From surviving cyclones to building a livelihood: Tania's plan for a more secure future

Three cyclones took everything she had. Now she's building an income of her own.

In one of Bangladesh's most climate vulnerable storm-battered district Barguna, three cyclones took almost everything Tania owned. Now under the "Nature Pulse" project of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, she is building something the cyclones can't easily take away: an income of her own.



A childhood cut short, a lifetime of storms

Tania (36) has been living in the Paschim Padma community of Patharghata upazila, Barguna district, on Bangladesh's cyclone-exposed southern coast. For her, life on the coast of Barguna has always meant living with uncertainty. Here, the river is close, the land is fragile, and every cyclone brings the fear that everything she has built could disappear again.

Tania has lived in the community since 2004. She lost her father as a young child, and six years ago she lost her husband too - leaving her to manage the family on her own. Today, Tania is raising three children, including a divorced daughter, and helping care for her grandchild.

For Tania and residents in Paschim Padma, life is measured out between cyclones.

"I still remember the cyclone Sidr in 2007 where I lost everything. After the cyclone, there was no sign of a house here. I still remember the terror. It still haunts me every time I hear about a cyclone," she said."

When the storms keep coming

Sidr was not the last. In 2019, Cyclone Fani and in 2024, Cyclone Remal hit her community directly. Living outside the embankment, close to the river, Tania's family has no buffer against the tidal surges that follow every major storm.

" Whenever a cyclone comes and the tidal surge rises, the soil gets washed away, the heavy wind blows off the roof of the house, and our house floods. During Remal, I lost my house. I had to sell my only cow, just to cover the cost. Even after rebuilding, I am still in debt of BDT 61,000."

Despite everything she has lost, Tania has spent years helping her neighbours to survive. As a volunteer of Cyclone Preparedness Programme, she aware people before a storm hits, walking door to door to guide people to the nearest shelter and staying on duty to make sure everyone is safe.



"We live outside the embankment, every time a cyclone hits, we are afraid. But I cannot just think about myself. As a volunteer, I must help people reach the shelter and make sure everyone is safe."

Surviving on whatever work is available

Between cyclones, survival looks different. Since her husband's death, Tania has had to depend on irregular work to support her family. *"Now I work in other people's houses. Sometimes I repair fishing nets or make new nets. Sometimes I collect small fish. That is how I survive with my family. When there is no work, we have to suffer from hunger."*

For Tania, livelihood diversification is therefore not simply about earning more money. It is about having something dependable when one source of income disappears.

A small opportunity with the potential to grow



Tania is rebuilding and this time with the support of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. Under the Nature Pulse project, Tania has been selected as one of 100 beneficiaries to receive livelihood support. Today, Tania has around 18 ducks and 15 chickens. She believes she can build this small livelihood into a more reliable source of income. She plans to use the cash grant to expand poultry and duck rearing, an activity she already has experience with.

"When my husband was alive. I had 52 ducks. But when he became sick, I had to sell all of them to pay for his treatment. I know I can do this work. It does not require a very large investment, and I already have a small pond behind my house where I can raise ducks."

Learning to farm for a changing climate

Before receiving her grant, Tania completed training from BDRCS on poultry rearing, covering everything from feeding and disease prevention to basic bookkeeping and profit calculation. Much of what she learned is now shaping how she prepares for both everyday risks and the next storm. Tania has already built a wooden coop for her flock beside the pond where she raises her ducks — a small but visible sign of the future she is investing in. It will strengthen Tania's future resilience, preparedness and ability to protect her livelihood from future shocks"



"I have learned how to make feed for chickens using household vegetable, like local legumes [kochu pata]. I didn't know anything about that before, as I am not always able to afford commercial feed. Training like this is very helpful for people like us. I've also learned that chickens can die from heat, so I built the shed with proper ventilation and netting, and I'll cover it during winter. If a cyclone comes, I'll carry my chickens and ducks with me to the shelter, in a basket."

More than a grant

For Tania, the livelihood support represents more than receiving money. *"I want to make this livelihood stronger. If I can earn regularly, I will not have to depend only on finding daily work."*

"The local market starts every day at 6 in the morning and finishes by 7. There is a good demand for chickens, ducks and eggs. I believe I can sell them there. We rarely have enough money to buy chicken or eggs. If I can raise more chickens, I may sometimes keep eggs for my grandchild and sell the rest to use the income to feed my family."



Her ambition is simple but powerful.

In a community where climate shocks can destroy homes, livestock and livelihoods within hours, Tania's story shows why resilient livelihoods matter.

"I have lost my home before, and I have lost my livestock before. I do not know what the next cyclone will bring. But this time, I want to be better prepared. I want to build a livelihood that can help my family stand again."

For Tania, resilience is not about never falling. It is about having the means to start again.