



## Annual General Meeting Held



The Chairperson is addressing the members in the AGM.

SKS Foundation's Annual General Meeting 2023-'24 (AGM) was held on 14 September 2024 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha. The 23 members of SKS Foundation General Committee attended the Meeting with Murshed Alam Saker, the Chairperson, in the chair. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive (Ex-Officio) of SKS Foundation facilitated the Meeting.

The AGM reviewed the last 1-year performance against the Annual Budget and Work-plan 2023-'24. The AGM also discussed and approved the Work-plan & Budget accordingly. The Meeting placed special emphasis on SKS Foundation Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029, addressing the challenges and exploring opportunities within the current development landscape.

In the AGM, SKS Foundation's Annual Report for 2023-'24 upheld that, alongside its Microfinance Program, 32 development projects were operational, reaching 1,630,213 people. This included 289,166 participants in the Microfinance Program and 1,341,047 in various development programs. Under SKS' 4 sectoral programs, 224,935 people were served in Social Empowerment, 1,408,021 in Economic Development, 230,081 in Environmental Justice, and 972,574 in Social Service Support. The report also noted SKS' research initiatives, with 5 studies conducted during the year.

For next year's plan, SKS aims to open 25 new Microfinance branches and increase its membership by around 84,000. Additionally, 13 new development projects are in the pipeline to serve more communities. The Meeting also approved the Annual Budget of Tk. 3,881 Crore and the Work-plan for the FY 2024-'25.

## Director General- NGOAB Visited SKS Foundation

Md. Saidur Rahman, Director General (Grade-1) of the NGO Affairs Bureau, visited SKS Foundation & its program intervention on 6 July 2024. While visiting program operations, the DG observed SKS' key healthcare initiatives at the Union Health & Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC) at Ghagoa Union providing 24/7 safe normal delivery, and promotion of maternal & newborn health at the hard-to-reach *char* areas. He also visited SKS Hospital, and SKS Eye Hospital in Gaibandha.

During the visit, Dr. A. B. M. Abu Hanif, Divisional Director (Health) of Rangpur; Md. Zahid Hasan Siddiqui, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) of Gaibandha; Khondaker Zahid Shorwar, Deputy Director of Development Program, SKS Foundation, and senior officials from other NGOs accompanied the DG.



DG-NGOAB is holding a view exchange meeting with NGO representatives, and interacting with SKS' Program Participants in a field visit (Inset).

The DG also presided over a view exchange meeting with NGO representatives at SKS Foundation Head Office, Gaibandha. Dr. A. B. M. Abu Hanif as a special guest, alongside Dr. Kaniz Sabiha, Civil Surgeon of Gaibandha; Sushanta Kumar Mahato, Additional Deputy Commissioner; and Md. Arshad Uddin, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Magistrate of Gaibandha Municipality participated in the meeting. In the meeting, the DG emphasized the importance of expanding development efforts to all *char* areas in Gaibandha.

## Consultation on CWIS Plan & Guideline Held



Dr. Md. Mujibur Rahman, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering & Director CSIRS-UIU, is presenting the key finding in Consultation

A Consultation on the Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) Plan and Guideline for Sreemangal Municipality, Moulvibazar was held on 19 September 2024 at the Sreemangal Municipality Conference Hall. FANSA-Bangladesh Secretariat- SKS Foundation and local member MAC Bangladesh organized the Consultation under the *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6* project. FANSA-Bangladesh has undertaken an initiative to develop the CWIS Plan and Guideline for its project areas i.e. Gaibandha and Sreemangal municipalities and Barisal City Corporation, and Muktinagar Union, Saghata, Gaibandha. As a part of that initiative, the Consultation was conducted by the study consulting organization *Center for Smart Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability (CSIRS)* of *United International University (UIU)*. (See Page 3)



## SKS Won Best BCC Campaigner Award



Rasel Ahmed Liton (Right), Chief Executive of SKS Foundation is receiving the Award from Dr. Md. Jasim Uddin, Additional Managing Director, PKSF.

SKS Foundation has bagged the Best Behavior Change Communication (BCC) Campaigner Award for remarkable achievements in constructing safely managed twin-pit toilets. The Award recognized the outstanding performance of SKS Foundation's Kakina Branch in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram Sadar Branch while each promoted at least 180 twin-pit toilets within 6 months. The Award included a crest, prize money and a certificate.

The award was presented on 4 July 2024 at the 3rd Annual Coordination Meeting of the *Bangladesh Rural Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Human Capital Development (BD Rural WASH for HCD)* Project at PKSF Bhaban in Dhaka. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation, received the Award from Dr. Md. Jasim Uddin, Additional Managing Director of PKSF. The event was graced by distinguished guests, including Rokeya Ahmed, Senior Water & Sanitation Specialist, World Bank, and Md. Abdul Matin, General Manager of PKSF.

## DRR Fair 2024 Held

(from page 4) Presided over by Mohammad Shafiqul Islam, District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer, Sabbir Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner and Executive Magistrate, Md. Saiduzzaman Sarkar, Chairman of Mollarchar Union Parishad, Moyenuddin Ahmmed, Program Coordinator at CARE Bangladesh, and Khondaker Zahid Shorwar, Deputy Director of Development Programs at SKS Foundation were present as Special Guests.

The speakers highlighted Gaibandha's risk of disasters and stressed the importance of raising awareness to mitigate risks. They noted that reducing disaster risks would make development programs more sustainable.

The Fair featured 17 stalls from various government departments and NGOs. It successfully brought hundreds of people together from various sectors and locations, offering a unique platform for disseminating disaster risk reduction messages to the wider public. The visitors gathered relevant information from different stalls and enjoyed cultural performances on disaster risk reduction.

## Global Day of Climate Action Observed

In a call to reduce carbon emissions and create a livable environment, the Global Day of Climate Action 2024 was observed demonstrating a human chain in the remote *char* area of Pepulia, located on the bank of the Brahmaputra River under Fulchari Union in Fulchari, Gaibandha on 21 September 2024. This year's theme, "Fight for a Fossil-Free Future," aimed to highlight the urgent need for climate action.

Marking the Day, SKS Foundation's *Community-based Resilience Women's Empowerment and Action (CREA)* Project, supported by *Manusher Jonno* Foundation, organized the event. Local Climate Action Group members, including adolescent girls, participated, holding placards and banners to raise awareness.

During the human chain, speakers expressed their concerns about the devastating impacts of climate change, particularly in vulnerable *char* areas. The speakers called for immediate action to reduce carbon emissions, transition to renewable energy sources, and enhance women's roles in energy policy.



The participants in the human chain are holding placards & banners.

## Community Monitoring Upheld

(from page 4) The monitoring, conducted under the FANSA- Bangladesh project *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network to Achieve SDG 6*, implemented by SKS Foundation- the FANSA-BD Secretariat, involving members of the local Women Forum and WASH Monitoring Teams. Their report detailed the unhealthy state of Public Toilets, many of which were found neglected, unsanitary & unusable. In some cases, these facilities were misappropriated for non-sanitary purposes. The Monitoring Team also reported non-functional water points, such as Tube-wells, in several areas. The situation was especially concerning for the *Harijan* community, whose sanitation systems were deemed inadequate, leaving them at severe health risks compared to others.

The Monitoring Team made several recommendations, urging immediate attention to the essential public and community toilets and advocating for improved waste management in the town. They called for prioritizing health-conscious management of functional facilities while addressing the issues of neglected or unnecessary ones.

Md. Arshad Uddin praised the initiative agreeing with the findings. He emphasized the need for family education and public awareness, particularly the role of women, in driving change. He assured attendees that necessary steps would be taken to restore and improve the sanitation system, promising a plan to ensure clean and functional toilets in the municipality area.



## Bangladesh Bank and SKS Foundation Signed MoU



Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation and Kaniz Fatema, Director of Agricultural Credit Department of BB are holding the MoU.

Bangladesh Bank and SKS Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to extend the *Small and Marginal Sized Farmers Agricultural Productivity Improvement and Diversification Financing Project (SMAP)* Project for an additional 3 years. The signing ceremony was held on 1 September 2024 at the Agricultural Credit Department of Bangladesh Bank in Dhaka. Kaniz Fatema, Director of the Agricultural Credit Department signed on behalf of Bangladesh Bank, and Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation signed on behalf of SKS.

The *SMAP* project, aimed to enhance agricultural productivity and diversification for small and marginal farmers who struggle to access credit and technical support. Under the MoU, SKS Foundation will continue supporting 9,000 farmers across 9 districts in northern Bangladesh over the next 3 years.

## Muktinagar UP Tripled Allocation

(From page 4) Md. Rowshan Alam, Secretary of the Union Parishad, presented the total budget of Tk. 18,716,402 for 2024-'25. Union Parishad members, members of the Women Forum, and professionals from various sectors participated in the Open Budget Ceremony. Referring to the petition submitted by the Women Forum and the WASH Monitoring Team to the Union Parishad, they again demanded increased allocation for sanitation promotion. The participants also shared their views on the declared budget and stressed the need for its proper implementation.

Addressing the gathering, Ahsan Habib, Chairman of the Union Parishad, stated, "In response to the demands of the Women Forum and the pressing need to address post-flood health & sanitation issues, we have prioritized this sector in the budget. The successful implementation of this budget will require cooperation from all stakeholders."

## 24/7 Service Launched at UH&FWC

A 24/7 maternal and newborn health service, including safe normal deliveries, was launched at the remote Kamarjani Union Health and Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC) in Sadar Upazila, Gaibandha. Dr. Kaniz Sabiha, the Civil Surgeon of Gaibandha, inaugurated the 24/7 service on 1 July 2024 as the chief guest. The initiative, supported by the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) in collaboration with SKS Foundation and Save the Children, aims to provide essential maternal and newborn health services in remote *char* areas.

Md. Matiar Rahman, Chairman of Kamarjani Union Parishad, presided over the ceremony, with Dr. Mohammad Tauhidul Anwar, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer, attending as a Special Guest. The new 24/7 service will provide round-the-clock access to ANC, PNC, and safe delivery services for pregnant and lactating mothers, enhancing healthcare services to the region's most underserved communities.



Dr. Kaniz Sabiha, the Civil Surgeon, is addressing the audience in the opening ceremony.

## Consultation on CWIS Plan

(From page 1) Shahina Akhter, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) and Administrator of Sreemangal Municipality, inaugurated the Consultation as the Chief Guest. Mohammed Zaherul Islam, Executive Engineer, presided over the event attended by officials from the municipality, councilors, sanitation workers, women forum members, marginalized communities, NGOs and research institutions, and journalists.

Dr. Md. Mujibur Rahman, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering & Director, CSIRS-UIU, presented key findings on the current sanitation situation, highlighting that 91% of Sreemangal's sanitation is unsafe, posing significant risks to public health and the environment. He stressed the urgent need for a City-wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) Plan.

The Chief Guest emphasized that improving sanitation systems is impossible without raising public awareness. She noted that residents often resist the installation of dumping stations in their neighborhoods due to past experiences and misconceptions about sanitation. Many are unaware that modern sanitation systems can be both odor-free and safe. She called for a social movement to educate the public and dispel these misunderstandings.

Other speakers stressed the importance of long-term planning, technological innovation, and cost-effective management to achieve sustainable sanitation solutions. Civil society representatives raised concerns about urban expansion, noting that residential areas have developed near waste disposal sites, leading to public dissatisfaction.



## Community Monitoring Upheld Poor Sanitation Status

Community-led Participatory Monitoring has unveiled significant mismanagement in the sanitation facilities of Gaibandha Municipality. The findings, presented on 5 September 2024 in a sharing meeting organized by SKS Foundation, highlighted the poor conditions of public and community toilets and their connections to drainage systems across the municipality's 9 Wards. The event was held at SKS Inn, Gaibandha, with Md. Arshad Uddin, BPAA, Chief Executive Officer, and Executive Magistrate of Gaibandha Municipality, as the Chief Guest. (See Page 2)



CEO of Gaibandha Municipality is addressing the audience.

## Muktinagar UP Tripled Allocation for Health & Sanitation

In a significant move to prioritize health and sanitation, Muktinagar Union Parishad in Saghata Upazila, Gaibandha, has tripled its Annual Budget for the sector for the 2024-'25 fiscal year. The allocation rose from Tk. 100,000 in 2023-'24 to Tk. 400,000 for the running year.

Ahsan Habib, Chairman of Muktinagar Union Parishad, presiding over the 'Open Budget Ceremony' held on 22 August 2024 at the UP's Conference Hall. Organized by the Union Parishad, FANSA-BD's network member, WDP supported the event under FANSA-BD's project *Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network in South Asia to Achieve SDG 6*. (See Page 3)



The UP Chairman is addressing the audience in the Ceremony.

## Talents Got Stipend



Rasel Ahmed Liton is addressing the students at the Stipend Distribution Ceremony.

SKS Foundation, in partnership with *Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)*, supported 18 underprivileged talents with a stipend. The Stipend Distribution Ceremony was held on 15 September 2024 at SKS' Head Office, Gaibandha. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation handed over the stipend cheques among the students as Chief Guest. A bank cheque of Tk. 12,000 was given to each of the selected College Students from Gaibandha.

In the ceremony, Rasel Ahmed Liton urged the students to be patriotic and serve the nation with patriotic zeal. He said, "The primary goal of education for students should be to contribute to the welfare of the country and its people. By focusing on service to society, students can truly embody the values and purpose of education, turning their learning into meaningful action that benefits the greater good."

## DRR Fair 2024 Held



Curious fair-goers gather around the stall, eager to discover and learn about what's on offer.

A day-long *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Fair 2024* was held on 25 September 2024 at *Shadinota Prangoan* in Gaibandha to raise awareness about disaster risks, educate communities on preparedness, and showcase effective risk reduction strategies. The Event, organized by Gaibandha District Administration with support from SKS Foundation and CARE Bangladesh, aimed to establish a connection between service providers and community members.

Dewan Maudud Ahmed, ADC- General, inaugurated the Fair as the Chief Guest, emphasizing Bangladesh's role as a global leader in disaster management. "We can manage disasters, and by effectively using that capability, we can further enhance our disaster risk reduction efforts. Participation from all sectors is crucial," he stated. (See Page 2)

