

Information Service Center in Nazirtek, Cox's Bazar District: An Information Hub for a Dried Fish Processing Community

*"I was desperately looking for information about the government-supported skills development training programs, particularly the sewing training that is available for us. I visited the new **Information Service Center (ISC)** and got the information."*

- Ms. Amina Khatun, Nazirtek (a dried fish processing community)

"I work at the ISC where community people who work in the dried fish processing establishments come to know about the services that are available at government office and with local organizations. I help them with relevant information including the contact address of the service providers. That is why the ISC has been recognized as a place of trust in the community."

- Mr. Helal Uddin, YPSA (CLIMB CSO partner)



Women attend a child services information session in Nazirtek

The Nazirtek dried fish processing area is located on the fringe of Cox's Bazar township and remains isolated during high tide along the Bay of Bengal. The community has developed as a major center for dried fish processing, with most residents working in the many dried fish establishments (DFE). There are no other facilities in the community, including schools and clinics, though it is not far from the main town. Residents have very limited access to health and livelihood services. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number of young children exploited as child labor (CL) in the DFEs.

Responding to the basic needs of the community, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), a civil society organization (CSO) partner on the U.S. Department of Labor-funded Child Labor Improvements in Bangladesh (CLIMB)¹ Project, worked with the community to pilot the ISC adjacent to the dried fish processing area in Nazirtek. The ISC was established with the objectives to:

- Provide appropriate information on services available through government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs;
- Support resolution of CL and other grievance cases brought by members of the community;
- Increase understanding of community members, DFE owners and owners' association members on the consequences of CL, CL abuse, CL-related laws and policies of the GoB;
- Provide healthcare and other support to children working as CL and their families; and
- Implement awareness-raising program on issues related to CL and child rights.



Information session on the prevention of child labor abuses in dried fish processing establishments



Families receiving health services

¹ The CLIMB project is managed by Winrock International under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor. The project runs December 15, 2017 through February 28, 2021.

Services are provided through a Support Assistant (SA) trained on child labor laws and policies, Bangladesh labor laws, service provisions through government, private sector and NGOs, grievance procedures including grievance settlements, and the roles and responsibilities of the government and NGOs to monitor CL in the hazardous sectors. The SA is also oriented on use of the Service Directory and procedures for referral services developed by YPSA in partnership with several service providers. The Directory and referral services are important tools to leverage services to the community.

Since opening in early 2020, the center has become an information hub for the families of children working in the DFS and played an important role in:

- Providing information to hundreds of community members on job skills training, livelihood support, health, education and other social services;
- Arranging training for **20** CL family members in handicraft-making from SWAPNOJAAL, a local NGO. YPSA arranged this training to create an alternative source of revenue for the families to send their children to school instead of engaging them in CL in the DFS.
- Making 46 referrals for community members to access old age allowances (5), education (4), medical treatment (3), sewing training (1) and trade licenses (3); and
- Providing more than **400** DFS CL/families health services through “health camps” organized by YPSA and community leaders.

The service center is playing an important role in resolving locally registered grievances through the assistance of the **Grievance Coordination Team (GCT)** that formed by YPSA with a legal aid officer, members of the local business association and staff of the local NGOs working in the community. The CLIMB project facilitated GCT training on grievance procedures, relevant labor laws, child labor laws, and other relevant issues. The GCT has facilitated resolution of nine (9) registered and documented cases related to discrimination in the provision of wages, problems with payment method, and family disputes.



Children receive polio vaccinations at the Nazirartek ISC

Through this ISC, YPSA has contributed to building the trust of the community in addressing longstanding challenges of: accessing health and other services; resolving work and other disputes; and identifying alternative livelihood and skills training opportunities. The piloting of the ISC in Nazirartek has provided early success and important lessons for scaling up and replicating centers in other communities to meet the needs of thousands of impoverished families in dried fish processing communities across the Cox's Bazar District. In the final year of the CLIMB project, YPSA and other partners will share their learning and support other CSOs to work with other DFS communities to establish ISC to bring services that reduce the vulnerability of children and their families.