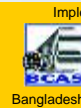


# CCDRER NEWSLETTER

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Collective Action to reduce climate disaster risks and enhance the resilience of vulnerable coastal communities around the Sunderbans in Bangladesh and India  
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## Climate Change's Impact on Women and Children in Sunderbans

### Working Area

*This series of interviews was conducted among members of Pritilata Mohila Samity, a women's group in the village of Nebukhali, Hingalganj, North 24 pgs. and other women.*

### Interview Findings: Problems and Awareness of Climate Change

The women in the village of Nebukhali described in detail

the current issues that they are facing in the harsh conditions brought on by climate change. This area was devastated during Aila and the majority of the water was contaminated with high levels of salt. While the village has been rebuilt, the women in the village continue to struggle to get adequate quantities of fresh water. Their situation becomes even more dire during the summer months when the water levels drop further. The villagers discussed how they have noticed more

severe weather patterns and significantly hotter summers. Many of the crops wither in the extreme heat and the lack of enough water significantly impacts their agricultural endeavors and ability to sustain themselves.

### Challenges

In Nebukhali, as in many villages in Sunderbans, the majority of men have migrated to seek more gainful employment outside of the Sunderbans.



DRCS researcher with the group members in the village of Nebukhali

There are only four men left in Nebukhali who stay there on a consistent basis. The majority of the men live in (Andhra Pradesh/Uttar Pradesh) for most of the year and send money to their families about every two months. They return about once a year to see their family, but the majority of the time the women in the village are left to fend for themselves. As a result, the community is quite vulnerable and when severe storms occur and the village is damaged it takes a long time to rebuild. The women must hire workers to help them repair their homes and this prohibitively expensive given their income. The villagers of Nebukhali largely rely on fishing, vegetable and rice paddy agriculture for sustenance and to earn money. The lack of fresh water has been



Women collecting the fishlings and crabs from the river

the largest impediment to successful agriculture in this area. The salt contamination of most of the ponds in the village coupled with the decreasing levels of underground water resources during the summer months has made paddy

agriculture incredibly difficult. Rice agriculture is one of their main sources of income and without this their financial situation will become even worse. The intense heat has also made it difficult for them to grow vegetables for their own consumption and to feed their livestock. The women also depend on local wood and dry plants for fuel. Currently, collecting wood has become more difficult due to the dwindling number of trees growing in the region resulting from the contaminated condition of the soil. This has made access to necessary fuel more difficult and the women must journey further and further to get the resources they need, which is highly impractical.



Woman rearing the chicks

## Current Alternative Approaches and Coping Strategies

While the villagers in Nebukhali face increasing threats to their livelihood, they have taken several steps to adapt to recent conditions and have been successful. The women have organized a group to address their concerns collectively and make sure that their needs are addressed. They have been working with DRCS to come up with solutions to their most pressing problems. Recently a grain bank was constructed in the village for storage of excess grain that can be used during times of need. This has been helpful, but their harvests continue to be meager as they struggle to grow rice paddy in such high levels of saline contaminated soil. The saline tolerant seeds have been introduced in this area, but



Women cope up with the stress period through grain bank

getting enough water for the crops remains a significant problem. Most of the water sources in this village were contaminated during Aila and the villagers continue to struggle to obtain enough fresh water.

There are only two tube wells in the village and the water levels drastically decrease during the summer months making it difficult to get enough water for their daily needs. The village has implemented a rainwater collection project and this has markedly increased their access to fresh water during the rainy seasons. The women in the village were particularly concerned about the fate of their children and their children's education. They are working hard to ensure that their children can go to school and that there is enough food for them to eat. However, malnourishment is a significant problem among many women because there is not enough



Rain water harvesting in Polymer

food for them and their children. While projects in this village such as food banks and nutritional gardens have helped to alleviate this problem, food security still remains a large problem in this area

In order to cope up with the existing problems, women have been encouraged to rear different domestic animals like goats, sheeps, ducks, hens, rabbits etc.

They can also be suggested for income generation programmes such as food processing and labelling, handicraft, preparation of jam, jelly and pickles.

Opting for some plantations and use of CPR where there will be plants of local variety for

food, fodder and fuelwood will be an added advantage for them.

Preparation of vermi compost and selling it in the local market is enhancing their income.

Women got motivated to use smokeless chullah and biogas since these two sources of energy are environment friendly and moreover the women suffer from problems of availability of fuelwood almost throughout the year.

They also got encouraged to save native variety seeds in the seed banks so that they do not have to depend on hybrid seeds from the market and thus our native variety seeds are being preserved.



Smokeless chullah - An alternative source of energy used for cooking



Women planting seedlings for CPR



Showcasing the native seeds

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