July 16 to August 16 of 2008.

One of the challenges faced by BYLC was during its preliminary stage. When he went to the government he had to go to the Joint Stock to register as a company as they were not happy with the use of the word 'leadership'in the company name. The term 'leadership' is often misunderstood in our country. People relate it to politics and authority most of the times. But what he believes is that leadership is more of a process/ activity that helps improve the human condition. BYLC wants to focus on action driven leadership.

When Ahmed and Shammi were looking for members, another problem occurred. At first, they had a hard time explaining to people why it's important to bring different groups together. Madrassas were initially sceptical but once the program started and they saw what was taught in class, the situation got better. But I what was found during this journey was that the Madrassa students were the most sincere, committed and compassionate in the group. There was also the matter of explaining to everyone that BYLC is what this country needs.

After selecting the members through a two step process of a written application and then an interview which assessed their responses to BYLC's mission, Ahmed referred to these young men and women as the best and brightest of Bangladesh.

On the program's first day, a large group of thirty was divided into five small groups that were composed of two Bangla Medium students, two English Medium students and two Madrassa students.

During their first two weeks, each group - with a beneficial mentor from Youth Power in Social Action (YPSA) - introduced each other by discussing their personal goals and leadership attempts, understanding society, depicting leadership in art and coming to an overall agreement on the definition of leadership. BYLC assigned the students to write and present to the class a speech on a topic they felt strongly passionate about. After being graded on criteria such as body language and vocal presentation of their subject, the students were able to give their speech again. In their third week, the students were ready to put into action what they have learned.

BYLC's pilot project was to have its students to go to the Kusumbag slum and implement stable ideas to benefit its residents. BYLC is having its students do this fieldwork so they could interact with those who are denied much necessary help.

Among the several problems the students came across, the few were sanitation, plant life and children not receiving basic education. One group brought in an engineer to implement a better bathroom while another group spoke to some of the parents with the proposal that they come teach the children themselves a few days a week.

When I asked Quddus what inspired BYLC to have these 30 young men and women put their heart to the test, "We included the community project part so that kids get a taste of how it is to work in the real world. Many kids, including myself, have never been to a slum before this, have no idea where their buas live. This is a wake up call for them to share in how half of the country is living like. And by coming up with a project idea as a team they learn to think creatively and find the courage to do something, anything which is very important for leadership."

A facilitator provided by YPSA led each group. Although it is the students who do work, each facilitator makes sure that there are no problems affecting their group. Yasmin Akhter, facilitator of one group who has an MA in political science from Chittagong University and now spends her time with YPSA preventing domestic violence against women - decided that the group should abide by her rules, give her their contact information, and go on with their work.

Children were running around less than half-clothed. These children observed what we were doing, and it seemed that they were seeing BYLC a look that said, "You're our ray of hope". Another problem was the lack of a recycling system. Mass amounts of trash were piled next to a dirty, clogged sewage system.

The students were really surprised that families of 4-9 members are forced to live in a single room. Around 60 - 70 families are forced to use a single bathroom. Cost for this single room can be up to Tk. 2000. However, a family's average earning is around Tk. 2500-3000. What is worse is that each house is jammed next to each other on the side of the city. When the groups figured out how to implement their respective projects, this is what was established by each group during their more than 600 hours of community service: Youth Power dealt with victims of environmental damage. Change began a medical awareness campaign. NAASAH formed a school which teaches children primary education. Sanctity cleared the air by introducing sanitation methods. Iron Butterfly set up a school for children to do fun learning activities. Their main goal now is to run a fundraising campaign. Donor funding is an option but they will first try to get their local business community involved.

At the end of the day, Shammi summed up the heart of BYLC into a few words. "Human potential is infinite. I heard Dr. Yunus speak at the JFK library in Boston, MA - you were there too - and the message that struck me was his faith in human ability. He believed that these uneducated, timid women could become entrepreneurs if given the chance and he stuck to his guns despite everything. Our kids have displayed the same thing."