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Teenage changemaker Sumaiya is working to improve community health and hygiene



Sumaiya is 16 years old and lives with her family in Rangamati hill district. The 5th out of 6 children, Sumaiya's parents are farmers who cultivate a small plot.

When the European Union funded LEAN project started working with her para, she enrolled herself with the adolescent club, which was established under supervision of the 'Chader Hashi Women Business Center', and become an active member of the club.

Prior to her involvement, Sumaiya was totally unaware of the need for diversified nutritious food and the importance of handwashing. She also needed more information on menstrual and personal health hygiene. Through her membership in the adolescent club, she came to learn about those things through sessions and other awareness raising activities by LEAN project.

Exposure visits were conducted for adolescent groups to visit other groups in neighboring unions to learn from each other, share experiences and increase motivation. Together with her peers, Sumaiya visited the Department of Women's Affairs and Community Clinics to learn about the services and resources and facilities. She became aware of the importance for adolescent girls of taking iron and folic acid tablets. Afterwards, she and her club have been disseminating information on what they learned and leveraging support and connection with Community Clinics, Union health and family welfare.

Sumaiya said, "Before joining the adolescent club, I was totally unaware of the proper way and the importance of hand washing, eating balanced and diversified diet and using clean clothes or sanitary pads during menstruation. With the support of LEAN project, I have got the opportunity to exchange information and knowledge with health experts and learned about dietary diversity, menstruation hygiene and other adolescent health related issues. I got acquainted with knowledge on health and hygiene and have encouraged my fellow classmate to get more information on menstrual health hygiene and helped them know that sanitary napkins are available at our WBC centre. When I can't afford to buy pads, I use clean and dry cloths, which we learned from regular sessions. I am leading a healthy and sound life, continuing my study properly without any break. We also formed a 6-member child marriage prevention committee in February".

Sumaiya monitors her handwashing station on a daily basis which was established on her village with the support of LEAN project, as well as works to raise awareness among community people on the importance of hand washing regularly as part of promoting increased awareness of COVID-19 risks and taking necessary preventative practices.

By observing all this progress she has gained the support of her family. She hopes to contribute to the prevention of child marriage through the adolescent club in the near future. For all that support Sumaiya expresses gratitude to the LEAN project.

