

Case Study:

First to Respond:

A Success Story of Community Volunteers



Country: Bangladesh



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“When we reached the spot, we saw the Disaster Volunteers had already extinguished the fire. We didn’t have to do anything. Volunteers did a great job.” said Station Officer Morshedul Islam, Tongi Fire Station.

On 17th May, 2016, a fire broke out at Kolabagan Slum, Tongi around 6:30 PM. A total number of ten rooms caught fire. Late Ismail Hossain known as *Chaka Ismail* was the landlord. His wife Nilu Begum said, *“Volunteer and local people’s response was highly appreciable. It is a good initiative to train some community volunteer under Fire service and Civil Defence.”*

Though fire destroyed everything inside the rooms, the major success of the volunteers was to stop fires from spreading out. In order to stop fires from spreading out, volunteers demolished a tin-shed school beside the house. Almost 50 spontaneous Urban Community volunteers and some other local people took part in firefighting. Due to insufficient space, Fire service couldn’t reach the spot on time. Volunteers had succeeded to put out fire before the firefighters came. No one died or seriously injured. First time the Urban community volunteers of tongi area experienced a real life fire



Sufia Begum, A female disaster volunteer and CDC President is briefing on the fire

hazard after they had received training. It took 30 minutes to completely put out fire.



Ripon and Anwar, two Urban Community Volunteer who responded to the fire hazard at Kolabagan slum

A positive Change was observed during this incident. Sandbags were found in most of the houses. That’s why people could throw water and sands from all the sides to extinguish fires. Awareness about the reservation of sandbags was promoted in the community as a part of disaster preparedness initiatives under *BRUP project. Now the community is much more prepared for any disaster.

A significant number of female volunteers like Sonia and Sufia Begum actively participated in the response activities. Sufia Begum called to local fire station for help.

“As slum dweller, we need more training on fire hazard. The three day’s training we received as urban community volunteer was mainly based on the preparedness for earthquake or building collapse. Firefighting was less focused there. But slum community is relatively more vulnerable to fire hazard than earthquake.” Said Ripon, an urban community volunteer.



Sonia, a female disaster volunteer is sharing her experience.

Without facing the real life experience it was hard to realize the importance of disaster preparedness. The necessity of training and awareness is now justified. People know their shortcomings and also their strength.

** CARE Bangladesh is implementing Building Resilience of the Urban Poor (BRUP) Project through its local partner VERC with the financial assistance of C&A Foundation. BRUP is trying to address both shocks and stresses by simultaneously working at both community and institutional levels, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and Bangladesh National Plan for Disaster Management. Under this project, a number of two hundred Urban Community Volunteer have been trained by the BFSCD.*

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