

There have always been a lot of division amongst the people of this country. There are religious divisions, political divisions, class divisions, and then some. Because of these divisions, the unity amongst the people in Bangladesh has faded to a point of obsolescence. One gap that desperately needs to be bridged, is amongst those with the strongest hold on society and those who want to develop it.

who had the most influence in a community," says Sara L Taylor, Deputy Country Representative, Asia Foundation. The project began in 2002 and continued till 2006. It resumed again in 2007 and continued till 2011. The Asia Foundation also partnered with the Islamic Foundation, who agreed to send their Imams from the Imam Training Academy Centers. They worked with around 27,000 Imams. The project was

After the Leaders of Influence project ended, the Asia Foundation continued to work with Imams and through one of the participants' suggestions, their wives too. The continued work included training that focused on 'Violence against Women' and 'Good Governance'. The Violence against Women programme consisted of topics such as 'Violence against Women in Bangladesh', 'Solution according to Islam', 'Islam's take on Mental, Physical, Sexual and Economic violence', 'Risks of violence in Islam' and they were taught which service providers to go to when faced with problems related to such issues, if they cannot keep it under control

say the least. The Imams themselves have been actively participating in developmental and social changes in their communities. They have partnered with their wives and while they cater to the men, their wives educate the women, in their respective communities. They have become open to discussions on topics such as family planning and child marriage- which would have been considered impossible a couple of years ago. The women have started advocating against violence against women and are taking measures towards eradicating it from their communities. "There were Imams and their wives giving us

THE CHANGE WE WANT

NAZIBA BASHER



Sara L Taylor

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

'Leaders of Influence', an initiative of Asia Foundation and a project funded by USAID, also called 'Imams on A Bus', began with the intent to reduce the distrust and miscommunication between religious leaders and NGOs, or development organisations, and remove the misconceptions that religious leaders have about development work and also remove the misconceptions that other people have about religious leaders. "The reason we decided to focus on Imams (Islamic religious leaders) was because when we thought about spreading the message all the way to the grass root level, we had to think of people



PHOTO COURTESY: ASIA FOUNDATION



embedded into their regular 40 day training, with an addition of 3 extra days for social development training. While working on the project, Imams were taken to different service centers where they were shown the kind of development work done in NGOs. During the first phase, there were only Muslim religious leaders, and in the second phase, there were leaders of other religions along with people from other professions. "Even though it took a while for their interest to grow, it ultimately did, and they were all very positive about it by then," says Nazrul Islam, Director, Islam and Development Programme, Asia Foundation.

The response and result of these on-going projects have been remarkable, to

themselves. The Good Governance programme, which the Asia Foundation have started in madrasas and other secular Higher Secondary Schools as well, focuses on topics such as 'Good Governance in Bangladesh', 'Participation in Governance', 'Tolerance and Mutual Respect', 'Judgement', 'Responsibility of Religious Leaders' and more. All of the topics are discussed in an Islamic and Bangladeshi context. "All of our curriculums were designed by religious experts and religious scholars," says Sara Taylor. We, as citizens, have been hoping for change for as long as we can remember. Change in attitude, change in politics, change in infrastructure, we hope for change in every aspect of life. But now, thanks to initiatives like the Leaders of Influence, we will finally, after the longest of waits, start seeing the change. ■

STYE IN THE EYE!

ANIKA HOSSAIN

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ever get that annoying feeling something is stuck in your eye and no matter how much you try, you can't get rid of it? Save yourself the trouble and take a closer look. You have a stye (hordeolum). This pimple-like growth under the eye-lid is an infection of its secretory glands, which causes inflammation, redness, swelling, tenderness, crusting of the eye-lid margins, burning sensations, blurred vision, mucus discharge, scratchy sensations and pain. These lumps can either point inward or outwards, are whitish or yellowish in colour and usually appear in one or both eye-lids simultaneously.

The culprit causing the stye is usually a bacteria known as *Staphylococcus*

which infects the oil glands in the eye-lid. Excessive discharge from the oil glands increases the chances of developing a stye. What causes this bacteria you ask? You of course! When you forget to (or are too lazy to) remove your make-up properly at night, when you can't be bothered to buy new make-up and use outdated and infected cosmetics, when you are absolutely gross and don't bother maintaining eyelid hygiene, or you have an eyelid disease like blepharitis, meibomitis, or androsacea (okay fine it's not always your fault). Stress and hormonal changes can cause this as well.

Although styes usually disappear in a few days, sometimes, complications may occur. If you notice that your eye is

swollen shut, the area around your eye is red, you can't see properly, the stye doesn't go away for weeks, the stye keeps coming back or bleeds, you lose your lovely lashes, the annoying stye appears on the bottom lid close to your nose, the whites of your eye turns red and you start resembling Cyclops, you keep tearing up unnecessarily, you have thick discharge oozing out of your eye, you have a high fever, the lymph nodes on your neck swell up, you see two of everything—be smart and go to a doctor. You may need pain meds or even surgery.

However, most of you will not be that unfortunate. For regular styes, apply warm compress four to six times a day for about 15 minutes. Gently scrub your eye-lid with tap water or with a mild

shampoo (baby shampoo works). Make sure you close your eyes when you do this, so you don't cause more damage as you are obviously prone to do. DO NOT no matter how tempted you are, squeeze or puncture the stye. Stop wearing contacts and eye make-up for a few days (yes it's a tragedy but would you rather see, or look hot?). Do not use eye-creams or lotions incase they are infected.

In summary, keep your eyes clean by washing frequently, do not touch your eyes with dirty hands, throw away all your old cosmetics and buy new ones from reliable shops that won't sell you contaminated rubbish. Follow these instructions and hope for the best. Good luck!

Source: <http://www.emedicinehealth.com/>

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BRAC, the world's largest non-government organisation, plans to spend over \$15 million in two years to help earthquake victims in Nepal. "The money will mainly be spent on building houses," Asif Saleh, senior director of BRAC, told The Daily Star. BRAC will begin the initiative with Tk 8 crore of its own funds, and another Tk 2.5 crore will be donated by its employees. The earthquake that struck Nepal in phases in April and this month killed more than 8,500 people. Many countries, including Bangladesh, have since helped the impoverished South Asian country.

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SOURCE: THE DAILY STAR