers, with the support of teachers, distribute learning materials to the students while also regularly monitoring their progress and assisting the learners to understand the material.

Nur Nahar, another Second Chance Education participant, shared that when her small boy asked her to teach him how to read and write, she couldn't do so because she was illiterate. "They say that you can learn at any age, so I enrolled in the SCE programme to study. We are poor, but one thing that provides us joy is that we have learnt to read and write. Now I can read the product labels at the grocery store and can calculate my money. This has been quite helpful to us."

The Second Chance Education sessions are held in three batches of one hour each, three days a week. Each batch consists of 10 students of a total of 30 who are part of the centre. "We are also providing them with life skills training and awareness sessions on how to maintain hygiene, childcare, and prevent child marriage," says Israt Jahan Mumu, Education Facilitator from the Second Chance Education programme. "The goal is to equip them with additional knowledge and skills that can support their income in addition to education." Mehtap Tatar, UN Women Programme Specialist for Gender in Humanitarian Action, explains, "With the programme, we are also






UN Women's work in Cox's Bazar is aimed at ensuring that humanitarian efforts contribute to transforming socio-cultural gender norms and relations through the leadership and empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of positive forms of masculinities.

Since 2017, UN Women, in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in Bangladesh, has developed a humanitarian response programme to meet the specific needs of the Rohingya refugee women and girls in Cox's Bazar. The objective is to ensure women and girls' protection and their equitable and safe access to humanitarian assistance and information. UN Women also works with the Bangladeshi host communities in Cox's Bazar to promote women's socio-economic empowerment as a means for social cohesion, recovery and resilience-building.

In addition, UN Women is a co-chair with UNHCR of the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Working Group, which promotes gender-responsive humanitarian action across the humanitarian sector in Cox's Bazar.

seeking to address the barriers that caused women to drop out of education in the first place and break down harmful social norms and barriers that prevent them from pursuing meaningful employment and actively participating in society. Also, we are supporting women for increasing their digital literacy. Through these efforts, the programme will work towards facilitating women's access to income generation opportunities by linking them with the market, ensuring an enabling environment for long-lasting change is created and sustained."

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