



**"THE ICDRM PROJECT ELEVATED MY DIGNITY" :**

## **INCLUDING THE LGBTIQ+ VOICE IN COMMUNITY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES**

In October 2017, Plan International Bangladesh, together with Jago Nari, the local partner, launched the Inclusive Community Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (ICDRM) project, funded by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies. The philosophy of disaster risk management (DRM) is to save as many people as possible without seeing the labels of individual community members. This project brings together the DRM philosophy with Plan International's global strategies to work with vulnerable groups in disaster preparedness activities. Through the ICDRM project, Plan and Jago Nari identified groups of people that had difficulties or challenges in participating in community activities, such as women, people with special needs, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. "Leave no one behind during emergencies" becomes the new slogan identified by the communities under this project.

One representative from the LGBTIQ+ group saw significant changes when she returned to her hometown after the ICDRM project was launched. Shapla (not her real name) found that vulnerable groups, including women, people with special needs and LGBTIQ+ individuals were warmly welcomed to the recently established inclusive community-level committee. After years of being silent, now her voice seemed important. She was respected and listened to, and her opinions were responded to. The acceptance she felt in the inclusive community committee brought out her true potential as a leader for marginalized groups.

The ICDRM project has successfully worked to establish a local community-level disaster committee or Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC), with support from the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC). This new committee has allowed a more inclusive approach to decision-making.

This includes encouraging the representatives of LGBTIQ+ individuals to take part in the WDMC committee, including Shapla. With her capacity and willingness, Shapla has succeeded in convincing more people to participate actively in community disaster preparedness activities. When she was asked about her experience in the committee, Shapla said,



**"DESPITE BEING TRANSGENDER, I HAVE DIGNITY  
IN OUR AREA, BECAUSE I AM AN HONORABLE  
MEMBER OF WDMC"**

Shapla's impressive contributions to WDMC led her to take on more responsibilities as a chosen member in the UDMC. She learned the inclusive disaster management decision-making process and the government's system for disaster risk reduction (DRR). She gained many hard and soft skills in DRR efforts. Most importantly, she understood that she and her peers are called to help develop community resilience at a high level, regardless of gender identity.

Capacity building is provided to all of the WDMC members, through training and meetings with many robust materials about community-based DRR. Before this membership, Shapla was not aware of her rights or her entitlement to access certain government services. She never thought that the LGBTIQ+ community could become an important part of society. With help from Jago Nari, she understands that her role is vital. The UDMC has also agreed to pay attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+ individuals.



Shapla used her voice on behalf of the LGBTIQ+ community at the WDMC meeting and she felt proud to be part of the decision-makers representing a group previously left behind. She is grateful for the ICDRM project. Through the project, her group has become an integral part of society.

The ICDRM project has helped LGBTIQ+ voices be heard. It will take more time and more effort to engage the LGBTIQ+ group in all elements of community activities, as it is a long journey. Nevertheless, through the ICDRM project, the LGBTIQ+ group has the willingness to be included in community activities. Shapla's voice does not represent one or two people; it represents the unheard voices of a large group.

Plan International and Jago Nari understand and respect those who are underrepresented. They are always trying to create an environment that enables everyone to participate in community activities. Like the slogan developed by the community, not one single person is left behind during emergencies: girls, boys, women, men, elders, people with special needs, and LGBTIQ+ individuals are all equally important members of the community.