



Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB)

Head Office: 122 Taxter Road, Irvington, New York 10533, USA; Tel: +1914-310-1342
Bangladesh Office: House #806, Road #03, Baitul Aman Housing Society, Adabor, Dhaka, Tel: 910-4558
US IRS Tax Exempt 1.D 13-4034550, Website: www.vabonline.org
VAB Chapter in Canada located in Toronto: Tel: 647-349-1729, www.vabcanada.org

VAB Newsletter, July-2023

The past few months witnessed one of the greatest strengths of VAB- resilience. Resilience is evidenced in changes made in the most effective manner. Both VAB USA, VAB Headquarters, and VAB Bangladesh, VAB's Country Office, have adjusted, and are adjusting, to changes successfully.

VAB has a new Chairman of its Advisory Board and a new Country Director in Bangladesh



The newly appointed Chairman of VAB Bangladesh Advisory Board Dr. Mohammad Haroonur Rashid is warmly welcomed by the members of the VAB Advisory Board and VAB staff.

The Chairman of VAB's Advisory Board in Bangladesh, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman who took up the position in June 2020 retired in April 2023. Dr. Mohammad Haroonur Rashid, CSP, a retired Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh and Founder Principal of the Civil Service College, Dhaka, took over the charge as the Chairman of the VAB Advisory Board in May 2023.

Dr. Haroonur Rashid has high-level professional and managerial experience of over 30 years with the Government of Bangladesh, and afterward with other public and private organizations, including non-governmental organizations. He has been an Advisor of VAB Bangladesh since its inception. Dr. Rashid has also been the Chair of the VAB Trust since its establishment, primarily because of his expertise in the financial field and his astuteness and integrity in financial management. He is highly capable of providing dynamic leadership and strategic management guidance to VAB, would represent VAB nationally, regionally, and internationally, and has necessary contacts in public, private, and NGO sectors in Bangladesh.



The newly appointed Country Director of VAB Bangladesh Dr. M. M. Zahid Hassan is warmly welcomed by the outgoing Country Director Mr. Masum Billah and VAB staff.

The term for the Country Director of VAB Bangladesh, Mr. Masum Billah who joined in March 2022 ended in June 2023. Dr. M. M. Zahid Hassan, former Director, Environment and Climate Change, Engineering Resources International (ERI) Ltd., former Advisor, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, Dhaka; Senior Process Engineer in three international organizations in the USA, took over the charge as the interim Country Director of VAB from July 1, 2023. As an Advisor of VAB Bangladesh, Dr. Hassan gained familiarity with VAB's mission and its work. His volunteer services for VAB are in line with the fundamental principle of volunteerism at VAB and are deeply appreciated by the VAB Family.

UNICEF officials visited VAB Bangladesh activities in Shyamnagar, Satkhira



Mr. Md. Kausar Hossain, the Head of the Khulna Field Office of UNICEF and Mr. Md. Sajidul Islam, Education Officer of UNICEF are talking with a VAB student, Debojyoti Biswas at the Shyamnagar Field Office of VAB Bangladesh.

The Head of the Khulna Field Office of UNICEF, Mr. Md. Kausar Hossain, and the Education Officer, Mr. Md. Sajidul Islam visited the Field Office of VAB and the VAB Technical Training Institute in Shyamnagar of Satkhira. They exchanged views with students, teachers, the technical training institute manager and trainer, and the trainees. Mr. Mina Habibur Rahman, Upazila Academic Supervisor (UAS) of Shyamnagar Upazila Secondary Education Office (USEO) was also present as a special guest. Students and Headmasters of the VAB Bangladesh project schools in Shyamnagar, officials of the Field Office of VAB, Field Officer and Manager of the Technical Training Institute, Mr. Abdul Alim, Computer Trainer Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun, as well as trainees, informed the UNICEF about various activities of VAB Bangladesh, particularly those of the VAB Technical Training Institute. During the hour-long discussion, the officials of UNICEF's Khulna Field Office learned the details of VAB Bangladesh's activities. They expressed their satisfaction and thanked VAB Bangladesh. VAB Bangladesh expressed its sincere gratitude to the officials of UNICEF's Khulna Field Office.

Chairman of VAB Board of Directors visited Country Office

Mr. Syed Zaki Hossain, Chairman of the VAB Board of Directors- the highest body of VAB, visited the VAB Country Office on January 31 and February 16, 2023. He met with the existing CD at that time, held meeting with the Country Office staff, and provided necessary directions.

Program Delivery

VAB currently has been implementing the activities of two externally funded projects, namely, the **Rotary Global Grant Project** and the **Malala Fund Project**. VAB also runs its own scholarship program and the VAB Technical Institute at Shyamnagar, Satkhira. In addition, VAB/ZAMOSC/RCWH Special Scholarship Program, funded by the later two organizations is administered by VAB Bangladesh.

Rotary Global Grant Project

The actual work of the three-year project, which was initially scheduled to start in April 2020, but was disrupted by the pandemic, started in full swing in March 2022. The project is now nearing completion. The project covers 25 schools, spread over 5 districts with 5 schools in each district - Pabna Sadar, Nilphamari Sadar, Nageshwari in Kurigram, Keshabpur in Jashore, and Shyamnagar in Satkhira. The main activity was to train teachers in the disadvantaged areas of the country so that they could impart good education to the students in those areas. The Rotary International provided financial support based on the support mobilized by the host Rotary Club- the Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka; the international Rotary Club, the Rotary E-Club of Heritage New York, as well as a number of sister Rotary Clubs.



Dr. Ranjit Podder, Associate Professor of Government Teachers' Training College, Dhaka conducting sessions in English Teachers' Training program at Shyamnagar VAB Technical Training Institute, Shyamnagar, Satkhira under the Rotary Global Grant 1989638 with the support of Rotary E-club of Heritage, NY and Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka.

Under the project, VAB provided ICT training to 100 teachers in the five upazilas. VAB also provided training in English to 45 teachers in Shyamnagar, Keshabpur, and Nageshwari. Training was also provided on a pedagogical method called the Group-Based Teaching-Learning to 25 schools, and also conducted community awareness engagement programs. As part of the project, VAB evaluated the performance of the students in communication skills (English and Debate), Mathematics, and computer skills. A total of 750 students took part in the performance evaluation test.

VAB successfully completed the first year of the Malala Foundation Project

A three-year project, extending from August 2022 to March 2025, is being financed by the Malala Foundation. Following the principles of the Malala Foundation, VAB implemented the activities intending to influence schools and sub-national and national decision-makers towards a more gender-responsive, climate-resilient, and digitally oriented secondary education environment in Bangladesh. Under the project, VAB is working in 8 schools in Belabo, Narsingdi, and Nageshwari, Kurigram areas.



Three students of Baroicha Girls' High School, Belabo, Narshingdi receiving the Champion Team Award from the guests in Inter-School Debate Competition on June 25, 2023 under the Malala Fund project organised by VAB Bangladesh.

Stopping 'Child Marriage' is one of the significant activities of this project. In the first year, VAB implemented five activities, which included, in addition to the prevention of child marriage, activities on reducing educational deprivation such as child labor, dealing with disabilities, and promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Under the "Local-level Dialogues", dialogues were held on the education budget with a particular focus on gender. Eight Debate Clubs with a focus on girls' issues were formed at eight schools, respectively, and inter-class and inter-school debate competitions were conducted. School-based environment clubs to raise awareness on climate-related issues were formed. In each of these activities, a large number of students, teachers, community leaders, and journalists got benefited directly and indirectly.



Sub-national level sharing on Education budget using gender lens at Nageshwari DM Academy, Nageshwari, Kurigram on March 05, 2023. Students, Teachers and School Managing Committee members, representatives from four schools of VAB-Malala fund project joined this program. Ms. Amena Bagum Ananya, Female Vice Chairman, Nageshwari Upazila Parishad was present as Chief Guest. Mr. Arifur Rahman, Program Manager, VAB Bangladesh conducted the Program. Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Program Manager, VAB Bangladesh and four head teachers were also present in the program.

Achievement of VAB Students

Out of seven special scholarship recipients who passed the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination in 2022 from Shyamnagar in Satkhira, two students got admission into MBBS studies and B.Sc. Nursing, respectively.



Sourabh Chandra Mondal

MBBS Class (2022-2023)
Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMC)
Barisal

Sourabh Chandra Mondal is the younger son of the day laborers, Ananda Chandra Mondal and Anita Rani Mondal of Harinagari village in Noornagar Union under Shyamnagar Upazila in Satkhira District. Sourabh's dream was to become a doctor in the future and he wanted to serve the people. Sourabh's family members did not even have three proper meals a day. He had to stop going to school sometimes and work as a day laborer on other people's land. Working as a day laborer and walking 10 to 12 kilometers to and from school every day, Sourabh had to withstand lots of hardship. The situation eased a little when he secured GPA-5 in the Junior School Certificate (JSC) examination in 2017.

A non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) sponsor in Australia, Ms. Laila Chowdhury, financed a scholarship of 1,000 takas per month. Sourabh's education was facilitated by the regular provision of this scholarship through VAB Bangladesh. Sourabh passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 2020 with GPA-5 (Golden A Plus). Ms. Laila Chowdhury gave Sourabh a scholarship of 2,000 takas per month, for two years in college.

Sourabh passed the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination in 2022 with GPA-5. Sourabh then passed with honors the admission test for MBBS and got admitted into Barisal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMC) in the MBBS class of the 2022-2023 academic year.



Nazma Khatun

B.Sc. Nursing Class (2022-2023)
Bandarban Government Nursing College
Bandarban

Nazma is the elder daughter of the day laborer, Nasir Sarder, and housewife Jamila Khatun of Darghapur village in Bhurulia Union under Shyamnagar Upazila in Satkhira District. Nazma's dream was to become a doctor in the future. However, without any coaching, Nazma had little chance of success in the admission test for MBBS. Fortunately, she passed with honors the admission test for B.Sc. Nursing and got admitted into Bandarban Government Nursing College for the B.Sc. Nursing class for the 2022-2023 academic year.

An NRB sponsor from Florida in the USA, Engineer Mahfuz Alam funded a scholarship of 1,000 takas per month for Nazma for grades IX-X. Nazma passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 2020 with GPA-5. Mr. Alam gave Nazma a scholarship of 2,000 takas per month, for one year in college. An Australian NRB, Mr. Adam Hasnat, gave a scholarship of 2,000 takas per month to Nazma for the last year in college. Mr. Adam Hasnat gave 20,000 takas to Nazma for B.Sc. Nursing admission. Both Nazma and Sourav expressed their gratitude to their sponsors and also to VAB Bangladesh for arranging for and administering the scholarships. Both of them stated that without VAB's assistance, their success in getting into higher education would not have been possible.

There are hundreds of underprivileged talented students like Sourabh and Nazma in the remote areas of Bangladesh. Despite having talent, many of them cannot fulfill their dreams due to lack of a little support and proper guidance. If these underprivileged talented students can be taken care of and guided in the right direction, they will become an asset to the country and play a leading role in the realization of the golden Bengal that we dream of.



Community Awareness Engagement Program for on-going and sustainable support at Dogachi High School and College in Pabna Sadar on May 29, 2023 under Rotary Global Grant Project 1989638 supported by Rotary E-Club of Heritage, NY, USA and Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka.

VAB opened new doors of technical training in Keshabpur, Jashore



Upazila Women Affairs Officer were present at that time. This money was paid to them for purchasing cloths and raw materials for fashion design.

Latifa Khatun and Nazmin Akhter are the two students who received financial assistance from VAB Bangladesh. They received training in fashion design under the Upazila Women Affairs Office. Besides, they are working as volunteers of VAB Bangladesh. They themselves will support VAB by providing training to others.

VAB Bangladesh has provided financial assistance to two students in Keshabpur of Jashore to become entrepreneurs. Mr. M.M. Arafat Hossain, Upazila Nirbahi Officer handed over the financial aid to the students in his office on 20 March, 2023. Mr. A.S.M. Zillur Rashid, Upazila Secondary Education Officer; Rupali Rani,

Deliberations of VAB's leaders both in the USA and in Bangladesh

With new and highly energetic leadership in the top management, both in Bangladesh and the USA, VAB sprang into action immediately, mostly spearheaded by the Founder and President Dr. A T Rafiqur Rahman. A number of important meetings among the Board of Directors of VAB USA- the highest body of VAB, and the VAB Bangladesh Advisory Board- the highest body of VAB Bangladesh, were conducted over several months. Resolutions were reached on a number of important issues: Synergic and more active participation by all VAB management; streamlining the VAB programs; improving communications at all levels; and aligning all activities with the original mission and vision of VAB while making them more transparent than ever before. As VAB is approaching its Golden Jubilee i.e. 25th Anniversary on Victory Day, December 16, 2023, the underlying theme of the meetings was the "Future of VAB".

Since the donors and Patrons are keen on making a difference in the lives of the needy beneficiary students in rural Bangladesh as well as interested in seeing the accountability of every dollar they donate in terms of outcomes, VAB programs were conceived as focusing on providing livelihood skills (vocational/technical streams, higher education, for example) to selected needy and deserving students. Accordingly, the two newly-conceived programs planned are:

- An individual-centered stipend for fair-performing needy students, which pays for vocational training in a high-quality vocational institution and living expenses up to the completion of courses, earning a certificate from the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) and entry into a career
- A limited and selective number of individual-centered stipends for the meritorious and needy students, which pays for educational and living expenses up to the completion of the tertiary level education and entry into a career

- Those stipends should be more focused, highly visible, trackable, and potentially yielding income-generating outcomes
- Redesigning the VAB Scholarship & Training Programs emphasizing technical/vocational education with an implementation mechanism
- After evaluation of those two stipend programs, start a dialogue with ZAMOSC/RCWH, Australia to restart their program since those stipend programs are compatible with the VAB/ZAMOSC/RCWH Special Scholarship Program, and a bigger and more effective program could be offered
- Steps could be taken to establish a full-fledged Technical/Vocational Training Institute at Shyamnagar that fits into the current emphasis of the VAB USA as well as the general demand of donors. Registration of the Training Institute with the proper authorities of the Government of Bangladesh should be pursued
- Establish a mechanism to transfer donated dollars directly to institutions and/or recipients to help them access quality education and/or vocational training
- Create a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the organizations and assign duties as agreed by each member

In light of the gradual upcoming challenges especially faced by the foreign NGOs, reviving of "The Volunteers"- a local NGO registered in 2008 with the Social Welfare Directorate of the Government of Bangladesh to maintain the stronghold of VAB Bangladesh has been planned.

As VAB is reaching a quarter of a century of its life and visioning the second quarter and beyond, we would greatly appreciate you standing by us as you did during its memorable journey.



Scholarship disbursement among needy meritorious students at Benai Jasimuddin Memorial Bidyaniketon, Khetlal, Joypurhat on March 21, 2023.

Appeal to Patrons/Donors

VAB is planning to award stipends that include educational and living expenses for underperforming students as well as bright students. VAB works with the most underprivileged students and schools in the most underprivileged areas of Bangladesh.

- **Sponsor one or more High School Stipends for one year, each for USD 150**
- **Sponsor one or more College Stipends for one year, each for USD 300**
- **Sponsor one or more University Stipends for one year, each for USD 400**
- **Sponsor one or more Medical/Engineering Stipends for one year, each for USD 600**
- **Sponsor one or more Technical/Employable Skills Training Stipends for six months, each for USD 250**

Donors may specify their donations and can personalize their charity in any name, and VAB will distribute it accordingly. It is your support that allows VAB to provide a brighter future for Bangladeshi youths.

In the USA, for donation, please pay online or send to VAB at P.O. Box 234, Irvington, NY 10533
Bank account in Bangladesh: Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB),
A/C-148.120.0005550, Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
For additional information, please contact Founder and President,
Dr. ATR Rahman at +1914-310-1342 or E-mail:arahman10@aol.com,
or Country Director Dr. M. M. Zahid Hassan, Mobile: +8801776934002
E-mail: mmzhassan@gmail.com