

Arsenic Poisoning Prevention Program

MCC Bangladesh Alumni-SIM Bangladesh Partnership

Expansion Project has Begun!

Clean Drinking Water for All



This woman is getting drinking water from a hand-pumped tubewell. Sadly, for many people in Bangladesh, their well water is contaminated with arsenic. Thankfully, an arsenic removal filter can be an effective and low-cost solution for those who don't have access to other safe drinking water.

Project Update

Thank you for your interest and support in helping people in southern Bangladesh gain access to safe drinking water! We are a group of former MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) Bangladesh workers, now partnering with SIM Bangladesh, a Christian organization that is part of SIM International, to help address the arsenic crisis in Bangladesh's drinking water. The World Health Organization has identified this as the largest mass poisoning in human history.

MCC has downsized its Bangladesh programs in recent years, and is now working primarily in the northwestern part of the country, where arsenic is not a significant problem. For multiple reasons, they are not able to work on the arsenic crisis, and they suggested we find another organization to partner with. This is what we have done.

SIM has served people in a few small arsenic-contaminated areas of Bangladesh for over 20 years, with a holistic and very successful arsenic mitigation program that has saved many lives and improved quality of life for many more. Their program vision is "everyone drinking water fit for life". We're partnering with SIM to expand their Arsenic Poisoning Prevention Program (APPP) into other hard-hit areas that haven't been getting much assistance.

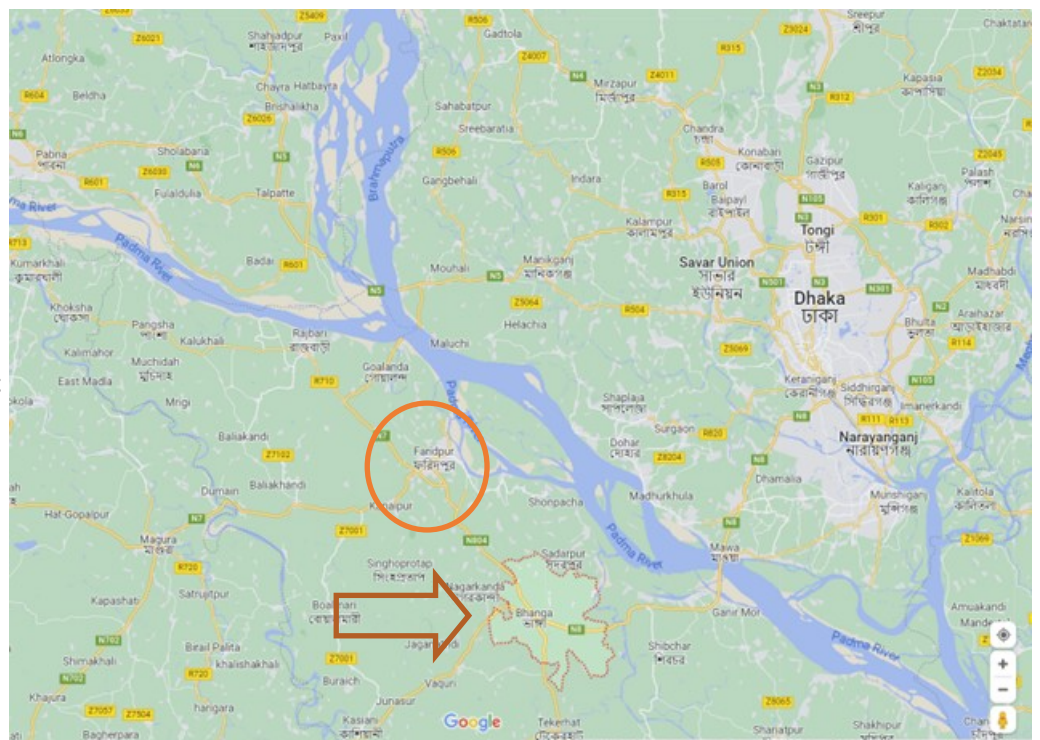
This program expansion is beginning. SIM Bangladesh staff have done initial survey work in the first area for planned expansion—Bhanga Thana. Related paperwork has been filed with the appropriate government offices, and the new local APPP office is expected to open in July 2023.

Project Expansion Starting

The project expansion, has started. This project , in partnership with interested MCC Bangladesh alumni and others , will move past the survey stage, into serving residents of Bhanga Thana in July 2023, with initial focus on education sessions and well testing. Filter distribution and medical care will ramp up as staff build trust with residents of this new area. With the project expansion, annual targets for the July 2023-June 2024 fiscal year will be increased accordingly.

This project will result in more people being educated about arsenic, more water testing, receiving clean water supplies and medical treatment as needed. It will help keep at-risk people from developing arsenic related medical conditions and save lives.

Below is a map that shows the location of the new expansion area. The arrow shows the new expansion area outlined in red. The circle shows the approximate present arsenic mitigation area in the vicinity of Faridpur.



Project Funding Status

Generous donations have brought funding for the project expansion to a level of 34,000 USD. This is sufficient to fund the first year of the project expansion in Bhanga Thana. We will continue fundraising for the longer-term financial health of the expansion project, and potential additional areas. A BIG *Thank You* to all who have donated so far! Your concern for the affected people of Bangladesh is very inspiring.

Background of SIM's Arsenic Project, Prior to Start of This New Expansion

Vision of the Project

Our vision is “Everyone drinking water fit for life”. Specifically, it is to bring hope to the people of Bangladesh who are suffering due to arsenic contamination of their drinking water. We desire to bring hope for improved physical health through increased awareness about the issue, household arsenic removal filters and patient treatment. We also want to address their spiritual thirst by proclaiming to them in various ways the truth of the gospel, insofar as it's possible and appropriate to do so as an NGO project in this context.

Project Background

In 1999, women's co-operative groups who were in existing partnership with another SIM Bangladesh project requested that SIM test their drinking water wells for arsenic. After confirming that there was significant arsenic contamination of their drinking water, the Arsenic Poisoning Prevention Program (APPP) (formally: *Arsenic Awareness and Alleviation Project*) began in 2002 as SIM's response to this request. The project has four main activities: **awareness raising**, **water testing**, **filter distribution**, and **patient care**. In July 2022 we started one more activity, a **nutrition and home cultivation** program.



Simple filters made with layers of sand, brick chips, iron filings and charcoal provide efficient, cost effective filters.

| | Activity | Annual Target | Achievement | % | Comment |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----|---------------|
| 1 | Awareness Raising Meetings | 600 | 626 | 114 | Exceed Target |
| 2 | Water Testing | 1700 | 1156 | 72 | On-Target |
| 3 | Arsenic Removal Filter Distribution | 800 | 633 | 79 | On-Target |
| 4 | Patient Treatment | 650 | 892 | 137 | Exceed Target |
| 5 | Nutrition and home garden Cultivation | 100 | 78 | 78 | On-target |



Nilufa shows off her garden

Beneficiary Story: Nutrition and Home Cultivation Program – Nilufa’s Garden

When our field workers first met Nilufa Begum about five years ago, she had visible symptoms of arsenic poisoning. When they tested her water it indeed far surpassed the safe drinking limit. Through our help, Nilufa better understood her predicament and started drinking safe water from an arsenic removal filter. We also provided doctor consultations and medicine to help ease her symptoms.

More recently, we added a nutrition component to our program, to more holistically support those with arsenic poisoning. Eating a nutritious, vitamin-rich diet is essential to strengthen the body so it can eliminate arsenic. For several years our field workers have been encouraging program participants to diversify their diet, making sure to include more varieties of vegetables. Recently we’ve been more active in this area: distributing seeds, teaching and encouraging people to grow their own gardens, and offering suggestions for how to cook the vegetables.

Nilufa took this knowledge and ran with it! On a small plot of land, she planted all kinds of vegetables, including radishes, beets, carrots, tomatoes, long beans, pumpkins, and several local varieties of spinach. All these seeds were provided by our program. She also planted eggplant and cabbage on her own. As we spoke, I could tell she was proud to show off all the foods she's been carefully cultivating, as the results of her labor are starting to be harvested.

Nilufa reports, and our doctor confirms, that through our help, her symptoms are significantly improved from several years ago. Praise God! How encouraging to see her taking initiative and ownership for looking after her health and taking steps to address the problem; this is truly sustainable development.

Closing Thoughts

We praise God for His faithful work through SIM's APPP program for over 20 years; for the tens of thousands of people whose lives have been healthier, and the many lives saved! We're also grateful for His guidance in the initial stages of this new partnership, to expand SIM's successful program to bring hope to those in another hard-hit area. We appreciate all of you who are partnering with us to make this expansion program a reality, and look forward to continued partnership for the health of Bangladeshi people.

Pray with Us

Pray that the residents of Nur-Mohammad Dangi village will be diligent in following Nilufa advice and instructions.

Pray for the new office which opening in Bhanga Thana, and the people who will be served there.

Pray for APPP **Field Workers** – that they would have endurance and skill in communicating about arsenic and health with thousands of villagers, many of whom are uneducated and more focused on short-term problems than on their long-term health.

Pray for the **700+ poisoning patients** currently being served, that they will regularly take their medicines and that God would keep them healthy.

Making a Donation

If you would like to make future donations to this project, then please use the information below to give online or to contact your country's SIM office by phone or mail. Be sure to mention, whether you call or do the on-line option, that you want to donate to Project #098335 expansion support (Bangladesh arsenic project).

SIM USA: 704-588-4300; <https://www.simusa.org/give>; 114830 Choate Circle, Charlotte, NC 28273

SIM Canada: 1-800-294-6918 ; <https://www.sim.ca/donate>; 10 Huntingdale Blvd., Scarborough, ON M1W 2S5