

Small WORLD

Issue 75 January 2022

Bibiana



Samakant



Alzain



Vanessa



Meet the climate pioneers
building a better future, today.

Practical
ACTION

Big change starts small

THE AMAZING OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US

Welcome to your January issue of *Small World*. My name is Shawkat Begum, and I am the country director for Practical Action in Bangladesh.

In this issue, we head to the front line of the climate crisis to meet people rising to the enormous challenges they face. Through their actions, these climate pioneers from Bangladesh, Sudan, Kenya and beyond, reveal the amazing opportunity we all have before us. A chance to create a better world for everyone... if we actively choose it. And we must choose right now, because the impact of climate change is getting worse, fast.

Here in Bangladesh, communities have been battered by a series of highly destructive cyclones over the last few years. These 'natural' disasters keep coming, and they are increasing in frequency and ferocity.

I've seen the impact for myself, when I was an emergency response worker for some of the worst-hit communities. It's quite impossible to explain the devastation that can happen in just one night.

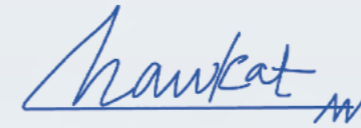
Cyclones are only part of the climate problem. Sea-level rise and shifting temperatures are severely affecting people's ability to grow food. And when you add this to the high levels of poverty present in Bangladesh, you can see how a bad situation is quickly spiralling into a catastrophe. The situation is similar in developing countries around the world.

At Practical Action, we have an ambitious plan to work with communities, to keep innovating and tackling these challenges. Even in the most difficult places there are solutions that work now. We need your support to work with 6 million people by 2025,

to build better, climate-resilient futures. You can discover more in our feature on pages 7 to 11. But first, I'll hand over to my colleague Afsari Begum, who will transport you to Bangladesh and explain in more detail the challenges and opportunities there.

Thank you so much for your support at this crucial time for so many people.

Sincerely,



Shawkat Begum, PhD
Country Director,
Bangladesh



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Farmers impacted by climate change are discovering new climate-resilient ways to grow crops.

It's time for us all to **CHOOSE**

...the status quo or positive action? We talk to Afsari Begum, our climate expert in Bangladesh, about the impact of climate change on communities.



Afsari Begum

What has been the main impact of climate change in Bangladesh?

Floods and cyclones are not new to the people of Bangladesh, but what is different is the intensity and frequency of this extreme weather. In 2020, people saw five times more flooding than usual. Personally, I have never seen flooding this bad before. Entire cities are now waterlogged. We're not adequately prepared for this, and many people are going through extreme hardship.

Who is worst affected?

It's the poorest communities suffering most. As we all know, Bangladesh is not responsible for causing climate change – our contribution is insignificant on a global scale. And yet it is the poorest people here that are experiencing the most damaging effects.

Growing crops in the normal way is no longer possible in many places across Bangladesh because of flooding and sea-level rise. People are having to leave their rural homes to search for work in urban areas. And when they get to cities, they're finding another set of problems. The basic services that a community needs, like waste disposal, aren't there. The cities just can't cope with the huge influx of people. This results in overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions for many people.

For me it's heartbreaking that rural communities are losing their homes. They're losing their croplands, their livestock and they're even losing their ancestral lands. They're losing their schools, their colleges and their cultural spaces, their local biodiversity. But it goes even deeper than this.

They're losing their friendship groups and their cultural heritage. They're losing their identity. Some of these losses can never be replaced.

Without action, the situation will only get worse. There will be greater food insecurity because more farmland will be underwater. There will be more migration and more displacement. More people will be unable to find work and support their families. Climate change means these communities are seeing opportunities vanishing every day.

STATUS QUO

Severe flooding is becoming more frequent in Bangladesh and many other countries around the world.



POSITIVE ACTION

Using flood barriers means that Afsari Begum's vegetable garden is protected.

What solutions can be put in place to support these communities?

To give you one example, the weather information systems we have implemented together have given farmers more control of their situation. They are no longer at the mercy of the weather. Up-to-date weather forecasts posted on digital weatherboards in communities help farmers make better decisions about their day-to-day operations.



For instance, if farmers know it's going to rain heavily for the next five days, they'll know that it's not the right time to get planting.

What really excites me from this work is seeing how the government of Bangladesh

has adopted Practical Action's approach and now they're scaling it up to reach many more people in many different areas. With the support of the World Bank, Bangladesh Department of Agricultural Extension and Bangladesh Meteorological Department, digital weather information systems have been introduced widely in the country over the last two years. This is really going to make a big difference for rural communities.

But of course there is much more to be done. And it is not just Bangladesh experiencing the impact of climate change. More solutions like this need to be developed and more communities need access to them. It will take many more organisations working together, and continuing to innovate in response to the rapidly changing climate.

What inspires you with optimism for the future?

What gives me hope is seeing how the people of Bangladesh

are working together in a very integrated way. I mean everyone: the communities, along with local and national government, and Practical Action of course. That's one of the most amazing things happening in Bangladesh. Together we are really coming up with new solutions, finding a way out of suffering, and into resilience.

One thing I have realised is that the people of our country really have the capability and courage to adopt these new approaches and systems. They are really determined. They know they can cope with changing situations. They know they have the capacity to adapt. They know they can do it. I think they are the real heroes and they really inspire me.

BONUS CONTENT

Hear more from Afsari on BBC Radio 4's *Costing the Earth*. You'll find a link to the show at [practicalaction.org/smallworld](https://www.practicalaction.org/smallworld)

The power of the collective

Over the last three years, our Global Distributors Collective has been transforming last-mile distribution around the world.

For people living in remote communities in the developing world, it can be hard to access life's essentials. Today, 759 million people live without electricity, 2.6 billion lack access to clean cooking, and 884 million have no clean drinking water.

One of the main causes of this "access gap" is that these communities are often overlooked by large-scale distributors. "Last-mile" communities are remote and have lower-incomes, making this market too challenging for them. There are, however, smaller distributors serving some of these remote communities. They have a strong relationship with their customers, are able to provide after-sales service, and even know them well enough to set up affordable consumer financing. But these last-mile distributors often work in isolation, and the challenges and risks of scaling-up their businesses keep them small and very local.

Our innovative solution was to help these last-mile distributors level-up their businesses, so they can reach the communities living without access to their life-changing products.



GDC members distributing cookstoves in Kenya.

Picture credit:
BoP Innovation Centre

"GDC has successfully created a network of last-mile distributors, giving us the opportunity to learn from each other and even partner on projects, making our work easier."

We set up the Global Distributors Collective (GDC) to connect last-mile distributors with each other, and to provide business support and training. We share and learn from each-other's experiences, finding new ways to save time, reduce costs, build capacity and develop beneficial partnerships.

Together, we are developing new ways to overcome the challenges of product distribution in remote areas. In this way, small distributors in the remotest areas are able to expand their businesses and help transform the lives of the people they serve.

After germinating this idea, we partnered with Hystra and BoP Innovation Centre to grow the initiative further and increase our number of GDC members enormously. **Today, we have 210 distributor members across 50 countries delivering life-changing products like solar panels, water filters and clean cookstoves to 35 million people.**

One of the keys to the success of the GDC is our Innovation Challenge. We run the challenge every year, inviting applications from GDC members for ideas that could benefit the group. Members themselves vote for the ideas that they would most like to see piloted, and then we fund those pilots.

To date, we have funded nine innovation pilots. One of the most recent was from Mwezi, based in Kenya. They developed a digital training tool to teach new distributors how to sell and service solar-irrigation systems to farmers living in remote communities. Critically, it's designed for people who have no agri-tech knowledge, making this life-changing business accessible to many more people.

Please support more work like this: **practicalaction.org/smallworld**

CHOOSE

A BETTER FUTURE NOW.

Meet pioneers on the front line of the climate crisis who are showing the rest of the world how to create a better, more resilient future.

Over the coming years, all of us will face the consequences of the changing climate in our daily lives. So now is the time to look to the pioneers, the people already applying ingenuity and co-operation to face the most devastating effects of climate change.

In Bangladesh, Samakant is adapting to the rising tide with a smart new way to farm crabs. In Sudan, Alzain has adopted new farming techniques to overcome the drought. In Bolivia, Vanessa is helping her community be prepared for flooding. And in Kenya, Bibiana is reducing deforestation by changing the way people cook.

These pioneers demonstrate our approach to helping the communities most impacted by climate change. It's all about the power of locally-led solutions, scaled up to national levels. With your support, communities can **adapt** to the changing climate reality, **prepare** for extreme weather, and **reuse and replenish** our finite resources.

To get this plan underway in 2022, we're asking you to help us raise £1 million in 100 days.

Come and meet our climate heroes, and see what a donation from you today can help make possible.

In Faridpur, Bangladesh
Kolom Chokder has
improved soil fertility by
using organic manure.

Make a gift and choose a better future now:
practicalaction.org/smallworld

Samakant is adapting fast to his rapidly changing circumstances, creating a sustainable livelihood, and protecting local biodiversity.

Samakant Mistry lives in the coastal district of Satkhira in Bangladesh, close to the Sundarbans mangroves. Like generations of his family, Samakant was a rice and vegetable farmer. But all that has changed.

Over the last 10–15 years, sea-level rise and a series of severe cyclones have devastated the area. Much former farming land has been lost beneath the sea, and huge areas have been rendered toxic to plant life by saline water flooding the area. This makes rice and vegetable farming impossible. And so Samakant, like the rest of the community, had to adapt.

At first, they turned to the Sundarbans mangroves to find food. The Sundarbans are vital to Samakant's community – not just for the food they provide, but for the natural flood protection they offer.

“The Sundarbans keep us alive in many ways. Our crabs, fish and honey are all collected there. If the rising sea had hit us directly, we probably wouldn't be here.”

But with the community relying entirely on the local mangroves to survive, crab stocks became severely depleted, impacting local biodiversity. And once again the future of local families was in peril.

We've been working together with Samakant's community to develop a more sustainable way to rear crabs from larvae. These nurseries provide a safe and sustainable farming system, where eggs from mature crabs are reared to create the next generation.

Putting his new farming skills to use, Samakant is now able to make a living year-round by selling the crabs. No longer dependant on crabs from the Sundarbans, he and his community are helping protect the wider biodiversity of the mangroves.

“In a short time, I can grow 3kg of crabs into 70–80kg of crabs. Now the pressure on the mangroves is less, and we can make a good profit.”



SAMAKANT

MASTER OF THE RISING TIDE

Make a gift and **choose** smart climate adaptation **now:**
practicalaction.org/smallworld

Alzain is growing abundant crops, despite the flooding and droughts.

Alzain Ali lives in Yarwa village, in the Blue Nile area of Sudan. His village saw a huge influx of displaced people when the recent civil war drove communities from their traditional homelands. This meant thousands of people competing for limited resources.

An already difficult situation was made much more extreme by climate change. Unpredictable cycles of severe flooding and drought meant harvests regularly failed.

“For the past couple of years, we lost half of our crop due to the weather. We only had enough to eat and nothing to sell. But this last year the entire crop failed.”

Malnutrition became a big problem, with some children losing their lives through hunger. During flooding events, disease would ravage the community, with cholera outbreaks becoming common. The Blue Nile area was simply becoming unable to sustain life.

We worked together with the community and partner organisations to develop a series of solutions to tackle these extreme challenges. Through this collaboration,

Alzain and his community began to use different varieties of seed so they could grow more resilient, nutritious and profitable crops like okra, sesame and cow beans. They applied new climate-resilient farming techniques and dramatically increased the reliability and yields of their crops. Together we restored water catchment basins, so farmers could gather and store water during floods, and have enough for drinking, crops and livestock during drought periods. And by creating new health centres, clean loos and washing blocks, the community began to see incidents of disease and diarrhoea drop away.

“The situation here has really improved. I would like to say thank you to Practical Action supporters. Everything they have given to help us adapt to our situation is making a huge difference.”

The political situation continues to be volatile in Sudan, which makes our work here particularly important. We are one of the very few organisations working in this difficult context.



ALZAIN

THE WEATHER-BEATER

Make a gift and **choose** climate-resilient farming **now:**
practicalaction.org/smallworld

Vanessa is putting her risk management training to use helping protect the livelihoods of her rural community.

Vanessa lives in a farming community near San José de Chiquitos, Bolivia. Like many other communities in this region, the increasing droughts and erratic weather are making a big impact on their ability to grow food.



VANESSA
COMMUNITY PROTECTOR

“Just now the weather has affected us strongly, so many of us have lost some of our crops. The same happened with the recent frost that took place at the end of June.”

Seeing the impact that droughts, flooding and chaotic weather were having on her community, and following training with Practical Action, she was inspired to step up and become a risk management manager. Now she is helping develop the way her community prepares for climate hazards.

“My job is to find a solution to what is happening in my community, to be alert, to give information to my community members and notify the municipality about any adverse event”.

Bibiana is running a sustainable cookstoves business, helping protect her community's health, and reducing local deforestation.

Bibiana lives in a small rural village half an hour from Kisumu, Kenya. We worked with Bibiana's community and provided business training, supporting her and a group of local women to set up a small factory where they now make and sell improved cookstoves.



BIBIANA
CLEAN ENERGY CHAMPION

“The stoves use less firewood, and they are cleaner because smoke is reduced. This impacts women and girls: they used to take the whole day to collect wood, but now they only take two hours.”

Bibiana's business is making a big difference to the health of the local community, and the local environment. It's also providing her with a stable and climate-resilient income. Bibiana's example is inspiring other women to take charge of their lives and find a way to thrive, despite the severe droughts and floods that are impacting this region.

“Before this project, there was so much stigmatisation in the village, women would not be heard! Men had to decide everything. After the training, I came back and I felt empowered.”

Will you choose A BETTER FUTURE NOW?

As you've seen over the last few pages, with ingenuity, training and collaboration, communities can **adapt** to the changing climate reality, like Samakant and Alzain. They can **prepare** for extreme weather like Vanessa. And they can **reuse and replenish** our finite resources like Bibiana.

Thank you for everything you have already done to support these climate resilient futures. We want to spread their successes to many more communities in the countries hardest hit by climate change. We want to scale up these local solutions to national transformations. But we need your help...

Make a gift today

With your support, we can raise £1 million and kickstart our ambitious plans for 2022 - so our teams around the world can work with more people like Bibiana as they build better, climate resilient futures.

Start a cascade of change

As we work with local organisations and communities, they pass on their new skills and knowledge to others, building on their success.

Multiply your impact

Every £1 invested by forward thinking people like you helps us to develop solutions that work, and unlocks on average another £2 in grants from foundations and other funders - so we can do even more.

And create big-scale transformation

Your gift can help change the systems that drive the problems. When our solutions are picked up by governments or businesses, positive change can happen on a much bigger scale. Your gift will help us work with **6 million** people by 2025 and make a big difference to **20 million** more.



Support more climate pioneers and **choose to donate now:**
practicalaction.org/smallworld

Please help us reach our **£1 million fundraising target in 100 days:**
practicalaction.org/smallworld

TEAM POSSIBLE

We're celebrating the amazing actions our supporters are already taking to choose a better future now.

Team Webb Yates are supporting the climate pioneers

"Our teams set out to achieve continuous movement for eight hours to raise money for Practical Action. Participants tagged each other in and out to keep the movement going by cycling, running, skating, and swimming, to mention just a few activities. Our event was a huge success and we managed to raise £2,924. We're chuffed!"

Thank you so much to everyone at Webb Yates Engineering for your support. We hope you had fun!



Get fundraising: Find inspiration for your own fundraising challenge at: practicalaction.org/smallworld



The Rebel Riders are raising awareness

"A group of twelve of us 'Rebel Riders' cycled from Brighton to Glasgow for COP26. Our aim was to raise awareness of the climate crisis and vital funds for climate action. On the way we visited renewable energy projects and community projects to do with climate change, and we held pub quizzes every night to meet communities and spread the word. Our goal was to arrive at Glasgow with a really good idea of the grass roots action happening across the country - not just the 'blah blah blah', but what people are actually doing."

The Rebel Riders cycled an average of 60 miles a day for nine days to reach the climate conference, spreading the word about climate change as they went. On the way, they also raised an incredible £3,486 for Practical Action and two other charities. Thank you Rebel Riders!

Go social Help raise awareness about our work by following us on social media and sharing our stories with your friends and followers.



Spread the word After you've finished reading this copy of Small World, pass it on to someone else, or leave it somewhere that others are likely to pick it up and read it, like your local doctor's or dentist's surgery.

Invite a speaker Our network of brilliant volunteer speakers is available to give a talk to a group you belong to.

Esther is becoming a climate pioneer herself

"Following your suggestion that we try to create our own keyhole gardens, here's mine - with rocket, bush beans and spring onions all growing brilliantly. I like it so much I might build another one!"

Keyhole gardens are a sustainable agriculture solution that climate pioneers in Zimbabwe are using to grow vegetable crops. We were thrilled to see that our supporters have been inspired to make their own. It's a practical way to grow crops in any climate, including Britain's. Well done Esther!



Become a climate pioneer: Discover suggestions for becoming a climate pioneer at: practicalaction.org/smallworld

Are you feeling inspired? Help us get 2022 off to an amazing start by doing two things - make a gift, and take another personal action.

You'll find more ideas at practicalaction.org/smallworld

Inspiring change at COP26

Silvia Maria Gonzales Gallegos, our Global Communications Officer based in Peru, shares her experience of attending the COP26 event in Glasgow.



After several months of interacting only through video calls and with a restricted number of people due to Covid restrictions in Peru, being at COP26 put my heart and mind on a rollercoaster of inspiration. It was incredible to hear my colleagues from Zimbabwe, Nepal, Peru and the UK share their powerful learnings from their own countries, and to be surrounded by so many people with fire in their hearts, pushing for action.

As a global Practical Action team, we provided advice and evidence, participated in many events, and had

many meaningful conversations with a diverse group of changemakers. But, most importantly, we demonstrated how collaborative work across many different countries plants a seed of change that grows from individual communities to global stages such as the COP26 event.

Together we shed the brightest light on how we can choose a better future now. That means working for agriculture that ensures a future to look forward to and a thriving present. It means addressing loss and damage for the people already facing the impacts of extreme weather events. And it means advising on approaches that put the needs and rights of women and indigenous communities front and centre.

My colleagues truly ignited something in me and in everyone who met them. Now that COP26 is over, we will continue working with renewed energy to achieve the results this planet and its people need.

🌐 BONUS CONTENT

Read our full report on the COP26 outcomes at: practicalaction.org/smallworld

Big award for Brighter Futures

Our pioneering schools project in Peru has been recognised with a PODS prize.



Brighter Futures is our ongoing project to bring education opportunities to children in the remotest areas of Peru, who live without basic necessities like clean water, electricity and internet connection. Across the 16 project schools, 700 children will benefit from access to clean energy, sanitation, internet connection and learning resources through tablets.

We're so proud to have won a Peru Towards Sustainable Development Goals (PODS) prize for this work, which will be completed later this year. The PODS acknowledge projects that create better futures for the people of Peru by contributing to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Alicia Quezada, our Latin America director, said: "Brighter Futures ensures children not only the right to education but the joy of learning in an environment that is safe. We are working for children to have a place where they can flourish, where their dreams become possible, and where they can play and enjoy every day."

🌐 BONUS CONTENT

Get more on this story at: practicalaction.org/smallworld

A HUGE THANK YOU

Over the last year, we've achieved so much together. Thanks to your generous support, in 2020-2021 we were able to do all this:

This year you helped us deliver
96 PROJECTS
 on the ground in
12 COUNTRIES
 reaching
2 MILLION PEOPLE
 who participated in our projects and activities, and an additional
2.2 MILLION PEOPLE
 indirectly in the wider community and through partners

To find out more about our reach and impact, visit: practicalaction.org/smallworld



Kids imagine a better world

Fun activities for young climate heroes at school or at home.



Inspire a young person in your life to imagine a bold new future for planet earth with our exciting educational resources. You'll find

simple games like our climate change wordsearch, as well as bigger projects, like our "Beat the Flood" challenge. In this activity, children can travel to the fictitious island of Watu, to explore how STEM skills can be used to help communities be better prepared for flooding. All our activities are free, suitable for home or the classroom, and ready to download now.

🌐 BONUS CONTENT

Visit practicalaction.org/smallworld to explore the full range of educational games now.



