



# Anticipation to Action: Tales of the Frontliners



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# Foreword

We are pleased to present “Anticipation to Action: Tales of the Frontliners”, which is published by Scaling up Forecast-based Action and Learning in Bangladesh (SUFAL II). It aims to portray real stories of communities acting early to protect their lives, assets, and livelihoods. It also provides insight into how the Government’s capacity to tackle the impact of the monsoon flood has increased over the duration of the project.

Floods have become more frequent and intense over time, which has severe effects on people’s lives and Livelihoods. However, Bangladesh now has greater opportunities to prepare ahead of time by taking proactive measures that would decrease the hardship and dependency on post-disaster humanitarian aid by taking anticipatory action.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Bangladeshi government, and in particular to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), for implementing the Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD 2019) which allows all relevant parties to benefit from consolidated learning by promoting proactive risk reduction. We thank the Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) of Bogura, Jamalpur, Kurigram, and Gaibandha for their initiative in initiating early activities, even though they haven’t yet established guidelines and regulations. We appreciate the close collaboration and assistance we received from the Flood Forecasting and Warning Center (FFWC) and the Department of Disaster Management and Relief (DDM) at every stage of the process. We also express our gratitude to the communities for their warm reception and cooperative efforts.

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## About SUFAL

SUFAL project worked with communities, government institutions, and local disaster management committees to build on existing capacity and support the implementation of community-focused, forecast-based actions to mitigate the potential impacts of monsoon floods in Bangladesh's northwest region. It focused on integrating anticipatory action into Bangladesh's national disaster-risk management framework by (1) improving access to impact-based forecasts and early warnings; (2) identifying thresholds and setting triggers for early action; (3) testing appropriate early actions that address the needs and priorities of vulnerable communities; and (4) generating evidence and lessons to influence policy, plans, and financing for anticipatory action.

After the successful completion of the first phase from July 2019 to June 2021, the second phase started from July 2021 onward focusing on consolidating learning and scaling up forecast-based financing and forecast-based action (FbA/FbF).

SUFAL II project continues to support the Bangladesh government in developing a gender-responsive and inclusive community-based approach to anticipatory action

in monsoon flood-prone north-western Char areas, and flash flood and lightning-prone north-eastern Haor areas. The expected results of SUFAL II are: (1) an Enhanced Early Warning System with tailored forecast information is available and used by the stakeholders and community, (2) Institutions and communities can take timely, appropriate, inclusive and sector-specific early actions to respond to multi-hazards; (3) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) / Early Action Protocols (EAP) and financing mechanisms are developed through evidence generation and advocacy.

The SUFAL-II consortium is managed by CARE Deutschland e.V. and implemented by CARE Bangladesh as the lead agency. Partners are Concern Worldwide and their local partners ESDO and People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI) (CARE) and the SKS Foundation and Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) (CWW), and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES). The project is financially supported by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). CARE UK provides technical support in project implementation.

Anticipatory Action (AA), Forecast-based Action (FbA), Early Action: all these concepts have in common to acting ahead of a hazard that is predicted by improved forecast products to prevent or reduce its potential impacts. It is a way of acting early with timely forecasts, preplanned action, and prearranged financing and resources. The overall goal is to prevent natural hazards from becoming disasters and reduce human suffering. AA involves the use of scientific forecasts and early warning systems to anticipate impending disasters such as cyclones, floods, droughts, etc.

While AA ensures that actions are taken earlier based on forecasts to reduce loss of life and damage to assets and livelihoods, it has fine distinction with preparedness. It works as a transition from regular preparedness to response, taking a very small window in the Disaster Management Cycle. AA complements overall disaster risk management (DRM) through a data-driven approach where each action is taken based on the probable impact of a forecast. In Bangladesh, where the natural hazards are more frequent and intense due to climate change, AA is a proven concept that increases the capacity to tackle hazards, reduce dependency on humanitarian emergency response, and ensure resilience in the long run.

# Anticipatory Action



# Empowering the next Generation on Anticipatory Action

**Jerin Khatun and Kabita Parvin  
Madarganj, Jamalpur**



In a small village in Madarganj, Jamalpur, Bangladesh, 16-year-old Jerin Khatun lives with her family. Jerin heard from her mother how different generations in her family battled with monsoon flooding when the mighty Jamuna River expanded with upstream and seasonal heavy rainfall, submerging the villages on its shore. They hardly got any early warning before the flood was coming or knew what to do beforehand. It was often too late for them to act as the flood water was already on the doorstep after swallowing their harvestable crop. Jerin also saw the discomfort of young girls after evacuating to a shelter or highland as there were no proper sanitation facilities.

Jerin said that during floods, all people take shelter in high places. Women and girls cannot defecate or take baths in open spaces. Many women cannot take a shower even after three or four days. Also, they cannot use sanitary pads for physical problems during puberty. And they don't feel safe in this open space.

A desire to make change brought Jerin to CARE's SUFAL II project; she started her journey as a community youth group member and learned about the need for early warning about flooding to take early action. She shared with friends her knowledge of Anticipatory Action (AA) and taught them where they can get early warnings and explored the Flood Forecast and Warning Centre (FFWC) website. They discussed the challenges faced during floods and brainstormed solutions. As a youth representative, Jerin actively participated in the Community Risk Assessment (CRA) of the union, where she, along with other community members, came up with a risk reduction and early action plan.

Jerin and her mother, Nargis, attend SUFALS' courtyard session to learn about household-level early action, such as proper methods of water purification, some hygiene practices and protection actions to keep herself and the family secure. She also learned some homestead agricultural practices to meet household nutrition requirements during floods.

*"In the beginning, I felt shy as I stammered while talking. But gradually I overcame my discomfort. It was also possible because people acknowledged my effort in awareness raising on taking early action"*

**- Jerin Akter, Jorekhali, Madarganj, Jamalpur**



Kabita from Gunaritala Union of Madarganj Upazila, Jamalpur district is another member of SUFAL's youth group who is actively supporting her community in taking anticipatory action.

Like Jerin and Kabita, SUFAL has 501 youth community members and 49 volunteers in 17 unions of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, and Bogura who are supporting in mobilizing the wider community to take Anticipatory Actions. These youths are the torchbearers to promote Anticipatory Action to the next generation.

*“After receiving the early warning, we share it in our youth team members’ WhatsApp group. I have many friends, and I also share the early warning voice message recording with them so they can inform their family.”*

*- Kabita Parvin, Gunaritala, Madarganj, Jamalpur*



# A Step Towards Localized Forecast

**Md. Maidul Islam**  
**Hatia, Ulipur, Kurigram**



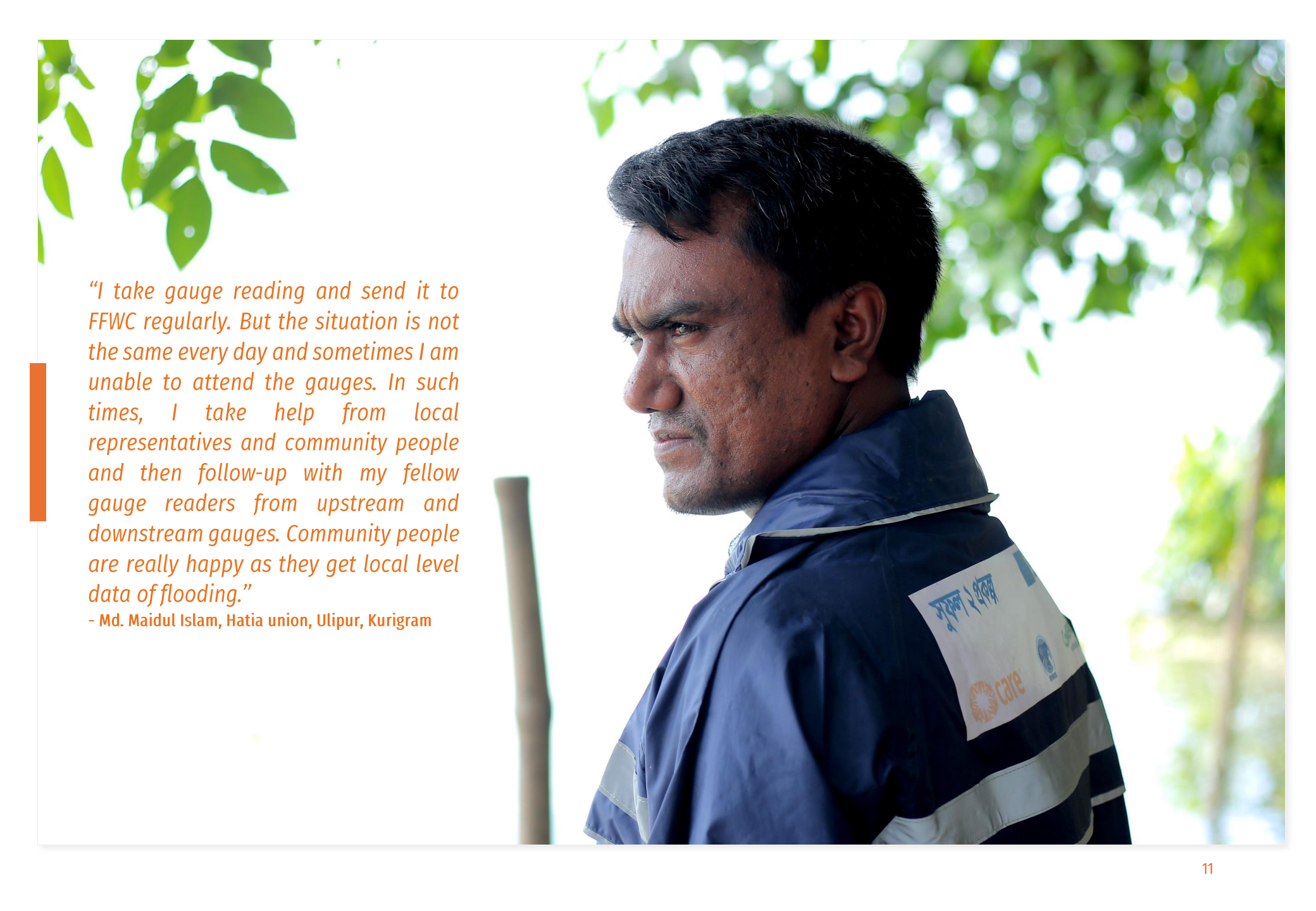
Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) is designated to generate flood early warnings in Bangladesh by analyzing various data. One crucial component is extracting data from river gauges through trained gauge readers. Through the community and institutional level consultation in Kurigram, the need for a river gauge in Ulipur upazila was raised to have localized forecast information. RIMES -SUFAL's technical partner -had a series of consultations with the community, local government and institutions, and FFWC on this. They identified that the forecast is generated for Ulipur from the downstream station, by the time the community gets the forecast, it's already flooded in that area. As a result, a new gauge was installed in the Hatia union of Ulipur Upazila, Kurigram district. River gauges are scales to measure the increase or decrease of river water while the gauge reader is the person who is assigned for the role.

As part of strengthening the local forecasting capacity, SUFAL is working with FFWC to train the gauge readers from the project area. Mohammad Maidul Islam from Hatia Union of Ulipur, Kurigram, is responsible for the newly installed gauge in Hatia Union from January 2021 and one of the 30-gauge readers trained by FFWC through SUFAL. He attended a one-day training facilitated by FFWC and learned about the process of collecting the water level data and sending it to FFWC. He also got to know the process of relocating the gauge considering the water level and maintaining the gauge.

Maidul collects the water level data from the river gauge 5 times a day (at 6 am, 9 am, 12 am, 3 pm, and 6 pm). He records the water level data and sends the information twice daily, at 9 am and 3 pm, to FFWC through mobile phone SMS. Taking a gauge reading is not the only task Maidul is assigned, with the increase and decrease of water level, he also has to shift the position of the river gauge in consultation with FFWC and local engineers of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and check if the gauge is in place and not overturned by any boat and strong current.

Maidul shared one of his experiences from the 2021 monsoon flood where the gauge was uprooted due to a strong river current and he had to search for it downstream in Chilmari, however, was unable to find it. He explains, *"I quickly informed FFWC, BWDB, and RIMES about the situation and immediately got guidance from them. I installed the new gauge with the support of the sub-division officer (SDO) of BWDB."*

Being a gauge reader is not easy; there is only one gauge reader for each gauge station, and they must stay active, and keep reading daily at the right time despite adverse conditions such as heavy rains, storms, etc. Md. Maidul Islam represents all the gauge readers who are on the frontline, supporting the strengthening of the forecast system so the community can take action ahead of a flood.

A man with dark hair and a serious expression is shown in profile, looking towards the left. He is wearing a dark blue jacket with reflective white stripes on the sleeves and back. On the back of the jacket, there is a white patch with Bengali text 'সুস্বাদু পানীয়' (Sussvadu Panij) and the 'CARE' logo. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

*“I take gauge reading and send it to FFWC regularly. But the situation is not the same every day and sometimes I am unable to attend the gauges. In such times, I take help from local representatives and community people and then follow-up with my fellow gauge readers from upstream and downstream gauges. Community people are really happy as they get local level data of flooding.”*

- Md. Maidul Islam, Hatia union, Ulipur, Kurigram



## Fighting Flood through Early Warning

**Shahin Mia**  
**Holdia, Saghata, Gaibandha**

“Did you sow Aman seeds yet? The forecast is saying flood water is increasing and there might be a flood coming.”- this is what Md. Emdadul Haque told Shahin Mia when he went to the village market. Md. Emdadul Haque is a farmer and one of the voice message recipients of SUFAL. As many people come to the village market and gather in the tea stall, he shares the early warning and advisory proactively with them over a cup of tea. As it was time to sow seeds for the Aman (rice variety), when Shahin Mia went to Emdadul’s shop to purchase goods, Emdadul informed him about the flood situation.

Shahin Mia, a farmer with six family members from Holdia Union of Sagatha Upazila of Ghaibanda whose Aman cultivation serves as the annual family income. At the end of the monsoon season, he prepares his land for cultivation, ploughs the land, and dries the Aman seeds that he preserved. Among all his farming, Aman cultivation is the major one that ensures his family’s yearly income.

After being informed about the probable flood, Shahin Mia postponed seed sowing and stored the seeds again in a dry and safe place. He also shared the information with his neighboring farmers so they could prepare accordingly. On 29 August, many areas in his union (Holdia) got inundated, including his cropland. After the water receded, Shahin Mia prepared his land and planted the stored seeds. He added, *“This saved me from seed damage. I didn't have any trouble cultivating Aman. Just an early warning message can save us from flood damage and bring back the family's wealth and solvency.”*

Through Md. Emdadul Haque, Shahin Mia got connected with the SUFAL team and became part of the voice message broadcasting service. He also started participating in courtyard sessions to better understand what can be done before a flood with that forecast information. Like Shahin and Emdadul, early warning voice message recipients shared the information with others creating a web to reach the last mile.

*“If I didn't receive the voice call, my paddy seeds would have been damaged, my time would have been wasted. I would have to spend approximately 15,000 to 20,000 BDT per Bigha land for new seeds. I might be able to do that but that would not make any profit.”*

- Shahin Mia, Holdia, Saghata, Gaibandha



A voice message broadcasting platform was developed within CARE's SHOUHARDO III program supported by RIMES. This platform is currently being used by the SUFAL project to disseminate localized action-oriented flood and weather forecasts; and associated forecast-based inclusive advisories for anticipatory action related to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, WASH and health. Under this system, **about 13,888 enlisted mobile numbers in four districts of Char received early warning voice messages and advisories.**



# Community Advocate for Anticipatory Action

**Latifa Begum**  
**Ghuridaha, Saghata, Gaibandha**

Ghuridaha union of Saghata, Gaibandha is situated at the bank of Jamuna, an area which gets inundated by monsoon floods almost every year. The 2020 monsoon flood was one of the most devastating where more than 60% of the union was flooded. The poverty rate is comparatively higher in this district where agriculture and cattle rearing are major sources of income. Almost all households have at least one or two cows and many people preferred to stay at home rather than go to shelter during flood as there were no proper facilities to keep their cattle.

Latifa Begum, one of the residents of Ghuridaha Union mentions that the flood affects the union almost every year and many cattle die suffering from diseases; fodder price increases remarkably because of its shortage during floods. She further mentions that the schools and embankments were used as shelters without dedicated places for males and females; the shelters were not female-friendly; there were no adequate toilets for females and sometimes there were no separate toilets for male and female at all. Moreover, going to these shelters was a major challenge as the roads became submerged in water. Latifa said, *“We are the people of flood-prone areas. We preserve some dry food and important documents to prepare for floods. However, we did not know how we could act based on the forecast. Our community people were not aware of the early action.”*

Latifa learned about the SUFAL project when it started working on the 2020 monsoon and supported the union Disaster Management Committee in preparing safe and secure shelters, provided with temporary cattle sheds. Many of the people in her union received flood early warning voice messages with advisories. She got early warning information from those recipients and took early action. She became interested in the project and became a community group member of SUFAL in 2022.



When the second phase of the project started in July 2021, SUFAL adopted a more community-based approach with the formation of three community groups (farmer group, women group, youth group) in each union. The aim was to enhance the knowledge of these community group members to mobilize the wider community to support taking early action. Latifa, along with the different community representatives of her union joined in the community-based risk assessment facilitated by the SUFAL project. They identified the risks and resources of their union and developed a risk reduction action plan which also included early actions. Latifa mentioned that they discussed the actions with union disaster management committees and raised their demands. Now some of the early actions are included in the union's annual budget. With her dedication and enthusiasm, she became the leader of the women's community group.

Latifa is the voice of the community who shared her experiences in the 2nd National Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action. Like Latifa, SUFAL enhanced the knowledge of 1461 individuals under 51 community groups in 17 unions. They identified the risks and needs of the community, supported the generation of a risk reduction and early action plan, and supported the dissemination of early warning information.

*“We need government support to tackle flood. But there are many early actions those we can take by ourselves if we get a timely forecast..... this year the people of the area were more aware; our community people along with the SUFAL project staff communicated with the Upazila Livestock officer to get the vaccine. Vaccination of grazing cattle were prioritized where flood waters arrives first. Now our cattle are safe.”*

**- Latifa Begum, Ghuridah, Saghata, Gaibandha**



# Timely Vaccination Saves Cattle Lives

**Shobuj Miah**  
**Veterinary, Ghuridah, Saghata, Gaibandha**


Shobuj Miah is a trained livestock vaccinator at the Saghata Upazila Livestock Office, assigned for vaccination in Ghuridah Union. As a local service provider (LSP), he attended a training arranged by SUFAL where he got to know the use of forecast and advisory information while extending services to communities. Shobuj Miah was able to connect his role ahead of an anticipated hazard to save the livestock from threatening diseases. He, along with his fellow vaccinators from the same union, shared their experience of training with the upazila livestock officer.



Many contagious diseases, like Foot and Mouth Disease (Khura), Black Quarter (Badla), and Anthrax (Torika) are more prominent following a flood. These highly contagious diseases have the potential to infect all the cattle in the area and in the worst cases, result in death. This intense impact makes it essential to vaccinate the livestock before the flood season. During the community risk assessment and risk reduction and early action plan, the community identified the need for livestock vaccination within the 1-month prior flood.

Shobuj Mia said, *“Following the forecast advisory, our Upazila Livestock officer instructed us to arrange a vaccination campaign. We talked with the SUFAL team, and they supported us in arranging the campaign. We announced with hand mike so all the livestock farmers can bring their cattle on the assigned date.”*





The SUFAL project prioritized sector-specific early actions where the respective departments are responsible for initiating action within their scope. 28 vaccination campaigns were arranged by the Upazila Livestock Offices in four upazilas of the SUFAL project working area where 4643 cattle belonging to 1706 livestock farmers were vaccinated. This demonstrates that the respective departments are more responsible and show a positive attitude to the Anticipatory Action approach. Upazila Livestock Office provided the vaccine at a subsidized rate and the community was more proactive in bringing their cattle as this investment can save their cattle. Despite the high demand, vaccines are often limited. Also, it is challenging for livestock farmers, especially women, to bring their cattle from remote char areas to the campaign ground.

*“We discussed with the community during the courtyard session where they proposed small campaigns in chars, union parishad also helped us on that. Volunteers supported women in bringing their cattle to campaign grounds. Thus, the service was more accessible.”*

- Shobuj Miah, Ghuridah, Saghata, Gaibandha



SUFAL's contribution not only mobilized local livestock services to arrange vaccination campaigns as early action, but many solvent livestock farmers took self-initiative to vaccinate their cattle.

*Md. Sumon Mia lives in a village named Kuripara (Kazla union of Shariakandi, Bogura), just beside the Jamuna River. Along with farming, he rears 10 cows and 28 sheep which helps to get extra income for his family. He said, "It was the month of August (2023) when I got to know by mobile phone voice message that there will be a flood in my area. I also got some advisory, where it mentioned vaccinating cattle. I have many cows and sheep those are my source of income, so, I decided to vaccinate the livestock as early as possible to protect them from disease."*

## Livestock Farmer's Self-Initiative on Cattle Vaccination

**Md. Sumon Mia**  
**Kazla, Shariakandi, Bogura**

Sumon went to the Upazila Livestock Office the next day where they recommended him to vaccinate cows for Foot & Mouth Disease and sheep for Anthrax. With the suggestion, he vaccinated all his cows and sheep through a local vaccinator with BDT 240 tk. Sumon said that in the previous year, he did not know when the best time was to vaccinate cattle to save them from life-threatening diseases resulting during the post-flood period.

As a member of a community group and voice call recipient of the SUFAL project, this year (2023), Sumon knew very well about the exact timing, and he successfully vaccinated all his livestock before the onset of the flood. The actions of Suman and similar solvent farmers and livestock farmers like him, not only safeguard their assets but also contribute towards building a more resilient farming community that is better prepared for future flood threats.



*“He (vaccinator) charged BDT10 per cow and BDT5 per sheep. I think that it was low cost because if any of my cattle become infected, it has a chance to spread to all others. I have cattle worth BDT850,000 so it would have been huge loss if I didn’t invest here.”*

*- Md. Sumon Mia, Kazla, Shariakandi, Bogura*

# Tackling Fodder Crisis by Silage Preparation

**Sahina Khatun**  
**Gunaritola, Madarganj, Jamalpur**

As the grazing land is inundated with water, fresh and green grass is mostly unavailable in the monsoon season. It causes scarcity and rising price of fodder. However, households can preserve green grass in silage technique before a flood which can ensure the nutrition requirement of the cattle.

Keeping the community at the center of its action, SUFAL II emphasizes strengthening the knowledge and capacity of individuals and the community, so they can take early action with available forecast information. With the support of the Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI), SUFAL provided agro-meteorological training to selected local service providers (LSPs) and community group members. A demonstration video has been prepared on the silage preparation process. 345 livestock farmers had silage preparation training, who then further shared their knowledge and the demonstration video with others in the community. As a result, around 500 people prepared silage as a flood early action in the 2023 monsoon.

Sahina Khatun from Gunaritola Union of Madarganj, Jamalpur is one of the recipients of local service providers' training and has cattle of her own. After learning the method of silage preparation by Napier grass, Sahina made about 20 kg of silage for her cattle in this (2023) monsoon season. As Sahina gives tuition to little children in her neighborhood, she has a good relationship with the parents of the pupils. She shared her knowledge with them as well and some interested women also came to learn by hands-on demonstration.

Sahina mentioned that it took about BDT250 for her to buy Napier grass, molasses, a plastic bag, and a drum to prepare 20kg silage. But now, she is cultivating Napier grass on her land so the cost will be reduced in the future.



*“There’s enough fodder for cows in the dry season. But, when the flood inundates everything, there’s no fodder. The price also increases. Compared to that, silage is more beneficial as cows get proper nutrition, their milk production also increases.”*

*- Sahina Khatun, Gunaritola, Madarganj, Jamalpur*





## Taking Early Action with Locally Available Resources

### Md. Aminul Islam and Mst. Monowara Begum Kazla, Sariakandi, Bogura

Md. Aminul Islam lives with his wife Mst. Monowara Begum and three children in Kazla Union of Sariakandi Upazila, Bogura. While Aminul mostly handles the agricultural activities on land, Monowara supports in rearing the cattle. Known for being a proactive and enthusiastic learner in his community, Aminul participated in the Local Service Providers' training and got knowledge on how to prepare silage by Napier grass to store fodder. However, there was not enough Napier grass in his area, and he had to purchase it from the local market which is far from our village.

Aminul discussed the issue with the field facilitator of SUFAL and he (SUFAL's field facilitator) told him about another fodder solution which is banana haylage. Aminul and Monowara then consulted with the nearest livestock office from where they learned about the banana haylage-making process. He said, *"I have enough banana trees in my house and neighboring areas, so it is easier for me to prepare haylage. All I need to buy is one (01) liter of molasses which costs BDT20. Other ingredients like water, salt, large bucket with a lid were available in my home."*

While Aminul shared the haylage-making process in SUFALS' courtyard session, Monowara taught to the women in the neighborhood.

*"Silage and haylage both are useful as fodder. We don't have to worry about cattle feed as it's already preserved. Making fodder with local and available ingredients is more convenient."*

- Mst. Monowara Begum, Kazla, Sariakandi, Bogura

# From Saving to Income through Napier Grass Cultivation

## Shah Alam, Buraburi, Ulipur, Kurigram

Md. Shah Alam is a resident of Sadi village in Buraburi union of Ulipur upazila in Kurigram district. He, along with his large family, is dependent on cattle rearing as the primary household income, followed by farming. But, in each monsoon season, he faced a significant challenge. Alam mentioned, *“Cows’ milk production decreased as there is no sufficient green grass; even if I purchase fodder, it’s very pricy and often doesn’t cover the nutrient requirement”*. As a responsible livestock Farmer, Alam sought information to improve his livestock production and participated in SUFAL’s courtyard session.

Alam got to know that silage can be better prepared with Napier grass, which also has flood-resistant varieties. He became interested in it and further discussed it with Ballal, the field facilitator of the project. Alam got to know that SUFAL is planning to organize training on Napier grass cultivation with the Upazila agricultural office for keen farmers and livestock Farmers. The training also included creating some demonstration plots so those who have some land in high places were encouraged to participate. Knowing that Alam reached out to Ballal to participate in the training. After the training, Alam received Napier grass cutting which he cultivated in 6 decimal lands of his own; within 25-30 days, the grass was ready for harvest.

Shah Alam received a lot of responses from his and the neighboring villages as many farmers showed interest and collected Napier grass cuttings. Two villagers prepared silage with his support after purchasing grass from him. The story of Md Shah Alam portrays how an early action can not only save a probable loss but also become an alternate forecast-based income opportunity.



*“I can harvest multiple times from the same cutting, and also, can transfer the cuttings and seedlings to higher land if the flood is severe. I learned to collect cutting from the new grass and sold cuttings worth BDT300 to Bakul (another farmer in the village). My four cows were able to have green grass this (2023) year. I also prepared silage when I got to know from the forecast that river water is increasing, and floods can occur. By that, I saved BDT5,000 by not buying fodder for cows. Moreover, I sold grass worth BDT2,500 this monsoon season.”*

- Shah Alam, Buraburi, Ulipur, Kurigram



# Drum Raft Connecting Isolated Villages

**Shapla Begum**  
**Bharatkali, Saghata, Gaibandha**

When the river water overflows and inundates the community, communication becomes interrupted as the low-lying roads are submerged in water. Nilkuti is one of the villages that become isolated from the union as the only connecting road becomes flooded in the monsoon season. 432 people from 107 families living in this village face serious communication disruption and lose valuable time by taking alternate long routes. Those who suffer most are especially children attending school, the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities who lack access to basic services.

During the Community Risk Assessment (CRA), the community agreed that this issue needs to be discussed with the union parishad. The community group members of SUFAL who represent their community, along with their neighbors, reached out to the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC). Acknowledging the needs of the villagers, the union chairman called for a meeting with representatives from UDMC, the Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC), community group members, and SUFAL project representatives. Learning from SUFAL's previous experience of building a drum raft during the 2020 monsoon to ensure the connection between villages, UDMC agreed to prepare such a drum raft for the villagers of Nilkuti. UDMC, with villagers of Nilkuti and the SUFAL project, took a joint initiative where SUFAL provided the drums, villagers arranged ropes and bamboo and UDMC covered all the transportation and labor costs to build the drum raft. This collaborative effort required around BDT 27,710 and about 13% of it was contributed by the UDMC (9%) and villagers (4%). Through the UDMC, a management team has been set up to ensure the maintenance of this drum raft.



*“After getting drum raft, our communication in Nilkuti has become easy. It took 30 minutes to go to Nilkuti by an alternate route, now it can be accessed in 5 minutes. Until we get a better road, we will carefully use this drum raft. This drum raft’s design is very good; it is spacious and has railing so children and anyone transporting on it are safer.”*

*- Shapla Begum, Bharatkali, Saghata, Gaibandha*



# UDMCs' Early Support Became Community's Blessing

**Saeed Miah and Maryam Begum  
Holdia, Saghta, Gaibandha**

Even with timely and actionable forecasts, taking pre-planned action becomes challenging if the resources are scarce. While the country's disaster management system is shifting from reactive to proactive and more emphasis is now given to Anticipatory Action, resource allocation and financing are still focused on post-disaster relief and rehabilitation. One of SUFAL's key priority areas is to scope the financing for Anticipatory Action which requires sensitization on the concept and evidence-based policy-level change. SUFAL worked closely with the Disaster Management Committees and provided knowledge-based support in planning and decision-making to mobilize locally available resources.

Holdia is among the 10 unions in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha district that are inundated in flood water comparatively early for being a low-lying area adjacent to the river. From early August of 2023, water gradually started to rise but remained within 1 meter below the danger level. With the probability of danger level exceedance by the end of August, Saghata Upazila Parishad allocated 2 metric tons of Gratuitous Relief (GR)- rice to Holdia Union on 21st August 2023 for relief purposes. Upon receiving GR-rice as part of social safety net mechanisms, the union chairman called for the union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023. Union Chairman Md. Rafiqul Islam Mandal mentioned, "if the flood hits, those living near the river will be most affected. They won't have any work at that time, so they won't have any food. As everything goes underwater, the distribution will also be challenging. But if we give the rice too early, they might use it too early."

During the meeting, UDMC members agreed to closely monitor the flood water and observe the forecast before disbursing the rice. On 21 August, UDMC members received an early warning voice message generated by FFWC and circulated by the SUFAL project which indicated river water might exceed the danger level at Saghata station by the end of August. On 25 August, they received another voice message that mentioned the river water was gradually increasing. On the same date, SUFAL activated its readiness trigger as the probability of danger level exceedance was above 75%. Based on the forecast and in consultation with SUFAL, UDMC decided to distribute GR rice to 200 households. HHs from the vulnerable wards on 27 and 28 August. UDMC also received 1000 pieces of water purification tablets which were distributed along with the rice.



*"If I wouldn't get the rice and water purification tablets before the flood, I would have to take loans from others. Because of getting water purification tablets, I was able to drink pure water with my family. As a result, no one in my family got sick."*

- Saeed Miah, Holdia, Saghata, Gaibandha

*"I am a widow and there is no one in my family to earn. If I did not get 10 kg of rice and water purification tablets, I would have to take a loan from the moneylender. Because of the water purification tablets, my family was able to have safe drinking water which kept my safe from any water borne diseases."*

- Maryam Begum, Holdia, Saghata, Gaibandha





# Takeaway Notes

Working with institutions and communities, the SUFAL project has implemented actions under the three building blocks of Anticipatory Action to reduce monsoon flood impact in north-western and flash flood and lightning impact in north-eastern Bangladesh. These stories reflect the voice of the people experiencing the 2023 monsoon flood.

Enhanced early warning interpreted in the local language with actionable advisory makes the community, including women and other vulnerable groups, resilient in taking action. When the community and institution have a better understanding, the inclusive and sector-specific plans with dedicated financing and coordination mechanisms make the anticipatory action more effective.

The stories depict how the project has made disaster management more effective together with national and local governments, forecast agencies, and communities through early action.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ANTICIPATORY ACTION FOR IMPROVED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION.**





# Anticipation to Action: Voice of the Frontliners



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