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GREEN FUTURE
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH URBAN LIVELIHOODS





It's been six months since Sabina Akter (31) and her husband Saiful Islam (45) leased two empty plots adjacent to their house in Hazaribagh, Dhaka and started growing vegetables. Once empty, the plots are now lush green spaces- with cucumber, bottle gourd, sponge gourd, spinach, stem spinach and papaya, lemon and more. Apart from attending to the tea stall in the local bazar, Saiful prepares the soil and helps in weeding and harvesting in the garden.

Investing the grant from the Urban Green Graduation Programme they transformed empty plots into green productive space by growing all sorts of leaves and vegetables. After meeting their household need of four member family including two sons, they are regularly selling every day's harvest to the neighbors and in the local streets.

With winter approaching, the family is eager to expand their efforts, planning to grow tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers, and radishes. A healthier and more prosperous season lies ahead, as Sabina and her family continues to enjoy the benefits of cultivating their own fresh, organic vegetables—both for their table and for income.



Sabina Akhter harvests sponge gourds from her vegetable garden in Hazaribagh, Dhaka, while her husband, Saiful Islam tends to the weeds. Each morning begins with harvesting fresh vegetables for the day. With winter on the horizon, the couple eagerly anticipates a bountiful variety of produce in the coming months.



The papayas have begun to ripen. Saiful Islam picks a perfectly ripe one as his wife, Sabina Akhter eagerly waits to serve the family with fresh produce after a day of hard work in their garden.






The story of Rabeya Hawlader (20) is an inspiring one in urban low income communities. It began in October 2023, when she enrolled in a three-month vocation training on electronic works and got a graduation fund under the Urban Green Graduation Programme.

By February 2024, she had stepped into the workforce, juggling her studies with a nine-to-five job. Her days are spent assembling, testing, and packaging solar controller boxes, crafting the intricate circuits that power solar panels for a local electronics company.

Rabeya lives in Laalbagh, Dhaka, with her parents and two younger brothers. Since Rabeya started earning, and providing for her family, her mother can look after their family.

As Rabeya started saving for future and awaiting admission to begin her undergraduate studies, her vision of the future is clear and bright, and the journey toward empowerment has already begun.

A woman wearing a bright pink patterned shawl over an orange top and pants, and an orange headscarf, is walking barefoot on a narrow wooden plank path. She is carrying a large basket filled with fresh green leafy vegetables. The path is flanked by tall, thin wooden stakes, some of which are covered in climbing plants. In the background, there are blue plastic crates stacked on a wooden structure, and more greenery of the garden. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

After a day of harvesting in her vegetable garden at Shahid Budhijibi City Colony, Mirpur 01, Shima (38) returns with a basket full of fresh green vegetables for her family. She grows a variety of crops, including beans, pumpkins, gourds, and leafy vegetables, serving as an inspiring example for others in the community.







Faruk Gazi (58) is an inspiring entrepreneur who knows how to save capital to diversify income sources. In the Buddhijibi City Colony slum in Mirpur, he expanded his small shopping bag workshop with a grant from the Urban Green Graduation Programme. Using the profits and receiving additional training, he then ventured into goat and cow rearing, which is also steadily growing.

Faruk, with his wife, two sons and a daughter have been living in the city colony slum, Dhaka for 15 years, making and supplying shopping bags in a small capacity with his one sewing machine. In 2023, he expanded his small business, buying two more machines and employing up to six workers. As he started making a profit of around twenty-five thousand every month, he saved and ventured into goat and cow rearing.

Initially starting with two goats for business, now he bought a milking cow. Faruk didn't stop there—he transformed unused space in front of his home into a vegetable garden, meeting his family's needs and selling the surplus at the local market. Now he looks forward to gradually expand all three of his ventures—bag making, poultry and vegetable farming.



Faruk Gazi (58) feeds his milking cow while overseeing workers sewing bags in his workshop in the City Colony slum of Mirpur. With the grant from the Green Graduation Programme, he expanded his bag-making business by purchasing additional machines and employing local workers. Using the growing profits, he started animal farming and now successfully manages both enterprises.



Faruk Gazi (58) tends to his goats in the City Colony slum of Mirpur. Using profits from his bag-making workshop, Faruk expanded his income streams by venturing into cattle farming. What began with just two goats has now flourished into a thriving herd of five.



Besides running a tea stall, Md. Suruj Mia (62) began making compost by renting a local rooftop after receiving training and grants under the Urban Green Graduation Programme in 2023.

Before starting this venture, Suruj used to sell household products in the local market. He invested part of the grant to set up a small tea stall by the roadside, and with the rest, began making organic compost from collected green waste. Since the process requires drying the compost in the sun, he rented a local rooftop to use as his workshop. He and his wife now live there in a small tin-shed room on one side of the rooftop.

What began as a side business has now become Soruj Mia's primary focus. He spends most of his daytime making compost in drums, drying under the sun, and packaging as odorless powder. His efforts and popularity have grown to the point where he now sells them to several nurseries around Hazaribagh, Dhaka and among his neighbors.







Panna Begum (35) is busy in tailoring and embroidering in the stall, she opened in April 2024. She earns up to fifteen thousand taka per month and manages the family expenses of her two daughters and the family. As her business grows, she has been able to hire two assistants to keep up with the increasing demand.



Alamgir Hossain (53) is busy dealing with customers, weighing and sorting vegetables. From the early hour in the morning until late into the night, he sells all sorts of vegetables, worth up to taka 40,000 daily, providing for his family of five including three daughters.



Shohag (31) and his wife Ayesha's (24) day begins with tending to their composite farm—feeding the chickens, watering the vegetable plants, and collecting eggs and vegetables for the day.

For years, they struggled to meet their family's needs, living on a modest monthly income of around seven thousand taka from a small tea and snack shop in the city colony of Mirpur, where they live with their two sons.

After receiving training and the grant in 2023, they expanded their stall and invested a portion to venture into a composite farm using the empty plot in front of their stall. He optimized the space use by setting vertical cages for roosters and hens under the shade of crawlers- beans, bitter gourds and bottles gourds and using the little left space for green leaves like spinaches and red amaranths.

Their farm now produces enough vegetables, eggs, and chickens to sell in the colony bazaar, adding to a sum of around twelve thousand taka a month. As their venture grows, they made a thorough family development plan targeting a monthly income of thirty thousand by the end of 2025.





Living in the slum for the last five years, Baby (35) always had an affection for pigeons. Starting with five to six pairs, now the number has grown to a flock of twenty-two pairs which include a variety of breeds like Jalali, Giribaj, Maksi and more.

Despite the cramped conditions, Baby has managed to raise her pigeons by keeping their cages inside her small tin-shed home. Her passion for the birds drives her to maintain her modest poultry farm. Along with selling pigeons at the Mirpur-1 local market, neighbors and people from other parts of the city come to her home to purchase them. She earns twelve to fifteen hundred taka for a pair of squabs (baby pigeons) and four to five thousand taka for mature pairs.

However, she faces challenges. She can't place the cages outside or on the roof due to the threat of mongooses and cats. With the arrival of a newborn, it has become increasingly difficult to share their limited space with the birds.

Now, Baby is saving up with the hope of renovating and extending their home to better accommodate both her family and her beloved pigeons.





Din Islam (26) harvests bottle gourds in his roadside vegetable garden in Beribandh, Mirpur. Alongside growing bitter gourds, he has enjoyed a bumper crop of bottle gourds this season. Ever since, he began using compost made from cowdung, his garden's yield has increased significantly.



Mst. Rema (33) is now managing her own savings account and handles transactions independently. After receiving business training and grant from the Urban Green Graduation Programme, she expanded her tea stall and saving capital to further grow her business.





After receiving training and a grant through the Urban Green Graduation Programme, single mother Laizu Ahmed Sajeda (39) opened a roadside snack shop alongside offering embroidery services at Jigatola at Dhaka. She also received a disability card and a small grant for her physically challenged son, Sabbir Ahmed (20), who now contributes to the family income as an auto-rickshaw driver.

Fifteen years ago, Sajeda separated from her husband and has been living in extreme poverty with her disabled son, Sabbir. Back then, she earned a small income through tailoring from home. In mid-2024, she invested a grant from the Programme to open a variety store near the Hazaribagh Police Station in Dhaka. She also placed her sewing machine inside the shop, allowing her to continue tailoring while attending to customers.

In August, Sajeda received a disability card and a small grant for his son. With the support she received and her savings from the shop, she was able to buy an auto rickshaw. Now, with his license to drive, Sabbir earns about six to seven hundred taka daily, contributing to the family income.

Together, they now make over ten thousand taka each month, which allows them to cover their household expenses and save for the future. Through their hard work and combined efforts, this small family has finally found the stability to aspire to a more dignified and secure life.





In his garage at the squatter settlement, Mosleh Uddin (47) stands with his mentally challenged son, Rasel (21). Once a pavement dweller, Mosleh now owns three rickshaws, earning around 14,000 taka per month. He drives a rickshaw himself and rents out the other two for additional income for savings.



A happy family- Mahammad Hanif (43) and Fatema (37) with their three daughters Farzana (18), Faria (7) and Riya (13) who holds their birth registration certificate. Concern's partner of Urban Green Graduation programme connected them with the Local Councilor's office and supported their birth registration process.



Jahanara Begum (42) poses for a family photo with her family. Besides her and her husband's, she got her son Jahid (20) registered for birth. Concern's Partner connected them to the local commissioner's office of ward 24 in Laalbagh, Dhaka.





Juliya Rani (43), sitting proudly with her family of four, sharing their vision for the future—a carefully crafted roadmap to expand their family business and improve their livelihood. Together with her husband Rajendra Das (40), she runs a tailoring service in their community, a venture she successfully grew after receiving training and a business grant through the Green Graduation Programme.

Belonging to the local Dalit community that has lived in this colony for generations, Julia used to work in a small capacity from her one-room house. Until 2023, her monthly income was no more than nine thousand taka.

After receiving training and grants provided by the Concern's Programme, she was able to expand her tailoring business quickly- now renting a shop nearby and employing assistants. Sometimes, she along her assistants work until midnight to meet the delivery demand in the shop which is just a two-minute walk from her home. Her monthly earning has now reached around twenty-five thousand BDT (tk).

After renovating and extending their home, the couple now live with their two school-going children, Ovi and Evan Das. Looking ahead, Juliya and her family aim to generate fifty thousand taka in monthly revenue by the end of 2025, for financial stability, meeting the rising demand of their growing family.



Hosneara Begum (40) is well-known and respected in her community in Bow Bazar, Hazaribagh, a committed advocate for change. After receiving 'Change Maker' training from the Programme, she has been counseling on gender equality, resolving domestic violence and communal disputes, and coordinating with local councilors for rights and services.



Rasheda Akter (40) navigates the streets of Hazaribagh, Dhaka, on her scooter. A passionate and dedicated humanitarian, Rashida works on the frontline as partner staff in the Urban Green Graduation Programme, to support community people.. She brought change in the community as well as in her life.





Shukkur Ali (45) sorting out the bottles from wastes collected from across the Rupnagar residential area and the neighborhoods in Dhaka. Only earning member in his family, he earns about seven thousand taka (BDT) every month by managing the waste and selling in the recycling company.

Left: Md. Nasir (42) and his wife Rokhsana (37), working together in their store in Bow Bazar, Hazaribagh, Dhaka. Nasir has been in this business for the past decade, and as he expanded his operations with the grant, Rokhsana now helps with sorting of daily collections.



Shahanaj Khatun (45) stands in her vegetable farm in Mirpur, which she leased for commercial cultivation. She currently grows pumpkins, lady's fingers, and a variety of leafy vegetables, earning about 30,000 taka (BDT) per month. She is inspiring other men and women in her community as entrepreneur.



Parbin Akter (52) beams under the warm morning sun as she harvests vegetables flourishing in her garden. After receiving training and a grant support, she started farming commercially. Meeting her household consumption need of a family of six, she sells vegetables worth three to four thousand taka every month in the local market —a quiet triumph of self-reliance.





In his rooftop nursery and vegetable garden, Md. Kamal (53) is repotting a mango seedling for a customer. Using the grant from the Urban Green Graduation Programme, he expanded his furniture business, using the profits to launch this new green venture to diversify his income.

URBAN GREEN GRADUATION PROGRAMME

Concern's Urban Green Graduation Programme strives to address social and economic inequalities whilst taking a transformative approach to tackling negative environmental practice and improving the efficiency and sustainability of natural resources.

The Programme encompasses five pillars: social empowerment; social protection; livelihood promotion; financial inclusion and enabling environment.

Targeting urban communities, the Programme engaged most vulnerable and marginalized families living in pavements, in squatter communities, in undeveloped slums, and in Dalit communities in Dhaka North and South City Corporation.

Through the programme, the households can sustainably meet their basic needs and improve their coping strategies through strengthened livelihoods, which place value in the natural environment.

(Cover Photo) Shahanaj Khatun (45) stands in her vegetable farm in Mirpur slum area, which she leased for commercial production. She currently grows enough vegetables to meet the family demand and sell in the local market for regular income . She is now an entrepreneur.

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