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SADHNA Learns to become a Happy and Healthy Mother

“I had no idea about the various health issues surrounding pregnancy or motherhood or even the baby’s health! The ANC was followed by Post Natal Care (PNC) and because of the JANO project, I got a deeper understanding of how healthy nutrition and prioritizing ones health are connected to a healthy and happy mother and child. I am so grateful to see my little one grow everyday into a healthy and happy child and it is all thanks to the information I learnt through the JANO project”




Sadhna Rani, Domar, Nilphamari.

At the border district of Nilphamari, lies a village by the name of Domar. Its residents fall under the ultra-poor category and due to their financial condition, consuming nutritious food was not a high priority for them. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) along with various NGOs, have been trying to upgrade the quality of life in the region for a long time now. Some changes in their lifestyle are visible but it is still a long way to go before each member of their society understands and values nutritional food. These changes have especially been evident ever since CARE Bangladesh and Plan International and local implementation organization Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO), have been working on a five-year project, Joint Action for Nutrition Outcomes (JANO). Funded by the European Union (EU), with co-funding from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), JANO has been operating since 2018 and will be working with the GoB at the national, regional and local levels, to support the effective implementation of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN). The NPAN provides the strategic vision for Bangladesh to achieve nutritional security, but the effects of this decision need to manifest amongst the local populations as well.

The project's main focus has been to form groups of volunteers that go around informing locals on the benefits of nutritional food, raising their general level of awareness. In the Domari union of the Gomnati Upazila, Ms. Sadhna Rani of Ambari Para, is part of a JANO group called "Aam". When Sadhna got married, she soon became pregnant. The JANO groups of volunteers have been operating in the area since 2018 and Sadhna joined them to learn about how she could make nutrition a priority in her life. The JANO volunteer Urmila Rani arranged small groups of community members and during these backyard meetings, she spoke to the women and raised their awareness about issues regarding nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers and general hygiene and nutrition for adolescent girls. As a pregnant lady, Sadhna set a great example by acquiring Ante-Natal Care (ANC) and inspired others to visit the Community Clinics, like herself. Urmila Rani also informed them about household gardening options of growing nutritional vegetables and Sadhna absorbed all this information with enthusiasm. She regularly looked after her nutritional needs and once she gave birth to her son, Sadhna fed him breast milk and he grew into a healthy baby. She also ensured that he did not miss any of his vaccination dates and got him inoculated on time. "I had no idea about the various health issues surrounding pregnancy or motherhood or even the baby's health! The ANC was followed by Post Natal Care (PNC) and because of the JANO project, I got a deeper understanding of how healthy nutrition and prioritizing ones health are connected to a healthy and happy mother and child. I am so grateful to see my little one grow everyday into a healthy and happy child and it is all thanks to the information I learnt through the JANO project" shared a beaming Sadhna.



A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white headscarf and a blue dress, stands in a green field. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred green field.

TAJMIRA Defeats her Fears surround- ing her Menstrual Cycle

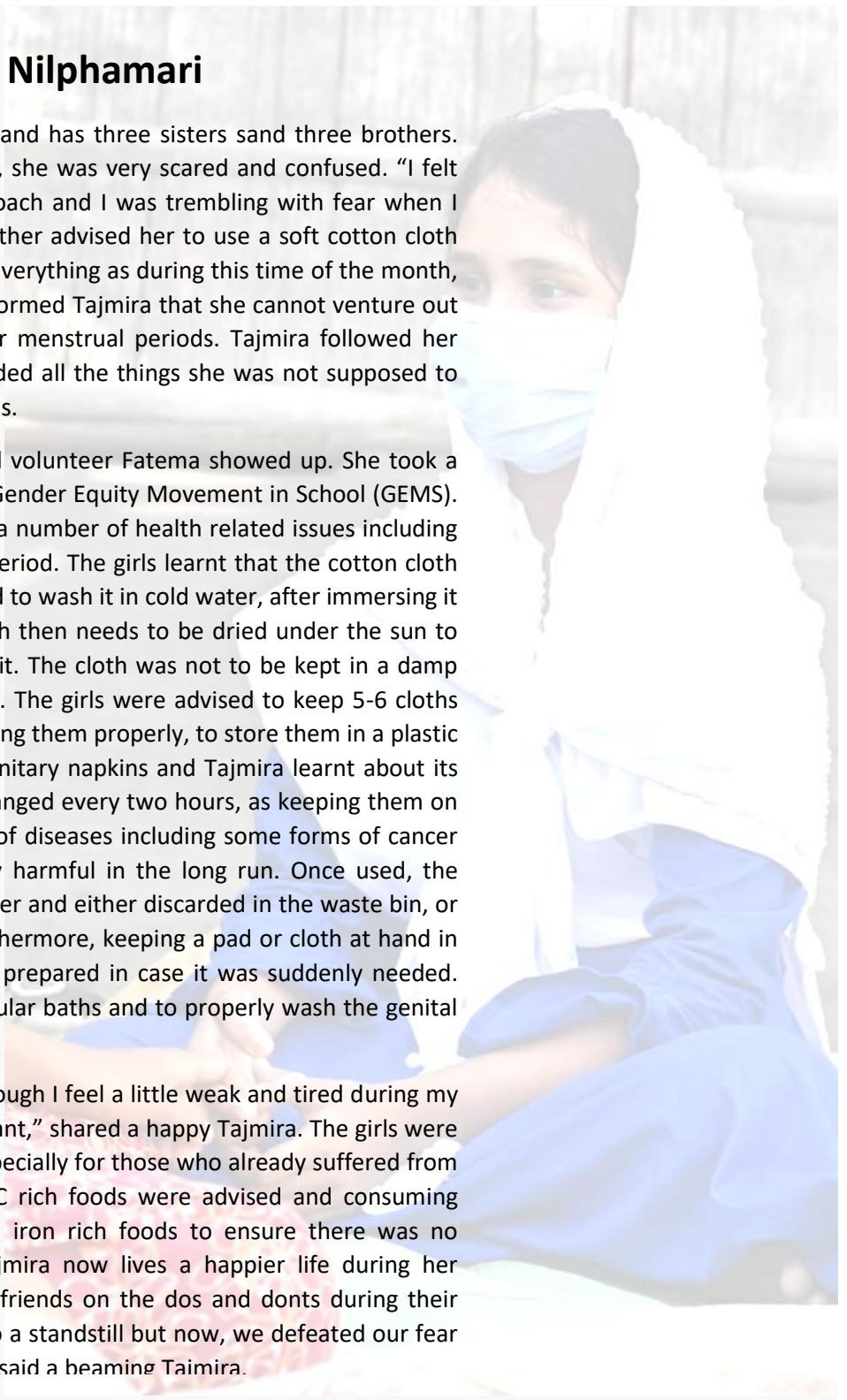
“Earlier, our lives would come to a standstill but now, we defeated our fear and live life to the fullest on those days, “ said a beaming Tajmira.

Tajmira Akter, Jaldhaka, Nilphamari

Tajmira is a student of the 7th standard and has three sisters and three brothers. When Tajmira first started menstruating, she was very scared and confused. "I felt helpless and did not know who to approach and I was trembling with fear when I told my mother," recalls Tajmira. Her mother advised her to use a soft cotton cloth and also told her that she could not eat everything as during this time of the month, certain items are prohibited. She also informed Tajmira that she cannot venture out of the house or go to school during her menstrual periods. Tajmira followed her mother's instructions diligently and avoided all the things she was not supposed to eat and stayed at home during her periods.

Then one day, the JANO project's school volunteer Fatema showed up. She took a few sessions with the curriculum of the Gender Equity Movement in School (GEMS). She informed the adolescent girls about a number of health related issues including personal hygiene during the menstrual period. The girls learnt that the cotton cloth needs to be changed every two hours and to wash it in cold water, after immersing it in soap for a while beforehand. The cloth then needs to be dried under the sun to get rid of any bad odors and to sanitize it. The cloth was not to be kept in a damp area or exposed to the natural elements. The girls were advised to keep 5-6 cloths ready for their monthly use and after drying them properly, to store them in a plastic bag. Fatema then told the girls about sanitary napkins and Tajmira learnt about its benefits. Sanitary napkins were to be changed every two hours, as keeping them on for long hours could result in a number of diseases including some forms of cancer and other illnesses which could be very harmful in the long run. Once used, the napkins should be then wrapped in a paper and either discarded in the waste bin, or buried in the ground or incinerated. Furthermore, keeping a pad or cloth at hand in the school bag was a great way to stay prepared in case it was suddenly needed. Fatema also advised the girls to take regular baths and to properly wash the genital area to keep it clean and sanitized.

"I was extremely happy to hear that although I feel a little weak and tired during my periods, I can still remain as active as I want," shared a happy Tajmira. The girls were recommended to eat nutritious foods especially for those who already suffered from lack of proper diets. Iron and Vitamin C rich foods were advised and consuming meat, fish, eggs and other protein and iron rich foods to ensure there was no excessive blood loss and weakness. Tajmira now lives a happier life during her periods and has also advised her other friends on the dos and don'ts during their periods. "Earlier, our lives would come to a standstill but now, we defeated our fear and live life to the fullest on those days." said a beaming Tajmira.





This Community Support Group (CSG) rallies for improved nutrition


This was a collaborative effort to make sure that each house had at least one source of high nutrition food that was easily available to the family. Each member of the CSG contributed to buy the papaya plant. And with the technical support from the Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer and reinforcement from the CSG, this community planted 300 papaya plants in 101 households in just one month!

Geddo Balapara Community Support Group, Kaonia, Rangpur

Horissor Community Clinic is one of the clinics under Rangpur District under Kaunia Upazila Balapara union. Three Community Support Groups (CSGs) come under this clinic and Geddo Balapara CSG is one of them. The CSG was reformed in 2019 by the Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome (JANO) project, and now has 17 members, comprising of 8 women and 9 men. Funded by the European Union (EU), with co-funding from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), The JANO project is a consortium program implemented by CARE Bangladesh, PLAN International Bangladesh and ESDO, that aims to end malnutrition and improve the nutrition status for 4.7 million people including 275,415 pregnant and lactating women and married adolescent girls, and 190,322 under five year old children in the districts of Nilphamari and Rangpur.

The Geddo Balapara CSG was non-functional and group members were not aware about their roles and responsibilities and had no functional communication with the community clinic and the service providers. With the support from the JANO project the CSG was reactivated after a situation analysis conducted by the project which identified the nutritional and health support needs of the community. There was an urgent requirement of health and nutrition services which could provide mothers, lactating and pregnant women (PLW) and adolescent girls' an improved nutritional status. Among many other activities the CSG selected 101 households of Geddo Balapara as a model and developed a nutrition action plan, which includes ensuring that each household has at least 3 papaya plants in every house as papaya is a great source of vitamin C and also contains vitamin A, folate, potassium, magnesium and calcium which is helpful for mothers, children, adolescents and other family members. Besides the papaya plantation, the CSG will also make sure that all PLW receives 100% antenatal care (ANC) and postnatal care (PNC) services and 100% children are immunized as per the government protocol. This was a collaborative effort to make sure that each house had at least one source of high nutrition food that was easily available to the family. Each CSG member contributed a small amount to buy the papaya plants. And with the technical knowledge support from the sub-assistant agriculture officer and reinforcement from the Community Support group, the community people planted around 300 papaya plants in 101 households in just one month. Everyone in the community is now enjoying the nutritional benefits of papaya. "100% PLW received ANC and PNC, 100% of the children are now vaccinated and 101 households planted papaya tree. We would like to thank JANO project for giving us knowledge & technical support" Convener, Geddo Balapara CSG. JANO project targeted to reach 178 sub-assistant agricultural officers, 208 community health providers (for 208 community clinics) and 624 CSGs.



A photograph of a woman wearing a vibrant, patterned headscarf and a matching colorful top. She is holding a young child who is sleeping peacefully. The child has a dark mark on their forehead and is wearing a pink shirt. The woman's expression is gentle and focused on the child. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

NOOR NAHAR sheds her Inhibitions towards a healthier motherhood

“As char dwellers, we have little or no access to health services so the least we can do is avail this opportunity and get the 4 pre and post natal checkups so we can ensure healthy babies and mothers,”

- Noor Nahar



Noor Nahar, Gangachara, Rangpur.

Noor Nahar (25) lives in a distant char named Char Modhupur in Khoi Khawa village located at Gangachara, Rangpur. She was expecting her second child but she had still not visited a health care centre to get a checkup. She would feel shy and embarrassed at the prospect and so the JANO project community volunteer, Masuda, went around to her house for counseling. She spoke to her sister-in-law and was given the details of Noor Nahar's case and persuaded her to go to the doctor. The JANO project aims to end malnutrition of children under the age of five and together addressing the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and adolescent girls.

In Noor Nahar's case, she eventually went to the community clinic for the first time for a health checkup, when Khawkhawa Para's Community Support Group (CSG) member Morsheda helped coordinate the appointments and motivated her to go to the community clinic. So far, she has been to 4 regular checkups and consumes Iron Folic Acid tablets daily while maintaining a balanced diet of greens, fish, meat, milk and eggs as advised from the community clinic and reminded by the CSG group member as well as the volunteer. As a result, she and her baby are healthy.

JANO project has 4 expected outcomes, one of which aims at women and adolescent girls in communities having the voice and adequate sense of empowerment, to demand nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services. Which have been expected results Noor Nahar now dreams of getting all the women living on the char to be more conscious about their health, especially when they are pregnant. *"As char dwellers, we have little or no access to health services so the least we can do is avail this opportunity and get the 4 pre and post natal checkups so we can ensure healthy babies and mothers,"* explained Noor Nahar. She would like to earnestly thank the JANO volunteer Masuda for spreading awareness around the char area and ensuring that more women get to know of the health care services they can avail themselves.