

A legacy of shared journey in Bangladesh



**YEARS OF
PARTNERSHIP
& IMPACT**





1946

CARE

1994

CARE

2019



CARE

1984



2003



2024

Acknowledgements

Editor:

Ram Das

Planning:

Tony Michael Gomes, Mehrul Islam

Content and Coordination:

Nusrat Daud Pritha

Contributors:

Abdul Mannan Mazumder
Abdus Sobhan
Ahmed Munier
Brian Kester
Chandra Prasad
Dr Muhammad Musa
Fatema Jahan Seema
Fazlul Haque
Gopal Chowhan
Hafijul Islam
Hafizar Rahman
Iqbal Miah
Kaiser Rejve
Md. Niaz Morshed Khan
Nadira Khanam
Rawnak Jahan
Shamim Ahmed
Tasnim Islam Samia
Tasneem Mahmood Chowdhury

Design and Print:

Pixel V Communication

Photo Credit

Abdus Sobhan
Abir Abdullah
A.B.M Saifuzzaman
Akram Ali
Apel Pavel
Asafuzzaman Captain
Asma Begum
CARE Archives
CARE Bangladesh Archives
Chandan Robert Rebeiro
Dr Muhammad Musa
Elias Mahmood
Iqbal Miah
Jannatul Mawa
Jorja Currington
Josh Estay
Joya Shikder
Kathleen Prior
Mahmud Al Haq Patwary
Mohammad Hasan Zobayer
Monjuri Begum
Nancy Farese
Parvez Ahmad
Parvin Akter
Peter Caton
Pintu Saha
Priyotosh Das
Roberts Sila
Sarah Easter
Soydul Islam
Tasneem Mahmood Chowdhury
Yeasmin Akhter

Long-term partners

Ashokta Punarbhashan Sangstha (APOSH)
Barguna Nari Jagoran Karmosuchi (JAGO NARI)
Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS)
Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS)
Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)
Eco – Social Development Organization (ESDO)
Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB)
Gram Bikash Kendra (GBK)
GRAUS (Gram Unnayan Sangathan)
Mukti Cox's Bazar
Mukta Akash Bangladesh (MAB)
Mahideb Jubo Somaj Kallayan Somity (MUSKS)
National Development Programme (NDP)
People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI)
Rupantar
Society for health extension judo Malayan comity (SHED)
Sheva Nari Shishu Kallayan Kendra (SHEVA)
Samaj Kallyan Sangstha (SKS) Foundation
Unnayan Sangha (US)
Village Education Resource Center (VERC)

Editor's Note

75 years is a lifetime. As a life passes through its moments of triumphs and tribulations, successes and disappointments, highs and lows, CARE Bangladesh had its moments too. Each of these moments shaped the organization and strengthened its edifice on which it stands today, towering yet humble and grounded.

This book is an attempt to put in print this historic journey. Page by page, we have tried to capture snippets from the last seven and half decades of our work in this country which had far reaching impact on the people's lives. This book is also a testament of the deep and emotional partnership with the people of Bangladesh, its vibrant civil society organizations, its governments over the years and our donors who all believed in us and trusted us. This book is also a tribute to the people of this country for their incredible adaptability and resilience. We have tried to capture the lives we have touched, the communities uplifted and the positive change we have catalyzed.

While I write these lines I cannot help but think of the lives CARE transformed, the sparks of innovations over the years, and the countless moments of kindness that defines our legacy. This is also a tribute to the CARE

staff, the first ever recruit in 1949 till today, who have been instrumental in building this organization, brick by brick, to what it is today. I'm aware we are standing on the shoulders of giants. The pages in this book is not just about the 75 years of CARE's work, it's about how CARE and its partners worked their heart and soul, poured into every moment of its existence. It is said, whatever you write about the beauty of a rose you still fall short of it. We have given everything possible to capture CARE's momentous journey, yet I feel there are a lot which have been left unsaid and difficult to put into black and white.

My gratitude to thousands of CARE colleagues over the seven and half decades, to hundreds of partners and governments over the years, our donor partners, and millions of people from the community who fondly remember us. Thank you for standing by us in this momentous journey of impact!

In gratitude,

Ram Das

Country Director
CARE Bangladesh

Message from the Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau



CARE is marking 75 years of operations, working side by side with the government to eradicate poverty and empower the people of Bangladesh.

CARE is one of the oldest INGOs operating in Bangladesh. In their years of operation, they have managed to reach the most desolate locations of the country and impact the lives of the most secluded communities. The projects being implemented by CARE have introduced many new methods and models for improving women empowerment, agricultural production, disaster resilience, climate change adaptation, health, hygiene and more. Their objectives have always aligned with the interest of the Government and the people of the country. Collectively, all the diverse projects that CARE has implemented over the decades have tremendously contributed to the development efforts of the Government of Bangladesh with an aim to contribute to the attainment of MDG and SDG goals.

CARE's rich experience and expertise has made them a reliable and trustworthy partner in the past decades, and I am hopeful that they will continue to partner and support the cause of Bangladesh's development in the years to come.

I would like to congratulate CARE, along with all their former and current employees on having completed this long journey and thank them for the continuous support they have provided over the years. On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and all its people, I wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saidur Rahman'.

MD. Saidur Rahman

Director General (Grade 1)
NGO Affairs Bureau, Chief Advisor's Office
Government of Bangladesh

Message from the Mission Director, USAID Bangladesh



USAID congratulates CARE Bangladesh on an impressive 75 years of dedicated service as one of the longest-serving international NGOs in Bangladesh.

Since the 1970s, USAID has partnered with CARE to implement numerous programs focused on improving food security, nutrition, emergency response, empowering women, and strengthening resilience in marginalized communities.

Each program played a vital role in addressing the evolving needs of Bangladesh – especially in areas prone to recurring natural disasters, chronic food insecurity, and malnutrition.

The innovative approaches developed through these initiatives continue to serve as effective models for empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty.

We express our gratitude for the tireless efforts of everyone who has contributed to improving people's lives and livelihoods over the course of many decades.

Reed Aeschliman

Mission Director

U.S. Agency for International Development
(USAID) in Bangladesh

Message from the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh



The British High Commission in Dhaka congratulates CARE on its 75th anniversary in Bangladesh.

The UK is committed to ending extreme poverty, tackling climate change and addressing the biodiversity crisis.

Our approach is grounded in partnerships. The UK Government values its longstanding partnership with CARE and recognizes its important contribution to Bangladesh's development. I am particularly excited about our ongoing partnership in climate adaptation in ecologically vulnerable areas.

I look forward to working together to strengthen our partnership and accelerate climate action in Bangladesh.

I wish CARE continued success in its mission.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S.C. Cooke".

H.E Sarah Cooke

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh

Message from the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Bangladesh



I extend my heartfelt congratulations to CARE on this remarkable milestone of 75 years of dedicated service in Bangladesh. As a leading global humanitarian organization operating in over 100 countries, CARE embodies the values we hold dear: compassion, resilience, and respect for human rights. CARE's unwavering commitment to human dignity has made it a beacon of hope for countless individuals in Bangladesh and beyond.

As one of the longest-serving international NGOs in the country, CARE has consistently stood alongside the people, the Government, and United Nations organizations, helping to respond to crises and emergencies that have affected Bangladesh. The joint efforts between CARE and the United Nations, including in response to the Rohingya influx, have highlighted the power of partnership in addressing urgent needs and fostering collaborative solutions.

CARE's ongoing disaster response initiatives and commitment to combating climate change further exemplify CARE's dedication to those affected by crises. Together, we have made a significant impact, and it has been an honor for me to share part of this 75-year journey with CARE Bangladesh.

On completing this significant milestone, I extend my best wishes to CARE and to all its dedicated staff, for continued success and strength to carry on its important mission.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gwyn Lewis'.

Gwyn Lewis

United Nations Resident Coordinator
Bangladesh

Message from CARE President and CEO



Marking 75 years of work and impact in Bangladesh is an immensely proud moment for CARE. I extend my sincere gratitude and congratulations to all those staff members whose contributions have improved the lives of at least one in every three people in Bangladesh!

As CARE's largest and longest established Country Office, CARE Bangladesh has pioneered many programs in, for example, food for work, climate-change adaptation, women's rights, and, most notably, health and nutrition – successes and learnings that CARE has scaled in other countries are shining examples of locally led, globally scaled impact.

Arriving in what was then still a new country, CARE Bangladesh has since supported crucial long-term developments such as road building; enhanced agricultural practices for increased yield; support for nationwide immunization; work with HIV-affected populations to reduce HIV prevalence; pioneering disaster mitigation programs and standing with impacted communities at the onset of emergencies. CARE was also among the first organizations to provide support to

Rohingya refugees, in the world's biggest refugee camps.

In all its work, CARE Bangladesh continuously and consciously focuses on women and girls to ensure equitable justice. And we gratefully acknowledge the many important partnerships that have helped CARE provide services in all corners of the country.

On this milestone anniversary, I salute CARE Bangladesh for exemplary service and dedication over many years. And I look forward to a continuing journey of excellence and impact together.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Nunn".

Michelle Nunn
President and CEO, CARE

Message from Asia Regional Director, CARE



As we celebrate CARE's 75th anniversary in Bangladesh, I am filled with gratitude and awe. Over the years, the country has faced immense challenges - devastating natural disasters, the Rohingya refugee crisis, and socio-economic difficulties. Yet, through it all, the resilience of the Bangladeshi people has been truly inspiring.

Throughout my journey with CARE, first as Country Director and now as Regional Director, I have witnessed how CARE and our dedicated partners have touched the lives of countless individuals, especially women and girls. Together, we have adapted, innovated, and gone the extra mile to support the most vulnerable communities. Our achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our partners, who have been instrumental in reaching those most in need.

From emergency relief to building long-term resilience, CARE and our partners have always been there, offering hope, support, and the tools needed to thrive. As we look

ahead, the world is becoming increasingly complex, making our work even more challenging but also more crucial. I am confident that, alongside our partners, we will continue to lead the way, ensuring Bangladesh remains a beacon of strength and positive change. Our commitment to those who need us most, particularly women and girls, remains at the heart of our mission, and we will continue this journey together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ramesh Singh'.

Ramesh Singh

Regional Director, Asia
CARE

Message from Country Director, CARE Bangladesh



It is an absolute honour to be part of CARE Bangladesh, as we mark 75 years of our service to the causes and people of Bangladesh.

I am humbled to note that we have played a significant role in creating shared value and in shaping the socio-economic development of the country over the years. This has been possible due to the selfless service of the staff and trusted partnerships we have nurtured during this incredible journey. I laud the efforts of our staff as they continue to pursue the mission relentlessly and without discrimination, and I am immensely thankful to our partners for their trust and belief in our mission.

CARE has its footprint in more than 100 countries today, and our operations in Bangladesh has been of high importance. CARE has always prioritized the needs of the vulnerable, especially women and girls. This has now become more pronounced with newer challenges posed by climate change as also the perpetuation of inequality in the society. We understand that we cannot truly

attain social justice unless we keep women and girls at the core of our programs. Our core focus intertwined with the partnerships at local and international level has given CARE Bangladesh this long legacy.

As we recognise and celebrate this significant milestone, I would like to reiterate CARE's commitment to communities' progress and the country's development.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Ram Das
Country Director
CARE Bangladesh

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Acronyms

BRUP - Building Resilience of the Urban Poor
CEFM - Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
EKATA - Empowerment, Knowledge, and Transformative Action
FbA - Forecast-based Early Action
IFFW - Integrated Food for Work
GO INTERFISH - Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice and Fish Production
LIFT - Local Initiatives for Farmers' Training
MDG - Millenium Development Goals
PSE - Private Sector Engagement
RMG - Ready Made Garment
RMP - Rural Maintenance Project
RSP - Rural Sales Program
RVCC - Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change
SDG - Sustainable Development Goals
SETU - Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor
SHABGE - Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension
SHAKTI - Stopping HIV/AIDS through Knowledge and Training Initiatives
SUFAL - Scaling up Flood Forecast-based Action and Learning
TICA - Training Immunizers in Community Approach
UP - Upazila Parishad
VSLA - Village Savings and Loan Associations
WASH - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
NIRAPAD - Network for Information, Response, And Preparedness Activities on Disaster
MJF - Manusher Jonno Foundation
NAWG - Needs Assessment Working Group
SUBARNA - Supporting Bangladesh Rapid Needs Assessment
APOSH - Ashokta Punarbhashan Sangstha
RtF-Right to Food
SHE - Social Health Entrepreneur
LB - Living Blue
LSP - Local Service Provider

Genesis of a vision

Early dreams and aspirations





It all started with a box

With a humble notion to aid the people affected by the Second World War, a big brown box containing food staples travelled from America to Europe in 1946. Soon after, the box made its way to Asia, Latin America and Africa.

The box carried dreams and hopes of millions of people and the successful delivery of these boxes through a signed receipt was the only proof that the senders' loved ones were alive.

Anywhere there was war and conflict, the big brown box imprinted - C A R E - it made its way there.





Franz Schubert, great grand nephew and only descendent bearing the name of the famous Austrian composer, receives a package with nutritious food.





Children of a refugee family from East Germany crowds close to get a better view of the food they received in the CARE Package.

CARE's journey in South Asia

In just a few years, the box also travelled with emergency medical services, short and long-term solutions that would aid conflict affected countries for recovery and rehabilitation.



CARE arrived in Asia in the late 1940s. These photos depict how CARE used virtually all modes of transportation to deliver the food packages.

Soon the word CARE began to stand for hope, transformation, inclusion and social justice to hundreds of thousands of people.

What started out as a simple relief operation for war-torn countries grew into a vast network of partners working globally to fight poverty and inequality.



1949.

CHAPTER 1: SEEDS OF CHANGE

- 1969

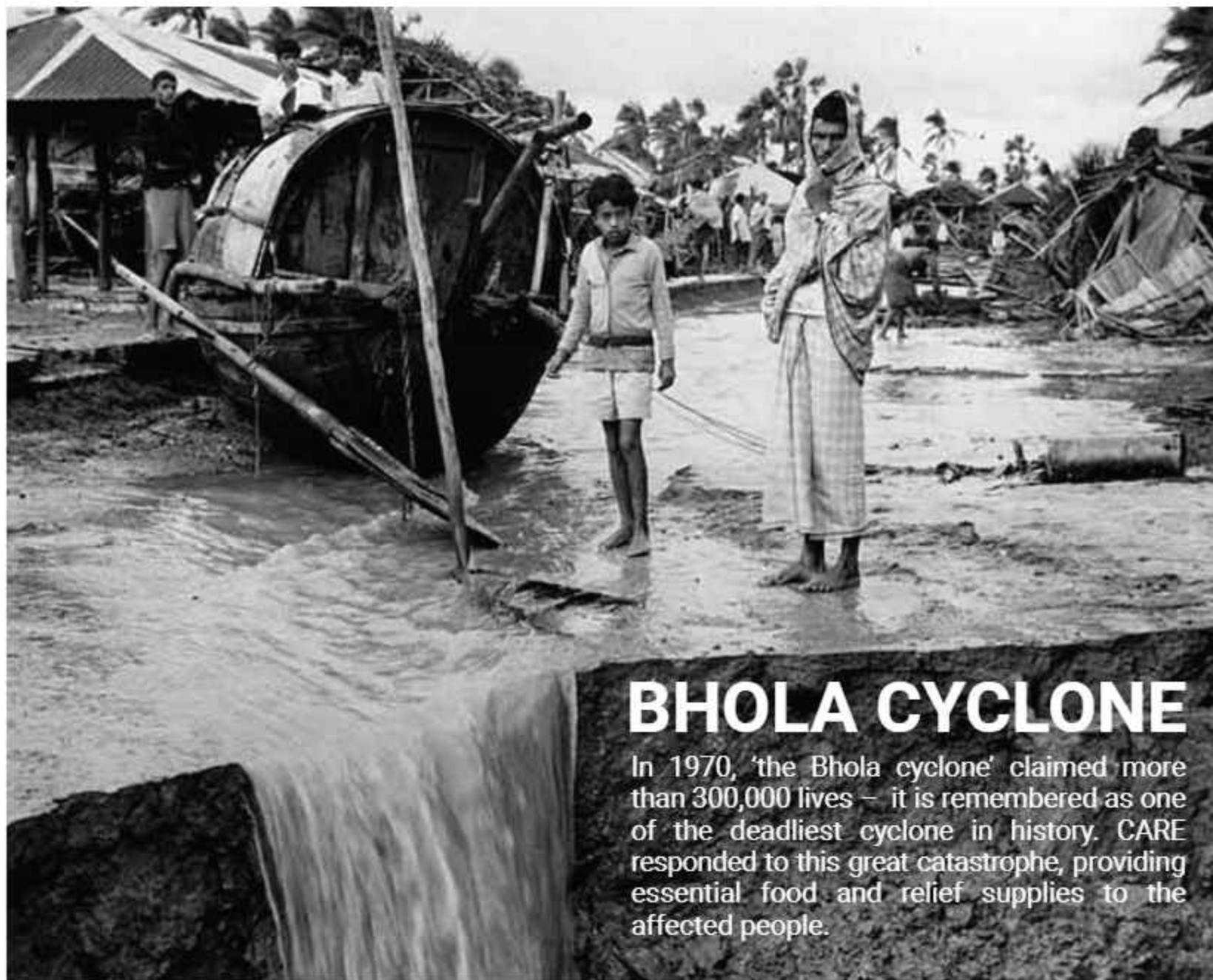
Within just four years of its establishment, in 1949, CARE began its operations in the Indian subcontinent. Between 1950 till the Liberation War, CARE's role in Bangladesh was primarily disaster relief and food assistance for school going children.





CARE distributed powdered milk in schools, which was considered a significant contribution to child health during the prevailing instability. In the early 1960s, CARE provided one meal a day for nearly 600,000 children to keep them in school. This led to an increase in the nutritional status of children and their school attendance in the then East Pakistan.





BHOLA CYCLONE

In 1970, 'the Bhola cyclone' claimed more than 300,000 lives – it is remembered as one of the deadliest cyclone in history. CARE responded to this great catastrophe, providing essential food and relief supplies to the affected people.



Hundreds of people waiting to receive relief after the cyclone.









Food preparation and distribution
for cyclone affected people.

1970 -

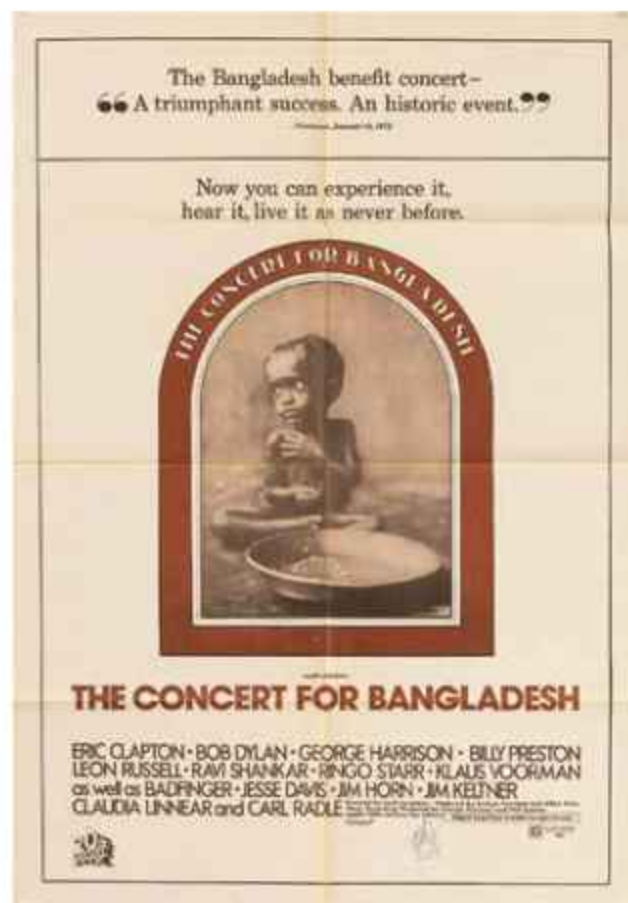
CHAPTER 2: REVIVING A NEW COUNTRY

-1980

The Liberation War of 1971 took a massive toll on the nation, affecting every sector. CARE once again found itself in a position to aid and support another war-torn nation.

Soon after the formation of Bangladesh as an independent nation, CARE took on major long-term projects to combat the new nation's crises of food shortage, low agricultural yield, housing challenges and many more.





A hungry Bangladeshi child scrapes the bowl for last bit of lifesaving CARE food. In 1971, dual calamities struck Bangladesh, making thousands flee to India. The plight of the new nation of Bangladesh, meanwhile, captured the world's attention, including George Harrison from the 'BEATLES', who gathered many rock stars and produced a best-selling live album called 'Concert for Bangladesh'. This photo graced the album cover, and part of the proceeds from its sales went to CARE.

In 1972, CARE tackled the housing crisis in the newly formed nation by constructing thousands of homes, supported by financial assistance from the United Kingdom and the United States.



The view from the air of a newly-constructed CARE village



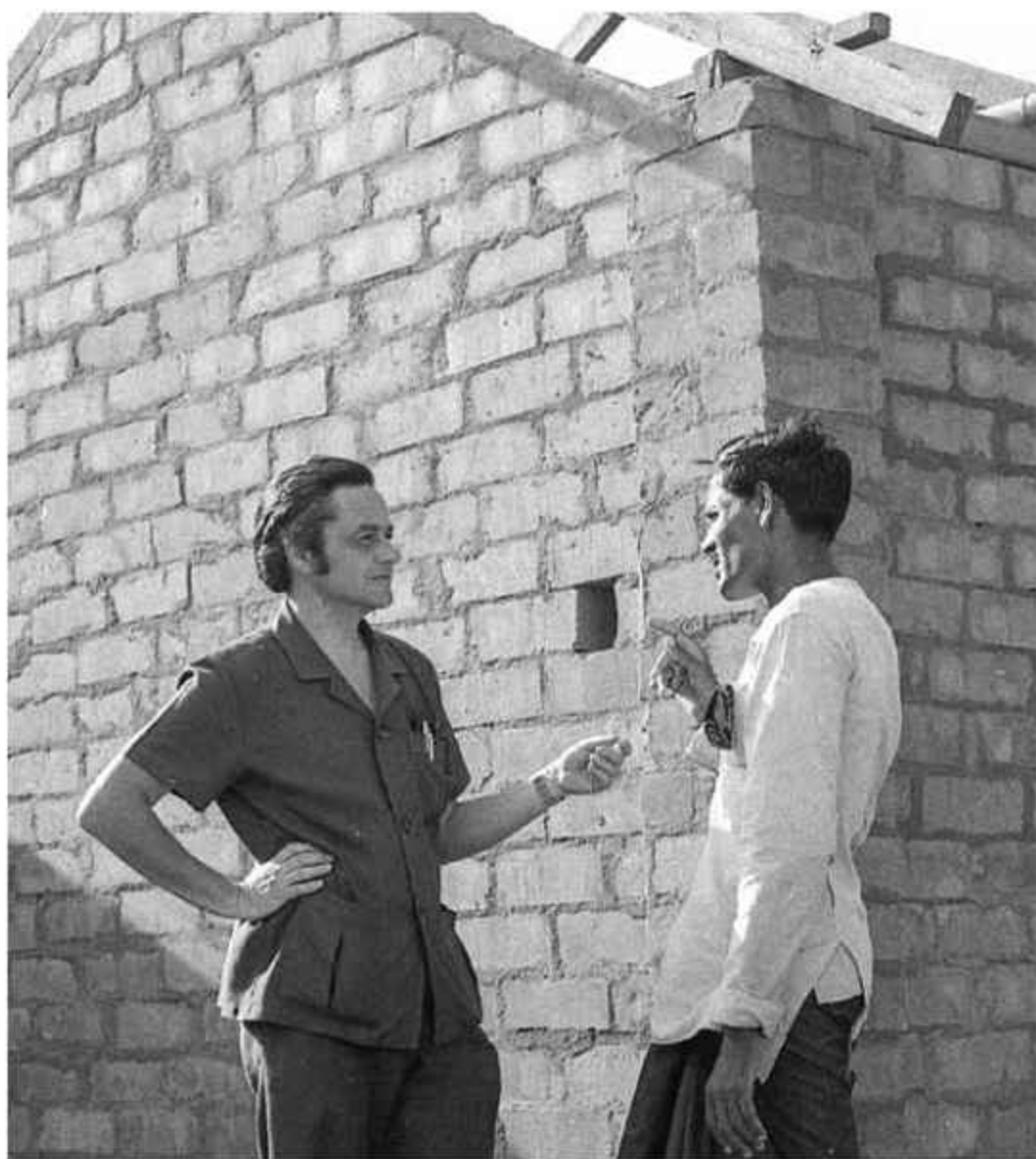






An under-construction house in 1972.





Oversight of CARE staff on the housing project.



A newly-built CARE building, part of their Experimental Housing Project in Bangladesh in 1973.







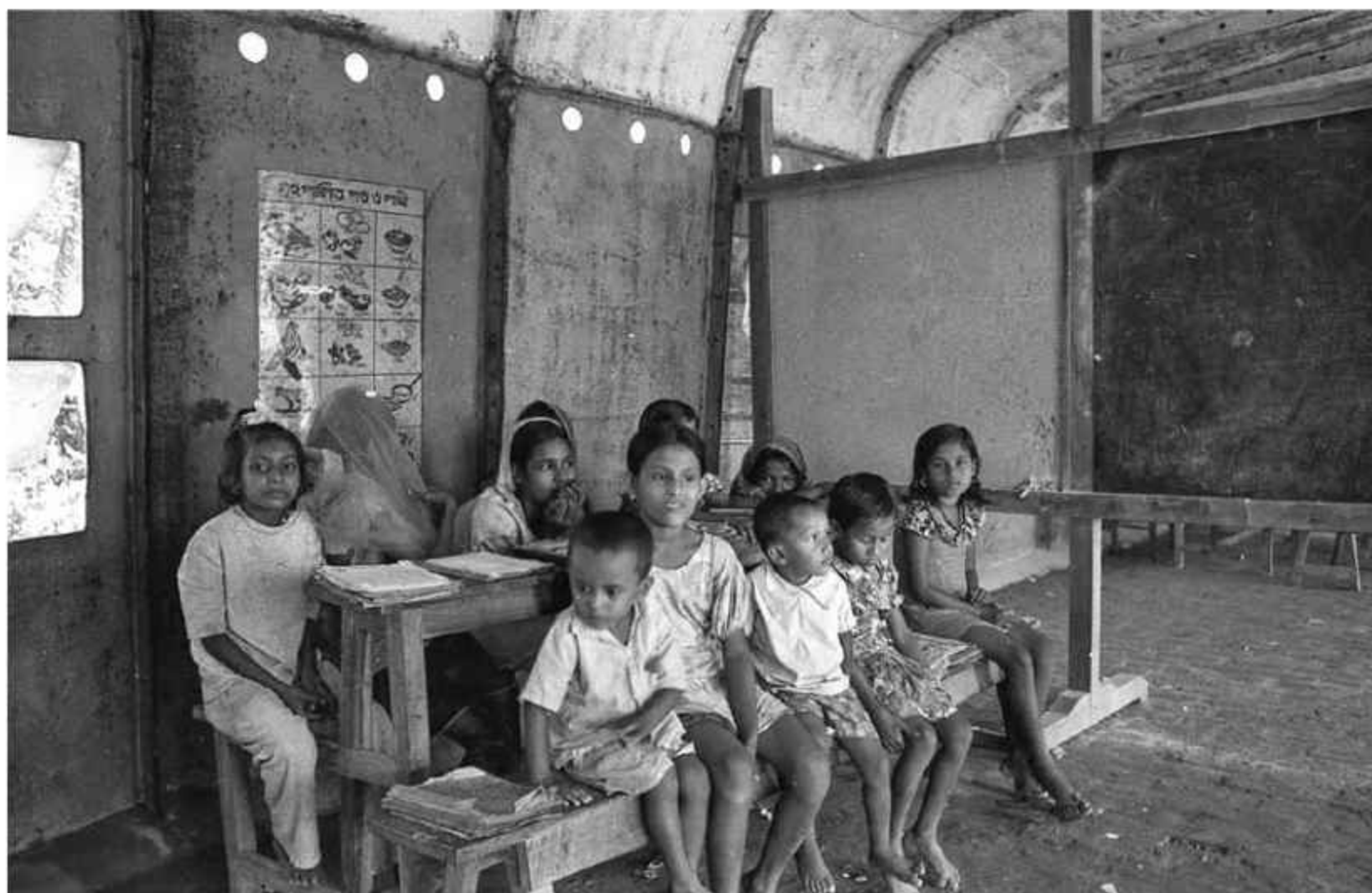


The exterior of a newly-built school building on Bhola Island, in 1976.



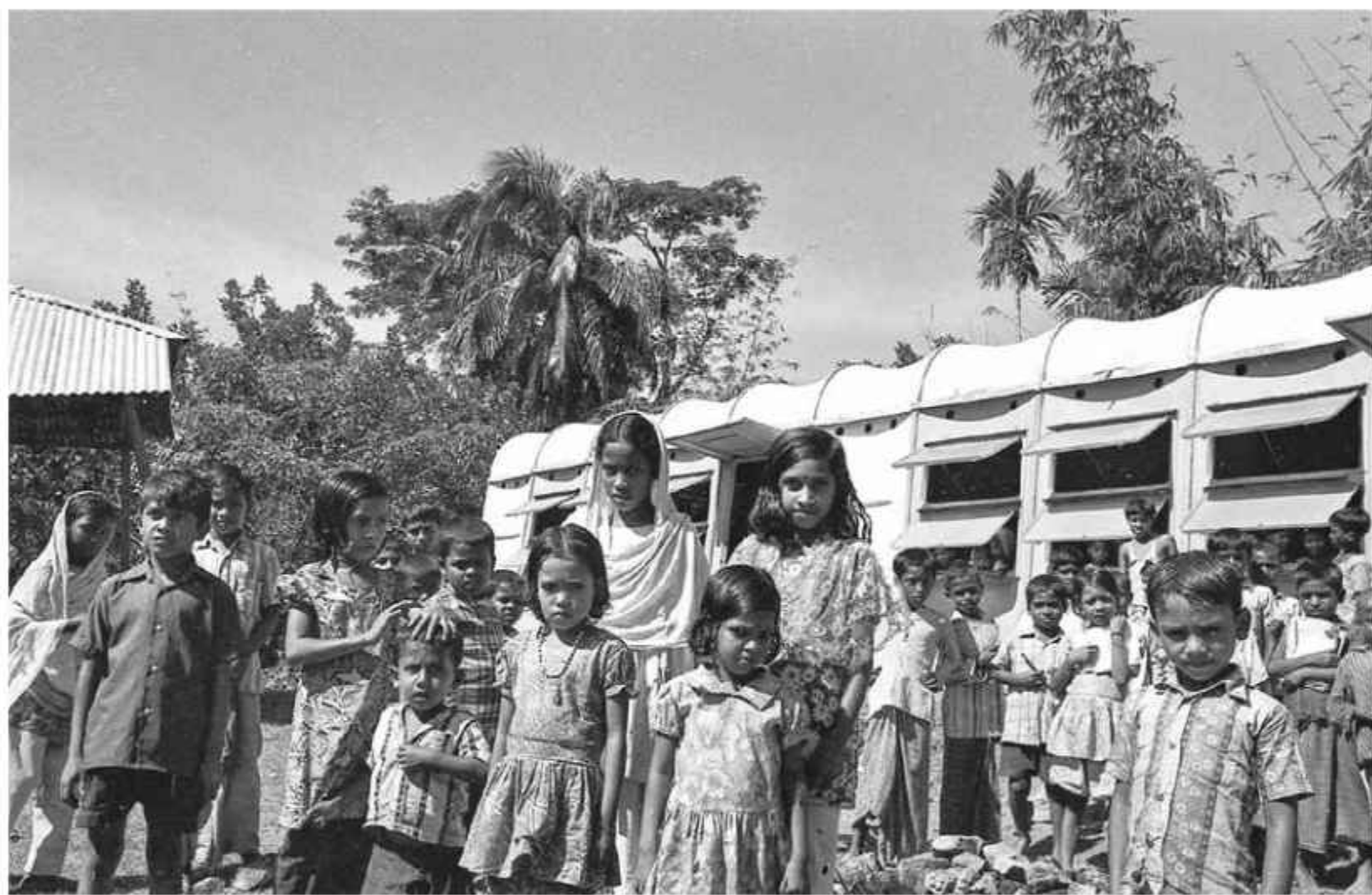
Young children in their newly constructed schools.



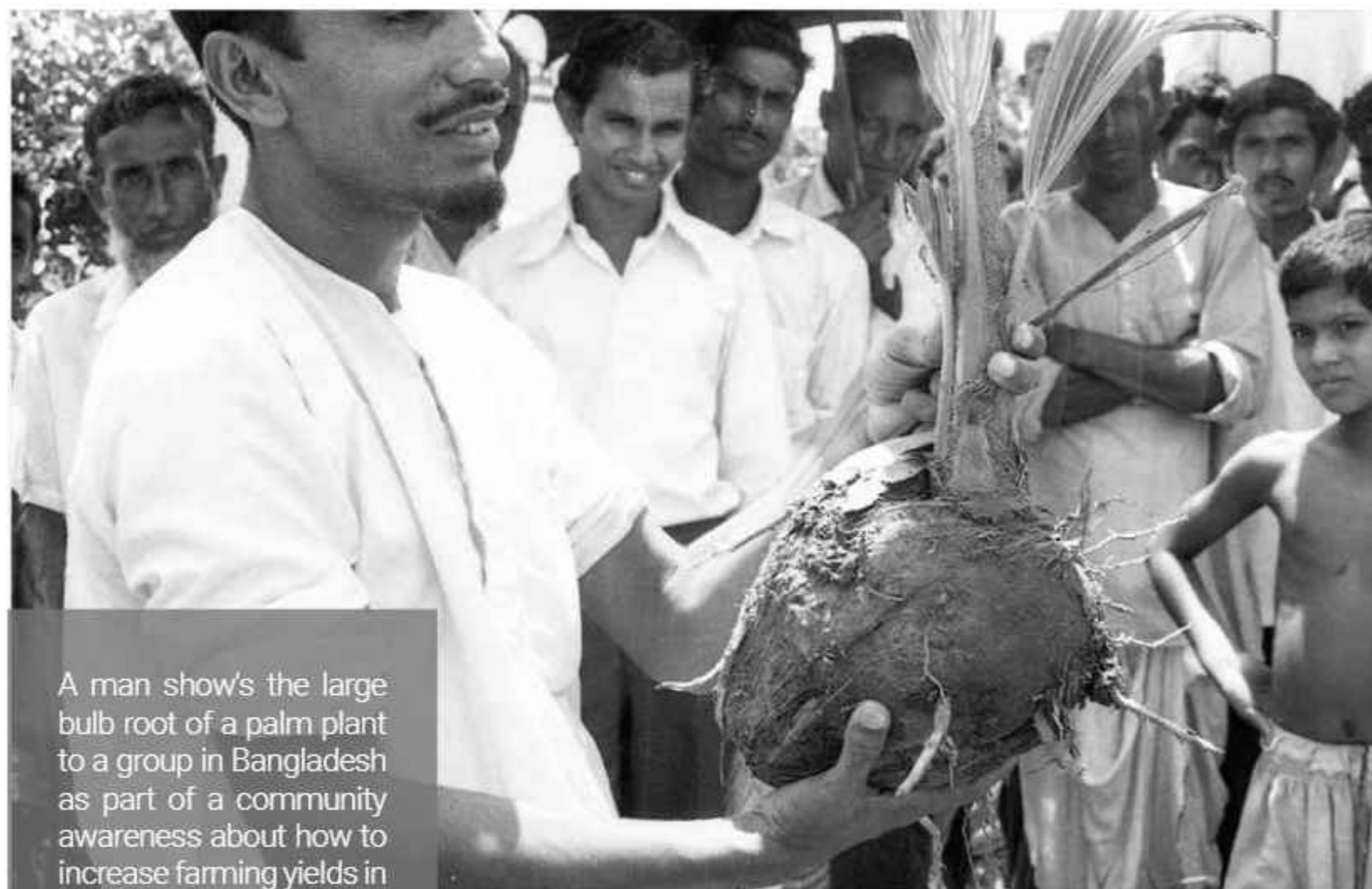








In 1974, CARE started Bangladesh's largest Integrated Food for Work (IFFW) project under an agreement with the Bangladesh Ministry of Relief. What later became popular as 'KABIHA' [food for work/kaj er binimoy e khaddo] began its journey to create short-term employment in agriculture through rural infrastructure development.



A man shows the large bulb root of a palm plant to a group in Bangladesh as part of a community awareness about how to increase farming yields in the area.



Farmers engrossed in reading information displayed on new farming techniques and agricultural machinery to increase their yields.





A photograph of a farm and greenhouse in rural Bangladesh in 1976.





A member of CARE (center) monitors a field of sorghum crops in rural Bangladesh in 1976.



Women and girls were always CARE's focus for project implementation. Here, we see a destitute woman who have been rehabilitated with income generating support.

Enriching lives through generations

“

When I was in class 2 in 1972, we were given milk powder in the classroom as part of a nutrition support program for school children. Powdered milk was a rare commodity back then, so this was a treat for us. We called it ‘imported milk’ and we liked one of the varieties more than the other. It was only after joining CARE that I realized that the milk powder we loved was provided by CARE. Even without me realizing, CARE had an impact in my life long before I was aware of them and I committed to continue the legacy through my engagement in various projects.

”

- A K M Fazlul Hoque, Head of Government Relation Department, CARE Bangladesh and a proud CARE member for more than 30 years.



1980

CHAPTER 3: REBUILDING BLOCK BY BLOCK

-1990

As the decade progressed, CARE continued to support major areas of the country with rural maintenance project, women empowerment activities, health education and agricultural advances. The active projects expanded in area with more and more staff engaged from the national team.



As the CARE programs expanded all over Bangladesh, so did increase the iconic CARE fleet.





By constructing roads and culverts as part of project activities, CARE created employment for millions and launched women's empowerment initiatives. With this initiative, CARE worked in 44 districts across approximately 300 sub-districts, employing around 500,000 workers, all of whom were marginalized men and women in society - a critical step in rebuilding and connecting a war-affected country. An estimated 84,000 KM length of roads were built!





The Rural Maintenance Project (RMP), CARE's longest running intervention in Bangladesh employed extremely poor women for construction and maintenance of rural roads. RMP marked the beginning of building leadership, decision-making capacity and self-reliance among women, a legacy that drives CARE to this day.

Golapi redefined her life and status

Golapi Begum, a former crew member of 'Rural Maintenance Project' became an elected Union Parishad Member of Jalalabad Sadar Upazila under Sylhet district. Initially, she had no interest in politics, but her RMP colleagues, neighbors, and elder brothers insisted she run for the position. She resisted due to financial constraints, but the community raised funds and supported her campaign. Ultimately, Golapi won the election because of the people's efforts and their trust in her.

Coming from a life of hardship and uncertainty, Golapi transformed her life by being part of RMP which helped her and many destitute women like her learn new skills, raising awareness about health, nutrition, family planning, and education. She was elected as Union Parishad member for two consecutive years, and during that time she was committed to standing beside the poor, working for justice, and guiding them toward progress.





Agro-based interventions from CARE Bangladesh introduced many new and innovative techniques in the 80s, many of which are still used as current agricultural practices.



Household women got engaged in income generating activities.







The floods of 1988 were perhaps one of the worst in Bangladesh's history, affecting millions of people. It required combined efforts by the Government of Bangladesh and national and international NGOs. CARE deployed immediate relief efforts to ensure access to food, clean water, shelter, and medical care for the flood-affected communities.



Empowering women began close to home

CARE's focus on empowering women is a drive towards gender equality. In order to empower women program participants, it was important to set an example from within – mobilizing female staff with self-driven motorcycles and cars was a brilliant way to set an example.





“

CARE was my first and only job - I never applied for job anywhere else. After being short-listed for the RMP project in 1987, I underwent a month-long training to ride a motorbike. Throughout my training and career, I endured many taunts and humiliation for riding a motorbike, but I never let that stop me from doing my work. I had very supporting colleagues who often helped me overcome challenges. The organization gave me so much that leaving was never an option.

”

- Monjuri Begum, former CARE employee and one of CARE's pioneering motorbike riders

1990-

CHAPTER 4: NURTURING GENERATIONS

- 2000



1991 CYCLONE

The 90s began with yet another deadly cyclone that claimed nearly 250,000 lives in the coastal region in 1991.



CARE aided the cyclone relief operation, which was also supported by the US Marine - rapid aid was dispatched to more than a million cyclone affected people with safe water, dry food and other necessary humanitarian assistance.



Despite starting another decade with a catastrophic disaster event, in the 90s, CARE's size and scope continued to grow in new and diverse program areas with long term programs.

The decade saw significant advancements in agriculture and health, helping the country overcome challenges in food production, nutrition, and healthcare. Key projects like LIFE, LIFT, NO PEST, INTERFISH, and SHABGE etc. tackled the root causes of food issues, while initiatives for HIV prevention and a national immunization drive improved health outcomes.





CARE staff members testing out interventions for viability in pilot phase before being deployed in the field.







As CARE continued to make advances for the agricultural sector in Bangladesh, there was another sector which needed strong attention—health and nutrition sector. In the late 80s and early 90s, infant mortality rate was high, and low immunization rate was one of the major causes of this.



The TICA (Training Immunizers in Community Approach) program, launched in late 1980s, was designed to tackle the country's low immunization coverage, which stood at less than 2% for children under five despite the availability of vaccines and infrastructure.





It was CARE's ambitious objective to raise immunization coverage to 80+%, creating herd immunity to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases, while making the system stronger to continue such initiatives.



The TICA program laid the foundation for CARE's role in public health systems strengthening, positioning CARE as a leader in the health sector in Bangladesh.





Just as the 90s started out with a devastating disaster, the end of the decade was also marked by a historical flood that lasted for 65 days and claimed 1,100 lives. An estimated 30 million people became homeless. The flood caused massive damage to infrastructure.



To help the affected communities overcome this ordeal, CARE was there.









2001.

**CHAPTER 5: SHIFTING APPROACH TOWARDS
MDGs**

- 2015

In the wake of the new millennia, CARE realized that in order to make positive changes last longer in the communities, a shift was needed from simple program delivery approach to a rights-based approach. With the rights-based approach, CARE began working with the communities, for the communities. This significantly changed the longevity of programs as the communities began taking more ownership of services being offered to them by CARE and its partners.



With a strong focus on poverty eradication, strengthening market linkages and creating earning opportunities for rural population, CARE Bangladesh was able to align with Government objectives for attaining the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).





'Musti Chal Saving' (handfull of rice saving) everyday can make a big difference in the end of a month.





Engaging women and girls in homestead-gardening creates a positive impact on nutrition status of families.



Alternate farming techniques for people with no access to cultivable land.







In an effort to reduce extreme poverty, innovative agricultural practices such as cage-fish farming, floating garden, Black Bengal goat* rearing was introduced by CARE.

** Black Bengal goats are highly adaptive and produce high-quality meat. As a result, they are the perfect investment for farmers.*





Engaging women in rural households to generate income was another way for CARE to introduce financial freedom.





While women were already looking after domestic animals, CARE connected them with markets who would buy their products.



Creating an Impactful life

“

Initially I received seed money of 13,000 taka* which I used for a vegetable growing and selling business. I used to cultivate vegetables in someone else's land. As the business became profitable, I expanded and bought cattle. Over time, I was even able to buy my own agricultural land, buy a shop in nearby market and some more land to secure my family's future.

”

SETU (Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor) project aimed to sustainably lift extremely poor households out of poverty through community-led collective action and inclusive governance. Asma's journey toward independence began with CARE. Today, she owns her own land, lives a financially stable life, and is educating her three children. In a continued effort to uplift her family and community, Asma became a Union Council member in 2022.

Asma Begum, an inspiring program participant from SETU, project from Nilphamari

*USD=105



Trailblazing through stereotypes

What appears to be a normal Bangladeshi family, has an intriguing story behind. In 2005 when CARE began skills training for women, while most women signed up for driving, Rabeya Sultana, popularly known as Rabbi, was the only person who signed up to take training as a mechanic. Even to this day, Rabbi is still the only female mechanic in the country, and CARE is humbled to have her given this unique identity.

“

If CARE Bangladesh didn't stand beside me during my difficult times, I wouldn't be this Rabbi now - a responsible daughter, a good wife and a good mother.

”

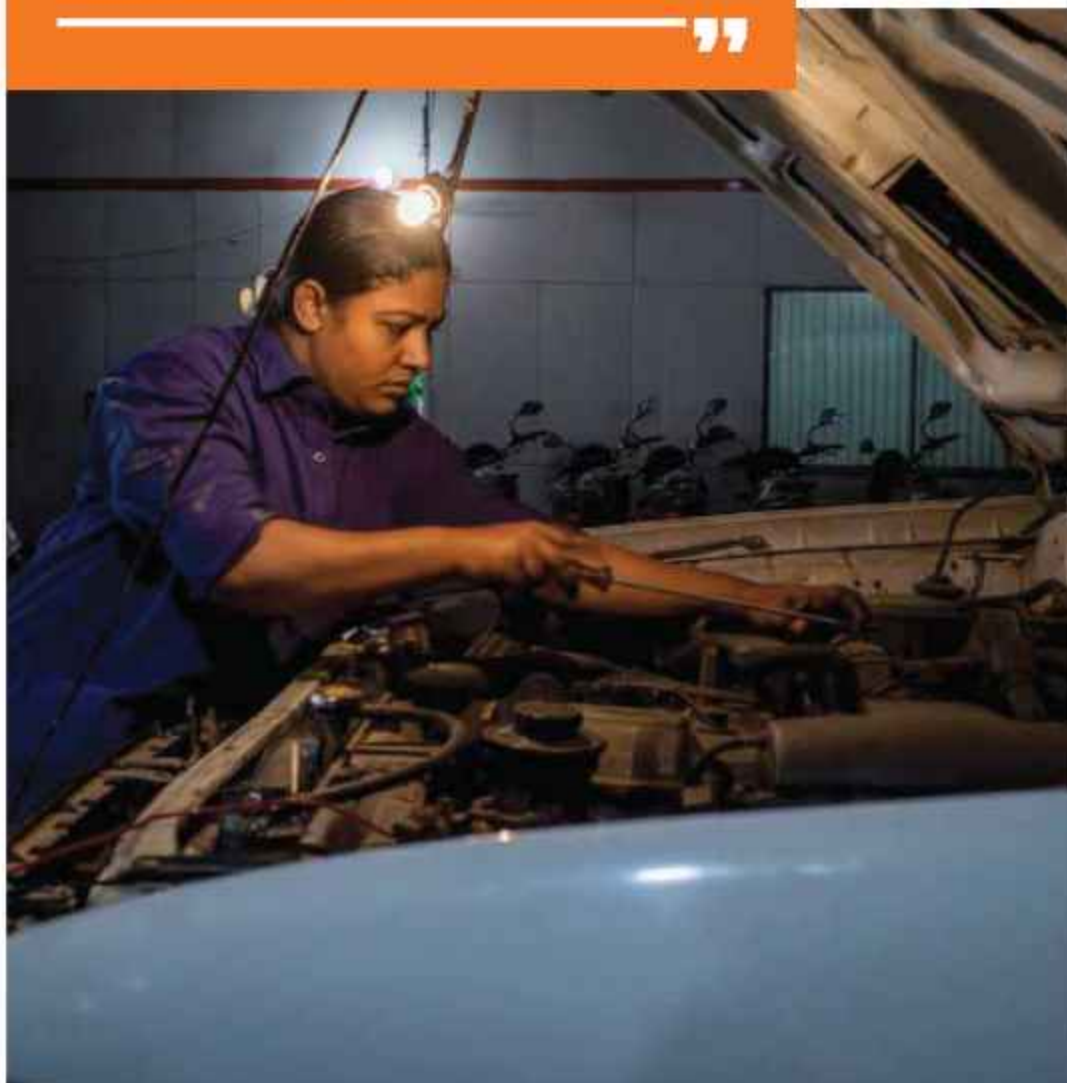




“

Every woman should do something, be it any profession, with self confidence, and without paying attention to the naysayers.

”





“

I became a driver for CARE to fulfill my childhood dream. Over the years, I have influenced many women to pursue driving careers, breaking social stigmas attached to it.

”

Parveen Akter, one of CARE Bangladesh's first female drivers.





As a school student in Sherpur, Parveen was inspired by her school's owner who drove her own car, sparking a dream in the young girl. After losing her parents and shouldering family responsibilities, her aspirations faded for some time. Life offered her another chance when she got a chance to enroll in driving course for women by Gono Shasthya Kendra in 1998. Soon after, Parveen joined CARE Bangladesh as one of the first professional women drivers and still continues to be with CARE Bangladesh. Parveen wishes to retire from CARE and carry a lifelong memory of dignity that she has received from CARE.



Living Blue is the name of a dream that took shape in the heart of northern Bangladesh in 2005, woven together by skilled artisans driven by dignity and craftsmanship. This social enterprise started by CARE Bangladesh with a focus to empower local women and men blossomed as a cottage business for reviving the 'Bengal Indigo'. As the artisans began to master the skills of extracting indigo dye and integrating it into traditional and modern dyeing techniques, the industry earned fame in the international market. Today, Living Blue boasts 3,000 indigo farmers and over 200 artisans, producing the finest True Bengal natural indigo. Their commitment to quality craftsmanship continues to transform lives.









CARE Bangladesh is implementing HIV and AIDS Program for different vulnerable groups for 29 years now. With a goal to prevent the spread of HIV and provide support to affected communities, CARE continues to work on enhancing information systems, coordination, and management capacity to ensure an effective, human rights-based, and sustainable national response.





An advocacy towards rights and recognition

CARE's work with the HIV-affected community and sex workers has been crucial in changing societal attitudes in Bangladesh. By highlighting their challenges and advocating for their rights, CARE has helped reduce stigma and discrimination, fostering greater acceptance and support from communities and local authorities. In 2000, CARE and the Shonghati alliance filed a writ petition that led to a High Court ruling stopping the eviction of sex workers and recognizing their work as a profession.

“

I have been a victim of sexual and mental abuse by my family, friends and almost everyone I have come across in my life. I was forced to live a life looked down upon by the society. I wasn't even aware I had any rights as a human being. But CARE has given me a voice and platform to fight the oppression against thousands of transgender women and sex workers across the country.

”

- **Joya Shikdar**, currently a rights activist for sex workers and transgender community. Joya was a CARE program participant under the HIV prevention program who later went on to being a peer educator for CARE.



With the right linkages and support, Joya now runs her own organization 'Somporker Noya Setu' from 2010. Joya has been to several global platforms where she has voiced her concerns for the sex workers and transgender community of Bangladesh. She is amplifying the learning received from CARE and continues to use that to empower her community.



Building resilience ahead of its time

CARE first came up with the idea for disaster preparedness and mitigation following its work in recurrent disasters in Bangladesh. In 2001, CARE Bangladesh initiated the Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change (RVCC) Project that aimed to help communities in southwest Bangladesh adapt to the impacts of climate change. Making women of the affected

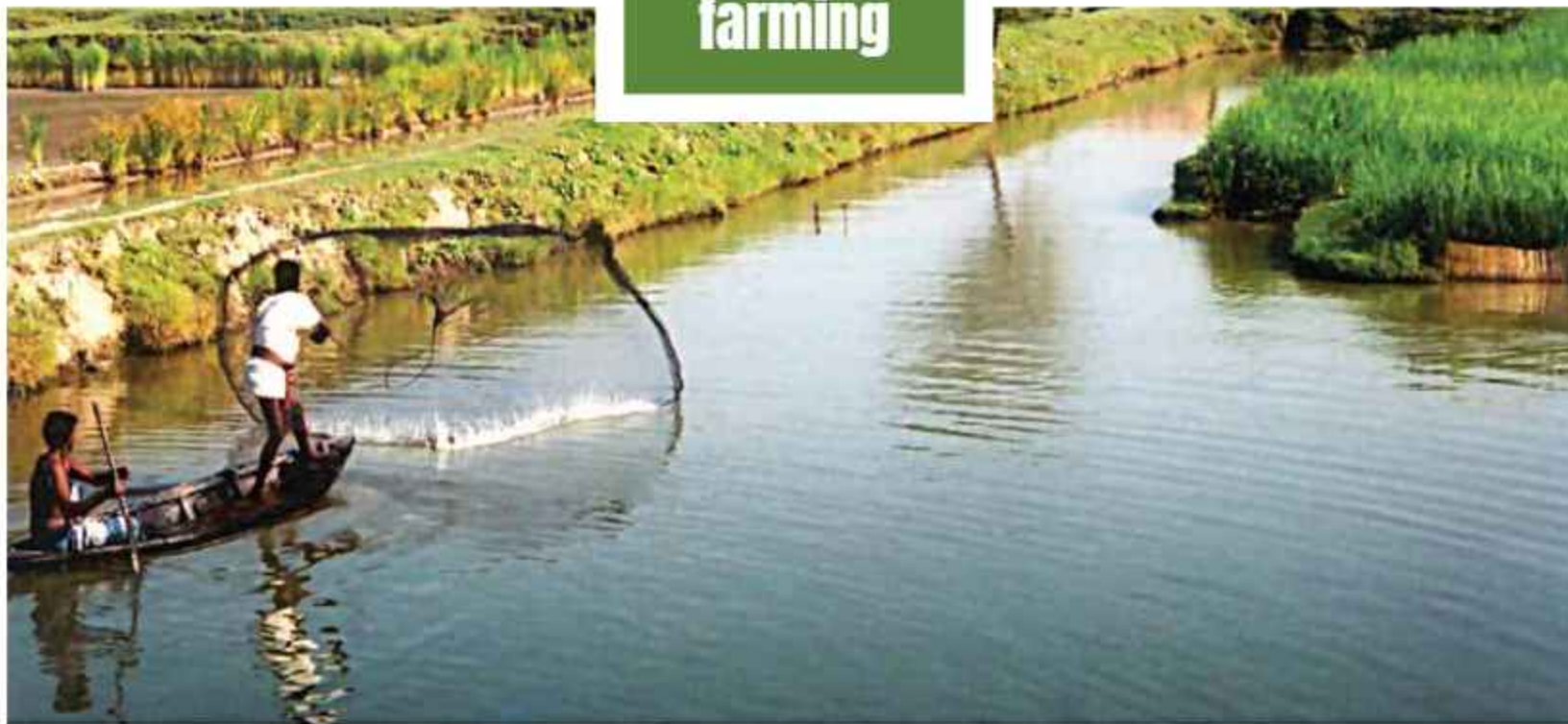
communities' key stakeholders for this project, this was the beginning of CARE's journey in disaster mitigation. Long before climate change impacts was an issue globally, CARE Bangladesh implemented projects that would reduce the vulnerabilities of communities that were facing natural calamities regularly.







Integrated farming





In 2015, Bangladesh was one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, in particular, its agriculture was highly impacted. A field research helped better understand and effectively address the relationship between changing weather patterns, food security, social inequalities, and human mobility. Building on the results, 'Where the Rain Falls' - a multi-country project was launched. The project used community-based adaptation to immediately reduce vulnerability associated with agro-climatic risks.

The project results indicated that the community-based adaptation reduce vulnerability associated with agro-climatic risks.









A true volunteer at heart

“

I remember my training days when people would ridicule me for putting on my firefighting uniform and walking to our training camp. They said women can't be firefighters. But when we got down to the task of firefighting, all we remembered was our gruesome training and our objective of saving lives. Eventually, the very same people who mocked us saw us on the news and came running to praise us and even ask us how to join the firefighting force. I had always wanted people to know me, to recognise me and this training has given me a new identity in our society.

”

- **Noor Jahan Akhter Sheuli**, a program participant of The Building Resilience of the Urban Poor (BRUP) project



The project trained and linked locals in firefighting and first-aid training. Sheuli proudly recalls her firefighting days where she had the rare opportunity of responding to the devastating Tampaco factory fire that claimed more than 30 lives in Gazipur in 2016.

She continues to work with different development agencies in her for raising awareness on social issues.



Leading change with girls

In a significant shift in programming approach, CARE started addressing social issues at the root causes. This led to the emergence of Tipping Point program that addressed Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) with community engagement, girl-centric activism, policy influence, intergenerational dialogue and more. The program empowered generations of young girls to protect their future and encouraged families to invest in their daughters.





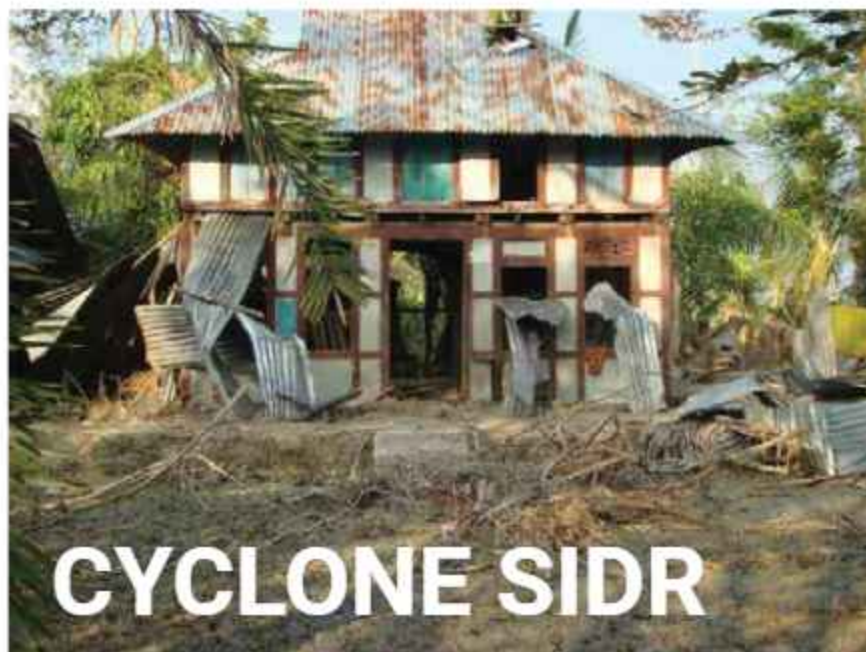
An advent to creating future leaders

In the late 90s, Bangladesh saw a boom in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. This led to a significant movement of human resource primarily women from rural areas to large cities and towns like Chittagong and Dhaka. Often the conditions in which these women worked and lived was less than ideal. They worked in a hazardous work environment and lacked minimum rights as workers.

CARE's work in the RMG sector primarily began with worker rights and leadership quality development, which continues to this day.









In 2007, Cyclone Sidr ravaged Bangladesh, causing immense destruction and over 3,000 deaths. CARE Bangladesh stepped in, providing food, water, medical aid, and livelihood support to the hardest-hit areas. Their efforts, backed by international donors, helped rebuild critical infrastructure and livelihoods.











Women empowerment leads to reduced child stunting



In 2009, CARE's program discovered a significant connection between women empowerment and child health. It was observed that child stunting was reduced by 28% over 4 years - taking CARE a step closer towards achieving national MDG goal.

CARE's right based approach included a focus on women's empowerment and increasing women's decision-making power; this was done by ensuring women were also involved in income generation for family. Empowering women meant thousands of children grew healthier and taller. This approach outperformed traditional food security programming that focused solely on direct nutritional interventions.

Drawing a legal solution for domestic violence

Around 2010, CARE played an instrumental role in the Citizens Initiative against Domestic Violence, which aimed to address and reform laws related to domestic violence. The efforts culminated in the creation of the Domestic Violence (Prevention & Protection) Act 2010. This law offers nationwide protection for women in Bangladesh who are victims of domestic violence, ensuring they have legal safeguards and support.



2016-

CHAPTER 6: ENHANCING SYSTEMS FOR SDGs

2024

With new goals set across the globe to obtain accountable and sustainable development, CARE Bangladesh evaluated its program areas. Placing more focus on climate resilience, disaster reduction, gender equality, economic development and health and education, CARE Bangladesh started the journey for the next generation to become a network of networks, working with partnerships on both implementation and strategic levels.







Besides introducing more diverse and effective farming techniques, CARE also introduced robust disaster risk reduction measures.





Greater emphasis was placed on diversifying income generation for youth, women, marginalized communities, and other groups living below the poverty line.















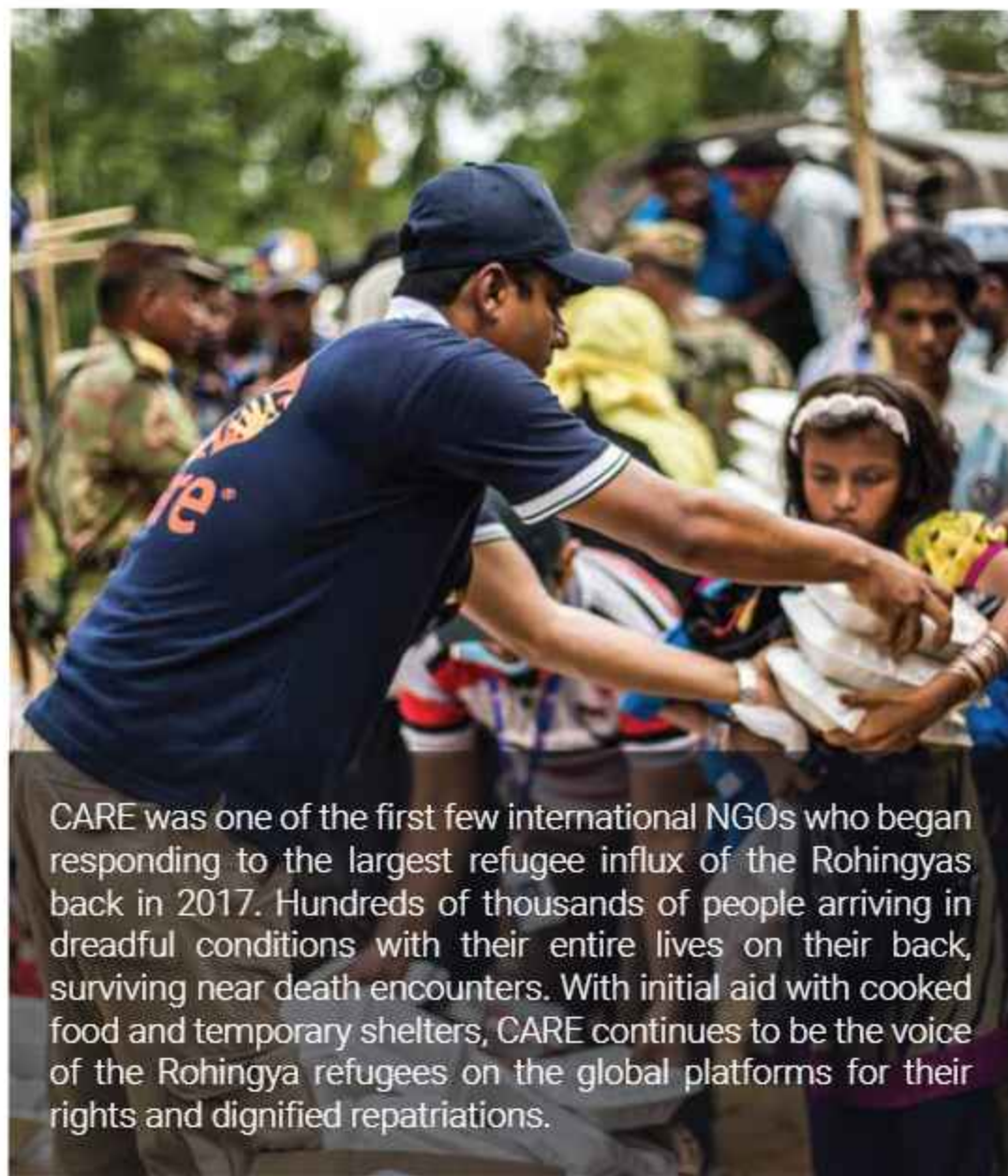






ROHINGYA INFLUX





CARE was one of the first few international NGOs who began responding to the largest refugee influx of the Rohingyas back in 2017. Hundreds of thousands of people arriving in dreadful conditions with their entire lives on their back, surviving near death encounters. With initial aid with cooked food and temporary shelters, CARE continues to be the voice of the Rohingya refugees on the global platforms for their rights and dignified repatriations.





Collaborating for Humanity





“

Since the influx in 2017, CARE Bangladesh has played a pivotal role in the Rohingya crisis response, showcasing a steadfast commitment to both the displaced population and host communities. Prioritizing gender sensitivity, CARE employs an integrated approach across vital sectors such as healthcare, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), livelihoods, disaster preparedness, gender-based violence prevention, and site management, ensuring comprehensive support for the most vulnerable. Their dedication to sustainability, climate action, and resilience-building underscores a long-term vision crucial for the sustained well-being of the communities they serve. In collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, CARE has been instrumental in aligning humanitarian aid with national strategies and we look forward to consolidating this partnership for the welfare of the people in need.

”

- Mohammad Mizanur Rahman

Additional Secretary
Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC)
Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner,
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.









FENI - NOAKHALI FLOOD





Taking financial empowerment to rural women

CARE Bangladesh has been promoting Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to empower women financially. Recognized by the Bangladesh Central Bank, these self-managed groups help members save money, access small loans, and get emergency insurance. VSLAs have significantly boosted members' incomes and resilience. CARE aims to expand this model to reach 50 million women and girls globally by 2030, collaborating with various partners to scale up the initiative.



Forecasting done the right way

CARE Bangladesh leads the SUFAL (Scaling up Flood Forecast-based Action and Learning) Project to reduce flood impacts through Forecast-based Early Action (FbA). Partnering with other INGO and local NGOs, the project works effectively in the northern part of the country.

The project works with local communities to implement early actions like early warnings, cash grants, and infrastructure repairs. Collaborating with the government, SUFAL enhances disaster response and integrates FbA into national strategies. This proactive approach has significantly improved flood forecast lead-time which multiplies into strengthened community resilience, improved emergency preparedness, and reduced the humanitarian burden during floods.



CHAPTER 7: LOCALIZATIONS

EMPOWER WITH PART

**ING
TNERSHIPS**

CARE planted the seeds of localization by forming solidarity groups in both rural and urban settings and linking them horizontally. These solidarity groups, known as EKATA (Empowerment, Knowledge, and Transformative Action), represent a model developed and tested by CARE Bangladesh to promote the collective empowerment of women. At the same time, to increase the number of solidarity groups and amplify their collective impact, CARE extended its support to help them emerge as Self-Help Groups - fostering a cycle of constant capacity-building while continuing Community Led Development parallel to facilitating a reflective participatory process within the community.

**2000**

NMS, DNS, Seed
Bank/assembling market,
APOSH

**2005**

MJF, NIRAPAD

**2010**

Anukul Foundation; Milk
collector group



Localization Journey 2000 - 2024

**2015**

SHE, PSSBA, JITA, Living Blue

**2020**CHAR Alliance, Right to Food,
NAWG/SUBARNA, LANCoM**2024**

Bijoyee, LSP, VSLA

In the meantime, CARE gradually scaled its efforts, transitioning from localized networks to a national framework while maintaining its commitment to local empowerment by building and nurturing foundations, networks, and alliances such as Anukul Foundation, APOSH, NIRAPAD, Manusher Jonno Foundation, NAWG, CHAR Alliance, Right to Food, HAOR Alliance, and the Girls'-led Movement, among others. Some of these evolved into national entities now operating across Bangladesh. These foundations and networks have become platforms for sharing best practices, amplifying local voices, and advocating for policy changes that reflect the needs of communities.





NAWG Meeting



Collaboration with Right to Food Bangladesh



Advocacy with the National Char Alliance

Instances of successful partnership
and advocacies

Pioneering a movement for the girls, by the girls

CARE Bangladesh's Tipping Point Initiative empowers girls to fight child marriage and assert their rights. It provides leadership training, engages communities, and involves boys and parents as allies. Girls receive mentorship and support from female facilitators and collaborate with 30 community-based organizations. The initiative has increased girls' visibility and participation in decision-making, shifted social norms, and developed their leadership skills. This collective effort elevates girls' voices from local to national levels, fostering a more equitable society.





“

As an organisation, we have worked with CARE for 28 years. And for the last 21 years, we have worked in more than one CARE intervention at any given time. Over the years, they helped us understand concepts like safeguarding, governance, government relations, gender issues, financial management and how to update ourselves with changing scenarios. They helped us set an organizational goal, objective, focus and strategic long-term planning.

”

- **Dr. Md. Shahid Uz Zaman**, Founder and Executive Director of Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO)

In the journey of localization, CARE Bangladesh maintained longstanding partnerships with local organizations – particularly with partners that value, represent, or are led by women, girls, and marginalized groups – and it support our local partners to lead on the design and implementation of programming. Apart from hundreds of local NGOs, ESDO, MJSK, GBK, POPY, SKS who also gradually scaled its programming and adopted CARE's best practices for maintaining accountability, diversity and amplifying local voices.



“

We have also worked with other donors and international partners along the way but none of it would have been possible without the guidance and support that CARE gave us. They were the first organization who gave us a chance to show what we were capable of and in the process of doing so, they helped us improve our capacity as an organization to the point where we can go out and look for opportunities.

”

- **Mr. Murshed Alam Sarker**, Executive Director of POPI



POPI began its work in 1986 on its own initiatives. In 1992, it received its first donor funding and registered with the NGO bureau. Starting in 1993, POPI collaborated with CARE on various projects, including disaster management, health, and infrastructure. CARE's support was crucial in building POPI's capacity, teaching them essential skills like proposal writing and budgeting. Today, POPI is a self-sustaining organization with strong safeguarding measures, continuing to adapt and support the needs of the communities they serve.



Journey of a project to an organization



“

CARE is a very well-known organization in Bangladesh. I can say this because I have travelled all over Bangladesh for my work and being able to work for CARE is a common goal for young people all across the country. This is because of the impact CARE had in their lives. They are thankful and want to show it by paying it forward through their service and dedication.

”

- **Shaheen Anam**, Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation

In 1999, Shaheen Anam became one of the first females to hold a leadership position in a major program under CARE, “Integrated Food Security Project”. In later years, her recruitment became a case study. Three years later, CARE applied for the HUGO project, funded by DFID, and she was sent to defend their position. After securing the project, CARE sought an expatriate team leader but eventually chose her, believing a Bangladeshi national would be better suited for the project’s future independence.

Despite initial hesitation, she accepted the role HUGO, managed by CARE but operating independently, formed a steering committee of influential development sector figures. After three years, this committee became the board of governors for the newly named Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). MJF focused on supporting small organizations advocating for women’s rights, marginalized communities, and child labor. CARE’s unwavering support and belief in her leadership were pivotal in MJF’s success.

Creating impact beyond numbers



“

As a representative of the healthcare sector, I believe that working with CARE has improved our effectiveness in delivering services to the people. We are carrying out a baseline survey to identify just how much the impact is. But this impact is only visible in the handful of districts where CARE works. If we can replicate the same model throughout the entire country, it would give a massive boost to our healthcare system.

”

- **Dr. Md. Quiume Talukder**, Line Director, Community-Based Healthcare, Health Service Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

CARE has been working with the DGHS since 2011 for improvement of the healthcare system, especially for the rural population. They have directly trained healthcare workers through formation of core committees, improving their knowledge on nutrition, health and hygiene and other relevant areas; some of which were done directly under his supervision. The health workers are now well equipped with the knowledge necessary to help the rural people suffering from malnutrition by disseminating this knowledge.

“CARE has been instrumental in the development of Bangladesh since our independence. Ever since I started working with them, I realized that they are not like the other NGOs. Their impact goes beyond what can be measured in numbers. And I hope they continue to work with us in the foreseeable future and help us deliver health services throughout the country.”, added Talukder.



Connecting markets, empowering communities

Furthermore, CARE Bangladesh also adopted and scaled operational models and programmatic approaches that ensure local people and communities – especially women, girls, and other marginalized groups – shape their own social, economic, and development futures. CARE's Private Sector Engagement (PSE) has worked to strengthen the economic capacity of the BoP. To empower marginalized, rural women, CARE implemented an intervention called Rural Sales Program (RSP). This aimed to employ rural women as sales representatives who went from door to door selling toiletries, footwear, food etc. from several private sector partners like Unilever, Bata, Danone etc. In time, out of the private sector's growing interest to engage with RSP and much international attention that the project

received, with investments it turned into a social enterprise called JITA. In JITA Bangladesh, has nurtured a rural distribution network, incorporating women micro-entrepreneurs to provide access of essential consumer products to communities that are excluded from mainstream distribution channels. CARE Bangladesh also collaborated with the private sector in other projects to ensure sustainability and adopt a market-based approach, such as through partnerships aimed at fostering long-term economic growth and integrating business solutions into development initiatives. These are, PRAN, LAL TEER, BRAC Dairy.





Collaborating with United Nations

CARE Bangladesh partners with UN agencies to tackle health, nutrition, climate change, gender equality, and humanitarian challenges. CARE works with WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, and UN Women to enhance maternal and child health and nutrition services, and women empowerment. CARE has also partnered with the World Bank and ILO for governance, accountability, and safe migration initiatives. Since 2017, CARE has been working with the Government, UN agencies and donors, providing critical services to the Rohingya refugees and host community members. In Cox's Bazar, CARE engages with WFP, IOM, and UNFPA around disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, and WASH services.

These coordinated efforts of CARE and UN agencies aim to create sustainable, impactful changes in Bangladesh.



CARE extends its heartfelt gratitude to all partners for their ongoing support and commitment to the development of Bangladesh





THE ROA

TRANSFORMING LIVES, SHAPING FUTURES

D AHEAD

A photograph of two women sitting on bicycles outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing an orange and white sari with a blue shawl. The woman on the right is wearing a maroon and white sari with a light blue shawl. They are both smiling at the camera. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Evolving approaches and new beginnings

On the advent of completing 75 years of journey in Bangladesh and being a part of the history of this rich and remarkable nation, CARE is humbled and excited to be a part of the future.

With key focus remaining on empowering women and girls, advancing gender equality, CARE also plans to set strong footprint in strengthening resilience against climate change.

CARE hopes to leverage market-driven approaches, championing locally-led development, and expanding the use of digital technologies. By 2030, CARE Bangladesh envisions transforming the lives of 15 million people—primarily women and girls—into gender-equal, resilient futures, in alignment with both national and global development goals.



75

CARE, Always There



