



# Quarterly Newsletter

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## National Mourning Day Observed



15 August is observed in Bangladesh as the National Mourning Day. This year marks the 45<sup>th</sup> martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest architect of our Liberation. 2020 also marks the birth centenary of Bangabandhu, which attaches special significance to this tragic day. In adherence to the health directives set by the Government in the wake of the global coronavirus pandemic, PKSF organized a virtual discussion meeting to observe the day.

Hon'ble Deputy Speaker of Parliament Advocate Md Fazle Rabbi Miah, MP graced the event as the Chief Guest while Ms Aroma Datta, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, was the distinguished discussant. PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad chaired the virtual discussion and Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Managing Director, PKSF delivered the welcome remarks.

The Hon'ble Deputy Speaker, in his address, recalled with deep reverence those who were martyred on 15 August 1975. Describing August 15 as a black day in the history of the nation, he said Bangabandhu was in power to run the country for only three and a half years after independence, and within this short time, he showed great leadership in rebuilding a war-wrecked Bangladesh. Advocate Md Fazle Rabbi Miah urged everyone to continue united efforts to build a prosperous Bangladesh.

Ms Aroma Dutta highlighted various aspects of Bangabandhu's life. Referring to the glorious achievements and sacrifices of Bangabandhu for the nation, the Hon'ble Member of Parliament said, "The Bengali nation is forever indebted to the blood of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and this can never be repaid."

PKSF Chairman Dr QK Ahmad commented that Bangabandhu's political philosophy was centered on people at all times. He called upon all to work relentlessly to realize Bangabandhu's ideology, just not in words but through services to the country as well.

In the welcome speech, PKSF Managing Director Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah termed August 15 a disgraceful day for the nation. He said that we have to build the Bangladesh of Bangabandhu's dreams by turning mourning into might.

Among others, PKSF Board Members Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Mr Arijit Chowdhury, Ms Parveen Mahmud and Ms Nazneen Sultana addressed the virtual discussion. To mark the end of the event, PKSF's Deputy Managing Director Dr Md Jashim Uddin gave the vote of thanks. All employees of PKSF and chief executives/representatives of its Partner Organizations (POs), and civil society members attended the virtual meeting which was livestreamed on PKSF's official Facebook page. Special prayers were also offered on the same day for the peace of the souls of those fell on 15 August 1975.

## Distribution of Grants among Victims of Covid-19 and Flood



PKSF employees donated 40% of their Bangla New Year bonus for relief operations. Out of this fund, around BDT 22 lac was given as grants to those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and flood through 2 Partner Organizations (POs) of PKSF – ‘Manob Mukti Sangstha’ in Sirajganj and ‘Progress’ in Jamalpur.

On 17 August 2020, a virtual meeting was arranged, in which PKSF Managing Director Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah exchanged views with the Executive Directors and some of the relief-recipients. He expressed his hope that this donation would be of help to the victims. The PKSF MD also emphasized on

ensuring utmost transparency in distributing the grants. Senior officials of PKSF attended the meeting.

On 15 August 2020, **Manob Mukti Sangstha** distributed a part of this grant among 105 victims of flood in reverential observance of the martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. And **Progress** distributed the grant money among the victims in the presence of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and the Upazila Chairman of Islampur. The officials of the two Partner Organizations took all care to oversee so that the more vulnerable victims receive the grants.

## Integrity Award



Following the National Integrity Strategy of Bangladesh (developed by the Cabinet Division), PKSF gave recognition to two of its officials with ‘Integrity Award’ for the fiscal year 2019-20. They were selected with the application of 19 indicators as determined by the Government of Bangladesh. The awardees this year are -- Mr Abul Kalam Azad, Assistant General Manager (in the senior category) and Ms Sabrina Sultana, Officer (in the junior category). PKSF’s Managing Director Mr Mohammad Moinuddin

Abdullah handed over the crests, certificates and cheques to the awardees during a quarterly coordination meeting on 31 August 2020. He congratulated the awardees and commented that they should show their capability in a continuous manner.

In addition, PKSF’s Integrity Strategy Policy was approved during the July-September 2020 quarter. The policy has been uploaded on PKSF website.

## New project -- RAISE

PKSF has taken an initiative to implement a new project titled ‘Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)’. The implementation of RAISE is expected to begin in January 2021. The objective of the project is to increase employability and productivity of low-income youths, existing entrepreneurs and returnee migrants, especially those affected by the COVID-19 crises. The project will be jointly financed by PKSF and the World Bank. The Project Management Unit (PMU) of SEIP, in coordination of the World Bank, is conducting all the activities of RAISE.

## Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises (PACE) Project

PKSF has been implementing the 'Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises (PACE)' project, jointly financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and PKSF, since 2014. In addition to providing financial services to microentrepreneurs, PACE implements value chain and technology transfer sub-projects to promote different potential farm and non-farm economic sub-sectors. So far, 74 value chain sub-projects are in operation in 139 upazilas of 41 districts through 46 Partner Organizations (POs). A total of 3,00,034 microentrepreneurs and value chain actors receive various technical, technological and marketing supports under the value chain sub-projects. Besides, 23 technology transfer sub-projects are in place to provide appropriate technological support to 20,313 microentrepreneurs/farmers. Appropriate technologies are available for productivity and increase of income of the microentrepreneurs.

### New Value Chain Development Sub-projects in July-September 2020

- (i) Increasing Income of Entrepreneurs through Cultivation and Marketing of High Value Spices:** Society Development Committee (SDC), a PO of PKSF, is implementing this value chain sub-project in Faridpur district to promote the potential spice cultivation sub-sector. A total of 1,000 microentrepreneurs (770 male and 230 female) of Faridpur Sadar and Boalmari upazilas are receiving various technical, technological and marketing support under this sub-project.
- (ii) Increasing Income of Entrepreneurs in Char Areas through the Expansion of Ecological Farming:** Amra Kaj Kory (AKK) is implementing this value chain sub-project for production of safe food by promoting ecological farming technology. A total of 1,000 microentrepreneurs (630 male and 370 female) of Char Bhodrashan upazila in Faridpur district receive different technical, technological and marketing support under this sub-project.
- (iii) Increasing Income and Employment Creation of Entrepreneurs through Expansion of Crab Farming Technology and Marketing of Crabs:** This value chain sub-project is being implemented by Nabolok Parishad, a PO of PKSF, in Rampal and Mongla upazilas of Bagerhat district. A total of 1,000 microentrepreneurs (730 male and 270 female) receive various technical, technological and marketing support under this sub-project. This sub-project is extending supports for capacity development of the farmers and setting up of demonstration hatcheries for raising awareness about the modern technology of crab cultivation.

### Additional Financing and Project Extension Mission

The 6-year PACE project was scheduled to be completed by December 2020. But the implementation of the project was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the Government to announce general holidays across the country from 26 March 2020. Against this backdrop, PKSF requested through the Ministry of Finance for a 2-year extension of the project and an additional financing of USD 18 million for the project from IFAD to resume value chain activities and financial services to

microentrepreneurs under PACE. Accordingly, IFAD has agreed on additional financing of USD 18 million as well as 2-year extension of the project (until 31 December 2022).

From 29 July to 16 August 2020, an additional financing Mission of IFAD worked on designing the project proposal for the extended period. The Mission expressed their satisfaction at the progress of the project implementation and highly appreciated various innovative activities of PACE at the virtual wrap-up meeting presided over by Mr Abdul Baki, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division held on 13 August 2020. The Mission also emphasized on the need for replication of these innovative activities. PKSF's Deputy Managing Director Mr Md Fazlul Kader and Senior General Manager Dr Akond Md Rafiqul Islam attended the meeting on behalf of PKSF.

### Supervision Mission of IFAD

An IFAD Supervision Mission evaluated the progress of different activities of the PACE project from 13-26 September 2020. The 6-member mission evaluated the progress of value chain activities and microenterprises under the project. Presided over by Mr Arijit Chowdhury, Additional Secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance, the wrap-up meeting of the Mission was held on 24 September 2020. The Supervision Mission expressed satisfaction over the progress of the PACE project and highly appreciated the innovative activities of the project.



## Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People (PPEPP)

Jointly funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO, formerly DFID) and the European Union (EU), the 'Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People (PPEPP)' -- in short 'Prosperity' -- program aims to lift two million marginalized people out of extreme poverty in the next 10 years. It will also support the development of stronger national institutions and systems to deliver the public and private services for the extremely poor people to become resilient and prosper thereby. The program will reach 0.25 million households in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase during 2020-2025. PKSF is implementing this multidimensional program in three climate vulnerable regions of Bangladesh -- the Teesta and the Brahmaputra river basins in the northwest, the coastal belt in the southwest, and the *haor* region in the northeast.



### Prosperity Starts Service Delivery

The services of the program include livelihoods, nutrition and other need-based interventions. Under the Livelihoods component, the program is implementing six broader activities -- financial services, capacity development, technical services, livelihoods and enterprise development, value chain interventions and market expansion, and building up resilience against disaster and climate change.

In the process, participants in the piloting areas have started receiving nutrition-sensitive agriculture, assistance in livestock and fisheries along with a number of off-farm services.

The participants are engaged mostly in broiler and native poultry rearing; pigeon rearing; fish farming in the ditch method; high-value fish farming in tanks; fish farming in floating enclosures; combined fish farming in the coastal belt and crab fattening activities. The interventions are expected to meet the extreme poor households' needs of nutrition as well as to raise their household income in a sustainable way.

The Prosperity program has already started imparting training to selected household members on agriculture, livestock and fish farming and offering the related technology, depending on their capacity and availability of assets. In the meantime, participants in some areas have started producing handicraft and some clothing items on completion of their skills training.

### Emergency Cash Support

The Prosperity program has begun transferring emergency cash to some 30,000 extremely poor households in the program area to help meet their basic needs. The family incomes of this vulnerable population came down under the impact of Covid-19. All the selected extremely poor households of 17 piloting Unions in 10 districts receive a monthly sum of BDT 3,000 for three consecutive months under emergency assistance program (EAP).

To ensure transparency, the money is transferred directly to the participants through mobile financing services (MFS) such as bKash, Rocket, Nagad and agent banking services. Before the formal launching, the EAP was piloted in some Unions in September 2020 to test the efficacy and accuracy of the mechanism.

### Household Selection under the Main Phase

The extremely poor (EP) household targeting activities for the main implementation phase are underway in all the Prosperity Unions in full swing. So far, nearly 3.5 lakh households have been primarily identified through Participatory Extreme Poor Identification Technique (PEPIT), a unique tool developed under the program that combines Social Mapping and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The selection process is being conducted through 175 branches in 246 Unions of 15 districts of four Prosperity regions -- the northwest, the southwest, the *haor*, and the habitats of selected ethnic minorities in some regions. Some 1,400 staffers and 530 enumerators of the 19 Partner Organizations (POs) implementing the comprehensive and integrated program are involved in the targeting process. Implementing officials of the POs have already received a series of training on identification and selection process.

During the piloting phase (under the one-year inception phase from April 2019 to March 2020), 34,000 extreme-poor households were selected. Some of these households are receiving various supports.

### Distribution of Potable Water

Distribution of potable water among some of the worst Amphan survivors in Satkhira was completed successfully in September 2020. Nowabanki Gonomukhi Foundation (NGF), a partner of Prosperity, carried out the distribution activities among the EP households in Gabura and Anulia Unions since 20 June 2020.



The Prosperity program distributed 9.62 lakh liters of potable water for free among extremely poor households of these two Unions. Some 4.88 lakh liters of potable water was distributed from 244 different distribution points in Anulia Union. In Gabura, around 4.74 lakh liters of safe drinking water was distributed from 240 distribution points.

### Virtual Orientation Program for the PO Staff

PKSF's Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for the Prosperity program has started a virtual orientation program for the technical staff of the POs that are implementing the program at the field level. The month-long virtual orientation was launched on 15 September 2020. The orientation program (for five batches) will

end on 15 October 2020. It aims to enhance the skills of the POs' staff for an effective implementation of the program. A total of 443 participants from 19 downstream POs are taking part in the orientation. The participants include Project Coordinators, Technical Officers and Assistant Technical Officers under the Livelihoods, Nutrition and Community Mobilization components including the Management Information System (MIS) officers.

### Operational Meeting with POs

A series of online meetings on the program operations have been organized with more than 350 staffers from 9 Prosperity POs since July 2020. The meetings were aimed at coordinating the field activities of the Prosperity program, as well as reviewing the monthly progress of the program's implementation. PKSF officials conducted these meetings with PO representatives.

### PIU Coordination Meeting

The staff of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of Prosperity took part in meetings on coordination, collaboration and integration among the team members.

The Livelihood, Community Mobilization and Nutrition departments arranged some discussion sessions to develop an efficient field operation mechanism among different teams and departments under the PIU for effective program implementation. Following the completion of the Inception Phase of the program, it is now rolling towards the main phase.

## LIFT Program

PKSF has been implementing the 'Learning and Innovation Fund to Test New Ideas (LIFT)' program since 2006 for sustainable development of the extremely poor across the country through innovative initiatives. LIFT is implementing different inclusive development programs for different disadvantaged groups including elderly people, persons with disabilities, *Dalits* and *Bede* communities, ethnic minority people, people of the third gender, and those living in haor and char areas.

A total of 34 innovative initiatives are being implemented through 56 Partner Organizations (POs). Currently, the LIFT program is in operation in 34 districts of the country. Upholding the fundamental motto of SDG -- 'leaving no one behind', LIFT operates different innovative initiatives for the extremely poor. LIFT also continues to expand and replicate potential initiatives.

### LIFT Initiatives for the Third Gender Community

To improve the living standard of the third gender people, a wide range of capacity development and financial support programs are being implemented under LIFT. TMSS, a PO of PKSF, is implementing this initiative for the third gender community living in Dhunat upazila of Bogura. Under the initiative, as many as 70

third gender persons have been rehabilitated since 2019 through skills transfer and job creation.

Of them, 20 persons have already received training on tailoring. Some of them are engaged in raising goats and small trades with financial assistance from LIFT. Most of them have given up begging and are now enjoying a comparatively comfortable life.



PKSF has been implementing the ‘Enhancing Resources and Increasing Capacities of Poor Households towards Elimination of their Poverty’ (ENRICH) program since 2010. ENRICH aims to create an enabling environment for the poor to live a humanly dignified life. Currently, ENRICH is being implemented at 202 Unions of 64 districts in all 8 divisions of the country through 115 Partner Organizations (POs) of PKSF.

## Health, Nutrition & WASH

Under this activity, 375 health officers and 2,650 health visitors are working relentlessly. Of them, 93 health officers and 625 health visitors under 50 POs are providing healthcare facilities to around 1.5 million people under the digital healthcare system of ENRICH. In July-September 2020, a total of 1,36,592 people received healthcare services through static clinics, satellite clinics and health camps.



A virtual training of trainers (ToT) on ‘Healthcare and Nutrition’ was delivered to 371 health officials from 115 POs and 2 social development partner institutions in seven batches from 7 to 24 September 2020. PKSF’s Deputy Managing Director Dr Md Jashim Uddin delivered the inaugural and closing remarks. Dr Md Saleh Mahmud Tushar -- currently working at the Corona Unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital -- conducted a session on the healthcare practices of the health workers during Covid-19 pandemic.

**Educational Assistance:** Currently, 1,73,314 students are receiving regular lessons through 6,629 Education Assistance Centers in 202 ENRICH Unions. In these Unions, the drop-out rate at the primary level has come down to 0.06%, while the rate is about 4-4.5% nationwide.

## Financial Assistance

• **Special Savings:** Under this service, disabled and female-headed ultra-poor families are offered financial grants which is (BDT 20,000 maximum) equal to their two years’ savings. They invest the money in different income-generating activities. In July-September 2020, a total of 232 members deposited BDT

1,34,400. So far, 2,388 members received BDT 3.23 crore as grants under special savings assistance.

- **Loan Disbursement:** ENRICH offers 3 types of credit services -- Income Generating Activities Loan (IGAL), Livelihood Improvement Loan (LIL) and Asset Creation Loan (ACL). In July-September 2020, a total of BDT 32.38 crore has been disbursed as loans among the ENRICH members.

## Other Activities

- **ENRICH Centers:** Currently, there are 1,482 ENRICH Centers in 202 Unions.
- **Ward Coordination Meetings:** The representatives of the local Union Parishad and members of the program assemble in regular meetings in every 2 months at each ENRICH Center. They usually discuss issues like the formation of social capital and review the status of development activities. In July-September 2020, a total of 9288 meetings were arranged at the ENRICH Centers.
- **ENRICHed Home:** The program inspires its members to make the best use of the existing resources of each household and to transform it into an ENRICHed home. In July-September 2020, a total of 83 households were transformed into ENRICHed homes, putting the total number to 13,621.
- **Bandhu Chula and Solar Home System:** ENRICH promotes eco-friendly and renewable technology. So far, 51,312 improved cooking stoves (locally known as *Bandhu Chulas*) and 74,925 solar home systems have been provided to the program participants.



## Uplifting the Quality of the Lives of the Elderly People

PKSF is implementing 'Uplifting the Quality of the Lives of the Elderly People Program' as a special intervention of ENRICH program in 218 Unions (including 183 ENRICH Unions) through 106 Partner Organizations (POs). A total of 4,09,465 elderly persons receive different services under this initiative. Of them, 2, 08,421 are female and 2, 01,044 are male.

### Major activities in July-September 2020

- A total of 5,426 Ward committee meetings and 648 Union committee meetings were held.
- BDT 2.82 crore (BDT 500 per month) was disbursed to 9,200 female and 9,610 male elderly persons as old age allowances.
- A total of 4,520 blankets, 3,180 walking sticks and 224 wheelchairs were distributed among distressed elderly people.
- On demise of the indigent elders, a one-time financial assistance of BDT 2,000 is provided to the family of the deceased to defray the funeral expenditure. In this quarter, 529 families received this support.
- A total of 134 elderly persons got the Best Citizen Awards in recognition of their special contribution to society. And 164 children got the Best Offspring Awards for taking proper care of their parents.
- 2.10 lac elderly persons received healthcare services from satellite clinics arranged in 35 Unions.
- Till now, 15,111 active/capable elderly persons have received training on different Income Generating Activities including duck, chicken, goat and cow rearing, and small trades.
- In order to help the capable and enthusiastic elderly persons, an elderly-friendly loan policy is in place and BDT 5.40 crore was disbursed as loans in FY 2019-2020.

**Supplementary Platforms:** Two National Platforms -- 'Platform for the Elderly, Bangladesh' and 'Bangladesh Dementia Friends Committee' -- are working for the welfare of the elderly people to ensure their basic social rights and safety.

A webinar was organized by the 'Platform for the Elderly, Bangladesh' on 4 October 2020 to mark the International Day of Older Persons (celebrated worldwide on 1 October every year). The program was attended by eminent personalities of the country. PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad presided over the webinar while Mr Md Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh was the Chief Guest. PKSF Managing Director and Vice-President of the platform Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah spoke in the webinar. Dr Md Jashim Uddin, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF and treasurer of the platform delivered the introductory speech of the event attended by the country's eminent personalities.



## Research Unit

The people living in the ENRICH Unions are found to be more resilient than the residents of the non-ENRICH Unions in coping with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the working hours of the economically active population, it was found that the unemployment rate in the ENRICH Unions was 45% and while it was 75% in the Non-ENRICH ones during the pandemic period (till June 2020). This was revealed in a research study titled 'Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Lives and Livelihoods of the Households in ENRICH and Non-ENRICH Unions of PKSF and their Resilience Capacity'. The Research Unit of PKSF conducted this study.

On 26 August 2020, Dr Tapash Kumar Biswas, Director (Research) presented the study's findings in a Board Meeting of PKSF. Borotara Union in Khetlal upazila of Joypurhat was randomly selected as the 'study area' while Amdoi Union of Joypurhat Sadar upazila was picked as the 'control area'.

The study further estimated that in 2019, the poverty rate was 2.5% and extreme poverty rate was 0.75% in the ENRICH Union while in the Non-ENRICH Union, the corresponding figures stood at 10% and 7% respectively.

During the pandemic, the poverty rate was 35.75% and the extreme poverty rate was 25.50% in the ENRICH Union. On the other hand, these were 69% and 61% respectively in the Non-ENRICH Union. Increase in the unemployment rate and corresponding fall in income also resulted in food insecurity, the study revealed.

The study measured a Resilience Index. Based on its values, in case of the ENRICH Union, 16.75% of the households were satisfactorily resilient, 40.75% were partially resilient and 42.5% were not resilient at all. In the Non-ENRICH Union, 1.50% of the households were resilient, 34% were partially resilient and 64.50% were not resilient at all.

## Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP)

PKSF is implementing the Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP) to enhance the capacity of the micro-enterprises in Bangladesh in the use of environment-friendly technologies; marketing and brand development; and adoption of environmentally sustainable business practices. The total budget of the project is USD 130 million, in which the World Bank's share is USD 110.0 million and PKSF's is USD 20 million. Up to September 2020, PKSF approved BDT 574 crore as loans in favour of 49 POs. Of the amount, BDT 311 crore has already been disbursed.

### Meetings, Training and Workshops

- The 8<sup>th</sup> evaluation meeting on the Sub-Project Concept Note (SPCN) of SEP was held on 26 July 2020. Deputy Managing Director Mr AQM Golam Mawla presided over the meeting. The officials of the Project Management Unit presented the SPCNs and the budgets proposed by the Partner Organizations (POs). The evaluation committee recommended for the approval of BDT 39 crore as Agrosor-SEP loan in favour of 6 POs. Later, the PKSF Board approved the recommendation.

- The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the technical committee (comprising PKSF officials and external experts) was held on 19 July 2020 to evaluate the Sub-Project Concept Notes (SPCNs) submitted by the POs. The committee recommended for approval of the proposed activities as well as of the budgets of 5 POs.

- In July 2020, a total of 300 officials from 43 POs received an online training on 'Policy and safeguard documents of SEP' in 4 different batches.

- An online training was arranged on 12 August 2020 for PO officials on achievable environmental practices.

- A number of presentations on the Detailed Sub-Project Proposal (DSPP) activities under SEP were made in September 2020. Mr Md Fazlul Kader, Deputy Managing Director, PKSF, chaired these sessions and shared observations on these DSPPs. Four DSPPs were submitted to the World Bank for approval.



- On 23 July 2020, a workshop was arranged to call for the Detailed Sub-project Proposals (DSPPs) from 7 POs.

- A number of presentations on different sub-sector studies were made in August and September 2020 on dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and the plastic sub-sector. Respective sector specialists presented their final study reports to PKSF.

- A 2-day quarterly progress review meeting was held on 1-2 September 2020. Officials of 41 POs selected in the first phase under SEP attended the meeting. The meeting discussed the progress of POs' loan disbursement and implementation of different activities. In addition, there were directions to conduct field-level activities following health directives to contain the spread of COVID-19.

## Workshop on the Role of Youth on Climate Change

On 08 September 2020, PKSF organized a virtual workshop on 'The Role of Youth on Climate Change' to increase the active involvement of youths in the country's various climate change related matters and to raise awareness among young people.

PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad presided over the workshop while Mr Mashud Ahmed, Managing Director (Additional Secretary) of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT) was the Guest of Honor. Dr Fazle Rabbi Sadeque Ahmed, Director (ECCU) of PKSF gave a presentation on the topic.

Dr Md Jashim Uddin, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF delivered the closing remarks. The members of PKSF's 'Youth in Development' and 'Adolescent Clubs' from different parts of the country attended the workshop. Representatives of various

ministries, departments, non-governmental organizations, development partners, Executive Directors of PKSF POs and senior officials of PKSF attended the program. The virtual workshop was livestreamed on PKSF's official Facebook page.





## Rural Water, Sanitation & Hygiene for Human Capital Development Project



PKSF is set to implement a project titled ‘Bangladesh Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Human Capital Development’ with financial support from the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 78 selected upazilas of 18 districts in 4 Divisions.

The project aims to reform institutions and improve WASH facilities during 2021-2025 to meet the ‘safely-managed’ service standards in line with Targets 6.1 and 6.2 of the UN-sponsored Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The five-year project is expected to begin in January 2021. The Department of Public

Health Engineering (DPHE) of the Government of Bangladesh will implement specific components of this project in collaboration with PKSF. The International Development Association (IDA), a member of the World Bank Group, and the AIIB will fund \$400 million for this project.

### Negotiation Meeting

Delegations representing the Government of Bangladesh and the IDA met on 20 August 2020 for negotiations. The project was approved by the World Bank Board on 25 September 2020.

Mr Md Shahabuddin Patwary, Additional Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance led the Bangladesh team and Ms Rokeya Ahmed, Water Supply and Sanitation Specialist of the World Bank, headed the team representing the IDA.

Another negotiation meeting with the AIIB team was held on 24 September 2020, following which the AIIB Board approved the project on 16 October 2020. Mr Md Shahriar Kader Siddiky, Joint Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance led the Bangladesh team and Mr Toshiaki Keicho, Senior Investment Operations Specialist, headed the AIIB team.

Mr Md Fazlul Kader, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF represented PKSF in the Bangladesh delegation in both meetings.

## Meeting on Microenterprise Program

In order to discuss the prospects and challenges of the microenterprise sector in Bangladesh and to determine ways forward, a virtual meeting on PKSF’s Microenterprise (ME) program was held on 13 September 2020.

The meeting was presided over by Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman of PKSF while Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Managing Director of PKSF delivered the welcome remarks to kick off the meeting.

Mr Md Fazlul Kader, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF gave a presentation on the general progress of PKSF’s ME program, the initiatives undertaken to promote this sector, and strategies for its further expansion.

A total of 93 officials including senior officials of PKSF’s ME Cell, panel leaders and relevant project officials, and Executive Directors of selected POs involved in the implementation of PACE, RMTP, WASH, SEP and RAISE projects attended the meeting.

The meeting emphasized on the need for institutional capacity enhancement of PKSF and its POs in implementing the ME

program with greater transparency and efficiency to minimize the prevalent and the probable risks in the sector.

The meeting also discussed the challenges existing in the sector and strategies including appropriate technologies, branding, marketing through e-commerce, digital money transfer, crowdfunding, certification etc.

The Chief Executives of the POs highly appreciated the steps taken by PKSF in the development of the ME sector in Bangladesh and also shared their views regarding future development of the sector.



### Progress of ECCCCP-Flood Project

The 'Extended Community Climate Change Project - Flood (ECCCCP-Flood)', approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) under the UNFCCC, will be implemented in 5 flood-prone districts of Bangladesh. The total budget of the 4-year project is USD 13.33 million. A total of 09 Partner Organizations (POs) have been selected as the Implementing Entities (IEs) of the project.

The inception workshop of the project was held on 20 August 2020. PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad presided over the workshop. Ms Fatima Yasmin, Secretary of Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance was the Chief Guest while Dr AKM Rafique Ahammed, Director General, Department of Environment was the Special Guest. Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Managing Director of PKSF delivered the inaugural speech in the workshop.

On 15 September 2020, a webinar was held with the Executive Directors of the Implementing Entities of ECCCCP-Flood project. Dr Fazle Rabbi Sadeque Ahmed, Director (Environment and Climate Change), PKSF presided over the webinar.

### Progress of GCF-Readiness Project

The GCF-Readiness project was launched to enhance the capacities of PKSF, government and non-government organizations on GCF mechanisms, policies and requirements. An inception workshop of the project was organized on 06 August 2020. Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Managing Director of PKSF, presided



over the event. Mr Ziaul Hasan, NDC, Secretary of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was the Chief Guest while Dr Nahid Rashid, Additional Secretary of Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance was the Special Guest. Representatives from different ministries, departments, NGOs, civil society organizations attended the workshop.

### Guidelines on Environmental Management

The Environment and Climate Change Unit has prepared 10 guidelines for environmental management of micro-enterprises of PKSF. These were carefully prepared in intensive consultation with the specialists and stakeholders concerned. During this quarter, 5 environmental management guidelines on livestock waste, shoe industry waste, power loom environment, banana cultivation environment and safe mango cultivation have been published.

### Low Income Community Housing Support Project (LICHSP)

PKSF and the National Housing Authority (NHA) have been jointly implementing the 'Low Income Community Housing Support Project' funded by the World Bank (WB) since October 2016 to improve the living conditions of the low-income people residing in selected municipalities and city corporations of Bangladesh. Seven Partner Organizations (POs) of PKSF are implementing the housing loan activities in 13 towns under the Project's Part-3, titled 'Shelter Lending & Support'.

As of 30 September 2020, PKSF has disbursed BDT 878 million as loans and BDT 18.93 million as grants to 7 POs. The POs disbursed BDT 718 million as loans to 2,679 borrowers to construct new houses and to extend or repair the existing ones. In the July-September 2020 quarter, 7 POs disbursed BDT 91 million as loans to 536 new borrowers.

### ABASON Loan Program

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) has undertaken different initiatives to ensure holistic development of the poor in the country. A healthy residence supplements to increase the productivity of the poor and thereby to live a humanly dignified life. In view of these, since January 2019, PKSF has been implementing a program titled ABASON out of its own fund to provide financial and technical assistance to the poor people living in the remote places for the construction or repairing of their houses.

The ABASON program is being implemented in 33 upazilas of 16 districts through 16 Partner Organizations (POs) of PKSF. As of 30 September 2020, BDT 317.50 million has been disbursed as housing loans to 16 POs.

The POs disbursed BDT 260.9 million to 1,010 borrowers. In July-September 2020, an amount of BDT 25.5 million was disbursed as loans to 116 new borrowers along with the old ones.

## PKSF Delegates Visit Field-level Activities

COVID-19 pandemic stalled many of our usual activities across the globe. In reality, we are still under the Corona impacts. To curb the spread of the dreadful Covid-19 virus in Bangladesh, the Government declared general holidays across the country in different phases from 26 March to 30 May 2020. But from the commitment to bring back normalcy in the context of the necessity of restoring economic activities of the country, the Government took different initiatives. Against this backdrop, along with other organizations, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) gradually started its activities, of course, following the health directives declared by the Government. Due to the unavoidable constraints posed by COVID-19, PKSF and its Partner Organizations (POs) took initiatives to conduct their activities with the use of different online technologies. To address the adversities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, PKSF's employees of all ranks and files came forward to help out the victims of the pandemic in all possible respects. Details of these initiatives were documented in the previous issue of PKSF Newsletter. Still it is worth to mention in this number of the Newsletter that PKSF arranged a number of webinars and virtual meetings to connect all its stakeholders in conducting the activities. It is to be specially noted that PKSF's Managing Director and two Deputy Managing Directors visited field-level activities as soon as the COVID-19 contraction and death rates had reduced slightly. PKSF's activities for the ultra-poor inhabitants of disaster-prone and backward *Haor* area significantly reflect the mission and vision of the Foundation.



PKSF's MD Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah and two DMDs, namely Mr Md Fazlul Kader and Dr Md Jashim Uddin visited different field-level activities of **People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI)**, a PO of PKSF, in the Kishoreganj region on 30-31 October 2020. During the visit, POPI's Executive Director Mr Murshed Alam Sarker and Director-EES Mr Mashihur Rahman accompanied PKSF officials.

PKSF's MD Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah and 2 DMDs Mr Md Fazlul Kader and Dr Md Jashim Uddin witnessed the floating fish culture activities being implemented by the members of the Prosperity program in Itna upazila of Kishoreganj. There, they discussed with the officers concerned on the issues of project planning, challenges in preparing budget, implementation strategies, project's progress, and the advantages and disadvantages of floating fish culture. Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, along with Mr Md Fazlul Kader and Dr Md Jashim Uddin, visited a floating school, a clinic, vegetable cultivation in sacks, native chicken farms of the successful members, a household of an ultra-poor member of POPI at Chatirchar Union of Nikli upazila. Mr Md Samsuddin Munna, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Nikli upazila was also present with the PKSF delegates during the visit.

Since the floating school and clinic run by POPI were closed due to COVID-19 pandemic, the students welcomed the guests in front of the school at the bank of the river. And it was a fascinatingly beautiful show in the open space. The guests discussed with the students on the overall status of their study.

They also exchanged views with the members of the adolescent girls' club of the school. The adolescent girls asked the guests about different ongoing issues of the country caused by COVID-19 including the current situation and awareness measures for the pandemic. The girls also requested for steps to increase the number of books in their library and the guests including the UNO assured them in this regard.

PKSF's MD Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah and 2 DMDs Mr Md Fazlul Kader and Dr Md Jashim Uddin discussed with the successful entrepreneurs about different initiatives at Chatirchar Union of Nikli upazila. They came to know about the lifestyle, employment, disaster preparedness and mitigation measures of the *Haor* people while visiting a household of an ultra-poor member and a vegetable farmer. PKSF delegates gave suggestions regarding necessary initiatives in improving the lifestyle of the *haor* people.

## Training Program

PKSF organizes training courses of various lengths at home and abroad for its personnel as well as for the officials of the Partner Organizations (POs). These courses cover a wide range of areas that are critical to alleviating poverty and smooth operation of different financial and non-financial activities of PKSF. Training for capacity building and improvement of the officials and staff of PKSF and its POs is always in place as a continuous and regular activity.

### Training for POs Staff

The main objective of PKSF's training department is to develop professional skills of the employees of its POs to ensure proper implementation and management of the activities of PKSF.

So far, PKSF has provided classroom-based training to about 1 lakh PO officials. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has brought about changes in the implementing process of PKSF's activities.

To address the unique challenges the POs are facing in implementing their day-to-day operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, a 4-day online training course titled 'Operation Management in COVID-19 situation' has been launched by PKSF for senior and mid-level PO officials.

PKSF Managing Director Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah inaugurated the training program on 10 August 2020. Deputy Managing Director Mr Golam Touhid delivered the introductory remarks at the event.



The overall objective of the course is to better equip the PO staff for managing their activities both at office and in the field during the COVID-19 in careful adherence to the health and safety guidelines issued by the Government and PKSF. Till September 2020, a total of 747 officials of 160 POs received this online training in 32 batches.

### In-Country Training and Conference

In July-September 2020, a total of 33 PKSF officials participated in a virtual training program while one PKSF officer took part in a virtual conference.

Subject	No. of Participants	Date and Venue	Organizer
Virtual Training on 'Information Dissemination and Training on Microenterprise Financing Operation Guidelines'	33	12-14 July 2020 PKSF Bhaban	PKSF
The 53 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Planning Conference of BARD	01	19-20 September 2020 Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)	BARD



### Internship

Due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, public access to PKSF Bhaban has been strictly restricted. In view of this, arrangements have been made to manage online internship. Students are using online platforms to complete their internship under the guidance of their respective supervising officers at PKSF. Three students from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) and one from the Institute of Health Economics, University of Dhaka are currently pursuing internships at PKSF. All of them are working on the ENRICH program of PKSF.

## Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP)

PKSF has been implementing the Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP) since 2015 to provide training and create employment opportunities for youths from socio-economically disadvantaged families. The project is jointly financed by the Government of Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Currently, under Tranche-2 of SEIP, training courses are offered through 38 partner training institutions and 66 training institutes on 17 trades under 8 priority sectors as determined by the Government of Bangladesh.

**Progress of Training Courses:** Up to September 2020, a total of 19,768 trainees have completed registration. Among them, 17,507 trainees have completed their courses. Training courses for other trainees have been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Progress of Employment Creation:** Till now, 12,966 youths have found employment. They constitute 74% of the total trainees who successfully completed their courses. Of the completers, 268 have found overseas employment. PKSF, under SEIP, has provided BDT 72 lac as start-up loans to 128 youths through 10 Partner Organizations (POs) to help them find self-employment.

**Progress of Tranche-3:** Under the proposed plan of Tranche-3 of the project, the target is to train 15,700 trainees including persons with disabilities.



## Strengthening Resilience of Livestock Farmers

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) has launched a new project titled 'Strengthening Resilience of Livestock Farmers through Risk Reducing Services' funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

On 10 June 2020, a tripartite agreement was signed among PKSF, SDC and Swisscontact to implement the project at the field level. In line with this, on 13 August 2020, a Subsidiary Grant Agreement (SGA) was signed between PKSF and the Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh at the Bangladesh Secretariat. Mr Golam Touhid, Deputy Managing Director of PKSF, and Mr Sirajun Noor Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Finance Division, signed the SGA on behalf of their respective institutions.

Mr Md Hasan Khaled, Senior General Manager of PKSF, Mr Touhidul Islam, Deputy Secretary of Finance Division, and Ms Mursheda Zaman, Deputy Secretary, Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance were also present in the SGA signing ceremony.

### Training of PO Officials

From 28-30 September 2020, a training on 'Risk Reduction in Livestock Rearing' was arranged for the officials of Partner Organizations (POs) selected to implement the new project that aims to better capacity and knowledge of livestock farmers.



PKSF's General Manager Dr Sharif Ahmed Chowdhury, also a noted livestock specialist, Deputy Manager Mr Md Shahriar Haider, Value Chain Specialist of PACE project Dr SM Faruk-Ul-Alam, and other PKSF officials conducted the training sessions.

During the training, a presentation was given on 'Livestock rearing, financial management and project implementing strategy'. A total of 75 participants -- 15 DVMs (Doctors of Veterinary Medicine) and 60 Extension Officers -- from 15 POs implementing the project, received the virtual training in three batches.

## Program for Adolescents

Upholding the motto of ‘Investment in Adolescents for Sustainable Development’, since July 2019, PKSF has been implementing the **Program for Adolescents** in 230 upazilas of 59 districts through 69 Partner Organizations (POs). The key objective of the program is to build a future generation imbued with moral values and ethics. Under the program, adolescent boys’ and girls’ clubs and ‘school forums’ are formed across the country. The activities of these clubs and forums are designed in four broad categories: 1) Raising awareness on different social issues and practicing of good values, 2) Leadership and life-skill development, 3) Nutrition and healthcare and 4) Cultural and sports activities.

### Raising Awareness and Practicing Good Values

**Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO)** organized a courtyard meeting on 02 July 2020 at Sarisakol Uttarpara Kishori Club in Shahjadpur upazila of Sirajganj.

**Palli Mongal Karmosuchi (PMK)** arranged a health camp on 07 July 2020 in Ghoshbagh area of Savar upazila.

Discussion programs on social awareness and good values development on hygiene and sanitation to prevent the spread of Covid-19 were organized by Adolescent Boys’ Club in Bhola on 06 September 2020, and Ilisha Adolescent Girls’ Club on 09 September 2020 with the assistance of **Grameen Jano Unnayan Sangstha (GJUS)**, Chorchifoli. At the end of the programs, members of the clubs distributed face masks, hand sanitizers and awareness leaflets among the participants.



Patronized by the **Centre for Development Innovation and Practices (CDIP)**, the members of Jajira Adolescent Club organized human chains and rallies against rape, sexual harassment and violence against women in Kosba upazila of Brahmanbaria on 23 September 2020. With assistance from **Center for Community Development Assistance**, Udayan Adolescent Club organized similar activities at Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj district on 25 September 2020.

Sporting kits including ludo, chess, carom, football and badminton were distributed to the members of different adolescent clubs by **Bandhu Kallyan Foundation** and **Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO)** respectively on 23 July 2020 and 17 August 2020.

### Other Activities

• **Integrated Development Foundation (IDF)** organized a workshop on ‘food and nutrition’ at Goajer Para Adolescent Girls’ Club in Satkania upazila of Chattogram on 29 August

2020. **Jagorani Chakra Foundation** organized a health camp at Shamontosena Adolescent Club in Khulna on 13 August 2020, while **Mousumi** organized a health camp on 27 August 2020 to raise awareness on health, importance of cleanliness and balanced diet. The PO also distributed sanitary napkins at Chakprasad Adolescent Girls’ Club in Naogaon Sadar.

- Discussion sessions and workshops on skill and leadership development were organized by **Bandhu Kallyan Foundation** on 06 September 2020 at Payra Adolescent Club in Abhaynagar of Jashore and by **Dabi Moulik Unnayan Sangstha** at Kushadanga Adolescent Girls’ Club in Naogaon Sadar on 16 September 2020.
- **Jagorani Chakra Foundation** distributed mango, olive and guava saplings among the members of Shiromani Paschim Para Adolescent Girls’ Club in Fultola of Khulna district on 16 July 2020. **Satkhira Unnayan Sangstha (SUS)** distributed saplings of lemon, guava and blackberry among the members of various adolescent girls’ clubs, namely, Raruli Sir PC Roy, Mohini, Pushpa and Baka Madhabilata on 20 July 2020 in Satkhira district.
- **National Development Programme (NDP)**, a PO of PKSF, arranged a parents’ assembly on 14 August 2020 in Sirajganj to raise awareness against sexual harassment, violence against women and children, dowry, drug abuse, and corruption. On 13 September 2020, **NDP** arranged a workshop at Bagbari Rizia Khanom Memorial Adolescent Girls’ Club to encourage its member to save money.
- **Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF)** arranged a story writing competition on ‘Bangabandhu’s Sonar Bangla in the Minds of Adolescents’ at Kashipur Adolescent Girls’ Club in Lohagora upazila of Norail district on 20 September 2020.



## Credit Operations

### Loan Disbursement to POs

During the financial year 2019-20, loan disbursement from PKSF to POs (Partner Organizations) is BDT 38.66 billion. The cumulative loan disbursement from PKSF to POs is BDT 386.14 billion and the recovery rate of loan from POs to PKSF is 99.23%. A summary of PKSF's loan disbursement and loan outstanding as of June 2020 is mentioned below:

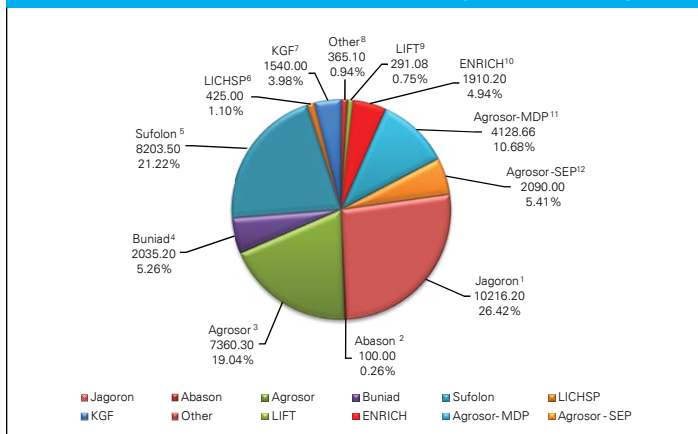
Programs/Projetes	Loan disbursement (PKSF to POs) Cum. up to June-2020 (in million BDT)	Loan outstanding (PKSF with POs) as of June-2020 (in million BDT)
Jagoron	137358.89	17830.74
Agrosor	70096.20	15434.95
Sufolon	96607.60	5716.80
Buniad	26521.70	3183.09
Sahos	1014.20	19.00
KGF	18487.70	4288.45
ENRICH	8273.03	3894.66
LIFT	1946.12	920.49
SDL	588.50	300.00
Abason	250.00	230.23
Other (including ID Loan)	3158.75	136.51
<b>Total (Mainstream):</b>	<b>364302.68</b>	<b>51954.91</b>
<b>Projects**</b>		
EFRRAP	1122.50	13.69
FSP	258.75	0.00
LRP	803.80	0.55
MFMSFP	3619.60	91.90
MFTSP	2602.30	3.60
PLDP	593.91	0.00
PLDP-II	4130.19	87.47
LICHSP	778.00	691.30
Agrosor-MDP	4128.66	4115.40
Agrosor-SEP	3110.00	2906.00
Others (including ID Loan)	683.71	9.00
<b>Total (Projects):</b>	<b>21831.43</b>	<b>7918.91</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>386134.11</b>	<b>59873.81</b>

Loan disbursement in FY 2019-20 (July 2019 to June 2020) (In Million BDT)		
Programs/Projects	Loan Disbursement (PKSF to POs)	Loan Disbursement (POs to Clients)
Jagoron	10216.20	176105.45
Agrosor	7360.30	189292.80
Buniad	2035.20	7191.74
Sufolon	8203.50	46527.26
KGF	1540.00	3064.42
LIFT	291.08	1655.87
ENRICH	1910.20	5661.37
Agrosor-MDP	4128.66	4326.60
Agrosor-SEP	2090.00	1077.99
LICHSP	425.00	291.01
Abason	100.00	136.52
Other	365.10	36242.56
<b>Total:</b>	<b>38665.24</b>	<b>471573.58</b>

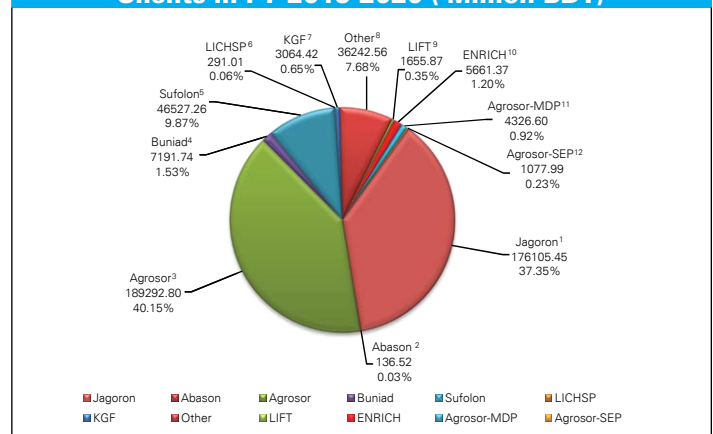
### Loan Disbursement from POs to Clients

During the financial year 2019-20, loan disbursement from POs to Clients is BDT 471.57 billion. The cumulative loan disbursement from POs to Clients is BDT 4044.23 billion and the recovery rate of loan from Clients to POs is 99.41%. At the end of June 2020, amount of loan outstanding of POs with Clients is BDT 334.05 billion. At the same time, the number of members is 14.43 million of whom 90.68 percent are women.

**Component-wise Loan Disbursement : PKSF to POs in FY 2019-2020 ( Million BDT)**



**Component-wise Loan Disbursement : POs to Clients in FY 2019-2020 ( Million BDT)**



## About PKSF

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) was established in 1990 with the aim of poverty alleviation through employment generation. Apart from providing financial and technical assistance to the underprivileged segment of the society, PKSF has played a vital role in creating employment opportunities through inventive operational activities. Over the three decades, PKSF has set some non-conventional and distinctive examples in the process of implementing development activities. PKSF has further broadened its various mainstream programs and projects with the understanding of its responsibilities to make poverty alleviation a reality.

## Governing Body of PKSF

Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad	Chairman
Mr. Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah (Managing Director, PKSF)	Member
Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad	Member
Mr. Arijit Chowdhury	Member
Ms. Parveen Mahmud	Member
Ms. Nazneen Sultana	Member
Dr. Toufic Ahmad Choudhury	Member

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Advisers	: Mr. Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin
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## Book Post

## Launching Ceremony of RMTP



As a major boost to Bangladesh's microenterprise sector, PKSF has floated a new project titled 'Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project (RMTP)'. The six-year project, jointly financed by PKSF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), was launched on 23 August 2020.

Mr Md Ashadul Islam, Senior Secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance was the Chief Guest at the RMTP's virtual launching ceremony presided over by PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad. Mr Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, Managing Director of PKSF, delivered the welcome remarks, and Deputy Managing Director Mr Md Fazlul Kader made a presentation on different aspects of the project. HE Ms Winnie Estrup Petersen, Ambassador of the Royal Danish Embassy to Bangladesh, and IFAD's Country Director Mr Omer Zafar attended the meeting as the Guests of Honor. Besides, members of PKSF's Governing Body and officials of PKSF and its Partner Organizations (POs) exchanged views at the launching ceremony held virtually. There, they stressed on the need for proper implementation of the project for effective expansion of the country's microenterprise sector.

RMTP will accelerate poverty alleviation through employment creation by expanding microenterprise activities in the agricultural sector. Along with financial services, the project will provide various technical and technological support to micro-entrepreneurs. Under the project, value chain development, financial services, and institutional capacity development support will be provided for the promotion of agricultural products under three major farm sectors — livestock and poultry, crops and horticulture, and fisheries and aquaculture. Apart from initiating farming activities based on Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), the project will adopt Blockchain technology to ensure more transparency in the management of financial services. A Crowdfunding platform will be launched to create opportunities to ensure equity financing for the microenterprises. In addition to PKSF and its POs, non-bank financial institutions will join in the financing of different initiatives under RMTP.

The RMTP project will directly benefit 0.45 million micro-entrepreneurs across the country. The total fund of the project stands at USD 200 million, in which IFAD's contribution is USD 81 million and DANIDA will provide USD 8.30 million. PKSF, its POs, non-bank financial institutions, entrepreneurs and private sector organizations will further join hands to accumulate the rest of the fund.

It is to be noted that PKSF has been implementing the Microenterprise Program since 2001 as one of its core programs to expedite poverty reduction by creating self and wage employments. Currently, around 30 lac microentrepreneurs and workers involved in microenterprises are receiving financial, technical, technological and marketing support from RMTP.