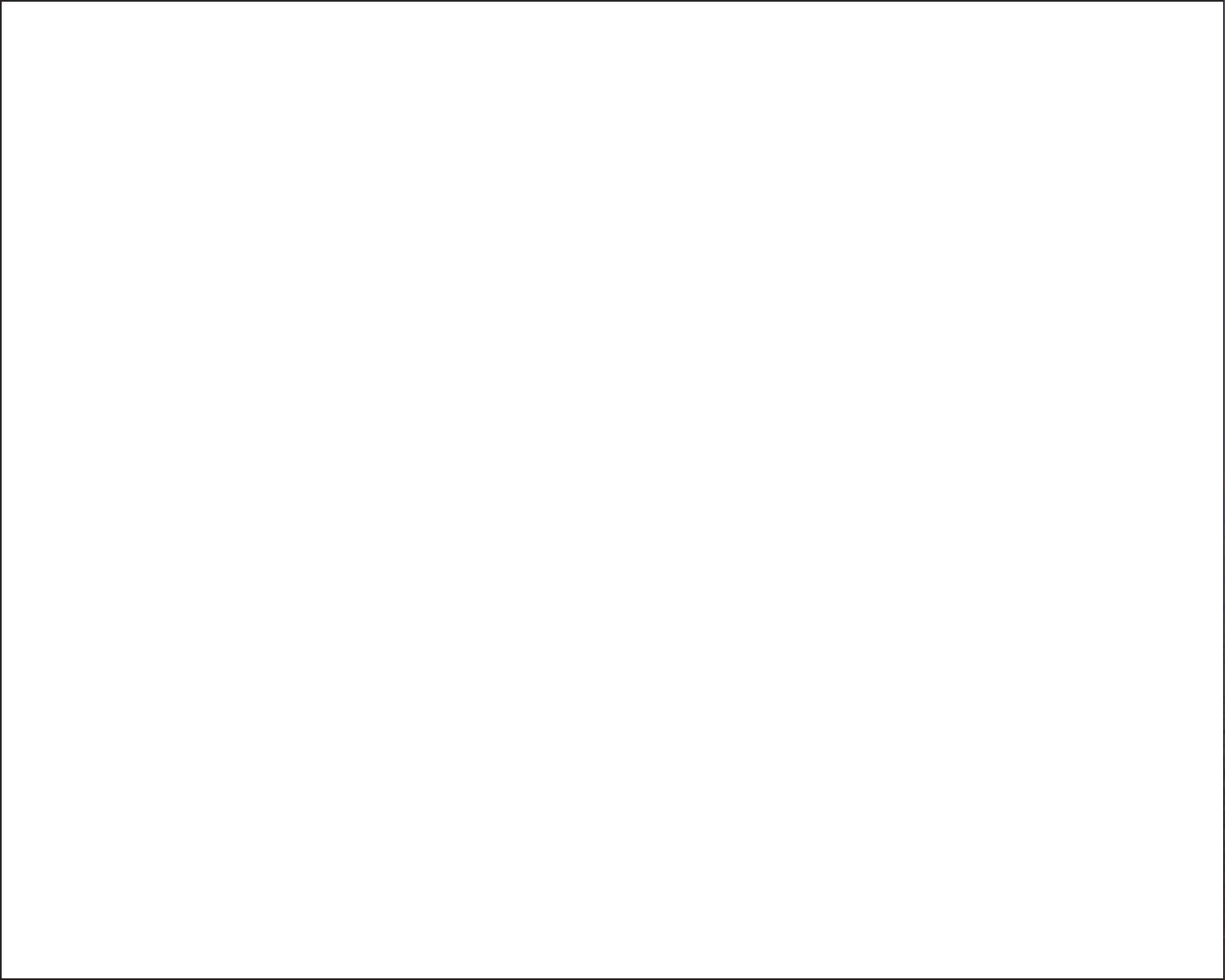




CONCERN
worldwide

**SURGING
HOPE** RESILIENCE
STORIES OF CLIMATE

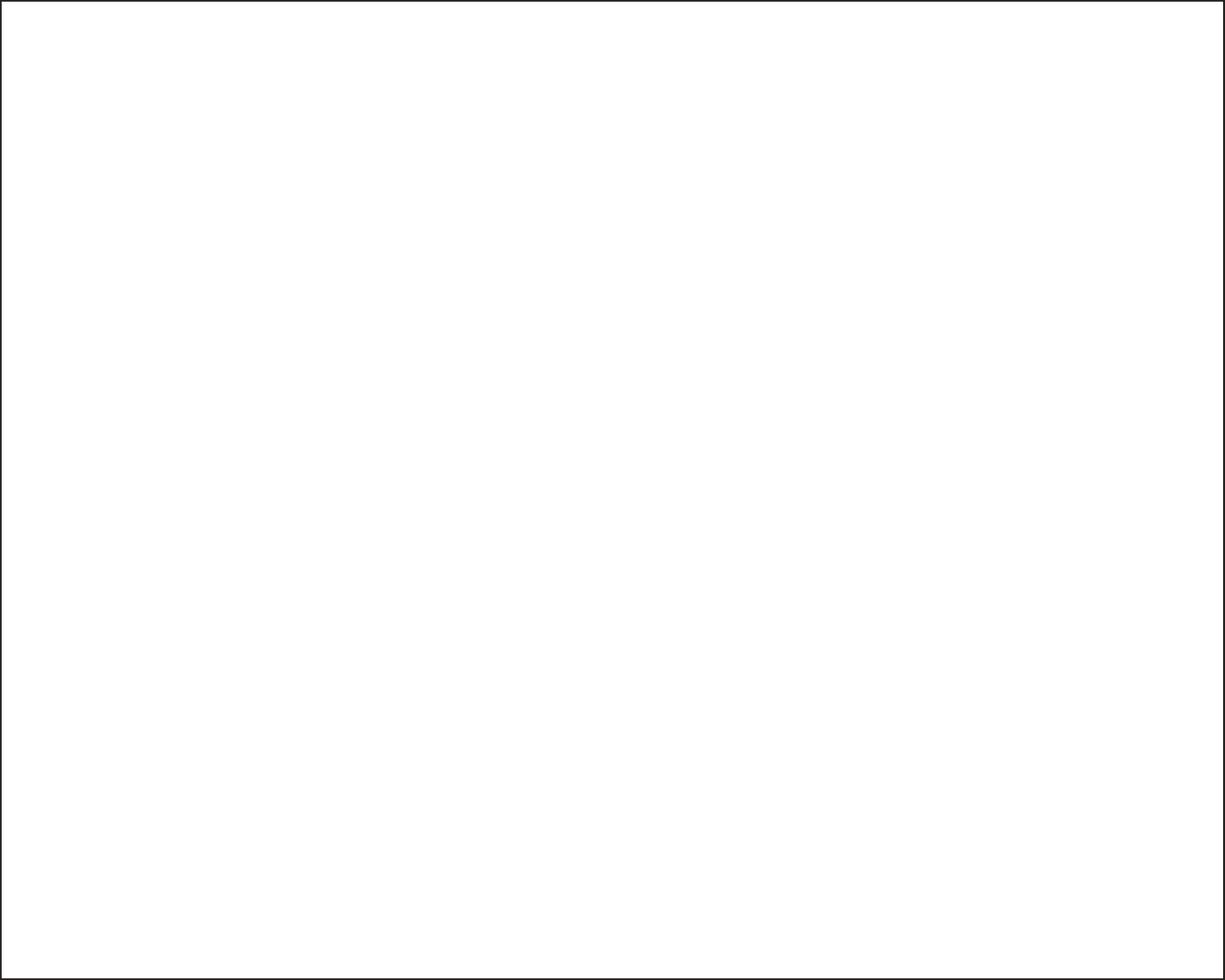




**The Photo Stories
of
Flood Resilience Programme**



The background image shows three young girls in school uniforms wading through shallow water. They are carrying school supplies, including books and bags. The water is calm, and the sky is clear. In the distance, a few other people can be seen on the shore.



“Surging Hope” is a photobook featuring the ‘Flood Resilience Programme’ of Concern Worldwide, highlighting the journey of resilience through challenges faced by the flood-prone communities in northern Bangladesh residing at the forefront of the climate crisis for generations.

The photo stories captured the lives of the people and their testament of resilience in the climate crisis across Sundarganj in Gaibandha and Hatibandha in Lalmonirhat, two of the most flood prone areas in northern Bangladesh.

Frequent flooding in these areas has led to devastating loss of lives, land, and livelihoods over the years, making climate change a lived reality for these people. Concern aims to portray both the continuous struggles of the communities as well as their immense courage to become more resilient to combat climate change impact.

The Flood Resilience Programme of Concern Worldwide, implemented by the local partner-Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), as part of the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance, with the funding of the Z Zurich Foundation focuses on strengthening the capacity of flood-prone communities to anticipate, prepare for, and recover from floods. The programme worked through a community-based approach, providing training, Early Warning Systems, and livelihood support to reduce vulnerability. It has also promoted sustainable infrastructure and disaster risk reduction practices. The programme worked with the communities to influence policies and practices as well as increase climate financing available at the local level which enhanced resilience to climate hazards. By integrating local knowledge with scientific tools, the initiative aimed to build long-term resilience against the impacts of climate change and recurring floods.

Through the photographs, Concern Worldwide documented the relentless struggles of climate-vulnerable communities, featuring their resilience as they navigate the uncertainties of a changing landscape.

Seven families, displaced from Badamer Char on the west side of the Teesta River, have been relocated to this flood-resistant housing in Kajir Char, Kapasia, Sundarganj upazila with the support of Flood Resilience Programme. Earlier this year, the powerful river swallowed their land, forcing them to migrate eastward in search of safety. As the flood crisis worsen and people are constantly forced to internal migration, more of these flood resistant housings are required to rehabilitate them to the safer locations that are still available around the shrinking landscape.





The sun is about to set and Ashinur Begum (35) pauses on her way home, her goats quietly trailing behind her after a long day of grazing. The mighty Brahmaputra, relentless and unforgiving, continues to devour the land inch by inch, swallowing up homes and memories alike. In the stillness of the fading light, Ashanur's thoughts drift back to the life she once knew—now lost, swept away by the river's ceaseless hunger. Her gaze lingers on the water's edge, where her past remains buried beneath the ever-shifting currents, leaving only the weight of remembrance behind.



Heavy clouds gathering ominously over the distant banks of the river. Rain begins to fall across the river's far side, a steady downpour that sends ripples of unease through the isolated communities in Vati Kapasia at Sundarganj upazila. Separated from the mainland of Kapasia, the locals fear that the storm will again quicken the erosion of their fragile land and flood their homes. Vulnerable to the river's whims, these flood-prone communities stand on the frontlines of the climate crisis, their lives shaped by the relentless forces of nature that threaten to sweep them away.



Prolonged heavy rainfall and the surge of water from upstream led to a rise in the Brahmaputra River, triggering the floods in July 2024.





The land drowned beneath floodwaters, leaving scarcely a patch of grass for grazing. For the people of the chars, their very existence is woven with the animals they raise. In times of flood, their greatest concern is not only for their homes but for the survival of these creatures, hurriedly seeking higher ground where they might find refuge from the rising waters.



Floods ravage not just the earth but also the very fabric of life, claiming both lands and loved ones. Shefali (30) breaks down in sorrow as she recalls her son Robiul, who drowned during the flood this year. At only three years old, he had been a beacon of innocent joy in the family, enjoying a carefree childhood in Kaderer Char, Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj.



As the roads vanish beneath the floodwaters, a family drifts toward higher ground on rafts made from banana plant stems. Prolonged rains often leave families stranded, with communication between different parts of the river basin comes to a halt.

Flood-resistant roads and houses with raised plinths become vital lifelines, protecting lives and minimizing losses during such disasters. In response, Flood Resilience Programme has been implementing these lifesaving measures across flood-prone unions in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat.



Climate migration is a recurring reality in the flood-prone regions of Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat. These areas, bordered by the mighty Brahmaputra and Teesta rivers, face persistent challenges as the lives and livelihoods of river basin communities are deeply affected. The frequency and intensity of heavy rains have increased, causing regular flooding that devastates homes and erodes land, forcing families to relocate to nearby higher ground roughly every three to five years.

The Flood Resilience Programme focuses on these vulnerable communities, aiming to ensure that floods no longer disrupt their lives or hinder the growth of local businesses. By building resilience and implementing strategies to mitigate loss, the programme also works with communities to influence policies and practices as well as increase climate financing available at the local level which enhance resilience to climate hazards.





In Hatibandha, the Teesta River's water levels are rising dangerously above the risk mark. Ambia Begum, a community volunteer under the Flood Resilient Programme, equipped with a handheld mic, is out in the community, warning the community people of the possible flooding.



Nur Moslema (33), a community volunteer in Belka union, Sundarganj, is guiding a group of women on how to purify and manage safe drinking water. She reaches out to the households immediately after an announcement of an impending flood. Volunteers like her, engaged in the programme, serve as tireless advocates, educating flood-affected communities on preparedness and minimizing losses from the increasingly frequent floods in Gaibandha district.







The mock drills organized for flood preparedness and loss mitigation is set to begin in a High School in Sundarganj, Gaibandha. In addition to Community people, Union Healthcare Services, veterinary services, the Fire Service and Civil Defense, the Public Health and Engineering Department- all participated in the drill. Their participation in this event demonstrated their coordinated preparedness and planned responses to prepare for upcoming floods.

Initiatives like this under Concern's Flood Resilience Programme are vital for creating and strengthening capacity of communities to tackle flood situations and building resilience among riverbank communities.

As evening falls, people make their way back home after a day of trade. Brahmaputra separates the char of Vati Kapsasia from the Sundarganj mainland, with boats being the sole means of travel between the two communities.





River Gauge of Bangladesh Water Development Board in the Teesta River



Flood Monitoring Display installed at the Teesta Flood Control Room under the Flood Resilience Programme with the technical support of RIMES for ensuring flood forecasting through effective monitoring of the river water.



Moderated by the Programme Field Facilitator in Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj, Raja Mia (36), members of the Community Resilience Action Group (CRAG) convene monthly meeting to discuss and reflect on community issues, particularly the developmental needs essential for building resilience. After identifying the concerns and collectively deciding on necessary interventions, the CRAG represents the community in communicating with the Union Parishad and other public service agencies and secure resources for implementation.



“It's time to plant trees to protect the land and the community” moderated by Nur Hossain, President of the local Community Consultative Group in Sundarganj, Gaibandha. The agenda focuses on nature-based solutions to mitigate flood-related losses and strengthen the community's resilience. The group is discussing the implementation of extensive tree planting across the community and at the household level, as well as strategies for seeking support and resources from the Union Agriculture Office and the Union Parishad.

Localised Flood Early Warning voice message received by a community participant via mobile phone for Early Action.





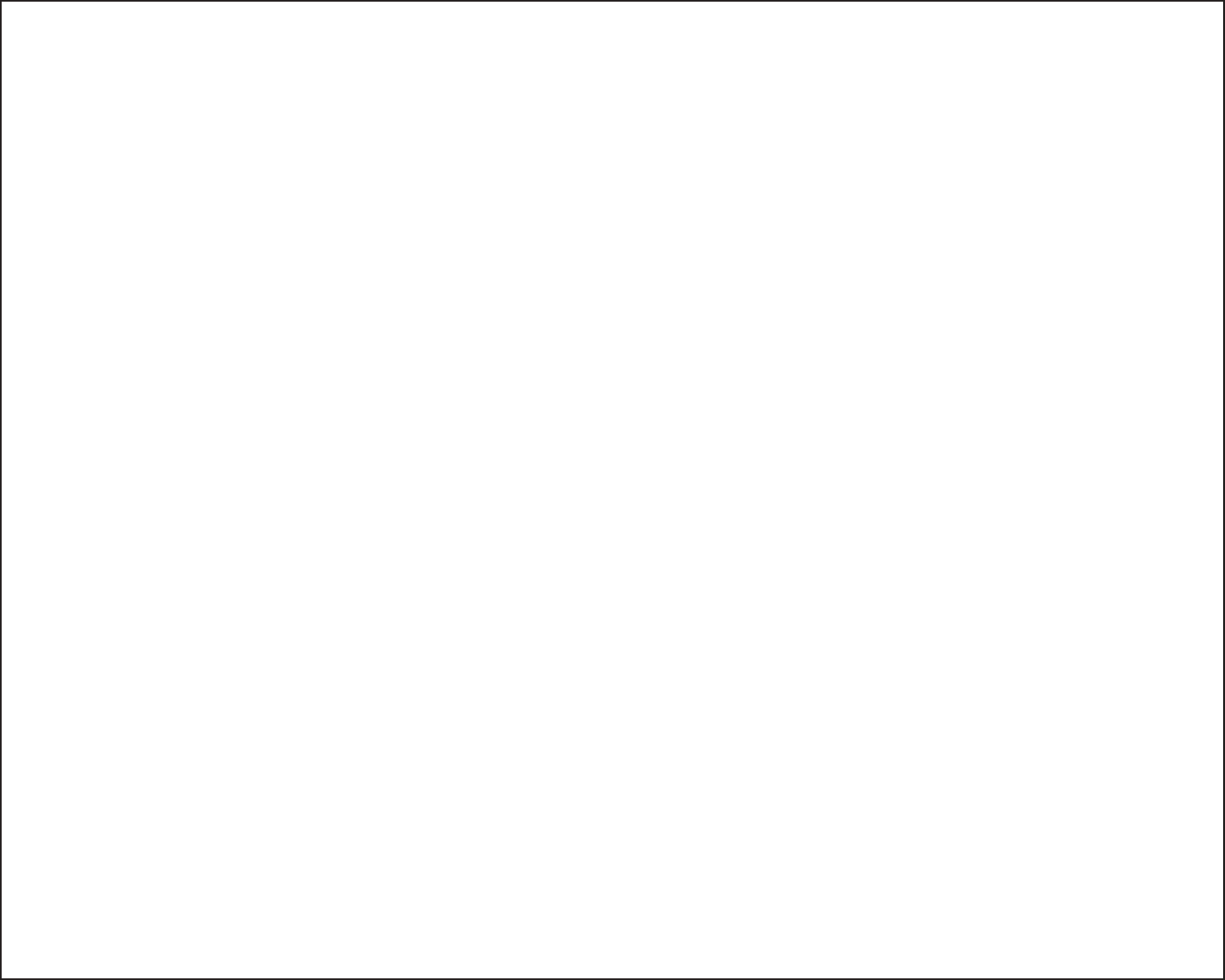
Mohammad Meher Ali is the President of the Climate Resilience Action Group Committee (CRAG), Belka, Sundarganj, Gaibandha. This community-based group is leading the changes in communities to mobilize communities and as first responder to any disaster. (UDMC) and influencing them for support and actions for disaster risk reduction.



Nur Moslema reaches out to her community to disseminate messages for preparedness after the announcement of a flood situation. She is creating awareness in the community about floods, facilitating a community action plan, and contributing to adaptive practices for the community.

Children and adolescents ventured into the flooded paddy fields with fishnets, catching fish that had gathered after prolonged heavy rains. As the water begins to recede from the cultivable lands across Sundarganj, the time has come to sow Aman seedlings.







The paddy seeds have sprouted, time to scatter them across the fields. As Aman cultivation season draws to a close, the stagnant waters from the ceaseless rains begin to recede, spreading thin over the cultivable lands of Sundarganj upazila, Gaibandha.

A farmer scatters the sprouted Aman seeds over the waterlogged fields, while starlings swoop down, eager for their share. Some of the seeds will be devoured by these birds, others destroyed by insects, and the remaining will endure, growing into paddy plants that will nourish the farmer's family in Kajir char, Sundarganj upazila .





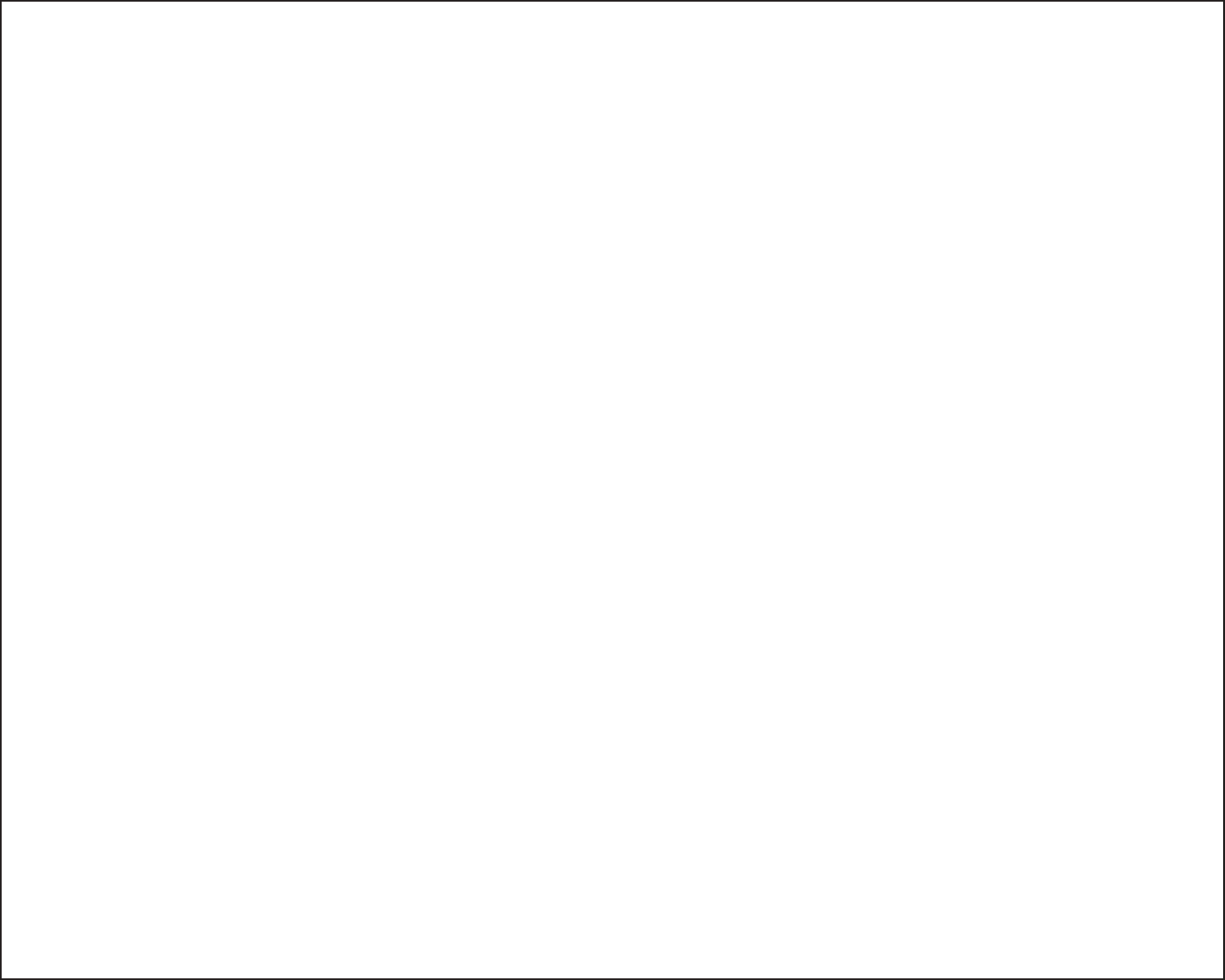
With a bright smile, Chayna Begum (35) holds a bottle gourd seedling, ready for replanting. She also grows eggplants and green chilies in movable sacks placed in her yard. After receiving training and support under the Programme, like many in her neighborhood of North Dhubni, Hatibandha upazila. She has embraced climate-adaptive agricultural practices by planting seeds in sacks for germination.



Waheda Begum (55) has a passion for gardening. In the flood-prone area, sandy soil where she lives, she nurtures everything from fruits and vegetables to vibrant flowers. As a participant of the Flood Resilience Programme, she learned how to make bio-compost using cow dung and household green waste, and using the compost to expand her vegetable garden. In her yard, she grows different climate adaptive vegetables with the climate smart techniques. Now her garden is flourishing along the raised plinth, turning her plot into a green oasis.

With a proud smile, she says, *"Since the cost of vegetables are always rising I started growing almost all vegetables on my yard".*







Farming at household level has become possible with the introduction of raised plots for flood-resistant housing. Ashraful Alam (35) living in one of these elevated homes in Kajir Char, Sundarganj, now grows eggplants, green chili, and spinach. His small garden meets the needs of his family of four, including a son and daughter, while the surplus is sold in the local market, making around two hundred taka in a day from time to time.





Ayesha Begum, 40, chops Napier grass to feed her cattle. She lives in a raised house now, where the sturdy, tall grasses fortify the plinths and serve as the primary feed for her cows. Nature-based solutions like these, promoted and supported by the Flood Resilience Programme, have proven vital in building resilience for those living in the flood-prone areas across Gaibandha district.



Hawa Begum (30) draws drinking water from a raised tube well in her yard. This well is shared by five families in the settlement. Raised tube wells like this, supported by the Flood Resilience Programme, are the only reliable source of safe drinking water in the chars and there's a need to install more.



On a sunny afternoon, a Self Help Group meeting is underway, led by a community volunteer of Flood Resilience Programme. They are discussing on storing dry foods in preparation for the upcoming flood emergencies. This group of 23 women from the neighborhood in North Dhubni, Shingimari union, Hatibandha, meets every month to plan on flood preparedness. Such practices are crucial to empower the women in the communities through their active participation in mitigating the loss from flooding.



Joyful Begum (31) aspires to become a tailor and is currently learning to sew. After migrating to one of the raised houses in Kajir Char, Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj upazila in the year 2023, she now lives with her husband, son, and daughter. She intends to earn to afford the expenses of education for her children.



Farida, (20) and her husband Mamun (26) save money to prepare for emergencies that often arise. Each day, they set aside a small amount—anywhere from ten to fifty—in locked pots they call their bank 'Tala Bank,' only to be opened in times of crisis. Introduced under the Flood Resilience Programme, this practice has been widely adopted by families throughout Haripur and the neighboring villages in Sundarganj, Gaibandha.



Teesta Barrage is a crucial point for flooding in Hatibandha upazila, Lamlmonirhat.





A group of jute farmers transports their harvest on horse-drawn carts, heading for processing. They will submerge the stems in water to decompose and extract the fibers, following the traditional process. Then the jute will be ready for making different products for business. Jute cultivation remains a vital agricultural practice in flood-affected areas such as Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat district.







The Chairman of Shingimari Union Parishad, Ward No. 3, Hatibandha, is presiding over the bimonthly Union Disaster Management Committee meeting at his office. In collaboration, the government, NGOs, and the Union Parishad are working together to implement a master plan aimed at reducing future flood risks in the area.



Md. Monowar Hossen Dulu, Chairman of Shingimari Union, Hatibandha, is actively engaging with the community to share the union's plans for securing resources to prepare the community mitigate flood loss, and his commitment to serving as needed.

The Flood Resilience Programme aims to enhance resilience and reduce losses in flood-prone areas of Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat through multi-sector partnerships, with a crucial focus on the public sector. This goal has been pursued by advocating for improved local preparedness budgets and strengthening the functioning of the Union Disaster Management Committees.

Supported by the Flood Resilience Programme, and with contributions from the locals, this 85-feet-long, 8-feet -wide U-drain plays a vital role in facilitating the cultivation of paddy and wheat across Wards 3, 4, and 5 in Goddimari union, Hatibandha upazila. Previously, the area suffered from persistent flooding caused by water from the Teesta River. Now, the drain channels stagnant water from one side of the road to the other. More of these essential water channels are needed along the road to further mitigate river water stagnation and protect the surrounding cultivable land.

The drain's construction was a collaborative effort involving the community and the Union Parishad, facilitated by the Concern's Flood Resilience Programme, overseeing its implementation. However, more of these essential water channels are needed at key points along the road to further mitigate river water stagnation and protect the surrounding cultivable land.









Raza Mia (35) stands proudly in his banana farm, a smile on his face. By planting banana trees along the canal that runs beside his home in Kajiyar Char, he has not only prevented the canal from expanding due to the flow from the Teesta River but also created a source of bananas to eat, share, and sell, setting an example for others.



Introduced under the Flood Resilience Programme, women in the chars are now using a climate-adaptive technique of planting vegetables in sacks, allowing them to relocate the plants or place them on high shelves when floodwaters encroach on their homesteads.





Since the construction of the road in Dhubni, supported by the Flood Resilient Programme, school children are now able to attend classes regularly. On one side of the road, there are two primary schools with approximately 400 students who rely on it for their daily commute. More of these flood resilient roads need to be constructed and renovated in other areas across Hatibandha.



A settlement of four families on a flood-resistant elevated plot in Charitapur, Sundarganj. A canal flowing from the nearby Teesta River runs alongside it. Due to the elevation and the trees planted around it, the settlement is now safe from erosion.





Rikta Akhter (16) is preparing for an upcoming test, her eyes set on the path to higher education. Unlike many of her friends and classmates, who have been forced to abandon their studies over the past few years, Rikta's determination remains unshaken. In this remote corner of the country, where the mighty river must be crossed by boat and the weather turns cruel without warning, the struggle for a better education in schools in the mainland is a battle fought daily.

In the isolated river basin villages across Sundarganj, most girls her age are already married, their lives consumed by the demands of family and the harsh realities of life in the river basin. Yet, Rikta stands apart, her spirit unyielding in the face of challenges that would crush others.



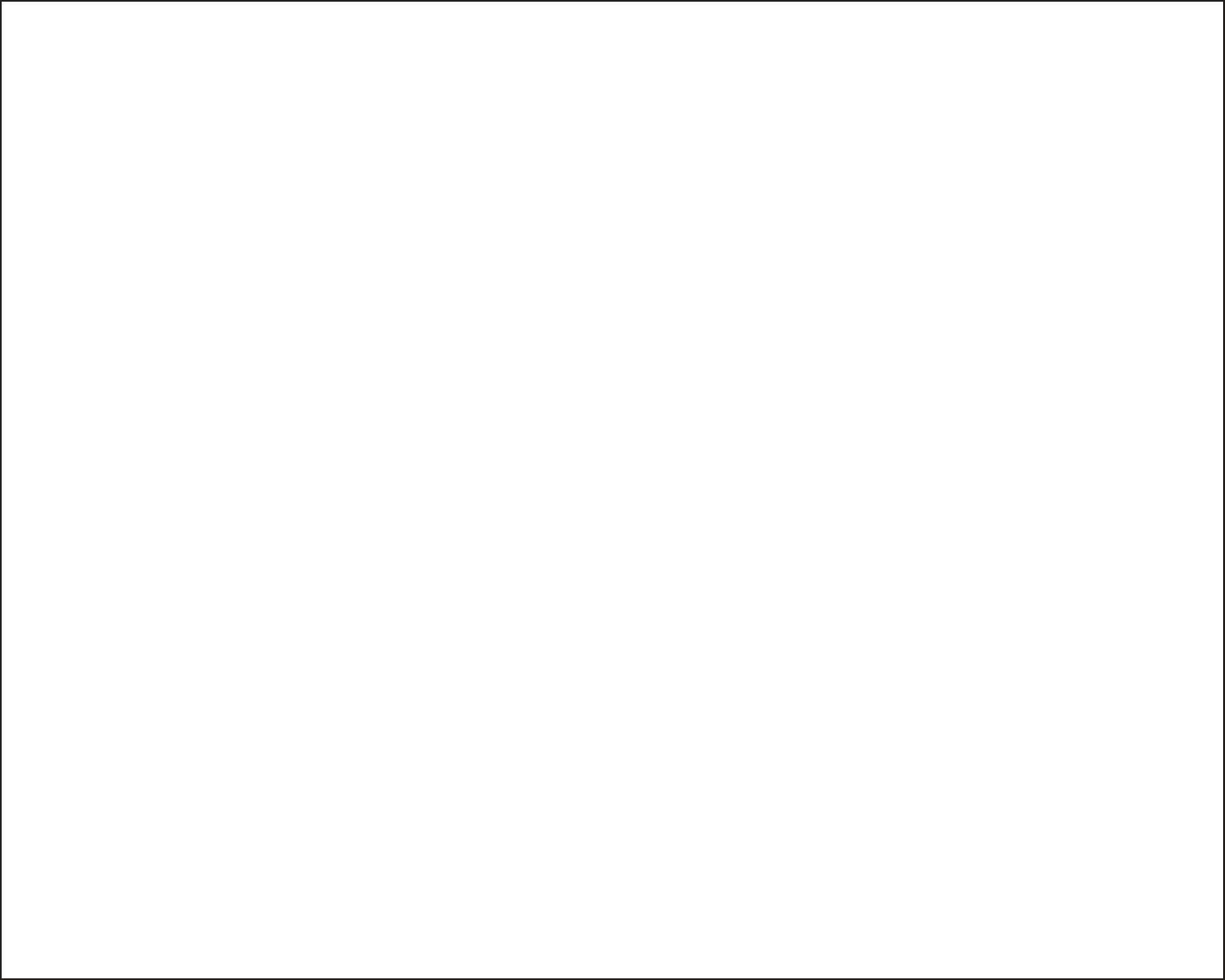
Hia Moni (3) bursts into gleeful giggles as her mother, Sumi Begum (26), lifts her high into the air, their laughter dancing on the breeze. Once displaced by flooding, Sumi's family has now returned here to their native village in Charitabari in Sundarganj, thanks to the flood-resistant housing implemented by the Flood Resilience Programme of Concern Worldwide. Their homecoming is a testament to resilience, rooted once more in the land they had feared lost.



Over two thousand feet-long and four feet high, the flood-resilient road supported under the Flood Resilience Programme, now bridges the east and west of Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj, Gaibandha, constructed in July 2024. In times when the river swells and floods engulf, communication with the various parts is often severed, trapping families in their homes and bringing daily life to a standstill. In a region where the mighty rivers threaten to isolate communities, raised roads that can endure the rising waters are vital.







(Cover Photo Story)

For the community of Vati Kapasia, Sundarganj, life is a relentless struggle against the constant threat of losing homes and croplands to riverbank erosion forcing relocation to areas further from the river's edge. Currently, it is home to more than 700 families, with a population of around three thousands. Over the past decade, more than five hundred families from neighboring chars have migrated here after losing their lands to the encroaching river.

The community is connected to the mainland at Poshchim Bazar on the west side of the river.

Several infrastructure developments have been undertaken with support of Flood Resilience Programme of Concern Worldwide. These efforts have focused on raising plinths and embankments, as well as renovating and constructing flood-resilient roads to connect different parts of the locality.

Despite their hard work, the extremely poor residents of this community remain among the most deprived, still in urgent need of support from both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to build their capacities for flood resilience.

Surging Hope
Stories of Climate Resilience

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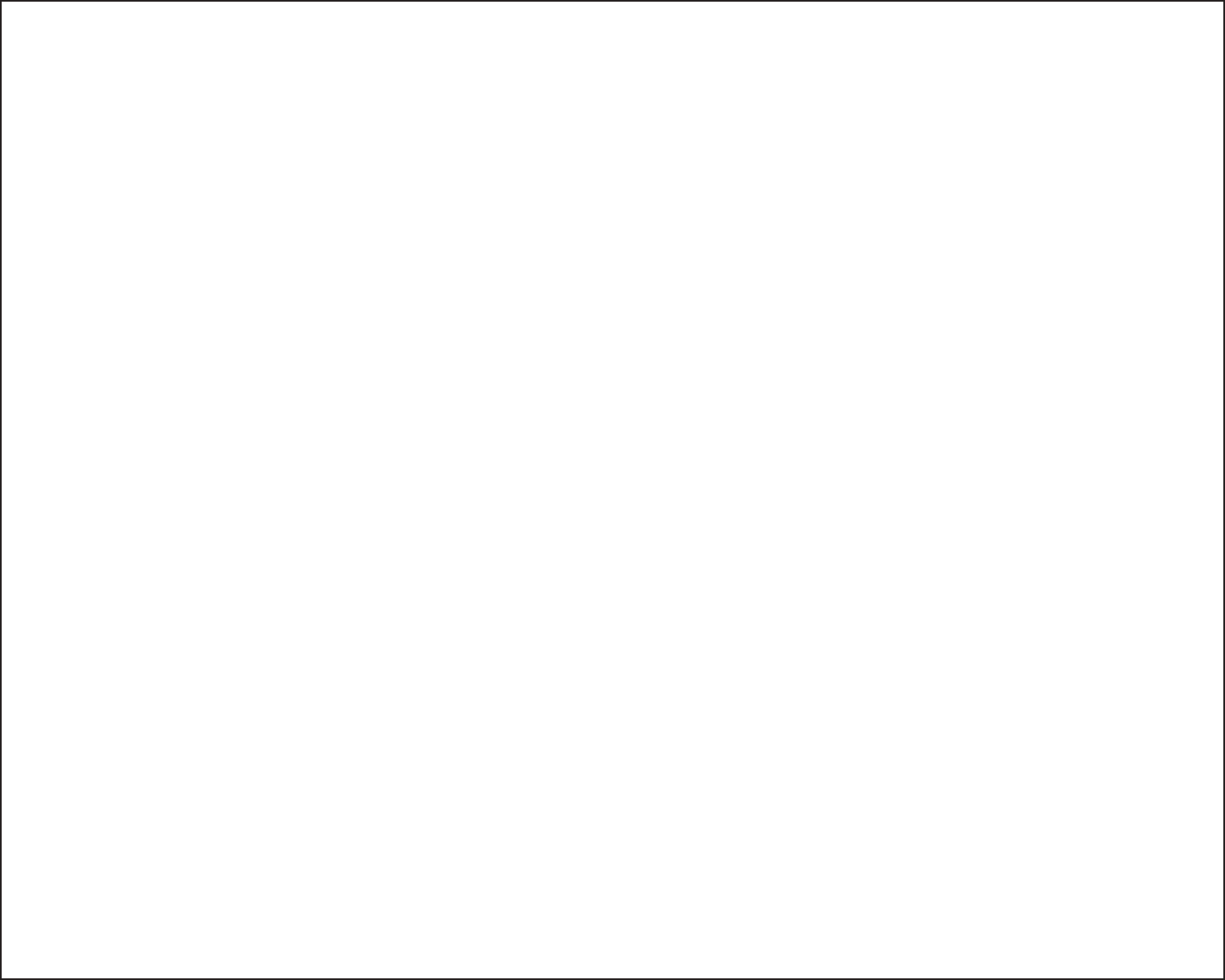
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