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Save the Children



Tanzila's New Beginning

NOBO JIBON
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Tanzila had a difficult start to life. She was born into an extremely poor household where a girl child was not wanted and where her mother was chronically malnourished and abused. Tanzila had difficulty breastfeeding and quickly became sick and weak. At less than one month old, her life was in danger. Meanwhile, in a neighboring village, Salma Begum and her husband had been struggling for years to conceive a child of their own, but to no avail. Just when they were beginning to despair that they may never have a child, relatives living nearby told them about a woman who wanted to give up her baby – this baby was Tanzila.

Salma and her husband adopted Tanzila when she was just over one month old.¹ While they were thrilled to finally have a child, she was severely malnourished and gained weight very slowly. She ate very little and was frequently ill, and Salma worried she may not survive. Fortunately, a member the local Village Health Committee learned of her desperate situation and enrolled Salma and Tanzila as beneficiaries in Save the Children's Nobo Jibon program. Nobo Jibon ("new life" in Bengali) combats childhood malnutrition and food insecurity in rural Bangladesh, offering services that include child weight monitoring and nutritional counseling for pregnant women and mothers of children under two.

Tanzila was 4 months old and weighed only 3.3kg, or 7.3lb, when she was enrolled in the Nobo Jibon program in February of 2011. Farida, the Nobo Jibon staff member who registered Tanzila, identified her as severely malnourished and quickly referred her to a doctor. The doctor gave her vaccinations, prescribed infant formula, and recommended that she and Salma attend Nobo Jibon's Community Based Growth Promotion (CBGP) sessions.

Salma followed up with Farida every month to monitor Tanzila's progress. Per the doctor's instructions, she fed Tanzila infant formula, adding fruit and kichuri, a local child-friendly food containing rice, beans and vegetables, to Tanzila's diet as she improved. She also attended Community Based Growth Promotion sessions where she met other mothers and learned about proper nutrition and healthcare for her family.

With Farida's counseling and Salma's watchful care, Tanzila started to gain weight and become ill less frequently. As of April 2012, at 18 months old, she has almost reached a normal weight for her age. Salma is grateful for her daughter and for Nobo Jibon's support. "My husband and I don't think of Tanzila as someone else's child," she says proudly. "She is our future." Tanzila's future too is now bright, thanks to her adoptive parents and the Nobo Jibon program, which have given her a chance at a new beginning.

Over the course of five years, Nobo Jibon will work with nearly 187,000 mothers who are either pregnant or have children under the age of two. Through activities like nutritional counseling, child weigh-ins, the promotion of antenatal care, and improved hygienic practices, Save the Children and USAID expect to reduce childhood malnutrition rates in southern Bangladesh.

¹ Legal adoption is not common in Bangladesh, but when birth parents are unable to care for their child guardianship is sometimes granted to another caretaker. Salma and her husband have obtained legal guardianship of Tanzila.