



Alternative Income Generation

Transforming a Housewife into a Fish Farmer

by Iffat Nawaz

In the west side of the Sundarbans, in a remote village called Burigoalini, a former house wife, Amena Begum, focuses all her enthusiastic energy into the fish ponds she built six months ago. Amena is among the IPAC project beneficiaries in Burigoalini village. In a place where rice farming is not an easy option, transportation is poor, and one boiled potato is all one might have as a meal per day, Amena considers herself fortunate to be a part of a sustainable income generation chain.

IPAC is constantly focusing on strengthening its work on value chain development and Alternative Income Generation (AIG) activities for forest and wetland dependent individuals and this is one of IPAC's main focuses for the next three years. While the environments around the forests and wetlands can be challenging the willingness of both the communities and the IPAC field staff keeps the work going in full force.

It was mid afternoon when Amena showed IPAC staff around her fish ponds. With a broad smile on her face and her two sons by her side she stood in the middle of the pond showing the variety of fishes she is farming. She mentioned she put in a little more seed money besides what IPAC provided her to get more robust results because she thought this could be a permanent solution to her age-old poverty. When asked if it's working, she nodded with a big smile and said "I wish I started this a long time ago, now my son does not have to go into the forest with the honey collectors, he is going back to school."



Amena collects fish from her productive fish ponds with the help of her sons

IPAC staff continues to train and assist Amena and her friends with developing their fish ponds, helping them chose the right feed, the appropriate breeds and monitor progress.

A few houses down from Amena, two other community members, stood showing their blooming vegetable gardens, another IPAC imitative that took place in the last six months in Burigoalini. With the right kind of intervention simple ideas such as vegetable gardening and aquaculture have changed the lives of people like Amena and her friends in this village.

IPAC is continuing value chain development work not just in Burigoalini, but in many other villages around Sundarbans. Development of eco-tour guides is another initiative taken by IPAC that is ongoing and hoping to prove success.

In the other four clusters, AIG activities are also running in full force. IPAC is building on the previous base of what has already been done as well as looking for new opportunities and partnerships.

Amena's story is not one off but one of many. Amena's youngest child and only daughter now attends the local school, Amena wants to send her to university in Dhaka, she said a few years ago this just sounded like a dream, but now it is a concrete vision.

IPAC is working on continuing work on AIG activities and value chain development and providing more people with better livelihood options. Through past research, present work and future implementations and partnerships IPAC is sure to reach its goal.