

World Renew: transforming whole communities in Bangladesh

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In Bangladesh, poverty in both urban and rural communities remains a major obstacle to the health and welfare of its 150 million people.

Lotifa, a Bangladeshi woman, is one. When she was pregnant with her fourth child, she was afraid, as her previous pregnancies had been difficult. She and her husband have no land and make their living as labourers. Poverty kept her from getting the help she needed.

However, before the birth of her baby, she discovered a mother and child health program, supported by World Renew, in her village. There she learned about prenatal and newborn care, and eventually delivered a healthy baby boy, attended by a specialist in a safe health complex.

Now Lotifa tells her friends and neighbours about the program, so they too can get the care they need.

“Lack of knowledge can cause many deaths,” she says. “We are grateful to World Renew for opening our eyes on how we can have healthy pregnancies and children.”

World Renew (www.worldrenew.net) is a global organization that serves as the development, disaster response and justice arm of the Christian Reformed Church of North America. It has been working in Bangladesh, partnering with

local organizations, since 1972.

A key aspect of World Renew’s work in Bangladesh is focused on maternal and child health.

Nancy Tenbroek, a development consultant for World Renew based in Bangladesh, says the country has high rates of maternal and newborn mortality, and women like Lotifa lack access to good healthcare.

Tenbroek and her team concentrate efforts on reducing the damage poverty inflicts. “In countries like Bangladesh, where there is so much poverty, many times people feel worthless,” says Tenbroek. “We help them in developing their gifts.”

Integrated community development programs tackle leadership development, literacy, health, agriculture, income generation and small business development—programs that consider the wellbeing of both the whole person and the whole community.

While World Renew’s Bangladesh teams work with families, they pay special attention to the most vulnerable, namely women and children, minorities, the disabled and the displaced. “When we enter a village, we try to work with community groups and do not play the leadership role,” says Tenbroek. World Renew places heavy emphasis on locally-anchored leadership development and training.

In its maternal and child health programs, Tenbroek and her team



Photo courtesy Kristen deRoo VanderBerg/World Renew

develop foundational teams of 15-20 women in villages. These groups are then linked with men’s groups and join together at the country level to form a “People’s Institution.”

“Through this body, community health volunteers are selected by the community and trained by World Renew,” explains Tenbroek. “Traditional birth attendants are also trained to be advice-givers and to help ensure the women go to clinics for prenatal visits and have deliveries from skilled practitioners.”

The program has a long-term goal: it is designed to be self-sustaining, with health improving long after the program ends.

Tenbroek encourages Canadians to get involved. Beyond giving financially or volunteering,

she says, they can stay informed—and pray. “Pray for our work with men and women in the poor communities of Bangladesh,” she says.

ABOUT WORLD RENEW

- World Renew partners with more than 130 churches and community organizations around the world.

- In 2013, World Renew was working in 35 countries, helping 1.2 million people improve their lives.

- Within Bangladesh, World Renew partners with six local organizations, providing programs in agriculture, health, income generation and small business development to 302,535 men, women and children.



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It is vaccinations and mosquito nets that help her stay healthy.

It is realizing that you and your family are dearly loved children of God.

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