



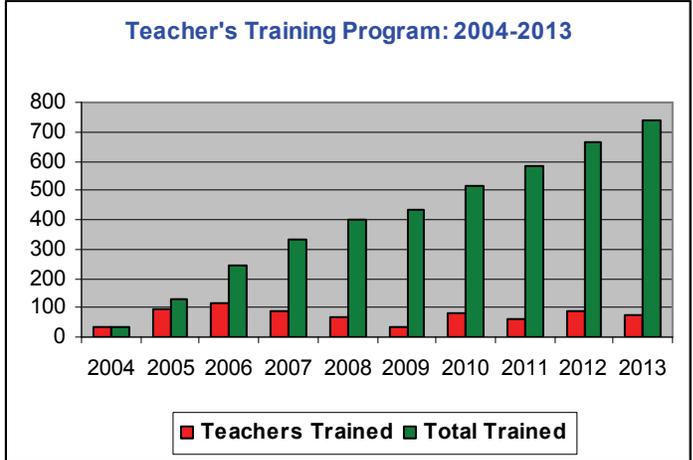
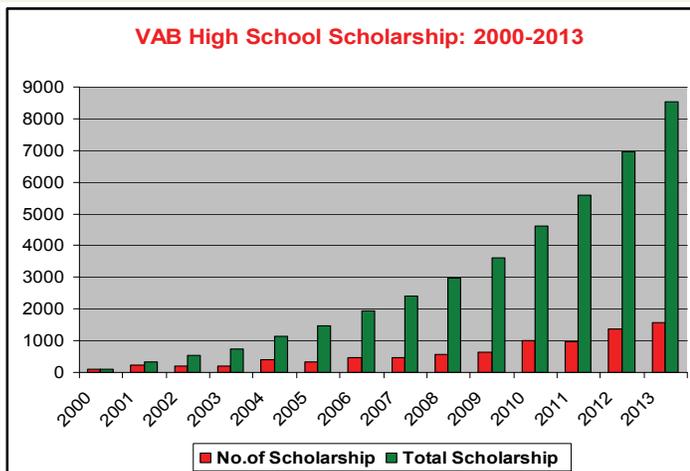
Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB)

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VAB Annual Report 2013

Established in 1998, VAB completed its 15th year in 2013. In this decade and a half, this unique NGO solely devoted to secular secondary education in rural Bangladesh, helped every year an average of 20,000 boys and girls of needy families in the villages, in getting high school education. It partnered with 80 rural high schools, provided scholarships to more than 8,600 high school students, tutoring help to nearly 9,000 Class VI students and over 8,300 SSC candidates, training to about 750 rural teachers, library books and science lab equipment to more than 60 schools, and computers and accessories to around 70 schools. The rising trends over this period aside (please see Charts), the current numbers are noteworthy.



Last year VAB awarded scholarships to 1,080 high school students, tutored 1,470 Class VI students and 1,254 SSC examinees, trained 74 teachers, improved 27 rural schools with library books and science lab equipment and gave 50 computers to 30 schools. The NGO with a difference is working with existing rural schools under the existing education system with volunteers and funds averaging around \$100,000 annually since 2009 mostly from expats and their friends (please see Chart on p. 2). It has a mission to make a difference in rural education in Bangladesh and to make a difference in the lives of hopeless, helpless children in neediest families in the villages.

Effective, affordable, and replicable model for rural education

VAB recognizes that quality secondary education is a necessary prerequisite for rural youths to surmount the poverty cycle. VAB also realizes that quality secondary education is only possible through the empowerment of students, schools and communities themselves to overcome the impediments of lack of resources, inadequate preparedness and poor motivation. VAB developed three sets of empowerment programs in a bottom-up approach after consultation with students, teachers, headmasters, members of school management committees and community leaders. These were also in adherence with the principle of obtaining maximum benefits from the limited resources of VAB.

Student Empowerment Programs consist of scholarships to poor students; tutoring of academically deficient students entering high school, i.e., at Class VI; tutoring of students at Class VIII and Class X before public examinations;

and participation in extra-curricular activities; of which scholarships and tutoring are the core programs.

School Empowerment Programs include teachers' training, performance awards for teachers, professional day for teachers, headmasters' seminars and best performance school awards. Upgrading of science and computer labs and library facilities also fall in this category. Teachers' training and school upgrade are core programs in this category.

Community Empowerment Programs are a novel set of programs to ignite the interest of rural communities in education, and include projects to link the communities with the schools through parent-teacher meetings and alumni contacts. Schools are encouraged to develop relationship with the community through voluntary societal work by the students guided by the teachers.

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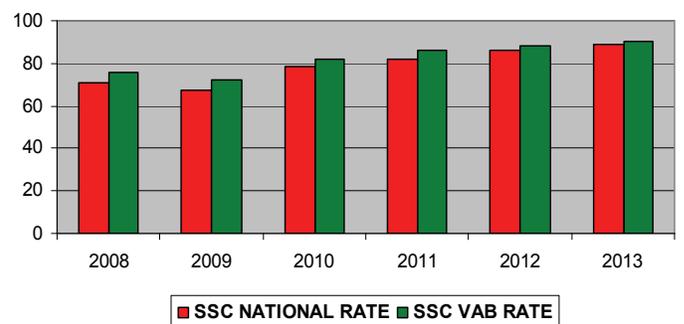
The VAB model incorporates two innovative features. One feature is to involve teachers and headmasters along with members of school management committees, parents and students in the education improvement planning process through workshops, preparation of five-year plans, development of projects for generating funds from internal resources and creating endowment funds. This is intended to promote ownership, commitment to improvement and sustainability for future continuation of improvement programs. The other feature is the development of the “cluster schools” concept. Schools are selected in a cluster of five in close proximity of one another in a given area. Schools in a cluster can learn from one another, encourage themselves and impart the value of education in the community. Administrative costs of monitoring programs can also be minimized.

Effectiveness of VAB programs

Looking at certain indicators, it appears, the VAB model is working very well. Since the model focuses on high school education, the success rates in the high school graduating SSC exam and in the newly instituted junior school graduating JSC exam are reasonable measures of its effectiveness. In the SSC exam, for example, VAB-assisted rural high schools are consistently achieving exceptionally high pass rates, in the range of 80%-90%. In 2013, 57 VAB schools scored 90.04% pass rate, which is not only outstanding, but also higher than the national average of 89.03%. In fact, in the last few years, the pass rate of VAB schools has been consistently higher than the national average rate, by 1 to 5 percentage points (Please see Chart). The picture is the same in the results of the JSC exam. These are remarkable accomplishments considering that the national average is dominated by better-equipped urban schools, with better trained teachers, and more affluent students. Children of poor rural families who did not have any hope of education beyond the primary level were able to graduate from VAB high schools-

with extraordinary success. In the Bangladesh economy, good high school education greatly enhances the potential of gainful employment. It can be argued that it is the effectiveness of the VAB model of modern and secular secondary education with emphasis on English, Mathematics, Science and Information Technology that attracted the attention of corporate donors like Dutch-Bangla and Chevron Bangladesh to VAB which awarded the first ever **institutional grants to VAB** recently. The 2-year \$140,000 Chevron grant in 2013 is for student and school empowerment programs in 13 secondary institutions in the Moulavibazar district.

SSC RESULT: 2008-2013



Looking ahead

The year 2014 will be significant for VAB as it completes 15 years of service in Bangladesh. This will be the year VAB moves into its own Office which will also house a Training Institute. Programmatically, VAB is in the middle of working with the cluster schools approach. So far VAB has seven such clusters and hopes to add a few more to have at least one cluster in each of the eight secondary Education Boards in the country. 2014 also marks the beginning of the next five-year plan submitted to the NGO Bureau, which includes 72 new schools in all eight Boards. Fund-wise, VAB looks ahead to develop partnership with more corporations and also to continue exploring support from individual donors both from inside and outside Bangladesh, while expanding its campaign for contributions to the Endowment Fund.

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For contribution, mail your generous check to VAB, P.O. Box 234, Irvington, NY 10533.

IRS Tax Exempt ID: 13-4034550; Web Site: www.vabonline.org. You can watch a video on VAB on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1JmEPSvQUU&feature=you.tube>

FUNDS FOR VAB'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

