

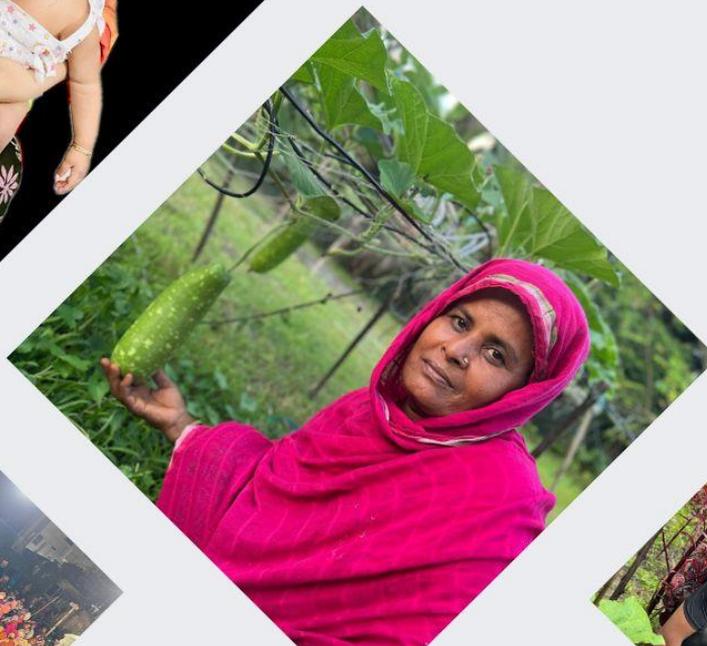
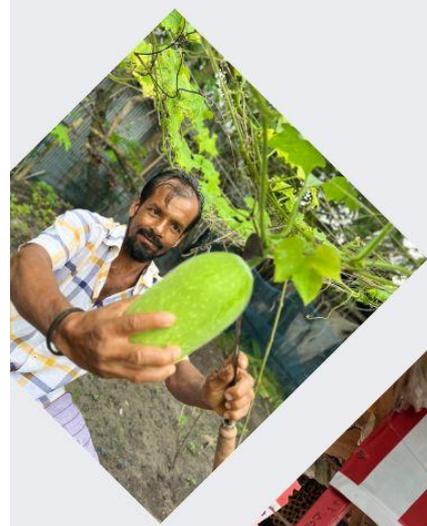


ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2024-JUNE 2025

**GREEN RESILIENCE AND
COOPERATION FOR
ECOSYSTEM**

**LABANCHARA, SHIPYARD
KHULNA-9201
WWW.GRACEBD.NET**



Message from The chairman

Bangladesh's development journey continues to inspire the world as a story of resilience and transformation. Since independence in 1971, our nation has navigated over five decades of progress amid political transitions, natural calamities, and human-made challenges. Each trial has tested our endurance—but every time, Bangladesh has risen stronger, demonstrating an unyielding spirit of recovery, innovation, and hope. Today, our country stands as a model of resilience, adaptability, and determination.



Yet, despite these remarkable strides, deep-rooted challenges persist. Socio-economic disparities remain entrenched, particularly among marginalized and vulnerable populations who continue to strive for dignity, justice, and equitable opportunities. In southern regions, communities bear the compounded burdens of poverty, climate change, and recurring disasters. Economic progress, while commendable, cannot alone address the gaps in governance, health, education, and social inclusion. These realities call for sustained commitment, innovation, and collective action.

At GRACE, we envision a world free from poverty—where human rights are respected, dignity is upheld, and every individual, especially women, youth, and persons with disabilities, can thrive in resilient and just communities. Our mission is to work hand in hand with communities and partners to advance equality, resilience, and inclusive growth, empowering the marginalized to lead their own transformation.

We are guided by our enduring values: Humanity, Innovation, Honesty, Accountability, Transparency, Leadership, Gender and Youth Sensitivity, Community Participation, Justice, Equity and Inclusion, Sustainability and Resilience, and Collaboration and Cooperation. These values are more than words—they are the moral compass that directs every action, partnership, and program we undertake.

Aligned with these guiding principles, GRACE has identified a set of core thematic priorities that address the most pressing challenges of our time. These include Climate Change, Disaster Resilience, Ecosystem Restoration, and Sustainable Environment, which emphasize sustainable adaptation and environmental stewardship; Children and Youth Development, focusing on nurturing potential and leadership among future generations; Health, Nutrition, and WASH, ensuring well-being and access to essential services for all; and Urban Resilience, encompassing health, climate adaptation, advocacy, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and governance to build inclusive and sustainable cities. Additionally, GRACE promotes Social Entrepreneurship, Green Business Development, and Private Sector Engagement to foster economic opportunities that are both equitable and environmentally responsible, alongside Education and Skill Development, which empowers individuals with the knowledge and capacity to drive lasting change in their communities.

Together, these focus areas strengthen our mission to foster inclusive growth, resilience, and lasting social change.

As we move forward, GRACE remains unwavering in its commitment to build resilient, inclusive, and empowered communities. We deeply value the trust and solidarity of our donors, partners, and well-wishers, whose support and belief in our vision make our journey possible. On behalf of the Board, I extend heartfelt gratitude to all who continue to walk beside us.

The challenges ahead are significant—but our shared determination, unity, and compassion are far greater. Together, we will continue to build, bond, and belong—creating lasting change, together.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GRACE WORKING TO SDG



Vision, Mission and Thematic Areas of GRACE

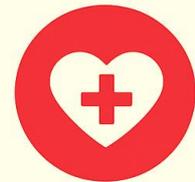
Vision: A world free from poverty, where human rights are respected, dignity is upheld, and every individual—especially youth and women—is empowered to thrive in resilient and just communities. Building, bonding and belonging — together

Mission: We partner with communities and stakeholders to drive equality, resilience, and inclusive growth, empowering the marginalized to create lasting change. Building, bonding and belonging — together.

Thematic Area of GRACE



Climate Change Disaster Resilience and Ecosystem Restoration, Sustainable Environment



Health, Nutrition and WASH



Children and Youth Development



Urban Resilience (Health, Nutrition, Climate change, Advocacy, Women empowerment, entrepreneurship development and Governance)



Social Entrepreneur, Green Business Development and private Sector Engagement



Education & Skill Development

Working Areas of GRACE



TARGET GROUP OF GRACE

TARGET GROUP



1

CHILDREN



2

WOMEN



3

PERSON WITH DISABILITY



4

YOUTH



PART-A

Conducted Multidimensional Vulnerability Assessment

Introduction:

Urbanisation is an inevitable global phenomenon shaping the development trajectory of all nations. Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated developing countries, is no exception. This transformation brings both opportunities and challenges, influencing how effectively national and local policies respond to the urban agenda. According to the United Nations' *World Urbanisation Prospects*, Bangladesh's urban population grew by 3.19% between 2020 and 2021. Current UN data shows that approximately 25% of the country's population now resides in urban areas, with over half concentrated in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, and Rajshahi.

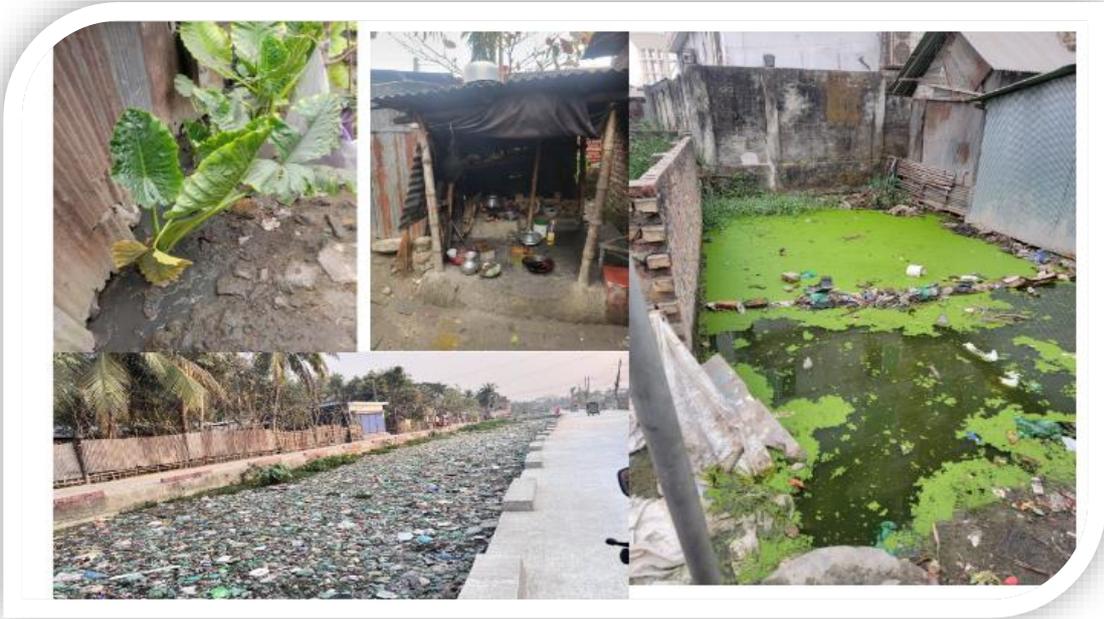
This rapid urban expansion exerts immense pressure on limited land, fragile ecosystems, and already weak urban services. Major cities continue to struggle with poverty, poorly maintained slums, corruption, inefficiency in service delivery, and inadequate financial capacity

.Amid these challenges, urban areas—particularly cities and medium-sized municipalities—are becoming central to climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, as well as pathways to resilient growth. Bangladesh is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, and the impacts of urbanisation intensify these risks. For example, Khulna City has seen accelerated growth following the inauguration of the Padma Bridge, which strengthened its economic links to Dhaka. While this connectivity has boosted development, it has also heightened concerns over the health, nutrition, and overall living conditions of low-income groups, particularly as climate-induced migration drives more people into urban areas.

GRACE has been actively engaged in addressing these concerns through health, nutrition, and livelihood initiatives across various urban contexts, with a strong presence in the south and southeast coastal regions. These experiences demonstrate that urban resilience is integral to climate change mitigation and sustainable development. Understanding coastal urban dynamics, in particular, is critical for protecting vulnerable populations who often remain excluded from mainstream development interventions.



For decades, impoverished urban populations in city corporations and secondary municipalities have faced chronic neglect. Health and nutrition conditions among these groups have seen little improvement, despite isolated development



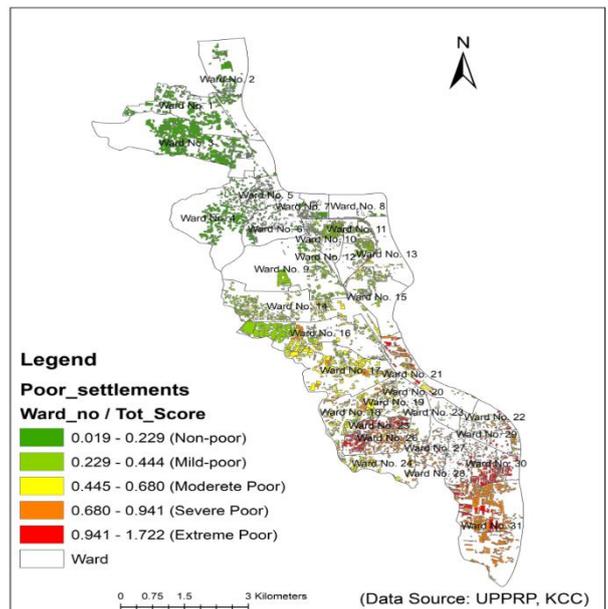
projects. GRACE recognises that the success of Bangladesh’s Country Strategic Plan depends on tackling these urban challenges head-on. By integrating lessons from urban programmes into broader strategies, it is possible to strengthen health, nutrition, and climate resilience outcomes at scale.

While donor-driven projects frequently bring predefined priorities, GRACE is committed to exploring emerging urban issues with fresh perspectives. By generating new knowledge and piloting small-scale, evidence-based interventions, GRACE seeks to identify practical solutions that can be scaled up. Not all urban challenges can be solved simultaneously, but incremental, well-designed initiatives can pave the way toward transformative change.

Background & Justification:

Climate change poses one of the most alarming challenges for Bangladesh, primarily due to its geographical location. It is estimated that a three-foot rise in sea level would submerge nearly 20 percent of the country, displacing over 30 million people (Glenon, 2017). Located in the southwestern region of Bangladesh, Khulna, the country's third-largest city, currently houses a population of 1.5 million (Alam and Mondal, 2018). This city has been identified by the International Institute for Development and Environment (IIIDE) as one of the 15 most vulnerable cities to climate change impacts, experiencing increased occurrences and severity of flooding, storm surges,

Demarcation of Poor Settlement in KCC



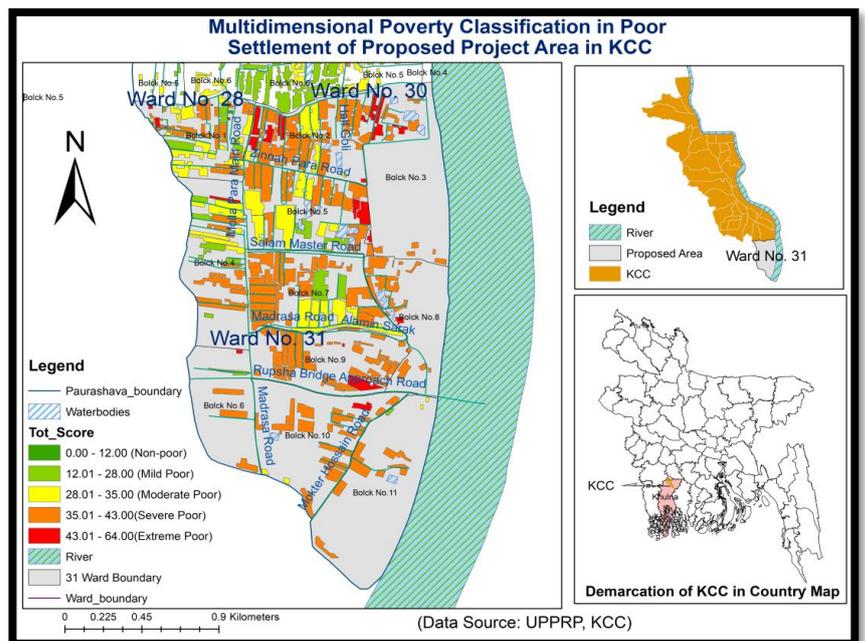
cyclones, water-logging, saltwater intrusion, sedimentation, and riverbank erosion (IIDE, 2009).

Within Khulna city, the urban slums are particularly vulnerable to climate change events such as floods, water logging, and heat waves. These slums lack essential municipal services, tenure security, and other facilities necessary to cope with extreme weather events. Moreover, the urban slums in Khulna city have become densely populated and more susceptible to vulnerability due to significant migration from neighboring coastal districts, particularly after the devastating cyclones Sidr (2007) and Aila (2009). Therefore, it is crucial to assess the impact of climate change and disaster resilience of urban slums in Khulna City to ensure safety, inclusiveness, and sustainability of these informal housing settlements.

The objective of this research-based project is to evaluate the community resilience of urban slums in Khulna City in terms of climate change-induced vulnerability on health service provision and delivery. The project endeavors to accomplish this goal by actively involving civil society, private sectors, the Khulna City Corporation (KCC), and local community leaders. This inclusive approach will provide valuable insights into the community dynamics and organizational structure concerning health service delivery. Additionally, it will focus on strengthening the service delivery capacity of these stakeholders, aiming to foster the inclusive development of an urban society that is resilient in the face of many challenges.

Based on the context analysis findings of GRACE, a poverty index has been created, revealing that wards 31, 30, 25, 26, and 21 exhibits the highest levels of poverty compared to the remaining wards within the Khulna City Corporation. Wards 16, 17, 19, and 24 contain communities experiencing moderate levels of poverty, while wards 9 to 16 indicate a milder level of poverty within the city. On the other hand, wards 1 to 8 demonstrate relatively better socio-economic conditions, with a limited presence of climate migrants and slum dwellers.

GRACE initiative has the purpose of investigating the existing multidimensional vulnerability in the urban slums of ward 31 within the Khulna City Corporation and then seeks to foster resilience and inclusivity in decision-making processes through the application of evidence-based methods. It specifically targets the engagement of stakeholders from various sectors and advocates for the implementation of community-based approaches. The project demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of interlink between urbanization and urban health, addressing associated challenges and proposing a forward-looking perspective from a multi-stakeholder standpoint. The overarching goal of this research initiative is to fortify and build a resilient

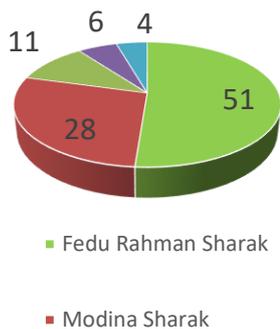


urban health system by employing evidence-based and participatory decision-making processes, involving stakeholders from multiple sectors.

Study Location:

The study was conducted in ward # 31 in Khulna city. A total of 246 data were collected from one cluster, considering all households in selected locations including Fedu Rahman Sharak, Modina Sharak, Akash’s slum (Modina sharak), CID Sharak and Amtola (2nd sharak) .

Landmark wise data collection percentage (%)



The data collection was conducted across several locations, the following chart outlines the distribution by landmark and their respective percentage contributions:

The majority of the data collection was concentrated in **Fedu Rahman Sharak**, which contributed over half (51%) of the total data. The remaining data was more evenly distributed among **Modina Sharak** (28%) and **Akash’s Slum** (11%). Lesser contributions came from **CID Sharak** (6%) and the **Amtola 2nd sharak** (4%). In CID Sharak, the area is large, but only a limited

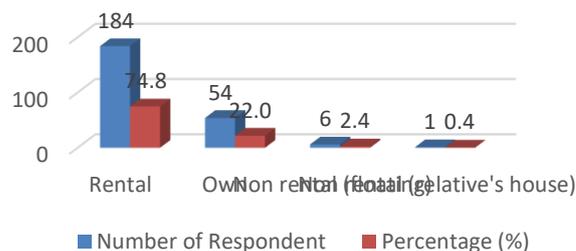
number of households are scattered throughout. Most of the land remains vacant.

This distribution suggests that Fedu Rahman Sharak and Modina Sharak were the primary focus areas, while other locations were secondary in terms of data collection. Further attention could be given to areas with lower representation to ensure a more balanced data distribution in future collections.

Key results:

Family Size and Religion: The demographic profile reveals that the average family size is 3.8 members per household. Age distribution shows that a majority of respondents (52%) are in the 36–59 age group, followed by 38% in the 19–35 bracket. Children and adolescents (0–18 years) represent only 4%, while the elderly population (60 years and above) accounts for 6.1%. In terms of religion, an overwhelming 97.6% of

Distribution of Leaving space by category



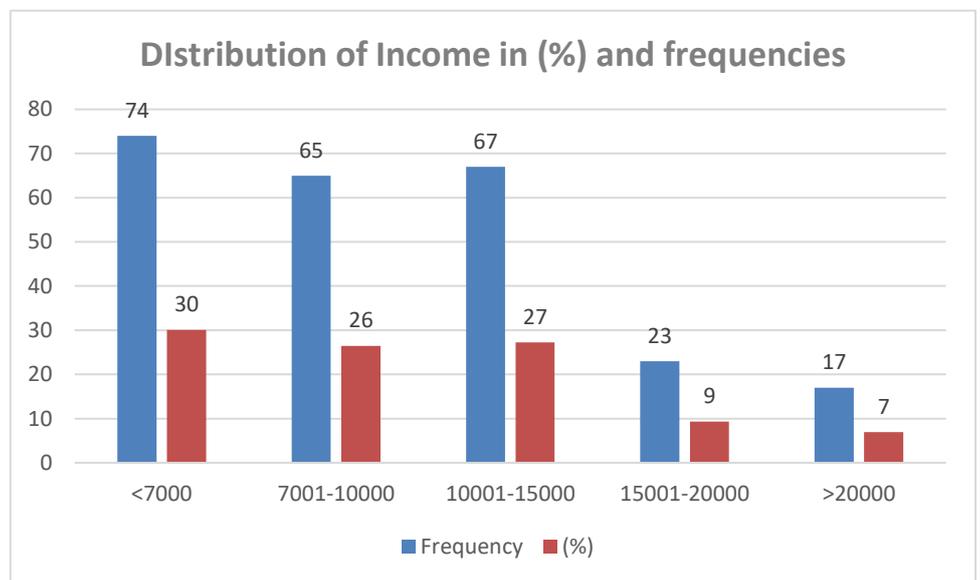
respondents identify as Muslim.

Education: Education levels are concerning, as only 31.7% of households have at least one member with secondary education, while 68.3% lack this level of attainment, pointing to a cycle of social and economic vulnerability.

Marital Status and Occupation: Marital status is dominated by married individuals (90.7%), while widowhood (7.3%), separation (1.2%), divorce (0.8%), and unmarried status (0.4%) make up the remainder. Occupationally, the community is largely comprised of housewives (67%), with smaller shares in formal employment (11%), day labor (9%), tailoring/sewing (5%), and other income-generating activities such as small business, maid services, and shopkeeping (8%).

Income & Household ownership:

Income levels suggest significant economic vulnerability, with 30% of households earning less than 7,000 BDT monthly. Around 26% earn between 7,001 and 10,000 BDT, 27% between 10,001 and 15,000 BDT, and only 17% exceed the 15,000 BDT threshold. Housing and living arrangements further highlight precarious conditions. A large majority (74.8%) rent their homes, while 22% own their dwellings. Floating households (2.4%) and those staying with relatives (0.4%) remain minimal. Regarding house types, 68.6% live in semi-pacca houses, 24% in pacca houses, and 7.4% in kancha or jhupri structures.



A large majority (74.8%) rent their homes, while 22% own their dwellings. Floating households (2.4%) and those staying with relatives (0.4%) remain minimal. Regarding house types, 68.6% live in semi-pacca houses, 24% in pacca houses, and 7.4% in kancha or jhupri structures.

Migration: Migration patterns show that 85% of households are long-term residents, most of them in rented homes (63%). Short-term migrants (≤ 15 years) make up 18%, of which only 4% moved within the last 1–3 years. Migration trends have shifted after COVID-19, with 6% relocating in the last six years, while seasonal migration remains low at 2%.

Households consisting of Person with disability & Permanent illness: Health and disability data reflect that 4.47% of households include a person with disability, which closely aligns with national prevalence (4.3%). Permanent physical illness or disability is reported in 26.83% of households.

Social Safety net access: Access to social safety nets is also limited. Only 14.23% benefit from programs such as VGD, VGF, and stipends, while 85.77% receive no support.

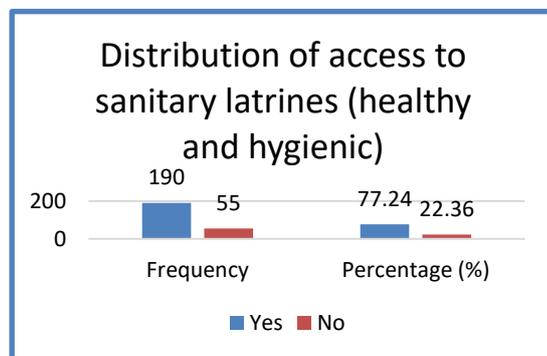
Climate Change Awareness: Climate change awareness is critically low, with just 8.94% of respondents understanding the causes of extreme weather or disasters, while 87.4% are unsure and 3.66% admit to not knowing at all.

Access to Microfinance: Participation in microfinance initiatives is fairly balanced, with 47.15% engaged as members and 52.85% not involved.

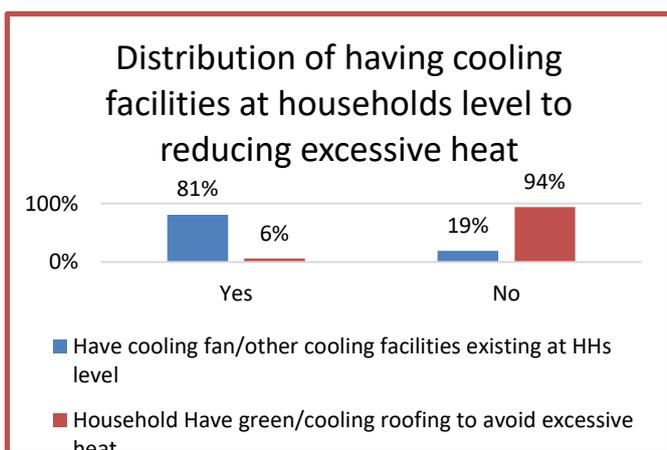
Disaster preparedness is alarmingly weak: only 1.22% of households reported receiving cyclone or flood warnings or community support, while 98.78% did not receive any.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Proportion
No	243	98.78	0.9878
Yes	3	1.22	0.0122
Total	246	100.00	1.0000

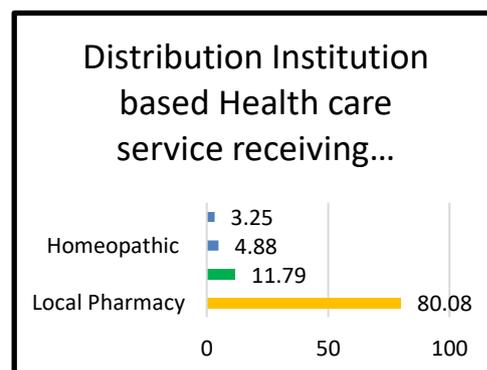
WASH Facility: In terms of WASH facilities, 77.24% of households have access to sanitary latrines, while 22.36% lack this basic service. About 31.3% reported their latrines and water taps flooding during disasters, whereas 68.7% remained unaffected.



Excessive Heat absorption/Cooling Facility: Cooling facilities are also inadequate. Although 81% of households use fans or other devices, only 6% benefit from green or cooling roofing, leaving the vast majority (94%) highly exposed to heat stress.



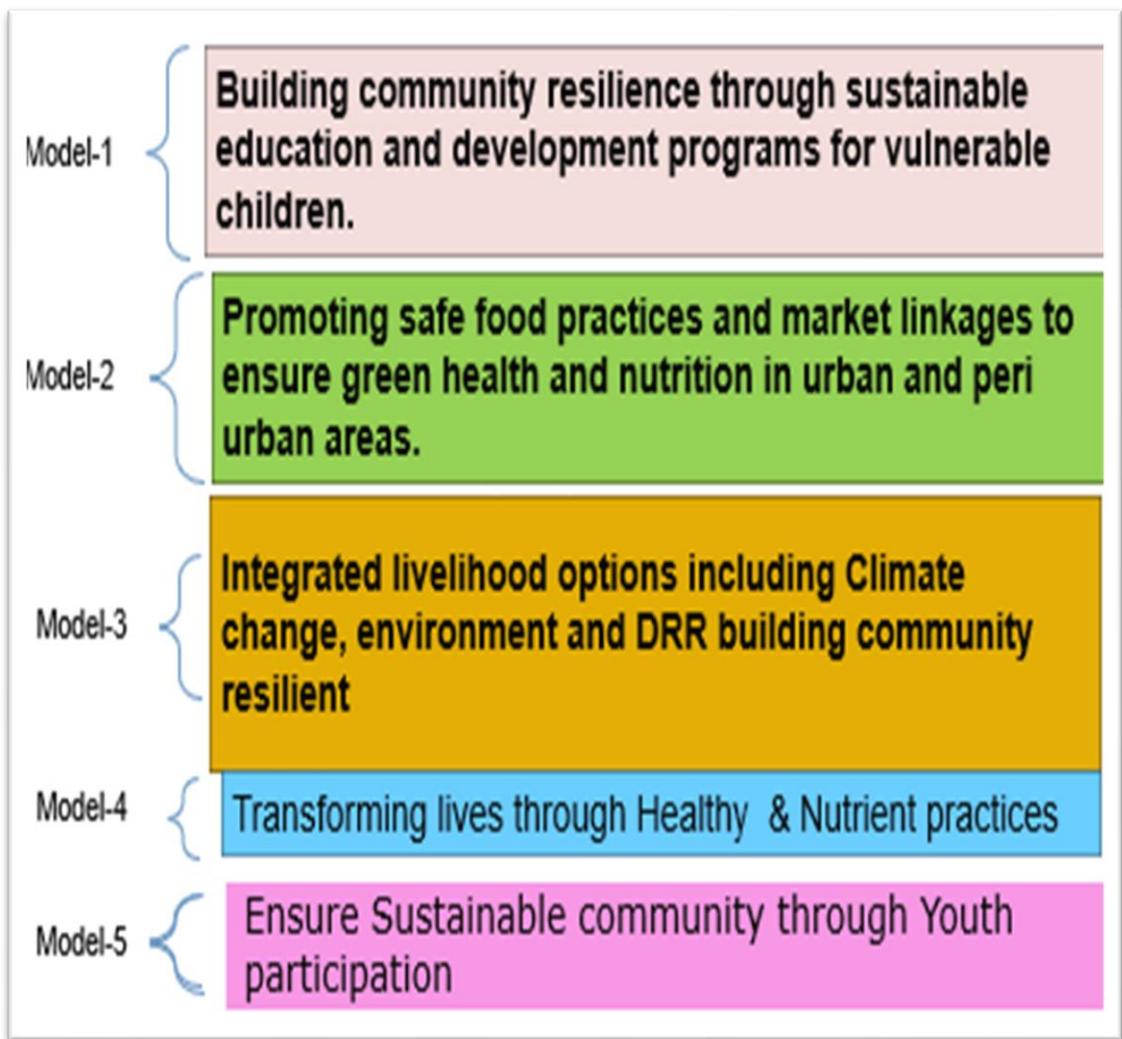
Immunization of the under 5 children: Children’s health shows mixed progress. Approximately 34.96% of households have children under five, and immunization coverage is relatively high at 90.65%. However, nearly 10% of children remain unvaccinated, which raises public health risks.



Health Care Seeking Behavior: Healthcare service-seeking behavior indicates heavy reliance on pharmacies (80.08%), with fewer households accessing government clinics or hospitals (11.79%). Alternative treatments such as homeopathy account for 4.88%, while private clinics or hospitals are used by only 3.25%.

Recommendation :

Following the Multisectoral Vulnerability assessment results- five models were recommended for implementation in urban and peri-urban contexts.



PART-B

What We Did? Thematic area wise models & results

Based on the assessment recommendations, five models have been established under GRACE's core thematic areas

Contribution to SDG



Best on the suggested models a community driven initiatives were carried out under the Thematic area of GRACE



Thematic Area-01: Climate Change, Disaster Resilience and ecosystem restoration, sustainable environment

Intervention-01: Women in Climate Action; Combating Disasters through Gender Empowerment and Economic Development

Introduction:

In 2024, GRACE conducted a rigorous census in Khulna City and Botiaghata, reaching 356 households. The study identified 125 women-headed households as the most climate-vulnerable, facing economic marginalization, social inequality, and recurring climate hazards. These findings highlighted the urgent need to address gender inequality, empower women, and create sustainable pathways for resilience.

To break the cycle of vulnerability, GRACE launched an integrated women-led initiative that is transforming lives. Women are no longer silent victims of climate change; they are becoming climate activists, role models, and voices of resilience—leading adaptation and economic development within their communities.



Integrated Approaches Driving Change:

GRACE's program equips women with tools, training, and support to combat climate-induced risks and build sustainable livelihoods:

- **Capacity Building:** Training on climate-adaptive livelihoods such as green agriculture, poultry and livestock rearing, aquaculture, and social business ventures.



- Green Entrepreneurship: Special focus on coconut-based interventions and sustainable business models that ensure both climate adaptation and economic growth.



- Entrepreneurship & Leadership Development: Women are trained in business skills, leadership, and market linkages to strengthen their economic independence.
- Input Support: Distribution of saline-tolerant high-yield seeds, vegetable saplings, coconut plants, and duck chicks to enhance climate-smart production.

Tangible Impacts

The results are powerful and transformative:

- Women are raising their voices against climate injustice and becoming recognized community leaders.
- Household incomes are steadily increasing, reducing economic vulnerability.
- Children from beneficiary families are now attending school regularly.
- Gender relations are shifting—men in the community are showing greater respect, sharing household and agricultural work, and supporting women’s leadership.
- Mental health resilience is improving as women “bounce back” from repeated climate shocks with newfound confidence.



This initiative demonstrates how women’s empowerment is central to combating climate change and disaster vulnerability. By supporting GRACE, it should be scale up these integrated interventions, ensuring that more vulnerable women gain access to resources, training, and opportunities to thrive.

Every contribution to this cause is an investment in climate resilience, gender equality, and sustainable economic development. Together, we can amplify women’s leadership in the fight against climate change—and build communities that are not just

surviving, but thriving.

Intervension-02: Coconut for Changing Coastal Economy of Bangladesh

Conduction an Assessment: Scoping the Economic Potential of Coconut Trees for Sustainable Growth in the South Coastal Regions of Bangladesh

Background: Coconut cultivation in the south coastal regions of Bangladesh has faced persistent challenges in achieving optimal fruiting and productivity due to inadequate crop management practices, pest infestations, and disease prevalence. To address these constraints, the subproject titled “Development of Integrated Crop Management Technologies for Higher Production of Coconut in Bangladesh” was launched in June 2018 under NATP Phase 2 funding. The initiative was implemented through a collaborative approach involving four specialized components of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and the Sustainable Soil Resource Development Authority (SSURDA).

Baseline surveys conducted in key coconut-growing districts—including Barishal, Patuakhali, Jashore, Satkhira, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Meherpur, and Gazipur—revealed poor adoption of key agronomic practices. Only 24.3% to 44.3% of farmers reported fertilizer application, and irrigation practices were limited, ranging from 7.6% to 32.4%. Use of growth regulators was negligible. Major pests such as the coconut eriophyid mite, rhinoceros beetle, and red palm weevil, along with widespread diseases like grey leaf spot and bud rot, significantly contributed to declining yields.



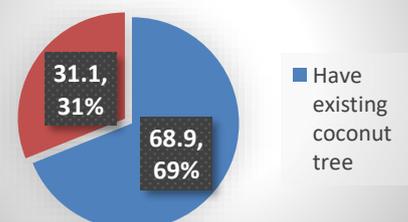
Exploring Local Wisdom: Community Perceptions, Knowledge and practices on coconut tree plantation in Climate-Vulnerable South Coast; In June–July 2025, GRACE undertook an insightful assessment to uncover the perceptions, knowledge, and everyday practices of communities living on the frontlines of climate vulnerability. The study focused on 45 households in Raypara, located in Jolma Union under Botiaghata Upazila, Khulna district — a region deeply shaped by the rhythms and risks of the southern coastal ecosystem.

The assessment revealed a nuanced portrait of community understanding, highlighting how local knowledge, cultural beliefs, and adaptive behaviors intersect in the face of mounting climate challenges. It brought to light both the strengths embedded in traditional practices and the gaps that remain in awareness and preparedness.

The assessment found that 68.9% of households have coconut trees, while 31.1% do not—indicating both a strong cultivation presence and a potential gap for future intervention, both the strengths embedded in traditional practices and the gaps that remain in awareness and preparedness.

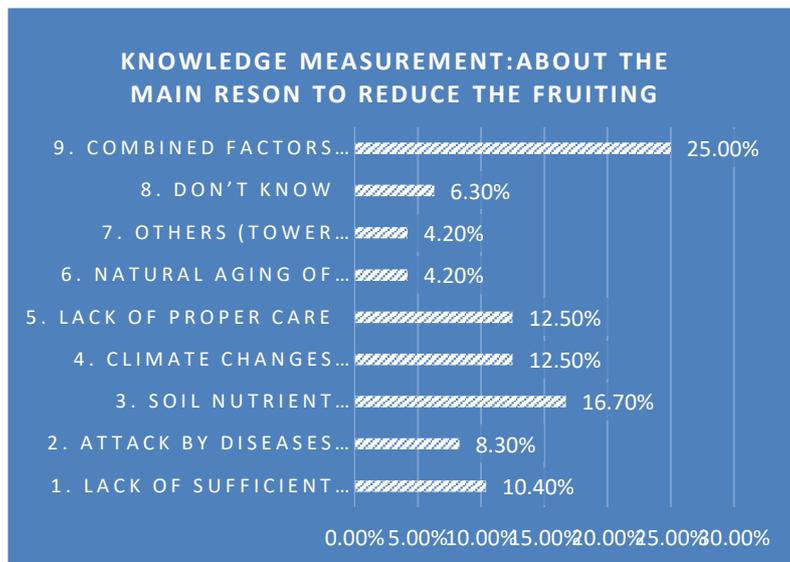
The assessment found that each household owns an average of 3 coconut trees, with an average age of 9.75 years. Notably, 100% of respondents reported a decline in fruiting compared to 10 years ago, indicating a significant reduction in productivity over time.

Status of vailability of Coconut tree (%) at HHs level



The chart highlights the perceived reasons behind the decline in coconut fruiting in the surveyed coastal region. A significant 25% of respondents attributed the issue to combined factors—namely poor soil nutrition, inadequate irrigation, and pest/disease incidence—indicating a need for integrated management. Soil nutrient deficiency (16.7%) and climate change impacts (12.5%) were also prominent concerns. Notably, 10.4% cited lack of irrigation, while only 4.2% referred to natural aging or other lesser-known causes. These insights reflect that environmental stressors and agronomic neglect are primary drivers of reduced productivity.

The assessment of coconut tree care practices revealed that a majority (75%) of households do not provide any nursing or maintenance to their existing trees. Only 16.7% reported occasional care, while a mere 8.3% actively nurse their trees. This lack of regular maintenance is likely a contributing factor to declining tree health and reduced fruiting, underscoring the need for awareness and training on proper coconut tree management.



Key Findings

- Coconut Tree Availability: 68.9% of households have coconut trees; 31.1% do not—highlighting both presence and expansion potential.
- Tree Status: Households have an average of 3 trees, aged around 9.75 years. All respondents reported a decline in fruiting compared to 10 years ago.
- Causes of Decline:
 - 25% identified combined issues (poor soil, irrigation, pests/disease).
 - 16.7% cited soil nutrient deficiency.
 - 12.5% pointed to climate-related factors (storms, drought, waterlogging, etc.).
 - Only 4.2% mentioned natural aging as a cause.
- Care and Maintenance:
 - 75% of households do not provide any care to their trees.
 - Only 8.3% nurse their trees regularly.
 - Low maintenance is a key driver of declining productivity.

Recommendations

- **Promote Integrated Crop Management addressing soil health, irrigation, and pest/disease control.**
- **2. Enhance Community Awareness and Training on proper tree care and sustainable practices.**
- **3. Strengthen Extension Services to support households lacking access to knowledge and inputs.**
- **4. Encourage Replantation and Diversification in households without existing coconut trees.**
- **5. Adapt to Climate Challenges through resilient farming methods and localized solutions**

GRACE Plan: Unlocking the Economic Potential of Coconut Trees in South Coastal Bangladesh

- Hands-On Training:** Practical training for 25 selected women and male participants, Focus: cultivation, irrigation, fertilization, pest management, and tree nursing
- Input Support:** Distribution of coconut saplings and fertilizers Support for climate-smart agriculture (seeds and seedlings)
- Monthly Group Meetings:** Experience sharing and coordination among trained participants
- Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):** Regular monitoring of irrigation, fertilization, mulching, and pest control including emphasis on adaptive learning and practice improvement

GRACE INTERVENTION ON COCONUT PLANTATION

Capacity Building Training and Input Support for Building a Resilient Community

A Model of Coconut Tree Plantation

“Scoping the Economic Potential of Coconut Trees including Integrated Inputs for Sustainable Growth in the South Coastal Regions of Bangladesh”



Background

In June– 2025, GRACE conducted an assessment to explore community perceptions, knowledge, and practices regarding coconut tree plantation in the climate-vulnerable South Coast. The study focused on 45 households in Raypara, Jolma Union, Botiaghata Upazila, Khulna district. Findings highlighted both traditional knowledge and gaps in climate awareness, revealing opportunities to strengthen resilience through sustainable livelihoods.

Beneficiary Selection:

Based on selection criteria and weighted value assessment, 20 women beneficiaries were selected for intervention under GRACE’s group-based approach. The group was named ‘**NARIKEL GROUP**’ (Coconut Group).

Capacity Building Training: On **26 June 2025**, a day-long participatory training was conducted for all 20 beneficiaries.

Topics included:

- Coconut tree plantation for economic opportunity (risk reduction, nursery management, pest management)
- Climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and mitigation
- Climate-smart livestock and poultry rearing in urban and peri-urban areas
- Climate-smart agriculture in urban and peri-urban areas
- Male engagement in household-level activities

Input Support:

On **28th June**, GRACE provided integrated household-level input support to all 20 beneficiaries. The intervention included:

- Two Coconut tree per Households
- Mixed fertilizer 500 gm per tree.
- Module/guideline on nursing, marketing and benefit.



Resource Persons:

1. Razual Islam – Agriculture Expert, Local Community
2. Joyanto Kumar – GRACE Expert
3. Arif Hossain – GRACE Expert
4. Rabby – Youth Leader & Agriculture Expert

Major Output:

Beneficiaries gained practical skills in climate-resilient agriculture and livestock management, coconut tree plantation as a sustainable livelihood, and climate-smart crop cultivation. These interventions strengthened food security, diversified income sources, and reduced vulnerability to climate hazards.



Intervention-03: Cleaning Mission

Clean Environment Leads to a Healthier, Resilient City

Background:

A clean and safe environment is essential for ensuring public health and urban resilience. Recognizing the growing challenges of waste management, vector-borne diseases, and urban pollution, GRACE actively collaborated with BRAC and Khulna City Corporation to promote community-led cleanliness initiatives in Khulna's urban areas.

Objective:

The initiative aimed to improve environmental hygiene, raise public awareness on waste segregation and proper disposal, and reduce the risk of dengue and other environment-related health issues. The program also encouraged local participation to build a cleaner, greener, and more resilient city.



Activities and Outcomes:

During April, May, and June 2025, GRACE, in collaboration with BRAC, participated in **four major cleaning missions** across **Ward No. 29, 30, and 31** under Khulna City Corporation. The drives focused on household waste removal, cleaning drains and public spaces, and community awareness campaigns.

- Over **1,200 residents** participated in the clean-up activities.
- **Public spaces and drains** in targeted wards were visibly improved.
- Community awareness on environmental hygiene and dengue prevention increased significantly.

Closing Remarks:

The joint effort demonstrated the power of collaboration between local government, NGOs, and communities in achieving a cleaner and healthier urban environment. GRACE remains committed to continuing such initiatives to foster sustainable urban resilience and public health in Khulna and beyond.



Thematic Area-02: Children Development and Youth engagement



Intervension-01: 1st Coastal Annual Sports-2024

REVIVING COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT IN KHULNA

The South-West coastal region of Bangladesh, particularly Khulna, faces critical challenges in mental and physical health, education, and cultural wellbeing due to climate-induced migration, salinity intrusion, and urban stress. Studies show that coastal populations are experiencing heightened mental distress linked to economic and non-economic loss and damage, environmental change and displacement. Child malnutrition remains widespread in coastal districts, contributing to stunting, poor physical growth, and school absenteeism. Among reproductive-aged women, nearly 68% face one or more high-risk fertility behaviors, compounded by limited contraceptive use, low education, and early marriage. Climate-driven migration further disrupts children's education and weakens cultural cohesion. Against this backdrop, the 1st Annual Sports initiative offers an inclusive platform to improve physical activity, promote mental resilience, strengthen cultural participation, and re-engage children and youth in education—particularly benefitting urban coastal migrant children, women, elderly people, persons with disabilities, and adolescent girls.



In December 2024, GRACE organized its First Annual Sports Competition under the initiative of Children's Education and Development. The event was held from December 1 to December 26, 2024, in the bustling heart of Khulna's Bandabazar, with the purpose of addressing cultural, social, and religious barriers, while also fostering mental and physical wellbeing, moral education, and academic growth.

For many children in urban coastal migrant communities, the absence of open playgrounds, excessive screen time, and a lack of healthy recreation are pressing issues. This competition was launched to restore the joy of outdoor play, strengthen community bonds, and inspire a culture of togetherness across generations. Beyond fun and games, the initiative aimed to promote health, resilience, empowerment, and cultural wellbeing for children, reproductive-aged women, elderly people, persons with disabilities, and youth.

Objectives

The First Annual Sports Competition set out to promote physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and community resilience in Khulna's urban coastal areas. It created a safe and inclusive platform where children, youth, women, elders, and persons with disabilities could come together, fostering peer learning, teamwork, and cultural integration. The initiative provided young people with positive alternatives to drugs, gossip, and isolation, instead inspiring cooperation and healthy recreation. By encouraging open-field play and outdoor activities, the program reduced screen dependency, strengthened family bonds, and revived community spirit. Aligned with GRACE's broader vision of localization and sustainable change, the event empowered communities to take ownership of their children's futures. Ultimately, it laid the foundation for a healthier, more inclusive society where everyone can participate and thrive.



Event Overview

The First Annual Sports Competition was led by 20 dedicated youth leaders from the community and spanned 16 days, engaging all participants in a wide range of activities. The event featured group-specific races, sack races, marble races, poem and art competitions, football, tennis throwing, and speeches on climate change and community resilience led by youth and community members. The final day on 28th December concluded with a vibrant prize-giving ceremony attended by local women leaders, religious figures, and influential community members, who praised the initiative. They expressed that, "No matter what, this event has been and will continue to be a pillar of community transformation, and we will carry it forward in the years to come." The event successfully combined physical activity, cultural expression, and civic engagement, leaving a lasting impact on both participants and the broader community.



Participation

The First Annual Sports Competition brought together a diverse group of 402 participants, reflecting strong community ownership and inclusion. A total of 130 women actively joined, highlighting the event's role in breaking cultural barriers and promoting female participation. Among children, 120 boys and girls, including 40 girls, found a safe space to play and learn teamwork, while 7 children with disabilities were meaningfully included—ensuring no one was left behind. The presence of 25 youth boys and 80 men reinforced intergenerational bonding, where families and neighbors played side by side. Beyond the numbers, the event strengthened community resilience, gender inclusion, and cultural wellbeing, leaving a lasting impact on both participants and the wider community.

Major Outcomes

- **Enhanced Community Resilience:** Over 400 participants, including children, youth, women, elderly, and persons with disabilities, actively engaged, fostering stronger community bonds and social cohesion.
- **Promoted Gender and Social Inclusion:** 130 women, 40 girls, and 7 children with disabilities participated, demonstrating progress toward equitable access to recreation and empowerment.
- **Improved Physical and Mental Wellbeing:** Regular participation in sports activities such as football, kabaddi, and tennis helped reduce stress, improve stamina, and encourage healthier lifestyles.
- **Positive Youth Engagement:** The event provided safe alternatives to drugs, gossip, and screen addiction, encouraging teamwork, leadership, and discipline among young participants.
- **Increased Access to Play and Learning Opportunities:** Children from underserved communities were given a chance to play in open fields, rediscover joy, and build essential social and cognitive skills.
- **Strengthened GRACE's Community Leadership:** The successful execution of the event reinforced GRACE's reputation as a trusted organization promoting health, unity, and sustainable change, paving the way for future community-based initiatives.



Challenges and Way Forward

- Limited Resources for Large-Scale Sports Events

- o Way Forward: Seek sponsorships, partnerships, and community support to expand future events.

- Managing Multiple Sports Simultaneously

- o Way Forward: Improve planning, allocate additional volunteers, and streamline event schedules for smoother execution.

- Weather Disruptions During Certain Days

- o Way Forward: Develop contingency plans, including indoor backup activities and flexible scheduling.

- Ensuring Inclusion of All Participants (Women, Children, PWDs)

- o Way Forward: Provide targeted outreach, accessible facilities, and inclusive equipment for future programs.

- Maintaining Engagement Beyond the Event

- o Way Forward: Organize follow-up workshops, community sports clubs, and regular outdoor activity sessions to sustain participation.



Intervention 02: Youth Engagement Transforming Communities

GRACE's leadership journey began with the vision of developing skill youth – Agro based skill development

GRACE's leadership journey began with the vision of empowering youth and women. The organization launched its strategy by engaging a team of 20 young women-led volunteers who actively work at the community level to mobilize action, raise demand, and identify gaps while driving solutions. This grassroots foundation continues to shape GRACE's commitment to inclusive, youth-driven, and solution-oriented development. Youth are the driving force behind sustainable change, and GRACE has been at the forefront of empowering young people to become catalysts of transformation within their communities. Through the Youth Engagement Program, a diverse group of motivated young leaders have not only gained skills and knowledge but have also begun applying them directly to community development, social protection, and environmental sustainability.



Key Highlights of Youth Engagement Activities

Green Business & Leadership Training

Twenty young participants received one-month intensive training through the GRACE Agro Innovation Lab, focusing on green business models, leadership, market linkages, and value chain development. Many of them are now

replicating their learnings and growing as local entrepreneurs, contributing to both economic resilience and sustainable agricultural practices.

Digital Skills & Freelancing Opportunities



Youth skill development in Information Technology, including a 60-day freelancing training, has created a new pathway for economic empowerment. Out of eight participants, six are now earning an average monthly income of BDT 25,000–35,000 within just one year, showcasing the potential of digital livelihoods.

Environmental Protection & Pollution Reduction



The youth are actively engaged in campaigns and actions that promote environmental conservation, pollution reduction, and sustainable practices, fostering healthier communities and ecosystems.

Community Change Dialogues



Monthly community-level meetings have been organized, where youth facilitate dialogue, raise awareness, and drive local action to address pressing social issues.

Life-Saving Blood Donation Initiatives

Committed to saving lives, youth members have donated blood five times to support pregnant and lactating mothers, accident victims, thalassemia patients, and other critical cases.

Humanitarian Response in Crisis



Impacted on Cyclone Remal, youth volunteers actively supported humanitarian relief efforts by distributing emergency food packages to vulnerable households, demonstrating solidarity and compassion in times of crisis.

Linkage with Social Protection Services

Youth are playing a crucial role in establishing linkages with government safety-net programs, ensuring that vulnerable households can access existing social protection schemes.

A Generation of Change-Makers:

Through these initiatives, GRACE is cultivating a generation of skilled, compassionate, and innovative youth who are reshaping their communities. From entrepreneurship and digital empowerment to environmental protection and humanitarian response, their collective actions are building stronger, more resilient, and inclusive societies.



Thematic Area-03: Health, Nutrition and WASH



Intervention 01: Transforming lives through Health, Nutrition and WASH practices

In a remarkable effort to advance health, nutrition, and resilience, GRACE has been implementing community-driven initiatives that empower women, improve family well-being, and promote sustainable practices. These interventions are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those focusing on Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3), and Gender Equality (SDG 5).



Major Highlights and Achievements



- **Formation of Women's Groups:** Eight mothers' groups, comprising 125 women participants, were established to meet four times a month. These gatherings have become vibrant spaces for shared learning, peer support, and collective problem-solving on health and nutrition issues.
- **Leadership Development:** A total of 21 community leaders (presidents, secretaries, and cashiers) received training on Health & Nutrition, Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA), and livestock

rearing. This initiative has built strong local leadership to promote household nutrition security and sustainable farming practices.

- **Improved Health Access through Partnership:** A formal MoU with a private hospital now provides community members with free health camps and discounted services for both indoor and outdoor treatments, including essential diagnostic tests—making healthcare more accessible and affordable.

- **Practical Nutrition Demonstrations:** Three cooking demonstrations were conducted for mothers of children aged 6–23 months, promoting nutritious meal preparation and child feeding practices that directly improve child health outcomes.
- **Community-Based Health Services:** Monthly free community health camps are providing general treatment, referrals, and screening for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). Alongside treatment, these camps are creating awareness on preventive health care and nutrition education.
- **Personalized Household Support:** Regular household visits ensure tailored counseling on Antenatal Care (ANC), Postnatal Care (PNC), Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF), Early Initiation of Breastfeeding (EIBF), Complementary Feeding (CF), and dietary diversity. These visits also promote CSA practices, ensuring long-term food security and resilience.

Building Resilient Communities

The coordinated actions under this initiative are already producing immediate and visible results—improving maternal and child health, enhancing nutrition outcomes, and strengthening food security. Women are not only gaining knowledge but also becoming agents of change, leading healthier practices in their households and communities.



By integrating health, nutrition, and climate-smart agriculture, this initiative demonstrates a scalable model of resilience-building that ensures no one is left behind. Together, these efforts are transforming lives, empowering women, and shaping healthier, more sustainable communities for the future.

Intervention 02: Cooking Demonstration Session

Background

Malnutrition among infants and young children remains a significant concern in the urban areas of Khulna. Limited dietary diversity, inadequate feeding knowledge, and poor hygiene practices have contributed to undernutrition, stunting, and micronutrient deficiencies.

To address these issues, **GRACE organized a Cooking Demonstration Session** targeting mothers and caregivers of children aged 6–23 months. The initiative aimed to bridge the knowledge gap by promoting locally available, affordable, and nutritious complementary foods that support healthy child growth and development.

By equipping mothers with practical cooking and feeding skills, this intervention strengthens community health awareness, reduces malnutrition risks, and builds long-term resilience in urban low-income settings.



Objectives

- ✓ Promote appropriate complementary feeding practices for infants aged 6–23 months.
- ✓ Demonstrate easy-to-cook, nutrient-rich recipes using local ingredients.
- ✓ Educate caregivers on hygiene, food diversity, and portion sizes.
- ✓ Contribute to reducing child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in the community.

Event Description and Methodology

Session Flow: Introduction (30 min): Discussion on complementary feeding and child nutrition needs.

- **Live Cooking Demo (60 min):** Preparation of 2–3 balanced recipes (fortified porridge, vegetable mash, and fish-based meals).
- **Tasting & Feedback (30 min):** Caregivers sampled dishes and shared feedback.
- **Q&A + Handouts (30 min):** Distribution of recipe cards and feeding guidelines.

Methodology:



- **Interactive:** Mothers actively participated in food preparation (mixing, cooking).
- **Visual Aids:** Use of posters showing food groups and portion sizes.
- **Group Discussion:** Participants discussed local feeding challenges and myths.

Picture documentation included action-oriented photos of live cooking and caregiver participation.

Participants

A total of 25 mothers and 25 children participated in the cooking demonstration session, which aimed to promote appropriate complementary feeding practices for infants aged 6–23 months. The session provided hands-on guidance to caregivers on preparing easy-to-cook, nutrient-rich recipes using locally available ingredients, emphasizing the importance of hygiene, food diversity, and proper portion sizes. Through active participation and practical learning, mothers enhanced their knowledge and confidence in feeding their children nutritious meals, thereby contributing to the reduction of child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies within the community.

Facilitator and Resource Person

Sl.	Name	Category	Department	Expertise	Topics Covered	Duration
1	Four Youth Leaders	Facilitators	Community Youth	Health & Nutrition	Ensuring child nutrition (6–23 months)	1 Day

Logistics Used

- **Materials:** Cooking pots, utensils, ingredients, posters, and printed handouts.
- **Venue:** GRACE Training Room, Labanchara, Khulna.
- **Banner:** A banner were used over there for ensuring the visibility

7. Major Outcomes

- ✓ 100% of caregivers learned at least two new recipes using local ingredients.
- ✓ 85% committed to adopting improved hygiene practices (handwashing, clean utensils).
- ✓ Increased awareness on:
 - Importance of animal-source foods (eggs, fish) for brain development.
 - Avoiding low-nutrient foods such as sugary drinks and plain rice.
 - 3 mothers volunteered to replicate the demonstration in their neighborhoods.
 -

8. Major Challenges and Way Forward

Sl.	Major Challenges	Way Forward
1	Limited access to ingredients (e.g., eggs, fortified flour)	Advocate for local government support or community food banks.
2	Cultural resistance to new foods	Conduct follow-up home visits to reinforce learning.
3	Time constraints for busy mothers	Organize shorter, more frequent sessions for convenience.



Thematic Area-04: Urban Resilience (Health, Nutrition, Climate change, Advocacy, Women empowerment, entrepreneur development and Governance)

Intervention 01: Beneficiary Selection

GRACE conducted an assessment in Ward #31 of Khulna city as part of its Model-3: Community-Based SafetyNet initiative. The assessment targeted 246 households to identify those experiencing extreme poverty based on multidimensional vulnerability factors. The study was primarily focused on areas such as Fedu Rahman Sharak, Modina Sharak, Akash's Slum, CID Sharak, and Amtola (2nd Sharak).

The objectives of the program included identifying extreme poverty, supporting income-generating activities (IGA), enhancing children's education, fostering entrepreneurship development, promoting social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) related to WASH, health and nutrition, encouraging organic vegetable production in urban areas, and providing short-term food assistance during Ramadan.

A systematic selection process was implemented to identify beneficiaries, ensuring that only one female participant was selected from each household. Data collection involved three trained data collectors who gathered information using a well-structured questionnaire that addressed various dimensions of vulnerability. The collected data was thoroughly reviewed and validated to ensure accuracy before finalizing the list of 105 households eligible for support.

GRACE has been actively working in the Khulna district, specifically in Khulna city and the Jolma union of Botiaghata upazila. As part of the GRACE Model- Community-Based SafetyNet initiative, GRACE conducted an assessment in a designated area of Ward #31, KCC, covering 246 households to identify those experiencing extreme poverty based on multidimensional vulnerability factors. The assessment identified potential households as extremely poor, which will

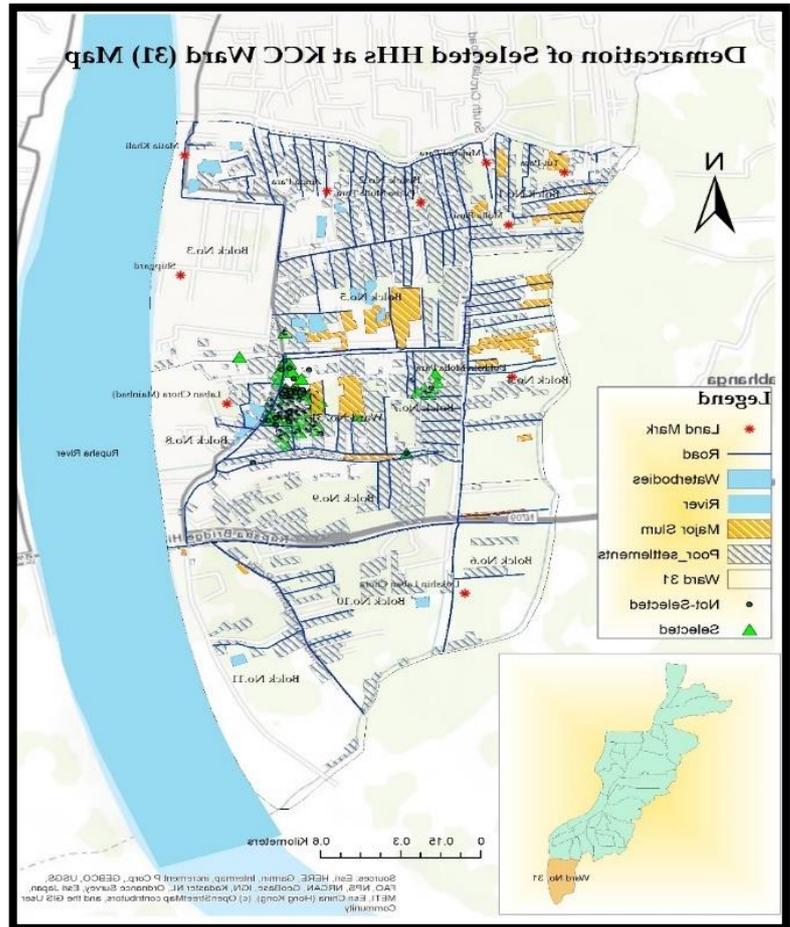


receive support for income-generating activities (IGA), children's education, entrepreneurship development, social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) related to WASH, health and nutrition, promoting a green environment, and food assistance.

Selection Process:

1. Selection criteria:

- i) All program participants will be female to ensure women's empowerment.
- ii) The eligible living areas are as follows: (i) Modina Sharak, (ii) Modina Sharak Akash Slum, (iii) CID Sharak, and (iv) Amtola 2nd Lane under Ward Number 31 in KCC.
- iii) The household owner's living place should be classified as either "jupry" (torn) or semi-pacca (wooden or brick with a tin roof).
- iv) Rental conditions should be also categorized as "jupry" (torn), semi-pacca (wooden or brick with a tin roof), or pacca.
- v) Single program participant will be considered from single household.



2. **Questionnaire Development:** An assessment questionnaire was designed to address multiple dimensions of vulnerability, including physical, financial, institutional, human capital, women's empowerment, disaster preparedness in emergencies, health, nutrition, and WASH.
3. **Data Collector Onboarding:** Three data collectors were selected from the community for the data collection process. All three data collectors were experienced and skilled in conducting surveys.
4. **Field Testing of the Questionnaire:** The questionnaire was tested in the field with the involvement of management, technical HR, and data collectors before finalization. Feedback received during the testing was used to refine the questionnaire.
5. **Training of Data Collectors:** A three-day training was conducted by technical experts on topics such as climate change, health and nutrition, and livelihoods, aimed at equipping data collectors with the necessary knowledge for the project.
6. **Data Collection:** The three trained data collectors completed data collection on a purposive cluster basis from 246 households.



Name of Data Collector	25.1.2025	26.1.2025	27.1.2025	28.1.2025	29.1.2025	30.1.2025	31.1.2025	01.2.2025	02.2.2025	03.2.2025	04.2.2025	Total	
1.Arif Hossain	9	16	1	10	12	1	3	7	1	14	3	77	
2.Joyanto Kumar dash	13	15	0	14	10	0	7	12	1	14	0	86	
3.Laila Khanam Rikta	4	10	14	8	13	0	0	7	8	19	0	83	
												Total	246

7. **Database Review and Cleaning:** The data was thoroughly reviewed; any errors were addressed through both physical verification and follow-up phone calls.
8. **Draft List Preparation for Program Participants:** A draft list of participants was developed by considering various vulnerability indicators and calculating data weight values. Key indicators included occupation, income earners, average household income, households with disabled members, those with chronically ill members, climate change awareness, women’s empowerment, financial access, and community support, among others.
9. **Cross-Checking and Validation of Participant List:** The preliminary selected 105 (100%) of households were thoroughly cross-checked by senior management. A 2% error rate was identified, such as cases where two interviews were conducted within the same household due to dishonesty of the respondent. The data accuracy result were excellent noted by validation personnel.



10. **Final Program Participant Selection:** The organization ensured that each household had only one beneficiary. A final list of 105 households was selected to receive the GRACE support.

11. **Approval for Beneficiary Support Card (BSC):** Approval was obtained for providing a Beneficiary Support Card (BSC) to the selected participants, formally recognizing them as beneficiaries.

Time Frame:

Expert meeting on the study	January-25
Questionnaire development	January-25
Piloting and tools finalization	20-25 January 2025
Data collection	25 Janu-05 February
Data crosschecking & cleaning	06-7 February 25
Draft report writing and sharing for feedback	7-10 February 25
Final report preparation & submission	18 February 2025

The assessment has successfully identified households experiencing extreme poverty and outlined a comprehensive plan to provide targeted support through various initiatives. The focus on women's empowerment and the inclusion of multiple dimensions of vulnerability underscore GRACE's commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable populations.

Moving forward, it is essential for GRACE to continue monitoring the impact of its interventions and adapt its strategies based on community feedback and changing needs. Additionally, future assessments should aim for a more balanced representation across all areas to ensure equitable support distribution. Overall, this initiative represents a significant step toward alleviating poverty and promoting resilience within the community.



Intervention 02: Community in Social Safety Nets

Addressing vulnerability through community-based social safety nets

Ramadan Food package Support:

Extreme poverty remains a persistent challenge in many communities, where households face food insecurity, limited income opportunities, and social marginalization. Vulnerable families often lack access to basic necessities and sustainable livelihoods, making them disproportionately affected by economic shocks, natural disasters, and social inequities. Without targeted interventions, these households struggle to break the cycle of poverty, impacting not only their immediate well-being but also the broader community's development.

Through the generous internal support of 10 dedicated donors providing ZAKAT funds, GRACE has been able to reach and uplift the most vulnerable families in the community.

Direct Support to Extreme Poor Families: A total of 105 ultra-poor



households benefited from targeted assistance. Families received nutrient-rich food packages during Ramadan 2025 and additional support for Eid-ul-Adha, ensuring both nutritional security and festive inclusion.

Date of Distribution: 27 February (inauguration) and 28th February-2025

Achievement of Distribution: 105 Selected Most vulnerable Program Participants

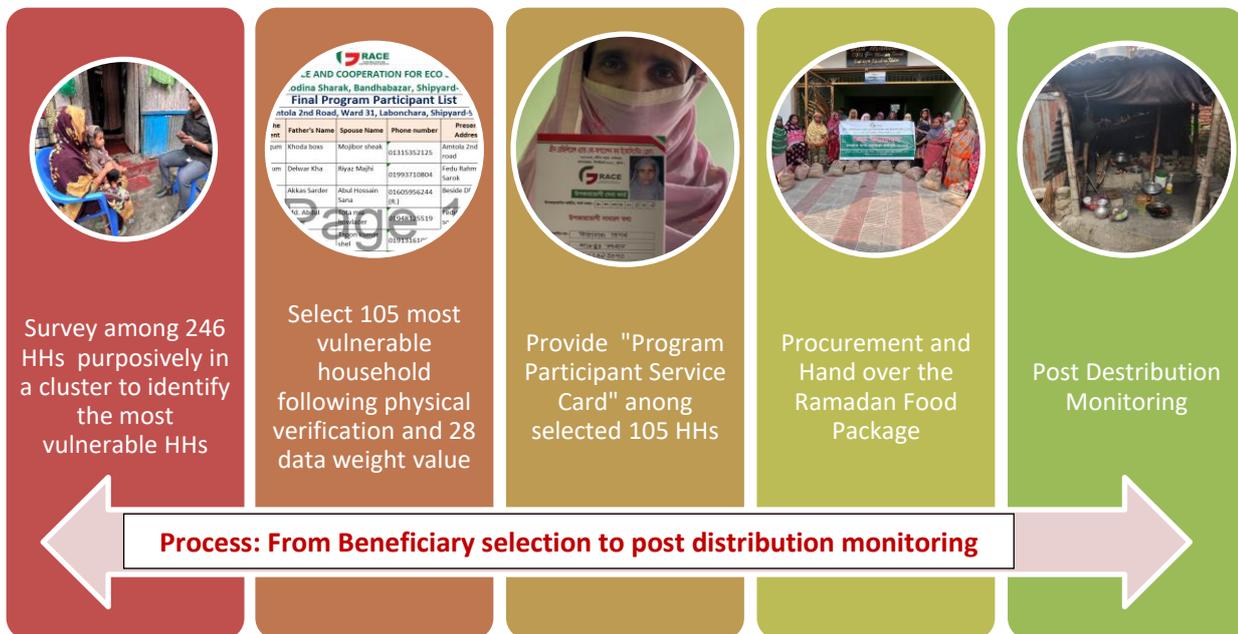
Package Details:

Each of the Program Participant (105) has received one package including eight variety of foods like-

S/L	Items Name& Quantity
1	Rice-5Kg
2	pulse (dal) -1kg
3	Oil-1 lt.
4	Sugar-500gm
5	Rice fried (muri)-500gm
6	Chola lentil-1Kg
7	Date-500gm
8	Rice flakes (chira)-1kg



Process from beneficiary selection to Post Distribution (PDM):



Support during Eid-UI-Adha-2025

A total of 105 households received Eid-ul-Adha support, with distributions made in consideration of religious preferences. Both goat and cow meat were provided among the program participants.

For many years, Rahima Begum could only dream of feeding her children meat during Eid-ul-Adha. Belonging to an extremely poor family, she had never received even 500 grams of meat as a gift or support from anyone. Every year, she joined others like her, moving from door to door in the neighborhood of wealthy families, hoping for a small share. Sometimes, after visiting 40 to 50 houses under the scorching sun, she managed to collect only a kilogram of low-quality meat — often mixed and leftover pieces.



But this year was different. With the support of the program, Rahima and 104 other families received Eid-ul-Adha meat packages with dignity. Both goat and cow meat were distributed, taking into account the religious sentiments and dietary preferences of the participants.

Tears filled Rahima’s eyes as she prepared a meal for her children — not from leftovers, but from a gift of respect. “It’s an honor for us,” she said softly. “For the first time, we didn’t have to move door to door. My children could eat meat like others, and I could feed them with pride.”

This simple act of compassion gave these 105 families more than just food — it restored their sense of dignity, belonging, and joy on a day meant for sharing and kindness.

Intervention 03: Income Generating Activities (IGA) Support

GRACE provided support to mostly vulnerable five women leaders for IGA in urban areas

Type of support	Quantity	Remarks
1. Integrated IGA (agriculture, aquaculture & poultry)	1	25,000*1=25000
2. Agro shop support	1	8500*1=8500
3. T-stall	3	8500*3=25500
Total	5	59,000

All the Income Generating Activities (IGA) initiated under the program are showing strong and sustainable progress. Participants have demonstrated remarkable improvement in their business performance, resulting in steady growth in household income. On average, monthly earnings have increased from BDT 5,000 to BDT 12,000 — a clear indicator of enhanced economic resilience and financial independence.

Several women entrepreneurs have already expanded their business



operations, introducing new products and diversifying their market reach. Their success stories reflect growing confidence, improved decision-making power, and active participation in household financial planning.

As an urban-based initiative, this program has created meaningful pathways for women’s empowerment — enabling them not only to earn a stable income but also to raise their voices, contribute to family welfare, and serve as role models within their communities. It stands as a testament to how targeted capacity building, mentorship, and startup support can transform vulnerable women into capable, self-reliant entrepreneurs.





Thematic Area-05: Social Entrepreneur, Green Business Development and private Sector Engagement

GRACE AGRO INNOVATION LAB ; DRIVING GREEN BUSINESS, DELIVERING SAFE FOOD



“Harnessing Green Innovation through Climate adaptation: From Safe Food to Thriving Green Businesses”

In Bangladesh, the “charlands” (river islands) cover about 830,000 hectares, of which 60 %-90 % are cultivable, offering significant potential for climate-smart agricultural intensification. In the Khulna agricultural region (Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Narail districts), of about 544,049 hectares of cultivable land, 66,000 hectares remain entirely fallow, and another 19,000 hectares are underutilized for much of the year outside the Aman rice season. In



urban and periurban Khulna (e.g. Batiaghata Upazila), roughly 61% of households are engaged in agriculture, facing frequent climate hazards such as salinity intrusion, waterlogging, and erratic rainfall — yet these same risks

strengthen the case for adopting sustainable, resilient farming of unused or marginal lands.[Sources: IRRI and daily Observer]



In January 2025, Green Resilience And Cooperation for Ecosystem (GRACE) established a “GRACE Agro Innovation Lab” in peri-urban Jolma Union under Botiaghata, adjacent to Khulna City Corporation. A total of 9 decimals of previously fallow land has now been transformed into a vibrant green hub. The objective is to demonstrate climate-adaptive, sustainable agriculture practices that ensure food safety, water conservation, promote green entrepreneurship, and create learning opportunities for urban and peri-urban communities. The lab aims to serve as a model of innovation, showcasing how even small patches of unused land can contribute to food security, resilient livelihoods, and eco-friendly business opportunities in climate-vulnerable regions.

Impact of the GRACE Agro Innovation Lab:

The GRACE Agro Innovation Lab has quickly become a beacon of hope in peri-urban Jolma, Botiaghata, where climate-vulnerable families face salinity, disasters, and shrinking farmland. By introducing green businesses rooted in climate-smart agriculture, the Lab is not only greening barren land but also sowing the seeds of dignity, resilience, and opportunity.

- Women’s Empowerment: Already, 150 women have received both practical and theoretical training on homestead, small, and large-scale climate-smart agriculture. This has translated into safe, nutritious food production for families and new opportunities for income generation.
- Turning Fallow into



Fertile: On just 9 decimals of previously barren, saline land, lush vegetables now thrive—an emblem of resilience and a symbol of sustainability for the whole community.

- Year-Round Cultivation: With 15 varieties of rooftop and bed system crops now being grown throughout the year, land and space are being used to their fullest potential. Already, the Lab has harvested 400 kilograms of organic vegetables in only three months, ensuring healthier diets and local food security.

- Eco-friendly Production: The adoption of organic farming practices—bio-pesticides, organic fertilizers, and soil nutrition management—has reduced harmful chemicals while restoring soil health.
- Water-Smart Solutions: In saline-prone areas where fresh water is scarce, the Lab has introduced water-saving and preservation technologies, ensuring that every drop sustains crops and households.
- Seedling Security: A community nursery has been established to produce climate-resilient seedlings, carefully managed for rainy seasons, high salinity, and insect threats—guaranteeing reliable planting materials year-round.
- Safe Food Access: Families of the 20 youth volunteers and surrounding community members are already consuming safe, organic vegetables produced by the Lab—turning training into tangible nutrition on their tables.
- Youth Engagement: 20 young volunteers have gained 30 days of hands-on experience at the Lab, becoming the next generation of green entrepreneurs and climate defenders.

Beyond Vegetables – Cultivating Hope and Resilience

- Resilience Building: Through vermicompost, worm production, climate-resilient seed varieties, and sustainable techniques, the Lab equips communities to withstand future shocks.



- **Women’s Green Enterprises:** Women are scaling homestead production into small green businesses, turning household farming into sustainable income streams.
- **Youth Leadership:** Trained youth are emerging as ambassadors of climate-smart agriculture, carrying forward knowledge and innovation.
- **Safe Food & Livelihoods:** Families gain access to safe, organic food while strengthening their sustainable livelihood base.
- **Replicable Model:** The Lab proves that even a small patch of land can transform vulnerability into resilience, dependency into entrepreneurship, and despair into hope—a model for replication across Bangladesh’s climate-affected regions.



Pathways of Impact

- **Scaling Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA):** Practices from Jolma Union are already replicated by three volunteers in urban areas, showcasing adaptability and sparking urban greening.
- **Sustainable Green Enterprises:** Integration of seedling production, water-smart technologies, and organic farming builds the foundation for green businesses that reduce risks and promote self-reliance.

Community Resilience: Each harvest strengthens food security, women’s empowerment, and youth engagement, proving that innovation and collective action can turn climate challenges into sustainable opportunitie



Thematic Area-06: Education & Skill Development

Skill Hands: Fighting Against Poverty for a Sustainable Future

Together, We Can Turn Skills into Sustainable Futures



Background:

Khulna, a southern coastal city of Bangladesh, stands at the frontline of the global climate crisis. Marked as a climate hotspot, the city has become a primary destination for displaced families fleeing cyclones, river erosion, and salinity intrusion. According to national reports, nearly 12% of Khulna's population are climate migrants, while more than 40% of residents live below the poverty line. The pressure is most visible in the city's informal settlements: in Khulna's three largest slums, 49% of dwellers are climate-induced migrants, with certain pockets, such as Ward 31, reaching as high as 70%.

These figures are not just statistics—they reflect thousands of families forced into precarious living conditions, where poverty, food insecurity, and lack of dignified work reinforce a cycle of vulnerability. Families who once depended on farming or fishing now struggle to adapt to urban poverty, with limited access to skills, resources, or income-generating opportunities.

GRACE's community assessment confirmed this multi-dimensional vulnerability, where the weight of low income and lost livelihoods constrains entire households, particularly women and youth, from building resilient futures. Responding to this urgent need, GRACE has initiated skill development programs tailored for women and young people. By focusing on both traditional livelihoods, such as tailoring, and forward-looking opportunities, such as freelancing, digital skills, and AI, these programs are designed to unlock potential, restore dignity, and transform vulnerability into resilience.

Contribution to SDGs:

The initiative directly contributes to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by transforming the lives of climate-affected communities in Khulna. Through skill development for women and youth, the program advances SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by increasing household incomes and strengthening food security. By equipping women with tailoring skills, it promotes SDG 5 (Gender Equality), while youth-focused digital and freelancing training fosters SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Targeting vulnerable slum populations, where up to 70% are climate migrants, the initiative also enhances SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and supports adaptive measures aligned with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Beyond these, improved income opportunities contribute to better health, education, and resilience, reinforcing the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Interventions

Tailoring Training for Women

A three-month tailoring course trained 10 women in cutting, stitching, and garment design. By the end of the training, 8 women successfully graduated, and average monthly incomes increased from BDT 0 to BDT 6,500.

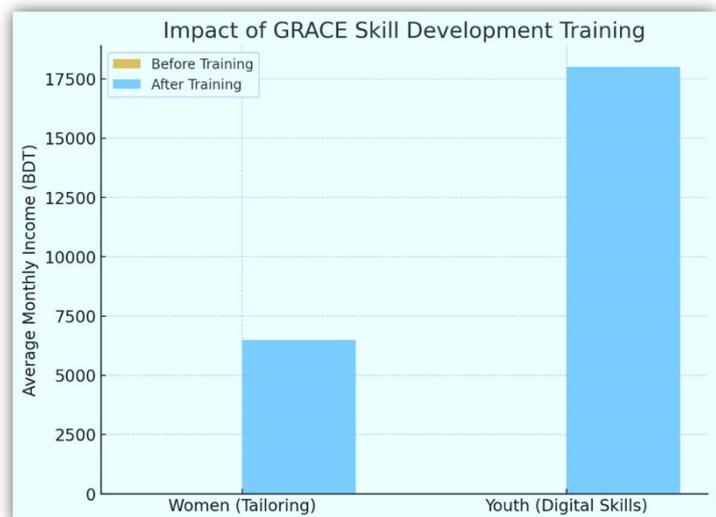
"This training has given me hope. Now I can support my family by stitching clothes at home."
— Rexona Begum

2. Computer, Freelancing & AI Training for Youth

From October to December 2024, GRACE

organized a digital skills training program for 10 youth, focusing on MS Office, freelancing, and e-business. With expert facilitation, the training enabled participants to secure online work. Graduates reported an average monthly income of BDT 18,000 through freelancing and digital entrepreneurship.

"This training changed my perspective on earning online. I never thought I could make money just by knowing MS Office and freelancing. Now, I have my first client!"
— Md. Mahedi Hasan Saad



Major Outcomes

- Tailoring: 8 women gained income-generating tailoring skills.
- Digital Skills: 10 youth acquired employable digital skills.
- Average monthly income increased by BDT 6,500 for women and BDT 18,000 for youth.
- Enhanced self-reliance and confidence among participants.

Challenges and Way forward:

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges remain in sustaining the impact of the program. For women trainees, the limited availability of sewing machines restricts their ability to fully utilize their skills and scale income-generating activities. Similarly, youth face barriers such as a lack of advanced mentorship and reliable internet connectivity, which hinders their competitiveness in the global freelancing market. To address these gaps, the way forward includes providing sewing machines or microloans to tailoring graduates, expanding digital training to incorporate AI, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship, and building mentorship networks and market partnerships at both local and global levels. These steps will ensure long-term sustainability, greater income opportunities, and enhanced resilience for climate-affected communities.



At its core, this initiative is about investing in people—their capacity, creativity, and courage—to ensure that climate migration does not translate into permanent poverty, but rather becomes a stepping stone toward inclusive growth and sustainable futures.

Md. Mamun Or Rashid
General Secretary
Green Resilience & Cooperation
For Ecosystem (GRACE)
73/36 Gha, Labanchara, Khulna

Emranul Haq
Chairman
Green Resilience & Cooperation
For Ecosystem (GRACE)
73/36 Gha, Labanchara, Khulna