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Women are increasingly turning to crab farming as salinity reshapes traditional livelihoods PHOTO: KINGSHUK PARTHA

A Lived Climate Reality from the Coastal Region of Bangladesh

Professor Dr. Md. Hafizur Rahman

I was around ten years old when I first noticed our neighbour's paddy field turning pale at the edges. Not from drought, not from disease. From salt. Within a season, land that had fed the same family for three generations became too bitter to grow anything. Nobody used the phrase "climate change" in our neighbourhood in Satkhira back then. We just said the sea was coming closer. And it was.

Growing up there, I did not learn about sea-level rise from a textbook. I learned it from watching the waterline creep further inland after each monsoon. From the way women in our community began walking longer distances to find drinking water that did not taste bad. From conversations at the tube well, where older farmers would compare this year's harvest to what their fathers used to grow, quietly, without much comment, just a kind of silence that said everything. Those early experiences did not feel like data points. They felt like something was being taken.

Years later, I began returning to communities like the one I grew up in, this time with research tools, frameworks, and a job title. And I will be honest: the frameworks help, but they are not what stays with me. What stays with me is a farmer, Karim Mia, whom I met in Khulna. He switched to crab farming after his rice land became too saline. Not because an NGO told him to. Because he watched his neighbour try it and survive, and decided that was enough reason. Or the woman, Nasrin Begum, in Barguna, who ran a savings group for twenty-three families so that when a cyclone came, nobody in her network would have to borrow money at impossible rates just to start over. Nobody funded that. She just did it. These people were not waiting for resilience to arrive. They were building it in the gaps, with what they had.

Across Bangladesh, communities have been adapting for generations, often without formal support, rarely with adequate funding, rarely with enough recognition. Floating vegeta-