

“A Transformation Journey: From Pain to Healing” – Stories of Fistula Survivors



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- Stories of Fistula Survivors

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**“ Dedicated to
the resilient fistula survivors
who inspire hope,
and to the skilled surgeons
whose compassion and
expertise restore dignity and
transform lives. ”**

Rokia Begum: From Rejection to Reconnection



“My husband sent me to my father's house, saying if I died from this disease, he would marry again.”

–Rokia Begum

Rokia Begum, 37, from Kalipur village in Sunamganj, endured nearly two decades of pain and isolation due to obstetric fistula after the birth of her sixth child. The condition caused uncontrollable urinary leakage, and instead of offering help, her husband rejected her.

Her suffering didn't end with her husband's abandonment. *“My family treated me like I was cursed. My sister-in-laws belittled me, and my husband made me sleep on the floor because of the smell. I felt worthless,”* she says. Struggling with constant shame, Rokia attempted suicide several times, believing no one would ever love or care for her again.

But hope came in September 2020 when a health worker diagnosed her condition. After surgery in Dhaka, Rokia was healed for the first time in 20 years. *“When I returned home, my husband welcomed me back, even buying me new clothes. It was a moment of healing and reconnection,”* she recalls with a smile.

With her health restored, Rokia received poultry farming training through a local government program. With some financial support, she started a small farm, raising chickens and ducks. *“It felt like I was given a new life. Now I can support my family and live with dignity,”* she says proudly.

Her son, who had watched his mother suffer for so long, couldn't be happier.

“I'm so proud of my mother. She's strong, and now she's teaching me how to help with the farm. For the first time, we feel like a real family,” he says with a smile.

Rokia's journey proves that with the right support, a brighter future is possible, even after years of hardship.

A Cry in the Darkness: Jaba's Rise to Hope



“For a whole day and night, I cried out, but my voice disappeared into the darkness. Losing my baby and living with this condition felt like a nightmare I couldn't escape.”

Jaba Rani Sarkar, from the village of Aaj Paragaon in Habiganj, endured years of pain and isolation. Married at 15, her second pregnancy ended in tragedy after 24 hours of painful labor. By the time she reached a hospital, her baby was stillborn, and soon after, she developed obstetric fistula—a condition no one around her understood. Ashamed and stigmatized, Jaba hid her suffering, believing it was her fate.

Her turning point came when a fellow survivor recognized her symptoms and encouraged her to seek help. With support from a Fistula Coordinator, Jaba overcame her fears and sought free treatment at the district hospital.

The life-changing surgery ended her suffering. *“After so much pain, I never thought I'd feel normal again. Now, I have hope, health, and strength,”* she shares with a smile.

Today, Jaba inspires other women to seek help, proving that no matter how dark the night, a new dawn is always possible.

Selina's Journey: From Isolation to Empowerment



“For 13 years, I lived like I didn’t exist—forgotten, broken, and ashamed. Today, I am free.”

Selina Begum, 38, from a small village in Sunamganj, endured over a decade of suffering due to obstetric fistula, a condition that left her isolated and humiliated. *“I was treated as less than human,”* she recalls, speaking of how her husband married another woman and her in-laws forced her out of their home.

The pain of living with constant leakage and unbearable stigma was overwhelming.

“I felt like I was carrying a punishment I couldn’t escape—every day was a battle just to endure,” she confides.

Diagnosed in 2019, Selina hesitated for six years, terrified to hope for a cure after years of disappointment.

In July 2024, Selina finally underwent life-changing surgery. *“Alhamdulillah, Allah has saved me,”* she says with tears of relief.

“Now I can sleep without fear of leaking, I can smile without shame, and I can dream of a future for my daughter and me.”

Fully recovered, Selina is rebuilding her life, training as a seamstress, and determined to help others.

“I pray no woman suffers as I did. My story is proof that healing is possible.”

Her voice, once silenced by shame, now inspires others: *“There is hope, even in the darkest moments. I feel human again.”*

Rehana's Recovery: A Tea Worker's Journey to Hope



“For months, I believed my life was over. Losing my baby and falling sick felt like a punishment I couldn’t escape. Today, I’m healthy, hopeful, and ready to rebuild my life.”

Rehana Khatun, a 27-year-old tea worker from Basulla village in Habiganj, spent months in despair after a traumatic second pregnancy. Married at 18, Rehana worked tirelessly in the tea gardens to support her family. When she became pregnant again, a lack of access to healthcare and resources meant she continued her physically demanding work, unaware of the risks.

Her labor lasted 19 excruciating hours at home, ending in the stillbirth of her baby. Soon after, Rehana developed obstetric fistula, a condition that left her leaking urine constantly. *“I didn’t know what was happening to me,”* she recalls tearfully. *“We had no money for treatment, and I felt ashamed and hopeless.”*

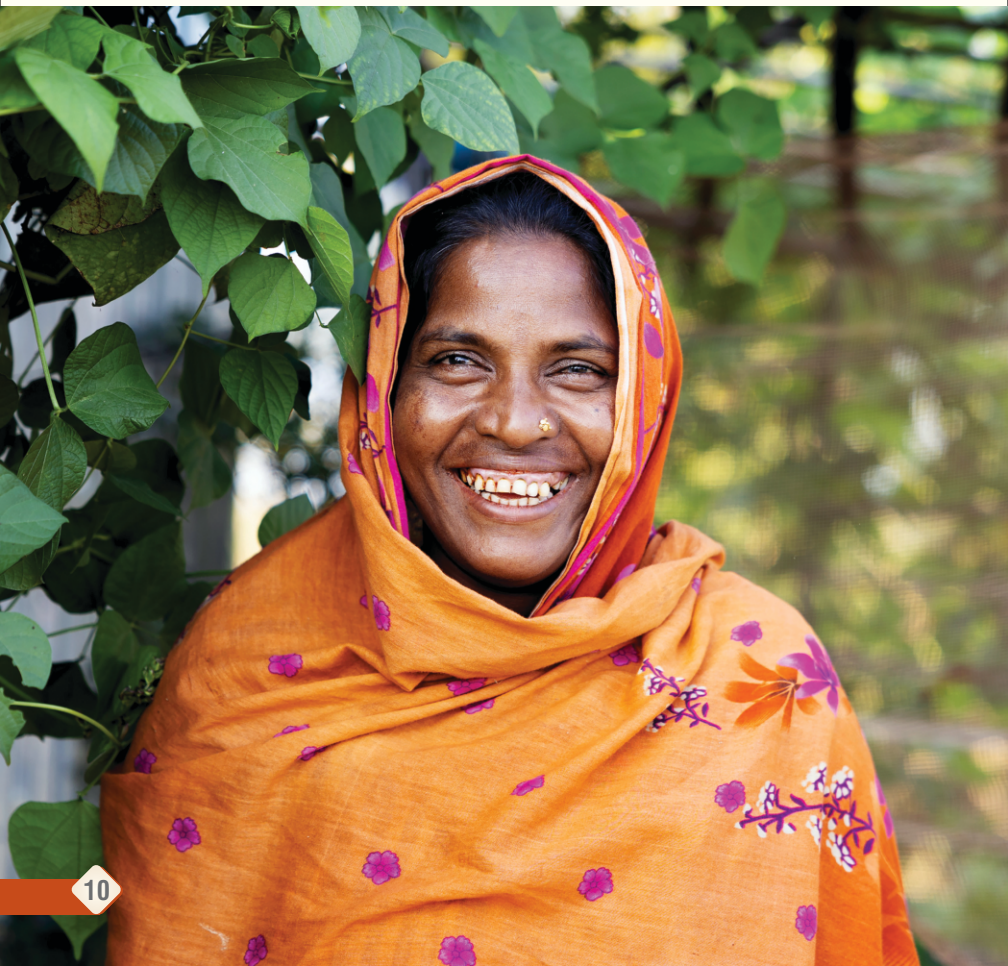
Her turning point came when a Family Welfare Assistant visited her village and identified her condition. Learning about free treatment through a government-supported program, Rehana made the brave decision to travel to Dhaka for surgery.

The surgery transformed her life. *“For the first time, I felt like myself again,”* she says.

“I can work, smile, and dream of a better future.”

Rehana’s recovery is a powerful reminder that even in the toughest circumstances, hope is possible. Today, she walks the tea gardens with renewed strength, inspiring others with her resilience.

From Isolation to Renewal: Ripta Begum's Story



“I never thought I’d find relief, but today I feel like I’ve been given a second chance at life.” – Ripta Begum

Ripta Begum, a 35-year-old woman from Patabuk village near the remote Tanguar Haor, lived in one of Bangladesh's hardest-to-reach areas, where access to healthcare is scarce. Married at just 13, she became a mother at 14. Tragically, her first two children died, and after her third birth, Ripta developed obstetric fistula, a condition that caused continuous urinary incontinence and isolated her from her community.

For 20 years, Ripta suffered in silence, unable to get proper medical care due to the isolation of her village. She had no idea that treatment was possible until a local health worker recognized her condition and referred her for care. After surgery, Ripta’s health was fully restored, and she returned home free from her condition.

“I feel like I’ve been given a second chance at life,” Ripta says, her smile reflecting the joy of recovery. Her story is one of transformation—physically, emotionally, and socially. No longer burdened by her condition, Ripta is reconnecting with her community and living a happier, healthier life.

Ripta’s journey proves that even in the most remote areas, with the right care and support, the darkest struggles can be overcome, leading to a brighter, healthier future.

Savita's Resilience and the Power of Support



“For months, I lived in pain and shame, feeling like my life was over. Today, I’ve reclaimed my health and hope, and I want others to know they can too.”

Savita Karmakar, a tea worker from Bhatara village in Moulvibazar, faced unimaginable hardship after her first pregnancy ended in tragedy. Prolonged labor at home led to the stillbirth of her baby, and she developed obstetric fistula, leaving her isolated and broken.

“I didn’t know what was happening to me, and my husband didn’t understand. I felt alone,” she recalls tearfully.

Her turning point came when local healthcare workers visited her village and identified her condition. With their guidance, Savita traveled to Dhaka for surgery through a government-supported program. Despite the challenges, including her husband’s initial reluctance, Savita found the courage to seek treatment.

The surgery transformed her life. *“I can finally smile again. Those who once avoided me now talk to me with kindness,”* she says with gratitude.

Savita’s story is a testament to resilience and the power of support. Her journey inspires others to seek help and proves that even in the darkest times, recovery is possible.

Tamanna's Triumph: A Journey from Suffering to a New Beginning



“For six months, I lived in shame, feeling unwanted and abandoned. I thought my life was over. Today, I have hope, health, and a new purpose to help others like me.”

Tamanna Begum, a 24-year-old from Sarangbazar in Habiganj, endured unimaginable heartbreak. Pregnant at 23, she dreamed of becoming a mother, but poverty and lack of healthcare turned her joy into tragedy. After a full day of labor with an unskilled midwife, she delivered a stillborn baby at a health center.

Her loss was only the beginning. Obstetric fistula left her leaking urine constantly, isolating her from her community.

“People said I smelled, avoided me, and treated me like I didn’t belong,” Tamanna recalls tearfully.

Even her husband considered leaving her, and she was left to bear the shame alone.

Everything changed in April 2024 when she learned about free fistula treatment. With renewed hope, Tamanna sought help at Sadar Hospital, where she was diagnosed and referred for surgery in Dhaka. On May 12, 2024, she underwent life-changing surgery that ended her six months of suffering.

“I feel like I’ve been given a new life,” Tamanna says.

“Those who once rejected me now treat me with kindness. My husband is by my side again, and we dream of a happy family.”

Tamanna’s journey from despair to recovery is an inspiration and a reminder that even the darkest times can give way to a brighter future, filled with hope and purpose.

Healing and Hope: Deepti's 23-Year Struggle Ends



“For 23 years, I thought my life was over. Today, I know there’s always hope, even after decades of pain.”

Deepti Rani Sarkar, a 39-year-old woman from Sunamganj’s Haor region, endured unimaginable suffering after her first pregnancy ended in tragedy. Married at 16, she went into labor a year later, spending three agonizing days without medical help before delivering a stillborn baby at a local health complex. The trauma left her with obstetric fistula, causing constant urinary leakage and years of isolation.

For over two decades, Deepti suffered in silence, unable to seek help due to fear, stigma, and financial hardship.

“I felt ashamed, helpless, and completely alone,” she recalls.

Her life changed in November 2023 when a Fistula Coordinator identified her condition during a village visit. Though hesitant at first, Deepti agreed to seek treatment. In January 2024, she was diagnosed at Jamalganj Upazila Health Complex and learned that surgery could cure her condition. *“Hearing there was hope brought tears to my eyes,”* she says.

With the support of compassionate caregivers and her family, Deepti underwent treatment, reclaiming her health and dignity.

“I never imagined I could feel normal again. Now, I want others like me to know they don't have to suffer in silence,” she shares.

Deepti’s story is a powerful reminder that even after years of pain, healing is possible. Her courage inspires other women to seek help and shows that every life is worth fighting for.

10 Years of Pain, a Lifetime of Hope: Selina's Journey to Recovery



“For 10 years, I lived in shame and pain, thinking my life would never change. Today, I have my health and hope back, and it feels like I've been given a second chance.”

Selina Khatun, 30, from a remote village in Bahubal Upazila, Habiganj, endured a decade of unimaginable suffering caused by obstetric fistula. Born into poverty and married at just 16, Selina’s life revolved around housework and supporting her husband in the fields.

Her suffering began after 12 painful hours of labor at home, assisted by an untrained village doctor. Selina gave birth to a stillborn baby, a tragedy compounded by the development of obstetric fistula—a condition that caused continuous urine leakage. *“The village doctor ruined my life. If I had gone to the hospital sooner, this wouldn’t have happened,”* she recalls tearfully.

For 10 years, Selina endured constant pain, humiliation, and rejection. Her husband married another woman, leaving her heartbroken and struggling to care for her son.

“I felt helpless and alone. I couldn’t even take care of my child properly,” she says.

In July 2024, her life changed when a health worker connected her with a local fistula coordinator. Hearing that her condition was treatable and free of cost gave her hope. With support, she travelled to Dhaka for surgery despite her husband’s initial reluctance.

On July 25, Selina underwent successful surgery and, for the first time in 10 years, felt free from pain and shame. *“I feel healthy and hopeful again,”* she shares with gratitude.

Today, Selina looks forward to rebuilding her life and cherishes the hope that her recovery has brought. Her journey inspires countless others, proving that even after years of suffering, there is always a way to heal. *“I want other women like me to know that they don’t have to live in silence. Help is out there—you just have to take the first step.”*

A New Beginning After 32 Years: Josna's Healing Journey



“For 32 years, I lived in pain and shame, thinking my life was over. Today, I am free, and I have my happiness back.”

Josna Begum, a 45-year-old woman from a remote village in Sunamganj, spent three decades suffering silently from obstetric fistula. Married at 11 and pregnant by 13, she endured prolonged labor without medical care. After three days of agony, she lost her baby and was left with a condition that caused constant urine leakage—a condition no one around her understood.

For years, Josna lived in isolation, believing there was no hope. *“I thought this was my destiny,”* she says. Poverty and stigma kept her from seeking help, leaving her to endure the physical and emotional toll of her condition.

In May 2024, everything changed. During a fistula outreach camp, a Family Welfare Assistant identified her condition and encouraged her to visit the Sadar Hospital Fistula Corner. There, her diagnosis was confirmed, and she was referred to MAMMS Hospital in Dhaka. Despite the challenges of traveling far from her village, Josna’s determination never wavered. With support from her husband and healthcare workers, she underwent a successful surgery that finally ended her 32 years of suffering.

“After all these years, I didn’t think I could ever feel normal again,” she says with tears of joy. *“But now, I feel free. With Allah’s blessing and the care I received, I have my life back.”*

Josna’s story is one of hope and resilience. Her journey from despair to recovery inspires women still suffering in silence and reminds us all that healing is possible.

Breaking the Chains of Suffering: Sumi's Journey to Renewal



“For five long years, I lived in misery, thinking my life was over. Today, I am healthy, happy, and full of hope,” says Sumi Rani Shil, a 25-year-old tea garden worker from Habiganj’s Vrindavan Tea Garden.

Married at 18 and a mother by 20, Sumi’s life took a tragic turn during her second pregnancy. After hours of labor at home with a traditional birth attendant, her baby was stillborn, and she developed obstetric fistula. Continuous urine leakage left her devastated, isolated, and stigmatized.

“We couldn’t afford treatment. My life felt like a punishment I couldn’t escape,” she recalls.

For five years, Sumi endured physical and emotional pain. Hope came unexpectedly when a neighbor told her about free treatment. Encouraged, she sought help and was connected to health workers who counseled her family and arranged her care.

Traveling to Dhaka for surgery, Sumi received expert, compassionate care. The operation was a success.

“I couldn’t believe it—my suffering was finally over,” she says.

Returning home, she found renewed support from her community, including a grant to help her family.

“I now look forward to every day with hope,” Sumi shares, her voice filled with gratitude.

Reclaiming Dignity: Minara Begum's Journey from Isolation to Independence



“For 19 years, I lived in shame and silence. Today, with a simple sewing machine, I have reclaimed my life and dignity,” says Minara Begum from Rahmatpur village, Sunamganj.

Married at 17, Minara’s life took a devastating turn after three days of agonizing labor at home. By the time she reached the hospital, her baby was stillborn, and she was left with obstetric fistula—a condition causing constant urine leakage. Her husband abandoned her, and she became dependent on her brother’s family.

“I felt like a burden, unwanted and invisible,” Minara recalls, describing years of isolation and emotional pain.

Everything changed in 2022 when social welfare department gifted her a sewing machine. Minara says *“I now earn 300 to 500 taka a day and no longer feel worthless.”*

With each stitch, Minara is piecing her life back together. Her sewing machine symbolizes hope and independence.

“I don’t rely on anyone anymore. I stand on my own feet,” she shares proudly.

Her transformation is a powerful reminder of how small interventions can ignite big change. “You can’t help everyone, but helping one person can make all the difference,” Minara reflects.

Though her condition remains, Minara is no longer defined by it. *“I may not be cured,”* she says, *“but I have my life back—and that means everything.”*

Bhabani Tanta Bai: A New Beginning After Adversity



“I would never have recovered without the dedicated support I received from Prof. Sayeba Akhter, who treated me, and from CIPRB and UNFPA, who helped diagnose my condition and took me to Dhaka for treatment. They gave me a second chance at life, and for that, I will always be grateful.” – Bhabani Tanta Bai

Bhabani Tanta Bai, a 20-year-old tea garden worker from Chanpur Tea Garden in Chunarughat, Habiganj, endured immense hardship. Married at 17, Bhabani’s first pregnancy ended tragically in a stillbirth, followed by the development of obstetric fistula, leaving her with constant urinary leakage. For two months, she was unable to work and felt isolated by her community.

The turning point came when Bhabani was connected to the support of CIPRB. After overcoming her fear, she was referred to a specialized facility in Dhaka, where she received life-saving surgery. Following her recovery, Bhabani was given a cow by the Social Welfare Department, which became a source of income for her family.

Today, Bhabani is healthy, happy, and able to support her family. *“I can now live with dignity and contribute to my family’s well-being. My life has been restored, and I will never forget the help that gave me a second chance,”* she says.

Manwara's Transformation: From Darkness to Light



“For 22 years, I lived in silence, believing I was cursed. Today, I am free and alive again. I pray no one else has to endure what I did.”

Manwara Begum, 35, from the Haor region of Sunamganj, faced decades of pain and isolation. Married at 13, she lost three babies during childbirth at home, assisted only by unskilled midwives. After her last loss, Manwara developed obstetric fistula, leaving her with constant urinary leakage. Misunderstood and stigmatized, she lived in shame, unable to seek help.

Her life changed when a community health worker visited her village, listened to her story, and explained that her condition was treatable through free surgery. Though hesitant, Manwara agreed to seek help after counseling and traveled to Dhaka for the life-changing operation.

“When the doctor said my condition could be fixed, I didn't know whether to cry or smile,” she says.

After 25 days of recovery, she returned home with her health and dignity restored.

“My neighbors, who once avoided me, now greet me warmly. My family has embraced me again, and I feel like I finally belong,” she shares.

Manwara's story inspires other women in her community to seek help.

Her journey is an evidence to resilience and the power of compassionate care, proving that even after years of suffering, healing is possible.

A New Light of Hope: Meghna's Journey to Recovery



“For months, I felt abandoned—not just by my community, but by my husband. I thought I had lost everything, but now I have a second chance at life, and I want to help others find hope too.” –Meghna Tati

Meghna Tati, a 20-year-old tea garden worker from Begumkhan Tea Garden in Habiganj, faced immense struggles from a young age. Married at 17, Meghna’s second pregnancy brought serious complications. After days of labor, an emergency cesarean section saved her baby, but she developed obstetric fistula, which caused continuous urinary leakage.

For a year, Meghna endured isolation and rejection, even from her husband.

“I felt abandoned. I thought I had lost everything,” she recalls, devastated by the stigma.

Her life changed when she learned about free fistula treatment from another survivor. Encouraged by a gynecologist, Meghna sought care at OGSB Hospital in Dhaka, where she was treated by Prof. Anowara Begum. Meghna made a full recovery within just 25 days.

“People who once avoided me now speak to me. I feel alive again,” Meghna says, grateful for her healing.

Her husband returned, and together they have begun rebuilding their life.

Today, Meghna is healthy, hopeful, and ready to contribute to her community with renewed strength.

A Journey of Renewal: Newarunnesa's Rise from Despair



“For 20 years, I lived in silence—ashamed, isolated, and broken. I thought my life had ended the day my baby died. But now, I know healing is possible.”

Newarunnesa, from a remote village in Dowarabazar, Sunamganj, endured unimaginable suffering. Married at 14, her first pregnancy at 16 ended in tragedy after two days of agonizing labor. Rushed to the hospital, her baby was stillborn, and a cesarean left her with obstetric fistula.

“I didn’t understand what was wrong with me,” she recalls. Continuous urine leakage robbed her dignity, isolating her from her community. Too poor for treatment, she spent 20 years hiding in shame, avoiding people and family gatherings. *“The smell, the rejection—I felt cursed,”* she admits.

In May 2024, everything changed. During a community campaign, health workers identified her condition and offered help. Traveling four hours to Sunamganj Sadar Hospital, Newarunnesa learned her condition was treatable. With her family’s support, she underwent surgery.

“I can’t describe the relief,” she says, tears of joy in her eyes. *“I sleep without fear, walk without shame, and smile freely.”*

“For 20 years, I thought this was my destiny. Now I know healing is possible. No one should suffer in silence,” she says passionately.

Shakira's Journey to Dignity: A Life Restored



“For five years, I felt like a shadow—unseen, unheard, and unwanted,” Shakira begins, reflecting on her harrowing experience with obstetric fistula.

After a traumatic childbirth claimed her baby’s life, she was left with constant leaking of urine—a condition that robbed her of both her physical comfort and social acceptance. Shunned by her community and even her husband, Shakira’s days were filled with isolation and despair.

“I cried myself to sleep every night, wondering why this happened to me,” she recalls.

Her once vibrant life was reduced to mere survival, overshadowed by shame and the silent pain of being misunderstood. A ray of hope came when she heard about treatment for her condition. Although hesitant, Shakira decided to take a chance. The journey was not easy, but her determination never wavered. With proper care and support, she emerged healed—not just physically, but emotionally.

“For the first time in years, I stood tall, free of shame,” Shakira says, her voice brimming with renewed confidence.

Returning to her community, she was met with acceptance and warmth. Instead of allowing her past to define her, Shakira chose to use her story as a beacon of hope for others. Today, Shakira lives with pride and purpose, proving that even the darkest struggles can give way to a life of respect and hope.

A Second Chance: Sabitri's Journey from Despair to Hope



“I never thought I’d regain my life after losing my child and suffering from fistula. But with support, I found hope and a way to rebuild.” –Sabitri Robidas

At just 17, Sabitri Robidas from Shamsernagar Tea Garden in Moulvibazar married Tulsi Rabidas, dreaming of starting a family. However, her journey to motherhood was filled with complications. After a difficult labor, Sabitri lost her first child and developed obstetric fistula, which caused constant pain and isolation.

For years, Sabitri sought treatment, but nothing seemed to help. Her life seemed hopeless until a local health worker recognized her condition and connected her with a referral facility for treatment. After being successfully operated on and cured, Sabitri’s health began to improve.

“After all the pain and loss, I never imagined I could smile again” –Sabitri Robidas

Despite her recovery, the financial strain of her illness lingered. Unable to work during her sickness, she and her husband fell into debt. But with support from a project, Sabitri received a sewing machine, enabling her to start earning from home. Slowly, she paid off her debts and regained her independence. Today, Sabitri is debt-free and able to support her family.

“The help I received gave me hope, healed me, and allowed me to rebuild my life. I now live with dignity and can care for my family again,” Sabitri says, grateful for the second chance she was given.

Free at Last: Modina's Journey to Healing and Dignity



“For years, I felt trapped by pain and shame. Today, I’m free and full of hope. No woman should suffer in silence. I want to show others that healing is possible, and every woman deserves to live with dignity.” – Modina

Modina, a 35-year-old woman from the remote Tahirpur Haor area in Sunamganj, endured 20 years of silence and shame. After losing her first child during childbirth, she developed obstetric fistula, a condition causing uncontrollable urinary leakage. For years, Modina suffered in pain and isolation, unable to work in the fields or care for her family. The emotional toll was devastating, leaving her withdrawn from her community and feeling hopeless.

“I thought I would never live normally again. I felt invisible, as though my life had no value,” Modina recalls.

Her turning point came when a Fistula Coordinator, informed by a local health worker, visited her home and diagnosed her condition. Modina was referred for surgery in Dhaka, where she received the treatment she desperately needed. After surgery, she was finally free from the pain and discomfort that had defined her life for two decades.

“I never imagined I would be free of pain again, but today I am healthy, and my life is full of hope,” Modina shares with a grateful smile.

Now fully healed, Modina has rediscovered her strength and purpose. She contributes to her family’s income by sewing clothes and is determined to help others who are suffering in silence, just as she once did.

“ In Bangladesh, an estimated 20,000 women endure the devastating effects of obstetric fistula, many from the most marginalized communities, trapped in poverty and isolation. Most cannot access the hospitals or care they desperately need.

Through these 20 case stories, we have witnessed their journeys from pain to healing. These stories prove that change is possible when we reach out to them at their doorsteps to identify those still suffering from obstetric fistula, provide quality treatment, and restore dignity through rehabilitation.

A fistula-free Bangladesh is not just a dream—it is within our reach. But it requires collective action. Together, we must ensure no woman is left behind. With compassion and commitment, we can bring healing and hope to every woman suffering from obstetric fistula. ”

- Editorial Panel Members



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