

Human Interest Stories (HIS)

of

Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) Project

A joint initiative of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh



Sharmin



Sajib



Mitu



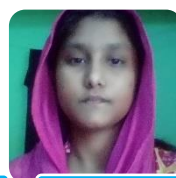
Minara



Sumaiya



Nargis



Reshma



Sima



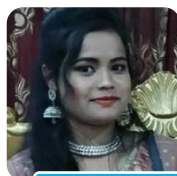
Milon



Dipti



Nazmul



Choity



Rumi



Musa



Sumaiya



Tajrina



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ACRONYMS

AC	: Adolescent Club
APC	: Accelerating Protection for Children
CBCPC	: Community Based Child Protection Committee
CRF	: Child Rights Facilitator
ECM	: Ending Child Marriage
GOB	: Government of Bangladesh
GBV	: Gender Based Violence
HSC	: Higher Secondary Certificate
JSC	: Junior School Certificate
IT	: Information Technology
MoWCA	: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MPS	: Mobile Phone Servicing
LSBE	: Life Skills Based Education
SSC	: Secondary School Certificate
TVET	: Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VAC	: Violence Against Children
UNICEF	: United Nations Children’s Fund
UNO	: Upazila Nirbhahi Officer

Table of Content

Acknowledgement-----	2
Acronyms and Abbreviations-----	3
Table of Content-----	4
01. HIS of Rozoni Akter (Dhaka)-----	5
02. HIS of Sharmin Akter (Dhaka)-----	6
03. HIS of Reshma Akter (Dhaka)-----	7
04. HIS of Nazmul (Dhaka)-----	8
05. HIS of Sumaiya Akter (Barishal)-----	9
06. HIS of Abdullah Khaled (Barishal)-----	10
07. HIS of Mitu Akter (Barishal)-----	11
08. HIS of Tarika Islam Choity (Mymensingh)-----	12
09. HIS of Rumi Akter Mina (Mymensingh)-----	13
10. HIS of Minara Akter (Mymensingh)-----	14
11. HIS of Nargis Akter (Chattogram)-----	15
12. HIS of Rifat Ara Sima (Chattogram)-----	16
13. HIS of Md. Milon Mia (Rangpur)-----	17
14. HIS of Md. Mostakim Islam (Rangpur)-----	18
15. HIS of Dipti Lohar (Sylhet)-----	19
16. HIS of Shamser Kaji Musa (Sylhet)-----	20
17. HIS of Ripa Khatun (Khulna)-----	21
18. HIS of Sajib Biswas (Khulna)-----	22
19. HIS of Sumaiya Akter (Cox's Bazar)-----	23
20. HIS of Tarjina (Cox's Bazar)-----	24

Rozoni: Reducing Adolescent's Vulnerability through Stipend



"Because of my livelihood opportunities, I can pay for school supplies and there is always enough food on the table." – Rozoni Akter

Rozoni Akter (17), member of an adolescent club, knows first-hand how a small financial assistance can change the life of an adolescent and her family. As a member of poor family and small business owner at Mirpur slum in



ROJONI AKTER

Dhaka, she credits her ability to support her family to a stipend she received from the Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) Project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh.

Access to cash support is a major obstacle to escaping the cycle of poverty, leaving adolescents vulnerable to exploitation and increasing their risk of protection and continued education. Without financial assistant, it is almost impossible to start and grow small initiatives that can increase income for their livelihood. By gaining some financial independence, adolescents improve their status and are better able to provide for their education and care other siblings without seeking outside help. In September 2019, as a member of the Adolescent Club of APC Project, Rozoni took out a stipend of BDT 15000.00 (USD 175.00). With this money she was able to start a business selling spicy puffed rice (Jhalmuri) in her community and named her shop "Rojonir Jhalmuri". As her small shop grew, she purchased tables and chairs and expanded the menu to include tea.



"I would encourage other adolescent to open their own livelihood option with the support of adolescent club and APC project," she says.

APC project is dedicated to reducing adolescent's vulnerability to VAC, GBV, ECM, Livelihood, Inclusion etc. through Adolescent Clubs. As a part of innovative approaches, APC project provided stipend to create livelihood opportunities for adolescents vulnerable to and affected by poverty. Through regular meetings of adolescent club members, Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) strengthens adolescent's connections to each other, creates a safe space where they can share successes and hardships, discuss ideas, life skills and support one another to take more control over their lives. Rozoni's success as a small business owner has given her a sense of financial independence and improved self-worth. Now, Rozoni can purchase school supplies, uniforms, and food for her and family.

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Sharmin: Reducing Adolescent's Vulnerability through Stipend



SHARMIN AKTER

When Sharmin Akter (18) attended in an adolescent club meeting with her peer groups in early March 2020, she heard about COVID-19. The adolescent clubs are implementing by the Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) Project under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) in association with UNICEF Bangladesh. They discussed the higher prevalence rates of COVID-19 and the adverse lives of the people of China, Italy during this epidemic. She also thought the impacts of coronavirus to the adolescents. Just after two days of their meeting, the Government of Bangladesh had taken steps in operationalizing quarantine measures, such as school closures and restrictions on movements, which had disrupted adolescent's routine and social support.

The global pandemic COVID-19 had also been spreading within the community of Bangladesh that became a serious threat to public health. It had upended the lives of adolescents due to prolonged school closures, mobility restrictions, lack of access to earnings by their capable family members.

Due to COVID-19, it was like bolt from the blue to her family as well as all others. A long walk without any income could be troublesome. Suddenly a great idea hit her. The idea which can skill her passion, change boredom into excitement and help to earn some extra bread for family. It was crafting, dress designing and selling those items through online. She designed wonderful sari and handmade jewelry. It took some time but her hard work pays off. Many people got interested and some wanted to have the crafts. When the story was written her daily turnover is about BDT 500.00 (USD 6.00) which helped her father to relieve his family burden during the pandemic COVID-19 situation.

When APC project launched its club at Korial Slum in Dhaka for the adolescents, the peer leader was among the first trained. "I think Child Right Facilitator (CRF) of APC project learned a lot about life skills and the club sessions broke the ice and created a forum for discussion. We even talked about child protection and our livelihood outside of the club sessions. I felt obligated to do something." She says.

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"This distressed situation is the worst-hit by the prevailing pandemic that has pushed to increase Gender Based Violence, Violence against Children, exploitation, social exclusion, child abuse, sexual harassment, child marriage, school dropout etc. resulting from the decrease of family income"

- Sharmin Akter

Reshma: Dreams to establish IT training centre

Reshma Akter, a girl of 17 years of age, is a daughter of Md. Jashim Uddin (Day Laborer) and Mrs. Rawshan Ara (Domestic Worker). She lives with her parents and four siblings in a rented house in Narayangonj, the port city of Bangladesh. It was difficult for her parents to maintain their educational expenses. Realizing the hardship, Reshma started tuition to continue her study. But the income was still low. So, she dropped out from the study after completing higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination in 2018. Reshma tried and did not find any suitable earning sources. Reshma discovered herself with much frustration when she did not find any hope for livelihood without any skills in this crowd and big city. She was totally upset. Suddenly, in November 2018, she heard about the Adolescent Club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh from one of her friends and got introduced with Child Rights Facilitators (CRF). Then, she went to the club and knew detailed from the peer leader of the club. Reshma was excited to hear all about and found a light of hope. Finally, her dream came to truth while she received stipend of BDT 15000.00 (USD 175.00) for her occupational skills opportunities from APC project.



RESHMA AKTER

Reshma successfully completed three months training on computer application. Similarly, she took part in different activities of adolescent club and become familiar with other life skills. All these helped to shape her new life. Now, Reshma works at a local computer compose centre and earns BDT 8,500.00 (equivalent to USD 100.00) per month. She feels proud to spend for her family and saves for future.

While Rshma was enjoying her daily life with harmony, the pandemic COVID-19 affected her again. But

"The learnings of the adolescent club make Reshma more responsible and kind. Her initiatives in response to COVID-19 save many of our lives."

**- Rowshan Ara
Reshma's Mother**



this time she felt very confident because she was economically empowered and learnt different coping mechanism from the clubs on emergency situations. Realizing the effect of COVID-19, she planned to help others along with the peer groups. She started composing different awareness message thus included symptoms of COVID-19, hygiene issues. Like wearing mask, staying at home, frequent hand washing with soap or sanitizer, social distancing etc. She distributed face masks and hand gloves, sanitizer to the neighbors to stay safe in this epidemic situation from her savings. Reshma also provided physical

support to the adolescent through mobile phone and social media during COVID-19.

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Nazmul: A Kindness of an Economic Empowered Adolescent During COVID-19



NAZMUL

Talking with a friend during playing in the locality is how Nazmul learned about the Adolescent Club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) Project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh. As a high school student with an interest, he felt the club activities would help expand his horizons. He was right.

“Going through Adolescent Club helped me a lot in getting up the ladder and sticking to my dreams. It was a positive step forward,” said Nazmul.

Born in a poor family with four siblings and parents Nazmul lives in a rented one room house at Mirpur Slum in Dhaka.

Due to economic hardship, his father was in very anxiety and pressurized him to do something for family. So, dropped out from the study after completing grade nine. He tried for jobs but did not find any suitable one. He shared all his sufferings to the Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) who helped connect him to a vocational training center and an apprenticeship opportunity and arranged stipend from the project. Nazmul successfully completed occupational training on Mobile Phone Servicing. After completing the training, the CRF again supported to place him at a mobile servicing center. With the earning Nazmul helps his family and gets himself admitted in class 10 under Bangladesh Open University.

The 18 -year-old has an entrepreneurial spirit and wants to continue to learn more valuable on-the-job skills before launching his own business. Nazmul is not only concern about his future but also for mankind. One fantastic initiative has taken by Nazmul during COVID-19. He along with his other 10 club members distributed food packets to 200 families at EID day from their pocket money to share the happiness among them during this pandemic situation.



“This is exactly what I want to be doing. APC project and UNICEF have given me the opportunity and the experience I need to start my own business in mobile phone servicing one day,” said Nazmul.

One of the senior citizens of the community says, “We are very happy for his kindness he shows during this pandemic COVID-19 situation. We think it becomes possible because of the inspiration and courage he gains from the adolescent club.”

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Sumaiya Akter: Story of a Role Model During COVID-19



“I am so proud; my little daughter is my strength. Thanks to APC project and UNICEF, she has grown up to become a confident young woman.”

***Monsur Patoary
Sumaiya’s Father***

Sumaiya Akter, 17, was raised in the village of Bhola District under Barishal Division of Bangladesh where her father worked as a launch laborer. Though she is young, Sumaiya has faced many hardships. In school, she lagged her classmates because she was tasked with many household chores. On top of that, it was well-known in her community that her parents often fought due to poverty. Sumaiya was upset and ashamed by the violence in her family.

Sumaiya thought that she could have do something thing and find a way to resolve the violence at her home. At this time, she heard about an Adolescent Club in her village. This club was supported by the Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project, an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) of Bangladesh developed in collaboration with UNICEF. In Bangladesh, Adolescents’ Club equips adolescents with life skills in order to reduce their vulnerability. Acquiring knowledge from the adolescent club, she started to protest her father and made her father convinced against the violence. After a long while, her father became violent again because he lost his job for COVID-19 and it felt her father deep in debt and often without food.

Sumaiya decided to do something exceptional and help her family during this pandemic situation. She thought that the schools are closed during COVID-19 and it may prolong. Thus, the children may drop out from school or even they may lose their interest to go to school after a long break. She decided to teach the children in a small group at the children’s house with a minimum tuition fee maintaining social distancing or even possible through video chatting in her locality. She communicated with the parents and made them convinced for tuition at BDT 100 (USD 1.2) per children. Finally, she manages to teach 80 children in different small groups and earns BDT 8000 (USD 94) per month during this COVID-19 pandemic situation which relieves the economic burden of her father and makes her family happy. Sumaiya’s progress and commitment to teaching children has made her a role model in the village during pandemic COVID-19.

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Abdullah Khaled: A novel work of a Child Rights Facilitator



ABDULLAH KHALED

Abdullah Khaled is a Child Rights Facilitator of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project. The project is being implementing in collaboration with Ministry of Woman and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh in 26 UNICEF focused districts in Bangladesh. He has been working at Lalmohon Upazila under Bhola District, the south-central part of Bangladesh. He started to build rapport with the government officers of local administration including Upazila Nirbhahi Officer (UNO), the administrative head of sub-district, right after his joining in July 2019. Mr. Khaled also participated in different meetings at Upazila and informed the activities of the Adolescent Clubs of APC Project in the meetings.

When the COVID epidemic started in March 2020, the UNO of Lalmohon assigned Khaled as a Tag Officer for relief distribution in response to COVID-19. Because Khaled has been working with the children and adolescents focusing to support of their vulnerability and protection. Accordingly, he identified 120 adolescents whose family income stopped because of COVID -19 outbreak lockdown.

The families were unable to ask for relief because of their social status and other circumstance. As a result, the families and adolescents were in mental stress. The behaviors of the family members towards the adolescents were rude which created an extra mental and psychosocial pressures to them. Moreover, the pressures of early marriage by the parents felt them in the risks of school dropout, mental disorder, anxiety etc. Realizing the vulnerability of the adolescents, Khaled discussed the issue with, Upazila Nirbhahi Officer (UNO) of Lalmohon and was able to convince to allocate 1-ton rice for those vulnerable adolescents. Maintaining the social distancing and wearing PPE, Khaled distributed the packet of rice to the adolescents by himself. It is really a novel work done by Khaled during COVID-19. The adolescents and their families are happy having the relief in this pandemic situation. This is one of the best examples of CRF how they are doing at the local level for the betterment of children and adolescent.



Khaled said, "I am very happy to help the vulnerable adolescents and their families during COVID-19. I think this pandemic coronavirus that has pushed to increase GBV, VAC, social exclusion, child abuse, sexual harassment, child marriage, school dropout etc. resulting from the decrease of family income. So, I dream to help the adolescents from the curse of exploitation. I thank to UNO Lalmohon Upazila for his extended support to make my dream success."

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Mitu: Empowering Disabled Adolescent Girls to Learn and Lead

Mitu Akter (18) from Patharghata village under Barguna district of Barishal Division, the southern part of Bangladesh wasn't born with a physical impairment. She became disabled at the age of five, following an illness. She was raised by both parents who are peasant farmers and is the second in a family of four.

"The community I have grown up in does not really believe that a child with a disability can amount to much. They did express sympathy with my family, but no one encouraged them to educate me. My parents did try to do so despite our poverty situation. It is really a painful form of stigma that people in my condition face," Mitu said.



MITU AKTER

Mitu dropped out of school at the age of 14 due to lack of financial support. After dropping school, she had too many responsibilities at home. She cooked and did the laundry, which sometimes meant she had to go to the fields to look for firewood. At the time of collecting firewood, Mitu heard about the Adolescent Club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project of MoWCA and UNICEF. She went to the club in the following day and came to know that the adolescents could exchange their views among themselves on life skills like VAC, GBV, ECM, Livelihoods, disability rights, light of education etc. Knowing the activities, she was so excited that she could have the opportunity to restart her education and decided to join.

Finally, APC project brought a great change in Mitu's life by convincing her parents to let herself admitted into school again. The Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) and the club members visited her parents and informed the rights of an adolescent and the protection of the children in the society. Mitu has completed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 2020. Today, she is continuing her own education and is in college in class 11. She is now determined to complete at least her Higher Secondary

Certificate (HSC) examination. After finishing HSC, Mitu look for better livelihood opportunities such as educating kids in the Kindergarten and continuing her higher education.

Mitu said that she gained important information about issues affecting adolescents like her, strengthened her critical thinking and communication skills, and deepened her relationships with community members. Her new skills and knowledge helped to raise her

voice against the rights of an adolescent with disabilities in the community and saved other adolescents from falling prey to the harassment.

"Mitu usually walks about 3 kilometers to come to school though she is an adolescent with disabilities. But her willingness and the support of APC project makes her success true."

***- Parabir Chandra Halder
Headmaster
Bari Azad Scondary School
Patharghata, Barguna***

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Choity Dreams to Establish a Beauty Parlour



TARIKA ISLAM CHOITY

Tarika Islam Choity, an adolescent girl of 19 years of age, lives with her family in the village of Jamalpur district under Mymensingh division of Bangladesh. In Choity's village illiteracy is extremely common due mostly to conditions of extreme poverty and the families of her village are highly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. But devastating monsoon flood washes away the crops every year. Thus, causes adolescents to engage in other income generating activities. They adolescents are not much concerned about doing something extraordinary. But Choity is an exceptional one and thinks how she can contribute her family engaging herself in an innovative way and keep continuing her education.

One fine morning Choity came to know from one of the adolescents of her area about the Adolescent Club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project, implemented in her area by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in partnership with UNICEF Bangladesh. She joined the club and has attended club sessions regularly ever since. She taught different life skills-based education (LSBE) like violence against children, gender-based violence, ending child marriage, participation of children, livelihood etc. Since joining adolescent club, Choity has proven to be a keen member with strong leadership skills and hopes to one day a peer leader. Finally, Choity became the peer leader of Sardar Para Adolescent Club.

Suddenly, Choity's family's financial situation worsened when her father lost his business and has been unable to get another alternative way to survive. No longer able to provide for his family, Choity's father stopped supporting her education. Yielding to family pressure, her father decided to marry her off before she could finish education. Her mother also agreed with his father's decision. Knowing the Choity's situation, the Child Rights Facilitator conducted a series of home visits to Choity's house and offered her a scholarship to cover her tuition and livelihood training costs. Her mother decided to support Choity in completing her education and successfully convinced her father to let their daughter complete her schooling.

"Adolescents are excellent in providing support for child protection through awareness building activities on VAC, GBV, ECM, MHPSS, Livelihood etc. I am really very happy to see the adolescent empowerment like Choity. I wish her success in future."

*- Joieta Jafrin
Child Rights Facilitator*



With the financial help of APC Project, Choity received livelihood skills training on Beautification from a local training centre where she learnt different process of beautifications like wearing Saree, hair cutting, Facial, Manicure, Pedicure, Bridal make up, Party make up etc. Now she is working as a Beautician in her locality. She also gets herself admitted into a local college and never ask for money from her family. Her parents are also happy for her success. Choity's parents even had tears in their eyes as they watched their daughter's demonstration about her career aspirations. Choity is now economically empowered and dreams to establish a beauty parlour in near future.

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Rumi: Dreams to Become a National Women Football Player

Rumi Akter Mina, a girl of 18 years of age is a member of Benupara Adolescents Club under Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) Project. The project is implemented in collaboration with UNICEF Child Protection Section and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) of Bangladesh. Rumi came from a poor family of Benupara village of Sherpur district under Mymensingh Division, northern part of Bangladesh. Her father Roisuddin is an agricultural day-laborer and mother Monoara Begum is a domestic worker. She lives with her family in a cottage. Rumi had a dream to become a member of the Under-19 Female National Football Team from her childhood. She started playing with the children in her neighborhood but when she was turning to an adolescent, the community people started resisting to let her play. Most of the people in the community are illiterate and conservative. This resistance put her into extreme anxiety and mental distress. They used to say, ***“You are a girl. Why you are playing like boys? This game is not for you.”*** But being a member of an adolescent club, Rumi has learnt about life skills, she was able to negotiate and convince her parents for their support. She has been continuously encouraged by the peers of the adolescent club. Finally, she got an opportunity to play at the Divisional Female Football Tournament in which she performed good. The news was published in a local newspaper which made her known to many people at the Divisional level.



RUMI AKTER MINA

Presently the community people are no longer opposing her from playing football rather they feel proud of her. Her parents are also pleased for her achievement. Finally, she was able to overcome all the barriers by dint of her strong determination, passion and mental strength. Today, she is a member of the Divisional Women Football Team and proven herself as a role model for many other adolescents' girls in her locality.



“I never thought my daughter would have the chance to play at divisional level. I thank to UNICEF and APC Project for my daughter’s success.”

***– Roisuddin
Rumi’s Father***

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the scenario and pushed the adolescents into mental stress. Rumi is not such an adolescent to surrender. She is building awareness on COVID-19 messages through video chatting and by sharing video clippings on different football techniques with other adolescents of the club. Rumi is supporting the peers for releasing mental stress and providing psychosocial support in many ways. She said, ***“I learn different coping capacities after joining the adolescent club and it helps me to become a change-maker of the society. I even know how to ride motor bike. I dream to become a national women football player in the future”***

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Minara: Dreams to end Child Marriage

Minara Akhter, a girl of 18 years of age is the peer leader of Udoypur Kishori Club of APC Project. She is from a poor family of Netrokona, northern part of Bangladesh. Her father Raza Kha is an agricultural day-laborer and mother Azufa Begum is a domestic worker. She lives with her family in a cottage at Udoypur along with her two younger brother and sister.

Her immediate younger sister Rita (15) was very beautiful. She studied in a local school. Every day she faced eve-teasing by her neighbor. The limit of teasing was so high that it was difficult for her sister to go to school regularly. One day the neighbor proposed her family to marry Rita. Her parents particularly her father was in very anxiety. He thought it was difficult for him to maintain the expenses of all three children with a low income. Finally, he decided to marry off Rita considering the economic and social pressures.



MINARA AKTER

Minara discovered herself with much frustration when she did not find any hope for stopping child marriage. She protested but it became more difficult. Even they tortured Minara and her younger brother and sister physically. She reflected the activities of Adolescent Club of APC Project which was being implementing jointly with MoWCA and UNICEF. Stopping child marriage, sexual harassment, bullying, eve-teasing, life skills etc. were main issues to discuss in the club. Bearing club spirit, she took challenge and talked with Child Right Facilitator (CRF) of APC Project in the next morning. The CRF guided her to call a toll-free number 1098. She called instantly for their assistance. According to their advice, Minara filed a case and took necessary steps to arrest the criminals.

After filing the case, the criminals requested local government Chairman (Union Parishad) and other elites to solve the issue by them (Grmmo Shalish). They requested Minara to come forward for negotiation. The

criminals also realized their mistakes. They undertook the responsibilities not to marry Rita or even any girls before 18 years. They also committed not to disturb their family anymore. Finally, Minara stopped her younger sister's early marriage by taking the initiatives and courage she gained from the Adolescent Club. This contribution to her family



Minara said, "I have the courage to raise the voice against child exploitation. I dream a child friendly society. I thank to UNICEF and APC Project making myself a Change Maker."

makes her very proud and happy. She dreams to end child marriage from the society.

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Nargis: A Tale of a Girl Who Turned Mountainous Barriers into Tiny Particle



NARGIS AKTER

Born in the village of Khagrachari District under Chittagong Hill Tracks, a brave adolescent girl, Nargis Akter has been fighting continuously with poverty since she lost her father in childhood. Her first barrier came after father's death when her studies was about to stop. Having no income source her mother told either to stop education or to continue in her own way. This brave girl chose the latter option and since then she was determined to complete secondary education by any means. Her neighbours and relatives in some cases made her uneven way of life easier with their cash or mental support. Gradually, she completed Junior School Certificate (JSC).

In the meantime, she involved with adolescent club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh. Under her leadership, the club members stopped an early marriage. Thus, studies and club activities both were going on at the same pace. After JSC, she faced another difficulty when admitted into Khagrachari Government Technical Training Center in class nine. It was so far from her village that often she couldn't attend the first period, even she was punished standing outside for hours by the teacher for being late in the class. So, she had to come out of home without taking breakfast. She did it only for her passion for education. One day, she told her teacher Shafikul Islam about her poverty and remote location. Then he tried his best to stretch a helping hand to Nargis, sometimes with financial support or providing with educational tools. Her another neighbor Umme Habiba Hasnahena, a college student paid for buying her educational things like pen, paper, books etc. Thus, time went on and she was on the way of struggling. In 2020, her dream came to a true. She passed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam securing GPA 4.84 from Technical Education Board. Beside this success, she had developed her leadership in club activities. Recently, she along with her club members has gathered money of their own and distributed soap among the poor families during COVID-19. She also disseminated COVID health rules to resist virus infection.



Nargis's Own Words, "I am always supported by people who loves me including my teachers, neighbours and friends that encourage me to overcome all challenges. I love to support other people despite my own financial crisis and love to spend time in adolescent clubs with peers."

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Sima: A Journey of a Brave Girl against Violence and Humanity

Rifat Ara Sima (17) born in a village of Khagrachari District under Chattogram Division. She lives along with her mother, four brothers and sisters in a tiny house of the hilly area. She is the second of them. When she was in class eight, she lost her father. Since then poverty grasped the family and they faced with harsh reality of life. But Sima didn't lose hope. She began to struggle to continue her studies, she managed some tuitions and carried on her studies. In the meantime, she came to know about the Adolescent Club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project, a joint effort of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoCWA) and UNICEF Bangladesh, from one of her neighbors where adolescents are taught different life skills ranging from violence against children, gender-based violence, ending child marriage, livelihood etc. Knowing the activity of the adolescent club, she was interested to join.



RIFAT ARA SIMA

Sima went to the adolescent club in the following day and enrolled herself in the club. She was enjoying her life with other adolescent and dreaming to contribute for the welfare of the community. One day she was in anxiety and thinking about future. Because when she was at the final level of secondary education, it was difficult for her to pay registration fee and her father decided to her marriage before 18 years rather education. Marriage proposal was also placed by the neighbours and most of the family members and neighbours inspired to agree with the proposal instead of studying.

"The observation about the impact of adolescent club towards the community that there has been a radical change in their attitude on positive activities of the adolescent club. Even, some of the guardians attend at the club session to get a clear conception and afterwards it works well. Now the villagers come forward to protect the children and adolescents from any types of violation."

***- Shumedha Chakma
Child Rights Facilitator***



But Sima was determined to complete her education and her marry off. She told her mother different legal procedures she learnt through the adolescent club and made her mother convinced. Finally, she was able to marry off. She became confident and involved herself more with the adolescent club so that no child marriage exists in the community. Later, as a peer leader, she has successfully stopped two early marriages with other club members. In addition to this, she has worked as volunteer in providing iron tablets among the teenagers, pregnant women and mother with new-born baby during COVID-19. ***Sima says "To work as leader in adolescent club is a great opportunity in my life, because it has developed my inner strength and I can better feel when solve any social problem with other club members unitedly."***

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Milon: A Story of Economic Empowerment in COVID-19



MD. MILON MIA

Md. Milon Mia (18), an adolescent of Adolescent Club, was born in the village of Nilphamari District under Rangpur Division, the northern part of Bangladesh. He lives along with his father Joynal (farmer), mother Joytun (housewife) and four siblings in a tiny house in their village on bank of the river Tista. Being a poor farmer, it is difficult for his father to bear their family expenses. Realizing the sufferings of his father, Milon started tuition in continuing his education. But all his tuitions were stopped due to pandemic COVID 19. He discovered himself very upset.

One fine morning he received a phone call from the Child Rights Facilitators (CRF) of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project under Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF to know his and the adolescent club members condition during the pandemic situation. Milon told that the people of his area were extreme poor and even lived without food during this time. He also added that he was in anxiety and looked for doing something to help his family. He shared his views to the CRF and was advised to do income generating activities. Finally, he helped Milon to communicate with the Upazila Livestock Officer. Milon talked with the Livestock Officer and the

officer advised him for duck farming. According to the advice, he started duck farming utilizing the money he saved from his tuition. First, he started farming with 200 ducklings @ BDT 33.00 (USD .039) per duckling and at a total cost of BDT 6,600.00 (USD 77.67). Out of these ducklings, 69 were duck and 131 were hen. Milon spent @ BDT 400.00 (USD 4.70) per day as feeding cost.



MILON IS WORKING AT DUCK FARM



"I am so proud, Milon is our strength. Thanks to APC project and UNICEF for their support in our locality."

*- Md. Joynal Abedin
Milon's Father*

After 3 months, the hen starts laying eggs and Milon gets more than 100 eggs every day which he sells in the local market @ BDT 10.00 (USD .11) thus he earns BDT 1000.00 (USD 12) every day. Milon is now very happy and grateful to the APC Project and UNICEF. **Milon Says, "The spirit of adolescent club makes me brave. I am grateful to APC Project and UNICEF."**

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Mostakim: A Story of Mankind in COVID-19

Md. Mostakim Islam (19) is the inhabitant of the village of Nilphamari District under Rangpur Division, the northern part of Bangladesh. The village where he lives, is situated on bank of the river Tista. Most of the people of his area are extreme poor and even live without food. Born in such a poor farmer family with other siblings, Mostakim, an adolescent of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project under Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF, never had the opportunity to do something better for the poor and vulnerable children in his locality. His parents also never thought to help the poor people of their village. But their son Mostakim showed his courage and took an initiative to help the poor of their village during COVID-19.



MD. MOSTAKIM ISLAM

"I used to realize the hunger of the people of my village and dream about being with them by providing food in COVID-19," Mostakim says.

One day I talked with some of other club members, my friends, Community Based Child Protection Committee (CBCPC) members, Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) and some people from my village about my idea and realization of helping the most vulnerable people through providing Iftar Packet @ BDT 1.00

"We are so proud, Mostakim is our strength. Thanks to APC project and UNICEF, he has grown up to become a confident young man in our locality."

- CBCPC Member



(USD 0.01) in the Holy Ramadan during the pandemic COVID-19. Once I told them that I was very interested in providing iftar at a cheap rate, all of them inspired to let me do so and gave me some money. Other adolescents of the club also helped me from their pocket money and joined with me to work together. Maintaining the social distancing, we also sensitized the village people about the health guidelines of the government and WHO on the prevention of COVID-19 at the time of distributing Iftar packet. We continued the same before Eid day. The people of my village are very happy for my innovative initiatives. My parents are also proud of me. ***Mostakim says, "I am very happy because I am able to help the poor during this adverse***

situation. It happens only for my courage which I gain from the adolescent club of APC project. I thank to APC project and UNICEF for happiness."

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Empowering Adolescent Girls in Sylhet Tea Garden to Succeed: Dipti Lohar’s Story




DIPTI LOHAR

There is no ‘back to school’ for the estimated 58 million primary-school age children around the world who are not getting an education. Most of them are girls, and Dipti Lohar (19), an adolescent girl of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project was among them. The project is being implementing with the collaboration of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh.

Growing up at Lakkatura tea estate under Sylhet district, the north-east part of Bangladesh, she was forced to drop out of school because her parents could not afford the fees. So, at an age when most children are learning to read, Dipti was performing back-breaking labor at the tea garden to earn money for her parents.

Dipti’s life changed when Adolescent Club of APC project identified her as a girl in need. Instead of getting married, 13-year-old Dipti returned to school after APC project gave her a scholarship (Conditional Cash Transfer-CCT) of BDT 36,000 (US\$ 420) and encouraged her goal of continuing education. She utilized some portion of CCT for buying a cow and the rest for books and schools fees. The cow gave 3 liters of milk every day which Dipti sold in the market. She saved money she got from selling milk so that she could manage school fees and new books for coming years. The club also taught Dipti life skills ranging from violence against children, gender-based violence, ending child marriage, participation of children and democracy.

Today, **6 years later**, Dipti is an examinee of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and a role model to the children of Lakkatura tea estate. She says that the financial troubles that her parents suffered are common in her community and keep many children away —especially girls, who are married off while they are still children—from gaining an education. Dipti advises adolescents in her club to work hard to complete their studies and be determined to succeed. **That, she says, “Education is the only way to become responsible and make decisions for themselves.**



“I never thought my daughter would have the chance to go back to school. Now she is an HSC examinee. I am grateful to UNICEF and APC Project to make my daughter’s dream possible.”

*- Rana Lohar
Dipti’s Father*

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Musa: A Story of Mask Producer during COVID-19

Shamser Kaji Musa is an adolescent boy of many talents. He always keeps a smile on his face and enjoys writing song, poem etc. He is a student of class eleven and a member of Telikuna Dalia Adolescents Club of APC Project which is being implementing with the collaboration of UNICEF and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) of Bangladesh. Born in a poor family with eleven other siblings, 17 years Musa lives in the village of Sunamganj district under Sylhet division, a north-eastern part of Bangladesh. He is an active member of the club and always tries to do something for the betterment of children. Likewise, Musa things to contribute in preventing COVID-19 in his locality.



When all the educational institutions were shut down due to COVID-19, it was found that all adolescents were tensed about their daily life. But Musa thought the situation in different way utilizing the knowledge gained from the club and how to take decision in a hard situation. Though club activities were postponed during this pandemic situation, the Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) kept regular communications with the



adolescents via mobile phone. After two weeks of lockdown, Musa and his fellow members learned about the health and hygiene procedures of the Government and World Health Organization (WHO) to prevent COVID-19. One day Musa thought he would have done something because the peoples of his village were not aware to follow the health guidelines.

Taking advice from the CRF, Musa along with other club members started publicity of health guidelines of COVID-19 maintaining social distancing and visited door to door. During their visit it noticed that people need face mask, but it is hard for them to afford the price of it. Musa thought they would have produced face mask at cheap cost for the village people. He hired a swing machine from one of his relatives and started producing mask. All the members of the club helped him to sell the mask at BDT 5 (USD 0.06) to the village people advising them to wear mask and other health guidelines like stay home, wash hands for 20 seconds before touching anything, social distancing etc. He also made the village people aware through handwritten posters.

Musa and the other members of the club are enjoying their time peacefully during this pandemic situation. The people of the village are also very much happy and appreciate their initiatives. Musa has plan to keep continuing his effort and hopes to save the life of village people from COVID-19.

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Ripa: A Story of a Divorced Adolescent



RIPA KHATUN

Ripa Khatun (18), an adolescent of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project. The project is being implementing in collaboration with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and UNICEF Bangladesh. She is from a poor family of Khustia district under Khulna Division, southern part of Bangladesh.

Ripa is the eldest daughter of Abdul Khaleque (day-laborer) and Mrs Jamila Begum (Housewife). She along with her parents and siblings (4 sisters) lived with economic hardship in the village. It was difficult for her father to maintain their family and educational expenses of all five children with a low income. Her parents particularly her father was in very anxiety and pressurized her to marry even she was only 15 years of age. Her father also arranged BDT 50,000.00 (USD 588.00) for dowry. She had no desire at all but failed to marry off. After marriage she was dreaming to construct her family but failed due to husband's (rickshaw puller) poverty. Moreover, her

husband was drug addicted and married to another women for dowry again. Subsequently, she was divorced within one year of her marriage and came back to her parents.

Ripa discovered herself with much frustration when she did not find any hope for livelihood. When she was totally upset, she came to know about the Adolescent Club where the adolescents are taught different life skills like violence against children, ending child marriage, mental and psycho-social support etc. knowing the activities of adolescent club she joined with the club and raised her voice in their community to stop early marriage, dowry, children violence etc. She became a confident adolescent in the community and thought to take some initiatives to help her family. She shared her idea with the Child Right Facilitator (CRF) of APC project and the CRF linked her with a local training center for a training. After completing the training, Ripa started cultivating vegetables in the surroundings of her house with an initial investment of BDT 3,000.00 (USD 35.00). After that she expanded her cultivable area and earned more money. Her father also helped her in cultivation. Now she is planning to get herself admitted in to school again and supporting her other sisters keep continuing their education. All these things helped her to shape her new life. She dreams to see her sister's self-reliance.



"This was an incredible challenge for her, but with support and encouragement from APC project, CRF, her friends and peer group leader, she was able to overcome it, and her words touched many members of her club."

Nazma Begum
Member

Community Based Child Protection Committee

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Sajib: A Kind Work of a Peer Leader



SAJIB BISWAS

A singing mode, smiling face, a calm and quite relationship; these startling and rare feelings which Shakil Hawlader depicts in his communications while he plays with the children in the Adolescent Clubs. Shakil (11) wonders why disabled persons are stigmatized, when no one is perfect in this imperfect world. Born with an intellectual disability, Shakil stays at home in their village of Dacope under Khulna District, the southern part of Bangladesh. Due to his disability, no one wants to play or even he does not play with others. But it had changed when Shakil was attached with an Adolescent Club of APC Project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) of Bangladesh and UNICEF. It was possible for Sajib Biswas (18), the peer leader of Baroikhali Laxmikanto Adolescent Club who took the initiative.

In the club, the adolescents are taught on life skills ranging from child protection, child and disability rights, violence against children, importance of education, livelihood etc. It also helps the adolescent how they can become kind people in the society. So, Sajib felt the sufferings of an intellectual disability and decided to include Shakil in their club. Participating in the club activities, Shakil was found miracle changed. He used to attend in the sessions regularly. Sometimes it was difficult to send him to home. Shakil found very supportive and enjoyed playing with other members. Observing Shakil's change, his father dreamt to get his son admitted in to school. He tries to enroll Shakil in a local primary school but fails for his disability.



"He participates punctually and is nice to others, and we don't regard him as being different from us. We are all happy to play with him."

*-Sajib Biswas
Peer Leader*



"I am now very happy to get admitted my son in a school. I am grateful to UNICEF and APC Project to make my dream possible."

*- Idris Hawlader
Shakil's Father*

Shakli's father expressed his desire and Sajib extended to help him. The club members and the Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) of APC project communicated with different schools for Shakil. Finally, he enrolled in 1st Grade in a specialized school. Shakil and his family are happy and dream of a better future.

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Sumaiya: A Dream Fulfilled-the story of a blind adolescent

Born to a poor farmer's family with eleven other siblings in the village of Maizpara under Cox's Bazar district, the southeast coast of Bangladesh, Sumaiya, a blind adolescent of 10 years of age, never had the opportunity to go to school. Her poor parents were even unable to provide her a basic education. But Sumaiya dreamt to get herself admitted in to school.

"I used to think some of the girls of my village going to school and dream about being with them, having my own books," Sumaiya says. "One day a Peer Leader of Chowfaldandhi South Para Uttar Adolescent Club of APC project under MoWCA and UNICEF had informed me about the Adolescent Club. Once I told her that I was very interested in joining the club, she and others convinced my parents to let me do so."



SUMAIYA

Sumaiya joined in an adolescent club and got introduced with the members of the club. She was excited to hear all about and found a light of hope. Attending two-hour sessions twice a week, she took part in the club activities and enjoyed her times playing with others. In an interview after joining with the club, Sumaiya said, "I felt very happy in my club. Our peer leader was like a friend and we were always encouraged to learn from and help each other. I passed my time with great fun in the club. I never imagined that learning could be fun."



Sumaiya's elder brother is also blind and enjoys Government's allowances. But she doesn't. I feel I need to assist Sumaiya to receive disability allowances to allow her continuing in education. Finally, I am able to enlist and I am happy to do so.

***- Md. Moniruzzaman
Child Rights Facilitator***

After she learned life skills like violence against children, gender-based violence, ending child marriage, protection and rights of the children with disabilities, she was encouraged to get herself enrolled in a school. The adolescent club brought a great change in her life. Sumaiya's enthusiasm was so clear that she beat the club members in all activities. After her parents found out about her ability to learn, they decided to let her go to the school. The club members and the Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) of APC project communicated with schools. Finally, she enrolled in 1st Grade in a specialized school. Now she goes to school regularly. She is very proud to be a part of her class who would not otherwise be able to go to school. Moreover, CRF supported her to enlist her name in the government's

list of disability to enjoy monthly disability allowances from the government. Today, Sumaiya is continuing her education though COVID-19 intercepts; she is determined to complete at least her Secondary School Certificate examination and look for better opportunities such as continuing her education or finding a viable option for livelihood. Sumaiya and her family are happy and dream of a better future.

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Tarjina: A Story of a School Dropout Adolescent



TARJINA

Tarjina, an adolescent of fifteen years of age is from the village of Ramu under Cox's Bazar district, the main tourist areas of Bangladesh. She lives with her family in a small cottage. She brings up with two brothers and two sisters though a miserable poor family condition. But she is very attentive to her studies. Besides textbooks, she reads many books to gain knowledge. she spends time doing household activities to help her mother. In leisure time, she likes to play with her friends.

Her father Kabir Ahmed is an agricultural day laborer and her mother Sahera Begum is a housewife. Her father is the only earning member of their family and it is very difficult for her father to bear the family expenses. They sometimes live without food. After completing Junior School Certificate examination, her father stopped her studies due to poverty. She became disappointed but she had a strong will to complete her education. This fact made her frustrated mentally.

One fine morning she introduced herself with the peer leader of Adolescent club of Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project. The project is being implementing by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) in association with UNICEF Bangladesh. Knowing the activities of the adolescent club, she was interested to become a member of the club and got herself admitted. She attended all the activities of the club. She shared about her drop out with the Peer Leader. Then the peer leader along the Child Rights Facilitator (CRF) of APC project talked over the issue with her family and discussed about her education, career, child rights and importance of women empowerment. They also informed the assistance of adolescent club on child protection and their livelihood. By the help of club and CRF she was linked with a local training center and received training on tailoring and dress making. Now she earns to lead the family and her continued education. At present she is studying in class 10 at Panir Chara High School Tarjina and her family wish to go ahead with the light of beautiful dream for better future.



Tarjina's Own words, "I am very happy to get opportunity to continue my studies and thank to APC project, MoWCA and UNICEF to support me."

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