

ULAB

Hosts International Conference on Sustainable Development

SIFAT MOSADDEK BHUIYAN

'Sustainable Development', according to the United Nations, means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Realising the need to bring about social and economic development that sustains comes from the ambitions set on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aims to go further to end all sorts of poverty.

Setting goals is one thing, however, and achieving them entirely another. Being familiar with this reality, the Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), organised a two-day International Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD) earlier this month. The aim of the conference was to identify and share empirical research findings and/or practical, evidence-based solutions that can support the Sustainable Development Goals. The conference also provided a unique opportunity to stakeholders – from the government, academia, international agencies, NGOs, and grassroots organisers – to share practical solutions towards the achievement of more sustainable and inclusive societies.

This year's conference was based on 12 themes: Gender and SDGs, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, Sustainable Livelihoods, Integrated Water Resource Management, Migration, Climate Change Adaptation, Coastal Zone Management, Disability and SDGs, Green Cities and Human Settlements, Public Health and Nutrition, Business and Sustainability, and Disaster Management. The conference featured a total of 34 research paper presentations that had been selected from 100 applications.

Eminent scholars from around the world participated in the conference to share highly relevant and valuable insights. Dr. A Mustaque R Chowdhury, Vice Chair of BRAC, and Professor of Population and Family Health at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, USA; Margreet Zwarteveen, Professor of Water Governance at UNESCO-IHE, The Netherlands; Dr. Boris Braun, Professor of Human and Economic Geography, Department of Geography, University of Cologne; Rajib Shaw, Professor at the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, Japan; Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen, Director and Professor at the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka; E.R. Ninal Gunawardena, Professor of Agricultural Engineering at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka; Dr. Jeroen Warner, Associate Professor, Sociology of Development and Change Group at Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR); Dr. Saleemul Haq, Senior Fellow, Climate Change Group, International Institute for Environment and Development Director, ICCCAD; and Dr. Hamidul Haq, Professor and Director of Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), shared their views on issues relevant to effective achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

A plenary session was also held on 'Sustainable Development & National Long-term Plan: Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.' Dr. Rezaur Rahman, Professor of IWF, BUET chaired the session. Professor Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member, GED, Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh, and chief guest at the session, said that Bangladesh being a rapidly developing country, faces major inter-related delta challenges in water safety, food security and socio-economic development, and is prone to natural calamities such as floods, cyclones and droughts. He expressed hope that the recommendation of this conference will be helpful for formulation of a long-term plan for management of the Bangladesh delta.

A total of 200 participants and observers took part in the conference.



Ayman Sadiq, founder of 10 Minute School speaks to the audience.

Empower Inc. Presents 'Talk It Out'

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

Over the past few years, many organisations that focus on workshops or training programmes for the young have sprung up in the country. While they arrange workshops from time to time, many of them fall short of actually teaching the attendees skills they can implement in their day to day lives. To eliminate that gap and to create platforms that truly let young people reach their potential, Empower Inc. started their 'Talk It Out' series of events, the first of which was held at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School recently.

Something that made Empower Inc. unique was that its founder, Shadman Karim, is a young person who is striving to help his fellow youth. Shadman, an AS student of Academia, has always wanted to help the country's youth break the conventions and lead their lives down creative paths. Protidaan and St. Joseph Higher Secondary School came forward to help him in this regard. "We, youngsters, have a lot of potential but very little room to explore that. Empower Inc. wants to create that room," Karim said.

The event featured three speakers. The first speaker was Ayman Sadiq, the founder of 10 Minute School. An educator and entrepreneur, Ayman Sadiq spoke on passions and how people can, through entrepreneurship, turn their passions into their careers. The second speaker was Khalid Mahmud Saad, Youth Leadership Trainer at the British Council. He spoke on presenting oneself clearly. The third and final speaker of the event was Mofizul Haque Chowdhury, vocalist of Black. He spoke on his journey in the music industry thus far and what it takes to survive and make it in music and

similarly creative fields. The event ended with a performance by Mofizul, featuring Moktadir Dewan Shanto (Blunderware) and Rayhan Islam from CIRCLE.

Nearly 150 students attended and when asked, most of them admitted the event was geared differently than most workshops of this sort. Raisa Rahman, from Darland International School and College, noted how the event felt more like a discussion session than a formal workshop. "The trainers were far more informal, something that made learning from them easier. Usually it's just a very stiff arrangement where the speakers talk behind microphones. Here it felt like we were talking to them directly, which made the whole experience far more enjoyable."

Tabassum Islam, from IBA, Dhaka University said the event felt more like a brainstorming session than a workshop. "The informal nature was really helpful for grasping what the speakers were saying."

Ayman Sadiq, one of the speakers, noted this too. "I could really feel the energy of the kids here, which inspired me as well. Usually the energy doesn't resonate like it did at this event."

A major part of the registration fee that attendees paid was used to buy stationery for the Literacy School that operates at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School. In this aspect, Protidaan, a community service organisation founded by students of St. Joseph paid a considerable part.

Rayaan Ibtisham Chowdhury is a business student who spends his nights trying to write a fantasy novel. Mail him at rayaansmail@gmail.com if you want to talk about dragons in suits.