



Sreepur Village, Bangladesh

Registered UK Charity No. 1085008;

Est. 1989

www.sreepurvillage.org

Patrons: Dame Sarah Storey OBE The Lady Tunnicliffe, PhD, BSc, FRSD, FLS

2022 End of Year - Impact Report



All photos of mothers used with their consent. All photos of children used with mothers' consent.

****Trigger warning**** - *This document contains material about rape and abuse*

Project Shishu Polli Plus

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About Us

Sreepur Village, Bangladesh serves as a refuge and safe haven for single mothers and their children. Sreepur Village was established in 1989 and is located 50km north of Dhaka in rural Bangladesh. Every year we provide approximately 500 single mothers and children with basic needs and a secure and loving environment; as well as education and healthcare services. We also equip mothers with crucial livelihood skills and knowledge to enable them to provide for themselves and their families over the long-term future. Each family can live on-site for **3** years. For 33 years, we have provided long-term support to over **7,500** single mothers and children to break out of the cycle of poverty and towards financial independence, and touched the lives of **tens of thousands** more, all across Bangladesh.



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Sreepur Village in Numbers

From December 2021 to December 2022 Sreepur village has supported **692** people.

As of December 2022, we have a total of **548** people living on site at Sreepur Village. This includes:

- **135** single mothers aged 18 - 40
- **277** children aged 0-14
- **100** staff members (including social workers, teachers, cleaners, cooks, management and security guards)
- **36** family members of staff who live on-site

As of December 2022, we are supporting a further **97** people offsite. This includes:

- **12** homeless girls at our Night Shelter in Dhaka
- **55** children who live in slums through our SUCCESS education project
- **30** single mothers and children through our community reintegration house

From January – December 2022 we also supported:

- **47** single mothers and children through our outreach project for impoverished families in remote river basin communities

New Arrivals and Departures

- Between December 2021 to December 2022, **87** mothers and **169** children arrived at Sreepur Village to begin their 3-year stay. They arrived from the streets, urban slums and remote rural areas all across Bangladesh.
- All new arrivals were escaping extreme poverty, abusive relationships or traumatic experiences and found a safe-haven at Sreepur Village to heal, recuperate and learn essential skills to transform their lives.
- **36** mothers and children arrived as a result of losing their homes and possessions in the worst floods in the north-east of Bangladesh for nearly two decades in May 2022.
- Between December 2021 to December 2022, **87** mothers and **167** children left Sreepur Village with education and vocational skills to return to their home communities to start independent life.

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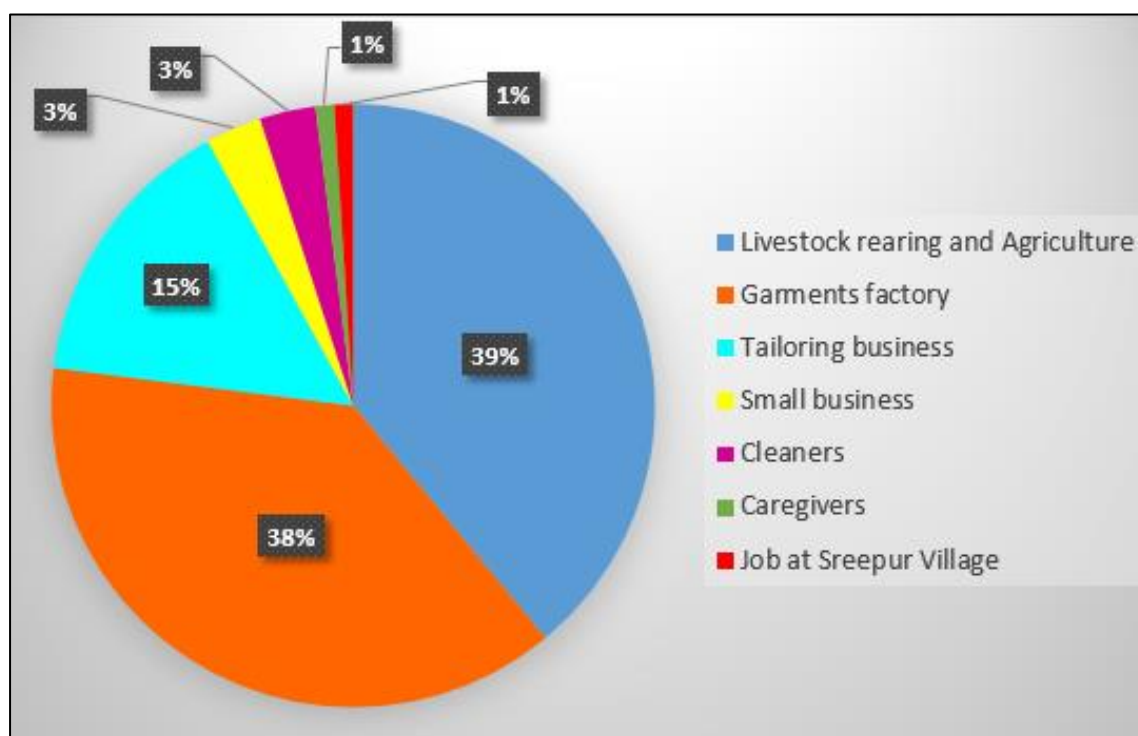
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Financial Independence and Employment

In 2022, Sreepur Village continued to make a strong impact in supporting mothers to be financially independent. The majority of single mothers arriving at Sreepur Village are unemployed and unskilled, and we provide them with vocational training in a variety of fields so that they can support themselves and their families once they leave Sreepur Village and return to society.

From a small sample of **79** mothers who returned to their home communities between December 2021 and December 2022, they were able to find jobs or earn income in the following fields:



Bank Accounts

When mothers arrive at Sreepur Village it is very rare for them to have previously owned a bank account. Between December 2021 and December 2022, we assisted **87** mothers to open bank accounts and deposit a small amount of savings. Each woman can access their bank account through their mobile phone.

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Mothers being trained in agriculture and tailoring

Former beneficiaries currently employed at Sreepur Village

We currently have **17** former beneficiaries of Sreepur Village (who arrived years ago as single mothers or children) who are currently employed at Sreepur Village.

They work in several different areas of our operations including:

- IT Coordinator
- Literacy Trainer and Development Coordinator
- Activity Development Facilitator
- Sreepur Village Trade – Design and Production Coordinator
- Sreepur Village Trade – Production Assistant
- 4 Assistants of Sreepur Village Departments
- 2 Caregivers
- Trainer in Duck and Goat Rearing
- Special Care worker
- Cook
- Assistant Cook
- Store – Senior Officer
- Store Assistant

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Education and Literacy

Children's education - From a sample of children who left Sreepur Village in 2022 with their mothers to return to their home communities:

- **6%** had completed Pre-school
- **22%** had completed Nursery
- **61%** had completed or are currently studying in Primary school
- **11%** are currently studying at Secondary school



Mothers' literacy - From the mothers who arrived at Sreepur Village in 2019:

- **39%** were completely illiterate
- **42%** had a little education
- **18%** had completed primary school
- **1%** had completed secondary school

From the mothers who left Sreepur Village in 2022 and returned to their home communities:

- **86%** had completed primary school
- **12%** had completed secondary school
- **2%** were going on to Open University
- **100%** had improved their literacy skills

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Nutrition, Health and Menstrual Hygiene

All new arrivals to Sreepur Village undergo a comprehensive health check at our on-site clinic and are monitored throughout their 3-year stay by our nurses, through tele-medicine (online appointments with local doctors) and medical and dental camps (teams of local doctors and dentists who visit Sreepur Village several times a year). Furthermore, all mothers and children requiring serious medical attention are taken to a local hospital.

Single Mothers

From the mothers who arrived at Sreepur Village in 2019:

79% had poor nutrition levels (e.g. underweight, overweight, constipation, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, severe hair loss, bone pain, getting ill often and taking a long time to recover, poor concentration, feeling cold most of the time, weak eyesight, lack of interest in food and drink, pale or lethargic, tooth decay, etc.)

Out of the mothers with poor nutrition in 2019 and who left Sreepur Village in 2022 to return to their home communities:

87% had fully recovered

13% had partially recovered

From the mothers who arrived at Sreepur Village in 2019:

89% had poor physical health (e.g. Diarrhoea, Diabetes, high blood pressure, Uterine Prolapse, Urinary Tract Infection, vaginal infection, stress, hot flushes, headaches, stomach aches, Gastritis, Glaucoma, etc.)

Out of the mothers with poor health in 2019 and who left Sreepur Village in 2022 to return to their home communities:

88% had fully recovered

12% had partially recovered

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Children

From the children who arrived with their mothers at Sreepur Village in 2019:

71% had poor nutrition levels (e.g. underweight, overweight, constipation or changes in bowel habits, poor physical growth, lack of interest in food and drink, pale or lethargic, tooth decay etc.)

Out of the children with poor nutrition in 2019 and who left Sreepur Village with their mothers in 2022 to return to their home communities:

85% had fully recovered

15% had partially recovered



From the children who arrived with their mothers at Sreepur Village in 2019:

91% had poor physical health (e.g. Diarrhoea, Typhoid Fever, Asthma, Scabies, Dermatitis, Vaginal infection, bone fractures, Conjunctivitis, weak eyesight, stomach aches, Gastritis, Lymph node infection, severe period pain etc.)

Out of the children with poor health in 2019 and who left Sreepur Village with their mothers in 2022 to return to their home communities:

90% had fully recovered

10% had partially recovered

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From all the children who arrived in the last 3 years (2019, 2020, 2021)

92% had lice

69% had scabies

48% had tapeworm

16% had vitamin A deficiencies

When these children left Sreepur Village with their mothers in 2022 to return to their home communities:

18% had lice

11% had scabies

0% had tapeworm

0% had vitamin A deficiencies

Menstrual Hygiene

Most women and girls in Bangladesh cannot afford to buy disposable sanitary towels or tampons. Instead they often use rags torn from old saris. Because most women and girls are not educated in how to properly wash and store these rags after use, vaginal and urinary tract infections are very common. At Sreepur Village the single mothers use homemade reusable sanitary towels made out of new textile. They receive menstrual hygiene training on the importance of cleaning the towels with soap after usage, drying them in the sun to kill bacteria and keeping them in a special bag to keep them hygienic.

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Rape and Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Child Marriage and Dowry Abuse

From all the mothers who arrived at Sreepur Village between January 2021 and December 2022:

- **2** had reported to our staff that they were the victims of rape or sexual abuse (before they arrived at Sreepur Village)
- **24** had reported to our staff that they were the victims of physical or psychological abuse (before they arrived at Sreepur Village). However, we suspect that the actual number is much higher and mothers are afraid to report it to us.
- **27** had reported to our staff that they were forced into marriage before the age of 18, or had a child before the age of 18 (before they arrived at Sreepur Village)
- **29%** had reported to our staff that they were were the victims of dowry abuse (before they arrived at Sreepur Village)

All mothers at Sreepur Village take part in psychological counselling groups and legal literacy workshops.

The cultural and legal definitions of rape, sexual assault and harassment are different in Bangladesh and the UK. For instance, when a woman is raped by her husband in Bangladesh, this is not recognized as a crime. Within the framework of a marriage, this abusive behaviour is accepted by society as normal behaviour. Furthermore, when unmarried women and girls become pregnant after being raped by their fathers, uncles or brothers, it is considered preferable to write the family member's name as the father on the baby's birth certificate, as incest is more culturally acceptable than writing "father unknown".

**** Dowry abuse:**

Despite the "Dowry Prohibition Act 1980", a central part of most marriages in Bangladesh is the "Dowry". This is the traditional practice of transferring money, property or gifts from the bride's family to the groom and his family to ensure that she is well taken care of when she comes to live with them. However, this can lead to "Dowry abuse" where the new wife is treated as a domestic slave by her husband or in-laws or her family is subjected to coercion, violence or harassment in an attempt to demand more dowry. The dowry can put so much financial pressure on parents that many families prefer saving money for a dowry than spending it on their daughters' education.

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Climate Crisis: Providing emergency supplies to families affected by devastating flooding in 2022

In May 2022, approximately 2 million people were left stranded and several dozen people were killed by the worst floods in the north-east of Bangladesh for nearly two decades. Thankfully, the floods did not reach Sreepur Village, which is located in central Bangladesh and situated on high ground. However, for many years we have run an outreach and support project for single mothers and their children living in remote river basin communities in northern Bangladesh. Because of the floods, **36 single mothers and children** arrived at Sreepur Village in 2022 and we are providing them with safe accommodation and all of their essential needs.

Furthermore, we provided emergency aid to **14 single mothers and 33 children** (who were former residents at Sreepur Village) who lost their homes and possessions. Our team worked in the area of East Mohonpur, Mohonpur, Sunamganj Sadar, Sunamganj, located in the northeast of Bangladesh within the Sylhet region.

The emergency supplies included:

- **Food items:** Rice, Pulses, Potato, Oil, Salt, Sugar, Flour
- **Personal Hygiene Items/Household Cleaning:** Laundry detergent powder, Soap, Tooth Powder
- **Medicine:** Paracetamol, Amodis (treats infections caused by bacteria and parasites), Saline solution
- **Seeds for growing crops:** Country bean, Pumpkin, Gourd, Red amaranth, Stem amaranth
- **Stationery:** Notebooks and pens



Recipient families living in Sunamganj, located in the northeast of Bangladesh
Banner reads: "Shishu Polli Plus: A project of The Sreepur Village, Bangladesh. Tengra, Sreepur, Gazipur. Providing emergency support to flood-affected beneficiaries of Shishu Polli Plus in Sunamganj Sadar, Sunamganj".

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Long-term Residents with Mental Illness and Special Needs

Mental health services in Bangladesh are extremely basic. There are two main mental health hospitals in Bangladesh but neither can provide any long-term care. We currently have 6 long-term residents at Sreepur Village with mental illness and special needs. They came to us as children but they are now in their forties with no-one else to look after them. Five residents have various psychoses, and of them, 2 have physical disabilities and one is also blind. In addition, we have one resident who is on the autistic spectrum who is doing very well and has a fulfilling life.

Many years ago when our Overseas Director, Pat Kerr MBE was trying to find a more specialist placement for our residents with special needs, she was given the shocking and inhumane advice to just drop them off at various railway stations. They have lived at Sreepur Village ever since. A psychiatrist visits Sreepur Village once a month to review each resident and prescribe medication as necessary. It is challenging to recruit therapists to live on-site because we are located in an isolated rural area, however our dedicated staff do their best to provide safe accommodation, nutritious meals, activities and a social outlet for our residents with special needs.

PLEASE SUPPORT SREEPUR VILLAGE

We rely 100% on donations. Please consider supporting us.

To donate online:

<https://www.sreepurvillage.org/pages/donate>

**To donate via cheque or bank transfer please contact Emma Gibbs
our UK Operations Manager**

020 8658 7585 | emma@sreepurvillage.org

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