



On a mission to make the best, better

4-H and BIID join hands for youth development

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4-H is America's largest youth development organisation – empowering nearly six million young people across the USA with the skills to lead for a lifetime. Through this programme, a network of volunteers and professionals take care of and mentor children and youth in the areas of science, agriculture, healthy living, and citizenship. They are present in over 50 countries worldwide, and have recently started their activities in Bangladesh.

On October 18, 2017, the SHOUT team had the opportunity to meet and speak to John Garlisch, an Associate Professor at New Mexico State University, USA, and a 4-H Programme Specialist, who was visiting Bangladesh on the invitation of Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID).

Tell us about 4-H and its contribution towards development of the youth.

Garlisch: 4-H is about empowering the youth to be more than what they can be – to give them soft skills, leadership skills, technical skills, and to do that through fun, experiential-based activities. It works with youth from age 8 to 18. It encompasses clubs, special interest groups, in-school and after-school projects, where we take activities such as gardening, animal husbandry, photography, engineering, and we explore those topics in depth. They are led by adult volunteers and mentors who understand the experiential learning process that allows kids to explore, set goals, and maybe make a few mistakes, and then speak about their projects and share their learning with other kids.

It's all about engagement and positive learning so that the youth can teach their peers who, in turn, can teach others. So, they can not only learn the skills, but also think how they can use their skills to help their communities.

Why does 4-H place so much value on the youth?

Garlisch: The youth are the leaders of tomorrow. We need to instil critical thinking, professional and leadership skills in them at a young age. If we don't allow them to raise their voices, to approach the government in advocacy of

youth issues, we are going to lose a whole generation of leaders who can not only think critically but can also use resources wisely.

What do you hope to accomplish through your partnership with BIID?

Garlisch: I have come here through BIID, USAID, and Asia Farmer-to-Farmer Programme to develop a model – the organisational model of 4-H in Bangladesh. BIID is already working

them about the 4-H model. Our slogan is to “learn by doing”, and therefore, we will teach them through experiences. We will be using the resources that are already available in Bangladesh, and the trainers themselves will be both from Bangladesh and the USA. Anyone from 19 years onwards can become a volunteer. We will have mentors based on their skill set, business background, technical background, but most

and they all wished that the students enrolling into universities had more of the personable skills, communication skills, presentation skills and professional skills. Even people in the corporate sector conveyed that young professionals should have soft skills – how to work as a team, how to set goals and follow through; not just the technical knowledge of how to get the work done, but the time management skills, finance and resource management skills. These are the areas in which we want to help the youth. The youth who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to make safer, healthier and informed choices in their lives. They are more likely to find solutions that address their specific conditions.

What sort of potential do you see in the Bangladeshi youth?

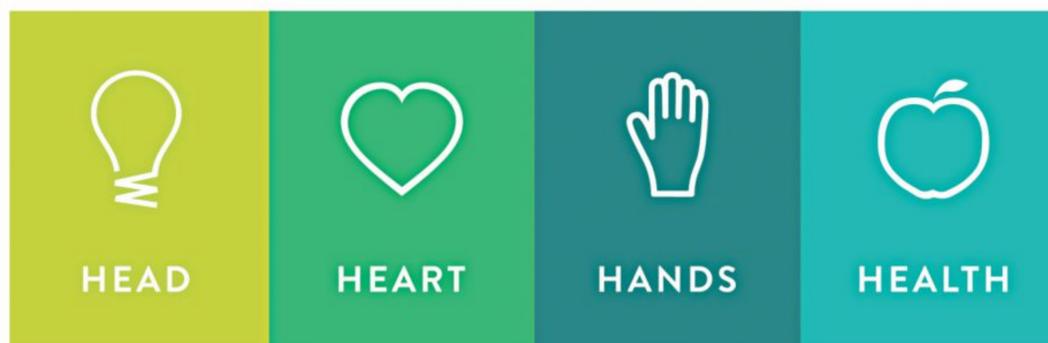
Garlisch: Since coming here, I have met with many students from across the country. I have been to educational institutions in Sirajganj, Pabna, and four schools in Dhaka. At the all-girls school in Pabna, many of the 9th graders were already fluent in English. They were doing skits on nutrition as a part of their nutrition club activity that BIID has been sponsoring. Some of those girls wanted to become doctors, some lawyers, and some technicians. They were all inspired to do something greater for their community. A few wanted to travel internationally too. When I went to visit some of the schools in Dhaka, I noticed that many of them had great aspirations. While some wanted to improve the environmental conditions, others wanted to be youth advocates, addressing various social issues in the community.

Bangladesh has youth with great potential; it's a matter of fostering them with right mentorship and letting them know that they are the leaders of tomorrow. We have to get into that mentality and start listening to the youth. They have a voice, they have great ideas, they can embrace and adapt to the new technologies. We need to give them a platform so they can be heard, but also foster their ideas in a positive manner; 4-H is a partner that does exactly that.

For more information, visit <https://4-h.org>



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



towards empowering the youth of Bangladesh in the areas of entrepreneurship, health, citizenship, and leadership. So BIID and 4-H are collaborating in order to form a framework that can benefit the youth in a sustainable manner.

How do you plan on training the volunteers?

Garlisch: First off, we will be teaching

importantly, we will train our volunteers to embrace the idea of youth empowerment – to give young people the freedom to explore and set goals on their own, instead of prescribing strict guidelines.

What opportunities will this initiative provide to the youth of Bangladesh?

Garlisch: During my stay, I had the chance to meet with university officials