

## APONE Project: Case study

**The story of Shukkuri Begum, Shapmari Village, Sherpur District  
Shukkuri Begum has increased tomato productivity by more than two folds through  
improved cultivation practice.**

Fertilizer is a one of the key inputs for crop production. It is expensive too. The appropriate use of fertilizer can produce an optimal yield whereas its inappropriate use can result in lower productivity and higher cost and can ultimately destroy soil health and fertility. Organic Matter (OM) is the life-blood of the soil. For ideal soil, organic matter content is 5%. Compost fertilizer (also called organic fertilizer) increases the organic matter content of the soil and slow release nature of the product minimizes the risk of the chemical fertilizer losses to waterways.

Alleviating Poverty in North-East Bangladesh is a three-year project. Under this project, co-financed by DFID (75%) and Traidcraft Exchange (TX) (25%), co-implemented by TX and Development wheel, the project is working in six sub-districts under Mymensingh and Sherpur District. The project seeks to ensure sustainable livelihoods for poor and marginal communities, particularly women, in North-East Bangladesh through improvements to small-scale agriculture.

The project is based on the recognition that small and marginal farmers in the project area face a number of problems and challenges in their production system which means that productivity, quality and prices are low, while costs are high. So naturally, APONE, within its integrated approach to increase productivity, efficiency, market access and negotiation capacity of producers, is working in the soil health & fertility management and production practice issues to ensure sustainable agricultural growth through introducing compost fertilizer, soil testing and cost effective quality inputs management among the farmers, which will be sustainable for them.



Mrs. Shukkuri Begum is a farmer living in Shapmari village of Sherpur Sadar. She is a member of the Shapmari farmers group. Like many others, she cultivated different vegetables according to his own knowledge, for example, she used chemical fertilizer by applying own judgment, belief, experience and often through peer-learning.

In the year 2011-12, Shukkuri Begum cultivated tomato, a winter vegetable with duration of four months crop period, in 12 decimal of land and used chemical fertilizer only. Her yield was 0.38 MT, which is equivalent to 3.16 MT/acre. Total production cost and sales revenue were BDT 10365 and BDT 7650, respectively; so, gross loss stood at BDT2715.

After joining with APONE farmers' group, she became aware and motivated about the importance of compost fertilizer, soil testing service, and improved cultivation practices through different group meeting and need assessment FGD. Afterwards, to see the quality and performance of the compost and benefits of soil testing results and improved cultivation practices, she organized a field demonstration on tomato in the same land in November 2012, and she used appropriate doses of chemical and compost fertilizer as per soil testing result and quality seed as per DAE advice. The



land yielded 1.02 MT, which is equivalent to 8.50 MT/acre. This is an excellent result as per DAE production record. Total production cost and sales revenue were BDT 7812 and BDT 19800, respectively.



She organized a field day and showed the performance among the group and neighboring farmers by inviting DAE and SRDI experts. She is very happy and said, "I did not know about the importance and benefits of compost fertilizer and soil testing on soil health. Therefore, I wrongly used chemical fertilizer and pesticide-mostly excessive doses, and cow dung. Now I have enough knowledge on the importance of compost fertilizer and soil testing. I know the overall fertilizer and other inputs management. As a result, this season I got higher production and made profit from the same land where last year I failed to recover my production cost. I am very happy with my profit. I also tested soil for chili cultivation. Hope it will further increase my profit, if so; I will use it for house expansion. My group members and other neighboring farmers also want to use compost fertilizer and soil testing service."