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United Nations



# STORIES OF CHANGE



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In Bangladesh, the FAO Upazila to Community (U2C) initiative believes that by giving training on vaccination, biosecurity and surveillance to women, who are usually the custodians of livestock, it is possible to improve livestock health and ensure food security in their communities.

In rural areas across the country, family-based poultry production plays multiple roles: improving nutrition, as it produces meat and eggs for home consumption; incrementing earnings, through sale of eggs and birds; and bringing social recognition to entrepreneurs, as well as confidence in vaccinators.

Daily income from the sale of even one egg can have a substantial impact on very poor families' livelihoods. Furthermore, experience shows that the entire family benefits more from income belonging to women than to men.

Family poultry production can empower women, especially if they are responsible for poultry vaccination and are able to provide livestock farming advice to their communities.

This happened with Helena, a 35-year-old poultry farmer, wife and mother-of-three, who became a community vaccinator after taking the training delivered by an Upazila livestock officer.

Helena lives in the village Piyadaha under Sathia upazila of Pabna district. Helena has been rearing poultry in her homestead over the years. Poultry is the source of her income and the money earned from selling birds and eggs remains under her custody. She utilizes the money to fulfill little demands of her three children and contribute to family expenditures, while a small amount goes to her.

She was motivated to take the vaccination training because she had witnessed a large number of bird deaths caused by diseases, such as Newcastle disease and Fowlpox.

***"Before the training, every year more than 60 percent of the chicks hatched by broody hens died from different diseases. I did not know how to protect birds from such diseases."***

Through the U2C vaccination training organized by Dr. Harunur Rashid, Upazila Livestock Officer, Sathia, Helena learned how to vaccinate different types of birds and animals appropriately. Helena also now knows that vaccination protects birds and animals from disease infection, which diseases are fatal and cause death and for which diseases vaccines are available.

***"After the training, I have been vaccinating my own birds and birds of my neighbours and adjacent villages. Vaccination has dramatically minimized the death of birds from diseases in the area. None of my chicks have died from disease."***

Helena's successful training also brought positive social effects, such as her growing social confidence and respect for her from her family, her husband and the community.

In fact, the training enabled Helena to work as a "community vaccinator" and create an opportunity to increase her income; people in the community now respect her as a "doctor". Helena's husband also appreciates her because she contributes to the family income.

Initially, Helena encountered significant challenges, because people were not interested in vaccinating their birds and simply left birds to die. In addition, the people were reluctant to let her vaccinate their birds because she is a woman – and their perception was that a woman could not perform vaccinations properly. Helena had to build trust with her community.

However, things have changed. Community people now call Helena "Doctor apa" (the word apa is used for respectfully addressing elder sister). Moreover, before the training, Helena only did housework. Today, she also spends three to four hours vaccinating her birds and the poultry of adjacent villages, almost every day. This enables her to earn and save money, as well as improve family nutrition.

Looking to the future with a spirit of hope and achievement, Helena wishes to continue learning and become a skilled community vaccinator, in order to protect from disease all birds and animals in her community and in surrounding villages. Her plans also include establishing a poultry farm model at her homestead, so that she can demonstrate how to increase farm income through improved management practices.

As Helena's story has shown, the training on vaccination practices gave her the ability to diversify her activities, develop new skills and improve her family's nutritional and financial situation.

The Upazila to Community (U2C) project is part of a wider Animal Health programme in Bangladesh supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

