



Child Development Centers Narail, Biral & Joymoni *Report*

Fighting Acute Poverty and Hunger

More than 35 million people in Bangladesh, around a quarter of its population, face acute poverty and hunger.

According to research, most households with lower levels of education that own less land have fewer assets, many young children and elderly relatives, and face vast difficulty in escaping poverty. Poverty leads to hopelessness which provokes people to desperate acts. Those with practically nothing have little reason to refrain from violence, since even a small

chance of improving their condition seems better than doing nothing and accepting their fate with passivity.

Most parents are employed, but low wages and unstable employment leave their families struggling to make ends meet. Poverty impedes children's ability to learn and contributes to social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Poverty also contributes to poor physical and mental health. Risks are greatest for children who experience poverty when they are young

and/or when they suffer from deep, persistent poverty. Research is clear that poverty is the single greatest threat to children's well-being.

The early years of a child's life are crucial for cognitive, social and emotional development. Therefore it is important that we take every step necessary to ensure that children grow up in environments where their social, emotional and educational needs are met.

In order to pursue the development of disadvantaged

children in Bangladesh, BNM started so-called "Child Development Centers". BNM runs 24 CDCs in different areas (apart from various other child development projects). Out of these, funds raised by the Argabrights support the following CDCs:

- Narail: 120 children
- Biral: 135 children
- Joymoni: 125 children
- Total: 380 children

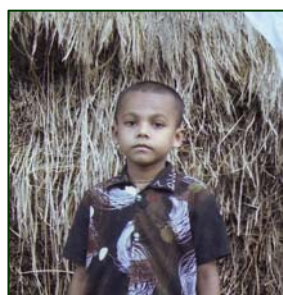
Narail CDC

The Narail, Paik Para CDC started in 2008 with 80 children; presently 120 children belong to this center. It is situated in a beautiful area. Two teachers and one cook work in the center. The center has a tubewell and latrines. All children attend classes and receive educational materials (book, pencil, eraser, khata), a school dress, and shoes. The center supplies food to all children, as well as spiritual teaching. Their parents receive different kinds of social awareness training. In addition, the children of the center celebrate national and international holidays.

In December the children took part in a Sunday school camp. They sang songs,

watched children's dramas and had lots of fun; their parents enjoyed the activities as well. But the center still needs a Pacca building (a more permanent structure).

The Narail CDC is running very well, and the children are growing up with love and care. We would like to share the story of Biplob, whose life was changed through the CDC.



Biplob Sarker, son of Prokash Sarker and Modhumita Sarker, is studying in Narail CDC in Class 1. When he first came to the CDC, he didn't want to stay in the classroom, because he preferred playing with other children. He didn't brush his teeth and was wearing dirty clothes. His father and mother couldn't take care of him properly, because they were very busy with their work. Prokash Sarker doesn't earn much money in his job as a day laborer, but his whole family depends on it. Biplob's mother is a housewife.

Biplob's family is not Christian, but they had a good relationship with the pastor. Sometimes they attended the Sunday service. They joined programs taking place in the CDC and found the rules and activities very satisfying. So the Sarkers agreed to send their son to the CDC.

At first Biplob didn't want to come to school alone, but now he comes to school without his mother. Everybody likes him. He attends regularly, wears clean clothes and doesn't want to miss his class. After class he likes to play with his classmates and participates in the CDC cultural program. He told his teacher that he wants to be a doctor after finishing his studies.



Birol CDC

The Birol CDC also started in 2008. The center is next to a local road, but for the kids this is great, because there is lots of space around the classroom where they can play. On one side there is a tubewell and a latrine, on the other a kitchen. 135 children attend the program in this center.

Illiteracy and ignorance are curses that must be overcome. Education removes darkness and enlightens; it develops mental and moral faculties. This is what a CDC is working on. Its school facilities prepare children for regular school. Various educational materials, school dresses, and shoes are also supplied.

Many of the children are malnourished, so the center provides a nutritionally balanced meal (Khichuri) each day. Physical exercises and recreational activities help the children to strengthen their physical capacity. But the CDC teachers do much more than that; they strive to change the lives of these children, because social and spiritual development begins during the earliest stages of a child's life.

Here is the story of Liton, who is part of the Birol CDC.



Liton attends Class 2 of Birol CDC. He's the second child of Bimol and Jhorna Roy. His brother also attends the school but their little sister is still too young.

Liton's father is an agricultural day laborer and the only earning member of the family. He isn't able to pay for the education of all his children. One day Liton's father heard about the CDC from one of their neighbors. He took Liton to the center and requested that he would be admitted to the school.



Liton had gone to school before and expected this one to be the same. He arrived late, didn't dress well, and had fights with other boys. The teachers didn't rebuke him, but started counseling him. They talked about good habits, health, and friendship. Liton started to change. Now he comes to school on time, wears clean clothes and is friendly to the other students. It was a great achievement for the CDC and really changed Liton's life.

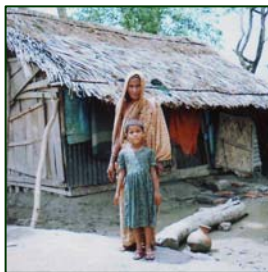
Today Liton is part of the local Sunday school. He learns songs and memorizes Bible verses. He learns about Jesus and his miracles. And we trust that one day Jesus will perform a miracle in Liton's life and transform him into a person who follows Jesus.

Monica Aktar is a student in the nursery group of Joymoni CDC. Although she is already six years old, this is only her first school year. Monica's life hasn't been easy. Her mother passed away when Monica was seven months old. Her father was a tricycle puller, but when his wife died, he gave Monica to her grandmother. Then he left and never returned. Nobody knows where he lives.



Monica and her grandma live in a straw hut near the street. They don't have any land of their own. Their house is weak; heavy rains or winds threaten to destroy it. Monica's grandmother is now 70 years old. She tries to take care of Monica, but she is no longer able to work. Sometimes she begs for a little money or food, and an uncle helps them every now and then. Their life is full of misery every day.

But then Monica's grandmother heard about the CDC and requested the pastor to admit Monica in the center. When he heard her story his heart was moved with compassion and he welcomed Monica to the CDC. Now she happily attends the school and studies well. Her health is improving, too, because she receives a nutritious meal daily.



And she knows about Jesus. Her teachers talk about him, and every Sunday she attends Sunday school. Although her father has left her, Monica knows that she has a father in heaven who loves her and cares for her. So Monica loves to sing a new song; she has learned to pray, and her life is changing.

Joymoni CDC

This CDC is new. It provides all necessary facilities. Two teachers care for the children. Six days a week the children receive nutritionally balanced food; their health is improving and the children love to attend.

The center provides education and educational materials as well as school dresses and shoes. Children study mathematics, English, Bengali, drawing, and general knowledge.

Rather than using traditional teaching methods (up-front teaching), the center introduced creative activities to

enhance learning. Children love to play and in this way they learn much better. A lot of progress is seen through these activities along with regular kinds of teaching.

The children also receive spiritual training, as one of the CDC's goals is to prepare children for the kingdom of heaven. They learn to pray, to worship and to enjoy a personal relationship with God every day.

Here is the story of Monica whose life was changed through the CDC ministry.

Conclusion

These are not the only life-changing stories in the CDC program. Over 50% of the children come from non-Christian backgrounds. The CDC ministry gives the local pastors an opportunity to visit the families of the children and share about Christ's love.

The CDCs are a wonderful opportunity to serve the children as well as reach the adults through the children. The next three CDCs will start in the areas of the Banglagor, Bosbhanga and Holdiabunia churches. *Please pray* for this new outreach.