

THE  
HUNGER  
PROJECT



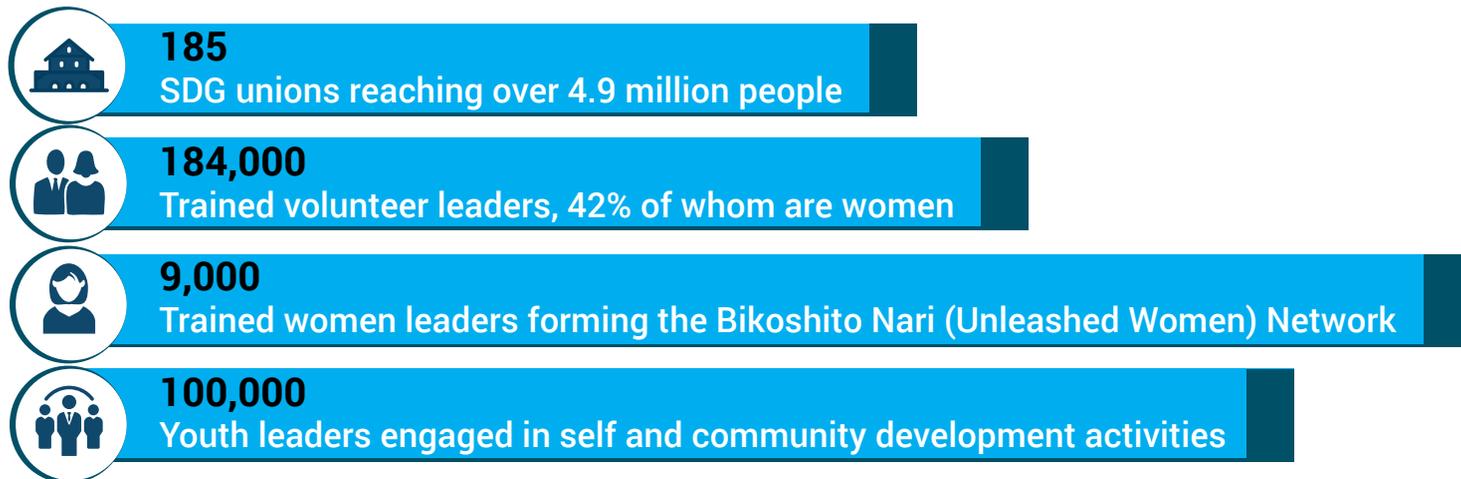
A Stand for Self-Reliant Bangladesh

# THE HUNGER PROJECT IN BANGLADESH

Throughout rural villages in Bangladesh, The Hunger Project carries out its mission of ending hunger and poverty with strategies that are affordable, effective, replicable and sustainable, based on four pillars:

1. Mobilizing people at the grassroots level to build self-reliance
2. Empowering women as key change agents
3. Forging effective partnerships with local government
4. Building Alliances and Advocacy for Community-led Development

The centerpiece of The Hunger Project's strategy in Bangladesh is to train and empower volunteer leaders, called "Animators," to mobilize their villages and strengthen the institutions of local democracy so that people can meet their basic needs.

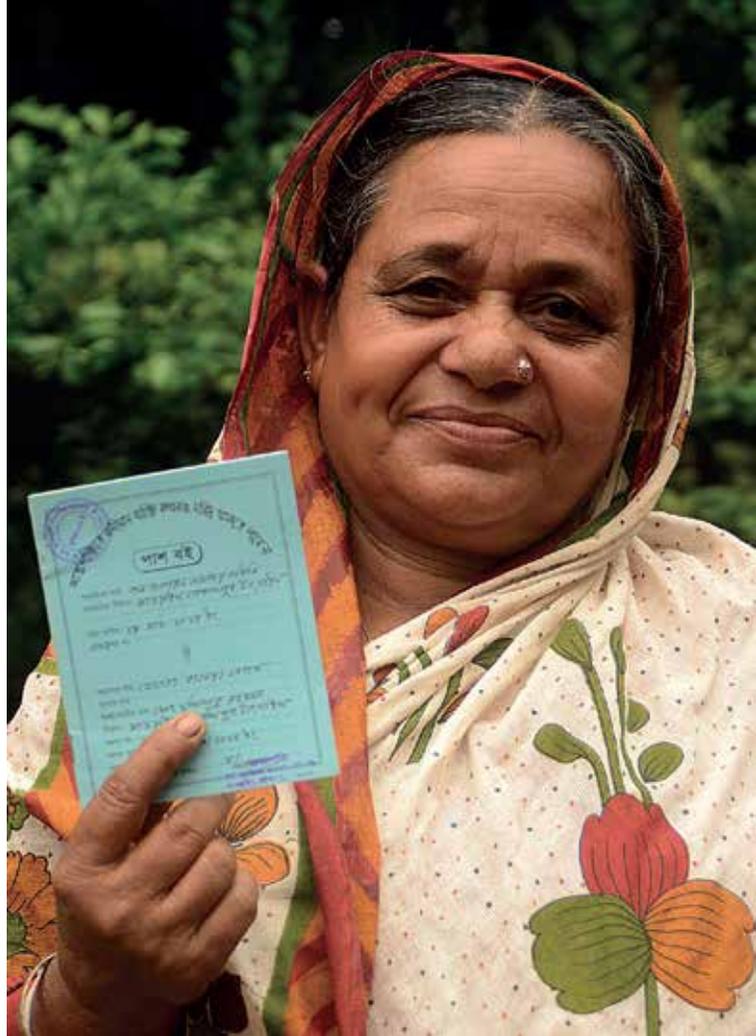


## THE HUNGER PROJECT BANGLADESH

The Hunger Project-Bangladesh (THP-BD), established in 1991, is the largest volunteer based non-government organization in the country. In a radical departure from traditional service delivery approaches and in an intentional drive to overcome Bangladesh's deeply entrenched mindset of resignation and dependency. The Hunger Project-Bangladesh bases its strategies on the principles of:

- self-reliance
- gender equality
- human dignity
- sustainability
- volunteerism
- local leadership.

It has pioneered women focused, community led strategies to empower rural communities to achieve sustainable progress in women's leadership, countering violence, promoting peaceful elections and strengthening local government.



# THE SDG UNION STRATEGY

SDG Unions come into existence through a partnership between the people, their elected Union Parishad (UP) representatives and their government functionaries. In 185 Unions across Bangladesh, THP-BD has pioneered the “SDG Union Strategy,” which strengthens local political leadership through intensive training with elected Union Parishad members, mobilizing an active and engaged civil society, and awakening and empowering the citizens to help achieve the SDGs. Union Parishad members are trained in principles of:



**bottom-up development,**



**decentralized democracy,**



**accountable governance**



**statutory specifics of their  
roles and responsibilities**

The SDG Union Strategy empowers both the local electorate and the elected Union Parishad, building capacity of the entire community to create truly participatory democracy.

# THE VISION, COMMITMENT AND ACTION WORKSHOP



The Hunger Project directly intervenes a mindset of dependency through its Vision, Commitment and Action workshop (VCAW), created by and for Bangladeshis. In the VCAW, people discover the power of their commitment, and take a stand to achieve their vision. Together, they set priorities for themselves and their communities which they can achieve with their own resources, such as forming savings groups, direct action campaigns against early marriages or promoting primary school enrollment. The VCAW is facilitated by a trained, grassroots volunteer “Animator” from within the community.

In 2016 alone, more than **57,000** people participated in **VCA Workshops** across Bangladesh.

# THE ANIMATOR TRAINING

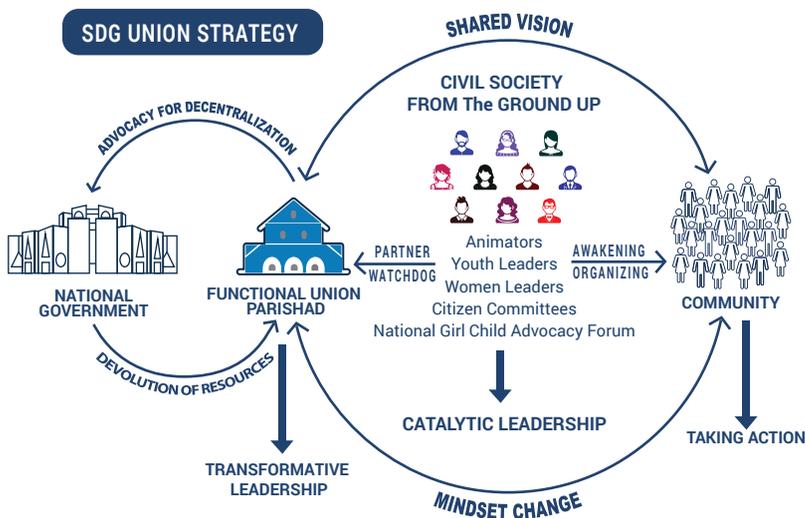


The centerpiece of The Hunger Project's strategy is the grassroots training and ongoing support of more than 184,000 volunteer Animators, 42% of whom are women, who organize mass action campaigns in their areas. The Animators focus their actions in their Unions and work closely with the UP representatives to achieve progress toward social goals such as eliminating child marriages, achieving sanitation coverage throughout the Union, and facilitating open budget meetings and ward assemblies to provide transparency and accountability.

Animators undergo an initial 4-day training designed to give them a deep grounding in the principles of people-centered (versus donor-driven) development, and a thorough understanding of gender issues and how gender issues give rise to poverty and malnutrition in Bangladesh. Through this training, Animators break through to an authentic faith in the power of grassroots people and discover the skills to call forth and unleash people's capabilities.

Following their training, animators meet monthly with Hunger Project staff, learning management and leadership skills to support action on their community-based visions. The Animator Training, originally developed in Bangladesh, is now used in all countries where The Hunger Project operates.

# TRAINING OF VOLUNTEER LEADERS A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH



Initially, the intensive 4-day Animator Training was led only by staff, but soon it was clear that to truly unleash the power of the people of Bangladesh, there would need to be hundreds of trainers who possessed both the deep knowledge of the principles of empowerment and the compassion and leadership skills to facilitate the transformation required in the animator training.

This posed a real challenge. Adding to this challenge was the need to “walk our talk” and ensure that women were in equal leadership roles with men, as Animators. This led to the creation of a multi-year “training of volunteer trainers” program. Now, our trained volunteer trainers provide a tremendous, decentralized, capacity-building resource across the country.

# PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCHERS

## - FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



In order to promote Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an empowering tool to reach the poorest of the poor, a group of volunteers are selected from the most engaged and active Animators. They participate in a 4-day, residential PAR Foundational Course, facilitated jointly by members of The Hunger Project's staff and volunteer facilitators. These Animators learn how to analyze their own social reality and facilitate the same process within their communities among the poorest of the poor people to identify and solve problems through their own actions and form Gono Gobeshona Shomity (GGS) at the local level. The members of

these 'self-emancipatory organizations' undergo a process of reflection, coming together to identify their social, political and economic obstacles, and working together to develop solutions through their GGS.

The members of GGS work towards economic empowerment, through forming savings and starting income generating activities. They also tackle social issues such as improved education or clubs for healthier life-styles. The PAR process is designed to develop leadership and dignity, stimulate social responsibility, and empower the poorest of the poor.

# TRANSFORMING GENDER RELATIONS

The majority of those battling chronic hunger in Bangladesh are women and children, a result of long-standing discrimination and exclusion within Bangladeshi society. Traditional practices such as dowries and child marriages have created a discriminatory sociopolitical context for girls and women. The Hunger Project-trained Animators and UP representatives address this head on by building partnerships between men and women to stop the cycle of malnutrition, and by promoting the inclusion of women and girls in decision-making processes and leadership roles. With funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Hunger Project is implementing the Political Participations of Women for Equal Rights (POWER) Project in Khulna district to empower women leaders to effectively participate in local politics and address women's rights, and violence against women in their communities.



# THE BIKOSHITO NARI NETWORK: WOMEN RISING IN BANGLADESH

The purpose of the Bikoshito Nari (Unleashed Women) Network is to organize, empower and inspire the women of Bangladesh by building their capacity and developing their leadership skills to powerfully confront the issue of gender inequality. This special women's leadership program trains women to take on initiatives such as stopping child marriages and violence against women in their communities.

Women Leaders undergo an empowerment process spread over four years, at the end of which women are empowered and able to advocate at the policy level and take a lead role in decision-making both at home and within her community.

## The 26-day training course is spread over a period of four years:

Year 1: Three-day residential Foundational Course, followed by monthly, full-day trainings for the rest of the year. Trainings are led by THP-Bangladesh staff and volunteer trainers.

Year 2: Full-day trainings every other month

Year 3: Full-day, quarterly trainings

Year 4: Full-day trainings twice a year



The Foundational Course addresses topics such as what gender is; the role of women in families and society; patriarchy and women's rights; and the development paradigm. Throughout the four years, there are scheduled trainings on particular topics, ranging from the role of women in their Unions, to how to hold courtyard meetings, and combat domestic violence. Women leaders gain a clearer understanding of gender and their rights, and develop the necessary skills to advocate for their rights and mobilize other women in their community through courtyard meetings, campaigns and rallies.

# NATIONAL GIRL CHILD ADVOCACY FORUM

In response to the deeply entrenched gender discrimination, The Hunger Project created and serves as the secretariat of the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF), an alliance which has grown to over 500 organizations as of 2016. The goals of NGCAF are to:

Build awareness of the importance of valuing girls

Create an enabling environment to secure girls' rights

Advocate policies that create opportunities to improve girls' lives

NGCAF inaugurated National Girl Child Day on September 30th, 2000, in partnership with the government, which has since been endorsed by the United Nations as an International Day of Celebration. Activities take place each year through nationwide rallies, marches, and school based activities.

**In 2016, 600,000 people celebrated National Girl Child Day under the theme “Stop Child Marriage- Build a Prosperous Country.”**

## HALTING EARLY MARRIAGE



The Hunger Project's work to foster the enabling environment that young girls need to flourish is achieved through a three-pronged strategy of multilevel awareness building through campaigns, courtyard meetings and extensive dialogues; capacity building through issue-based trainings and workshops; and policy advocacy at the national level. In 2016, The Hunger Project volunteer leaders reported stopping over 360 girl-child marriages by direct intervention in its working areas. With funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hunger Project is currently implementing Her Choice, a large-scale targeted 5-year program addressing the root causes of child marriage.

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# YOUTH ENDING HUNGER

The Hunger Project-Bangladesh identified the power of Bangladesh's educated, unemployed youth as an integral part of community mobilization. When the majority of educated youth face little chance for employment, it is a breeding ground for frustration and even violence. To channel the energy and skills of



youth for the betterment of the nation, The Hunger Project-Bangladesh has carried out a Youth Ending Hunger (YEH) Program since 1995. Today, nearly 27000 Youth Leaders have been trained. These leaders work with about 100,000 other young people to make them active citizens.

These leaders bring the creativity and leadership of the youth to the forefront while stimulating a sense of social responsibility among their peers in universities, schools, and communities throughout Bangladesh.

Together, they meet monthly in chapters across the country, planning activities to improve their communities with an emphasis on active citizenship and human rights. These youth leaders organize campaigns in their communities throughout Bangladesh on issues such as nutrition, education, family planning, tree planting, environmental education and blood donation. They also arrange rallies and organize clubs against child marriage, debates, math olympiads, writing competitions, study circles to develop their own creative potential.

# STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

By 2000, The Hunger Project Bangladesh's experience had shown that grassroots development can only truly be sustainable when it is in partnership with accountable, transparent local government. In fact, many great initiatives of the past did not take roots because they depended on temporary structures parallel to the constitutionally mandated Union Parishads. Thus, The Hunger Project works to make local government functional and accountable at the level closest to poor people, the Union, through the following three components:

Union Parishad.  
The Hunger Project provides a four-day residential course for all members of the Parishad, training them in principles of bottom-up development, decentralized democracy, accountable governance and the statutory specifics of their roles and responsibilities.

**Component 1**

Standing Committees. Bangladeshi law calls for each Union Parishad to establish Standing Committees to provide citizen participation and oversight in key areas such as health, education and economic development. In non-SDG Unions, these committees are rarely functioning. But, in SDG Unions, The Hunger Project makes certain they are and that they are equipped to do their job. Standing Committee members help to establish priorities, agendas and budgets of the Union Parishad.

**Component 2**

Ward Shobha. Ward Shobhas are mandatory, twice-yearly assemblies of all voting-aged citizens. They are held in each of the nine Wards within a Union. The Ward Shobha is designed to provide a transparency and accountability mechanism, allowing citizens to engage directly with their elected officials and allowing elected officials to transparently discuss ongoing and planned local government projects. The Ward Shobha is the most powerful forum for grassroots women to bring their concerns to the attention of the Standing Committees and Union Parishad Members.

**Component 3**

# TRAINING CAPACITY AT THE HUNGER PROJECT

Training is a key component of The Hunger Project Bangladesh. THP-BD offers trainings for elected representatives of local governments, potential women and youth leaders, volunteers, social activists, community leaders, political and civil society leaders, staff of development organizations, and government officials.

## Examples of the training courses include:

- ★ Animators Training
- ★ Youth Leadership Training
- ★ Youth Activist Training
- ★ Training of Volunteer Trainers
- ★ Training on PAVE Lead
- ★ Training on Micro Advocacy
- ★ Training on Legal Know-How
- ★ Training on Gender Issues
- ★ TOT for Campaigning Facilitator
- ★ Women Leadership Development Training
- ★ Capacity Building Training for Elected Representatives of Union Parishad
- ★ Training on People Against Violence in Election (PAVE)
- ★ Participatory Action Research training
- ★ Training on Community Philanthropy
- ★ Training on State Schemes and Entitlements
- ★ Training on Networking and Advocacy
- ★ TOT on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
- ★ Income Generating Training on different trade

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Special training courses are organized by The Hunger Project on request. We also extend our assistance to other organizations in developing training module and materials.

# ADVOCACY FOR REFORMS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Citizens for Good Governance (SHUJAN) is an independent, non-partisan group for which The Hunger Project serves as secretariat. Formed with the help of The Hunger Project in 2002, SHUJAN is a non-partisan platform of committed, active and socially conscious citizens which aims to strengthen grassroots democracy, ensure transparency and accountability of local government, promote free and fair elections, and carry out advocacy initiatives for policy reforms and good governance at the national level.



In the run up to an election, SHUJAN gathers background profiles on the candidates including disclosures of criminal histories and sources of income and wealth. SHUJAN members organize meet the candidate gatherings performing all manner of outreach to voters including posters, newspaper articles, street plays, debates, human chains and marches, awareness campaigns and Democracy Olympiads.

The Hunger Project works to ensure government accountability in Bangladesh through SHUJAN. Since 2008, The Hunger Project has facilitated holding nearly 1,800 SHUJAN Committee meetings for over 31,000 participating SHUJAN members across the country.

Members of SHUJAN are among the most respected citizens of Bangladesh. Many are from academia and journalism, and many have public profiles as well-regarded leaders. SHUJAN chapters' influence extends from the Union all the way up through the national level.

# PAVE for building Peace and Harmony in grassroots

The PAVE (People Against Violence in Elections) peace building project was launched in partnership with the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) in response to unprecedented violence during the 2014 National Election. The project aims to build peace and harmony through the promotion of democratic values amongst grassroots citizens, the development of greater understanding of election processes and the development of skills for peaceful conflict resolution. The PAVE project was financed by USAID and UKAID and has been implemented in partnership with local political leaders, community leaders and key citizens in forty-eight



sub-districts of Bangladesh. Outstandingly, the PAVE project has had an enormous impact on improving cultural enmity within the districts it has had contact with. Most significantly, through fostering peaceful dialogue between leaders of rival political parties and restoring the social relationships which bring cohesion to a community, the threat of future violence during political instability has been significantly reduced. In ten sub-districts, the major political parties have signed a 'Code of Conduct' promising to settle differences peacefully. The project has successfully worked to highlight a common interest of all parties to work against violent extremism together, a unifying act which aims to leave no-one behind.

# PROMOTING SOCIAL HARMONY IN THE FACE OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

The Hunger Project-Bangladesh aims to improve sustainable social harmony at all levels of society, celebrating the diversity of religion and culture of Bangladesh as its strength, achieved through:

- Implementing the People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) training program to increase peoples' knowledge of constructive and non-violent ways of citizen engagement for mitigating electoral and political violence;
- Building a functional network of Peace Pressure Groups and Peace Ambassadors to prevent electoral violence and foster peace-building; and
- Transferring enhanced knowledge and skills through peace building initiatives to the masses of the community for constructive and non-violent ways of citizen engagement.



Building upon the holistic community-led development work of the SDG Union strategy, The Hunger Project Bangladesh is implementing targeted Social Harmony Workshops and Animator trainings, designed to foster social cohesion in rural communities and empower individuals within those communities to collectively advocate for preventing political violence through peaceful means.



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