



2018 AWARD Fellow
Lutfun Nahar

Position	Scientific Officer
Institution	Bangladesh Rice Research Institute
Country	Bangladesh
MSc	Agronomy, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, 2013
Mentor	Dr. Sekender Ali, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Research area	Increasing grain yields by introducing different management practices and helping farmers improve their crop production.

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Lutfun Nahar, raised close to the capital of Bangladesh, is married to an agriculturalist with whom she has a two-year-old daughter.

"I grew up in a hard-working family. My mother didn't have much schooling, but her dream was to make sure all of her children got a good education—she didn't wear nice clothing, but put all of her money toward our education," she recalls. During her undergraduate degree, she tutored two students to help financially.

As a young female researcher, it is Nahar's dream to devote a part of her life to the development of rice research in her country by introducing new technologies that will be eco-friendly as well as cost saving for farmers. In her role as a scientific officer at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRRI), she is working directly with smallholder farmers. "Their management practices are not good," she remarks. "They preserve seed, but they don't do it well. The germination and vigor of the seeds are low. The farmers work hard, but they are not achieving maximum yields from their farming." She is committed to helping these farmers.

Nahar is currently investigating the effect of cold temperatures and drought on rice production. "Bangladesh experiences low temperatures from November to January," she explains. "Sometimes, from late December to mid-January there is cold spell when temperature decrease to below 10°C, and this is exacerbated by the effects of climate change." The low temperatures stifle the germination of rice seeds and those that do germinate are often affected by seedling blight.

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Nahar is one of a growing number of women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD works toward inclusive, agriculture-driven prosperity for the production and dissemination of more gender-responsive agricultural research and innovation. We invest in scientists, research institutions, and agribusinesses to deliver sustainable, gender-responsive agricultural research and innovation.

The AWARD Fellowship is a career-development program that invests in top women agricultural scientists to ensure that confident, capable, and influential women are available to lead critical advances and innovations in the agricultural sector.

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“Rice is a staple food for 165 million Bangladeshi,” she notes. In addition to dealing with drought, some parts of the country are seriously affected by weeds, forcing farmers to spend a lot of money on weeding. “Some farmers use herbicides, but many use manual weeding, which is very labor intensive.” She recently held a workshop to encourage farmers to use small machinery, such as a smaller weeder that has recently been developed.

Nahar is encouraged to see growing participation of women farmers in training workshops. “I recently had an opportunity to conduct training with male and female farmers on modern rice production technologies,” she says. “I noticed that the female participants seemed especially interested to learn about new technologies.”

Nahar’s goal is to be a renowned researcher and contribute to agriculture-driven prosperity in her country. “I want to develop technologies that farmers can easily adopt to increase their crop production,” she asserts. One of her focuses is teaching women how to preserve seeds. “If they preserve seed properly, their cost of production can be minimized because they won’t need to buy seed from the market.”

Nahar is proud to be an AWARD Fellow. “This is a very good opportunity for me,” she enthuses. “I look forward to networking with my colleagues. I also want begin working on a research proposal, which will be great not only for me, but also for Asia-Pacific and Africa—especially if I am able to publish the paper in an international journal.”

She believes that the chance to work with AWARD Fellows from other countries will directly help her with innovative and informative program planning. “The knowledge, skills, and experiences that I will gain from the AWARD Fellowship, will contribute not only to my future career but also to the development of my country.”

Nahar says she has already influenced her BRRRI peers—only five of whom are women out of a staff of 17. “I hope to be a role model, and I hope others will follow me,” she concludes.