The SIIL-Polder project mobilized additional funds for its gender studies. The CGIAR Gender Platform awards a grant of 150,000 US dollars to IRRI for the study entitled “Exploring women empowerment pathways in water governance for better livelihoods” or GENERATE.

This study aims to generate evidence on the gender dynamics and women's empowerment or disempowerment outcomes in the water governance of the polders.

In partnership with Sushilan, a local Non-Government Organization, the study will be implemented for the whole year of 2022 in the four polders covered by the SIIL-Polder project.
SIIL scholarship grant to Master of Science Students

The SIIL-Polder Scholarship Award was given to qualified students from Bangladesh to pursue Master of Science (MS) Research in agricultural production systems and water management in the coastal zone of Bangladesh.

The research priority areas for this year are: 1) Agronomy/water management; 2) Socio Economics/economics specifically on adoption of improved technologies; and 3) Gender in Agriculture specifically on water governance.

The two students awarded with scholarships are Ms. Yeasmin Akhter (top photo) and Ms. Shadia Afrin Joty (below photo). Ms. Akhter will study gender dimensions in water governance while Ms. Afrin will study the agricultural value chain in the polder zone. Both students came from the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU). Together with the SIIL team, they will be supervised by Dr. Sadika Haque, a professor of Agricultural Economics in BAU.
A new approach of capacity building- Cluster Farmer Field School

Led by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), the project is working together with water management groups (WMG), water management associations (WMA), and other farmer community members to deploy Cluster Farmer Field School or CFFS approach. CFFS is a tailored Farmer Field School (FFS) approach that involves hands-on training with farmers for the full cropping season. The difference of CFFS with FFS is the clustering of farmers according to their farm’s hydrological boundary, a key to a successful crop production in the polders. The CFFS approach helps to leverage similar efforts of other existing social organizations like WMG and WMA.

These CFFS trainings cover various topics such as: i) sunflower and maize production practices, ii) nutritional awareness among mothers and school teachers, and iii) terminal drainage and control rat attack in high yielding variety (HYV) rice. So far, a total of 1119 participants attended 13 different training sessions in the polders from October 2021 to March 2022. They are mostly farmers (91%) where 37% were women.

The team also conducted training on the use of machinery: i) mini tiller for fertilizer and weed management in maize and sunflower, ii) reaper for harvesting rice, and iii) a refresher course on troubleshooting machinery. Field days and traveling seminars were organized for 1135 individuals, mostly farmers and members of WMGs and WMAs, where 40% were women and 21% were young people.
IRRI Asia Representative Dr. Nafees Meah and IRRI Bangladesh Country Representative Dr. Humath Bhandari visited the SIIL Polder project sites in the coastal zone of Bangladesh on March 30, 2022. They interacted with SIIL ground staff, women and youth entrepreneurs, collaborating farmers, and Additional Secretary (Research) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Dr. Meah expressed his admiration to stakeholders and how elucidating it has been to interact with them on site.

The SIIL-Polder project identifies pathways to scale improved cropping systems to adapt to the polder’s agro-environment, women’s awareness on nutrition, producers’ skills and capacities in different aspects of farming, and youth and women’s livelihood through farm mechanization. The project is on its sixth year and will run until 2023.

Some of the benefits that were reported by the farmers during the visit are gaining higher profits from improved cropping and having a new source of income for women. They spent the money on children's education, nutritious food, household and personal needs.
Featured photo: A farmer harvests maize, an additional source of income and food during the dry-season in the polders.

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