

## SPOTLIGHT

Over the years, Jaago Foundation and their volunteer wing VBD (Volunteer for Bangladesh) established their work, philosophy and work across the country. What started out as just a school for slum children, became one of the most popular and active youth organisations in the country. One of the reasons behind this popularity was their UCD campaign. Campaigning for quality education for all children, Jaago and VBD have been celebrating Universal Children's Day for seven years, on November 19th, a day before the Universal Children's Day is observed worldwide – November 20. The friendly yellow army is seen creating awareness and collecting donations for this cause. This year, the organisation finally reached their goal, when the United Nations

declared quality education as the fourth Sustainable Development Goals. And everything began in a little corner located in Rayer Bazar, Dhaka.

Universal Children's Day was first declared on December 14, 1954 by the United Nations. By the resolution 836(IX), the UN declared November 20 to be observed as a day to promote child welfare. Though this day would be celebrated all over the world, Bangladesh had very little knowledge about it, until 2009. "Children's day was limited to a couple of corporate heads holding a press conference in our country," says Korvi Rakhshand, Founder and Chairman of Jaago Foundation. "There was never a celebration or involvement of children. So in 2009, just a couple of months before the day, we came up with the UCD

campaign." The aim was to take the street children on a fun filled day while the teenage volunteers worked as their replacement to raise awareness and funds for quality education. "More than a thousand volunteers showed up for the event and without any struggle we raised 3,75,000 takas," he adds.

With the enormous response from 2009, Jaago again organised the campaign in 2010, only this time the response was way more than they have ever hoped for. Thousands of youngsters started lining up to register for the UCD campaign. "This was when volunteering for Jaago started to become a trend. Every young individual in the city took it as something they have to do before they graduate high school," says Korvi Rakhshand. He also adds, "These volunteers all came from a very privileged background. We are talking about sons and daughters of ministers and officers. The fact that they wanted to get their

hands dirty and work in the streets, even if they took it as a trend, had a huge impact on Dhaka city." That year Jaago collected more than 24,00,000 takas in donations. "I think that year's campaign put us on the mark and UCD became the flagship campaign of Jaago Foundation."

Though the organisation achieved much popularity, it came at a price. In 2011, Jaago Foundation came across great hurdles, and even questioned themselves as to whether they should continue or not. "That year we were going to celebrate UCD in 7 districts and VBD was also collaborating with us for the first time. None of us had any idea that something could go wrong," says the founder. On the day of UCD, for some untold reason the police refused to let the volunteers work in the streets. For this incident UCD was on a hold for several hours. Though they overcame this incident, what happened next was even worse. At the end of the

day, the volunteers were accused of money laundering which led to a lot of negative social media attention. "We were devastated and were thinking if putting an end to this yearly celebration. However, some of our seniors told us to continue and thank God that we listened," says Korvi. Eventually, Jaago and VBD recovered from this incident and continued towards their goal. "This incident taught me that any PR is good PR. This event got us a lot of coverage and people actually wanted to know what we do. I think that was the time when we started to have visitors from all over the country and also from abroad. Everyone wanted to know what we do, and we were all ready to tell them our story."

After 7 years, UCD is considered as more of a celebration than a campaign. Youngsters clear out their schedules to take part in this movement. Several months of preparations and workshops take place for

were asked to write down their pledge for quality education for all in the booklets provided by the volunteers, and upload the photo to <https://goo.gl/XY7b7j>. Companies such as Rahimafrooz Solar, Pizza Hut, KFC, Beximco Pharma also showed their support in the event. While K Nasif partnered with Jaago for photography, Prito Reza took over visuals and videography.

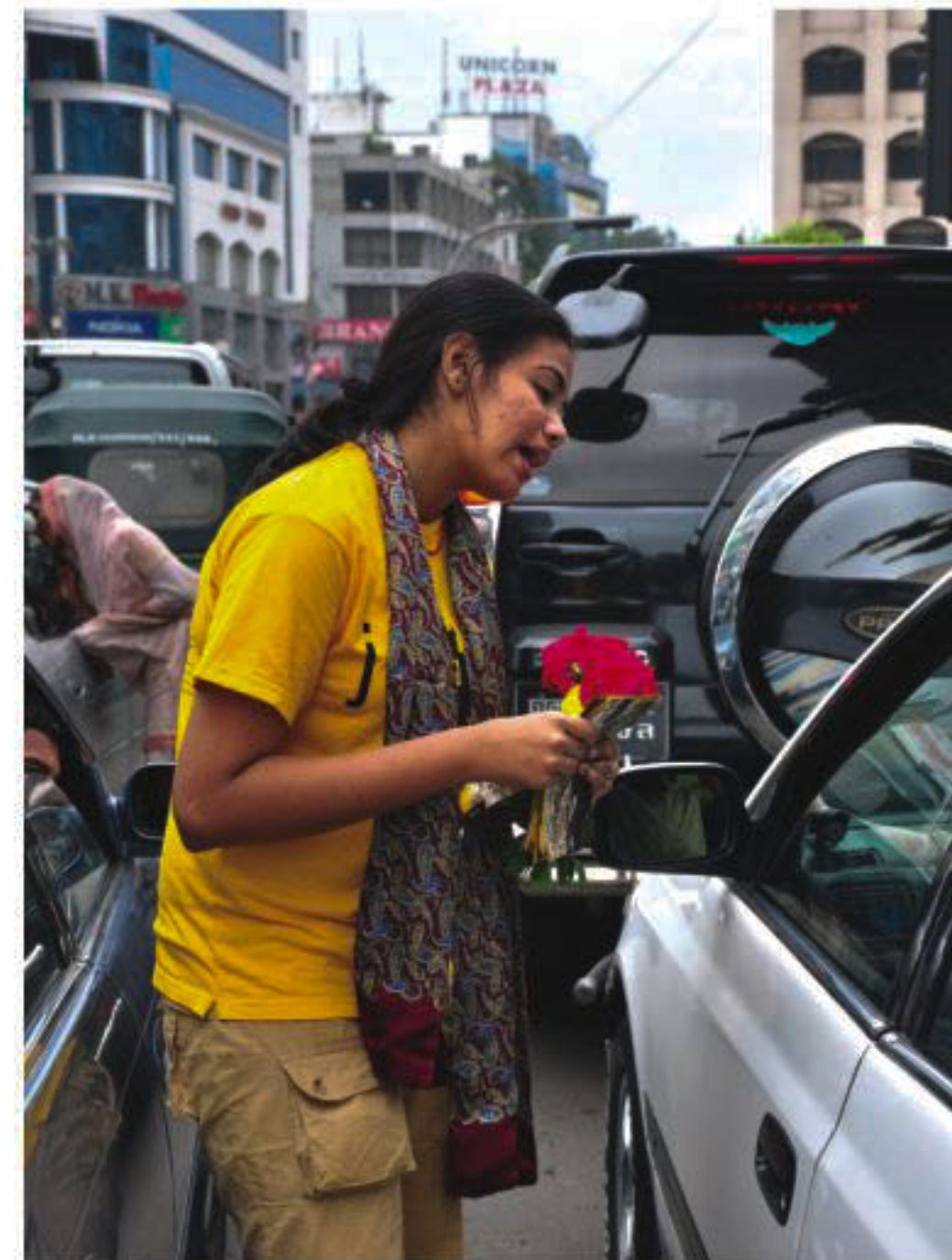
The carnival, held at the Banani field was filled with young enthusiasts. Volunteers and street children all playing

"This year will be the last year we do our flagship campaign. As the UN has

# THE STORY OF A TIDE

APURBA JAHANGIR

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the making of UCD. "The most exciting day is the day before UCD," says Tahmeed Sadab, Volunteer and media officer at Jaago. "We at the office call it 'Chand Raat'! The core volunteers and employees stay up all night and gather flowers from different stores. The last minute preparations take place for the next day."

This year, that is yesterday, the UCD celebrations by Jaago Foundation and VBD were bigger than ever – with more than eight thousand volunteers participating in 32 districts. "We will be observing and celebrating Children's Day in many parts of Bangladesh, from November 19 to 27," says Korvi Rakhshand. This year the Daily Star collaborated with Jaago as their strategic partner, providing the volunteers and donors with special caps and booklets. With the hash tag #JoinTheJourney, donors

together made the day memorable for everyone. Captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza with his team Comilla Victorians came to the event to show support for quality education for all. Other celebrities such as superstar Ananta Jalil, also took part in the affair to show their support. A theme song for UCD was composed by music director Khayam Sanu Sandhi and was sung by Kona, Elita, Emil (Shunno) and Mahadi.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Korvi Rakhshand

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



PHOTO: AKHTER TASLIMA

