Team Bangladesh

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Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world that can boast of its huge and dynamic population of young people. A huge number of young Bangladeshis always keeps the nation alive with their voluntary work that aim to bring about a positive change in the society. Mahmud Hasan a fresh graduate of Dhaka University is one such young Bangladeshi. When he went to Nepal to attend a training session, he met John Christian, a young dreamer from Denmark who wants to establish a society where education will be free for all. These two friends worked out a plan to make that dream come true in Bangladesh. Their mission is to reach students of remote areas with an interesting and joyful method of learning called alternative education. Rene Peterson and Jonas Stampe from Copenhagen University joined and "Team Bangladesh" was formed.

At that time it was in need of a mentor who would support the cause, which Professor Dr Amjad Hossain and his AB foundation duly became. Mahmud Hasan says, "A few things happened in my life which is very significant to me. One of these is my meeting with Professor Dr Amjad." They managed Amena Baki Residential Model School for Team Bangladesh's alternative education project. The school is situated in the border town of Chirir Bandar, Dinajpur which is some 341 km away from Dhaka and one of the northern most areas of Bangladesh.



Team Bangladesh with the school students (In the middle row- John christian, Mahmud Hasan, Rene Peterson and Jonas Stampe. PHOTO COURTESY: MAHMUD HASAN

Despite the remoteness of its location, the school is quite dynamic in its teaching method. To ensure the access of impoverished families, they have resource centres called Child Development Centres (CDC) in remote villages where students and their families are counselled to send their children to the school. Thanks to the cordial support of Dr Amjad and AB foundation the Team Bangladesh not only found a school to run their initiative but the school authorities also provided their food and accommodation in that far flung region of Bangladesh. Dr. Amjad says in this regard, "Bringing students and volunteers from other countries can be a good way of socio-cultural knowledge exchange. Its aim is to ignite the students' minds and connect them globally and we are very happy to accommodate the volunteers at our school". Such a warm welcome highly motivated these young workers to start their work with great enthusiasm.

The first day with the school students started with a welcoming introductory session. The students were excited to get some teachers from Dhaka University and some foreign guests from Denmark. They all spontaneously wanted to learn English from these wonderful teachers. But the lessons were not like the usual English classes. These young teachers soon became friends with the young students. At the open air classes in the school playground there was actually no teacher, all of them were friends who were facilitating each other in teaching and learning. According to Rene, "We didn't teach grammar and traditional things to these young friends. We actually had a lot of fun with tongue twisters, pronunciation and storytelling and as well as learning communicative English." Such joyful learning sessions give the students a great opportunity to learn how to communicate fluently in English.

Now the Team Bangladesh has around 150 members from class 6 to 9 of Amena Baki Residential Model School. With these energetic members, the team does not confine itself to only English teaching and learning in the open air classes. Another core objective of the alternative education process is to learn through community activities. Soon these students were engaged in various community awareness activities with their foreign friends, which are coordinated by Hassan. They set up trash