

SUCCESS STORIES LAST-MILE PROJECT

Herd to Harvest: A Woman's Journey in Livestock Farming in Bangladesh



Photo: Cattle farm of Md. Rotna Khatun

Ms. Rotna Khatun, a 28-year-old farmer from Dopkula Sadar in the Pabna district, Bangladesh, has a story of resilience and growth that exemplifies the transformative power of the Last Mile Project. Living on a modest 5-acre plot with her husband and two children, Rotna began her journey in livestock farming in 2018 with just two cows, which yielded an annual income of approximately BDT 30,000 (USD 353). However, her lack of capital and access to resources limited her ability to expand and make a sustainable profit.

Rotna faced significant challenges in her venture, including the adverse effects of climate change, inadequate veterinary care, limited breeding resources, and a lack of access to quality feed. These obstacles made it difficult to expand her farm and optimize her returns, leaving her with minimal profits from her small herd.

In 2021, Rotna engaged with the Last Mile Project (LMP) through the Rural Advisory Service Provider “praniSheba”, an extension service venture that provides vital resources and support for local livestock farmers.

Advisory services and a stronger Country Fora/National Platform in Bangladesh connected Rotna with a unique profit-sharing business model: it provided her with cattle, which she would raise and sell, returning 20% of the profit along with the purchase value of the cattle. Through this model, praniSheba also offered a range of additional services, such as online veterinary consultations, livestock management training, and even an insurance package for each animal, which significantly reduced her financial risks.

The impact of this partnership has been remarkable. With praniSheba’s support, Rotna expanded her herd from 10 to 20 cattle, including 6 calves, and increased her income exponentially. Today, Today she earns about BDT 270,000 per year (170,000 from milk and 130,000 from cattle sales), a striking improvement compared to her previous income, and in a way that has allowed her to invest in her children’s education and make progress on constructing a permanent home for her family.



Photo: Md. Rotna Khatun

“My profits will pave the way for my children's education, and as they flourish, I'll gradually build our dream concrete home,” envisions Ms. Khatun, planning how to translate the increased income into more stability and improvements for her household and family.

Beyond her own farm, Rotna's success has become a source of inspiration within her community. By sharing her experiences and encouraging fellow farmers to explore the opportunities provided by advisory services and the connections made by the Country Fora in Bangladesh, she has influenced many others, especially women, to pursue livestock farming. Her story has even inspired local farmer groups, with field days conducted to showcase the benefits of livestock farming and the support offered by the Last Mile Project.

Through her journey, Rotna has not only improved her family's financial security but has also contributed to a larger movement toward professionalization and sustainable practices in rural advisory services. With newfound confidence, market access, and enhanced skills in livestock management, Rotna represents the powerful impact of the Last Mile Project in empowering farmers, fostering community growth, and driving meaningful change in rural areas.

ABOUT THE LAST-MILE PROJECT

The Last Mile Project, launched in 2019 by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) with IFAD support, aims to enhance smallholder farmers' access to knowledge, technology, and innovations through Rural Advisory Services (RAS). It strengthens public-private partnerships, fosters institutional development, and promotes sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, it supports knowledge management and South-South cooperation for scalable impacts. The program focuses on capacity building, leveraging ICT tools, strengthening Country RAS Platforms, and involves eight countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to drive sustainable rural development.