

2015

# Annual Report

February 20, 2016



**Volunteers Association for Bangladesh**

*Educating the poor for a better life*

# 2015 Annual Report

## Inauguration of VAB Bangladesh Office

The year started with an auspicious Event for VAB. On January 9, the permanent home of the VAB Bangladesh Office in the Adabor area of Mohammadpur, Dhaka, was formally inaugurated. The permanent home gives VAB confidence and ability to move forward with greater zeal and commitment.



Inauguration of VAB Office by Dr. A.T. Rafiqur Rahman and Mrs. Saleha Rahman

It also gives greater visibility to VAB, inspires supporters of VAB to do more, and enhances trust among those whom VAB helps. The home is also a tribute to the donors whose generosity made it possible to "build" it. The front plaque (42"X96") gives the name of all of the donors. Two more plaques, one (24"X36") for the donors of the Seminar Room and Training Room and the other of the same size for the dorm and the offices, decorate the walls on the two sides.

## VAB's 15th Anniversary Celebration

On January 18, VAB celebrated the 15th anniversary of its service to the rural poor of Bangladesh. A seminar was held in the LGED Auditorium in Agargaon, Dhaka, with the Finance Minister of the country, Abul Maal Abdul Muhit, as the Chief Guest and the Bangladesh Bank Governor, Dr. Atiur Rahman, as a Special Guest. A well-prepared souvenir was distributed.



Chief Guest, Mr. Abul Maal A Muhith MP, Honorable Minister of Finance is delivering speech at the VAB Fifteenth Anniversary Program

The Chief Guest lauded that even in the current environment of profit-making by NGOs, VAB is devoted to volunteerism. The Special Guest highlighted the work of VAB for quality education in rural high schools and urged the financial sector to lend their help. He announced a contribution of 10 lac taka (\$12,500) from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund of Bangladesh Bank and promised further support and patronage. A unique feature of the Seminar was the presentation by students, male and female, and teachers from the schools VAB partners with.

## First prize to VAB awarded by Global Conference

VAB received the First Prize in the competition among Innovative Social Business Projects at the Global Conference on Health, Technology, and Education held in Atlanta, GA, on May 10-13, 2015.



From left to right: Mr. Abu H Chowdhury, Mr. Sufian Chowdhury, Mr. Mohammad Saleh, Mr. Peter von Christerson, Ms. Bette Lemperle and Mizanur M Rahman

The model's focus is on the empowerment of the stakeholders combined with low cost, effectiveness and sustainability impressed the judges.

The Conference had invited a number of organizations worldwide to submit Innovative Solutions to problems that are being faced by nations, especially developing nations, in the field of health, technology and education. As an invited organization, VAB submitted its current "Model" of education as a solution to poor quality secondary education in rural Bangladesh, which can be replicated in any Third World country. The Model consists of a range of empowerment measures for spreading and improving the quality of high school education in rural Bangladesh along with facilitating sustainability over the long run. The Model, as VAB friends may recall, is a four pronged intervention in rural high schools empowering the students, the teachers, the schools themselves and community linkage.

### Program Delivery by VAB in 2015

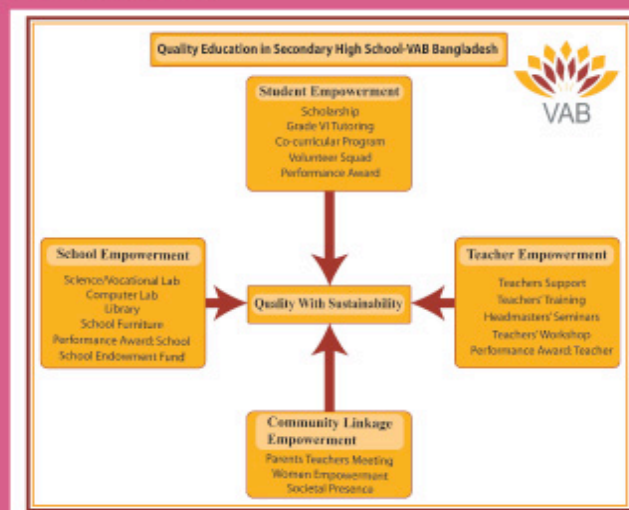
Program	Delivery in 2015
<b>Student Empowerment</b>	
1. Scholarships	2,000 Students
2. Grade VI Tutoring	45 Schools
3. Students' Clubs	Debating Club : 19 Schools Sports Clubs : 18 Schools Math Olympiad : 30 school – 347 students
4. Performance Award	92 Students
<b>Teacher Empowerment</b>	
1. Teachers' Training	33 Teachers in English, 34 Teachers in Math And 135 Teachers in Computers On -Site Computer Training in 25 Schools
2. Teachers' Support	8 Teachers (6 Schools)
3. HMs' Workshop	20 Headmasters Participated
4. Professional Day/ Teachers' Workshop	15 Schools
5. Performance Award	35 Teachers
<b>School Empowerment</b>	
1. Science Lab	12 Schools
2. Computer Lab	27 Computers to 24 Schools
3. Library Books	19 Schools
4. Sports Goods	17 Schools
5. Furniture/ Classroom Develop	17 Schools
6. Performance Award	5 Schools
5. Endowment Fund	17 Schools
<b>Community Linkage</b>	
1. PTA Meeting	13 Schools
2. Mothers' Assembly	12 Schools
3. Sustainability Mtg.	14 Schools

### Program delivery by VAB in 2015

In 2015, VAB partnered with 51 schools, apart from the 14 funded by Chevron Bangladesh (see below). The Table shows the implementation of various measures in 2015.

### Institutionally funded projects - Chevron

VAB was awarded the task of executing the Chevron education program in thirteen rural institutions, eleven high schools, one madrasah and a college, in the Moulavibazar area. 2015 was the second year of the project. The project gave an opportunity to VAB to execute the full VAB model.



VAB Model

As a part of the program in Chevron supported schools, VAB gave scholarships to 419 students, provided Grade VI tutoring to 400 students and training to 20 teachers in Math and English. Computer training was offered on site to 50 teachers in four venues with five teachers from each school.

Computer and internet connection were provided to all the 13 institutions. The best performing students, teachers and schools were recognized in a public function raising their prestige and providing encouragement for others to perform with excellence. The schools were further strengthened by enrichment of science lab, library, student seating in class rooms and employment of additional teachers. Community linkage was strengthened through several public events that helped the community to be

aware of the Chevron-VAB contribution to the community. They also helped create transparency and accountability.

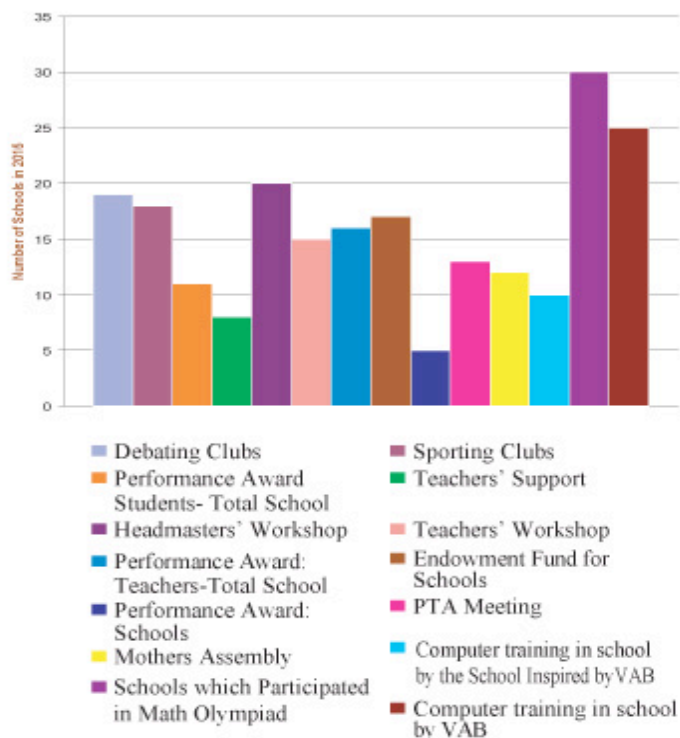
The schools spent funds from their own sources creating a stake in the success of the programs. This is a unique and exemplary step that could be emulated by other rural schools. Eleven schools participated in the endowment fund scheme encouraged by Chevron Bangladesh.

### VAB's innovative empowerment measures enhancing quality of education

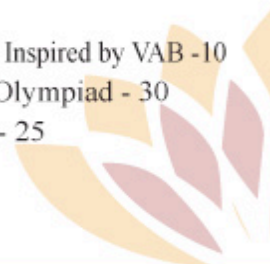
The VAB Model incorporates a number of innovative measures that are aimed at putting the quality issues in focus. Some measures nourish the innate energy of the students thereby making them more galvanized for better learning. Other measures enrich the environment of education in the community. These measures are very low-cost but the holistic benefits derived are immeasurable. Examples include organization of debating clubs, coaching of students for Math Olympiads, sports events, Parents-Teachers Meetings, Mothers' Assembly, etc. Debating clubs were formed in a number of schools. Students realized the potentials of debating in enhancing their learning. Students in a number of schools were also prepared for successful participation in local, regional and national Math Olympiads. Both teachers and students felt that skills as well as confidence of students were strengthened. In 2015, a number of VAB students from several schools took the exam for Math Olympiad at the regional level. 2 boys were among the successful candidates, but, unfortunately, because of a number limitation, none of them could go to the National Olympiad. The consolation as well as inspiration for VAB is that two boys did qualify.

A measure that is intended to augment the environment of education is Parents-Teachers Meeting. The attendance of guardians, particularly mothers, is encouraging. Their active interaction augurs well for the community and the school, among others, to take up ownership of education improvement measures, contributing to their sustainability. Mothers' Assembly has a focus on women's empowerment and is expected to bring to the fore the contribution of mothers in quality education of the children, role of education in deterring child marriage, and the issues of women's rights in general. A similar program was implemented at a school at Bagha, Rajshahi with funding from American & Efirid (Bangladesh) Ltd and with 16 more schools funded by VAB, supplemented by funds obtained from Bangladesh Bank.

### VAB's Innovative Empowerment Measures in 2015 Enhancing Quality of Rural Education



- Debating Clubs- 19
- Sporting Clubs- 18
- Performance Award Students- Total School 11
- Teachers' Support- 8
- Headmasters' Workshop- 20
- Teachers' Workshop- 15
- Performance Award Teachers- Total School 16
- Endowment Fund for Schools- 17
- Performance Award: Schools- 5
- PTA Meeting- 13
- Mothers Assembly- 12
- Computer training in school by the School Inspired by VAB -10
- Schools which Participated in Math Olympiad - 30
- Computer training in school by VAB - 25



## Program execution under difficult local conditions:

When we are outside the country, we often fail to appreciate the difficulties faced by "development agents" in the country in executing development projects. In 2015, Bangladesh had its share of political violence, hartals (strikes - partial or full, daylong or weeklong),

aborodhs (offices, institutions, shops, etc. made inaccessible by demonstrators) and crimes. Yet, the society and the economy go forward despite considerable difficulties. So did the VAB Bangladesh Office, despite the facts that two staffs were subjected to mugging and assault, and one woman staff was victim of mugging on her way to home from work.

### VAB Luncheon:

The year ended with a memorable Event for VAB. On December 6, a luncheon Event was held in Hicksville, NY with the dual purposes of acquainting some potential donors with VAB and expressing thanks to major current donors. It was well-attended, with many participants expressing interest in the mission, goals and work of VAB.

### VAB Training Center:

The VAB Training Center is now fully ready. On June 26, an outside group used our facilities with a fee. We expect this to catch on and the Training Center will be a source of income for VAB that can be utilized for the VAB program.



Training session conducted by Prof. Dara Shamsuddin

Endowed with a degree in offering training and years of experience in teaching and being a true mentor for countless students and others, the retired Jahangirnagar University Professor Dara Shamsuddin assumed, on a voluntary basis, the responsibility for developing and executing the training program for VAB. In addition to subject training, a program on Training of Trainers has been added. The inaugural activities under the leadership of Prof. Shamsuddin were a 5-day training program of 19 English teachers from 19 VAB schools and a 5-day training program of 21 Math teachers from 21 VAB schools, both in October.

### Financial situation of VAB:

In 2015, VAB received a total of \$124,923 from 112 donors, through checks and online receipt via PayPal (\$3,215). The total transfer to Bangladesh in 2015 amounted to \$107,000. To deal with fundraising, VAB Bangladesh appointed a Program Director with campaigning for raising funds as his primary duty. It is also trying to galvanize and obtain assistance and guidance from its Advisory Board. As for VAB USA, a new member of the Management Committee with extensive experience of fundraising for non-profits has been co-opted. The Lunch Event also seemed to have energized Directors, officials and Patrons to redouble their efforts to raise funds. There is also a potential of expanding the donor base through the inclusion of the attendees and their contacts

### VAB's financial measures for long-term sustainability:

In addition to ensuring funds for executing the VAB program annually, for the long-term sustainability of VAB and its program, VAB USA has launched an Endowment Fund, and VAB Bangladesh has initiated an Endowment Fund and also a Trust Fund. The Endowment Fund of VAB BD is an extension of that of that of VAB USA, and receives and invests funds remitted from the latter in fixed deposits earning 8 - 10% interest annually. The arrangement is approved by both the U.S. and the Bangladesh authorities. The VAB BD Trust Fund is built up on funds raised locally or through collaborative arrangements with local trust funds. Three private Trusts have already signed agreement with VAB for carrying out their education projects. Incidentally, both Funds are overseen by respective Boards in a rigorous fashion.

**VAB website:** The website has been re-designed and revamped under the leadership of Mr. Mahbub Ahmad, Secretary of VAB, who was the in charge of the UN website for its first 15 years. A new web host has also been engaged under a contract for five years. The website will be continuously updated and developed to make it an effective tool of publicity and fundraising.

### Plans of VAB for 2016 and challenges:

The VAB Empowerment Model for sustainable quality education has been well received by the stakeholders - students, teachers, schools, communities, donors and sponsors. Concerted efforts are now needed to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability and spread the model in an increased number of schools. VAB now has a dedicated core of Directors and Advisors, executive officials, staff and volunteers. And a permanent home. We are looking at 2016 as the Year of Transition. We will critically evaluate the current programs under the VAB Model, and refine it as necessary, incorporating it into the VAB "business strategy". We will also strengthen program monitoring and evaluation and provide feedback to the strategy. We will improve our information sharing capacity by increasingly utilizing technology. To address our critical need for continuing, stable funding, we will seek greater corporate and institutional involvement.

### VAB's Five-Year Plan and appeal to VAB Friends:

In the medium term VAB plans to apply the rigorously evaluated and refined Model in a pilot project of 100 schools in 20 upazilas with 5 schools in each upazila. We need \$325,000 US dollars (2.5 crore BD taka) annually for the pilot project. Indeed, the annual budget is large and a leap forward from the current annual average of \$110,000 to an amount three times as big. But, we feel, it is very much within our reach if we join hands with contributions, time and contacts. The base of individual philanthropists and of institutional grant makers must be expanded. We appeal to you to help us, so we can help the needy students and schools in rural Bangladesh.



## Management of VAB

### VAB USA Board of Directors and Management Committee

In the VAB Annual Meeting held in June, two central accomplishments were: formation of a new Board of Directors and of a new Management Committee. The VAB Board of Directors for 2015-2019 consists of: Dr. Delwar Hussain (NY), Chair; Mr. Mohammed Saleh (NY), Vice-Chair; Mr. Mahbub Ahmad (NY); Mr. Nurul Alam (NY); Mr. Khurshid Anwar (NY); Dr. Fazlur Rahman Chowdhury (NY); Dr. Maksud Chowdhury (NY); Mr. Peter von Christierson (WA); Mrs. Tanveer (Rumi) K. Hoque (PA); Mr. S. Zaki Hossain (NY); Dr. A.T. Rafiqur Rahman (NY); Mr. Mohammad Asabur Rahman (NY); Dr. Ehsanur Rahman (DE); Mr. Mizanur M. Rahman (NY); Mrs. Nasrin Rahman (MD); and Mr. Shahid Ullah (TX). The new Management Committee of VAB, as approved by the meeting, consists of: President: Dr. A.T. Rafiqur Rahman; Vice-President: Mr. Nurul Alam; Secretary: Mr. Mahbub Ahmad; Treasurer: Mr. Matilal Pal; Chairperson, Programs and Research: Dr. Fazlur R. Chowdhury; Chairperson, Fundraising and Endowment: Mr. Mizanur M. Rahman; Chairperson, Communications and Media Relations: Mr. Anm Mostafa Khandaker; and Volunteer Coordinator: Mrs. Siobhan Hogan.



### VAB Bangladesh Board of Advisors

A new Board of Advisors was formed in 2015 consisting of: Dr. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Chairman; Mr. Khondkar Tajuddin Ahmed, Treasurer; Principal Hamida Ali; Mr. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury; Professor Manzoor Ahmed; Mr. Masud M. Z. Hassan; Dr. Golam Mostafa; Prof. Dara Shamsuddin; and Dr. Jasimuz Zaman. Dr. Zaman is also the volunteer Country Director and has 10 paid staff members.

### For more information, please contact

#### In USA:

**Mr. Mahbub Ahmad**, Secretary,  
Email: mahbub.ahmad@vabonline.org, Tel: 914-509-2644  
or,

**Dr. A. T Rafiqur Rahman**,  
Founder and President,  
E-mail: arahman10@aol.com. Tel: 914-591-8535  
VAB, 122 Taxter Road, Irvington, NY 10533

[www.vabonline.org](http://www.vabonline.org) [vabbangladesh](https://www.facebook.com/vabbangladesh)

#### In Bangladesh:

**Dr. Jasimuz Zaman**, Country Director  
E-mail: zamanjasimuz@gmail.com,  
Mobile Tel: +88-01829-333-311  
House #806 (4th Floor), Road #03  
Baitul Aman Housing Society, Adabar, Dhaka 1207

**Volunteers Association for Bangladesh**

