

Newsletter

Making difference in a child's life





Editorial Notes

Dhaka Ahsania Mission with its long experience and expertise in working with street children, has conceived the idea of developing a “Children City” with the objective of rehabilitating the helpless street children and allowing them to grow within an enabling environment where they can unleash their latent social energy and exhibit their potentials and creativity. Since 2011, Ahsania Mission Children City (AMCC) has been providing support to homeless and distressed children for their holistic development through fulfilling basic necessities along with education and vocational skills training within a residential campus.

The Ahsania Mission Children City (AMCC), implemented under the project entitled “Integrated Development Program for Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Street Children (IDP-MVDSC)”, has started its journey back in 2011. From June, 2014 new phase of the project started which will continue till December 2019 for 5 years with the financial support of KNH-Germany.

Ahsania Mission Children City (AMCC) expresses its sincere gratitude to KNH Germany, Dhaka Ahsania Mission management, local administration, local community and all stakeholders for their continuous cooperation. The second issue of newsletter reflects a glimpse of the activities from January 2014 to June 2015. ■

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Introduction

The principal objective of the AMCC is to support and rehabilitate the Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Street Children (MVDSC) of urban city centers and to help them grow with their full potentials up to 18 years through education and specialized hands-on training on different trades of employable skills including child development services. It targets to develop necessary infrastructure and support facilities for 10 children villages for rehabilitation of 10000 street children. Keeping this ahead, Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Street Children (MVDSC) project has started its full fledged journey on June 1, 2014 in Panchagarh district with the financial support of KNH-Germany.

Providing long term institutional care to the street children is a challenging mission. As a new challenging area of work, the project is gathering new experiences and implementing those in regular activities in order to implement the program more efficiently. As a result, a successful year has passed with the continuous support of KNH-Germany, KNH country coordinator, child rights organizations, local committees and local administration. AMCC is hopeful to receive continued patronage of all stakeholders in the future. ■

Observation of Days and Festivals

New Year Celebration

AMCC welcomed the New Year 2015 in festive mood and arranged grand celebration with full participation of the children. In the beginning the children and the staffs of the centre cut a cake together. A pleasant cultural event was organized where children performed dance, music and poetry recitation. They also enjoyed special meal on that occasion.

International Mother Language Day

AMCC celebrated the International Mother Language Day with Maghi Panimach Pukuri High School and Darika Mari government Primary School through different programs. The children of AMCC wearing school uniform along with a black ribbon placed floral wreaths at Panchagarh National Shaheed Minar. They also performed a parade followed by a cultural event.

Victory Day

Ahsania Mission Children City (AMCC) and Maghi Panimach Pukuri High School in Panchagarh jointly observed 43rd Victory Day through different day long programs on 16 December 2014. AMCC children wearing school uniforms went to Maghi Panimach Pukuri High School. AMCC children along with the Maghi Panimach Pukuri High School students placed floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar in order to commemorate the martyrs of the liberation war of 1971. They maintained silence for one minute to show honor to the martyrs of the liberation war. Later, a victory rally was brought out where staff, teachers and children of both organizations participated. The rally proceeded to Talma bazaar and some other roads of the area. AMCC children participated in a parade with other school students and took part in various competitions, such as, art, music, recitation. A discussion session was also organized to orient them about the history and significance of the day.





International Literacy Day

AMCC has celebrated the International Literacy Day on September 8. There were discussions highlighting significance of the day for the children. A pleasant cultural program was organized where children displayed their competency in different categories such as poetry recitation, music, dance, acting and drawing. The program ended with distribution of prizes to the winners.

Independence Day

Ahsania Mission Children City (AMCC) along with few other local schools jointly observed the Independence Day on March 26. On the day all the children and teachers from different schools sang the national anthem at the same time together with thousands of voices at Dhaka National Parade Square. Singing of national anthem in thousand of voices was covered by national electronic and print media. Then children of AMCC attended the rally in the Maghi

Panimach Pukuri High School. Subsequently this rally become a big rally attended by staff, teachers and children of different organizations. AMCC children also participated in a parade followed by drawing, music and story reading competitions.

Children's Day

On 29th of each month AMCC celebrates the Children's Day. On this particular day children play different roles of the staff of the center. For example, a child plays the role of a teacher on how teachers take classes while another one plays the role of a house mother on how she carries out her duty. Then at the end of the day they share their experience and learning from the role play. The purpose of this occasion is to create the sense of responsibility and realization among children about hard works of the caregivers to keep everything in the right order.



Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Adha



Along with the whole Muslim community of the country AMCC celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr & Eid-ul-Adha. Children started the day with a very festive manner wearing new clothes and having sweets and vermicelli. Then, they all together headed toward the Eid ground and offered the Eid prayer. After the prayer they embraced, exchanged greetings with each other and went to visit the Eid fair. They bought toys and other items of their choice from there. With lots of funs, delight and amusements amid special diet children spent the Eid festivals. ■

Education

AMCC has created ample opportunity of joyful and quality education for children. Children are admitted into appropriate classes at AMCC's school according to their ages. Many subjects are taught in the class that includes English, Bengali, math, religious and moral studies, social science, geography, primary science, agricultural studies, environment and health studies, physical health studies, computer studies along with music, drawing, reading. Besides 1st term, 2nd term and final exam and in order to evaluate students overall progress monthly tests, chapter based tests and class tests have been regularized. There are full time teachers, assistant teachers, part-time teachers and headed by an education coordinators devoted to assist the students in their study. Children are always encouraged to perform well in the academics and comparatively weaker students are given extra care after class hours. Even evening classes have been introduced for that purpose. AMCC follows integrated curriculum which is a combination of NCTB curriculum and AMCC's own curriculum. Until June 2015 the number of children in different grades is as under:

Grade	Number of students
Pre Primary	32
1st	28
2nd	18
3rd	11
4th	06
Total	95



Extracurricular Activities

In addition to the regular academic curriculum, the children of AMCC also participated in various extracurricular activities.

Cultural Events

The children of AMCC are getting opportunity to learn drawing and singing with the help of teachers. They also learned recitation of poetry from story books. On special occasions AMCC organizes cultural events. Children perform and compete with each other in the cultural events. AMCC children participated in several external competitions and won prizes.



Excursion

An educational excursion was held on September 8, 2014 at Bhitorgarh (Moharajar Dighi), one of the oldest historical places of Bangladesh. Children enjoyed the whole day through participating in cultural competitions and playing games. They also learned about the history of the place. Besides, a portion of the day was allocated for prize distribution to the children who held positions in various events of the cultural and sports competitions. The day was productive for the children in terms of both learning and recreation.

Wall Magazine

AMCC publishes monthly wall magazines contributed by the children. Children prepare wall magazines with their drawings and handwritten text materials. This kind of practice helps unlock children's latent talents and bring out their creativity.



Scout

AMCC formed a scout team with selected children. They are well trained. The scout team regularly performs parades with band party in the district level events.



Advocacy

National Seminar on Street Children of Bangladesh

A national seminar on 'Street Children of Bangladesh: Observations and Task Ahead' was held at the auditorium of Dhaka Ahsania Mission on July 7, 2014. President of Dhaka Ahsania Mission Kazi Rafiqul Alam chaired the occasion. The inaugural session of the seminar was attended by the secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Tarique Ul Islam, as the chief guest. Maruf Momtaz Rumi, the country coordinator of KNH Germany, Md Omor Faruk, the national project director of Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh, Department of Social Services, Shamima Begum, the deputy police commissioner, Victim Support Centre, and AFM Faruque, the director of the Non-Formal Education Bureau, were also present as special guests. Kazi Ali Reza, the director of Public Relations Department (PRD) of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, read out the key-note paper. The discussants in the seminar upheld the present condition of the street children. According to the speakers of the seminar, there are about 1.15 million street children living disorderly across the country. While growing up, they face discrimination and injustice. Taking advantage of their weakness, a section of people engages them in various criminal activities and hazardous jobs. As a result, their normal growth is hindered. The speakers called upon people from all walks of life to come forward and extend their support for the betterment of these street children.

Annual Sports & Cultural Competition of 2014

Annual Sports & Cultural Competition 2014, a two day long program, was held on February 17 and 18, 2015. Annual Sports event took place in AMCC's own play ground in Panchagarh. Children were divided into three different groups according to their height. Out of 13 events, all children had a chance to

compete in no more than three events as per their choice and performance.

Sports started with the 300 meters race. Other than that sack race, pillow passing, drawing, mathematics competition, long jump, high jump, biscuit race, cock-fight, basket ball, spoon marble race and climbing up a banana tree were held. Finally sports ended with a biscuit race. Some villagers of the neighboring villages came to enjoy the event. On February 18, 2015, a daylong cultural competition was organized. All the children participated in various competition like poetry recitation, patriotic songs, rhymes recitation, folk songs, and group performances in different topics. After competition, the prize giving ceremony was organized. The Chairman of Hafizabad Union Council and chairman of Children Village Advisory Committee (CVAC) Mr. Shahadat Hossain was the chairperson of the event and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ms. Laila Muntazeri Dina was the chief guest of the prize giving ceremony. Besides, Maghi Panimuch Pukuri High School's Head Master Ruksanul Islam, Upazila Vice Chairman Kamrun Nahar, CVAC member Taslima Khatun were also present at the prize giving ceremony. The children welcomed them with flowers. Then the guests gave their valuable speech. The chief guest emphasized the need of fulfilling five basic needs of human being and thanked the management of AMCC for initiating this kind of humanitarian activities. Finally prizes were



distributed to the winners. After distributing the prizes, guests wrote their comments on the visitor's book and spent time with the children.

Student Council Election 2015

In order to develop AMCC children with democratic values, especially for the practice of discipline and to cooperate with teachers and other children "Student Council" was formed. Student Council Election 2015 was conducted on 14th March 2015. As per the children's will, from the senior students one was nominated as an Election Commissioner to conduct the election. Students decided that they will elect one from each class. Total seventeen students participated in the election. Candidates campaigned in different ways to collect votes using handwritten posters, banners. Teachers and Education Coordinator demonstrated the election process and code of conduct. Finally, under the supervision of the Election Commissioner the voting took place on 14 March 2015. Students voted for their favorite candidates continuously

till 1.00 pm with high enthusiasm. After counting and calculating the votes, Education Coordinator announced the result. 7 candidates were ultimately elected out of 17 candidates. The winners became class captains and the highest vote recipient elected as the school leader.

AMCC's Mini World Cup Football Tournament 2014

AMCC arranged a football tournament titled "AMCC Mini World Cup Football Tournament 2014" aligning with the

FIFA World Cup 2014 on 28th June. Five teams as Brazil, Argentina, Germany, Spain and AMCC were formed. All the children were divided in those five teams and they competed with each other. They were provided jerseys and shorts according to the team they are playing in. Argentina and Brazil played in final on July 12 and Argentina won the tournament by 1 goal. This tournament was organized with the financial support of one external donor. ■





Current Children Status

Up to June 30, 2015, the total number of children in AMCC was 95. AMCC team tirelessly made coordinated efforts to find out real address of the enrolled children with an aim to reintegrate them if they have family. If children's parents are tracked

down then children are reintegrated to their family maintaining legal procedures. Besides, some children prefer to be relocated to the previous organizations where they come from such as Victim Support Center, SCAR, BRAC, Shishu Palli Plus (SPP) etc. ■

Human Resources

Until June 2015 other than Program Manager, Accounts Officer, Documentation and Admin Officer, additional 25 staffs of different grades were appointed in AMCC project. Currently there are one supervisor, two counselors, one education coordinator, one paramedic, one social worker, one

agricultural supervisor, four teachers, two assistant teachers, one part time art teacher, one part time music teacher, three residential caretakers, one cook, one assistant cook, three guards, one peon, and one plumber. ■

Reintegration

One of the major goals of the project includes reintegration of a child to his long-lost family. However, it is difficult to know about the whereabouts of their families from those minor children. However, after having couple of psychosocial counselling sessions with our psychologists they sometimes provide some important clues. After gathering some information about the village and family background of a child, local police and the union council are notified to search for the child's family. If AMCC local management set information about any child's family then parents are contacted over phone requested to come to AMCC to collect their children. If parents visit the center and identify their children and want to take back home, AMCC management hands over the children to their families maintaining legal procedure and documentation.

There are few success stories of reintegration throughout the reported period. Fahim and Shahin, two children who lived under the shelter of AMCC found their family by dint of AMCC social workers' close follow-up and a missing advertisement on local news paper on June 29, 2014. Md. Johirul was reintegrated to his family on February 22, 2015. He went missing from home long ago. As a result of the effort of AMCC social workers Jahirul's family was found. His father was informed by the local people and he came and identified Jahirul as his missing son. Then AMCC handed over Jahirul to his father maintaining proper and legal documentation. ■

External visits



Meeting between KNH representatives and Children Village Advisory Committee (CVAC)

Donor of Ahsania Mission Children City, KNH-Germany's representative Ms. Ute Rabenau, Bangladesh coordinator Mr. Maruf Momtaz Rumi, AMCC's Vice President and CEO of CINED Mr. Shahnewaz Khan have visited AMCC on 12-13 November 2014. During the visit they observed on-going educational activities,

health services, psychosocial care, infrastructural facilities and other related supports being provided to the children. They also had an opinion sharing meeting with local advisory committee on various management and programmatic issues.

Ms. Farida Akhtar, a renowned counselor, along with her team visited AMCC Panchagarh center on 12-13 August 2014. She had a series of informal discussions with all children and employees and analyzed the overall situation of AMCC. She conducted a psycho-social needs assessment and gave feedback and suggested a long term strategy. Dhaka Ahsania Mission Advisor Mr. Mostafizur Rahman visited AMCC on 21 June 2014. In addition district social service officer, police officers; local government officials have also paid visits to AMCC in different times throughout the reported period.



Ms. Ute Rabenau planting a sapling as a token of memory of the visit

Accomplishments and Initiatives

Installation of Fire Extinguisher



To ensure the safety of the children AMCC has established a fire extinguisher system inside its own building on February 6, 2014. In this regard, a gas cylinder has been placed on each floor. Through the support from Panchagarh Fire Service and Civil Defense, AMCC arranged a training session on fire extinguishing where both the children and the staffs got practical training on how to use the fire extinguisher in emergency.

Computer Lab

During the reported period, AMCC established a computer lab for the children so that they can keep pace with the modern world of technology. Children attend the computer class as a part of their daily routine. They are given a general concept on use of computer and hands on trainings by trainer. Now they know how to use computer. Currently there are two desktop computers in the lab.

Boundary Wall

In order to secure the children from external hazards AMCC has constructed a safety boundary wall around the building. Now children can take a break and move freely and safely inside AMCC and enjoy the fresh air.





Mini Children Park

A mini park at AMCC's own premises has been constructed to enhance facilities of recreation of the children. There are slipper, swing and see-saw set inside the park. The park is surrounded by a colored bamboo fence. Children spend their leisure playing with each other in this park.

Library

Aiming to create interest among the children in reading books, a library has been established at AMCC. AMCC has a small but well equipped library with various books for children. Every child from pre-primary to grade four has free access to the library. With the consent of the children some rules were fixed for using the library i.e. books can be borrowed only after signing in the register. A book can be kept by a student maximum for three days. One has to be very careful and make sure that the books are neither lost nor torn. Every day from 4 pm to 5 pm books will be exchanged. On specific days apart from exchanging class related books children are allowed to read books sitting inside the library. In case of borrowing a new book the older one has to be returned first. There are competitions organized on reading library books in the weekly cultural events. A counselor of student council is responsible for issuing and collecting library books. A teacher supports him in doing his works properly.

Peer Education

All the children at AMCC are trained to be a peer educator to know a child through his fellow mates. With the help of a peer educator a child's hidden problems are discovered which he might not disclose to the counselor or any other staff of the center. It helps to find out a child's internal problems and take necessary measures accordingly.

Opinion Box

There has been a provision of an opinion box at AMCC so that children could unveil their inner thoughts and complains confidentially. Staffs of AMCC go through the box regularly and address accordingly.

Legal Guardians' Gathering & Education Fair

AMCC organized a legal guardians' gathering & education fair on 24th May, 2015. Eight local schools participated in this daylong education fair.

Orientation with Agriculture and Livestock

With the supervision of an agriculture supervisor AMCC children are being oriented with agricultural and livestock activities. Children were provided with practical training on agriculture according to

their age. They also took part in planting saplings of banana, mango, lychee etc. Moreover, children prepared a bay leaf garden. They have also cultivated various vegetables, such as, pumpkin, ladies finger, spinach, potato, carrot. Besides, children planted

plenty of marigolds, rose flowers in the garden. Moreover, children have been raising hens, ducks and pigeon and nurturing them with the guidance of agriculture supervisor.

Counseling

AMCC has been providing psychosocial counseling care to the children to assist them in changing the behavior and to create a positive attitude towards life. These counseling sessions were conducted by the counselor of AMCC in groups as well as individually. These sessions played a vital role in identifying individual and group psychology as well as information of their lost families which ultimately help them in reintegration to their own families.



Coordination

AMCC regularly participated in monthly district coordination meeting chaired by Panchagarh District Commissioner. In this meeting all the NGOs working in Panchagarh share their performed activities and describe their future plans. In addition bi-monthly Children Village Advisory Committee (CVAC) meeting were also takes place regularly. This initiative helped AMCC to share its programmes with the members of the committee and get their support. AMCC implemented its activities in coordination with other activities and programs of DAM. ■

Community Integration

In order to create scope for interactions with the outside world different measures have been taken throughout the reported period. Each month 9 children were taken to AMCC's staffs' houses in groups of 2/3 to orient them about family life. Every month 9 alternatively selected children get the opportunity to visit families. Children were also taken to local markets, different schools and fairs to make them aware of what is happening all around and it also meets the purpose of recreation. Moreover, AMCC had welcomed external visitors from local community. They have observed the facilities and activities of the centre and appreciated the initiatives of AMCC. ■

Training

Three staff capacity building trainings were conducted during reporting period. They were on "Case Management and Basic Counseling", "Counseling Support and Care Giver Techniques Training" and "Psychosocial Counseling". All the trainings were conducted by external training experts.



Case Study

Samiul Dreaming to be a Pilot

Samiul was merely an infant when the heartbreaking story of his life started. He had his father, mother and a brother in his family. His father used to do nothing for livelihood and stayed at home always. Since his early childhood he often saw his father used to beat his mother mercilessly. One day his father left home and few days later they heard death news of his father. Then another tragic chapter of life of that orphan began. In spite of boundless poverty Samiul's mother admitted him into a Madrasah. As per Samiul's statement, the Madrasha teachers by force engaged him in begging. He started begging standing across the road. By end of the day total collection of money was handed over to the Madrasha teachers.



If the begged money was less than expectation the Madrasha teachers used to beat him ruthlessly. One day he could not make any money and at once he, out of panic, decided to flee from Madrasha and he returned home. But when he got home his mother became very angry because of his fleeing. He was rigorously scolded and beaten by her mother. Amid violent rage and anger of his mother and in the face of adverse and unfavorable situation at home the child again decided to leave home. The next early morning he caught a train from Dinajpur railway station which dumped him in Dhaka.

Samiul got a new identity as “street child” here. This life introduced him with lots of unknown things. He made some street friends, started to collect bottles, leaves and sold chocolates to live hand to mouth. Gradually he was getting more and more used to that kind of horrible life. Samiul's tragic life started awaiting new and horrific experiences every day. According to him, a group of anti-socials used to take him to an isolated place and assault him physically. Their repeated abuse caused the kid unbearable pain and mental distress. Samiul was heading toward a dark future without any hope and certainty.

One day while collecting bottles from the streets Samiul met Kamrul Islam Rubel, a social worker of Dhaka Ahsania Mission Children City. He heard the whole history of Samiul. Then he brought him at Paikpara center of the organization. After he lived there for a month Samiul was sent to the Ahsania Mission Children City at Panchagarh. At the beginning Samiul could not adjust with the life of the center. He used to stay detached from other children and didn't want to talk to anybody. He had a very unhygienic lifestyle for which he had skin diseases all over his body. He did not like to attend classes. He threw foods here and there out of anger. That is why none liked him at all.

In order to help Samiul deal with the troubles and get over his aggressive behaviors special psycho-social counseling sessions were taken. After several sessions his behavior was under control. He gradually changed his violent attitude. Just about three months ago Samiul's lost home was found out and his family was communicated. However, his mother decided to keep him at AMCC and raise him there since she is not in a state to take care of the child properly. Samiul is now in 1st grade. He can draw pictures beautifully. He dreams to become a pilot. In his little pair of eyes he has big hopes for himself now. ■

Networking

In order to establish a strong network, AMCC maintained regular communications with district municipalities, union councils, journalists, children academy, sports bodies, primary education and mass education offices, district administration, various NGOs, local elites and many other group of people and offices.

“Street Children Activist Network (SCAN)” is AMCC’s one of the major initiatives of networking

with similar organizations and individuals. To build a strong communication and support mechanism regarding child rights and child protection every month “SCAN” members sit together and discuss on various issues. Additionally, Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) and Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) has been lately involved with AMCC in order to enhance the network. ■

Recreation

Outdoor



AMCC has a large playground at the Panchagarh centre where children play in the afternoon and during their leisure. They mostly play cricket, football and volleyball in the playground. They compete among themselves in small teams. For instance, on the occasion of 16th birth anniversary of The Daily Prothom Alo, a football competition was arranged among the children followed by a cultural program on October 25, 2014. Besides, they also enjoyed local games, such as, cock fight, kabadi. Moreover, they spend their free time in the mini park riding on swing, slipper etc. Furthermore, bicycles have been purchased for the children. While the children play in the ground the residential caregivers oversee them to ensure their full safety.

Indoor

Children in AMCC also have enough opportunity for indoor amusement to spend their free time. They often play carom, chess, ludu with each other. It also helps to develop friendship and a sense of team spirit among the children. Another way of indoor entertainment is watching television. During the weekend and after children finish their homework they all sit together in their common room and watch television. They usually enjoy educational movies, documentary film and cartoons.



Self Governing Rules

AMCC believes in encouraging the children in maintaining discipline rather than imposing it on them. Therefore children made a set of rules by themselves for School, dining room etc. They write the rules on a paper what they should do and what they should not do and put it against the wall so that everyone can view and follow it.

Call for donation

AMCC requests all section of people to come forward to donate for rehabilitation of the street children in the country. President of Dhaka Ahsania Mission Mr. Kazi Rafiqul Alam while addressing a press conference on 13 July 2014 at DAM auditorium at Dhanmondi, Dhaka requested all section of people

to donate Dhaka Ahsania Mission to implement programs of Children City. Sharing the key features of Ahsania Mission Children City being implemented at Panchagarh, DAM President said, it is not possible for DAM alone to construct hostels and other infrastructures for long term institutional care for the street children. He requested the interested and wealthy people of the country to donate any amount of money they want for the construction of hostels including program costs. He mentioned that there are provisions to donate a whole building, a part of it or even a floor or a room to serve the humanity. He said Zakat funds are also accepted for rehabilitation of the distressed street children.

