

# SALMA, BANGLADESH



**Salma was just 18 years old, pregnant and fearful for her life and that of her unborn child, when she featured in Project Compassion 2013. In Bangladesh, maternal and infant mortality rates are still tragically high. According to a recent World Bank report, nearly 30 in 1,000 newborn babies die, while still more are born suffering malnutrition and low birth weight.**

Salma sought the help of a midwife trained by Caritas' Safe Motherhood Program – and more than six years on, Salma is thriving and the mother of two healthy children.

Salma lives with her husband, Masud, in the rural community of Gazipur, two hours from Bangladesh's bustling capital, Dhaka. During her first pregnancy, Salma was very sick. She experienced abdominal pain, couldn't eat and was frightened by the pain she was experiencing. Her distress increased as some villagers suggested that something might not be right with the baby.

The nearest medical clinic was too far away for Salma to attend, so she sought care from the village's elderly traditional birth attendant. However, Salma didn't feel comforted or confident that her baby would be born healthy.

Thankfully, Salma heard about a rural midwife named Pronoti. Word had reached Salma that mothers and babies in Pronoti's care suffered fewer complications during birth and in the critical months afterwards. Pronoti's patients were also less likely to suffer illness or injury. This brought great hope to Salma and her family.

Salma sought out Pronoti, who safely monitored her pregnancy and helped deliver Salma's beautiful daughter.

Pronoti was able to help, thanks to the midwifery training she received through the Safe Motherhood Program supported by Caritas Australia. This comprehensive training means midwives like Pronoti can provide full antenatal and postnatal care, deliver babies, and refer mothers to hospital if needed.

Through the program, more and more women in rural Bangladesh are receiving the care they need and fulfilling their hope of having a family. To date the program has reduced maternal and infant mortality in the area by almost 70 percent. Over 400 women have been trained in midwifery since 2008 – and these new midwives have had an incredible impact, giving over 28,000 women antenatal checkups and delivering more than 15,000 babies.

Not only has the program benefitted new mothers, it

has empowered midwives, like Pronoti, by giving them the opportunity to learn valuable skills. Pronoti is now a respected community member who is able to contribute to her family's income.

"There has been positive change in the community, many women say they are less fearful. Now, the women are much better prepared for pregnancy and delivery," says Caritas program manager, Provaty Rozario.

Of course, when Salma fell pregnant a second time, she called Pronoti immediately. Pronoti was once again delighted to accompany Salma through her pregnancy and this time deliver a healthy baby boy.

"I think often how if the Safe Motherhood Program had not trained midwives like Pronoti many of us would have to go to the private clinics 11 kilometres away," Salma says. "Some of us women and our babies might die because of that."

Salma's husband, Masud, says that without the midwife's help, they would not have known what to do. He's proud of his young family.

"Being poor I see it is going to be very hard to educate our children well, so I need to earn more money. We dream of leasing some land in the future so we can cultivate rice," Masud says. "With hope we can believe that our children will not have to suffer in the same way as we do because of our poverty."

Now 24, Salma smiles as she lovingly watches her one-year-old boy and her six-year-old daughter who is in Year 2 at school. She is pleased that not only were they born healthy, but they're growing up strong, and can focus on their hopes and dreams for the future. Salma's face lights up as she describes her daughter's ambition to be a doctor in future.

Salma would like to say a big thank you to Caritas and the people of Australia for all their help. With your support, Caritas is helping women in Bangladesh to safely give birth to their babies.

*"We are poor and so it is easy to get discouraged about the future. However, if we have hope, we have the courage to try and do things that seem difficult or impossible at the time."*

*- Salma*



## FIND SALMA'S SHORT FILM AND INTERACTIVE STUDENT WORKBOOK:

<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1114685007835693057>



### REFLECT

"The human heart is always drawn by love."

St Catherine of Siena

- What is your initial reaction to this quote? What thoughts and images come into your mind when you hear this?
- How does Salma's story show that the human heart is always drawn by love?

### CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Preferential Option for the Poor

We believe in prioritising the women, men and children most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice.

- How is this story an example of this Catholic Social Teaching principle?

### LEARNING TASKS



#### TASK 1: STORY STUDY

English Y7- ACELY1723, Y8- ACELY1734, Y9- ACELY1744, Y10- ACELY1754

- ▶ Watch (or read) Salma's story and discuss.

1. What are some challenges for Salma?
2. Why was Salma scared and afraid when she was pregnant with her first child?
3. Why do you think pregnancy is so dangerous in Bangladesh?
4. Why is it important for women like Salma to have access to midwives like Pronoti?
5. How has Pronoti's life

changed through her participation in her training?

6. How did Caritas Australia help?
7. What can you do to raise awareness about this issue?



#### TASK 2: HUMAN WELLBEING

Geography  
Y10- ACHGK081/  
Religious Education

Investigate differences in human wellbeing between places.

1. What are the different concepts and measures of human wellbeing, and the causes of global differences in these measures between the countries?
2. What are the spatial differences in wellbeing within and between countries?
3. Evaluate the differences from a variety of perspectives.
4. How are Caritas Australia supported programs designed to reduce the gap between differences in wellbeing?

Suggested websites:

- o <https://data.worldbank.org/>
- o <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>
- o [caritas.org.au/projectcompassion](http://caritas.org.au/projectcompassion)



#### TASK 3: CIVIC LIFE

Civics and Citizenship Y9- ACHCK079/  
Religious Education  
Research the work of Caritas Australia.

1. How does Caritas Australia contribute to the Australian community? Explore the concept of 'the common good'.
2. How is Salma's story an example of how Caritas Australia, as the aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia, demonstrates interfaith understanding and social justice?
3. Why does Caritas Australia advocate for an end to poverty and inequality around the world?
4. How can you contribute to the work of Caritas Australia?



#### TASK 4: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 goals to achieve 3 extraordinary things in the next 15 years:

- End extreme poverty.
- Fight inequality and injustice.
- Fix climate change.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attempt to address the root causes of poverty and inequality within and between countries, climate change and environmental degradation, the lack of peace and justice, alongside other important issues.

1. How do the goals relate to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles?
2. Which goals do you think apply to Salma's story?
3. How has the Caritas supported program contributed to achieving these goals?

4. How are we tracking to achieving these goals? <https://sdg-tracker.org/>
5. What can you do to achieve these goals?
6. What link do you see between SDGs and CST?
7. What can we do to bridge the gap between the reality and the ideal?
8. How can you make a commitment to take action?



#### TASK 5: CLASS DEBATE

English Y7 ACELY1804, Y8 ACELY1807 ACELY1808, Y9 ACELY1811, Y10 ACELY1812, ACELY1813, Civics and Citizenship Y9 ACHCS089, ACHCS085, Y10 ACHCS099

Topic: Lives change when we all give 100%.

OR

Hope is the courage to try something



#### TASK 6: GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Salma's story was first shared in Project Compassion 2013. At the time she was pregnant with her first child, sick and terribly frightened. In distress, she sought the help of a midwife trained by Caritas' Safe Motherhood Program. Six years on, she's now a healthy mother of two strong, happy children. Salma is committed to giving her children the education they need to provide them with the future she hoped for. Spend 10 minutes reflecting upon what you have learned and on all the blessings in your life.

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## 100% LOVE



Salma, Bangladesh

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This week I am grateful for...



How can I work with others to show God's love to others?

I asked for help this week...

1.

2.

3.

