

THE STORY OF SAVING LIVES

With their age old slogan 'Lifebuoy Jekhane Shastho Shekhane,' Lifebuoy has indeed been fighting the good fight in Bangladesh. Since 1964, the brand has been with its consumers through and through, providing supreme healthcare and protection. Meeting the needs of 160 million Bangladeshis is no walk in the park, but Lifebuoy has undertaken this challenge for the long haul. Alongside producing healthcare consumer goods, it also strives to instil hygiene habits for a healthy life.

In 1894, Victorian England was up against epidemics such as typhoid, smallpox, cholera and diphtheria. It was William Lever, one of the founding members of Unilever who launched Lifebuoy with the hopes of improving hygiene. Not only did the brand provide healthcare products, but also enforced hygienic habits among people through campaigns, for which it still remains one of the leading health soaps in the world. Having said that, its involvement with social welfare speaks volumes of the hygiene habits Lifebuoy has been trying to install within the country and beyond.

Every year, 1.7 million children, globally, die before the age of 5 from life threatening diseases such as diarrhoea and pneumonia. But with a simple habit of hand washing with soaps, this comes down to a minimum. Lifebuoy initiated 'Help a Child Reach 5' programme aiming to reduce the number of deaths with this simple yet effective habit. This one act can save lives for the greater good, and allow a child to experience the joys of childhood to the fullest. Lifebuoy plans to not only create greater awareness but also bring about sustained changes in hand washing behaviours, to curb diarrhoea and child mortality. In light of the situation, Lifebuoy focuses to make a difference among 1 billion people through their hand washing programs by 2020.

That's not all; Lifebuoy takes social welfare to the next level with the largest school hygiene programme in Bangladesh. "School of 5" ropes in Lifebuoy's decades of experience, running hand washing campaigns around the world. This programme uses an effective strategy that helps achieve sustained behavioural change.

Through this, Lifebuoy stresses on the importance of washing hands with soap during the five key occasions: after going to the toilet, before breakfast, lunch and



dinner, and while bathing. With health and hygiene in mind, this programme runs over a period of 21 days, consisting of 4 visits. To sweeten the pot, it uses a unique

combination of activities such as comics, puzzles, stories and games to teach children about the importance of washing hands. The programme also recruits teachers and parents as strong driving agents for change during community contact. It becomes even more effective once teachers and parents work together for the same cause and creates a favourable eco-system for behavioural change to take place. Starting in 2011, the programme has reached an incredible number of 29.8 million people, covering 20% of all primary schools in Bangladesh with the lifesaving message of washing hands with soaps.

Alongside their health campaigns, Lifebuoy has been supporting "Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital." Since 2001, this floating hospital provides free healthcare in the char and riverbank based population clusters in northern

eye, dental and general treatment. This floating hospital is the true symbol of a Lifebuoy.

But this battle for health awareness does not stop with these two initiatives. The brand continues to go all out with Global Hand Washing Day Celebration. This is an annual awareness day celebrated in over 100 countries worldwide on October 15, co-founded by Unilever along with other public and private partners in 2008. Through this occasion, Lifebuoy wants to educate and inform everyone about healthy hygiene habits. Lifebuoy, in Bangladesh, also celebrates "Global Hand Washing Day" every year to raise awareness on washing hands with soap. The implementation of the programme has moved millions and it's safe to say that all of this came to being with the constant dedication from Lifebuoy.

The brand continues to impart its mission and goal among enthusiastic individuals. "Lifebuoy Lifesaver Volunteer Programme" is the latest initiative taken by Lifebuoy Bangladesh. It has been launched on the occasion of Global Hand Washing Day this year. This platform allows participants to join Lifebuoy's 'Help a Child Reach 5' campaign by volunteering in Lifebuoy's 'School of 5' programme. Citizens of Bangladesh aged over 18 can easily register to volunteer in this programme by logging on at www.lifebuoylifesaversbd.com or giving a missed call to 09-613-111-111. All selected volunteers will undergo training and attend an orientation session before they commence the programme. They then spend just one hour a week over a four-week period teaching a group of children how to wash their hands. Through this, volunteers can help to save lives just by dedicating an hour every week.

Since its inception, Lifebuoy has braved countless programs and become more than just soap. This life-saving brand not only prevents diseases but is headstrong about the behavioural change programs it has implemented around the world. Its vision is one which has informed and educated people about the need for hygiene in daily life practices; and it all starts with one simple act of washing hands. Through Lifebuoy one can learn that you don't have to move mountains to make a difference among billions. It all starts with you!

Courtesy: Unilever

NUMBERS

35,000,000

It is the number of textbooks that the Education Ministry plans to distribute among four crore students between class 1 to 10 across the country for free. This year this project would cost the government Tk 733 crore. Since 2010, Government has been distributing free textbooks among the students of primary, secondary, Ebtedai and Dakhil madrasahs and technical institutions every academic year.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

ANIMAL WELFARE

RECOGNISING TRUE COMPASSION

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTOS: TOUSIF FARHAD, VOLUNTEER, OBHOYARONNO

There is a common sight in Bangladesh that can wrench your heart in a matter of seconds- that of a street animal being abused. When we come across a sight as terrible as this, we link it to illiteracy leading to a lack of morals and ethics. But very recently, Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Foundation has proved the situation to be quite different.

On October 9th, 2015, Obhoyaronno, with support and sponsorship from Humane Society International, hosted the first 'Dog Lovers' Day' in the country, to recognise and celebrate the real dog lovers of Bangladesh. Along with celebrating the compassionate souls of the society, Obhoyaronno provided free treatment and vaccination for their dogs along with safety kits.

"There is an unprecedented notion in our country that animal welfare is only considered by the 'rich and educated'. What I have learned from hosting this event is that compassion has absolutely nothing to do with literacy and education," says Rubaiya Ahmad, founder



of Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Foundation. The event moved from Dhanmondi, to Karail Slum, and then finally Gulshan. "When we were in Dhanmondi, Rabindra Sharabar, to celebrate Dog Lovers' Day, we were shunned by a man who was 'literate and had a high social status'. He said 'this is a developed, literate society. There is no room for such nonsense' when we told him that we were there to celebrate dogs and dog lovers. We were surprised by his reaction, but ultimately had to leave because of his persistence to drive us away." On the contrary, when the programme moved the Karail Slum, Rubaiya and her volunteers were met with some of the most compassionate people they had come across. "Starting from

toddlers, to parents, to religious adults in the community, they all were caring and wonderful to the dogs in their area! I was surprised to see that not one dog was starved, not one was ill, not one was unhappy. That really proved to me that literacy and compassion do not go hand in hand at all," says Rubaiya. In Gulshan too, Obhoyaronno were able to carry out the event with cooperation and support from all the dog lovers and other members of the crowd.

On October 21st, 2015, Obhoyaronno, again with the sponsorship and support from Humane Society International, hosted World Rabies Day. The Bangladesh Government also celebrates this day every year. This year Obhoyaronno took the initiative. With the help of volunteers from

the Animal Welfare Club of Dhaka University, Obhoyaronno was able to vaccinate around 40 dogs in five hours, covering almost 80 percent of the dogs in the area, to make Dhaka University a rabies-free campus.

"It was another delightful day for us, especially with the amount of love and

support we had gotten from the members of the university- student and faculty alike. "I was especially touched when a Muslim religious man came to me to share his sorrow of losing his dog. As I listened intently and noticed the sheer sadness in his countenance, I realised how, right at that moment, stereotypes were being shattered, especially in a country where it is believed that our religion prohibits dogs" says Rubaiya. With the man's narrative, many were reminded of Surah Kahf in The Quran about the only real dog that appears in the text, as a companion of the People of the Cave, a small group of young men who, threatened by an ancient king after refusing to abandon their faith, hide in a cave and take a 309-year-long nap. During these three centuries of hiding, their dog lay stretched out at the entrance

of the cave to keep any intruders at bay."

Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Society plans not only to celebrate both these events on an annual basis, but also move it to different cities across Bangladesh. "We celebrated both these events along with World Animal Day, which was on October 4th. We plan to move outside the

city once we expand our regular activities."

With the objective to find real compassion, Rubaiya and her team were pleasantly surprised with the people they have come across as some of the most kind-hearted and loving people, in the most unexpected of places. "We want to celebrate the uncelebrated. All the well established dog



owners and lovers make maybe only 1 percent of dog lovers in the country. If we look in the slums and villages, we will find many, many more. These people not only have big hearts, but accordingly carry out their responsibilities as humans by caring for all creatures- people and animals alike."

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Maybe we've already are a great nation. Maybe we've just been judging the wrong crowd.