

ACTIVE CITIZENS

In Bangladesh

ANNUAL
REVIEW
2014

Globally
Connected
Locally
Engaged

ACTIVE
CITIZENS
In Bangladesh

GLOBALLY
CONNECTED
LOCALLY
ENGAGED

FOREWORD



Director, British Council Bangladesh

I am delighted to present to you the Active Citizens Annual Review for the year 2013-14 at a time when, according to the UNFPA State of Population 2014 report entitled “The Power of 1.8 billion” reveals that there is currently the highest number of young people ever in the world.

Over the last year the British Council has enabled young people across 40 countries worldwide to overcome barriers in their communities and gain access to and influence decision makers to raise the standards of humanitarian care, education, social welfare, health, prosperity and stability in their communities. In our Annual Review you will read a selection of impressive stories about the work of our young Active Citizens in their communities across Bangladesh.

These stories are testimony to the commitment and capability of our young people to really make a difference. I am very proud that we have achieved so much in Bangladesh, where more than 16500 young people have had the opportunity to take part in this project. These young people have had – and still have – the opportunity to communicate their ideas and experiences across cultural and geographical boundaries and form a platform to interact with decision makers at the local, divisional and international levels.

Over the last five years, 1071 Social Action Projects (SAPs) have been initiated in Bangladesh, voluntarily carried out by newly trained young people in 54 districts reaching out to 500,000 beneficiaries in more than 500 communities. This network of committed, sincere, hardworking young people that are locally engaged and globally connected promote the values of global citizenship amongst their peers. These young leaders have been trained and motivated by a network of national facilitators who in turn have been trained on a globally standardised leadership module developed by the British Council and guided by local mentors.

Bangladesh needs to develop skills of its 48 million young people to fully harness the demographic dividend. The ‘Active Citizens’ project has helped Bangladesh to reveal its next generation of leaders who have proved themselves by making a huge difference at grass roots level and who now have the experience and confidence to grow and go further. I believe that their exemplary role within their communities will encourage others to come forward and join hands to address many of Bangladesh’s local development issues.

This annual review presents a wide range of inspiring stories and experiences from these Social Action Projects.

I take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge our eight partner organisations’ dedicated work at field level, without which the fantastic results would not have been realised. The nine partner organisations are:

- Centre for Communication and Development
- Democracywatch
- JAAGO Foundation
- Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)
- Mass Line Media Communication
- Shushilan
- The Hunger Project Bangladesh
- Uttaran
- Wave Foundation

We are determined to continue increasing our support to thousands of young people in the communities in the years ahead.

Brendan McSharry OBE
Director, British Council Bangladesh

ACTIVE CITIZENS

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ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Our purpose is to create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and to build trust between them worldwide. We work in four key thematic areas: the Arts, English, Education and Society.

We seek new ways of connecting with and understanding each other through the Arts. We strive for more widespread and better quality teaching, learning and assessment of English worldwide. Our goal is to enhance UK leadership and shared learning from interactive Education. We want to build Societies whose young people, citizens and institutions contribute to and benefit from a more inclusive, open and prosperous world.

We have over 7,000 staff working in over 190 offices in 110 countries and territories across the world.

The British Council was established in 1934, and our founding Royal Charter outlined our mission as 'promoting abroad a wider appreciation of British Culture and civilisation by encouraging cultural, education and other interchanges between the United Kingdom and elsewhere:



781 MILLION

GLOBAL ANNUAL TURNOVER

92%

"SAID THAT WORKING WITH U HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES"

1 ->3.56

FOR EVERY 1 OF UK GOVERNMENT GRANT WE RECEIVE, WE GENERATE 3.56 OF INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES



THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN BANGLADESH

We have been working in Dhaka since 1951. Since then we have extended our presence to Chittagong and Sylhet. In all three locations we now offer a wide range of services, activities and programmes.

We work with three main groups of people:

Society and community leaders who can bring about changes in social, education and cultural policy and help us make wider connections.

Influencers including career professionals, the media, educators, artists, scientists and business leaders, who we partner with in order to help maximise the impact of their work and ours.

Your people either the education or just starting out on their careers, who are opinion formers through their own social networks and are potentially the next generation of national leaders and influencers.

Our main office in Dhaka is situated within the grounds of Dhaka University. It is here where our recently refurbished Library is located and from where we project our operations across the country, and design and plan the implementation of our programmes. We teach English at three centres in Dhaka (Dhanmondi, Fuller Road, Uttara), Sylhet and Chittagong. We administer exams nationwide. We work in partnership with a large number of foundations, trust and public, private, non-profit and non-governmental organisations to deliver a portfolio of projects that are vibrant and full of impact. We are strongly committed to equal opportunity and diversity in all aspects of our work.

900,000

PEOPLE ENGAGED
THROUGH OUR DIGITAL PLATFORMS



55,000

EXAM CANDIDATES



135,000

ATTENDED
OUR EXHIBITIONS, FESTIVAL, EVENTS
AND PERFORMANCES



ACTIVE CITIZENS – AN OVERVIEW

How Active Citizens works

Active Citizens can be adapted to suit the needs of communities across the world, from South London to South Sudan. Below are the eight stages we follow to ensure the programme keeps its core values but remains relevant, no matter where it is delivered.



National strategy

National priorities are identified and country-specific themes are set, working with government, civil society and third-sector organisations. This includes geographical, target audience and social-development themes.

National call of interest for partners

Local organisations are recruited to deliver the Active Citizens methodology in the communities in which they work.



Cascade training to community

Facilitators deliver the Active Citizens 'Learning Journey' to participants during a series of face-to-face workshops. At this stage the content is adapted further.

Facilitator training

National or international staff from local community organisations are trained to deliver Active Citizens methodology.

Social action initiatives in community

The Active Citizens use their new skills to develop and run sustainable social action projects that address issues which they have identified in their community.

Connecting communities



Partner induction meetings

National or international: partners attend induction workshops to familiarise themselves with the programme content and outcomes, and network with others working in the same field.

Local development of training content

The content for the programme is developed to reflect the themes and priorities identified in the national strategy.



International Study Visits, international partner networking, online resources, research, conferences: Active Citizens connect through social media and at international workshops. They share experiences, build skills and generate ideas for social action. Local research and programme data set the agenda for future Active Citizens themes and priorities.





ACTIVE CITIZENS – IN NUMBERS



From April 2009 to March 2014

16,500

ACTIVE CITIZENS
TRAINED

10

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

226

FACILITATORS TRAINED

1,071

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

2,03,0000

PUBLICATIONS AND BROADCASTING





From April 2013 to March 2014

Impact data for 2013-14

10,990

FACE-TO-FACE

2,500

DIGITAL

1,49,500

THROUGH CASCADE
TRAINING

9

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

35

FACILITATORS TRAINED

4,500

PARTICIPANTS TRAINED



Our Partners

CCD



Centre for Communication and Development (CCD) Bangladesh, a non-government, non-profit and non-partisan knowledge centre has been working at the grassroots level of the country and advocating for freedom of press, right to information, enhancing professional skills of the journalists and development activists, building capacity and leadership of the youth, empowering women and indigenous people as well as promoting folk culture since 1999.

CCD is committed to utilise the strength and potential of information and communication media for people's well being and encourage peaceful and egalitarian society as well as raise marginalised people's voice for their socio-economic development. Youth has been identified as one of the key priorities and CCD is committed to build young people as Active Citizens so that they can utilise their energy and enthusiasm for overall socio-economic development as well as ensure their participation and raise voice on issues at local and national levels.

Website: <http://www.ccbd.org>

motivation, inspiration and participation. The organisation also organises visits to parliament sessions for young students and professionals. It also imparts Gender and Governance training especially for women through its Gender Resource Center (GRC).

Democracywatch



Democracywatch (DW) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organisation which works towards establishing a true democratic culture in Bangladesh. It was established as a trust in 1995 and over the years it has built strong linkage and network with international and national network of civil society organisations; including NGOs, Media, Trade Unions, etc. Its mandates enhance democratic good governance, human rights advancements and human resource development for empowering local government institutions, media, women and the youth and also sensitising its stakeholders about gender and promoting rule of law.

DW has been providing vital and very high quality 'Life skills Training Programme' to the youth and since 1995 reached about 25,000 young people who were provided with employable skills and opportunity to be employed (wage and self) in government organisations, UN bodies, private companies, national and international NGOs. The primary objective of this initiative is to provide life skills training and build confidence of the new generation to keep pace with the ever-changing competitive world and to prepare them as the future leaders of influence through training,

Website: www.dwatch-bd.org



Jaago Foundation



JAAGO Foundation is a Bangladesh based non-profit organization catering to the education needs of children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, the integration of numerous 'Support Functions' to the organization's core schooling program ensures the sustainable growth of the financially insolvent communities the beneficiary groups come from.

JAAGO Foundation's vision is to build an illiteracy free Bangladesh with access to quality education for all. JAAGO Foundation believes in working towards a better society – one in which every child can and has access quality education. Through access, each student served can capitalize on his or her dreams and take life to be the opportunity it is.

Website: jaago.com.bd

Mass-line Media Centre



Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), a non-profit organization engaged in the development sector since 1995, works for promotion of human rights and democratic values through professionalism in media particularly journalism. Its overall objective is to remain an advocate for freedom of opinion, expression and free flow of information in the media. Access of the rural poor to relevant and affordable information is expected to be the ultimate result of MMC's work. At present, MMC is implementing projects with the objective that the respect for human rights of women and men, democratic participation of all citizens in the political process and good governance are promoted through a pluralistic, independent and professional media sector.

Website: www.mass-line.org

Shushilan



Shushilan, a Bengali name signifying endeavours for a better future, is a national NGO established in 1991. The organisation came into being in the face of degradation of socio-ecological resources in the coastal region with specific mission to redress the declining natural resource base, livelihoods and food security of the people. To uphold human rights and gender equity for the socially disadvantaged community with the focus on women is another major concern of Shushilan's development initiatives. Other areas of operation include economic development, environmental management, good governance, human rights and capacity building activities. The organisation's experience in participatory development, planning and implementation of projects with social mobilisation and community empowerment has been very significant over the last 20 years. Shushilan has been closely working with community based organisations and implementing different projects funded by government and national and international donors. Till date Shushilan successfully implemented 125 different projects with additional 44 on-going projects.

Website: www.shushilan.org

Uttaran



Uttaran (Transition), is a people centred NGO using a rights based approach to empower poor communities and reduce poverty. They work across the coastal region of southwest Bangladesh and are gradually expanding their activities to other parts of the country.

Their work is focused on human rights, land rights and agrarian reform, sustainable water management, community based river basin management, adaptation to climate change, sustainable agriculture and food security. Their campaign to support the poor and vulnerable in their struggle for human rights and social justice began in 1985. Uttaran is committed to making sure local communities participate in all aspects of development, to empower people to overcome the challenges they face. Their programmes help women, the landless, outcastes, untouchables and ethno-religious minorities. These groups are the victims of socio-economic dislocation, a hierarchical caste system and a male dominated society

Over the years Uttaran's activities and working area have grown in response to the needs of their target groups. Uttaran currently work with partners in Satkhira, Khulna, Jessore and Bagerhat Districts of southwest Bangladesh.

Website: www.uttaran.net

The Hunger Project

THE
HUNGER
PROJECT

The Hunger Project is a global, non-profit, strategic organisation committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, The Hunger Project seeks to end hunger and poverty by empowering people to lead lives of self-reliance, meet their own basic needs and build better futures for their children. The Hunger Project carries out its mission through three essential activities: mobilising village clusters at the grassroots level to build self-reliance, empowering women as key change agents, and creating effective partnerships with local government.

In Bangladesh, The Hunger Project's programmes are, in large part, carried out by the more than 260,000 volunteer animators (or village leaders) and youth leaders whom we have trained to tackle issues of hunger and poverty. The Hunger Project has been active in Bangladesh since 1990 and is currently the largest volunteer-based organisation covering all 64 districts.

Website: www.thp.org/bangladesh

**VSO
Bangladesh**



VSO Bangladesh works to enhance the ability of marginalised women and men in some of Bangladesh's poorest districts to participate in, contribute to and benefit from our country's economic and social development. We work with our partners to identify the skills that would most effect strategic change, and our international recruitment bases then match highly-skilled technical experts to each placement's specific needs. Since 1974, more than 1,500 international VSO volunteers have given their time and expertise to our work in Bangladesh. Our programmes are supported by volunteers from Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands, Philippines, Uganda and the UK. We also have a rapidly growing team of more than 2,000 national volunteers, who have been central to developing this strategy and who will lead its implementation.

Website: www.vsointernational.org



**WAVE
Foundation**



WAVE Foundation is established in 1990 in Darsana town under Chuadanga district, situated in the south-western part of Bangladesh. In the aim of alleviating poverty, it focused on integrated development of the organized participants including their human, skill and economic development. The organization thereafter involved in governance programme to strengthen local government institutions and to increase access of the poor in public services through implementing local governance strengthening activities. Centring the programme the organization has been contributing significantly in promoting democratic decentralization and local self-government. Alongside, through its microfinance programme and related activities WAVE Foundation has been playing an important role for the economic development of the poor and in the field of agriculture. According to the organization's policy, special emphasis is given on women's participation and in building poor people's capacity towards disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. Networking at various levels and policy advocacy are the important areas of WAVE's programme implementation approach. Accordingly, campaign, lobbying and policy advocacy activities have been undertaking jointly with the social organization formed at local level and with the national level platforms. With deepening its experience and considering the development context, organization has adopted necessary changes in its programmes and working approaches. WAVE's main thrust is securing rights of the poor and marginalized, good governance and sustainable livelihood development through promoting people's participation at all levels of the state and society, accountability, capacity development and access to resources. WAVE, at present, implements 4 programmes in achieving its goal.

Website: www.wavefoundationbd.org

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Opening Minds in the Open Air

Theme: **Education**

City, Province: **Munshipara, Rangpur**

Project Duration: **2009-Present**

Project Conductor: **Meher Nazmun Tisha**

While Bangladesh is fully committed to the Education for All (EFA) objectives, ensuring every child enrolled in school is a big challenge. There are many reasons why children are not in school, such as poverty, distance and discrimination, and equally many reasons that result in children dropping out of school. At the time of school, a lot of children play around the slums they lived in instead of going to school which is depressing.

Meher Nazmun Tisha, a youth activist of The Hunger project, started her involvement with Active Citizens in 2009. During the Active Citizens Leadership training, she was able to apply her learning to educational issues in her area. With the support of the community, she decided to start teaching slum children who were not enrolled in primary school out in the open. This meant there would be no rent related costs and thus she called it “School under the Sky.”

The children responded well initially and attended regularly, but after a while, attendance dropped. As Tisha didn't want to give up so she spoke with the children's parents about how important an education is for their children. After this, attendance improved and the school ran regularly except for rainy days, when due to the forces of nature, she had to cancel classes.

After some time, she arranged an arts programme for her students and invited the principal of her college to observe. He was so impressed with what Tisha was doing that he offered her a permanent room to use for classes. He proved to be an invaluable supporter and advised her on how to address her students' re-enrolment with the local government primary school.

The students of Tisha's "School under the Sky" are now pursuing their studies in the formal education, where many of them didn't think they would do. She has also gone on to do things she didn't expect. Tisha said, "I recently visited Scotland as part of a bilateral exchange with the British Council's Active Citizens' programme. My story was also featured in the British Council's Next Generation Report for Bangladesh."

Tisha has gained various Useful skills through this Active Citizens programme like Leadership, Confidence, Public speaking, Teaching, Team work etc.

Tisha had the opportunity to share School under the Sky's story with Her Royal Highness Anne, the Princess Royal. Tisha quoted.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger project**



Going Green, Going Global

Theme: **Environmental Protection**

City, Province: **Dhaka**

Project Duration: **2012**

Project Conductor: **Mahmuda Samanjar Chowdhury**

A riverine country, Bangladesh is vulnerable to natural disasters like flooding, droughts and cyclones. In 2007, Cyclone Sidr took more than 3,400 lives but little attention is given to how the country's mangrove forest actually broke some of the cyclone's devastating impact. The low-lying region may be at risk but looking after our environment could be crucial to ensuring our future security.

Keeping sustainability in mind, Samanjar, an Active Citizen planned a project called Go Green. She along with other Active Citizens worked with 40 primary school children on environmental awareness. How do trees help our ecosystem, why are they important, what happens when there aren't trees? They engaged the children through pictures, role playing, lectures and demonstrations.



They taught the children how they could use small places like window sills, balconies, desks or even a corner of a room to grow plants using waste materials like bottles, tires and even shoes. As a group project, they planted two saplings in the school grounds and motivated the students to go green.

Visitors from the British High Commission and British Council inspired their group and students to do more. In 2013, she was invited to participate in UNV Bangladesh's Final Youth Consultation in Dhaka on the vision for post-2015. There were 35 youth representatives from different NGOs and they worked in groups to brain storm our ideas and opinions on certain topics. Her particular group presented on the issues facing and solutions for Bangladesh's education system to officials from international and national NGOs, Unicef, UNFPA and UNDP.

In January 2014, as a youth representative she also attended a conference on the priorities of least developed countries (LDCs) in the post-2015 development framework in the UK. Not only was she the youngest participant but she was the only global youth representative from LDCs. Meeting leaders and decision makers from the UN and across the world was a dream experience she couldn't have imagined for herself. She is particularly proud that she was able to raise her voice on the issue of the Rampal power plant threatening the world's largest mangrove forest on an international discussion platform. She believes that the youth – despite the many critical problems they are facing – can fight and bring about positive change if they work together. As former US President Herbert Hoover once said, "Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die."

Partner organisation: **Democracywatch**

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A Truly Active Citizen

Theme: **Education**

City, Province: **Mymensingh**

Project Duration: **2013**

Project Conductor: **Moushumi**

Adult literacy in Bangladesh has almost tripled since the country's birth in 1971. However, with the current estimate at 57 percent, the number of those who are unable to read or write is in the millions.

Moushumi began her Active Citizens journey in late 2009 with a facilitators' training. Since then she has been working as a facilitator to train other Active Citizens youth leaders alongside running social action projects. As a student of the Government Ananda Mohan College, she kept her teachers and friends informed about being an Active Citizen and to make their work more effective, she arranged youth leadership training on several occasions in Mymensingh. She also helped an Active Citizens group in a nearby district.

Her first step as an Active Citizen was establishing a literacy centre for illiterate adults. Within two months, she was able to teach 15 women how to read and write in Bangla – a skill they thought they would never get the chance to gain.

She was part of a bilateral exchange visit to Scotland and she feels that this opened new doors for her. The experience helped her realise her responsibility and duty to her society. She has also spoken on FM Radio Amar about the Active Citizens programme and why it's important, and now can boast a strong network with the media and other organisations.

She has gained various useful skills through this Active Citizens programme like public speaking, confidence, media relations, teaching etc.

She believes that the opportunity to talk about being an Active Citizen on the radio was a complete dream come true for a small town girl like her. She thinks that the young generation have to be aware of their role in society and realise there is a lot to do for their community.

Partner organisation: **[The Hunger Project](#)**



ACTIVE CITIZENS



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Challenging Child Marriage

Theme: **Community Mobilisation**

City, Province: **Natore, Rajshahi**

Project Duration: **2009-Present**

Project Conductor: **Md. Mahmudul Hasan Tuhin**

Tuhin is from a village where there are lots of social issues and a lack of understanding on how to tackle them. Child marriage, primary school drop outs and dowry are just a few examples of the problems they face. When something such as child marriage has gone on for as long as anyone can remember, it is hard to convince parents, community members and even the local authority that the practice of early marriage must be stopped.

From a young age, Tuhin was interested in social activities but it wasn't until he took Active Citizens training that he realised who he was and how he could help his community. In 2009, he got involved in a social awareness campaign against child marriage. To make their campaign more successful, he reached out to influential people in the community, partnered with other NGOs and organised a rally, workshops, street plays, distributed posters and conducted surveys.

It was difficult to persuade people – and even local administrators – of the legal and social complications of a child marriage, but with constant follow up, he along with his project members managed to overcome this. They managed to stop seven families from arranging a child marriage and made a documentary about the project. By sharing these families' stories, they have reached a further 12,000 people with their message more effectively than had they lectured them.

After implementing their project, villagers have been more aware of the laws against child marriage and they understand that it's not right to marry off their daughters before the age of 18. There is also more value placed in their girls getting an education. Following further training, he has been involved in eight more community projects and the reputation of Active Citizens in his area is positive. Young people are working towards reducing the number of primary school drop outs, building sanitary latrines, planting trees, raising awareness against dowry and building libraries.

Personally, the Active Citizens programme has had a huge impact on Tuhin's life. He grew up with a small town attitude, so it is hard to believe he has come so far. Not only was he once unknown in his community, but also shy about speaking out. Now he has developed friendships across the world and he currently work for an international organisation for improving the education and sanitation of slum children. If it weren't for Active Citizens, he probably wouldn't be there. He learned everything from the programme.

He has gained various Useful skills through this Active Citizens programme like Conducting training, Drafting project proposals, Writing reports, International communications etc.

Her Royal Highness Anne, the Princess Royal, visited our project and was very happy with it. Also, our documentary was shown at the SAP showcase in Pakistan and during the facilitator development training in Mumbai, and it was selected as the best project from the Rajshahi division.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger project**

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A Change in Perspective

Theme: **Education**

Project Duration: **2010- Present**

Project Conductor: **Sazzad Hossain Riju**

Riju grew up in a middle class family with little idea about his responsibilities towards society as a citizen. He was always busy with his own studies like many other students and used to think that civic activities were a distraction from one's education. However, once he joined Active Citizens his whole perspective changed and he believe to make any change in the world, one has to first accept individual responsibility in seeing it through.

During the Active Citizens Facilitator Training in early 2010, Riju realised how important yet neglected the practice of debating is in student life. Finding time to engage in any activity outside of school work is hard but an extracurricular activity such as debating can inform students of social and cultural issues and encourage them to become more analytical. There are also transferable skills such as presentation skills and public speaking.

As a facilitator, he advocated for introducing debating in schools and colleges by illustrating how important a tool it can be in a student's development. He faced some obstacles but has found that students who have got involved in the project have visibly benefited.

He has also tried to spread the word through his writing, blogging and use of social media. So far he has conducted 16 youth leadership training sessions.

Students who once participated in his training sessions are now advocates in their own right. As the next generation of Active Citizens, they have actively participated in our projects and encouraged others to get involved as well.

Their project was featured in local media and he had the opportunity to share his experiences at different events, including at the regional symposium in Pakistan in 2011. On a personal note, the skills he developed while working as a volunteer for Active Citizens have helped him in my professional career. He currently is working as an executive in Pubali Bank Limited (Foreign Exchange Branch) and he thank the Active Citizens programme for what he has achieved so far.

Partner organisation: [The Hunger project](#)



Speaking to the People: A Radio Show for Change

Theme: **Community Mobilisation**

Place: **Rajshahi, Rajshahi district**

Project Duration: **8 months**

Young people now make up the majority of the world's population, and yet in their communities their voices are often left unheard. In Bangladesh, a third of the population is under the age of 18. That is over 50 million young people who will soon shape the society of tomorrow. Unfortunately, we see that there are serious issues affecting their lives – such as eve-teasing, drug addiction, early marriage, suicide and the negative effects of student politics – which aren't discussed enough at home or in the public sphere.

Keeping these problems in mind, we, a group of youth activists from Rajshahi felt that if we do not take matters into our own hands and try to change the world, the world will not change for us. We strongly felt that we should try to start a project that would give us and other young people a chance to get our voices heard in our local communities.

We held meetings, discussed our different ideas and decided that the best way to achieve this was through a live community radio show where we could raise awareness on the many social issues that affect young people, from malnutrition, dropping out of school, early marriage and eve-teasing, to drug addiction, suicide and the dangers of getting involved in student politics.

Afterwards, we agreed on the participation of four of us in a weekly hour long show called 'Youth Voice' to be broadcast every Friday at 6pm. We sought the support of the director of CCD Bangladesh and the chief coordinator of Radio Padma 99.2 FM, who thought our idea was an excellent way to raise awareness.

Our first show was broadcast on 4 October 2013. The topic of the week was eve-teasing and we tried to explain the issue of public sexual harassment of girls and women through examples. Our second show covered suicide and Active Citizen Mahmud spoke passionately about how we should help young people who often feel pushed to kill themselves because of depression, failure and rejection.

Ten shows have been broadcast so far and with every radio show, more Active Citizens are willingly taking part and getting involved. Through Youth Voice, we are creating a group of people who want to bring about change to their community, improve welfare and help others in difficulty.

We received a number of calls after the first show on eve-teasing and an even larger response after the second show. Listeners, both young and old have expressed their appreciation and acknowledged the power and potential of young people working together. People are not only becoming aware of the problems around them but they are finding solutions through this show – this inspires us a lot.

Partner organisation: **CCD Bangladesh**



Access to Safe Drinking Water

Theme: **Environmental conservation**

Place: **Satkhira**

Project Duration: **2013**

About 300 people of Jadabpur village, located at Shyamnagar upzila in Satkhira district, have been directly affected by Cyclones Sidr and Aila in 2007 and 2009. The major problem in this village is the lack of clean and safe drinking water. To get clean water, residents of Jadabpur have to travel to another village nearby, which takes up a lot of time and energy.

In 2011, a few Active Citizens of Shushilan installed a filter for drinking water in this affected village. That filter was active for 4-5 months but after a while the pond was polluted by rubbish. Because of this pollution in the water, the filter became dysfunctional and was not able to be used. In this situation, people suffered from acute drinking water crisis along with water prone diseases.

At that moment Active Citizens visited Jadabpur village and identified the sweet water crisis situation. In order to solve this situation, the Active Citizen Team took an initiative which they named as 'Filter Purification and Pond Conservation for Sweet Water.'

Along with 15 more Active Citizens, they determined their project period in 2013. To make a start in implementing the project, they started collecting money from local leaders, renowned persons, civil society, local chairman and members. After the donation given by the society they cleaned a deceased pond by decontaminating that and border the pond by using net to conserve the pond for drinking water purpose. Later they refined the adjacent filter of the pond and managed drinking water opportunity for the people of Jadabpur village.



At present all the people of Jadabpur village get sweet drinking water after refining the filter and the adjacent pond conservation. After this activity, all the people of Jadabpur village are so much gratitude on the Active Citizen members.

Partner organisation: **Shushilan**



Driving Disease Out

Theme: **Health, Community Awareness**

Place: **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Project Duration: **2013- Present**



Thalassemia is a hereditary blood disorder affecting an estimated 10 million people in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, due to a lack of awareness, most of these people don't realise they are affected by it. Severe thalassemia can cause an early death from heart failure, usually in those between the ages of 20 and 30 and if left untreated, another type of thalassemia can lead to heart failure and liver problems. Regular blood transfusions are important for treating the disorder and helping to control some of the symptoms. However, donating blood in Bangladesh is neither popular nor done enough.

We selected a health-related social action project called 'Awareness Campaign on Thalassemia' and our motto was 'Save blood – Secure a life'. We chose to focus on the blood related issues of Thalassemia, a disorder affecting unaware millions. With only a few organisations in the country working in relation to this disorder, we see our contribution as being different and unique from other social action projects – this is a critical issue that not enough people are doing anything about.

Our first phase involved campaigning for voluntary blood donations. We did this because there isn't enough blood for Thalassemia patients, let alone other patients who need blood transfusions. We developed a relationship with the Thalassemia department at Dhaka Shishu Hospital (children's hospital), observing their work and the conditions facing patients. Targeting universities is very important in raising social awareness, so we ran parallel campaigns in various educational institutions like Dhaka University, Asa University, Peoples University, Bangladesh University and others. We also reached out to like-minded organisations like the Society for Thalassemia Awareness, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and WBB Trust and various blood-related organisations.

We organised a sharing meeting with doctors, organisations and the project's volunteers, where we were praised for our efforts. We know that treating Thalassemia is expensive and the government has not yet taken any specific action to help sufferers. But fortunately, the Thalassemia Centre and Dhaka Shishu Hospital announced they would charge a reduced rate to those who are recommended to them through our campaign.

By running this project, we have gained many relevant life skills such as networking and communication skills, and event management. We continue to spread the word about this serious blood disorder and we are eager to see the government take action in treating Thalassemia patients. To do this, we need every level of society to cooperate, and we are hopeful.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Empowering with Education

Theme: **Education**

Place: **Tala, Satkhira**

Project Duration: **Ongoing**

While Bangladesh does not have the same Hindu caste system as its neighbour India, those who are excluded from the system – Dalits or the ‘untouchables’ – are still discriminated against here. A mixed group of peoples, Dalits are deprived of basic rights and ignored by the greater community. Often landless and illiterate, they perform undesirable jobs in society such as street sweeping and making leather. In the sub-district of Tala in Satkhira district, which is prone to natural disasters such as flooding and cyclones, 15 per cent of the population are from the Dalit community.

We thought about why Dalits are left behind by society, how they can integrate and what will help them build relationships with their communities and progress socio-economically. Lack of education perpetrates their situation and so education is crucial to solving the issue of deep-seated and multifaceted discrimination. Once educated, those from the Dalit community could seek out their rights and entitlements from the government and feel part of society. We felt this step towards education had to start early in life, so we decided to build a pre-primary school for children from the Dalit community.

We faced multiple barriers from having to convince parents there is value in educating their children to finding a suitable location for the school. As a community that has gone without education for many generations, the Dalit people saw education as a privilege and activity for wealthier children and not for them. To address this, we held courtyard meetings with the community and explained how an education would empower their children and only through an education would they gain their freedom.



With financial support from the NGO Uttaran and the local community, we were able to buy materials such as a blackboard and floor mats for the unused room we took over on the grounds of Chargram Government School.

We have expanded to become an education programme with 12 teachers and two supervisors. The British Council and Uttaran supported us by giving us more training, which allows us to work and financially support our school. Because the Dalits of this area live in separate places, sometimes too far to walk, we are at last establishing another rural school in the area. After this first step in their education, these Dalit children will not only see the changes in their lives, but be the change in their lives.

Partner organisation: **Uttaran**



Ensuring Our Future

Theme: **Education**

Place: **Bagpur village, Pongachora, Rangpur**

Project Duration: **2013 - Present**

Bangladesh's younger generation makes up a third of the country's population and so its future lies in their hands. While the country has made great advances to increase primary school enrolment and achieve gender parity in education, there are still many children getting left behind. In the municipality of Borbil, we realised this was an acute problem in the village of Bagpur. Sixty children were not in school, either having dropped out or never having been enrolled.

First, to understand why so many children were not going to school, we spoke with their parents. As a team of 40 Active Citizens, we could not do this together so a sub-group of 10 to 12 boys and girls talked to parents. We found that most of the children leaving school are girls and parents allowed this because they believed there was no need for their daughters' to gain an education. They said it was more important that they learnt household chores and cooking. There were also boys who did not go to school, and these children were engaged in earning money for their families. Many parents saw sending their sons to study instead of earning as a loss of income for the family. Finally we spoke to teachers and local leaders about their understanding of the issue and we came to the conclusion that raising awareness was key to changing this mind-set that education is an unnecessary expense.

Through street plays, surveys and meetings for women and their daughters, we began to convey why sending their children to school was important. We held face-to-face meetings between parents with children in school and parents who don't. This parent-to-parent discussion proved to be very effective.

We also arranged meetings between parents and teachers and had religious leaders in mosques and temples ask worshipers to see sending their children to school as a parent's responsibility. What was interesting is that when we spoke to the children themselves about why they were not in school, very few actually said they did not like going. Most of them enjoyed school and understood why an education was important.

The number of dropouts in Bagpur village has been reduced to zero. Since our leadership training in September 2013, we have managed to enrol or re-enrol 60 children into primary school, ensuring that 100 per cent of the children in the area are pursuing an education.

We have been able to gain a variety of skills in leadership, community engagement, public speaking, and conducting research.

This has proven to be a very important initiative because if we all want to move forward, our next generation has to be educated. Everyone should be involved in such initiatives rather than depending on the government to do something about it.

We all dream that every child of the village will go to school and no one will drop out. We hope our initiative will be an example to others.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Evolving Stars

Theme: **Social Health, Education**

Place: **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Project Duration: **2013**

All over the world, children face difficulties every day but in developing countries, their struggles are acute. For example, child abuse is a serious problem with an estimated one in three girls and one in six boys having experienced sexually abuse by the time they reach the age of 18. Any form of abuse can create physical and psychological harm and in a developing country like Bangladesh, where people do not speak openly about sensitive issues, children do not have a safe place to share their thoughts. Some children don't even realise they've been abused until they are older and mature enough to understand what happened to them was wrong.

We wanted to create a safe and healthy space for children to understand certain rights and wrongs and share their experiences. As unravelling a child's experience of abuse is serious and requires sensitivity, we had some trouble persuading the slum school run by the non-profit organisation, Jaago, to allow us to run the project in their school. They wanted a specialist to talk about these issues so we engaged Dr Esha Farooqe to work with us during the sessions.

Our first two sessions were primarily to break the ice and develop trust with the children of class 3 and 4. For some of the topics we raised, we separated the classes between boys and girls but we have successfully talked about puberty, eve-teasing, drugs and child marriage. Then we brought the discussion to child abuse, the real topic we wanted to have with these children. We gave them examples of different kinds of abuse and how they should act in such a situation. At the end of every session, there was Q&A part, during which the children asked about their problems and shared their thoughts on what they had learnt that day.



At first the children felt shy and were not ready to talk about serious problems affecting them. As they began to trust us, they liked being able to talk about different situations including abuse. We have held eight sessions so far and they want us to take more sessions with them as they feel they got some real life experience from it.

We are also looking to start sessions with Jaago's students in class 1 and 2, before which we will take a session with teachers and parents to raise greater awareness about what we are doing. We want to encourage parents and teachers to be friendly with their children so that these children can feel they have someone close to them they can share their difficulties with. We also have a plan to run our project in slum areas and different schools.

The children's positive reaction to our session really inspired us to continue our project beyond our original plan. We are hoping for the best.

Partner organisation: **Jaago Foundation**



Heading Towards a Victorious Bangladesh

Theme: **Education, Health**

Place: **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Project Duration: **2013- Present**

‘Building Bangladesh with a dream’ - heading towards this slogan we are Active Citizens: DURJOY.

As a group we have focused our attentions on two key areas: Child education and ensuring healthcare facilities to the poorest in our society. After a successful 2012, we have tried to contribute even more in 2013 in co-operation with our dedicated members.

In 2013, we successfully completed our 1st event of the year at MRITTIKA School, a school for street children that is run by the different university students at Mohammadpur. Around 50 students regularly attend the classes. As it is run by the students, it needed some support to run the activities smoothly. Active Citizens: DURJOY came forward with its active helping hand. We have distributed educational materials to the poor children. We provided school bags to all the students of this school. We also gave them writing materials for one year. As a part of our event we played some animated videos on hygiene & safety, which shows how they can keep themselves safe from germs and how they can safely cross the road. We also followed up with 2 classes on the same topics to teach them how they can remain safe.



Our next event took place at Naogaon and for the first time we arranged an event outside of Dhaka. This time we arranged a totally different debate competition. It was held in a Madrasa where thousands of orphans live. We arranged a debate competition on “Ensuring the human rights of orphaned children” at Gausul Azam complex, Naogaon. The founder of this complex and other social leaders attended in the event to enjoy the debate of the participants. The main objective of this event was to introduce the orphans to their basic human rights. We were able to do this in front of local social leaders. Our event ended with a colourful prize giving ceremony.

We moved to our next event in October 2013. On this day we engaged 20 more Active Citizens to make our efforts stronger and more coordinated, united with the dream of making our country a happy place where every child will get proper education and health facilities.

We hope healthy and educated children can bring a great positive change in the near future for Bangladesh. And Active Citizens: DURJOY is working tirelessly towards this vision.

Partner organisation: **Democracywatch**



Humans for Hygiene

Theme: **Health, Community Mobilisation**

Place: **Rajshahi, Rajshahi District**

Project Duration: **Ongoing**

Contaminated food from anywhere in the world can cause someone to fall sick, and in extreme cases even die. In Bangladesh, there are thousands of roadside motels, restaurants and cafés serving food in dirty, hot conditions. Due to a lack of awareness, these outlets are not following even simple hygienic practices and put their customers at risk of food poisoning. Owners and the waiters on duty rarely cover food when it is in the open, allowing germs, dust and insects to gain access to the food before it is served. Ensuring hygiene in the kitchens is equally difficult as restaurants are reluctant to make any operational changes that might slow them down or cost them financially.

Our goal is to ensure a healthy and happy community in the city of Rajshahi. So after our Active Citizens Youth Leadership training, our group chose to do a two-pronged awareness campaign as our social action project, called 'hygienic food for a healthy community'. To do this, we needed to first, advise food outlets about how and why they should cook and preserve food hygienically and second, to alert customers – mostly working class people and students – of the health risks of eating badly prepared food.

As a group, we brought different skills to the table but we had to consider the restrictions we would face such as how to cover a large area, whether the political unrest would affect our work and scheduling our activities so that we were not short-handed. We drafted a six-month plan with strategic arrangements for our meetings and obtained permission from the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) to run the project.

In the first phase, we reviewed our targeted areas, which were Rajshahi University, Shaheb Bazar, Rajshahi Medical College, Talaimari and Vadra areas, Rajshahi rail station, and New Market and the court areas. We inspected and advised roadside hotels, restaurants and cafés on how to prepare and keep food hygienically. We also campaigned for customers to think about their health and how to avoid food poisoning.

In phase two, we repeated our activities and for those outlets that hadn't changed their practices, we focused on counselling them further about hygiene. Finally, we arranged a human chain to alert the public and local press about our work and what we believe needs to change to ensure people do not fall sick from eating out.

Initially there were mixed responses from hotel, restaurant and café owners, with some showing active interest in improving their standards and others showing complete indifference to our requests and suggestions. By repeating our activities we were able to reinforce our message and 'convert' some of the sceptics. We have plans to arrange a larger human chain now that the community is engaged in our work. It is hard to measure the number of food poisoning cases but there are some visible changes in the areas we targeted so, with time, we believe that our efforts will spread across the city of Rajshahi.

We have gained many important skills through this Active Citizens project, such as public speaking, team work, good communication, and project planning and implementation.

Partner organisation: **CCD Bangladesh**



Overcoming Fear

Theme: **Education**

Place: **Rajshahi, Rajshahi district**

Project Duration: **Ongoing**

“One of the biggest reasons why our students lag behind is because of their fear of studying English, even though they achieve top marks in other subjects. This initiative will show us the path forward and will benefit everyone.”

- Tariqul Hasan, Proctor of Rajshahi University

English has always been a common second language in Bangladesh, with many government bodies, civil society organisations and the judiciary conducting some of their work in the language. Unfortunately, students in Rajshahi division have often failed to participate in national or international events because of poor English. Many students expressed a fear of learning the language.

Following Active Citizens Youth Leadership training in August 2013, a group of us decided to focus on improving students’ English language skills. We feel this is important for young people to be able to seize

new opportunities on a national and international platform. Thanks to our youth leaders and their mentors, we began working with Rajshahi University, Rajshahi College, Rajshahi Polytechnic Institution and Rajshahi Court College to establish English language clubs.

To eliminate students’ fear of learning English, we ran various social initiatives such as quiz competitions, readers’ circles, workshops with government and non-governmental organisations and set up information stalls. When we faced a shortage of books and materials, the Hunger Project assisted us.

There are currently 29 active English language clubs in learning institutions around Rajshahi. As many as 310 students have said their English skills have improved greatly through participation in our clubs. Students also benefit by having an extracurricular activity that allowed them to use their time more efficiently than before. The Vice Chancellor of Rajshahi University has asked that we expand our project to more schools in Rajshahi division as he believes the initiative will help students to be more knowledgeable. The founder of the Onushilon Library informed us that readership at the library increased and, according to the president of the newspaper readers club, they now have 50 new members and a waiting list of 100 more.

Our English language club initiative was awarded the best project at the regional and national summits in 2014. We have also been featured in local and national media such as the Bengali Daily Ittefaq and the English newspaper The Independent.

Students are not as afraid of learning English as they once were – they are now stepping forward more confident in their abilities.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Rethinking Before Being Attacked

Theme: **Health**

Place: **Dhaka**

Project Duration: **2012- Present**

Viral Hepatitis is an emerging global health problem affecting millions of people every year causing disability & death. According to the World Health Organisation, around 500 million people are chronically infected with Hepatitis B & C every year. In Bangladesh 4-7% of the total population (especially 3.5 % pregnant women) is affected by Hepatitis B or C. This dangerous disease is affecting mostly in all ages people, commonly in young age as 60-70% people remained unaware about this viral disease.

After successfully participating in the Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training held in Dhaka, a few of us identified this as a critical social problem and expressed our collective interest in finding a solution & thereby contributing to the development of our community. Newly trained and inspired, we formed a group called "AUDOYMO" with a hope of improving the situation. This motivation led us to our first initiative of awareness campaign for health issues. Despite facing more than a few challenges, we successfully completed our first program and, for the betterment of the project, we asked some more Active Citizens to voluntarily join with us, later forming another new volunteer organization called the "Youth Club of Bangladesh."

At first, we took an initiative to fight against Hepatitis through awareness. We targeted the general public, especially young people, to raise a voice against Hepatitis. We named our project as "Hepatitis: Think Again." To implement our project successfully, we worked in a joint group. First, we arranged our sponsors & supporters. We presented our ideas and strategies to many youth organisations, NGOs and pharmaceuticals groups. Finally, we got our financial & logistical support from the Liver Foundation of Bangladesh.

To put this project into action, we jointly organized this project in collaboration with The Hunger Project Bangladesh.

By this time, we had managed to gain international support from the World Hepatitis Alliance & World Health Organisation. We have been interviewed by more than 20 national and online news dailies along with media coverage in Alokito Bangladesh, Kalarkhontho, Daily Sun, Shirshonews.com, rising bd, & Radio Kolorgun & Radio Vhuvon.

We believe that this is the time for youth to raise a voice against hepatitis. In our first phase of the project, we have already made more than 5000 people aware directly or indirectly through our motivational seminars, which we held on different universities and colleges. For the very first time in Bangladesh, we conducted a survey about Hepatitis around 15 different universities in Dhaka, in which 5000 youths participated. We have trained around 50 youth leaders about Hepatitis, who have gone on to work in their own communities. More than 1000 people took a Hepatitis virus test after attending our seminars. We provided 20 free vaccines to our competition winners. More than 1,00,000 people are now more aware about Hepatitis through the radio show & online campaigning.

Every day the spread of viral Hepatitis is increasing rapidly. This deadly disease cannot be cured properly unless we become more aware about it. To help with this, we are trying to spread our movement both globally and locally as we firmly believe that young people can change anything.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Saving the Environment

Theme: **Environmental Protection, Community Mobilisation**

Place: **Sunamganj, Sylhet**

Project Duration: **2012-Present**

Bangladesh is a country that is roughly the same size as the UK but with twice as many people. As such, its environment is under pressure to meet the needs of its inhabitants and industrial advancement. Brick kilns line the outskirts of many cities and the millions of fuel guzzling vehicles plying the country's roads are just a part of the reason why the air is polluted with CO² and other gases.

The Active Citizens groups from Sunamganj, Sylhet have been working on two projects since our training in early 2012. One project is to ensure education for child labourers, while the second is to engage youth in environmental protection. The purpose of the latter project is to remind people in the community about their responsibility to society and to create awareness about protecting the environment.



With 'Let's stand hand in hand to save the environment' as our slogan, we begun conducting workshops, training, a tree plantation drive, human chains, a cycle rally, meetings, a quiz and debate competition, free seed distributions and street plays in schools and colleges. We also held campaigns for a clean and air pollution free city of Sunamganj. Our project's goal was to create social awareness and inspire the local communities to take the matter of protecting the environment into their own hands.

We have about 450 students actively involved in our project. Through 30 workshops, we have reached 600 students and through 20 community meetings, we have reached 200 local people. We held two cycle rallies to encourage people to use more environment-friendly vehicles and have planted 5,000 fruit, forest and medicinal trees. Our efforts have been recognised by a host of local and national NGOs, including schools and colleges and the media. We were also recognised at the 2014 Active Citizens Regional Achievers Summit.

We are hopeful that our efforts will be felt by the local community for many years to come and will improve the quality of life for the next generation of people living in our area.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Second Chance at Learning

Theme: **Education**

Place: **Rangpur**

Project Duration: **2013- Present**

On the university premises of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, many students have seen young children from the nearby slum engage in illegal activities instead of attending school. These children, already living a life in extreme poverty, are at risk of facing abuse or entering a future of criminality.

Following training in October 2013, our Active Citizens group from Begum Rokeya University decided their first project ought to address an issue close to home and so decided to open a school for deprived children. More than 18 of us formed a volunteering team for those who could commit to leading classes.

One of the biggest challenges that we faced while starting our school came from the parents of these working children on our campus. They would rather send their children to work, be it legal or illegal, than send them to school for a small fee. To address and win their backing, we worked hard to change the mind of these parents through discussion and support.

The success of our school has directly benefited the children and people of the local slum and also we believe indirectly, the rest of the community. We have 15 regular students attending our school and are looking to enroll 15 more children. The impact can be seen as other student-led or social clubs are collaborating to expand this project. Not only has there been a noticeable change in parents' attitudes but many more parents now wish to enroll their children in our school.

We showcased our initiative at the 2014 Regional Achievers' Summit in Rajshahi and won an award for Best Social Action Project. We have learned that people are the main focus of development and if someone takes the initiative to develop society, then others should join hands and help.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Thinking Creatively

Theme: **Education, social enterprise**

Place: **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Project Duration: **2013**

Traditional schooling in our country doesn't allow students to think creatively, critically or "outside of the box." As a result, a lot of young children are now spending their free time either watching TV or playing with Computer Games instead of creative activities. In order to boost up this skill into the school going children, we started our project named "Think Creative."

Our primary focus was to build up creativity and awareness among under-privileged school going children, with the eventual aim of them being able to make and sell their own products to make them self-reliant. To do this we decided we would explain to them how to make creative products (e.g. making New Year cards/greetings cards and gift boxes, painting a flower vase, face masks etc.). We would also play various puzzles or games with them (e.g. Tangram, Jigsaw Puzzle, Origami etc.), and address important issues like health and hygiene through these games.



At first, we selected a JAAGO School at Rayer Bazar in Dhaka as the venue of the inauguration of our project. As that was the first session with children, our aim was to make simple greeting cards that would only require the simplest of materials, such as paper, glue and scissors. After some funny icebreaking sessions we started our programme with brain stimulating puzzles. Finally we divided them into different teams and demonstrated how to make cards. Although we gave them instructions and showed them samples, we were amazed to see that they did far better than us and the young hands ended up making nice and colourful greetings cards.

After a few consecutive sessions, we now have plans to arrange a competition among the children to increase interest and to give them prizes for the best craft maker. Our secondary objective is, if the products are of good quality, to sell the products at fairs or exhibitions. We would use the money raised to contribute something to their libraries or school premises, raising the sense among the children that they have done something important of their own.



Partner organisation: **Democracywatch**

Changing a Community

Theme: **Community Mobilisation, Social Enterprise**

Place: **Rangpur Union, Dumuriya, Khulna**

Project Duration: **2013**

Most people in Khulna's Rangpur Union are unemployed and many of them make up the youth population in the area. As unemployment has ripple effects – such as children dropping out of school, poor sanitation and malnutrition – we felt it was important to involve the community in income-generating activities.

Our goals were to reduce the unemployment rate, build up a socially aware society, ensure financial stability for the project's members and bring about positive change to the area. To achieve this, we decided to start a community co-operative club, from which our produce would be sold to the local and wholesale markets.

We decided to engage 38 young men and 22 young women in different income-generating activities – fisheries, vegetable cultivation and handicrafts – and the profits were to be divided among the workers as well as reinvested into the project. We began funding ourselves through contributions from members and donations from the local community.

In the beginning, local people did not take well to our co-operative idea and once people were on board, we faced certain challenges. For example, we could not always get the right price for our goods, raw materials had to be bought for higher prices and there was an insect infestation in the vegetable gardens. Despite this, a lot of Active Citizens and local leaders helped us in establishing this project. The local Union Parishad member gave us use of an abandoned pond, which was crucial for us to pursue fisheries. A local government agriculture officer provided members with training and NGOs like BRAC supplied us with different materials.

A learning process in itself, our project proved to be a success and featured in the local newspaper. There has been a big change in the community, with 60 actively involved active citizens and their families benefiting financially. Our plan is to expand the work of this co-operative club so that more people can get benefit from establishing a source of income, which will in turn support the rest of the community.

We believe if we can improve on our co-operative club and engage the support of more organisations, this project will have an infrastructure that will be sustainable.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Broadening Young Minds

Theme: **Education**

Place: **Zhinaidah, Khulna**

Project Duration: **2013**

Extracurricular activities are not commonly available at schools across Bangladesh, nor are they considered important for developing children into educated young adults. Many students learn by rote memorisation instead of thinking independently and unfortunately, teachers and parents do not see any value in teaching beyond the national curriculum.

We believe that an educated individual is well-rounded and extracurricular activities are important in developing skills that school books cannot teach. We began by establishing communication with different schools to assess the feasibility of introducing debate clubs for students.

This type of extracurricular activity is not unheard of in the rest of the world but it was one we hoped would generate excitement among Bangladeshi students. We not only wanted students to debate amongst themselves but to manage regular debating competitions. This would help them process logical arguments, strengthen their communication skills, teach them how to network, improve on their public speaking and gain knowledge on social, cultural, political and economic matters.

Entirely dependent on schools wanting to get involved, this project began with workshops to introduce debating to students.

Our Active Citizens group of 35 prepared materials for three-hour long workshops at Kanchanpur Model High School, Zhinaidah Government Girls High School, Fazar Ali Girls High School, Shishukunio School and College, Wazer Ali High School, Zhinaidah College and Mosharaf Hossain College. It took some time to gain the support of some institutions but we successfully crossed hurdles to reach the point we are at now.

In less than two years, nine debate clubs have been set up in five high schools, three colleges and one after-school group. This translates into an active scene of 400 students and teachers practicing debating on a regular basis. Our efforts to introduce this extracurricular activity to the community have been well received by local teachers, parents, leaders and media. A story about our project was published in the local weekly Shebakhabar and we were recognised at the Active Citizens Achievers Summit in the capital in 2012. As two of the initiators of this project, we personally presented our work to other Active Citizens at a regional symposium in Pakistan and at an event in London, UK.

By this project, the students have trained up in various Useful skills like Public speaking, presentations etc.

We would like debating to one day spread across the country and this year, we want to organise a debating competition in our area. We hope that with the strong leadership of Active Citizens, our project will expand and inspire more people to broaden their horizons.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



Saying No to Abuses

Theme: **Community Mobilisation**

Place: **Srimongal, Sylhet**

Project Duration: **2012- Present**

In our area there is a need for young people to become more responsible citizens. We have seen young people and children fall to vices such as drugs. Bangladesh has been known to be a transit stop for drugs from Myanmar on their way to India and further afield. Street children are also most likely to be addicted to sniffing glue and burning plastic. By helping the community through fund raising activities, events and rallies and the promotion of education, we hope to help people leave behind a life of drugs and develop a sense of civic duty.

Since 2012, the Srimongal Active Citizens group has been actively engaging with the community to bring about social change. We particularly believe in ending drug abuse by people in our area and are working to raise awareness on the consequences of this abuse. Drug addiction is very hard to break and requires more than a person to be determined and strong willed, therefore we engage relatives and the community to work together to help someone say no to drug abuse.

Most likely out of desperation and a lack of purpose, ten-year-old Imran Ahmed Rabbi was addicted to smoking and drugs when we first met him. Our group decided we had to do something for him and began by speaking to his mother.

With the help of community leaders we enrolled Rabbi into a local school and the local authority waived his fees in consideration of his family's financial difficulties. Our group supplied Rabbi with materials such as pens, bag and paper and this year he will be taking his primary school certificate exam.

We also launched a campaign demanding modifications in the drug control laws, in the hopes that this will reduce the number of tobacco-related deaths in the long-run. This was done with the support of MAC Bangladesh, WBB Trust and Kontho Kotha. We put up posters and distributed leaflets all around the area to inform people of anti-drug abuse raids.

Our other activities have included organising blood donation camps, street plays to raise awareness against child marriage, sports and quiz events for children, rallies on issues that are important to us, and establishing new local youth councils.

Our Active Citizens group has always tried to stand strongly against drug abuse and to encourage people to become more responsible citizens because we want a drug abuse free country, we want a beautiful society. By working with primary schools, the local authorities and the general population, our messages are being spread across communities.

Partner organisation: **The Hunger Project**



HEADLINES

SUB HEADLINE SUB HEADLINE SUB HEADLINE



Connecting Youth for Nation Building at Democracywatch

Democracywatch organized a three-day youth festival named 'Connecting Youth for Nation Building' (CYNB) to support the network of youth groups working for a better future on Friday, 21 March, 2014 at its premises in Dhaka.

The festival was part of an on-going 2014 Year of Contribution to Nation Building (CYNB) program implemented in the September, 2013 under the involvement of Democracywatch and donors in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The CYNB program launched during January - September in 2013. The event has supported the success of its organization and youth empowerment about



মুগ্ধবাদ

মুগ্ধবাদের মূল কারণ হলো মুগ্ধতা। মুগ্ধতা হলো অজ্ঞানতা বা অসচেতনতা। মুগ্ধবাদের ফলে মানুষ নিজেকে অসচেতন মনে করে এবং অন্যের মুগ্ধতাকে স্বাভাবিক মনে করে। মুগ্ধবাদের ফলে মানুষ নিজেকে অসচেতন মনে করে এবং অন্যের মুগ্ধতাকে স্বাভাবিক মনে করে।



Warm clothes distributed among street children in Barisal

A Compassion

BARISAL: Children and young adults of the poorest families, Labibul, distributed warm winter clothes and food to support the street children in the city on Thursday under the newly launched program 'Winter Warmth'.

Deputy Commissioner of Barisal Municipal Administration the program of Public System in the city. A total of 1000 children were given the clothes.

Labibul, a social organization, distributes warm clothes among the street children in Barisal on Thursday.



দেশ-জন্মদ

দেশ-জন্মদ হলো দেশের জন্মদাতা। দেশ-জন্মদ হলো দেশের জন্মদাতা। দেশ-জন্মদ হলো দেশের জন্মদাতা। দেশ-জন্মদ হলো দেশের জন্মদাতা। দেশ-জন্মদ হলো দেশের জন্মদাতা।



আজকের বার্তা

আজকের বার্তা হলো আজকের বার্তা। আজকের বার্তা হলো আজকের বার্তা।

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Youth can turn country into middle-income one

Key foreign minister

Foreign Minister Ahsanullah Khan said that the youth of Bangladesh can turn the country into a middle-income one if they are properly educated and trained.

He said that the government is committed to providing quality education and training to the youth of the country.



Bangladeshi participants Ayesha, Afroza and, Labida in UK

Ayesha, Afroza and Labida, participants of the Active Citizens program, are in the UK for a training program.

The program is organized by the British Council and aims to provide training and support to young people in Bangladesh.



Active Citizens STARZ launches SAP

Active Citizens STARZ launched the Social Action Project (SAP) to support the youth of Bangladesh.

The SAP is a program that provides training and support to young people in Bangladesh to help them become active citizens.

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অরুণদের হাত ধরেই এগোবে বাংলাদেশ

স্বপ্ন পূরণের

অরুণদের হাত ধরেই এগোবে বাংলাদেশ। অরুণদের হাত ধরেই এগোবে বাংলাদেশ।



Active Citizens Achievers' Summit 2014

The Active Citizens Achievers' Summit 2014 was held in London to celebrate the achievements of young people in Bangladesh.

The summit was organized by the British Council and aimed to provide a platform for young people to share their experiences and ideas.

Active Citizens STARZ Launches SAP at JAAGO School

Active Citizens STARZ Launches SAP at JAAGO School

Active Citizens STARZ launched the Social Action Project (SAP) at JAAGO School in Dhaka.

The SAP is a program that provides training and support to young people in Bangladesh to help them become active citizens.



Active Citizens Achiever's Summit, organized by British Council Bangladesh was held on an occasion of celebrating among web of Active Citizens, learners, actors and influencers in the communities with a view to promote international and intercultural trust and understanding at Bangla Academy premises on Saturday March 29, 2014.

Chief Guest and Foreign Minister Ahsanullah Khan, MP and Special Guest British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert W Gibson, OMC presided the summit at its inauguration in Dhaka.

In the Inaugural Ceremony, Foreign Minister expressed his gratitude toward British Council for providing the opportunity to the youth of Bangladesh.

Bremen Moorthy, Acting Country Director of British Council Bangladesh welcomed the representatives of government, civil society organizations, sector specialist on Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Youth Development, International Dialogue and Community Development, Active Citizens Program participants and other guests.

British Council launched the Active Citizens program in Central and South Asia in 2006. At present, the youth initiative is continuing in Sub-continental countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and, Sri Lanka including other 22 countries. The project was launched in Bangladesh in 2009.



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