



## A New Star in the Rural Economy through Nursery Business: Soheli Molla

Soheli Molla, a young man from Faridpur, once dreamed of moving abroad. Today, he has created an inspiring example of success right in his own village. With the support of SDC, he has become a successful agricultural entrepreneur by producing soil seedlings using cocopeat (soilless cultivation). His nursery produces over a hundred thousand safe vegetable seedlings annually, which are now being distributed to various corners of the country. Through his hard work, he is self-reliant today and has set a new benchmark in the rural economy.

Let's find out—who is this Soheli Molla?

Reporter: Syeda Silvi Zaman

Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman

Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain



## The Main Story:

Sohel Molla, a 35-year-old farmer from Boalmari, Faridpur, is now a leading agricultural entrepreneur whose nursery is transforming the local rural economy. Supporting a five-member family, Sohel's passion for farming began in childhood while helping his father, sparking a lifelong dream to modernize agriculture. However, financial uncertainty eventually pushed him to prepare for migration abroad.

His turning point came after joining SDC's **"RMTP: Eco-Friendly and Safe Vegetable Production and Marketing"** sub-project. Enlisted as a safe vegetable farmer in 2022, Sohel received advanced horticulture training, mastering the innovative technique of producing safe vegetable seedlings using soilless cocopeat.



**Photo:** Sohel caring for seedlings in cocopeat



**Photo:** Sohel working in field alongside his child

This training opened up a whole new horizon for his life. In **2023**, with a **40,000 Taka** grant from the project, he started his nursery on just three decimals of land. He began production using **100 seedling trays** filled with a special mix of cocopeat, Trichoderma, and vermicompost. Right in the very first season, local farmers achieved excellent results by using his seedlings, and news of Sohel's success spread rapidly.



Gradually, he expanded his nursery, which now spans seven decimals of land. The number of seedling trays has grown to **1,200**. Every season, he produces between **90,000** and over **100,000** seedlings. His nursery supplies a wide variety of seedlings—including **cauliflower, cabbage, chili, tomato, eggplant, papaya, gourd, sweet pumpkin, and red cabbage**—to various districts across the country through both online and offline channels.

In addition to selling seedlings, he is also cultivating safe vegetables on three acres of land. Currently, his annual income from the nursery is around **4 to 4.5 lakh Taka**, with an average monthly income of **35,000 to 40,000 Taka**.



**Photo:** A smiling Sohel in his field during the cultivation of various seasonal vegetables

He believes that with rural soil, hard work, and the right guidance, agriculture can become a sustainable livelihood. Today, Sohel wants to support not just himself, but other farmers in his village as well. In the future, he aims to further expand his nursery and create new employment opportunities. His plan is to establish a modern greenhouse alongside his nursery to produce high-quality seedlings year-round.

**Sohel Molla is now a self-reliant, successful farmer. He says:**

**“I used to think that it wasn't possible to achieve anything without moving abroad. But SDC showed me that an immense pool of potential lies right in my own village. Now, I am standing on my own two feet, and my family is doing well.”**

In the future, he aims to expand his nursery even further to inspire many others to take up safe vegetable cultivation. In his own words: **“I want people to stay healthy by eating safe vegetables, and I want the village folk to fall in love with farming.”**

Expressing his gratitude, Sohel credits the support and guidance of the SDC's RMTP project for helping him reach his dreams.





## Stitching Dreams into Reality: Rabiul's Entrepreneurial Success Story

Once struggling to support his elderly parents, Rabiul Islam Awal from Faridpur turned adversity into opportunity through determination and entrepreneurship. Starting with a single sewing machine financed by an SDC loan, he built a successful garment business that now provides employment for local people. His journey reflects resilience, hard work, and the power of opportunity to transform lives.

[Read More About Rabiul](#)

Reporter: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
 Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
 Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain

## The Main Story:

Md. Robiul Islam Awal (29) is a resident of Bil Mamudpur under Faridpur Municipality. He lives with his elderly parents after his sister's marriage. Due to financial hardship, he could not appear in the SSC examination. His father, Md. Nuruddin Pramanik (80), is a farmer, but because of old age he was no longer able to work as before. To support the family, Robiul initially worked in agriculture, but the income was not sufficient to cover their basic needs.

**Seeking a better livelihood,** Robiul learned garment-making skills as an apprentice under a local tailor, Mr. Abul Fakir. Later, he worked as a garment production technician at Nari Unnayan Forum. Although the job provided some income, he always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur and establishing his own business.



Photo: Roubiul's Work Station



Photo: Robiul guiding his workers in the production

In 2017, Robiul took a loan of BDT 20,000 from SDC in his mother's name and purchased a sewing machine to start a small garment business. Through hard work and strong relationships with local customers, he gradually expanded his enterprise. Within a few years, he established a small garment workshop, created employment opportunities for three people, and earned a monthly income of around BDT 15,000–18,000.



In **2017**, Robiul took a loan of **BDT 20,000** from SDC in his mother's name and purchased a sewing machine to start a small garment business. Through hard work and strong relationships with local customers, he gradually expanded his enterprise. Within a few years, he established a small garment workshop, created employment opportunities for three people, and earned a monthly income of around **BDT 15,000–18,000**.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant losses to Robiul's business, putting it at risk of closure. After the pandemic, support from SDC and a Mujib Loan from Krishi Bank enabled him to recover and expand his business by purchasing three modern sewing machines.



**Photo:** A busy & Happy Robiul, Collaborating with the others

Through the Faridpur Sadar SDC office, Robiul learned about the **RAISE Project** supported by the World Bank and PKSF. After being selected, he participated in training on Business Management and Entrepreneurship Development. According to Robiul, the training helped him develop an entrepreneurial mindset, learn innovative business practices, strengthen customer relationships, and manage different business risks and challenges.

Today, Robiul owns **6 sewing machines** and two printing machines, providing employment opportunities for five people. His monthly income now ranges between **BDT 30,000** and **BDT 35,000**. Looking ahead, he dreams of establishing a garment factory with **50–60** sewing machines and creating employment opportunities for at least 50 people. He also hopes to receive further training support to help expand his business and achieve his long-term goals.



## From Struggles to Success: The Inspiring Journey of Shahana Akter Khushi

Shahana Akter Khushi, from Faridpur, turned from a housewife into a successful entrepreneur through determination and resilience. Despite early marriage, financial hardship, and her husband's serious accident, she never gave up. With support from SDC and her own effort, she started a small rickshaw garage business. Gradually, she expanded it through hard work and smart planning. Today, she runs a growing business and creates job opportunities for others.

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Reporter: Syeda Silvi Zaman  
 Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
 Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain



## The Main Story:

In **2008**, at the age of just **15**, Shahana Akter Khushi was married to Syed Tabeebur Rahman of Joypasha village under Boalmari upazila. Emotionally unprepared for marriage, she silently adjusted to her new life while carrying the burden of adolescence. Her husband worked as a mason and also ran a small mobile food stall selling fuchka, chotpoti, luchi, alur dom and chola bhuna, with Shahana helping by preparing food at home.

In **2010**, she became the mother of her first daughter, Avonti, followed by her second daughter, Srabonti in **2012**. With growing responsibilities, Shahana began dreaming of a better future for her children and a more stable life. In **2015**, while she was pregnant again, tragedy struck when her husband met with a severe road accident just before Eid-ul-Fitr. His injuries were critical, and doctors initially feared for his life.



Photo: With rickshaw and makers in her garrage



Photo: Observing how things going on

In **2016**, she gave birth to a son. Despite partial recovery of her husband, the family remained in financial crisis. Her father later provided land and a tin-shed house for their shelter, but sustaining the family remained difficult. To survive, Shahana sold her gold chain and took a **BDT 20,000** loan from SDC to buy two old rickshaws. This marked the beginning of her entrepreneurial journey. Alongside rickshaw income, she also practiced handicrafts such as Nakshi Kantha, quilt stitching, and other hand embroidery work.

To survive, Shahana sold her gold chain and took a **BDT 20,000** loan from SDC to buy two old rickshaws. This marked the beginning of her entrepreneurial journey. Alongside rickshaw income, she also practiced handicrafts such as Nakshi Kantha, quilt stitching, and other hand embroidery work.

Gradually, she expanded her rickshaw business by taking regular loans from SDC and reinvesting her income. Later, under the **RAISE project**, she received a **BDT 2,50,000** loan and purchased electric bikes along with additional rickshaws. Over time, her assets grew to around **30 motor rickshaws**, **2 electric bikes**, and **livestock including goats, ducks, chickens, and pigeons**.



Photo: Shahana & Her Husband looking after the accounts

Today, Shahana's husband has recovered significantly and supports her in managing the business. She also completed a **16-day** entrepreneurship training under the **RAISE project**, which changed her perspective on business growth and employment creation. Now she dreams of establishing a permanent garage on her own land and continues to seek **support from SDC, PKSF, and the World Bank** to achieve her goal.





## From Ruin to Resilience: Akhiruzzaman's Journey of Reinvention

Akhiruzzaman, a small entrepreneur from Faridpur, turned adversity into opportunity through determination and resilience. After losing his clothing business due to an eviction drive and later suffering heavy losses during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, he faced significant financial challenges. With support from **SDC** and the **RAISE Project**, he rebuilt his business and adapted to changing circumstances. Today, he successfully runs a stationery business while maintaining additional sources of income. His journey reflects the power of **perseverance, entrepreneurship, and timely support**.

Read more: Scroll down to the next page

Reporter: Syeda Silvi Zaman  
Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain

## The Main Story:

**Akhiruzzaman (42)**, a resident of the small village of Kabirpur in Faridpur Sadar, is the second of six children of farmer Abdul Majid Molla (70). Although he was a bright student, financial hardship forced him to discontinue his education after completing Higher Secondary School in 1998. With limited income from farming, his father struggled to support the education of six children, prompting Akhiruzzaman to seek ways to improve his family's financial condition.

Unable to find suitable employment, he started a small clothing business in Faridpur's Heliport Market around **2000** with **BDT 20,000** provided by his father. The business gradually helped improve the family's economic situation. In **2005**, he married and started a separate household with his wife and parents. By **2011**, he had become the father of a son and a daughter, and life appeared to be moving according to plan.



Photo: A real hero Mr. Akhiruzzaman



Photo: Engaging himself with customers

**However, in 2012**, disaster struck when the government evicted structures built on public land, forcing the closure of his rented clothing shop. Losing both his business and inventory left him on the verge of financial collapse. Searching for a way forward, he **approached SDC's Faridpur Sadar Branch**. Following the advice of the branch manager, he combined **BDT 20,000** of his savings with a **BDT 20,000** loan from SDC and launched "**Bhai Bhai Library & Stationery**" in a small rented shop near Heliport Market.



His decision was driven by local demand. After nearby stationery shops were also removed, students of the Faridpur Technical Training Center had to travel nearly two kilometers to purchase educational materials. Recognizing this market gap, Akhiruzzaman built his business around books, notebooks, pens, and stationery products. Over time, he expanded his services to include mobile banking, mobile recharge, computer composing, and printing. His dedication and hard work steadily increased the size of his business, generating a monthly income of **BDT 30,000–35,000** and enabling him to move into his own shop premises.

Just as the business was flourishing, the **COVID-19** pandemic brought new challenges. Prolonged lockdowns and the closure of educational institutions severely affected demand for stationery products. Despite attempts to keep the business alive, including selling products door-to-door by bicycle, he suffered losses of nearly **BDT 400,000** during the pandemic period and struggled to support his family.



Photo: Working with his computer

Following the pandemic, Akhiruzzaman sought support from **SDC** to revive his business. He invested **BDT 200,000** from the sale of family land and received a **BDT 51,000** loan through the **RAISE Project**, supported by **PKSF** and the **World Bank**. He also completed training on **Risk Management and Business Continuity**, which helped him better prepare for future business challenges. Today, he earns around **BDT 20,000–25,000** per month from his shop and supplements his income through livestock farming. He now raises cows, goats, and native chickens, generating additional monthly earnings. Akhiruzzaman credits the **RAISE Project** for helping him rebuild his business and regain financial stability.





## From Moonlit Dreams to Threads of Triumph

Beneath the vast sky of dreams, countless untold stories quietly bloom amidst hardship and hope. Where poverty casts long shadows, courage often shines like moonlight through the darkness. This is the story of a woman who stitched together a future from threads of determination. A journey woven with sacrifice, resilience, and unwavering faith in a better tomorrow. From empty hands to empowered dreams, she transformed obstacles into opportunities. Meet Shila Aktar—a woman whose story proves that self-reliance begins with a single brave step.

To listen her voice, scroll down to the next page

Reporter: Syeda Silvi Zaman

Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman

Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain



## The Main Story:

In every corner of our society live countless diligent workers—silent guardians of perseverance, carrying the weight of life's storms upon their shoulders. Their stories are often written in the ink of hardship and uncertainty. Yet, even beneath skies clouded with despair, they dare to dream. Like moonlight piercing through the darkness, hope illuminates their path. Today, we listen to the inspiring journey of one such woman whose courage transformed adversity into achievement.

**“My name is Shila Aktar,”** she begins. “I was born into a family where scarcity was a constant companion. My father worked tirelessly as a laborer, struggling to provide even the simplest necessities. As a child, I dreamed of changing my family’s fate through education. But when a household struggles for food, education often becomes a distant star beyond reach. Despite countless obstacles, I managed to complete my secondary school examinations.”



**Photo:** Shila is busy swinging clothes at her tailor store



**Photo:** Shila showing her niece how to swing

“Soon after, the heavy chains of poverty altered the course of my life. At only sixteen years old, I was married. Before I could fully experience the colors of youth, I found myself carrying the responsibilities of motherhood. My husband’s modest income was barely enough to sustain our family. There were days when I could not afford milk for my children. Determined to change our circumstances, I searched for work, but no one was willing to employ a poor village girl like me. Every closed door deepened my despair.”

“Unable to afford vocational training and with no opportunities in sight, I turned to a microfinance organization for support. Taking a small loan, I purchased a sewing machine—the humble instrument that would one day weave a new destiny. Sitting beneath the dim light of hope, I began sewing clothes from home. The earnings were modest, only one to two thousand taka per month, but they represented the first threads of my journey toward self-reliance.”

“As the seasons passed, my dedication began to bear fruit. My skills improved, my customers increased, and within a year my monthly income reached nearly ten thousand taka. Like a river gaining strength with every tributary, my confidence grew. With savings from my sewing work, I started selling different types of fabric from home. What began as a small effort soon blossomed into a thriving enterprise.”



Photo: Shila working in her dream house

“Today, I earn **15,000–20,000** taka per month through my sewing business and own a tailor shop with a capital of **250,000–300,000** taka. Once, I struggled to find even two taka, but now I stand as a financially independent woman. My journey proves that determination can turn hardship into success.”

“My dream extends beyond personal success. I aspire to establish a training center where disadvantaged women can learn sewing and handicraft skills, helping them become financially independent.

Shila Aktar’s journey is a shining example of resilience and hope, proving that with determination and hard work, even the humblest dreams can be transformed into lasting success.”





## Rising from the Shadows: The Unstoppable Journey of Nasima Begum

In the remote town of Faridpur, where hope often seemed a distant dream, a remarkable woman and a sanitation worker of municipality named **Nasima Begum**, defied the odds and became a beacon of light for her community. Born into the grips of poverty and societal neglect, Nasima's life was a relentless struggle against the tides of adversity. Yet, her unwavering spirit and fierce determination would turn her story into an extraordinary triumph.

Interesting isn't it? Read more from next page

Reporter: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
 Writer & Editor: Syed Aswadur Rahman  
 Overall Support: Md. Sanowar Hossain

On **January 15, 1993**, Nasima, who was only in the third grade, was married off. The sole reason for this hasty marriage was "**poverty and social security**." Time passed, and Nasima's first daughter was born, illuminating her home. This event marked the beginning of her worries, as she pondered, "**Will my daughter's life be as dark and bleak as mine because she too is a child of a destitute family?**" Determined to secure a brighter future for her daughter, Nasima resolved to work hard despite her own struggles. Even without a proper shelter, she started raising a few chickens in a small shack and sold the eggs to fund her daughter's education. Her only concern was to ensure that her daughter would not be deprived of an education like she was.

Financial hardship weighed heavily on Nasima's family as her husband's income as a sanitation worker was barely enough to meet their basic needs. When her **children reached school age**, their education seemed uncertain. Refusing to surrender to poverty, Nasima resolved to change their future and create better opportunities for her family.



**Photo:** Nasima at her cooperative office meeting



**Photo:** Nasima with the sanitation workers.

Amidst this relentless struggle, a glimmer of hope appeared. Through a project name "**Towards A Dignified Life For All Sanitation Workers in Bangladesh**, funded by **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SDC & Practical Action** dedicated to empowering marginalized communities, entered Nasima's life. With their support, Nasima helped establish a cooperative committee and was elected as its president. SDC provided her with **life skills training** and unwavering encouragement. Their belief in her reignited a dream she had nearly lost—the dream of educating her children.



Nasima's efforts soon began to yield remarkable results. Her daughter **achieved a monumental milestone** by obtaining a driver's license, opening doors to new opportunities. Fueled by her mother's relentless drive, Nasima's daughter **enrolled in Saroda Sundori College**, embarking on a journey to pursue a **Bachelor of Social Science in English**. This achievement was not just academic; it was a **resounding victory against the shackles of poverty**.

Recognition of Nasima's extraordinary efforts soon followed. The DC office, in collaboration with Practical Action, honored her with the title of **"Best Dreamy Mother 2023."** This accolade was more than a personal triumph; it was a celebration of resilience, a testament to the power of a mother's love, and a symbol of hope for all struggling families.



**Photo:** A disciplined group of Nasima after their weekly meeting

Nasima's story reverberated through her community like a clarion call. Her journey from the depths of despair to the heights of recognition inspired countless others to believe in their strength and potential. Her **unwavering commitment to her children's education and her ultimate success illuminated the transformative power of determination and support.**

Today, Nasima Begum's tale is not just a story; it is a saga of resilience, hope, and empowerment. Her rise from the shadows of poverty to a position of leadership and recognition serves as a powerful reminder that with **relentless determination and the right support, anyone can overcome adversity.** Nasima's legacy continues to inspire, proving that the human spirit, when fueled by love and hope, is truly unstoppable.