



SKS Foundation's Manager Conference 2021 held

Managers are the heart and staff are the blood of an organization. Managers work as the driving force and staff propel the organization. SKS Foundation has thrived in its endeavor. Referring to the Core Values and Unique Features of SKS Foundation, the officials remarked these at the Manager Conference of SKS' Microfinance Program.

The Manager Conference titled Manager *Sammelon* 2021 was held in the spirit of the organizational motto *Striving for a Sustainable Change* on 1 January 2022 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha. More than 400 Managers from 168 microfinance branches across the country attended the Conference. Md. Ayub Ali, the Chairperson, flanked by other members of the Executive Committee of SKS Foundation presided the Conference. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, Coordinators, and Zonal Managers of SKS Foundation played the facilitating role.



Awarded Branch Managers are standing behind the Executive Committee members

Facilitating the main session of the Conference, Rasel Ahmed Liton said, "SKS envisages a poverty-free society and Microfinance Program directly contributes to eliminating poverty by providing monetary support to the poor & disadvantaged who are excluded and left behind. SKS Foundation, as a development partner of the government and committed to nation-building, has been working on poverty alleviation of the marginalized implementing various development ventures. And SKS' Microfinance Program is playing the pivotal role in financing the poor to eliminate poverty. SKS has the target to extend its microfinance branches from 168 to 220 covering Kushtia, Meherpur, Tangail, Gazipur, Cox's Bazar district by this year with loan outstanding from 600 crore to 1000 crore. Concerning this, the Managers should be dynamic to cover more disadvantaged people with SKS' convenient financial support."

Md. Ayub Ali closed the day-long Conference with his concluding remarks. He said, "The growth of an organization depends on the growth of its human resources and its capacities, as its human resource drives the organization, the organization goes in that direction. So, each Manager is the director of the respective branch and his directions help the growth of the respective branch. The role of a Branch Manager is to keep up the growth of his branch and in turn contribute the organization to run its mission."

Based on the last year's growth and performance, 10 Microfinance Branches were awarded at the Conference. Alongside, a lifetime award was given to Md. Mosharraf Hossain Khan, former chairperson of the Executive Committee and Member of General Council for his dedicated support to SKS Foundation. The event wrapped up with the cultural program performed by the program participants and artists.

LGRD Minister visited Saidpur FSM Plant



LGRD Minister is visiting the Fecal Sludge Management Plant

Md. Tazul Islam, MP, Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives visited the Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) Plant at Saidpur, Nilphamari on 22 October 2021. Visiting the Plant, the Minister expressed his satisfaction and reiterated government's commitment to the promotion of Fecal Sludge Management. The country's one of the biggest Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) Plant covering 170 decimal areas has been initiated by Saidpur Municipality with support from WaterAid Bangladesh and implementing partner SKS Foundation. (see page 2)

SKS got Special Honor

SKS Foundation received a Special Honor from NRBC Bank and Bangabandhu Parishad of Russia & the USA on the development of marginalized people in Bangladesh. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation received the Award from Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique, Former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University. The Honor was given in unveiling the book *Bangabandhu Theke Bishwo Bandhu* ceremony on 28 December 2021 at Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad Auditorium of Bangla Academy, Dhaka. Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury inaugurated the event virtually as Chief Guest. Dr. Mashiur Rahman, the Economic Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister, Poet Asad Chowdhury, Poet Nurul Huda, Director General of Bangla Academy, were present as special guests. SM Parvez Tamal, Chairman of NRBC Bank and General Secretary of Bangabandhu Parishad, Russia chaired the ceremony.



Rasel Ahmed Liton is receiving the Award from AAMS Arefin Siddique

Learning sharing on Healthy Village model



DC, Satkhira is distributing Certificates among the respective UP Chairmen

SKS Foundation organized a Learning sharing event titled Healthy Village for Sustainable Development in Satkhira district. The event was observed organizing a Workshop and a Fair on 16 November 2021 at Lake View Resort, Satkhira targeting to scale up and educate people on Healthy Village model. Md. Humayun Kabir, DC, Satkhira, inaugurated the function as Chief Guest. Dr. Hossain Safayat, Civil Surgeon, Satkhira was present as a special guest with Masruba Ferdous, Deputy Director, Local Government, in the chair.

In his speech, the Chief Guest upheld, "Healthy Village model is essential to get a healthy nation. So, this Model is necessitated to expand from village to ward, ward to union, union to upazila, and upazila to the district to get the full benefit."

SKS Foundation, under its MaxNutriWASH project supported by Max Foundation, arranged the Workshop & Fair to improve the health, hygiene, nutrition of the villagers through enhanced community participation in the improvement of WASH & environment. The Workshop was attended by officials from District Family Planning, Department of Social Services, Department of Women Affairs, Department of Agricultural Extension, and Department of Public Health Engineering, District Primary Education Office, UNO, Upazila Chairman, UP Chairmen, NGO representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Total of 16 stalls were demonstrated by the health promotion agents, local sanitary entrepreneurs, sweepers, and so on while the mass people from different parts of the district visited the Fair.

Session on Cyber Security & Digital Literacy held



Md. Mahfuzur Rahman, DIO, is addressing the function as chief guest

SKS Foundation in partnership with VSO Bangladesh organized an Awareness Session on 'Cyber Security & Digital Literacy' on 15 December 2021. Md. Mahfuzur Rahman, District Information Officer addressed the Session as Chief Guest. Organized at SKS School & College, Gaibandha with participation of 105 students, 10 teachers and 5 officials, the Session was chaired by Dr. Anamika Saha, Vice-Principal, SKS School & College. The speakers underscored the need for bringing students and teachers under awareness programs on Cyber Security & Digital Literacy aimed at educating themselves about cyber-crimes.

'Char women still vulnerable in childbirth'

In char areas of Gaibandha, 49% of women get delivered at home, of which, only 24% are attended by skilled Birth Attendants. The average marriage age of girls is 16.6 years, of which, 36% complete primary education, and 18% have no formal education. This was disclosed in a Sharing Meeting on the Key Findings of Baseline Study of MAMOTA Project, organized by SKS Foundation on 15 November 2021 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha.

Chaired by Md. Mahbub Alam, Director of Family Planning, Rangpur, the Event was attended by Dr. Mohammed Sharif, Director (MCH- Service) & Line Director (MCRAH), DGFP as Chief Guest while Md. Saiful Islam, Deputy Director of Family Planning, Dr. A.M. Akhtaruzzaman, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha, Dr. Shamim Jahan, Deputy Country Director, Save the Children, Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Dy. Chief Executive of SKS Foundation were the special guests.



Dr. Mohammed Sharif is addressing the Meeting as chief guest

Presenting the Keynote, Professor Dr. Md. Zakir Hossain, Team Leader of the Study, said, "Household heads play a vital role in the decision-making process of healthcare service seeking. Many factors i.e. inadequate health service nearby, shortage of medicines and health service providers, and taboos are holding *char* women back in health service." The participants from GOs & NGOs pointed out that despite the government measures, child marriage has not been stopped and the public perception has yet to be changed in *char* areas to Promote Maternal and Newborn Health.

Referring to the study findings, Dr. Mohammed Sharif said, "We need to work on preventing child marriage to promote maternal and newborn health in *char* areas. And NGO can play an important role, complementing the government efforts, in changing perceptions at the community level including the hard-to-reach communities." Md. Mahbub Alam said, "The context and area selection is important for such intervention. I believe, the program and these areas will be benefited under the wide network of SKS Foundation."

LGRD Minister visited

(from page1) Md. Helaluddin Ahmed, Senior Secretary, Local Government Division, Md. Saifur Rahman, Chief Engineer, Department of Public Health Engineering, Md. Abdur Rashid Khan, Chief Engineer, Local Government Engineering Department accompanied the Minister during the visit. Rafika Akhtar Jahan, Mayor, Saidpur Municipality; Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid, and Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Deputy Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, welcomed the Minister and the delegate at the FSM Plant. Ahsan Adelur Rahman, MP, Nilphamari-4; Md. Hafizur Rahman Chowdhury, DC, & Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, SP, Nilphamari; Md. Moksedul Momin, Chairman, Saidpur Upazila; Md. Shamim Hossain, UNO along with senior officials of WaterAid, SKS Foundation, and Municipality team members were also present during this visit.

Seminar on handwashing held

Speakers underscored the importance of handwashing, urged handwashing facilities at all public places, asked about availability and affordability of WASH devices across the country, and warned people of lessening the handwashing practices as the COVID-19 outbreak has been weakened. The sector specialists & professionals upheld this in the Seminar titled 'Let's Stay Safe with Handwashing' organized centering the theme of the Global Handwashing Day 2021 *Our Future is at Hand– Let's Move Forward Together*.

FANSA- Bangladesh along with the networking body in the WASH sector i.e. SWA, BAWIN, FSM Network, MHM Platform, IWA–BD Chapter, and WaterAid Bangladesh organized the Seminar virtually on 31 October 2021. Presided over by Dr. Tanvir Ahmed, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, BUET & Director, ITN-BUET, Partha Hefaz Shaikh, Director–Policy and Advocacy, WaterAid Bangladesh, made a comprehensive presentation covering the directions in National Hygiene Strategy and the current handwashing status in Bangladesh. A set of professionals from the government, UN bodies, development partners, national and international organizations, academia, and respective stakeholders from the civil society took part as Designated Panelist.



The speakers pinpointed that there is markable progress in terms of coverage in the WASH sector. But the practice of handwashing still has not reached the expected level, especially in private and public places. Moreover, the large disparities in the availability and affordability of handwashing facilities between the poor and rich remain high in the country. WASH & hygiene professionals came up with their comments and recommendations while attending the Seminar from all over the country.

SC Country Director visited

(from page 4) The Country Director visited Padumshahor Union Health & Family Welfare Centre (UHFWC) and Saghata Union Parishad. Interacting with the UHFWC committee and Union Parishad members, Onno said, "Good facility like doctors, nurses & midwives is only one part of ensuring healthy mothers & children. The other part is a mother with awareness on nutrition & diet diversity which make a mother strong & healthy and in turn success for the baby might trigger. This also comes from education. If a young girl is educated and marry a little bit later then there will be stronger and better security of families and lives of their children."

The 2-day visit ended on 12 October 2021 with a meeting with the senior management team of SKS Foundation led by Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Deputy Chief Executive of SKS Foundation. Khaleda Habib, Senior Project Manager, Hosneara Khondker, Project Director, Md. Abdul Alim, District Manager, Gaibandha, accompanied the Country Director on behalf of Save the Children. Md. Saiful Alam, Director, Development Programs led the facilitation of the visit on behalf of SKS Foundation.

Training on WASH & COVID-19 held



A participant is sharing his view in the Training Course in Barishal

FANSA-Bangladesh conducted training for community champions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through safely managed WASH in the communities. Three member organizations of FANSA- BD namely SKS Foundation, Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) and AVAS conducted the training course on "Capacity enhancement and leadership building of Community Champions to demand access to WASH information & improved services". The courses were held covering 3 geographical zones i.e. Gaibandha under *char* zone, Barishal under coastal belt and Dhaka under urban setting respectively on 11, 13 & 27 December 2021.

A total of 65 participants including the WASH promoters, sanitation workers, health professionals, journalists, teachers, CBO leaders drawn from the LNOB groups defined as 'Community Champions' in catalyzing the community towards sanitation promotion and COVID-19 prevention in the communities attended the courses.

WASH & COVID-19 situation, the most affected communities in terms of WASH & COVID-19, importance of hygiene i.e. handwashing in preventing COVID infection, government institutions for disaster, WASH & COVID management, etc were covered as the contents of the Courses.

The Community Champions identified environmental hazards & area-based disasters and poor economic conditions were deteriorating the WASH facilities while inadequate education & WASH information are holding them back to fighting COVID-19. The participants expressed motivation and came up with an action plan in making their community follow the COVID-19 health guidelines. WASH and health specialists from GOs & NGOs and development professionals from the organizers and other FANSA-BD members took part in facilitating different sessions of the Training Courses.

Training on Child Protection & Safe guarding held



Md. Mahfuj-ur Rahman is facilitating the Training Course

SKS Foundation organized a day-long Refreshers Training on Child Protection & Safeguarding on 27th November 2021 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha to review and update its Gender, Child Protection & Safeguard Policy. Md Mahfuj-ur Rahman, Project Manager-HLP, WaterAid Bangladesh, facilitated the Training while 43 SKS' management level staff attended.

Separate institution needed for *char* development



The chair is speaking while the chief guest & others are sitting on the podium

'There needs to be a separate institutional structure for the development of *char* regions' stated speakers in the annual Regional *Char* Convention 2021. SHOUHARDO III program of CARE Bangladesh in association with the National *Char* Alliance (NCA) organized the Convention on 5 December 2021 in Rangpur. AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem, MP, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Water Resources, was the Chief Guest. Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, MP, and MA Matin, MP, were the Special Guests with Marc Nosbach, Chief of Party, SHOUHARDO III, CARE Bangladesh in the chair.

AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem, MP, highlighted the *char* development interventions by the Government of Bangladesh. He mentioned about the *Char* Development and Settlement project-5. Referring to the Mujib Fort (shelters), he mentioned, "It's an innovative model where both people and cattle can take refuge during natural disasters".

Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, MP, mentioned that Bangladesh is second after China considering the climate-induced migration and on top regarding climate-induced child vulnerability. About the necessity of an institutional structure for the *char* region, he stated, "We need to establish a semi-government *Char* Foundation/ Board to lead the efforts for the development of the *char* region. Uninterrupted policy interventions are needed for the development of *chars*."

Dr. Atiur Rahman, Founding Chair, National *Char* Alliance and Ex-Governor of Bangladesh Bank mentioned that among the BDT 1000 crore of the Social Safety Net, only BDT 217 crore have been allocated for the *char* region. This allocation has to be at least 20% of the total social safety net budget, he added. ADP allocation for *char* regions should be at least 30%, he emphasized. And establishing an institutional structure like *Char* Board/Foundation is a must to ensure the proper implementation of that.

Marc Nosbach mentioned, "Women and adolescent girls living in *char* areas are among the worst affected, as they are denied an equal and equitable say in decision-making in family and community. Despite various development efforts, the population of the *char* region often remains isolated and in many cases development benefits do not reach them adequately."

Eight program participants awarded *Joyeeta*

Eight female program participants of SKS Foundation received *Joyeeta* Award 2021 for their exemplary works as entrepreneurs and fighters of oppression in their communities. Three out of 8 women have been awarded at district and upazila level both while 5 have been awarded at upazila level. Relating to women empowerment in the community, these program participants have been engaged under SKS Foundation's Action for Socio-economic Security & Rights for Excluded and Marginalized Women & Girls project supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

The Award was given in observance of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence and Begum Rokeya Day on 9 December 2021 in an event at DC Conference Hall, Gaibandha. Abdul Matin, DC, handed over the Crests as Chief Guest. Referring to the enormous education spirit of Begum Rokeya, DC said, "Begum Rokeya was a great *Joyeeta*. Because she was the one who took the first endeavor to break the then social taboo barring women from education. She knew education is the power to eradicate all the inequality in society and society can not go ahead leaving women behind. As a result, today, women have got an opportunity to be thrived."



The DC is giving the Award to Rupali Begum of Boali, Gaibandha Sadar

Chaired by Sadequr Rahman, ADC (General), Md. Towhidul Islam, Superintendent of Police, Nargis Jahan, Deputy Director, Women Affairs, and Sha Sharwar Kabir, Upazila Chairman, Sadar, also spoke as special guests. Several NGO, Civil Society representatives, and journalists attended the ceremony.

SC Country Director visited SKS' Program

Onno Van Manen, Country Director of Save the Children in Bangladesh visited SKS Foundation's Promotion of Maternal and Newborn Health (MAMOTA), Integrated Child Development Program (Shishuder Jonno) projects and Emergency Flood Response 2021 supported by Save the Children. The visit took place on 10-11 October 2021 in Gaibandha. (see page 3)



Onno Van Manen is addressing the UHF&WC committee members at Padumshahor