



PHOTOS: COURTESY



# CONNECTING HEARTS THROUGH ART



Tanmoy seen with an enthusiastic participant.

## PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

It is easy to mend a broken toy but it is not easy to repair shattered dreams, broken hearts and most of all, a destroyed present. Children after a traumatic situation need special care which can make them believe in life again. Famous cartoonist Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy along with some of his friends took a step towards bringing smiles to these children's faces through a good cause.

The anti-insurgency operation by the Myanmar army in Rakhine state is not an unknown story. Tanmoy did a series of cartoons on the crisis and gave them away for free to different media agencies around the globe in order to spread awareness as much as possible. He still felt that he needed to do something more. Opportunity knocked on his door when Adam Ostaszewski from Queens, NY, contacted him through his social media page and asked for his support to conduct an art camp at the Rohingya camps.

Tanmoy, who had prior experience in conducting art camps with children in

Europe, felt comfortable and confident with the idea. He knew he would be able to conduct it in his own land with children who were not very different from Bangladeshi children. With some more enthusiast friends, they headed towards an orphanage maintained by the United Sikhs in the Balukhali camp where more than 200 kids were waiting for them.

Tanmoy was taken aback when he realised the language is very different. Neither he understood theirs nor did they understand his. So, he called upon an interpreter to solve the case. However, it helped only little because Tanmoy wanted to tell the children to draw what they liked, but somehow, the interpretation was made that they would draw what they experienced or saw. Tanmoy did not intend to take the children back to their traumatic phase. He quickly decided that he would fade the difference in language by art because that is what he knows best. He quickly picked up a marker and started drawing on the white board and yelled the words he could learn by then. He shouted "Badda

Lekho", "Lekhomaradpuwa, maiyapuwa," which translates to "Draw Big", "Draw boys and girls". The children were stupefied by his action, but eventually, it worked.

More challenges were waiting for Tanmoy when he gave different art materials to share. It didn't occur to him that, during a time when everyone is struggling to survive, any resource is very precious and worth fighting for. It didn't matter if it's food or art supplies. The challenge gave them an opportunity to discuss the importance of sharing. To his surprise he saw that, the children picked up the message quickly.

To recall the day, Tanmoy says, "Everyone poured out their hearts into what they drew." Although some paintings depicted the horrors they and their families faced, but mostly, the pages were filled with doodles, the sky, butterflies, and all the innocence that any child would possess. A little girl from the orphanage who drew a pink flower on the wall of her house to brighten up her life living amid a barren area, said a thousand words about the impact the art camp had on her.

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PHOTOS: SALIM SADMAN SAMOY

# Battle of the Brush 3.0

*Art is a tool that can be used to bring about the fall of any barrier between people. So, with the purpose of bridging the gap between the abled and the differently abled communities, along with children from different backgrounds, JCI Dhaka West, in partnership with Kiron, hosted the largest art competition in Dhaka, "Battle of the Brush 3.0". The competition took place on March 17, 2018, in Shahid Moazzem Hall of Mirpur-14 in celebration of both National Children's Day and birthday of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.*

## MOHIMENUN HOQUE MAHIM

JCI is a worldwide membership-based non-profit organisation, which consists of young and active citizens who are dedicated to creating positive changes within their communities. JCI Dhaka West is a chapter of JCI Bangladesh. Upon asking why they came up with the idea of Battle of the Brush, Mehedi Hossain, President of JCI Dhaka

West, says, "Among these 800 children and students, there are many who come from different backgrounds such as abled, differently abled and children with different privileges, but when they all start painting together, it is impossible to tell who's from what background and that is our goal, to create a platform free of walls and discrimination for the youth to flourish." Children with partial blindness also

took part in the competition, indicating that, there were no boundaries that day and no scale for anyone to judge.

For the whole time the competition took place, it was a spectacle of colour and talent. The beautiful competition ended with handing out prizes from Acron to the children and with the promise to come back next year with a bigger audience and ambition.