Youth Transformers

By Sumaiya Ahsan Bushra

"GLOBAL projects customized to meet local needs" was the motto behind the recently initiated projects of the British Council in Bangladesh. British Council, an UK based organization, which traditionally works on enhancing cultural relations between UK and other countries, has undertaken a number of projects in the last couple of years based on the development needs of Bangladesh. These projects mainly focus on young people and are implemented in partnership with various ministries along with other various Non government organizations such as the Hunger Project.

One such project involving today's youth to make the future better is Active Citizens. Active Citizens' central theme is to involve young Bangladeshis globally and to act as a motivating agent to make them work for their community. It aims to act as a pathway for the young generation to overcome traditional barriers, access decision makers and influence the lives of others in their community. In addition, it allows interested individuals and volunteers of the community to share ideas and experiences with different groups within and outside the community through intercultural dialogues and global citizenship programmes. These participants come from all walks of life, beginning with youth workers with different educational backgrounds, women's groups, educators, community development professionals, voluntary sector representatives and faith leaders.

Active Citizens is dedicated mainly to work with young people or interested individuals within the age group of 15-25 through social learning, joint social action projects, and international exchanges with other Active Citizens' communities.

Active Citizens has been operating in affiliation with the Hunger Project Bangladesh. The programme is divided into two segments: Developed locally and Share globally. The segment, 'Developed locally' bears two parts - training sessions and social action projects.

In the training session part, 6 UK trainers trained 65 local facilitators who were volunteers of the Hunger Project. Later, these facilitators conducted 80 training sessions in 20 communities all over Bangladesh producing 2500 young leaders. These trainings were based on a module developed globally but customized locally in order to ensure that it reflects the local needs. After the training, the young leaders developed Social Action Projects (SAP) based on their own community and there will be more than 80 such projects. These mainly highlighted the problems faced by the people of a particular community.

