DAM Supporting street children in the City

Two hundred and fifty five street and working children are being protected from violence and abuse at a Drop-in Centre (DIC) of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) at Bashbari, Channia housing in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. The vulnerable children are now being provided with food and shelter as well as safety, healthcare services, counseling, educational and recreational facilities there. They are being imparted vocational and life-skills training for leading a meaningful life with regular income through placement of jobs or self-employment. The children got a new lease of life following intervention by DAM under a project titled, 'Drop-in Centre for Street and working Children in Dhaka City Project.' The project is underway with support from Comic Relief through DAM-UK, since April, 2011. Earlier, four Urban Community Learning Centres (UCLCs) for urban poor and working children were set up in April, 2006. These were set up as part of a five-year project titled, 'UCLC Project' with funding from Comic Relief, DAM. On completion of the five-year project in March, 2011, a total of 49 children got jobs and became self-reliant. Moreover, 119 children got vocational training in different trades and 53 others came to the mainstream by becoming students in different schools run by government and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). Initially, 589 children were enrolled in the DIC and received services but some of them either discontinued or left the DIC halfway. The UCLCs still render services to the street and working children with funding from the local Community and DAM-UK. Previously, the street children had no access to basic needs and they were abused and traumatized in every way. Their basic rights were violated at every stage of life. Realizing the gravity of the situation, DAM intervened and floated the DICs to bring back rights of the street children. DAM's aim is to create awareness among family members on child protection, safety issues and help restore their rights. Support to children and members of their families of Dhaka city are also being given. Special counselling, motivational and other support services are also provided to their family members. Parents/guardians of children, especially mothers, are given necessary counselling so that their children do not undertake hazardous jobs. Efforts are underway both at local and national government level to give hope to these hapless children under care of DAM. DAM is committed to develop its capacity for changing lot of these hapless street children.

Community level dialogue on social protection with poor people

ACCESS (health & empowerment) project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) organised a dialogue on social protection for its beneficiaries and service providers in Jamalpur. It was aimed at identifying problems of social protection programme based on participatory opinion of poor and ultra-poor people at union and upazila level. The dialogue was held at Chikajani Setubandhan Community Resource Centre on October 15 and at Parorampur Modhuban Community Resource Centre on October 18, 2012. Area Coordinator of the project Md. Asadullah and Technical Officer Syed Mizanur Rahman were present as discussants.
ISEESCO Award for DAM

Dhaka Ahsania Mission received the prestigious ISEESCO Prize for Literacy-2012 at a function held at the conference room of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education on October 11, 2012. Acting Secretary M M Niazuddin of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education formally handed over the prize to the President of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Kazi Rafiqul Alam. Among others, Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Director General Abdul Halim, Bureau of Non-formal Primary Education (BNFE) Director General Alamgir Hossain, and DPE Director General Shyamol Kanti Ghosh were present. High officials of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Dhaka Ahsania Mission were also present. It is worth mentioning that Dhaka Ahsania Mission has been working in the fields of Non-formal Primary Education, Adult Literacy and Continuing Education as well as Formal Education for three decades. In fact Dhaka Ahsania Mission is implementing various types of educational projects more than in 28 districts. In his address, Acting Secretary M M Niazuddin said, ISEESCO Prize for Dhaka Ahsania Mission is a great honour for the entire nation. If all other NGOs come forward like Dhaka Ahsania Mission then the entire country will be freed from illiteracy. ISEESCO Prize for Literacy-2012 is awarded after an interval of every two years. The announcement for this award was made on August 29 this year. The award was handed over to the Primary and Mass Education Minister, Dr Afsarul Amin, at a high level meeting on literacy at UNESCO Headquarter in Paris on September 6-7, 2012.

Keep restaurants hundred pc tobacco-free, demand restaurant owners

Restaurant owners at a press conference jointly organised by Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association and Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) at the Mission Bhaban auditorium in the city on October 21 appealed for keeping restaurants hundred per cent tobacco-free. Restaurant owners also urged for declaring all restaurants of the city public places. Secretary General of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association Md. Rezaul Karim Sarker Rabin, Publicity Secretary Abdul Khaleque and Treasurer Taufiql Islam were present on the occasion. President of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association Kamar Uddin Ahmed presented the key-note paper. The President of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association Kamar Uddin Ahmed said that if smoking goes on unabated in tobacco-free zone then it is not possible to make all public places 100% tobacco-free. He strongly demanded for not allowing smokers to smoke at any tobacco-free public place. He demanded for not keeping such provision while amending the tobacco control law. Continuous rise of tobacco and tobacco products has created a problem in our country. It has become a burden in our problem ridden society. Four crore and 30 lakh people smoke and use tobacco products while 4 crore and 20 lakh people fall victims to direct or indirect smoking. Nearly 2 crore and 58 lakh people are victims of indirect smoking at restaurants. Not only that, everyday 45-50 thousand restaurant employees are victims of indirect smoking. They are at risk of tobacco-related diseases.

Distribution of saplings of fruit-bearing trees

Saplings of fruit-bearing trees were distributed among poor beneficiaries of IFLS Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) in Mongla upazila of Bagerhat district on September 6, 2012. The saplings were distributed in cooperation with the European Union and Cafod. Two hundred fifty families of Chandpai and Chila unions of Mongla upazila got the saplings. Each beneficiary got one sapling of ‘Safeda’, one sapling of coconut and one sapling of guava. Mongla Upazila Parishad Chairman Md Idris Ali, Mongla Upazila Nirbahi Officer Dr Md Mizanur Rahman, Upazila Vice Chairman Md Nur Alam Sheikh, Agriculture official Md Abdullah al Mamun, DAM Field Coordinator Uzzal Kumar Kundu and government officials were present. Apart from this, saplings were also distributed among 150 families of Rampal upazila and 250 families of Sharankhola upzila.
Inauguration of 2-days Nat'l Confce of Teachers at AUST

The inaugural ceremony of a two-day National Conference of Teachers 2012 on "Problems and Practices of Teaching in Bangladesh" was held at the Multipurpose Hall of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology on October 5, 2012. Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and Bangladesh Reading Association (BRA) jointly organised the conference on October 5-6, 2012, in cooperation with the International Reading Association (IRA) and Campaign for Popular Education to mark the World Teachers Day.

DAM President & BRA Chairman Kazi Rafiqul Alam presided over the inaugural ceremony and Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was present as Chief Guest while IRA President Carrice C Cummins as the Special Guest. Dr A M M Safiullah, Vice Chancellor, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology presented a Keynote Paper on Education and Problem of Education Practice in Bangladesh. Prof M Eltasuddin, former Chairman, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) & Vice Chairman, Bangladesh Reading Association delivered the welcome address.

Speakers said, Need to ensure quality education with innovative practice. All books are being turned into e-books. Discussants discussed on various problems and issues of teaching and learning at the first day of the conference.

Bangladesh Reading Association was founded in 2005 aiming at improvement of the professional skill of teachers and students. After being officially approved by the IRA in July 2008, BRA has been conducting various programmes for enhancement of skills of teachers, students and researchers on education across the country.

Int'l Day of Older Persons observed in Barguna

ACCESS-CAFOD Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) observed the International Day of Older Persons in Barguna district on October 1, 2012. This year's theme was 'Long Life & Building Safe Future.' Befitting programmes were chalked out in 86 Ganokendro (people's centres) and five CRCs in Barguna Sadar upazila and 20 Ganokendro and CRCs in Amtoli upazila. Programmes included discussion meeting, rally, human chain and exchange of pillow. This was followed by prize distribution ceremony. Older persons spontaneously participated in all programmes. Zohra Begum, an older person shared her experience at Rupsha Ganokendro. Older persons demanded of the government to fulfill their various demands. The demands are: increase in number of elderly allowance and its amount, government initiative for their healthcare and nourishment, government announcement of elderly citizens, make separate arrangement so that older persons can easily guard in train and organising training course for their involvement in income raising activities.

Seeds, fertiliser, agri-inputs distributed

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), in collaboration with the European Union and Cafod, distributed seeds, fertiliser and agricultural inputs, among the beneficiaries of IFLS Project, in Rampal upazila of Bagerhat district on October 9, 2012. Rampal Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nasrin Parvin, Upazila Agriculture Officer Hafizur Rahman, UP Chairman Sheikh Bazlur Rahman, Rampal Upazila Freedom Fighter Commander Sheikh Moazzafar Hossain, Cafod UK representative Pala Niont, IFLS Project Programme Coordinator Umme Kulsum and Dhaka Ahsania Mission Field Coordinator Uzzal Kumar Kundu were present. Each beneficiary got a spade, a spray, fertiliser, 2 yards polythene, seeds of saline resilient winter vegetables etc. Eight beneficiary of Rampal upazila and 10 beneficiaries of Mongla upazila received the materials.
'Create awareness against smoking at family level to protect young generation'

Speakers at a discussion meeting held recently in the city underscored the need for creating awareness at family level to protect the young generation from the curse of smoking.

The discussion meeting on Implementation of Tobacco Control Law at Public Places and Transports was held at the office of local parliament member at Khilgaon in the city on October 9, 2012. The meeting revealed that because of smoking, 12 lakh people are now at death risk. Every year, one out of six people die due to adverse effect of smoking.

They also stressed on coordinated efforts of all to create a tobacco-free atmosphere. Now 43% people smoke in Bangladesh.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam presided over the meeting while parliament member from the constituency Dhaka-9, Saber Hossain Chowdhury was present as Chief Guest. President of Khilgaon thana Awami League Alamgir Hossain Bahar, Regional Executive Officer of Dhaka City Corporation, Regional-2 Ranjit Chandra Sarkar and Media and Advocacy Coordinator of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Taifur Rahman were present as special guests.

The Chief Guest, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, underscored the need for creating awareness against smoking at family level to protect young generation from the curse of smoking. He also said, it is essential to start anti-smoking campaign in school, college and educational institutions.

It is mentionable that Dhaka Ahsania Mission is conducting different activities to control tobacco by creating awareness against the menace. It has also launched anti-smoking campaigns.

Women and Girls: the Invisible Force of Resilience

Int'l Day for Disaster Reduction observed in different districts

Various projects of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) observed the International Day for Disaster Reduction in different districts of the country on October 13 this year. The theme for 2012 was "Women and Girls: the Invisible Force of Resilience." Marking the Day, bfitting programmes had been chalked out by IFLS, ACCESS-CAFOD and ACCESS (Health & Empowerment) projects.

IFLS Project : Upazila administration, DAM, CARITAS and ADD International jointly organised a discussion meeting at Rampal Upazila Parishad auditorium in Bagerhat district on 13 October, 2012. Rampal Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Nasrin Parveen presided over while Rampal Upazila Chairman Prof Molla Abdur Rouf was present as Chief Guest. Project Implementation Officer Swapnan Kumar Brahma, Rampal Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Sheikh Bazlur Rahman and Rajnagar UP Chairman Sheikh A Hannan Dubloo were present as special guests.

ACCESS-CAFOD Project : ACCESS-CAFOD Project organised rally, discussion meeting and painting competition at Ganokendro (people's centre), CRC and MCRC in Barguna district on the day. The meeting declared Barguna district a disaster prone area and urged all to remain ever vigilant. Discussants dwelt on various ways for reducing disaster.

This was followed by a painting competition for children and adolescents. After the competition, prizes were distributed among the winners.

ACCESS (Health & Empowerment) Project : Marking the Day, a discussion meeting was held at Keshobpur Upazila Parishad auditorium in Jessore district. Project Implementation Officer Mohammad Ashekur Rahman presided over while Keshobpur Upazila Chairman H M Amir Hossain was present as Chief Guest and Keshobpur UNO Abu Sayed Md Manzur Alam was present as Special Guest.

Discussants expressed concern over children, pregnant women, physically and mentally challenged persons who are at maximum risk during disaster. They discussed about their healthcare after disaster and sewerage system during post disaster period.

This was followed by an essay competition on "Disaster Risk and Our Duties & Responsibilities" and a painting contest. Later, certificates and prizes were distributed among the winners.

Marking the occasion, ACCESS (Health & Empowerment) Project and various Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) organised rally and discussion meeting in Narshingdi district. A colourful rally was brought out from the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office premises. The rally terminated at old Shilpakala Academy compound after parading various streets of the district town.

This was followed by a discussion meeting at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium. Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Md Zahirul Haque presided over while it was attended by Additional DC (General) Suraiya Begum as Chief Guest.
Now, it is essential to reject the provision of smoking zone in public places which was recommended by Cabinet on 27 August 2012 meeting. Cabinet gives initial approval with some changes, retention of smoking zone one of the major changes. If the law becomes effective, initiative to protect non-smokers from second hand-smoking will be affected. 100% Smoke-free environment will not be created.

Speakers said this while addressing at a Media Briefing jointly organized by Dam Ahsania Mission (DAM), Progga, Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) with the support of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids at Dhaka Reporters Unity on Tobacco-free Environment and Tobacco Control Law in the city on October 2, 2012. They also said, 45% people fall victims to passive smoking in various public places. Four crore 20 lakh people of the country fall victims to passive smoking. Of them, 2 crore 58 lakh people fall victims to passive smoking in restaurants only. DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam presided over the media briefing while Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, a member of parliament (MP) was present as chief guest.

MANOSH President Prof Dr. Arup Ratan Chowdhury, Media & Advocacy Coordinator of Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids Taifur Rahman, and Senior News Editor of Bangla Vision Abu Ruhul Amin were present as guests. Progga Chairman Sayed Badrul Karim delivered the welcome address. DAM Assistant Director Iqbal Masud presented key note paper on Tobacco-free Environment and Tobacco Control Law. It is mentionable, 43.3% people who are above 15 year, take smoke and smokeless tobacco products. Of them 23% are smokers. Smoking is harmful for both smoker and non-smoker. 57,000 people die and 3,82,000 people become crippled every year due to smoking.

Ducklings distributed among Ganokendro members

ACCESS (health & empowerment) Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) distributed ducklings among Ganokendro members at Sufalakati Smiriticharan Community Resource Centre in Keshobpur upazila of Jessore district on October 2, 2012. Two hundred members of 12 Ganokendro under Sufalakati union got 800 ducklings of Cambel ducks. Sufalakati union is the worst affected union in flood in Keshobpur upazila and one third area of the union always remains under water throughout the year. Because of saline water, lands become unfit for cultivation. Fish cultivation is the only source of income of 95 percent people. Local women spend idle time. They lack any opportunity of employment. The ducklings were distributed to poor people through Protiva Sangstha aiming at creation of their job opportunity.

Nat'l Tobacco-free Day-2012 observed in Moheshpur

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and RDC jointly observed the National Tobacco-free Day-2012 in Moheshpur upazila of Jhenidah district on October 9, 2012. Rally, sit-in programme and discussion meeting marked the day. A rally began from Hospital Road and terminated at Upazila Parishad after parading different streets. A discussion on adverse effects of smoking was held at the Upazila Parishad meeting room. RDC executive Abdur Rahman presided over while president of Moheshpur upazila committee of Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (SUJON) and retired headmaster of Moheshpur Secondary School A T M Khairul Anam was present as chief guest. Area Coordinator of Dhaka Ahsania Mission delivered the key-note speech. Among others, journalist Adhir Sarker and DAM technical officer Tapan Kumar Ghosh spoke on the occasion. Later, a sit-in programme was held for amendment and implementation of smoking and tobacco control act. NGO officials, school and college teachers, students and people from all walks of life were present.
**17,000 people die in breast cancer every year**

Seventeen thousand people die in breast cancer every year in the country. 22,000 people are being infected in this cancer anew. If the cancer is detected in primary stage, fully recovery is possible. Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, State Minister for Ministry of Women and Children Affairs said this while addressing as chief guest at a discussion meeting organised by Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital at Mission Bhaban auditorium on 1 October 2012 marking International Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2012. Minister also said, 13 thousand Community Health Clinics out of 18 thousands have been already operating across the country. It may be possible to make aware about the Breast Cancer of rural women on the basis of Public Private Partnership (PPP) through these Health Clinics.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) President Kazi Rafiqul Alam presided over the meeting while Meher Afroz Chumki MP, Chairperson of Standing Committee on Women and Children Affairs was present as Special Guest. Meher Afroz Chumki MP said, People should be aware before cancer is infected, specially for women. One lac 50 thousand people die in cancer every year in the country.

Cancer Specialist of AMCGH Prof. Dr. Syed Akram Hossain and Surgical Oncologist Prof. Dr. Harun-or-Rashid jointly presented the key-note paper on breast cancer awareness. Adviser of Dhaka Ahsania Mission Prof. Dina Haque delivered the special address. Director of AMCGH Brigadier General (retd) Dr. Syed Fazle Rahim delivered the welcome address.

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**Dipon Foundation donates land & building to DAM**

Dipon Foundation donated 2.5 bighas of land with a two storied building located in Savar to Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) on 13 October, 2012. Dipon Foundation Chairman Mahmud Hasan handed over the donation deed to DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam at T.K Bhaban, Karwan bazar in the city.

Dipon Foundation Chairman Mahmud Hasan donated this land with building to DAM for building Dipon-Ahsania Shelter Home for Elderly People and Child Care Centre. Md Badiuzzaman, brother of Mahmud Hasan, and Deputy Director of DAM Kazi Forhad Alvi were present on the occasion.

A multistoried shelter home for distressed elderly people will be built on this land. An abandoned children's rehabilitation centre and a healthcare centre will be run on the two storied building. In future, a primary school and a technical training centre will be established. DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam said, Mahmud Hasan has undertaken the noble initiative as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Following his footsteps, many more will come forward to such public welfare activity, he hoped.

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**TMD facilitated trainings to help ensure gender equity at workplace**

ILO-Gender : Training & Material Development (TMD) Division of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has conducted a training course in two batches for creating awareness to bring gender equity and prevention of sexual violence against women at workplace. The one-day training course was held for one batch on October 4 and for other batch on October 11, 2012. General Manager (GM) of Agriculture Marketing Company Limited, Hazrat Ali and GM of Pran Industrial Park Sheikh Abdul Kader jointly inaugurated the training course. While inaugurating the training course, both of them termed the training course as 'timely and important'.

The GM of Pran Industrial Park Sheikh Abdul Kader informed that wages of women workers have been increased from Tk 65 to Tk 75. He said that the increment was done because Pran Industrial Park thinks that women workers work 'sincerely'. Like garment industry, 80% women will also get an opportunity to work at Pran Industrial Park, the GM declared.

TMD Director Rabeya Sultana, trainers Nasima Shaheen, Mariam Jahan Sonali and programme officer Saira Sultana conducted the training sessions. Senior, mid and junior level officials of two separate wings of Pran Group (Agriculture Marketing Co. Ltd. and Pran Industrial Park) participated. A total of 60 trainees took part.

PPVD : TMD Division also conducted a three-day training course for area coordinators of various projects of DAM including personnel of PPVD Project in the month of October, 2012. Rabeya Sultana, Director of TMD Division, has conducted the course held in Barguna. Area coordinators of various projects of DAM in Barguna Sadar upazila and all staffs of Barguna and Patharghata working areas of PPVD Project took part. Of them, five were women and 21 others men. Participants opined that the training course will help realise importance of gender equity in the project area. More dynamism in day-to-day affairs will come following the training course, they commented.
Stop child marriage

Child marriage is a social ill. In child marriage, not only the rights of girls are violated but they also fall victims of further exploitation. Because of lack of awareness of parents and community people, a large number of girls before attainment of the age of 18, get married, which is quite illegal. The reality is that many adult girls do not keep official record of their dates of birth and marriage.

Members of law enforcement agencies and local government leaders try to prevent child marriage but they do not receive information of child marriage from the community on time. Sometimes, community people try to hide information on child marriage.

Parents usually accept any 'good' proposal because they think that if they wait for marriage of their daughters for a long period then they might face problems in future regarding marriage of their daughters, according to versions of some adolescent girls. It is a common notion of community people that their economic burden will decrease a lot after child marriage of daughters. Other young girls said every parent wants better life partners for their daughters. This is why, girls usually do not object to their parents' decision of marriage.

In our society, when a girl grows up in a family, her family suffers from a sense of insecurity. This is why, parents want to marry off their daughters as early as possible. In reality, insecurity prevails in schools and other places. We observe that many students fall victims of sexual harassment in schools and other places.

Health and education of a girl are threatened when she is married off at a young age. The situation worsens when she becomes pregnant in a short time after marriage. The phenomenon contributes to raise numbers of premature births. Early marriage of girls not only leads to early pregnancy but often causes their physiological damage during child birth. Moreover, married girls have fewer social connections due to restricted mobility. In a new situation, they have limited control over family resources and they have no power to take decision at their husbands' families.

As part of social responsibility, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has been relentlessly working to prevent child marriage from society. DAM is striving to create awareness in this regard among school students, teachers, parents and community people. With the help of members of youth groups and adolescent groups, DAM is trying to prevent child marriage as soon as possible.

While implementing the programme, DAM provides support for capacity building on human rights perspective. Proper measures are being taken to deal with the issue of child marriage. Community-based actions are being taken for preventing child marriage, violence against women and children, lessening the menace of dowry, encouraging birth registration and marriage registration etc. Members of youth groups and adolescent groups contribute a lot in raising awareness on child marriage, dowry, domestic violence, gender inequity and education. Because of their intensive activities, dropout rates of school-going children in schools and trend of child marriage in society have reduced considerably. Adolescent and youth group members are basically acting as "watch dogs" for social change. Whenever they face any problem, they usually share problems with other groups and then they communicate with the project staff to resolve problems. They also maintain close working relationship with community leaders and UP/GP representatives to involve themselves in the social action. This has been evident from decreasing incidents of child marriage in society in recent days.

Because of DAM intervention, an effective working relationship has been developed between community people and local government leaders for prevention of child marriage. Here are a few recommendations for stopping child marriage.

The government should take immediate measures for strict enforcement of law to prevent child marriage. The ground reality is that legal actors alone are not sufficient to combat the issue rather community-led awareness programmes are effective to prevent child marriage. Steps should be taken for safety and security of young girls so that they can move freely everywhere. Efforts should be made to convene that each and every marriage and child birth is officially registered. Parents and guardians should be motivated so that they do not pay dowry to would-be husbands of their daughters because it is quite unethical and an unhealthy practice. Relentless work with local community is a must to ensure that all community educational programs are gender sensitive.

Proper advocacy is required with relevant government departments, particularly, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law, to ensure strict enforcement of law regarding dowry. Wide awareness campaign be made so that people can learn that demand for dowry is a punishable offence. Relentless efforts should be made so that no family members of girls indulge in the unhealthy practice of dowry in the name of gift.

Rowshon Ara, Project Manager, PPVD Project, Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DAM in frame

Activities at Drop-in Centre