

COMPUTERS FOR ALL

ANIKA HOSSAIN

CAFFE (Computers Are Free for Everyone) is an NGO that strives to provide technology based educational opportunities to the most underprivileged children of our society. How this organisation was formed, is an inspirational story. In 2004, Luke Doyle, a high school teacher from the UK was sent to Bangladesh by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) to help with the educational sector of our country. He started working in an NGO in Sylhet, where he met a child who changed the course of his future. "Kobir Uddin was the son of a farmer working with the same NGO," says Luke. "He was eleven years old when his father brought him to our cafeteria where I was working on my laptop. He was fascinated by the computer, and despite our language barrier I wanted to teach him how to use it. In a way he was the first CAFFE student before any of it was thought of, he showed me that this could be a powerful thing."

In 2010, when Luke came back for a second stint in Bangladesh, he decided to help more children like Kobir by giving them an opportunity to learn to use and have access to modern technology. Kobir, who was



PHOTO: COURTESY



PHOTO: SHOUROVE CHOWDHURY

now a student of A'Levels in Dhaka, was more than willing to help. When CAFFE (funded in the UK) held its first computer lesson in 2011 they had four computers, twelve students and one teacher. They now have over 200 students, fourteen laptops, thirteen tablets and five teachers.

CAFFE focuses on three areas, primary school, vocational training and curriculum development. Their target is to promote critical thinking, creativity and team work. They have recently introduced a filmmaking course where students attended a movie making workshop with a pro-

fessional director. Through this course they are taught to use filming equipment, come up with ideas for scripts and film their own movies.

"The youngest students start on Paint," says Luke. "We've also got stop motion animation, engineering, a game design workshop, and then we move them on to some simple coding, then eventually into actual coding. We've got teenagers who have made some apps, they're on Google Play, in the CAFFE app store. The older ones are doing Photoshop and Illustrator, and they've been working on a project to design a logo for a real

company, so what we're really aiming for, is to give them real life experiences."

The students come in droves from the surrounding slum areas of Nururchala, where the NGO is located. "Nowadays people from all walks of life understand the importance of education," says Kobir, "We want to help our students find employment eventually," says Luke. "They're still mostly in school or college; they may not go to university and get a degree, so it depends on whether the experience they have gained here can count. We are trying

to get them internships for this summer through our links with various businesses."

CAFFE aims to teach as many students as possible in hope that they too will contribute to the learning process by spreading their knowledge. "We can provide them with curriculum material and training to do so. We also hope to share our curriculum ideas with local schools. We have developed learning apps which will help children all over the country with basic education," says Kobir.

To learn more please visit www.caffebd.org

On The MOVE

NAZIBA BASHER

From being a student of SFX Green Herald International School, to graduating from the New York Film Academy; from training under Bollywood Guru Kishore Namit Kapoor to training under the skillful and poised Mira Nair, Alex McKenzie's story is nothing short of a wonder and it keeps getting better.

"Filmmaking, for me, happened when I decided to move a step forward from photography. Like photography, it was a hobby at first. Every time I took a photograph, I wanted to tell a story with it. So I decided to move from one frame to 24 frames per second," says Alex.

Alex gets most of his inspiration from his father. And when he had the support of his family, there was no stopping him from reaching his goal. "He always told me that he wanted me to do something different, something that will be exciting and also something he can be proud of. He is the reason I went into the field, and I love it very much. Now, I can never really imagine myself sitting in a cubicle and doing a 9 to 5 job. I always wanted something more," adds Alex.

Currently working as a Managing Partner in an entertainment company in Mumbai, Alex is gaining all the experience he can from Bollywood, with industry professionals working as his partners. Alex's role in the media doesn't just stop at filmmaker. "I'd rather say I'm an Entertainment Entrepreneur as well-- managing celebrities, endorsements, live events, sports, television and film. I am and love being involved in all these sectors."

Preparations are in progress for a Bollywood celebrity talk that Alex is presently involved with. This particular show will be his Bollywood directorial debut.

Already having the experience of working with different companies and artistes previously on various themes and projects-- from musicians and actors to corporations such as Standard Chartered Bank, British American Tobacco and more, Alex has only one plan for the future- to keep moving forward!

"I'm only as good as my next move. From moving to Mumbai and venturing into the world of Bollywood, I am always striving to be better than I was yesterday," says Alex.



PHOTO: CANVAS



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSSIN AGAZ APURBO

NEW BLOOD in Filmmaking

FAUZIA SULTANA

What is that one thing we all want in life? Of course, happiness. Not to mention, Bangladesh has ranked amongst the happiest nations in the world. With this idea in mind and passion in heart, a group of film and photography enthusiasts came together to form The Bengali Filmmakers (TBF). "We wanted a break away from the stereotypical subjects like politics or corruption and rather involve the common people. So we set out to make our first video project --'Are You Happy? Dhaka, Bangladesh'," said The Bengali Filmmakers.

The Bengali Filmmakers is a team of seven high-school friends with interests in street and art photography, multimedia visuals and documentaries. Their work is mostly based on citizen journalism that involves public citizens. "Not everyone has access to Facebook or blogs to express their viewpoints on a particular issue. Through this group, we are trying to create a platform where people can voice out their opinions," said the group members.

The idea of forming this organisation emerged after

the successful release of their first combined video project. "We were so overwhelmed by the acceptance and responses from people that we thought of forming a group, where like-minded creative people can share their knowledge of filmmaking, discuss art and films, and implement creativity on self-initiated projects," said the members.

So far The Bengali Filmmakers have produced two social visual surveys, 'Are You Happy? Dhaka, Bangladesh' and 'Bangladesh Cricket - A Message-ICC T20 World Cup 2014'. Recently, they won an award at Inter-University Short Film Competition for their first short film "The Letter". At present they are working on projects with One Degree Initiative and other NGOs. "In the future we want to produce significant works, like documentaries on the key issues of Bangladesh or a feature film," the members shared.

On asking if they are happy with their work, they said, "It is extremely encouraging when people follow and appreciate our work. What would make us even happier is when people will get a glimpse of all the positives of Bangladesh through it."