

Shivia Spring Newsletter

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An all-women farmer group on our Agri-management Services Programme proudly showing their bank account and cash saving books, with their Shivia Livelihood Service Provider Tapas Mondal

Dear Friend of Shivia,

I write this message on International Women's Day which feels appropriate given how the women we work with in West Bengal inspire me on a daily basis; their hard work and determination is indeed resulting in brighter futures for their children.

I returned last month from a successful trip to West Bengal where our CFO Chris Langridge and I focused much on our three-year plan and budget as well as social impact methodology. Victoria Denison spent time in the field with Chandrani Banerjee, Head of Livelihoods, to monitor progress on the ground, which she writes about on page 2.

Our Poultry Development Services continues to produce excellent results and is being replicated elsewhere in West Bengal (the Sunderbans) in March by another organisation that we have trained. Through our own team, we are now helping over 7,000 families in 755 villages of rural Bengal and this year, to date, we have distributed close to 8,000 toolkits. Our plan for next year (1st April-31st March) is to distribute 10,000 toolkits and start forming groups, as with our Agri-Management Services Programme (AMS). AMS is going from strength to strength and we now have nearly 700 farmers in 40 Farmer Interest Groups all benefitting from access to better priced inputs, market linkages and opening of bank accounts. Our goal this year is to transition these smaller groups into a larger Farmer Producer Organisation. I am delighted that the goat pilot for 20 families is in full swing and since I returned from India, the first kid has been born!

We have a busy period in the run up to and around Easter with **Damon de Laszlo** hosting a special and intimate lunch on 21st March for some close supporters; we are presenting at **The Funding Network** that same evening and would welcome supporters to come along; **Max Patel** from St James's Place is hosting a fabulous dinner at the House of Commons on 7th April where our Patron **Nick Jenkins** will be doing the keynote speech. We also have our two boxes at the Royal Albert Hall on 18th March and 5th April kindly donated by **Vin Murria**. The boxes at Christmas were much enjoyed: Nutcracker on Ice and Christmas Classics. After Easter, we will be looking forward to Joe (General Manager) and Chandrani's annual trip to the UK where, amongst other events, our loyal partner **Artemis** will be holding an evening reception on 8th June to galvanise new support and **Alquity** will also be hosting a gathering for clients to hear about our work.

We appreciate all the efforts that our friends and supporters make to enable us to deliver our services and change the lives of some of the world's very poorest people; thank you.

Meanwhile, I hope that all of you who celebrate Easter have a joyful time and that you think of us when you paint or eat eggs! Perhaps this year, instead of buying Easter eggs, donate a £15 poultry toolkit and change a family's life in the process.

Thank you for your continued support which means the world.

Olly

Olly Donnelly, Chief Executive

REPORT FROM WEST BENGAL by Victoria Denison

It's so rewarding to travel to the villages where we are working and hear the stories from our farmers at first hand and in February I spent a few days with **Chandrani Banerjee**, Head of Livelihood Programme, doing just that. Our first day was spent in our Familia location where we first launched the Livelihood Programme in 2011. Since that time we have worked with over 7,000 families living in poverty, providing the tools and training so they can start their own poultry enterprise from home. We spent time talking in detail with some of the families who have benefitted from that opportunity and learned about the difference it has made to their lives. All of the stories are inspiring and help to endorse the impact of our programme that is designed to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship and not dependence on just aid.

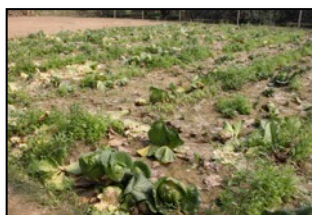
We witnessed a number of examples where our farmers have used the money they make from selling their produce to start a new enterprise and gain a sustainable income. **Husna Begum** in the photo below has bought a sewing machine and is earning more money to support her family from her tailoring services.



A walk through the busy local market was fascinating and it was wonderful to see fresh eggs from Shivia hens on sale. Here's one of our Livelihood Service Providers from Familia location, **Marjeeta Katul**, showing the eggs.



Another day was spent talking to farmers who are learning organic farming techniques from our **Agri-management Services (AMS)** programme. This is an enterprise we have been offering since April 2014 and it has been very successful as can be seen from the 'before and after' photos below. We are teaching farmers to maximise the yield from their small plots of land with soil testing, advice on crop selection, planting techniques and access to cheaper inputs (seeds, organic fertilisers and pesticides). One of the main benefits of AMS is the formation of farmer interest groups that allow our farmers to work together in a sustainable and self-sufficient co-operative to get better access to the market for selling their produce and to be able to negotiate favourable prices from suppliers. I met a number of farmers who are very pleased with the services and training they receive from Shivia and who are already seeing the results in higher yields and better quality produce.



My final day in the villages was spent visiting some of the families taking part in the pilot project for our third enterprise in goat farming. We launched this programme with 20 families at the start of the year and we were delighted to hear that the first kid from one of our nanny goats was born in early March, just after I left India so sadly I didn't get a chance to meet it! Goats are highly valued in West Bengal for both their milk and at the market and we expect this enterprise to be very popular in the future. The model is simple – we loan each family two female goats that are approaching reproductive age. A male goat is also on loan to a group of local families. Each family is obliged to repay the loan with half of the goat kids born over a period of 27 months. At the end of that time the family should have five young goats of their own to continue their farming enterprise. Shivia will also have received five of the kids as repayment.

It was wonderful to meet some of the women and children from the families who are taking part in this project. The children in particular looked so pleased and proud to be taking some responsibility for their welfare as you can see from the photo here.



Meet Hari - he's just four years old and his mother has recently been told that he has a hole in his heart. Without an operation his life expectancy will be greatly reduced. Hari lives with his mother, grandparents and his older brother in the village of Shankal (Familia location), about 50kms from Kolkata. The family is very poor and the cost of the life-saving surgery Hari needs is way beyond their means. But through the success of his grandmother's Shivia poultry enterprise, Hari now has the chance of getting some of the medicines that will increase his life expectancy. **Shefali Biswas**, started her poultry farming enterprise with Shivia in 2014 and is using the money she is earning from selling eggs and chickens to pay for the medicines Hari needs to control his heart condition. She has also paid for a weaving loom, which her daughter-in-law (Hari's mother) uses to make saris. As you can see, Hari is a happy little boy who enjoys helping his grandmother to look after the hens and collect their eggs.



This photo is of a lady called **Suparna Dhara** and her 12 year-old son. They live in a village called Maihipara (Familia location) with seven other family members, including her first grandchild who is now three years old. Suparna registered with Shivia in 2013 and has bought six subsidised poultry toolkits since then and has received all the training she needed from her Shivia Livelihood Service Provider **Arup Kumar Mondal**. She is really happy with her poultry enterprise, which allows her to support her large and growing family. Recently she spent some of her income to buy this second hand bicycle for her son so he can cycle to school (saving the cost of the bus fare). She has also been able to pay for the extra study books he needs. As is so often the case with our farmers, Suparna is delighted to be earning money to help her child succeed at school.



This is **Monajat Mondal** from the village of Madan Danga at our first location, Familia. He is a farmer on our Agri-management Services programme. We visited him in February, a year after he registered on the AMS programme and this is what he told us about how Shivia is helping him. *"I am farming on leased land. Farming is my only source of income and I have large family to provide for, with two school age children. I registered with Shivia so that I could learn how to reduce my farming expenses and produce better quality outputs (onions, gourd and aubergines to date). I am definitely seeing good results compared to previous years and have learned how to make bio-pesticides. My ambition is to become the proud owner of a small piece of land one day and send my children to a better school if I can so they receive a good education for their future."*



Syed Golam Sobhani (pictured here with one of our poultry farmers) is one of Shivia's Livelihood Service Providers and has been working with us for nine months in our Babnan location. He decided to train to be an LSP for two reasons – to gain a regular income to support his family and also to help very poor families living in his village. Sobhani is a very hard working and versatile LSP. He trains families on our poultry programme and also on our newly established goat farming enterprise. One day a week he works in the local Shivia office recording the data we collect from our impact assessments. These assessments help us to monitor the progress our farmers are making and are an indicator as to whether the programmes are working. Sobhani says he can see the positive impact Shivia is making on the very poor families in his village. He says that Shivia is a true friend to these families.



HOW TO SUPPORT SHIVIA



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There are many ways of doing this - from making a one-off donation for a £15 Poultry Toolkit or setting up a regular monthly donation, to organising a fundraising event, undertaking a sponsored challenge or championing Shivia where you work (Give As You Earn).

To find out more please visit our website page: www.shivia.com/donate

CONTACT US
info@shivia.com

Twitter: [@shivatweets](https://twitter.com/shivatweets) or facebook.com/shivia
c/o EFG Bank, Leconfield House, Curzon Street, London W1J 5 JA