

Organization Profile



ARA

(Action for Rural Advancement)



ARA (ACTIO FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT)

Circuit More Mahedibug, Sadar, Satkhira

District: Satkhira, Country: Bangladesh

Phone: +88-02477741787, Mobile: 01714-740372, 01876033625

Email: arasatkira@yahoo.com, web: www.ara-bd.org

01.Introduction:

Established in 1996 by a group of visionary social entrepreneurs in Satkhira, Bangladesh, ARA(Action for Rural Advancement) is a leading non-governmental, non-profit development organization. For over 30 years, ARA has been dedicated to transforming the lives of marginalized coastal communities by addressing critical challenges in Climate Change, Women's Empowerment, Safe Water (WASH), Human Rights, and Disaster Management. By blending local wisdom with modern innovation, ARA plays a pivotal role in building resilient futures and elevating the living standards of those most in need.

02.Our Story: The Birth and Growth of ARA :

The Context and Inspiration Satkhira, located in the southwestern coastal belt of Bangladesh, is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in the world. While natural disasters are an annual reality here, the 1990s brought a different kind of crisis. A group of visionary local youths realized that man-made challenges were becoming even more devastating than natural ones. The rapid expansion of unplanned shrimp farming was encroaching on arable lands, skyrocketing soil salinity, and destroying traditional agriculture. As a result, thousands of families lost their livelihoods, falling into a cycle of extreme poverty and displacement.

The Foundation To combat this socio-economic decay, these young changemakers mobilized the local community and formed a grassroots forum in 1996 called Action for Rural Advancement (ARA). Initially, the group focused on restoring agricultural productivity and educating the community about their fundamental rights. The movement gained rapid trust, leading to its formal registration with the Department of Social Welfare in 1999. From that point onward, ARA launched full-scale interventions in safe water provision, non-formal primary education, and human rights advocacy.

Growth and Institutional Excellence As the scale of the crisis evolved, so did ARA. The organization strengthened its institutional framework by registering with the Department of Youth Development in 2001 and the NGO Affairs Bureau in 2018, becoming a full-fledged national non-governmental organization.

Present Impact and Geographic Reach Today, ARA has expanded its footprint far beyond Satkhira. With the strategic support of national and international donors, the organization now operates across multiple districts, including Khulna, Netrokona, Panchagarh, Habiganj, Kurigram, Barisal, Bhola, and Jamalpur.

A Humanitarian Legacy A cornerstone of ARA's compassionate work is the "ARA Old Age Home" in Satkhira. Established as a charitable initiative, this sanctuary provides dignified care for the elderly and is sustained through donor contributions, local grants, and ARA's own internal funds. After three decades of service, ARA stands as a symbol of resilience, transforming the challenges of the coastal people into sustainable opportunities for a better future.

Why this version works:

- Narrative Flow: It starts with a problem (Climate & Salinity), offers a solution (ARA), and shows the results (Growth).
- Credibility: Clearly mentions all registration years and departments, which is vital for donor due diligence.

- Geographic Authority: Listing the districts shows your organization's capacity to manage large-scale, multi-regional projects.
- Human Touch: Ending with the "Old Age Home" adds an emotional and philanthropic layer to your professional profile.

3. Vision, Mission, and Values:

Vision:

"To establish a resilient and life-friendly society where every individual lives with dignity and equity."

Mission:

"To empower marginalized communities and influence public institutions to uphold human rights, thereby fostering an active and participatory society."

Core Values: We are committed to upholding the following principles in all our endeavors:

- Transparency: Ensuring openness in every decision and action.
- Accountability: Remaining responsible to our stakeholders and the communities we serve.
- Participation: Promoting inclusive involvement of local communities in development.
- Equality: Ensuring fairness and equal rights for all, regardless of background.
- Sustainable Development: Focusing on long-term, eco-friendly, and impactful solutions.

04. Legal Status and Governance:

ARA (Action for Rural Advancement) is a fully registered and legally compliant non-governmental organization in Bangladesh. We maintain strict adherence to national laws and regulations, ensuring transparency and accountability in all our institutional operations.

Institutional Registrations:

Authority / Department	Registration Number	Date of Registration
NGO Affairs Bureau	3130	07 January 2018
Department of Social Welfare	Sat-271/1999	05 October 1999
Department of Youth Development	Jabu-041/2001	21 October 2001

05. Governance:

ARA is governed by a General Body and an Executive Committee (EC). The Executive Committee is responsible for policy-making and strategic direction, while the management team, led by the Executive Director, ensures the smooth implementation of programs at the grassroots level. We conduct regular audits and hold annual general meetings (AGM) to uphold the highest standards of organizational governance.

- **General Committee:**

This is ARA's highest decision-making body, composed of 21 enthusiastic, dynamic, and experienced volunteer members. This committee is the primary authority for

formulating organizational policies and providing direction for achieving objectives. The committee meets at least once a year but can convene multiple times if needed.

- **Executive Committee:**

ARA 7-member Executive Committee is elected by the General Committee for a two-year term. According to the organizational constitution, the Executive Director serves as the Member Secretary of the Executive Committee. This committee adheres to the constitutional guidelines, holds quarterly meetings, and implements the policies and strategies adopted by the General Committee.

- **Advisory Committee:**

- The 3-member Advisory Committee is elected by the 21-member General Committee for a two-year term. This committee provides invaluable guidance and expert advice for the organization's operations and in achieving its goals. Based on their experience, the Advisory Committee offers crucial support to ARA in strategic planning, overcoming challenges, and capitalizing on new opportunities.

06.Management Committees:

To ensure the **smooth and successful operation of regular activities** and uphold **organizational efficiency**, ARA has established several vital **internal committees composed of its dedicated staff**. These committees play a crucial role in overseeing specific functional areas, promoting accountability, and facilitating effective decision-making. The key management committees include:

- **Management Committee:** This committee is responsible for the overall day-to-day management and coordination of ARA's programs and operations. It ensures that strategic plans are translated into actionable initiatives and that resources are utilized effectively.
- **Gender Committee:**
Dedicated to promoting gender equality and mainstreaming gender perspectives across all of ARA's interventions. This committee works to identify and address gender disparities, advocate for women's empowerment, and ensure that all activities are inclusive and equitable.
- **Procurement Committee:**
Oversees all purchasing and procurement processes within the organization. Its primary role is to ensure that procurement is conducted with transparency, fairness, and cost-effectiveness, adhering to established policies and guidelines.
- **Budget Control Committee:**
Responsible for monitoring and managing the organization's financial resources. This committee ensures that expenditures align with approved budgets, tracks financial performance, and identifies any deviations, promoting fiscal discipline.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Committee:**

Focuses on assessing the progress, performance, and impact of ARA's projects and programs. Through systematic monitoring and evaluation, this committee ensures that activities are achieving their intended outcomes, identifies areas for improvement, and supports evidence-based decision-making.

- **Internal Audit Committee:**

Provides an independent and objective review of the organization's financial and operational activities. This committee helps to safeguard assets, ensure compliance with policies and regulations, and promote good governance by identifying and mitigating risks.

These committees collectively contribute to ARA's robust internal governance structure, ensuring that the organization operates effectively, transparently, and in alignment with its mission and values.

07.Safeguarding Committee:

To ensure the safety, well-being, and protection of all individuals involved in ARA's operations, especially children, vulnerable adults, and staff, the organization establishes a dedicated Safeguarding Committee. This committee is crucial for fostering a secure and respectful environment, upholding ethical standards, and preventing any form of harm or abuse. The key responsibilities and activities of the Safeguarding Committee include:

- **Policy Development and Review:** Regularly developing, updating, and disseminating comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures, including a code of conduct for all personnel and partners.
- **Risk Assessment and Mitigation:** Conducting periodic risk assessments to identify potential safeguarding concerns across all programs and activities, and developing strategies to mitigate these risks effectively.
- **Training and Awareness:** Organizing mandatory safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers, and partners to ensure they understand their roles, responsibilities, and how to identify and respond to safeguarding incidents. This also includes raising awareness among beneficiaries about their right to safety and how to report concerns.
- **Reporting and Response Mechanisms:** Establishing clear, accessible, and confidential channels for reporting safeguarding concerns, and ensuring prompt, impartial, and appropriate responses to all allegations or incidents of harm. This includes investigations and disciplinary actions where necessary.
- **Monitoring and Compliance:** Continuously monitoring the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures, and ensuring compliance with relevant national laws and international best practices.
- **Victim Support and Referrals:** Ensuring that victims of any safeguarding incident receive appropriate support, including psychological, medical, and legal assistance, and facilitating referrals to specialized services when required.

The Safeguarding Committee plays a vital role in demonstrating ARA's commitment to creating a safe and protective environment for everyone it interacts with, ensuring trust and integrity in all its work.

08.Organizational Transparency:

ARA places great importance on financial transparency. The organization is committed to ensuring the highest level of accountability in its operations, which is reflected through the following measures:

- **Annual Financial Audits:**
Each year, ARA ensures that its financial activities undergo an audit by a reputable audit firm. This process generates detailed financial reports and management reports, which accurately portray the organization's financial health and activities.
- **Report Publication:**
Following the audit, these important reports are submitted to the organization's high authorities. Simultaneously, to ensure the public's right to information and maintain transparency, these reports are published on ARA's website. This allows partners, donors, and the general public to easily access information about the organization's financial status.
- **Information Disclosure Policy:**
ARA has developed a specific Information Disclosure Policy. Under this policy, a designated information focal person is available to provide legal information upon request, in accordance with the law. This further strengthens ARA's commitment to the free flow of information and accountability.

09.ARA's Policies: A Concise List:

ARA adheres to the following core policies for effective and accountable operations:

- **Strategic Planning Policy:**
Guides long-term vision and aligns all activities with the organization's overarching goals.
- **Financial Management Policy:**
Ensures transparent and efficient management of financial resources.
- **Human Resources Policy:**
Governs staff recruitment, training, welfare, and ethical conduct.
- **Gender Policy:**
Promotes gender equality and women's empowerment across all programs.
- **Procurement Policy:**
Ensures fair, competitive, and ethical processes for all acquisitions.
- **Information Disclosure Policy:**
Guarantees the transparency and accessibility of organizational data to stakeholders.
- **Contingency Plan:**
Outlines effective response mechanisms for emergencies and unforeseen events.
- **Safeguarding Policy:**
Ensures the safety and well-being of all individuals, preventing harm or abuse.
- **Anti-Corruption Policy:**
Establishes a clear framework to prevent and combat corruption and unethical practices.
- **Conflict of Interest Policy:**

Provides guidelines to manage situations where personal and organizational interests might clash.

- **Data Protection and Privacy Policy:**
Ensures the confidentiality and secure handling of all personal data.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Policy:**
Systematically assesses project progress, effectiveness, and impact.
- **Communication Policy:**
Defines standards for effective, consistent, and responsible internal and external communication.
- **Volunteer Management Policy:**
Guides the recruitment, training, and recognition of volunteers, valuing their contributions.

10. Staff strength:

ARA has committed, energetic, experienced, and capable staff to achieve any milestone and target in any context. Those are treated as the heart of the organization.

Scenario of staff strength:			
In position	Male	Female	Total
Management Level	04	03	07
Mid-level	15	07	22
Filed level	33	16	49
Olga age home	02	05	07
Volunteer	55	20	75
Total:	109	51	160

11. Geographical Coverage Area:

ARA is working in-deftly at the south-west coastal region in Bangladesh.

Name of District	Name of Upazila	Purosova/Unions	Villages
Satkhira	Satkhira Sadar	08	21
	Kalaroa	07	17
	Asashoni	06	12
	Debhata	05	13
	Tala	06	11
	Shyamnagar	12	108
Khulna	City Corporation	04	21
Netrakona	Netrakona Sadar	02	02
Hobigang	Chunarughat	01	05
Panchogar	Debigang, Panchogar Sadar	01	09
Panchogar	Panchogar, Sadar	03	22
Barisal	City Corporation	02	08
Bhola	BholaSadr, Charfession, Taujmoddin	21	46
Kuregram	Roumary upzila,	01	05
Jalampur	Jalampur Sadar, Islampur	12	36

12. Finances and Partnerships:

- * Ministry of Labour
- * Mansher Jonno Foundation (MJF)
 - GIZ
 - OXFAM
 - Ashroy foundation
 - Islamic Relief Bangladesh
 - Bangladesh NGO Foundation (BNF)
 - Japan Development Corporation (JDC)
 - Human Development Foundation (HDF)
 - ASA
 - BRAC
 - Relief International (RI)
 - Rights Jessore
 - Social Development Foundation (SDF)
 - Ministry of Health and Family planning
 - Ministry of Social Welfare
 - Ministry of Public Administration
 - Member of Satkhira Network
 - Save the children Dhaka
 - National Disability Development Foundation
 - ATSEC Bangladesh
 - Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF)

13. Major Program Areas:

For over two decades, ARA has been implementing projects in the coastal region under five major program areas. In each program, gender equality and ethnic rights are considered as cross-cutting issues. Here are the detailed program areas of ARA, covering various initiatives aimed at community development and welfare:

a. Climate Resilience and Water Security Program:

Project Name	Budget (BDT)	Donor Organizations	Area	Key Activities
Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA)	75,77,800	Oxfam, Ashroy Foundation	Tala & Satkhira Sadar	NGO capacity building, meetings, training, policy development, IGA training.
Safe Drinking Water	3,17,50,000	BNF, SDF, HDF	Satkhira, Barisal, Netrokona, Panchagarh,	Research, distribution of 57,900 filters, awareness meetings, signboards, 45

			Habiganj, Kurigram, Jamalpur	handwashing training sessions.
Arsenic & Iron Free Drinking Water	50,00,000	Japan Development Cooperation	Kalaroa, Sadar, Shyamnagar	Water treatment plant, mini filter distribution, awareness meetings, training.
Multi-Star-Filter in Aila Affected Areas	90,09,500	Human Development Foundation	Shyamnagar & Sadar	Mini filter distribution, seminars, billboards, water research, awareness campaigns.
Arsenic Free Water Treatment Plant	1,97,06,900	ASA	Satkhira Municipality	Low-cost community water supply, seminars, meetings, workshops.
Promotion of Salinity Removal Filters	150,00,000	GIZ	Shyamnagar	Distribution of mini desalination filters, drama performances, Jari Gaan (folk songs), training.
Agricultural Development Project	64,92,000	Ministry of Agriculture	Satkhira Sadar, Kalaroa, Shyamnagar	Free seed and material distribution, training, agricultural school education.
Latrine & Tubewell for Amphan Affected Families	89,00,000	Bangladesh NGO Foundation	Shyamnagar, Tala	Free latrine distribution, awareness training.

b. Human Rights Protection Program:

Project Name	Budget (BDT)	Donor Organizations	Area	Key Activities
Disability Development Program	24,50,000	National Disability Development Foundation	Satkhira Sadar	IGA training, material distribution, medical services, and awareness meetings.
Prevention of Violence Against Women	85,30,700	Relief International	Satkhira, Debhata	Legal aid, arbitration, counselling, distribution of sewing machines, and poultry.
Prevention of Human Trafficking	2,48,00,000	Rights Jessore	Kaligonj, Debhata	Legal aid, workshops, training, medical assistance, courtyard meetings, and awareness campaigns.
Mother and Child Care Project	174,50,800	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Satkhira, Kalaroa	Medical services, workshops, distribution of medicines and filters, courtyard meetings.

Training Project	95,40,608	Ministry of Health	Satkhira District	Skill development training for youth.
VGD Project	65,87,500	Women Welfare Department	Bhola, Satkhira	Various income-generating trainings for women.

c. Community Empowerment Program:

Project Name	Budget (BDT)	Donor Organizations	Area	Key Activities
Non-formal Education	1,97,75,375	BRAC	Satkhira Sadar	Classes I-V, 2,670 students, distribution of educational materials, parent meetings, teacher training.
Population Control Project	115,25,000	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Satkhira District	Mother and child health meetings, medicine distribution, seminars, B-Hepatitis vaccination.
Pre-Primary Education	57,50,000	Save the Children	Satkhira Sadar	Pre-primary education, 1,750 students, distribution of materials, parent meetings, teacher training.
Child Labor Eradication Project	1,42,88,000	Ministry of Labor	Khulna City Corporation	Skill and education training for 993 children, non-formal education.

d. Democratic Governance Practice Program:

Project Name	Budget (BDT)	Donor Organizations	Area	Key Activities
PARTNER (Accountability & Transparency of Elected Representatives)	1,02,05,966	Manusher Jonno Foundation	Satkhira Sadar, Kalaroa, Ashashuni	Open budget declaration, five-year planning, ward meetings, and participatory upazila planning.
RENEW (Empowering & Networking Disadvantaged Women)	25,00,000	Manusher Jonno Foundation	Satkhira Municipality	Organizational capacity building, empowerment of climate refugees, legal aid, training.

Charitable Mission:

Project Name	Budget (BDT)	Donor Organizations	Area	Key Activities
Old Age Home (Probin Awasan Kendra)	95,80,400	Bangladesh NGO Foundation, Local Donations, HDF	Satkhira & Other Districts	Free food, accommodation, healthcare, care, and workshops.

14.ARA's Research Initiatives: A Deep Dive into Coastal Area Projects Since 2010

Since its establishment in 1996, ARA (Action for Rural Advancement) has been working tirelessly to improve the livelihoods of people in the coastal regions of Bangladesh. However, according to the information you provided, since 2010, ARA has specifically been conducting research on various projects in these coastal areas. These research efforts have played a crucial role in making their activities more precise, effective, and evidence-based. Below is a detailed account of these initiatives:

ARA's Research Endeavours: A Deep Dive into Coastal Area Projects Since 2010

The south-western coastal region of Bangladesh is one of the most climate-vulnerable areas in the world. Natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, tidal surges, and increasing saltwater intrusion continuously challenge the lives and livelihoods of the people in this region. Against this backdrop, although Action for Rural Advancement (ARA) was established in 1996, since 2010, they have added a new dimension to their operations: **in-depth and systematic research on various projects in coastal areas**. This research has helped ARA not just to be limited to relief operations, but to focus on long-term, sustainable, and impactful solutions.

Realizing the Need for Research: Around 2010, ARA's leadership realized that relying solely on experience or assumptions for project design was insufficient. Scientific information, data analysis, and deep insights became essential to tackle the complexities of climate change, shifts in social structures, and emerging challenges. This realization encouraged them to invest in research-based activities. They understood that to know why a project succeeded or failed, systematic research on its effectiveness, impact, and sustainability was necessary. Especially, considering the sensitivity of coastal areas and changing circumstances, the importance of specific research is immense.

Key Research Areas: Since 2010, ARA has conducted research in several key areas, including:

1. Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies:

- **Salinity and Drinking Water Crisis:** Saltwater intrusion into drinking water sources is a major problem in coastal areas. ARA has researched this issue, evaluating the availability and effectiveness of new water purification methods (e.g., multi-star filters, solar desalination), rainwater harvesting techniques, and safe water sources.
- **Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** Research has been conducted on salt-tolerant crop varieties, innovative agricultural practices (e.g., vertical farming, floating agriculture), and livelihood alternatives suitable for a changing climate. The capacity of farmers to adapt to new technologies and the economic impact have also been assessed.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Preparedness:** Research has covered community vulnerabilities during natural disasters, the effectiveness of existing shelters, and improvements in early warning systems. Human behaviour during disasters, information flow, and the efficiency of relief distribution were also part of the research.

2. Human Rights and Social Justice:

- **Rights and Rehabilitation of Climate-Displaced People:** ARA has specifically researched **migration peoples (climate-displaced people)**. This research has shown how climate-displaced people face social, economic, and psychological challenges. Research on their land rights, basic services (education, health, shelter), and livelihood security has been conducted to develop effective models for their rehabilitation.
- **Gender-Based Violence and Women's Empowerment:** Research has been conducted on the status of women in coastal society, gender-based violence, and the challenges of women's economic empowerment. The most effective interventions for women's empowerment have been identified.
- **Status and Needs of the Elderly:** Research has been carried out on the need for **old age homes** and the social, health, and psychological needs of the elderly, which has helped to further improve their elder care programs.

3. Sustainable Livelihoods and Skill Development:

- **Affordable Fuel Use:** Research has focused on which types of **affordable and eco-friendly fuels** (e.g., improved cook stoves, biogas, solar energy) are most effective and environmentally friendly at the local level. The adoption trends of these fuels among the community and their economic and environmental impacts have been evaluated.
- **Diversification of Coastal Livelihoods:** When traditional livelihoods are at risk due to climate change, research has explored alternative livelihood opportunities and their feasibility. It has identified which skills can create new opportunities in the local economy.
- **Impact of Technical Training:** Research has examined the effectiveness of technical training programs and their impact on trainees' employment or self-employment. It has determined which types of training are in highest demand and how to make training programs more relevant.

4. Research Methodology and Impact: ARA has used various methods in its research, including:

- **Field Research:** Collecting information directly from communities, which included interviews, focus group discussions, and observation.
- **Data Analysis:** Analysing collected primary and secondary data (e.g., climate information, government statistics).
- **Case Studies:** In-depth analysis of specific successful or unsuccessful projects.
- **Participatory Research:** Conducting research jointly with local communities, experts, and other organizations.

As a result of these research efforts, ARA has been able to make their projects more evidence-based and effective. The research findings have provided important guidance for their strategic planning, project design, and implementation methods. This has also strengthened their evidence-based advocacy activities, enabling them to work more effectively with policymakers.

Future Path: This research journey, which began in 2010, has transformed ARA into a learning-based organization. It has helped them adapt quickly to changing circumstances and find innovative solutions. In the future, ARA will likely deepen and enhance their research by utilizing modern technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and remote sensing. This will help them achieve their strategic goals for 2025-2035 and play a greater role in improving the lives of people in coastal areas.

15.Awards and Recognition:

Since its establishment, ARA has earned several significant awards and honours for its exceptional work and commitment to society. These achievements not only recognize our efforts but also serve as proof of our impact and reliability at both local and national levels.

❖ Established an Probin Abasan Kendra (Old Age Home):

This is a ground-breaking humanitarian initiative by ARA, ensuring shelter, food, healthcare, and care for the elderly and vulnerable population in society. This centre symbolizes ARA's deep social commitment to helping the elderly live dignified lives.

❖ Awarded as the Best Youth Organization in Satkhira District in 2014:

This award was received in recognition of ARA's active role in youth empowerment and local development. It demonstrates how a collective effort of young people can quickly bring about positive change.

❖ Received the Human Rights Peace Award in 2016:

This prestigious award was granted for ARA's tireless struggle in protecting human rights and its commitment to establishing justice in society. This recognition highlights the widespread impact of ARA's human rights activities.

❖ Awarded for having the Best Stall in 2014 at the Climate Information Fair for promoting climate-resilient information:

This award was earned as a result of ARA's innovative approach to disseminating timely and effective climate-resilient information for people in climate-vulnerable coastal areas. It proves our leadership in climate adaptation.

❖ Secured third place as the leading NGO Foundation organization at the District Development Fair in 2018:

This is a recognition of ARA's strong organizational structure at the district level and its significant contribution to development activities. It also indicates our successful partnerships with local government and other development organizations.

❖ **Received the District Best Social Worker of the Year award in 2024 for contributions as a social worker:**

This personal recognition of a dedicated social worker from ARA reflects the organization's overall work. It indicates how ARA's staff are also personally bringing about positive change in society and inspiring others.

16. Conclusion:

ARA (Action for Rural Advancement) is more than just an organization; it's a movement positively impacting the lives of people in the coastal regions of Bangladesh. Their extensive activities, strong partnerships, and well-structured framework demonstrate their crucial role in social development. From tackling the challenges of climate change to protecting human rights and empowering communities, ARA is committed to building a sustainable and prosperous society.

17.ARA (Action for Rural Advancement) Strategy 2025-2035: A Possible Framework:

Vision: By 2035, to create a stable, environmentally friendly, and inclusive society where every individual can realize their full potential.

Mission: To improve the living standards of marginalized communities through climate resilience, human dignity, and sustainable development, and to lead in building a just society through strong partnerships and innovative solutions.

Key Strategic Pillars:

1.1. Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation 2.0:

- **Objective:** To further strengthen community capacity in tackling the escalating impacts of climate change and to lead in promoting eco-friendly technologies and practices.
- **Potential Activities:**
 - **Smart Water Management:** Innovation and widespread expansion of salinity-resilient drinking water supply methods in coastal areas (e.g., large-scale rainwater harvesting, advanced RO plants, underground reservoirs).
 - **Climate-Resilient Agriculture & Livelihoods:** Research and promotion of drought-resistant, salinity-tolerant, and flood-resilient crop varieties; providing climate-smart agricultural training and technological support to farmers (e.g., vertical farming, hydroponics).
 - **Environmental Restoration & Protection:** Strengthening mangrove reforestation programs; ensuring local community participation in reinforcing coastal embankments and dykes; developing community-based models for plastic pollution and waste management.
 - **Early Warning Systems:** Developing advanced and community-based early warning systems for natural disasters, utilizing information technology (e.g., mobile apps, AI-based forecasts).
 - **Carbon Neutrality:** Reducing their own carbon footprint and promoting the use of renewable energy (solar, wind) at the local level.

2.2. Women Empowerment & Gender Equality 2.0:

- **Objective:** To ensure the economic, social, and political empowerment of women and to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in society.
- **Potential Activities:**
 - **Economic Self-Reliance:** Providing advanced skill development training for women (e.g., digital marketing, e-commerce, coding), supporting small and medium enterprises, and ensuring market access.
 - **Prevention of Gender-Based Violence:** Raising awareness about gender equality by involving men and youth; establishing integrated service centers (legal, psychological, health) for women affected by violence.
 - **Leadership & Participation:** Increasing women's participation in decision-making processes at local government and community levels; launching mentorship programs for the development of women leaders.
 - **Education & Health Rights:** Ensuring continuity of education for girl children; providing awareness and services related to adolescent reproductive health and nutrition.

3.3. Human Rights & Social Justice Reinforcement:

- **Objective:** To protect the human rights and ensure justice for marginalized and disadvantaged communities in society.
- **Potential Activities:**
 - **Elderly Care & Integrated Support:** Enhancing the capacity and quality of Old Age Homes; expanding day-care centers, healthcare, and recreational activities for the elderly; social movements to protect the dignity and rights of the elderly.
 - **Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities:** Creating employment opportunities, increasing access to education and healthcare for persons with disabilities, and advocating for and building their capacity to ensure their full inclusion in society.
 - **Child Rights Protection:** Playing an effective role in eliminating child labor; ensuring a safe environment for children; taking strict measures and raising awareness to prevent child marriage.
 - **Legal Aid & Awareness:** Strengthening free legal aid, arbitration, and counselling services for the disadvantaged; creating widespread public awareness about human rights.

4.4. Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Response Excellence:

- **Objective:** To conduct effective disaster risk reduction, rapid response, and recovery operations.
- **Potential Activities:**

- **Risk Reduction & Preparedness:** Strengthening community-level disaster risk reduction committees; assisting in the construction of shelters and safe zones; conducting disaster preparedness drills.
- **Immediate Response:** Enhancing capacity for emergency relief distribution, medical aid, and psychosocial support post-disaster.
- **Rehabilitation & Recovery:** Assisting in sustainable livelihood recovery, housing construction, and long-term rehabilitation programs for disaster-affected families.
- **Networking:** Building strong networks with national and international humanitarian organizations.

5.5.Organizational Capacity & Partnership Development:

- **Objective:** To enhance ARA's effectiveness and impact through internal capacity building, innovation, technology utilization, and strategic partnerships.
- **Potential Activities:**
 - **Human Resource Development:** Providing regular professional development training for staff (especially in data analytics, AI, project management); leadership development and ensuring staff mental well-being.
 - **Technological Innovation:** Increasing the use of modern technologies such as block chain, AI, big data analytics, and remote sensing in operations; ensuring transparency and accountability through digital platforms.
 - **Research & Knowledge Management:** Increasing their own research and publications based on climate change, poverty, and social inequality; establishing themselves as a knowledge-sharing hub.
 - **Financial Sustainability:** Diversifying their own funding sources (e.g., social enterprises, corporate partnerships, online crowd funding); reducing donor dependency.

Strategic Partnerships: Forging strategic partnerships with

18.Implementation and Evaluation:

ARA's strategic plan is designed for effective execution and continuous improvement, underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. This systematic approach ensures that every initiative contributes meaningfully to our long-term vision.

Our commitment to transparency and accountability is paramount. To this end:

- Annual work plans will be meticulously prepared, outlining specific actions and timelines.
- Achieved results will be regularly and rigorously reviewed against established benchmarks.
- Financial and activity reports will be readily accessible to our partners and the broader public, ensuring full disclosure of our operations and impact.

- A sophisticated data management system will be developed and utilized to precisely measure the outcomes and overall impact of all activities. This system will enable us to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate the tangible difference we make.

This comprehensive strategic framework will empower ARA to confidently navigate the challenges of 2025-2035 and achieve its ambitious goals. For each strategic sub-section, we will further define more specific targets, measurable indicators, and detailed activities to guide our work and optimize our impact.

Case Story: Ruksana Akter Rubina: A Courageous Teen Mother Who won her right to live with Dignity



- **Background**

Ruksana Akter Rubina, 20, was born in Gobindapur village under Kadakati Union in Assasuni Upazila, Satkhira District. Her parents, Md. Robiul Gazi and Asma Khatun, were displaced by two devastating cyclones Sidr (2007) and Aila (2009). Losing their home and livelihood, the family moved to a slum settlement in Garerkanda, Satkhira Sadar, in search of survival.

From childhood, Ruksana was known for her brilliance. She was admired by her teachers and beloved in her community. After completing primary and secondary school with good results, she began college. But during her HSC studies, at just 17 years of age, Ruksana was married to Al-Amin Sardar, a laborer from Foyjullapur village in Satkhira Sadar.

The marriage soon turned oppressive. Al-Amin, irregular in work and income, began demanding dowry. When her family failed to meet his financial demands, he subjected her to mental torture, physical abuse, and eventually forced her out of the house while she was three months pregnant. He threatened divorce and abandoned her with nothing but despair. Back at her parents' slum home, Ruksana found herself overwhelmed socially humiliated, mentally broken, and physically fragile. She seriously contemplated suicide, believing her future was sealed in darkness.

- **The Change That Occurred**

What changed everything was an encounter with an **ARA field volunteer** who noticed her distress during a courtyard meeting and gently reached out. This volunteer listened and, with great empathy, encouraged Ruksana to seek help through Bangladesh's National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO).

With the support of ARA's legal advisor, **Advocate Selina Akter**, Ruksana was referred to the Satkhira District Legal Aid Office. There, she filed a case completely free of cost under NLASO. A government-appointed female lawyer represented her. Through multiple court-mediated sessions led by a district judge, both parties were brought together. On May 28, 2025, the case was conditionally resolved: Al-Amin pledged in writing to take back his wife, discontinue any dowry-related pressure, and support her throughout the pregnancy.

Today, Ruksana lives again with her husband peacefully. Their child is expected soon. She has reclaimed not only her place in the household but also her right to live in dignity.

- **Role of the Program**

This transformation would not have been possible without the combined support of **ARA**, its trained field volunteer, and legal advisor Advocate Selina Akter. **ARA**'s presence in the slum settlement through awareness meetings and the Women's Protection Forum provided the first link between distressed women and available state legal services. The field volunteer's compassionate response, followed by Advocate Selina's guidance, ensured Ruksana had both legal and emotional support throughout the process.

In Ruksana's own words: "I didn't know I could get legal help from the government without spending money. If that **ARA** sister hadn't talked to me that day, I might not be alive today. I didn't just file a case; I stood up for myself."

- **Broader Community Impact**

Ruksana's case has already inspired other women in the slum community. Several women have expressed interest in understanding how to access legal aid. The taboo around speaking about abuse is slowly breaking. Her story has sparked a ripple effect of courage, especially among young girls navigating uncertain futures. This proves that legal awareness combined with respectful grassroots engagement can enable lasting change at scale.

- **Conclusion and Learning**

Ruksana's journey demonstrates that even the most marginalized women can regain their rights and dignity if given timely information, empathetic support, and access to justice.

"Ruksana was always brilliant in class. Now she is brilliant in life her courage is teaching all of us what justice truly means."

20. Fatima Khatun: A Blazing Symbol of Self-Reliance

- **Background:**

Fatima Khatun was born into a poor family in Padmapukur Union, Shyamnagar Upazila, Satkhira District. Growing up in a household with six siblings, Fatima became a victim of child marriage at a young age. At just 14, she was married to a utensils trader who was one and a half times her age. Upon entering married life, she was immediately confronted with harsh realities her husband lost his business, children were born, and poverty deepened. Due to financial hardship, they left their homestead and moved to the Islampur slum in the city. Life in a cramped house in an unfamiliar urban slum, burdened by the responsibility of raising two children, became unbearable. The ducks and chickens provided by NGOs often died from various diseases. Neither society nor relatives extended a helping hand. At that time, Fatima didn't know that a significant change awaited this small woman.

- **The Transformation**

Today, Fatima's home boasts **3 cows, 5 goats, 45 chickens, and 16 ducks**. Her husband is employed, her elder son studies in higher secondary school, and her younger son attends a quality school in the city. Once, they went hungry; now, they can eat and dress as they please and even help others. She has become known in her community as a **successful livestock**

entrepreneur. Her life story is not just her own but an example for many women in her vicinity.

- **The Role of Relevant Programs in the Transformation**

This transformation in Fatima's life came about through the **RENEW project** and the **Women's Protection Forum led by ARA**. She regularly attended forum meetings organized by ARA, with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation and Christian Aid. It was there that she learned about the Department of Youth Development's livestock training. Along with 30 other women, she participated in this training. Applying the knowledge gained from the training, she sold her mother's gold ring to buy a cow and started livestock farming. Fatima herself says:

"I can now be proud of myself and my family. I used to cry from hunger; now I can feed others." Without ARA's programs, this change might not have been possible for Fatima. Various training sessions, linkage meetings, and regular motivational support empowered her with self-confidence.

- **Impact of This Change on Society**

Fatima's story has brought a ray of hope to many women in her village. Many are now interested in livestock farming, training, and saving. Following her path, neighbours are realizing that women, alongside men, can also be primary income earners for their families. Self-reliant women don't just signify their own change but also a shift in societal perspectives.

- **Conclusion**

This story teaches us that if marginalized, neglected women are provided with the right opportunities, training, and compassionate organizations, they can transform their own lives. If such women-centric training and forum structures are introduced in other marginalized areas, the change will be even more widespread. The local Ward Councillor remarked:

"Fatima is no longer just a housewife; she is an inspiration in this area. It's possible to change society with women like her."



Entrepreneur Fatema Khatun is self-reliant today after receiving training from Youth Development with the support of ARA.

Key achievements :

1. Established Probin Abasan Kendra(Old Home)
2. Invention of saline and arsenic free water filter.
3. Install water treatment plant for poor community.
4. Awarded best Youth organization of Satkhira district -2014
5. Achieved Human Rights Peace Award-2016
6. Edward of the Year District best Honor for his contribution as a social worker 2024

Awarding :

- Awarded as the best youth organization by the District Youth Development Department on 2014.
- Awarded “ Human Rights Peace award” by the United Movement Human Rights on 2016
- Awarded as the best stall to disseminate climate resilient information in Climate Related information Fair on 2014.
- Placed third position of District Development Fair-2018 as the lead organization of NGO foundation.
- Edward of the Year District best Honor for his contribution as a social worker 2024

21.Bank Details:

- Account Name: ARA
- Bank Name: Janata Bank Limited Satkhira Corporate/Satkhira
- Bank Address: New Market Mor, Satkhira
- Account Number: 010100012286729
- Routing Number: 1358711220
- Swift Code: JANBBDDH

22.Contact Details:

- Head Office: ARA (Action for Rural Advancement)
- Address: Circuit House More, Mehedibag, Sadar, Satkhira, District: Satkhira, Country: Bangladesh
- Phone: +88-02 477741 787
- Mobile: +88-01714-740372, +88-01876-033625
- Email: arasatkhira@yahoo.com
- Website: www.ara-bd.org
- Facebook: ARA -Action for Rural Advancement

*****0*****