



Case Study

Case Story: Building Resilience in Chhota Sluice - Voices from Cox's Bazar's Vulnerable Communities

Cox's Bazar is one of the most disaster-prone areas in Bangladesh, where women, adolescent girls, children, and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to floods, landslides, and other emergencies. In the Chhota Sluice area, daily life is a struggle not only against natural disasters but also against challenges like lack of safe water, limited healthcare, early marriage, and wildlife attacks from elephants that destroy homes, crops, and livelihoods. Vision Bangladesh Health and Education Society (VBHES) has stepped forward with targeted awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene management (MHM), sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and child safeguarding, helping adolescent girls, women, and the wider community build knowledge, resilience, and hope.

VBHES conducted sessions at local schools, such as Chhina Primary School, for adolescent girls on MHM, covering how to manage periods during disasters and what to do when menstruation starts unexpectedly. Several adolescents expressed that MHM education is essential, viewing it as a life-saving need. One adolescent student shared: "I am proud to be an adolescent girl and I live near Chhina Primary School in Cox's Bazar. Before Vision Bangladesh came to our school, I wasn't aware of MHM. Now I know how to manage my period. At our school, there are no proper MHM facilities. We don't have girl-friendly toilets. When menstruation starts unexpectedly, we have to leave school and go home, so we miss important classes like math and science. I think it is our right to have these facilities and to know about MHM and child safeguarding. In our community, early marriage is common because this area is disaster-prone. We need more support. I want more schools and more adolescent girls to learn about MHM."

Additional awareness sessions in the Chhota Sluice area targeted women and adolescent girls on SRHR, including antenatal care (ANC), postnatal care (PNC), safe delivery, and MHM. The community, heavily affected by natural disasters, faces severe difficulties during heavy rains, landslides, and flash floods when sluice gates open. Women and girls suffer the most, lacking disaster-friendly toilets and local clinics for maternal services. The nearest hospital is far, making it difficult to access vaccinations or emergency deliveries. Due to religious and social stigma, many girls cannot leave home, and with schools distant, some drop out entirely. The area also lacks safe drinking water, free pad supplies for MHM, and free education opportunities.

One of the Community elders highlighted the nightly fears: "Our area is affected by landslides and flash floods, and every night we cannot sleep because of wildlife attacks, especially elephants. Elephants come into localities at night, destroy houses and crops, and injure people." Also One elder woman recounted how an elephant destroyed her betel leaf garden, her only source of livelihood, leaving her uncertain about survival. Community members work in shifts as guards from evening to morning, using whatever tools they have. They called for large torches, watchtowers, and training on wildlife safety to live securely.

A widow shared her tragic story: "An elephant killed my husband while he was working in the field. I am now living in very difficult circumstances. I cannot ensure daily food or adequate nutrition for my children and myself. My husband was the only income earner in the family. Now, when people give me food, I can eat, but it is not enough to ensure nutrition for my children. Sometimes I become mentally distressed because I cannot properly feed my children. I do not know how I will live and sometimes feel hopeless. But for my children, I continue to live."

Another community member appreciated VBHES's efforts: "Vision Bangladesh provided trees to help the community cope with natural disasters. The community faces daily challenges from landslides during heavy rain and flash floods when the sluice gate opens. Women and adolescent girls suffer a lot. They need more support to improve and maintain their livelihoods and daily life. Please increase your aid and services in our Chhota Sluice Area."

The people of Chhota Sluice live with the harsh realities of disasters, lack of services, and wildlife threats, yet their voices carry strength and hope. VBHES's initiatives have raised awareness on MHM, SRHR, maternal care, and child safeguarding, but the needs-safe water, girl-friendly toilets, maternal health facilities, wildlife protection, and education opportunities-far exceed what one organization can provide. With greater support, we can build a safer, healthier future for this community, ensuring every girl, woman, and family lives with dignity and safety.