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The Poverty Challenge

Bangladesh case study

‘Cows are as precious as life to me – they bring me survival.’

Shaharbanu Begum is 50. She describes how her family's farming has improved since they joined Christian Aid partner organisation UBINIG's Nayakrishni project. 'Before, we farmed using chemical fertiliser and pesticides. Now we don't need any of these things. In the past... we only got one crop so we couldn't even buy our children clothes. Now they go to school and college.

'Other farmers joined the project when they saw the benefits. Some neighbouring farmers still use chemicals on their crops. They sell their vegetables in the market and then buy ours!

People like to buy our produce because they know we're from Nayakrishni. In our village we exchange seeds at community meetings. These seeds must be stored in black pots called *corigadiga* and you must choose the best seeds to store. You can tell this from the colour of the seed and if it absorbs the moisture when you blow on it in your hand.'

Shaharbanu knows a lot about plants. Her favourite fruit is the jackfruit. 'It's our national tree. You can use every bit of it. The seed is dried and toasted for a snack. The husk we feed to the animals – it means they

produce more milk. The leaves make good fodder [food for the animals] and the wood is used for firewood and furniture.' Her family also uses plants for traditional medicine – for example, special *bidhktali* leaves can be wiped across the forehead to relieve headaches.

Shaharbanu is grateful for her new cows. 'Cows are as precious as life to me – they bring me survival. Before I joined Nayakrishni my cows were always sick and infested with termites.'

Shaharbanu's relations, Nasil (white scarf) and Tania, carrying their school-books



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Bolivia case study



Christian Aid/Sam Faulstich

Romaldo and his catapult!

‘... if you’re not good at maths,
people can cheat you.’

Romaldo Temo is 14 and lives in Santa Ana de Museruna. He goes to school in the morning and in the afternoon he helps his dad by watering the seedlings and building the greenhouse. Romaldo explains that growing bananas ‘isn’t a lot of work, but you have to go to the *chaco* [plot of land] everyday to keep the parrots away – they eat the fruit!’ Romaldo uses his catapult to scare the parrots. He also has to protect the family’s cacao plants from monkeys and helps look after the family’s woolless sheep. The sheep are woolless naturally – it helps them keep cool. Romaldo has to stop the sheep from getting into the forest and eating a plant which could make them sick. His parents learnt how to take care of the sheep through training sessions with Christian Aid partner organisation CIPCA. Six lambs have already been born.

Romaldo’s favourite subject is maths, ‘because if you’re not good at maths, people can cheat you’. The children in his class are aged between 12 and 17 – if they fail a year, they have to repeat it. At the moment Romaldo’s lessons are held outside because the school doesn’t have enough classrooms.

Romaldo’s home only gets electricity in the evenings. When it’s on he does his homework or listens to music. There are problems in Romaldo’s community because cattle ranchers (rich farmers with massive herds of cows) try to steal their land. CIPCA helps families like Romaldo’s to understand their legal rights and get rid of the ranchers.

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Kenya case study

‘The water was dirty and there were always really long queues. But now it takes a short time to get water, there are no queues and it is clean.’

Naomi Mutisya is 15 and lives in Machakos. Her family has received support and training from Christian Aid partner organisation BIDII in irrigation, making and using organic pesticide, rainwater harvesting and small-scale businesses such as tie-dyeing and soap-making.

The drought in this region of Kenya has been very bad but because they have learnt new farming techniques and business skills, Naomi and her family have learnt to cope with the drought and continue to support themselves.

‘In the afternoon when school finishes, I go to collect water. Before BIDII we used to have to walk so far to get water. The water was dirty and there were always really long queues. With the drought now we would have had to walk for hours. But now it takes a short time to get water, there are no queues and it is clean. This is because BIDII has helped us dig some more boreholes and have protected some of the springs to keep the water clean.’

‘After collecting water I collect some grass for our cow and then assist my mother with the cooking. We cook *ugali*, which is made from ground maize flour. I like to cook banana bud – this is unusual. In the past we would never eat this. My mother told me we must eat it because BIDII had told her that it was good food and would help us keep healthy – like green vegetables. Now I think it is delicious but at first I didn’t want to eat it. Now I know if Mum makes it she will not keep it for long if I am near because I’ll eat it all!’

Naomi tending to her family's crops



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Malawi case study

'Before we used to run out of food but now we've got enough.'

Gladys Jumbe is seven years old and lives in the Thyolo district of southern Malawi. Her family used to run out of food six months after each harvest, but in 2003 they went on a training course run by Christian Aid partner organisation CARD. They learnt how to make compost and prevent soil erosion by building ridges, so the soil and water don't wash away. Since then, their maize crop has more than doubled.

CARD has installed a treadle pump in Gladys' village. A treadle pump draws water from a borehole by someone standing on it and 'pedalling' in a motion similar to climbing stairs. Thanks to the new water pump, the winter crop harvest has trebled. Now there's plenty of food to last through the year.

Even during droughts, there's been enough to eat and drink, and Gladys and her six-year-old sister Gertrude are now eating three meals a day.

'Before we used to run out of food but now we've got enough. We have three meals a day now and we used to have only two,' Gladys explains.

'For breakfast we have boiled cassava or sweet potato or porridge. For lunch and dinner we have *nsima* [a dish made from maize flour that looks similar to mashed potato].

'I like cassava. I know how to cook it,' Gladys says. 'You peel it, then wash it and cut it up into small pieces and put it in a pot of water. Then you add salt and boil it until it's cooked. It takes 10-20 minutes.'

Gladys (left) with her sister Gertrude tending the kitchen fire



Christian Aid/Joel Bieber/MS Pictures

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**The Poverty
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Nicaragua case study

'The fruit has lots of vitamins. We used to get sick more often but we're much healthier now.'



Jessica with her family's cattle

Jessica Rayo Sevilla is 16. She has two years left at secondary school and wants to study business administration at university because she likes numbers. Jessica has noticed how life has improved for her family since Christian Aid partner organisation JFPS trained them to grow a wider variety of crops. 'Before we had hardly anything. We didn't know how to sow. Now we have more plants and fruit trees. The fruit has lots of vitamins. We used to get sick more often but we're much healthier now. My younger brother has grown more in the last few years since we've been eating better.'

After school Jessica helps in the fields and the kitchen. Each of the family's cows produces 12 litres of milk a day. Jessica has named her favourite cow Big Foot! Her dogs are called Jugete (toy) and Dumbo.

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**The Poverty
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Tajikistan case study

'I want to work and help earn money for my family.'



Christian Aid/Steven Buckley

Illiteracy is a huge issue in Tajikistan. The current generation of young people is less educated than the generation before, because the civil war meant many children missed their schooling when they were evacuated to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Children also regularly miss school to work for their families.

Christian Aid partner organisation Mehrengez runs literacy courses, teaching people to read and write. Classes are often held in small, crowded rooms with no heat or light. The desks are planks of wood and the students sit on coloured mats. They explain why they want to do the course: 'I want to work and help earn money for my family,' says one. 'I don't want to go somewhere and be embarrassed,' says another.

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Boys at their makeshift desks in a literacy class near Kurgan Teppa