

Help women to flourish this International Women's Day

The empowerment of women in developing countries is critical to reducing poverty, which is why our charity, Traidcraft Exchange, runs projects that help women to diversify and take on new types of work, become more engaged in decision making and take up leadership roles.

7 March 2012

When Begum Madina Akhter joined the Sustainable Livelihoods for Poor Producers (SLIPP) project in Northern Bangladesh, she was living hand-to-mouth as a duck farmer. She had just 20 ducks and her husband was a day labourer, which meant they could not afford to send their children to school.

Within a year and a half of joining SLIPP, Madina had gone from a shy, nearly illiterate housewife to a successful businesswoman and community leader. She explains: "After joining the SLIPP duck rearer group, I received training. After having gone through these trainings I increased duck productivity from 200 to 240 eggs per duck and reduced mortality rate from 25% to 5%."



Madina built up a flock of 400 ducks, as well as learning about the importance of saving. She put aside money as insurance for tougher times, which proved invaluable when she lost most of her ducks to an outbreak of disease. Thanks to her savings she was able to build up her flock again.

As her confidence grew, Madina became secretary of a duck rearers' group in her local area and was then elected as an executive committee member of the Netrokona District Duck Rearer Association. Her latest achievement has been her election as a member of the local government body.



She says: "Now I am a community leader and a local government representative. My husband is very supportive about my activities, which to me is important. He encouraged me and actively participated in the election campaign. As is generally the case, husbands are very reluctant about their wives to participate in any income generating and awareness raising activities. My husband and I have, to a large extent, changed this behaviour in my community. Now many women are involved in economic and social activities and influencing others."

Asked how her participation in SLIPP has changed her life, Madina says: "Currently all four of my children are continuing their education. I can now afford to provide a more nourishing diet for my family which includes fish, meat, eggs, vegetables etc. After becoming successful with duck rearing, I have upgraded my house to a tin shed from a bamboo house. I feel very proud when I have money in my hand and my neighbours recognise me as a successful woman."



With the right support and training from Traidcraft, more women like Madina can improve their lives and those of their families and their communities. Show your support for women like Madina and celebrate International Women's Day by donating to Traidcraft Exchange.

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