

Prodeep, Ranger Unit brings hope for change

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Ten-year old Saddam is a canteen boy at Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall of Dhaka University (DU). But the youngster is already dreaming of the day when he will get admitted in a school which will be the first step for him towards changing his life.

Another canteen boy, six-year-old Farook, also works at the canteen of the female dormitory and is often found engrossed in reading books. He also has plans of getting into a school soon. "I can read the books now and my teachers never scold me. When I go back to my parents, I will ask them to put me in a school," said Farook.

Poor children like Saddam and Farook, who work in dining halls or canteens of DU and class four employees are seeing new hopes for their future thanks to the initiative of Dhaka University Ranger Unit and a voluntary organisation called Prodeep, who have been trying to ensure basic education for them.

For the last six years Prodeep has been operating at 11 male dormitories with its own resources. It does not have an office and does not receive any funds or donations from the university authorities.

Founder of Prodeep and an outgoing student of DU Mohammad Masudur Rahman informed that more than a thousand children had received basic education from Prodeep.

At present 116 students of

the university voluntarily teaches some 300 canteen boys and other child workers.

"But our programme is often hampered due to lack of funds. It is no longer possible for me to bear 4,000 Taka every month for their educational equipment," said Rahman adding that the vice chancellor of DU had assured Prodeep of funds and a room at the TSC in their last monthly meeting.

"An action plan with an estimated budget of Tk 23,000 for educational instruments was submitted to the treasurer of the university. But it has not been approved yet," said Rahman.

Treasurer Prof. Syed Rashidul Hossain said that only university-approved active organisations are eligible to receive funds.

"As the university syndicate has not recognised Prodeep yet, it is not possible to provide any financial help to them at the moment," said Hossain.

The Dhaka University Ranger Unit, which was established in 1973, meanwhile was providing basic education to the canteen boys of the two female dormitories under its mass education programme.

"The boys are very eager and serious in their studies and are enjoying it. Infact, sometimes we feel that we are not giving them enough time because of our own commitments. They work hard all day and yet, they come to us in the evening in their spare time," said ranger Rina.

Twelve canteen boys are



Some of the Dhaka University canteen boys smile as they wait in hope for a change in life.

now learning to read and write at Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall and Rokeya Hall. But unfortunately, two other female dormitories -- Shamsunnahar Hall and Bangladesh-Kuwait Moitree Hall --had to postpone

their education project.

Secretary of Ranger advisory council Selina Begum Chowdhury said internal problems in those halls and lack of interested volunteers could have been the reason behind the

project stopping there.

Selina said that in the future, they have a plan to admit the boys at the Unicef-funded Ucep school.

"The problem is that the boys stay here for three to four years

and then go away somewhere else. As they are in a floating state all the time, it is difficult to manage a permanent school or educational system for them."

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