REPORT ON CSR IN BANGLADESH 2019
Encouraging Youth As Changemakers
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The information contained in this document was correct at the time of going to press and reflects the understanding of the CSR Centre. Information about companies was secured through interviews and review of corporate websites. For more information about particular CSR initiatives please contact the company directly.

CSR Centre 2019
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The CSR Centre is delighted to share with you its 7th Annual CSR Report entitled “Report on CSR in Bangladesh 2019 – Encouraging Youth as Changemakers.”

Over the years the CSR Report published by the CSR Centre has highlighted interesting thematic issues in regards to critical agendas both at national and global levels. The last three reports had emphasized on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - a lot has been happening around the world but if we take a look at Bangladesh there are unique opportunities of engagement and we through this report would like to continue sharing all the examples on corporate sustainability through the SDG lens. This issue of the Report has emphasized on how today’s young generation of entrepreneurs is envisioning a changing world through innovation to achieve certain SDGs. We know that technology has come a long way and in Bangladesh has stimulated positive growth and impact. There have been many social innovators and this report highlights some of their stories.

We would also like to share a section on the United Nation’s largest CSR/ sustainability platform known as the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the initiatives being undertaken by the various Local Networks in Bangladesh, Kenya, Ukraine, Indonesia, Turkey with a glimpse by UNGC office in New York’s specific initiative on youth innovation through the Young SDG Innovators Program.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this report through case studies, interviews and articles we have been able to capture the “Youth as Changemakers”. Thanks to bKash, Shuttle, BRIDGE Foundation, LightCastle Partners, Mastul Foundation, MindMatters and JAAGO Foundation for their time and interest in sharing their thoughts.

I take the opportunity to especially thank H.E. Charlotta Schlyter, Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh for sharing her insights on the SDGs and the priority of the Swedish government for young people in the society.

We hope you will enjoy reading this CSR Report!

Shahamin S. Zaman
CEO, CSR Centre
I am very honored and pleased to present the ‘Report on CSR in Bangladesh 2019’ being published by CSR Centre. This is the 7th year that CSR Centre have taken the initiative of documenting and producing a comprehensive report on the CSR activities of different member organizations in the year of 2019.

Concepts and practices of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Bangladesh have an extensive history of charitable undertakings. These activities included donations to different charitable organizations, marginal communities and religious institutions. Most of the businesses in Bangladesh are involved in community development work in the form of charity without having any fixed policy regarding the expenses or any concrete purpose concerning financial gains in many cases. Besides, most of the SMEs fall under the informal sector having low management structure and resources to address the social and environmental issues. While some organizations in Bangladesh have followed globally acknowledged CSR models, but most businesses haven’t been able to do the same because of country-specific constraints. These limitations drive the top management of local companies to think only about the profit maximization rather than doing business considering the triple bottom line: Profit, Planet and People (3P).

From this perspective, Bangladesh has some way to go before establishing widespread CSR practices in the business sector. While the perception of CSR often differs from one observer and/or practitioner to the other, it is now understood that CSR is recognized as a business strategy tool by both external and internal stakeholders in Bangladesh. However, the degree of importance of CSR varies between stakeholders. As such, the need for a guideline and yardstick for CSR activities have been long felt by the private organizations. This is where CSR Centre played a vital role in driving the CSR agenda in Bangladesh since its inception as well as in developing a national level guideline for CSR engagement in the private sector. With an operational experience of more than a decade, I am confident to state that CSR Centre can now act as a knowledge center and guiding light for the organizations seeking to take CSR as an investment to ensure sustainability and community development instead of treating it as plain old charitable activity.

*I personally believe that CSR should be incorporated as a part of the core business model* and should be treated as investment instead of charity, because it is the responsibility of the organizations to ensure sustainable development and maintenance of the communities, they operate in. This report entails a wide array of cases, practices and examples from different organizations operating in diversified sectors.
I strongly believe and hope that this report would prove to be beneficial and enlightening for the private sector organizations that are determined to drive the sustainability agenda and help our country achieve the goals set by our government for the SDGs.

Farzanah Chowdhury  
CEO & Managing Director  
Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd.

“Corporate social responsibility is a hard-edged business decision. Not because it is a nice thing to do or because people are forcing us to do it... because it is good for our business.”

-Niall FitzGerald  
Former CEO, Unilever
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3P</td>
<td>People, Planet, Profit</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSCI</td>
<td>Business Social Compliance Initiatives</td>
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<td>BSR</td>
<td>Business for Social Responsibility</td>
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<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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<td>GCNB</td>
<td>Global Compact Network Bangladesh</td>
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<td>GenU</td>
<td>Generation Unlimited</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information &amp; Communication Technology</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Internet Technology</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>KWS</td>
<td>Kenya Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>LEAD</td>
<td>Leadership Excellence and Development</td>
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<td>MNC</td>
<td>Multi-National Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NYA</td>
<td>National Youth Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>PENC</td>
<td>Plant Exchange &amp; Care</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small &amp; Medium-Sized Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRHR</td>
<td>Sexual &amp; Reproductive Health and Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Secondary School Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAC</td>
<td>Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code</td>
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<td>UWC</td>
<td>United World College</td>
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It has already been five years since all nations initiated their journey on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – these 17 goals cuts across all sectors, industries and stakeholders. Through this effort we have seen the strength of the development partners, governments and the private sector in a culmination for one vision, one mission for all – save the planet and its people and “leave no one behind”.

This year’s “Report on CSR in Bangladesh 2019: Encouraging Youth as Changemakers” shows a glimpse of the best practices in Bangladesh through a new generation of vibrant enthusiastic youth segment of the population who are concerned about today’s world and has new thoughts in combating the issues of negative change. Through their innovative ideas the youth are contributing to decent employment opportunities, producing new products and services in Bangladesh that foster a healthier socio-economic system. Some are identifying youth talents and creativity through engaging in various start up products and services that can link specifically to SDG 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 17.

The Report tries to share articles, case studies and interviews of organizations and companies that are trying to be agents for change in Bangladesh. It also gives an opportunity to learn about how some other countries are engaging with youth in their CSR platforms which is through the UN Global Compact Local Networks. In the agriculture sector both in Indonesia and Kenya young farmers are encouraged towards creating sustainable enterprises in agriculture through youth mobilization. Ukraine promotes youth for social innovation and entrepreneurship. In Turkey youth from academia are encouraged to engage in social responsibility through projects initiated by NGOs. It also promotes young entrepreneurship through corporate internship and awareness programs. Lastly we learn how the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) envisions the role of youth in collaboration with other stakeholders in regards to implementing “a better world – the world we want” through the SDGs.

Finally, this CSR Report highlights a New Generation of Entrepreneurs; Social Innovators and Youth Creating Technological Change in Bangladesh’s economy. These thematic issues will certainly guide others to learn and implement their own innovation and encourage youth as “Changemakers” in Bangladesh.
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is commonly thought of as the philanthropic or charitable activities of a business. This conception of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has changed significantly over the past two decades including its manifestation in corporate practice across the world. CSR is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable – to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. Its focus has shifted from one-off tree-planting events and winter clothes drive to incorporating sustainability at the core of businesses.

Along with a shift in focus, there has been a global shift in aspirations and priorities. Before the advent of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the 2000s, the global development agenda was scattered and there were no underlying structures or frameworks to approach development on a global scale. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) changed the game and put forward a framework that aligned the development agenda globally. Research has shown that the share of the world’s population living in absolute poverty has declined from 30 percent in 2000 to 9.6 percent in 2015. This change is partly due to global economic growth driven by the private sector.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of “Agenda 2030” are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs clearly define the world we want – applying to all nations...
and leaving no one behind. Even though governments are primarily responsible for leading the way by setting national implementation plans, taking action to prepare an enabling environment and letting their constituents know that this agenda is important, the private sector has been key in implementing and driving progress on all the SDGs.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the modern business landscape is inseparable from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because it is the most comprehensive articulation of our global priorities and aspirations. It gives companies a framework they can use to actively contribute to crafting a better world for all. There is essentially a business case for using the SDGs as a driver for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The SDGs open up enormous opportunities for companies because it is an indication of where future market opportunities lie globally as well as investment opportunities. The SDGs also create enormous partnership opportunities for businesses given that they are overarching and shared priorities across all countries and continents. On the flip side, full private sector participation is critical to the success of the SDGs because companies have the resources and talent required to develop fresh, scalable and innovative solutions to our world’s most pressing challenges.

“Business is a vital partner in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Companies can contribute through their core activities, and we ask companies everywhere to assess their impact, set ambitious goals and communicate transparently about the results.”

– Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations Secretary-General

There are a number of guides on how companies should implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG Compass is one such framework developed by GRI, United Nations Global Compact and wbcsd. It gives companies 5 steps to integrating and aligning their business with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) give us a framework to think about Corporate Social Responsibility, however, breakthrough innovation and technology are indispensable to modern Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Previously, CSR would be focused on incremental changes. With the help of breakthrough innovation, companies are changing the landscape and helping countless people to lead a better life. One such example given in this report is that of bKash, a mobile financial service in Bangladesh helping millions of people make transactions seamlessly. The bold and ambitious goals set forward by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require exponential changes. This exponential change can only be achieved through the usage and refinement of technology and innovation.

One other crucial element to modern Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is partnerships. Achieving the ambitious goals of the SDGs requires embracing unconventional partnerships with other companies, civil society organizations, and governments. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require the efficient use of resources to deliver massive impact. The best ideas also come when there is diverse input. Companies may not always be sufficiently equipped to deal with development challenges. Partnering with NGOs and civil society organizations and even other companies give them the knowledge base and the required tools to use their resources to deliver impact.

*CSR in the modern-day corporate climate means to implement the SDGs, breakthrough innovations, and partnerships in a coherent manner so as to have the most meaningful impact. These are the three pillars laying the foundation for modern Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability.*

“Poverty is not just poverty of money or income. We also see a poverty of self-esteem, hope, opportunity and freedom. People trapped in a cycle of destitution often don’t realize their lives can be changed for the better through their own activities. Once they understand that, it’s like a light gets turned on.

- Sir Fazle Hasan Abed
NEW GENERATION OF ENTREPRENEURS
bKash
Enabling the Youth in Creating an Inclusive Economy

Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam (retd)
Chief External & Corporate Affairs Officer, bKash Limited

Kamal Quadir, the CEO of bKash is a technology entrepreneur who got the first recognition at the age of 36 when he received the ‘Tech Award 2007’ for ‘Applying Technology to Benefit Humanity’. Then he received few awards in tandem as his CellBazaar won the ‘Best Use of Mobile for Social and Economic Development Award 2008’ from GSM Congress and Asia Telecom’s ‘Innovation of the Year 2008 Award’. Kamal was also chosen as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2009. His pursuit for application of innovative technology to benefit society continued, thus he founded bKash, which provides financial services primarily to the unbanked population of Bangladesh. The foregoing narrative fundamentally highlights the successes of a person who capitalized his energetic youth in translating ideas into reality which is significantly relevant when Bangladesh currently is experiencing more than 30% population in youth category.

With the motto of financial inclusion of the unbanked population, bKash - a subsidiary of BRAC Bank was launched in 2011, in partnership with US based Money in Motion LLC. Subsequently, International Finance Corporation of World Bank Group, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Ant Financial an affiliate of the Chinese Alibaba Group made investment in bKash. Within 8 years of its inception, bKash has successfully changed the entire landscape of payment system in Bangladesh, making financial services accessible and affordable to all segments of the population.

Along with providing a fast, convenient and dynamic payment platform, bKash has created opportunities to build a youth-inclusive labor market. To reach out at the doorstep of common people, bKash from the beginning has been using agent and distribution networks for its service delivery. As an extension of the bKash ecosystem, there are more than 220,000 agents, 85,000 merchants, 220 distributors and 1,700 employees of bKash, most of whom are in their youth. Through the opportunity of employment and earnings of all the associated stakeholders, bKash has created sustainable impact on the society and hence been ranked 23rd in Fortune’s top 50 Change the World list in 2017.

bKash is a true patron of innovation through science and technology. The fact that more and more students are choosing business studies over science for their higher studies is tilting the balance for
worse. In a study conducted in 2012, 73% of the students in grade 8 in Bangladesh were found to be aspiring science students when actually 20% of them ended up being one. Due to the lack of conviction, resources or proper employment opportunities in the fields of science and technology - potential scientists, engineers, researchers and doctors are demotivated to pursue those careers.

To face the challenges and encourage young learners to pursue a career in science and technology, bKash joined forces with the leading science related monthly magazine of the country, 'Biggan Chinta' and sponsored nationwide 'Science Festivals'. Students from grade 6 to 10 presented fascinating science projects representing 350 schools from 7 administrative divisions of the country.
To have an entrepreneurial spirit or the passion to become a scientist, one needs to have an enlightened and inquisitive mind. bKash believes that the society can be endowed with knowledge through well-read youth who can broaden their vision to contribute in different fields of development of the country. Since 2014, bKash collaborated with Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in embarking upon a unique journey aiming to enlighten the future generations through nation-wide book reading program. Over the last 6 years, bKash distributed 213,600 books that benefitted 230,000 students from around 2,500 institutions. This year alone, bKash reached out to 400 schools to distribute 40,000 books. The students are expected to read about a total of 108 books suitable to their age and disposition over a period of five years, exposing them to diverse and multi-faceted cultural expositions. All in all, this venture of bKash has been hugely successful in instilling the urge of reading books as a usual habit of students.

To ensure sustainable economic growth of Bangladesh, the crucial step is to reduce the economic vulnerability that it suffers from time to time. A set of young, well-educated and skilled professionals can play a vital role in stimulating productivity in all development sectors of the country. Infused with nationalistic spirit, backed by the insatiable aspiration and energy, youths of Bangladesh can transform the country well within the span of a decade. In keeping with such strategic goal of the nation, bKash will continue taking initiatives to facilitate knowledge development, skills and capacity building of the youth of Bangladesh, to enable the future generation in creating an inclusive and progressive society.
INTERVIEW WITH

MAHENAZ CHOWDHURY

Founder, Broque Fashion

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I go by the name Mahenaz Chowdhury. I completed my BBA in HRM & Marketing, but pursued HRM. I have been working in different industries for the last 7 years from real estate and airlines to the IT industry. For the last 4 years I was at Graphic People | Software People heading their talent management team and CSR wing as well. Then I started doing Broque Fashion recently and I have had other initiatives in between.

Tell us about Broque Fashion and how you embarked on this entrepreneurial venture?

Broque is basically about creating a culture for sustainable consumers who love being stylish but also aware of the environmental impacts of fast fashion. It’s about bringing a culture which is moving towards sole fashion through recycling, reusing & repurposing.

The pain point that it arrived from was the fact that hand-me-down was an art of carrying forward traditions from one generation to the next. I feel that our generation really don’t have access to the good quality materials. Due to fast fashion, the quality of products has deteriorated in a way that programs people to buy newer ones. What that entail is the loss of a hand-me-down culture. That is where it started coming together for me. I wanted to make a circular fashion label which will be a bespoke brand as well where I’m doing custom order for clients. I wanted it to be an internationally standard recognized label which produces very high-quality, high-end luxury products. So that it not only becomes sustainable here in Bangladesh but also be able to enter international market and create an awareness about sustainability as well.

I came up with the idea of Broque in January 2018, however executed it on July 2019. I am working
with 2 tailors right now, 1 male and 1 female for both groups of customers. I will be launching my first collection of 20 items this year. So far, 70% of our items are made from used items and only 30% are new products such as fabrics, laces, buttons etc. Through recycling used materials to create new products that resonate with the customers, Broque Fashion is promoting a lifestyle that endorses the idea of a circular economy.

As a female entrepreneur, did you face any challenges?

Yes, but I considered them to be a healthy challenge. It helped me reevaluate my priorities. For example, previously I used to work at Buckets Engineer – a learning difficult awareness platform. When I was approaching different learning difficulty schools, they would point to my educational background in business and question the credibility of my work.

I consider myself a problem solver. You may not have a particular educational background, but it does not take away from your ability to find solutions to a problem. I had the drive and motivation to change and create something different.

The idea of Broque Fashion revolves around the concept of circular economy. Could you briefly elaborate on why that is important? Specifically, in the context of Bangladesh?

I think it is very important. It goes back to what I said about the hand-me-down culture. Our grandparents were very frugal people who also were good at saving things. Nowadays, clothes are discarded over minor defects and the bulk factory made clothes are so cheap, people find it easier to replace them than to reuse them. It hampers the sustainability of the economy at a macro level. We need to verify who we are sourcing from and how much environmental impact an item is causing. We also need to consider the cost of making these products including environmental costs and how much utility consumers are extracting out of it. There is a big disconnect and a circular economy can make the system more sustainable.
As someone who has taken initiatives to make a positive impact, how do you suggest we encourage youth to be such changemakers as well?

I think the first is having casual but engaging conversations with them to create a connection and build trust. Then understand what their interest points are instead of imposing external expectations. If someone is interested in mathematics and I am trying to make them do art, if I don’t show them that there is a lot of mathematics in art and create that linkage, that person won’t respect art. Digging into that person’s interest and creating linkages that motivate them to pursue those interests.

How are you contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with your work at Broque Fashion?

When you recycle and reuse goods or products, it reduces the amount of waste generated and significantly reduces the damage done to the environment. If you see some areas in Gazipur or Narayanganj that are dumping grounds for factories, you will see the amount of pollution generated by producing in such a manner. This waste in turn impacts the lives of the people who live in those communities. So, the lifestyle change that I want to promote directly contributes to SDG-13 (Climate Action), SDG-3 (Good Health & Well-being) and most importantly SDG-12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).
Azuria – Organic Skincare by Hridi Ahmed, is a homegrown Bangladeshi skincare line that uses the gifts of nature to make unique skincare products that help the skin to deal with pollution and other day-to-day problems that damage the skin. As of now, it is an online business that uses platforms like Facebook and Instagram to reach its audience and customers.

Azuria was founded in May 2018. It all started with a skincare product that I created whilst combining my childhood fascination with botany and the mystical allure of ‘ancient beauty secrets’. The product greatly benefitted me as well as acquaintances who I know use chemically produced cosmetics regularly. It made me think about how there might be so many others looking for a similar solution, and that’s when with some encouragement, I launched Azuria. The name, ‘Azuria’, is inspired by the name of a butterfly (‘Azure’) and a shade of the color blue.

Azuria strictly follows a no-harsh-chemical policy. The ingredients used in our products are sourced exclusively from plants. We do not test on animals and are cruelty-free. Rather, we invite people of different skin types who voluntarily participate in our product-testing phase. This is how we assure our customers that our products are suitable for varied skin-types. During testing, we have noticed that, at most, our ingredients cause mild reactions if applied to incompatible skin. Even so, we only launch a product if it passes all of our rigorous testing practices (that takes place over several months).

So many people suffer due to the harsh chemicals in their skincare products. For many, the damage inflicted by harsh skincare products can last a lifetime. Azuria is a healthier alternative to conventional skincare products due to its all-natural ingredients that fulfill the task of creating and preserving healthy skin. Apart from this, Azuria is a green company that adheres to the SDGs.

Azuria and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. **SDG 12:** Responsible Consumption & Production – The production of Azuria products is done outside of a factory, and so it is a green company that does not contribute to the emissions of greenhouse gases.
2. **SDG 13**: Climate Action - Azuria helps in spreading awareness about green companies like itself, and has also has taken small initiatives to help contribute towards a greener Earth (ref. point 4).

3. **SDG 14**: Life Below Water – Keeping the ocean in mind, Azuria uses cloth and paper bags to create its parcels. Even while sending sample sachets to customers (that are typically in plastic packets) Azuria uses biodegradable paper sachets.

4. **SDG 15**: Life on Land – Azuria has recently started an initiative called, ‘Save Planet Earth: Plant a Tree’. As part of this initiative, Azuria sends customers free sachets of plant seeds with every purchase to encourage and help them build a greener environment and world.

Alongside being an organic skincare line, Azuria has found that both their Instagram and Facebook pages are great platforms for working towards a greater cause. Azuria always looks at the bigger picture and loves helping people. In 2019, Azuria launched two initiatives: ‘Project Save Planet Earth: Plant a Tree’ and ‘Project Spirituality & Positive Thinking’.

**Azuria – Organic Skincare’s Project ‘Save Planet Earth: Plant a Tree’**

This is Azuria’s latest venture. With every purchase, Azuria sends its customers bio-degradable sachets filled with plants seeds to encourage gardening for the benefit of the environment. With increased air pollution and the devastating effects of climate change that we are faced with today, Azuria wants to contribute in whatever small way they can to making the planet a better place to inhabit.

**Azuria - Organic Skincare’s Project ‘Spirituality & Positive Thinking’**

‘Spirituality & Positive Thinking’ is a page run by Azuria that makes a post every day that expresses a positive message. The aim is to make our customers and any other page visitors feel comfortable in their
skin and have a positive outlook on life. This is especially done for people who are fighting depression and intrusive suicidal thoughts. We are also open to talking with anyone who reaches out to us via the page. This page has a small, but loyal following who eagerly await new posts.

Azuria – Organic Skincare has been part of a few events. The company won a certificate that was recognized by BRAC University’s Nature Sciences Club during the, ‘Nature Carnival’, event that promoted a green lifestyle. An article on Azuria was also published in Dhaka Tribune’s Avenue T magazine as part of the Eid Special Edition in June 2019.

In a year, Azuria has sold over 1500 products. The clientele mainly consists of repeat customers who have truly become a fan of Azuria products. Sales were low at the start of 2018. But, things changed as our very first customers spread the word about our products and helped us amass a follower count of 4000 and 3600 on Instagram and Facebook respectively. Plans for a physical store in the future are also in the works for Azuria.

Ms. Hridi Ahmed attributes her success to spending more time doing than planning. So, the takeaway for young entrepreneurs here is to be brave, and just go for your dreams. There will be setbacks along the way, and people who will doubt your abilities, but the best response is achieving what you’ve set out to do. Keep going.
CATALYZING TECHNOLOGY FOR CHANGE
INTERVIEW WITH

BIJON ISLAM
CEO & Co-founder, LightCastle Partners

Tell us about yourself and why you started LightCastle Partners.

I am a business graduate from the University of Dhaka. I worked for a corporate investment bank called The City Bank for 5 years mostly in South Asia in different departments such as investment banking, business planning and analysis and, corporate banking. Zahid was working at HSBC at the time. We realized if we are going to build a startup, we need someone to do the marketing and operations, so we reached out to Ivdad who was working for Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC). We had worked for 4-5 years at our jobs. The work was nice, the money was good. However, being business graduates, it only made sense to create something of our own. At the time the movie 3 Idiots was very popular. There was this popular line in the movie that said, “You will only be going to regret the things that you did not do when you’re 70”. When we started, we definitely wanted to do something that would take Bangladesh forward. That’s why we decided the tagline is going to be “Inspiring business, boosting economy”. We drew Venn diagrams jotting down our expertise, passion and market demand. Within that intersection we thought data is something that the market needs and we also had the expertise to pull it off. So, we got together and started a company.

Briefly describe the work that you are doing at LightCastle Partners.

At Lightcastle, our vision is to inspire businesses in Bangladesh because we believe this will boost the economy of the country and change the lives of the people. In short, our tagline is, “Inspiring business, boosting economy”. How do we do it? We do it by providing data-driven opportunities for growth. We do it for our development partners, corporates, startups, and SMEs. We do it in 3 verticals,

- Research and consultancy for development and corporates partners.
- Accelerator and incubator batches for startups who can’t afford it. We are one of the largest
Accelerators in the country with the largest pool of graduates. We have had 10 accelerator programs in 2019 alone.

- We do investor linkages and also invest ourselves.

Other than this, a lot of the work that we do involves a lot of data and visualization, so we build custom data visualization and capture systems that allow us to collect data and then help us do research and consulting as well as acceleration and investments.

*It is undeniable that data is important. In the Bangladeshi context, oftentimes we do not have the required data to make decisions and offer policy recommendations. Tell us why you think market research is important in the context of Bangladesh and how the data you are gathering is helping companies and policymakers make better decisions.*

We are at an age where data is created at a fantastic speed. 90% of the data in the world has been created in the last 2 years. What does this mean? It has never been possible in the history of humanity to capture data so easily, store and analyze them at such a speed with the technology available at such a low cost. We can record this conversation, run a simple algorithm, find the top 10 words and find out what this conversation is about. On top of that, with the advent of smartphones and smartwatches, the data created is also immense.

Authentic and good quality data is a major problem in Bangladesh. This is part of the reason getting investment is so difficult. If you look at Vietnam and other countries, even in Myanmar, they have better investments as well due to the data quality and integrity. We started an open data portal with the Bangladesh Government called data.gov.bd where we collect all available data of Bangladesh Government for better access. We have developed a platform where we are democratizing the data of Bangladesh especially the business data so that businesses can make data-based decisions. This will also try to help policymakers make the right decisions. When international investors are coming in, they want to look at this data as well. In order to take the country forward, it’s important to democratize, collect and digitize the data.
What are some of the challenges and obstacles you had to face in your journey?

Initially there’s a social challenge of leaving a stable job to start a venture. Secondly, doing business in Bangladesh is very difficult. The registration process and documentations are very time-consuming. Large players have huge entry barriers. On top of that, there’s a huge problem of account receivables. First-year alone, we didn’t get 60 lakh takas in paid bills. Currently, 80% of our clients are international. Originally, we used to work with local companies but we couldn’t do it because of the problem with account receivables. There’s no structure or grievance mechanism to contest these practices.

Tell us about the impact LightCastle Partners has had since its inception?

We have worked with 100+ Development Partners and Corporates to develop sustainable business solutions/expand business. We have mobilized over USD 25 million+ in investment capital and supported 300+ Startups/SMEs in business development. Created Data Points across 40+ sectors and data democratization including launching of Data portal (https://databd.co/). On top of that, we actively supported and executed 25+ accelerator programs for Startups/SMEs and we also regularly launch industry knowledge products like LightCastle Business Confidence Index, LightCastle Startup Ecosystem Report, Bangladesh Doing Business Blueprint, Sustainable Business Report, Payment Digitization.

What recognition or awards have you received for the work that you are doing at LightCastle Partners?

Throughout our journey at LightCastle, we have received a number of Honours and awards. I was recognized as one of the Top 7 Rising Young CEOs by SD Asia. In 2015, I was selected for the FS 15 under 35 list by Future Startup. The company was also featured in TechinAsia – a leading regional media on startups - among top 11 promising Startups in Bangladesh as well as in Innovation is Everywhere – a regional leading online media – as one of the top 11 startups in Bangladesh in 2015. In November 2016, LightCastle Partners was nominated as the Startup of the Month by SD Asia. We have also been showcased in popular local media outlets such as Dhaka Tribune and Future Startup as one of the top 5 startups in the country.
What role is LightCastle Partners playing in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda?

The world is at a stage where profit should be with a purpose. Every company should focus on 3 Ps; profit, people and planet. All the companies that we work share that goal as well. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the go-to framework. We run accelerator programs that incorporate impact investment framework. We mobilize a lot of impact investment in the market as well.

We recently worked with a company building very low-cost greenhouses. We also worked with Sheba. xyz who are creating a lot of employment and working in SME development. These technologies or services are contributing to produce clean drinking water, reduce greenhouse emissions, promote health, food securities and, education. The SDG framework and impact investment are close to our hearts and we try to work with clients who are in that Mindspace as well.

Tell us how you are engaging with the private and development sector to advance the sustainability agenda?

When we started the business, we decided it is not only about making a profit. It’s about understanding how we can make sustainable frameworks, sustainable ventures not only with a bottom-line kind of focus but also focuses on people and the planet. One of the ways that can be done is through private sector development. When one of the development partners design initiatives for sustainable initiations and need to mobilize resources, they need the private sector. Since we have a lot of experience working with the private sector, we found it very easy to do the bridge. To give an example, we work with a corporate foundation called the Syngenta foundation, they are from the private sector, but they also have this development agenda for food security and nutrition. We designed systems, researched with them so they can build a franchise business model that spreads green low cost, precision technology in rural Bangladesh. We designed kind of like an accelerator program so these ventures who distributes this green precision technology can get financed through impact investors. We are also working with IFC to engage the private sector to create daycare facilities for childcare.
We worked with IFC to optimize water resource consumption in the textiles sector as well. Where we saw that it is not only good for the environment and the SDGs, but it is also saving them a lot of money. If they can reuse the water, save the heat that is being produced, it reduces their electricity consumption and decreases their greenhouse emissions. Having that private sector development approach is one of our key goals and how we engage development partners such as IFC, ADB or corporate foundation, Gates foundation.

The LightCastle Partners team is made up of highly talented young professionals. How are you helping them grow as individuals and progress in their careers and what advice do you have to other fresh graduates and young professionals?

When starting a business, people can start with ideas, models or technologies, however, we started with people. You can have an A category idea, but if it is a C category people you will not be able to do it. We spend a lot of time in recruitment, understanding the motivation of the candidate, what he or she wants to do in the future and structure a program likewise. If someone is going for higher studies, we try to understand the skills you need to build, recommendation letters required and try to maintain a very high touch environment. We don’t have separate rooms but work in the same room and table like everyone else. It’s a very open culture. We want to help them in the right kind of skills, training and, exposure. Our job is to enable them with the right skills, contacts and, resources so that they can grow.

What advice do you have for young entrepreneurs and the youth of Bangladesh in general?

Entrepreneurship is about finding the right kind of people to work with. Your idea is as good as the execution. You will be spending a lot of time with your cofounders, close to 70% of your life. When things get tough, it’s your cofounder who can make or break the business. Identifying the people is important, after that you can build on any ideas. When we started, I was 31 and a lot of people were skeptic. I figured if I give clients quality value, authentic data, sound analysis and if my product, service or value proposition is good, then it is not very difficult to sustain the business. If you believe that you can build something world-class, do not listen to naysayers and go build it.
Can you share with us your background?

I am Reyasat Chowdhury. I graduated from North South University in 2015 with a Finance and Economics degree. After that I joined Robi Axiata Limited as a Product Specialist. I worked there for 2 years. However, since childhood, I have always wanted to be an entrepreneur. But I didn't know how to take the first step. Jawwad Jahangir (one of my partners) and I wanted to work with a sustainable business idea that will have a positive impact on society. During a brainstorming session at Robi, Jawwad suggested working with the transportation sector since it is severely underdeveloped.

During my 2nd year at Robi Axiata, they introduced this programme called Aventures, where they wanted to invest in employees who had good start-up ideas. That same year, I had a good GMAT score, and also received a 100% scholarship at John Hopkins University for the MBA program. I imagined I would get an MBA from abroad, become a lecturer at a university, and explore other ideas on the sideline. When Robi introduced Aventure to give employees a chance to become entrepreneurs, I applied immediately. The idea of Shuttle got selected and our journey began.

Could you briefly tell us what Shuttle is and about the company?

A study done by BRAC shows that 94% of women commuting on public transport have experienced some sort of physical, verbal or sexual harassment. At Shuttle we wanted to solve this problem. Shuttle is an app-based pick-and-drop transportation service that aims to provide Bangladeshi women with a safe, affordable and comfortable vehicle for travel. Shuttle runs on a specific route with specific pick up points and maintains a busy schedule along 7 routes. We deploy microbuses where 10-11 women can commute together with an affordable fare. There's a trip manager in every single vehicle who is separate
from the driver and is the contact point for customers. This contact person or trip manager makes sure that passengers are onboarded and reach their destination safely.

**How do women get access to this service?**

Our app is available for purchase on both iOS and Android devices, so any woman with a smartphone can access Shuttle. After downloading the app, there’s a verification period of 24 hours, in between which we will contact the user to ensure that they are indeed a woman.

**Why did you choose to work with this issue specifically?**

As I mentioned before, we wanted to work on a project that addressed a local issue. Looking at the rates at which women are sexually harassed on public transportation, we realized that women do not share the same feelings of ease and comfort as their male counterparts during travel. Car services provided by Pathao and Uber are not cost-effective for daily commutes. Although bike services from Pathao and Uber are relatively cheaper, women are still not entirely comfortable utilizing them. This assumption is backed by the fact that only 4% of Bangladeshi women are availing Pathao and Uber bike services. All in all, we wanted to offer a transportation means that is both women-friendly and affordable.

**What are some of the challenges and obstacles that you faced in starting this company?**

There were countless challenges. Among the first of these is the fact that we had to distinguish ourselves as a micro-transit service that is quite different from the more familiar ride-sharing apps. Customers became skeptical of our services after learning that all of Shuttle’s founding members are men. We also had to convince several parents that the app is safe for their daughters to use. Many of our frequent
customers’ parents availed our services to make sure that it is indeed safe. We launched a Facebook group to build credibility around our app and create customer-centric solutions for any problems that arose. We initially started with just two microbuses and a hotline. After receiving customer feedback, we launched the app in July 2018.

Tell us about the outcome, results and impact Shuttle has had so far. Give us concrete numbers and statistics.

The first day we launched the app, there were 5 rides. After that we kept expanding, and currently, we have 7 routes providing 1200 rides per day. In the last 13 months, we have had 18,000 successful rides. So far, we have around 23,000 registered customers who use Shuttle.

Share with us the recognition Shuttle has received.

First of all, we were the winners of the Aventures accelerator program by Robi Axiata Limited. We raised our initial seed funds through that program. I was chosen as a young achiever for Shuttle in the Bangladeshi branch of Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT), which is the largest Logistics and Transportation organization globally. We got to represent Bangladesh in UK at an International Conference. We were also selected by Asia Accelerator for a bootcamp in Singapore for Shuttle.

As an entrepreneur, do you have a message or any advice to give to young people who would like to start their own venture?

First of all, do not focus on the solution. You can see that people already thought of most of the successful ideas. What is more important is understanding the problem well and execution. If you can solve the customer’s problem, you will have a great business. Focus on the problem, get real feedback from customers, incorporate those, and craft a solution. In order to do that you need data on customer behavior. The simplest and tiniest information about your customer behavior is important to identify the problem, innovate, and provide a solution. Remember, your solution has to be customer centric.

How can the GoB or corporate sector support such ventures created by young minds, and how do new entrepreneurs find the required investments to launch and grow?

The corporate sector is creating a lot of opportunities for new startups. If it wasn’t for Robi, we probably wouldn’t be able to launch Shuttle. There are other large companies who incubate, invest and support new ventures as well. The Government, especially the ICT ministry is also increasingly supporting new startups and creating an ecosystem where startups can thrive. However, in order to tap into these opportunities, you need to show that you have a minimal viable product through which you can solve a problem and have customer demand. If you can do that, it is very easy to find investments. There are organizations like Toru who are giving small funds to new ventures and creating linkages with other investors.
In the marketing end, how do you suggest these young entrepreneurs capture the market and reach more customers?

It is critical that you identify your target market and laser focus on them. No matter how many resources you have, you need to learn how to tactically use them to reach your target market. When we started, we set up a booth in North South University to enlist potential customers who would like to use our service. We created a Google Sheet where interested customers shared their information. Also, with the advent of social media, it has become easier to reach your customers and gain the required exposure. As long as you know your target market and doggedly pursue them, it is not difficult to acquire customers.

How are you advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through what you are doing at Shuttle?

Our goal is to ensure each and every woman in Bangladesh has the freedom to commute wherever and whenever they want so that they can reach their true potential. When you face obstacles whilst travelling, it affects your mindset. Women need to have the freedom to go wherever they want. It helps them to plan their lives independently. Shuttle cannot solve all problems related to women; however, we can solve their transportation problem. We have a lot of customers who send us messages of appreciation that they couldn’t do a job or attend classes without our services. With Shuttle they can commute to these places conveniently. Opportunities to avail our services will only increase as Shuttle grows.

50% of our employees are women, and we plan on reaching 100% of female employees soon. We also look forward to creating training centers for women to become trip managers and start a driving school for women so that they can drive Shuttle. These are all contributing to women empowerment and we believe we can eradicate the transportation problem for the women in our country.

“Technologies that are emerging today will soon be shaping the world tomorrow and well into the future – with impacts to economies and to society at large. Now that we are well into the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it’s critical that we discuss and ensure that humanity is served by these new innovations so that we can continue to prosper.”

-Mariette DiChristina
Editor-in-Chief of Scientific American, and chair of the Emerging Technologies Steering Committee
What is the Swedish Government’s commitment globally to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a guiding light for development agencies and for us in what we do to help make the world a better place. We are enthusiastic about the goals, and Sweden wants to be a leader in advancing the SDGs regionally and globally. Some of our priority SDG areas are SDG 5 - Gender Equality, SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals. We believe gender equality has to be at the front of the work we do. It is mainstreamed throughout all the other goals and our efforts towards the goals. We put a lot of emphasis on good governance and promoting the rule of law. These are important pillars of society and it is also reflected in our work in other countries. Another very important goal for the Swedish Government is creating strong partnerships with different stakeholders to advance sustainability efforts and the SDGs.

How important is it for the private sector to be involved in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The private sector has become a key driver of the sustainability agenda. I think the participation of the private sector is critical to the success of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Companies are more innovative than governments. They can offer fresh, innovative and scalable solutions to some of the massive challenges facing us and the planet. On the flip side, companies are beginning to acknowledge that if they are not sustainable, they will lose out. There is a business case for adopting sustainability and incorporating it into business operations and processes. We see new partnerships between the private sector, civil society and governments as is seen in the Climate Summit where Swedish companies are partnering with Governments to tackle the climate crisis.
**The Sustainable Develop Goals (SDGs) are bold and ambitious, it requires resources. How do you think we can finance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve the 2030 agenda?**

Development agencies are focused on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These ambitions have to be financed. There are in fact a lot of available financing opportunities for the SDGs, including for climate change mitigation and adaptation. We must also make the best use of available resources. Each of the SDGs are broken down into targets. Even if it is difficult to manage the necessary financing for an SDG, it is possible to finance a part of it rather than the whole aiming at individual targets.

**How do you see the SDGs being implemented in Bangladesh through the Swedish Embassy/ Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)?**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are guiding what the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is doing in Bangladesh. As I mentioned, the SDGs are easily relatable and they bring clarity to the challenges we face. Bangladesh as a country is also very enthusiastic about the SDGs and was active in formulating them. There are currently 5 strategic goals that are directing the Swedish Governments development efforts.

- **Strengthening Democracy, Human Rights & Gender Equality** contributing to SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.
- **Inclusive Growth** contributing to SDG 5 - Gender Equality, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth.
- **Environment, Climate and Disaster Resilience** contributing to SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 13 – Climate Action and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.
- **Improved Health, Sexual & Reproductive Health** contributing to SDG 3 – Good Health & Well-Being, SDG 5 – Gender Equality and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities.
- **Displaced Communities.** This was added later with additional funds because of the Rohingya refugee crisis, which also affected the host communities. This contributes to SDG 3 – Good Health & Well-Being, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities and, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. For example, we have created provisions for gas stoves for Rohingyas as well as host communities to reduce the cutting of firewood which was hampering the local ecosystem. Also, not having collect firewood has been important for reducing women’s exposure and freeing up time for other activities (since women are often the ones getting firewood).

As you can see, women’s empowerment is cross-cutting in all our work. Sweden has a feminist foreign policy since 2014, which means we strive to do everything in foreign policy through a gender lens. Previously, people would sometimes think of women’s empowerment as an afterthought, now it is at the core of everything we do. This feminist foreign policy was established at the level of the Foreign Minister, and is embraced by the whole Government. Our Prime Minister is a champion of UN WOMEN’s #HeforShe campaign.
How is SIDA thinking of engaging young women in rural Bangladesh to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change?

Since advancing Women’s Empowerment is a priority for the Swedish Government and the work that we do, SIDA is actively involved in programs related to girls and young women as well. For example, we are supporting work in the Kurigram area through Plan International and RDRS to prevent child marriage by working with champion dads, religious leaders on the field, as well as through using creative community radio jingles to raise awareness on the issue. A case story is when one of the teams visited a Madrasah school where they had a girls’ football team which acts as additional motivation for them to stay in school. The project actively engages with the people in the community through dialogues and parent-teacher meetings. It is not always easy; some places are easier to work in than others. We are also working on some climate change programs that involve women. In coastal areas a lot of families find themselves in trouble due to the salination of land. So, teams are working with local groups and helping them cultivate and trade crabs as they are easy to sell, while others are working with hydroponics. Even if the volume is not big, it opened up innovation and also the spirit of working together. These projects are also led by women leaders. The message we try to get across to these young girls is the idea that they have a role in their own future. Men and women can work together and contribute to their societies and the economy.

From your point of view, in what ways can Bangladesh mobilize the youth who are the demographic dividend as well as the future leaders?

It is not for old people to tell youth what to do. There needs to be an atmosphere of civil dialogue guided by empathy. We need to listen to young people and have open conversations to understand their needs and challenges. Recently, the Swedish Embassy and UN WOMEN hosted a photo exhibition called Swedish Dads and Bangladeshi Babas, a competition of fathers sending photos with their children and explaining their roles as fathers. Young men in Bangladesh are just as interested as dads in Sweden to step up and take responsibilities within the household including taking care of their children. In another encounter with you people, I was invited by IUB recently to be part of a “Greta Competition” organized by IUB Faculty of Arts where kids from grade 7-12 delivered Greta speeches. The younger generation are aware of these global challenges and they are very enthusiastic about solving the problems that these challenges pose to us.

Every year, countless young students from this country go to Sweden to pursue their higher education, how do you think they can be ambassadors of progress and change for Bangladesh and also promote friendship between the countries?

Bangladeshi students who go to Sweden for higher education often come back to Bangladesh and do all sorts of interesting and innovative things. Some of them join the civil society, some choose academia and other professions. The alumni association in Bangladesh is much more vibrant than it is in other places. The photo exhibition I mentioned called Swedish Dads and Bangladeshi Babas was actually co-organized with the Swedish Alumni Association. Alumni have also taken initiatives such as PLOGGING, a concatenation of jogging and picking up garbage. The alumni are also involved in supporting marginalized kids, marginalized groups and education about good practices around menstruation to enable girls to attend school.
What is your idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)? How can CSR play a significant role in the social-economic development of a country especially with regards to the youth – kindly share with us your opinion and observations in the Swedish context?

The Swedish Government has a policy for sustainable business. There is also an action plan for business and human rights. The areas covered are Environmental Sustainability, Human Rights & Working Conditions, Governance and Anti-Corruption. There are policies, legislation and incentives to ensure that these principles are adhered to. Swedish businesses consistently rank high in international indices based on their commitment to sustainable business practices.

How can young women and girls build their capacities and skills to contribute to the economy of Bangladesh?

First of all, education with a focus on IT literacy. Secondly, they need to be involved in the economy. Policymakers also need to take policy measures that encourage the participation of young women in the economy. In Sweden the provision for affordable quality childcare and parental leave for both mothers and fathers have been important. As a result, almost 80 percent of all Swedish women work outside the home. Fathers can take the leave too, and in fact 3 months of the total leave can only be taken by the father, in order to encourage a more even division between parents. Since one of the parents generally stays at home during the child’s first year, creches are available only after age of 1. So there are policies that can be conducive for young women to join the workforce, and for parents to be able to share family responsibilities.

Do you have any advice regarding the youth?

Listen to them and provide spaces for them to express themselves freely
BRIDGE FOUNDATION

Creating a Space for the Differently-abled Deaf and Mute Artists

Natasha Israt Kabir
Co-founder & President, BRIDGE Foundation

In December 2015, we at BRIDGE Foundation initiated a project, ‘ARTPreneur for Differently Abled’, where people mute and deaf artists were given the opportunity to work with experts through a monthly workshop to make and sell their art online. As AllianceFrançoise and CounterFoto were our main strategic partners, they provided us with the perfect venue for this project.

Our founder believes that deaf-mute artists are ‘differently abled’, as opposed to ‘disabled’. This terminology helps in changing the negative mindset that surrounds people with disabilities. Most importantly, it empowers people living with ‘different’ abilities. It is also about making lessening the stigma that surrounds disabled people, and which contributes to work-place and social exclusion. Our founder states that, ‘We have successfully ended our year with a participation in ‘Social Enterprise Day’….’ powered by the British Council, and facilitated by Better Stories at their official venue. From then on, we have been engaged in joint ventures with Better Stories.

After that, we initiated more activities involving arts and crafts, through a successful art exhibition at the Netherlands Embassy in May 2016. The foundation got more opportunities to collaborate with creative people, and one of the artists, Muhammad Sohel Ahmed, got the chance to start his career as graphic designer at Red and Orange Communication. There are also others like him. For example, Shafayth Hossain Asif, who is also currently working as a graphic designer at DOT3PRD and Jannatul Ferdous Srity (23) who interned at local NGO, Democracywatch.

The targeted stakeholders

As the head of Chancery, Mr. Tanvir Kabir from the High Commission in Mexico bought several paintings made by deaf and mute artists to exhibit in Mexico City. Unfortunately, the fact is that the amount of people buying paintings these days is very low. So, the founders are focusing instead on innovative design, that consists of making products out of wool, hand-made pottery, and miniature arts as well through the online page, ‘Magical Art of Silence’. This is the new imperative for our foundation.

Achievements
Joy Bangla Youth Award is the flagship event of Young Bangla, one of the biggest national platforms for Bangladeshi youth. Joy Bangla Youth had its third installment on the 27th and 28th of October, 2018 to celebrate young innovators and change makers at Sheikh Hasina National Youth Development Institute in Savar. The selection process focused on youth-led organizations or youth leaders and the finalists were selected across 10 different categories. BRIDGE Foundation was selected under the, ‘empowerment of specially challenged people’ category.

Around 150 selected youth representing different professions and areas in Bangladesh spoke with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directly about what they consider to be priority areas for the country and its people.

**Conclusion**

As founders, we hope that we can draw more help from national and international NGOs, as well as embassies. If we collaborate with these entities, our hope is that they will promote the works of our artists through their miscellaneous company-branded stationary, such as diaries or desk calendars, through their online presence, and social networking.

There are well-known and important debates about how inclusive policies ‘involve’, ‘engage’, ‘consult’, and (more recently) ‘co-produce’ services with communities of people who are not considered to be a part of the mainstream. These debates help us to consider what approaches can lead to a change in the lives of the communities we work with. In 2005, our president volunteered with Democracywatch, a Bangladeshi youth-oriented NGO based in Dhaka that works closely with people who are especially vulnerable in society. After working with Democracywatch, our president found that Bangladesh is inflexible when it comes to support for marginalized communities. In 2013, she initiated, ‘Project IT for
the Differently Abled’, with a grant provided by the US Department of State. The project aims to equip technological education and skills to people with disabilities. She believes that technology is the key to empowerment, independence and personal freedom.

Ensuring that these spaces are inclusive of people of varied abilities is the biggest challenge. But this is the driving factor for making a space that is dedicated to deaf and mute artists; we would like to assist them in generating income and facilitate collaborative efforts. This process opened our eyes to the fact that we cannot move forward with sustainable development if we are inattentive to the needs of disabled/physically-impaired people(s). So, we took it upon ourselves to find ways to help so-called, ‘disabled’ (we prefer ‘differently-abled’) people.
INTERVIEW WITH

NAHID AHMED

Young Initiator, Plant Exchange & Care (PENC)

What made you connect with SDG 15 on environment?

Young people are the most energetic and intelligent generation. But one in ten of the country's 44 million-strong young people face unemployment, which is an immense concern for Bangladesh. Skills and education become outdated because of unemployment and tends a person to get involved into various dissipated doings, such as drug addiction, illegal activities.

I think if we want to utilize their inner power and motivate them to be socially responsible, we should encourage them to be involved with tree plantation. This initiative will not only help to maintain the ecological balance, it will also help our country to achieve SDG 15 (Life on Land) both actively and passively. Believing in it, I modified my initiative to plant trees with the intention to get connected with SDG 15.

How did you plan to promote SDG 15 through your initiative?

I started planting trees at the very early age of my school life and I used to inspire other people to plant trees also. When I came to know about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 15, I became more inspired considering that I would support the Government of Bangladesh in achieving SDG-15.

In this era of virtual life it is easier to reach out people through social media. In 2016 I started a group in social media – “Plant Exchange & Care” to inform and inspire other people about my tree plantation and rooftop gardening. Also I keep trying to inform about the importance of tree plantation and forestation, necessity of maintaining ecological balance and also protecting and preserving the forests of Bangladesh. Currently the group has 75,785 members. They regularly post the update of their gardening and planting trees in the group. They also share various problems they face in regarding to gardening and
receive solution from the administrative bodies from the group and other members, from which other members of the group learn how to combat the same issues.

**What is the impact of planting trees and rooftop gardening?**

The members of “Plant Exchange & Care” everyday post 1500-2000 update about their gardening or planting trees. Among them 400-500 posts are related to different problems of their gardening. We provide solutions of these problems to our members. Thus we are providing solutions to 1500 problems of trees in a month and 18000 problems per year.

Not only providing solution, we also inspire our members to exchange their plants with one another for free of cost. Members can get their expected plants and get into the culture of planting more trees.

We also share sale post for various rare and expensive plants, seeds and fertilizer for trees with our members through which they can easily get access to all the information they require and share the information with other people.

We also conduct workshops on different issues like-taking care of any specific plant, potting orchids etc. Through these workshops we teach our members practically about this issue and also give plants as gifts.

**How can this initiative help the Government of Bangladesh to meet SDG-15?**

Bangladesh Government had embraced SDGs which requires the cooperation of private sector, civil society and citizens to ensure that we leave a better planet for our future generation. “Plant Exchange & Care” is actively and passively motivating its members to plant more trees and fight against deforestation. The members of the group also inspire other non-members to plant trees and do gardening. Thus we ethically try to collaborate the Government of Bangladesh to achieve SDG 15.

**What is your plan for enhancing the tree plantation in Bangladesh?**

My plan is to plant trees in every educational and religious institute in our country. It is not possible for me alone to execute the plan. In this regard, I wish Government of Bangladesh should make tree
plantation compulsory for students in their own educational institute. With the help of Government, I and my members of this group will provide knowledge to all to understand the value of tree plantation and forestation.

**Do you have any other projects which help to meet sustainable social responsibilities?**

Most of the students of madrasas in rural areas cannot afford to buy seasonal fruits regularly. For this reason recently we have initiated a project through which we are planting saplings in various madrasas in rural areas. After 2/3 years they can get the fruits from those trees and can meet the demand of nutrition.

We also have started another project “PENC Scholarship”, in which some of the members of the group provide financial donation to the brilliant students from grassroot level. The students who achieve A grade from science department and A- from commerce and arts departments in their test exams, will receive scholarship to fill up form for appearing SSC exam. We want to take these brilliant students forward and wish they would achieve their destination. After that, we believe these students will reiterate this initiative to other grass root and brilliant students to support to achieve his/ her dream.

**What is your message to others in Bangladesh for preserving the environment and creating a “Green Livable Planet”?**

To preserve the environment and create a “Green Livable Planet”, to save country and its people, there is no alternative for tree plantation.
Apon was born on a foot over bridge in Farmgate. A pedestrian first saw him there, crying. His existence was denied by his parents. He was abandoned by them. His fate was discerned; to live like a weed. The pedestrian, with the help of a police officer, handed him over to an old lady. The old lady was his shelter for five years until her death. Her family members threw him out just after she left the world. That five-year-old child had once again ended up on the streets, unfed, abandoned, and alone. Within a few days, he tagged along with a group of boys who collected trash for a living. Gradually, he discovered that the group was involved in unlawful activities. Most of them were drug addicts, involved in robbing and hijacking. He could not understand what was going on, but he never felt comfortable in the group. One day he got a chance and ran away. He found his second shelter in the Korail bosti. This is his present address. But, as a matter of fact, he does not get proper nutrition there, and nor does he get a proper chance for education. There is no opportunity for him to change improve his life.

Apon is growing up in a slum. He spends his time alone, building up his own dreams. Just a few days ago, he had not even heard of the word ‘dream.’ Now, he lives because he dreams. When he sees a plane flying over his head, he actually sees his dreams. He dreams of being a pilot now. He is ready to reach the sky. Apon is walking towards his dreams because MASTUL is holding his hand.

Over two hundred children are dreaming because of MASTUL foundation. They are continuing their education for free in addition to being provided proper medication, tools for study, mental health counselling and nutritious food. At MASTFUL, we are trying to build children a future with proper education and other basic needs.
Tell us a little about yourself.

I am Farid Uddin. My home town is at Tangail. I have completed my studies under the faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. After accomplishing my Masters in 2007, I started my business of event management and interior designing and now simultaneously heading BD Clean.

What inspired you in starting BD Clean?

My uncle was an inspiration to me in getting involved in various voluntary activities since my childhood. After the completion of my education, I became busy with the business and family. In 2016, I read a Facebook post that under a project of JICA, the Mayors of Dhaka City Corporation initiated a distribution of dustbins throughout the city for ensuring cleanliness and raising awareness. On the next day I read a report that a dustbin was in its place, however, the garbage was scattered around it. I created an event to clean the Dhanmondi area as it is my residence and got a huge response. The purpose of the initiative was to make it as a model so that other people can adopt it to make their area clean.

On that very day, I thought to inflate the boundary of my initiative. I wanted not only to focus on the Dhanmondi area, rather spread awareness throughout Dhaka city. I designed a logo on the name of “Dhaka Clean” and planned to start our activities officially. As most of the activists were jobholders, users chose to work on Thursday nights. Gradually when women also became interested to participate then we shifted the event from night to daytime. Our purpose was spreading awareness not only verbally, but also implementing it. We started cleaning the roads throughout nights and also placed the garbages into the adjacent dustbins.
Where did the name come from? How do you operate your activities?

Initially, we started our journey focusing on some specific areas of Dhaka. That is why we named the activity Dhaka Clean. Gradually we received a response from various divisions and we started working on Barisal, Mymensingh, Khulna, Rajshahi, etc. We then decided to change the name and logo of the initiative from Dhaka Clean to BD Clean, as it had started reaching the whole country. Gradually we covered 56 districts in our country and by December 2019, we are anticipating to cover more than 30 upazillas and all the upazila by June 2020. Currently we have 2,00,000 registered members, among them 18,000 are the regular members.

How does your organization create such a large membership base?

Every person in Bangladesh has a dream to have a neat and clean country. When I started the initiative, I saw the passion and urge in the eyes of the members to transform their dream into reality. This patriotism assisted to create such a large membership of BD Clean.
**How do you link your initiative to social responsibilities?**

I do believe that cleanliness is civic responsibility. BD Clean is performing the duty by spreading awareness among the society to ensure cleanliness, which can lead to a clean Bangladesh. That is how BD Clean is performing its social responsibility.

**How do you involve the adjacent community in this cleaning process?**

When we go to a specific area to clean it up, at first, we talk to the local people like shopkeepers. Initially, we faced some challenges, such as they expressed their suspicion about our intention and also asked for the sustainability of our activities. We took those challenges very positively and kept our work going. We gradually achieved their trust and now they are also helping us. We encourage them not only to get involved in cleaning on that specific day, also make them realize that it is their responsibility to keep their area clean and also take care of its sustainability.

**Do you know about the SDGs? How can this initiative help the Government of Bangladesh to meet SDG-11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)?**

Being a cognizant citizen, I certainly know about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I believe the goals of sustainable development are to meet the needs of today, without compromising the needs of tomorrow. It is our duty to cooperate with our Government in achieving SDGs. By 2020 we are dreaming to ensure clean Bangladesh, which can ensure the sustainability of the environment and also help the Government of Bangladesh to achieve SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).
What is your target for achieving clean Bangladesh in the next 5 years?

By 2021, BD Clean has targeted to establish a clean and garbage-free Bangladesh. We wish not only the members of BD Clean, but also everyone should participate and contribute to achieving the target. After achieving the target, the activities of BD Clean will continue, rather we simultaneously will work on education, law, creating employment opportunities for the unemployed people. We hope to ensure problem free environment for Bangladesh by 2025.

As the environment is an important agenda how do you propose to involve more youth in your future progress?

We are forming more teams that are working with immense integrity to ensure cleanliness and spreading awareness among the people throughout the country. They are organizing more events, regular sessions, and seminars for the coordinators of the program. In these events we ask them to encourage and involve not only the youth of the cities but also from the villages.

What is your message to others in Bangladesh for preserving the environment and creating a “Livable Planet”?

For preserving the environment and creating a “Livable Planet”, my message to others in Bangladesh would be, “Good citizen and civic sense can establish and ensure a livable planet”.
MINDMATTERS

Creativity as the Language of Advocacy

Sarah Fardeen
Founder, MindMatters

I am a dedicated and culturally-sensitive counsellor and mental health advocate with extensive experience in private practice. I also have extensive experience volunteering and campaigning in the non-profit sector in Canada, Bangladesh and the United Kingdom. Currently, I am doing a postgraduate diploma on addiction and mental health at Centennial College, Toronto.

I aim to work against the overwhelming stigma and shame attached to mental health issues by promoting the belief that such issues require professional attention. Working with youth and student communities in Dhaka made me aware of a dire need for a safe and open outlet to discuss mental health issues.

With these objectives in mind, I founded MindMatters, an organization that aims to raise awareness about mental and psychological health issues in Bangladesh by spreading knowledge, raising awareness and understanding and creating a safe environment for dialogue through bold advocacy. MindMatters believes that good mental and psychological health is integral to one’s overall well-being. We campaign to break the barriers to accessing quality mental and psychological healthcare services. We promote SDGs, good health and well-being since the beginning of the organization.

While working at North South University, many students have asked for my help in finding professional help for mental health issues privately because their parents would not allow them to. This made me look for ways to engage the youth and provide them with an outlet to help them deal with their mental health issues. MindMatters was started with the idea of using creativity as the language of advocacy. Creative platforms provide psychoeducation as well a means of expression. Our activities have so far consisted of organizing an art-exhibition depicting mental health issues in Bangladesh, a dance therapy session promoting wellbeing, art therapy sessions, and musical events promoting mental health and panel discussions on post-partum depression. We have worked with artists and authors to publish a book and a zine providing psychoeducation through art and literature.

Due to prevalence of the stigma, MindMatters have often struggled to find sponsorship and funding for its activities. Many organizations, even established worldwide brands, even MNCs, have refused to collaborate with us for fear of being associated with the stigma. In spite of this, we have partnered...
with Bengal Publishing and the Dhaka Lit fest to publish our zine and book. We have partnered with private-sector organizations such as East Coast Group and Tradexcel Ltd. to organize our inaugural art exhibition. Union Capital Ltd. sponsored the production of our promotional video for World Mental Health Day in 2017.

Increased urbanization has caused mental health issues to be more prevalent and prominent. Solutions must, in my opinion, be community-based. Providing basic mental health care training to local leaders and having him/her train other lay people can go a long way.

I will encourage the youth of Bangladesh to volunteer at least once in their life for a cause that is outside their comfort zone. The growth will come in many folds and sometimes in ways that you won’t even expect it to.
INTERVIEW WITH

KORVI RAKSHAND
Founder, JAAGO Foundation

Tell us a little about you days as an adolescent.

I was a student of Scholastica. In addition to studying I used to play cricket and involved in numerous volunteering activities. I used to organize various programs and arrange concerts in the school to raise funds for helpless families. I passed a very simple but enjoyable adolescent period.

What experiences (if any) led you to work with underprivileged children? Please share with us what inspired you to establish JAAGO Foundation.

When I was a kid, I thought street children were the happiest as they can play all day long and do not need to go to school. The older I got, the more I thought about their future. I thought what would happen to me if I were in their situation.

After completing my graduation, I became determined that I need to work for the underprivileged children. I started exploring around Bangladesh to experience the life of the disadvantaged street children and also to be aware about their desire and dream. On that journey I met some of the children. I proposed them to spend a day with me and they will get paid for their time. The whole day we did a lot of fun activities such as-playing games, drawing pictures, having lunch etc. At the end of the day, a child came to me and said, “Thank you so for spending time with us today. We had such great time today. I have no one in this world; would you please take me along with you?” From that very moment I decided that I need to do something for these children which can provide them a sustainable and happy future. I talked to my friends and decided to teach them English as it will help them to become significantly qualified for job sector and even in that case if they want to go abroad. We started visiting the slum areas of Dhaka. Initially we faced a lot of challenges; gradually we could overcome it and achieved our credibility to all. That is how JAAGO Foundation started its journey.
Currently, what types of youth programmes are you initiating through JAAGO Foundation?

Basically, JAAGO Foundation works on two major areas, these are -Quality Education for underprivileged children and Youth Development Programme (YDP), widely known as Volunteer for Bangladesh. We teach children of the remote parts of Bangladesh using Digital Technologies.

JAAGO Foundation actively works to equip the youth with a voice. The program focuses on national development via the reallocation of skills and resources to foster self – reliance and growth in every young citizen. This program primarily deals with advocacy, good governance and the capacity building of youth aligned with different Sustainable Development Goal (SDG’s). The aim is to encourage and strengthen them to participate in discussions for different governance and entrepreneurial issues and collectively work towards national development.

When did you start the Volunteer for Bangladesh? Under the umbrella of Volunteer for Bangladesh, what activities do you do?

We started the Volunteer for Bangladesh in 2011. We encourage youth to be engaged with decent community services. We provide guidance to them about working on governance, democracy, anticorruption, sanitization and hygiene, environmental issues and more.

Volunteers of each districts select committee members among themselves and they also elect Vice President, HR, treasurer for the committee. The committee identifies the problems of their area and prepare an action plan to work on. They also help the youth from other districts and thus they create a collaboration to work for the future potentialities.
How many of the youth populations are you working with? What are the impacts of the activities of JAAGO Foundation?

Currently we are working with 35000 youth. We provide the opportunity to empower them, facilitate volunteerism, foster self-resilience and growth, as well as equipping them with necessary tools to shape them for a meaningful future. With the cooperation of JAAGO Foundation youth are contributing to the society through various activities, events and programmes to create a decent and modified society. Thus JAAGO Foundation helps to create impact to the society.

How does Volunteer for Bangladesh help Bangladesh Government to achieve the SDGs, specifically SDG 4?

SDGs are in the core of every program and projects of JAAGO Foundation. In every year we assemble our elected volunteers in National Youth Assembly (NYA) at Cox’s Bazar where UN bodies provide trainings, conducts workshop and discuss with our volunteers. Through discussions, skill-building workshops, networking sessions and ideation challenges, youth delegates from all over Bangladesh will gain relevant knowledge, resources and opportunities they need to take action and build projects of their own throughout the year. All of our projects and programs for Volunteer for Bangladesh are related to SDGs. Through our projects and programs, we are trying to link with the SDGs in Bangladesh.

Where do you see these youth engaged in your programme in 5 years?

Currently we are working on 32 districts. We have targeted to work on the 64 districts by the next 2 years. We want the youth from remote areas to be involved into our programmes and become volunteers. We know that every area has some different issues. We want to encourage youth from the different areas to solve the issues and empower them.
How does JAAGO Foundation inspire the youth of Bangladesh?

JAAGO Foundation believes in “Talk Less & Work More”. We expect 50% of our members in any campaigns, programmes or events should be new people. When they get into the work, they realize the purpose of our activities, become interested to be a volunteer and also determined to contribute to the society.

We know that one of your students has earned a fully funded scholarship in USA. Please share us the story.

Siam, a 16 year old boy was a student of the digital school in Rayerbazar, has earned a fully funded two-year scholarship at the renowned United World College (UWC) in New Mexico, USA in 2019. He rekindled his family’s hopes for a better life through his excellent academic performance. This is one of the biggest achievements of JAAGO Foundation.

What is your message to the young generation of Bangladesh?

To the young generation of Bangladesh, I should say, “Try to identify what your passion, don’t go with the trend. If you fail to do so, then try again”. I also would like to say that, this world is the best gift God has given us; we need to take care of it. If we perform our responsibility from our end, we can definitely create a better planet”
I propose that you, the business leaders…and we, the United Nations, initiate a global compact of shared values and principles, which will give a human face to the global market.

–Kofi Annan, 1938-2018
The 1.2 billion youth dividend and the untapped talent that exists in the youth generation provides a huge resource to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Young people bring innovation, passion and new perspectives. They are the generation that is the most passionate and concerned about our future and they have no time to wait to be given the opportunity for a seat at the table. The need to provide platforms that connect companies, start-ups, young entrepreneurs, students, and universities is now greater than ever.

Initiatives such as Generation Unlimited (GenU), a global partnership, led by the UN, with the goals of developing a multisector, market-oriented approach to partnerships, provide valuable platforms to prepare young people to become productive and engaged citizens.

For the private sector, there is a huge opportunity to encourage and engage young people in the development of commercially viable, and therefore scalable, SDG business solutions. By involving young people as both co-creators and beneficiaries of sustainable business solutions, business is able to empower young people in their companies while also making markets work for the youth.

However, most companies lack the tools and resources required for aligning their aspiration to contribute to the SDGs with their capabilities to do so. Many existing business models remain short-term in expectations of financial outcomes and performance. This issue is most apparent at the junior and middle management levels where employees lack support from top management that allows them the time and capacity for social innovation. This is turn results in lower engagement on their ability to innovate for impact. Among 1000+ companies surveyed in 2018, 67% reported corporate responsibility engagement at the CEO level. However, at the midlevel and junior management levels engagement remains low at only 21%1. This can be attributed to employees at this level who are not equipped with internal enabling structures such as formal programmes and/or incentive systems that are aligned to SDG innovation.

At the UN Global Compact, we recognize the importance of equipping young people in the private sector with the tools they need to become agents of change and drive the SDGs. Through programmes such as the Young SDG Innovators, we are engaging young professionals and encouraging SDG innovation.

1. UN Global Compact 2019 Progress Report
through bottom-up approaches with the aim of developing breakthrough solutions that have both social and market value.

Launched May 2019, Young SDG Innovators is a development programme designed to accelerate business innovation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by bringing social innovation into mainstream business practices. Young SDG Innovators connects mid-level and junior managers – aged 35 and younger – across diverse business units to generate bold yet viable solutions that can have a positive impact on the company and the SDGs.

The 10-month programme is focused on accelerating business innovation and the development of commercially viable business models that will achieve Global Goals. The young professionals will work in teams to undergo training, mentoring and peer coaching that will support them in designing, prototyping and assessing new commercial products, services, and business models for their companies that can deliver on the SDGs. Running in 10 countries with more than 130 Global Compact Participants and Signatories, the programme will conclude its inaugural round in June 2020.

Beyond equipping young people to be able to tackle the complex challenges of the SDGs, it is important to provide platforms to connect and empower youth in the private sector and then share their stories to inspire other young people to take action. The UN Global Compact has long supported engaging youth on the business tomorrow. Through the more than 750 business schools in our sister initiative, Principles for Responsible Management Education, the Global Compact supports the education institutions that are creating large and diverse platforms for future sustainable business leaders to collaborate exchange ideas, learn from and inspire each other.

Earlier this year, the UN Global Compact announced ten new SDG Pioneers, young business leaders who are doing an exceptional job to advance the SDGs. These exceptional young professionals aged 35 and under, are demonstrating how breakthrough innovation can create the profitable business solutions needed to address today’s global challenges. These young SDG Pioneers shine a spotlight on the power of young individuals who are championing sustainability and mobilizing companies to be a force for good.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a blueprint for the future and a chance to ensure the next generations are able to live in a world we all want. Through programmes such as Generation Unlimited and Young SDG Innovators, we are supporting the creation of platforms for young business leaders to advance the SDGs and contribute to shaping the sustainable businesses of the future.

“Youth are more than victims of poverty and economic downturn - they can be agents of change. We need to do more to create jobs for young people and to support young entrepreneurs so they can create jobs for others.”

- Ban Ki-Moon
  Former United Nations Secretary-General
Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB)
PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES OF 2019

The UN Global Compact is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world with over 13,000 members across 170 countries. It is a principle-based framework for businesses, stating 10 principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment and Anti-Corruption to encourage businesses globally to adopt sustainable and socially responsible practices and report on their implementation.

The UN Global Compact office works on the basis of a mandate that was set out by the UN General Assembly as an organization that “promotes responsible business practices and UN values among the global business community and the UN System”. The UN Global Compact has two primary objectives, “Mainstream the ten principles in business activities around the world” and “Catalyse actions in support of broader UN goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

The Local Networks of the UN Global Compact advance the initiative and its ten principles at a country level helping companies and nonprofit organizations understand what responsible business means within diverse national, cultural and linguistic contexts. The Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) is the local network in Bangladesh localizing and implementing the initiatives and programmes that are launched globally.

The Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) was launched on January 26, 2009. The CSR Centre hosts the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB). The Local Network currently has 43 members, with 20 corporate members – 11 companies and 9 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises - and 23 members from civil society, NGO and other types of organizations.

In 2019, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) hosted a consultation session in partnership with Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) and launched 3 new initiatives that were developed in the UN Global Compact New York Office; 2019 SDG Youth Pioneers, Young SDG Innovators Programme and the SME Playbook.
Consultation on
BSR’s Gender Data Framework

On April 10th, 2019, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) partnered with Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) to launch a consultation session on a framework developed by Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) to collect gender-disaggregated data to understand and tackle the needs and challenges women face in the workplace.

The inaugural session of the consultation event began with opening remarks from Ms Shahamin S. Zaman, Executive Director of Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) followed by a brief introduction to the participants. Ms Katie Abbott, Manager, BSR New York delivered a presentation on the Gender Data and Impact Framework created by Business for Social Responsibility (BSR).

After the introduction to the framework, there was a panel session consisting of speakers from BRAC University, Green Delta Insurance Company Limited, Change Associates Ltd, Ispahani Agro Ltd and SQUARE Pharmaceuticals Limited.

The presentations were followed by a technical session where the participants were divided into groups and asked to discuss the indicators in the framework to gather gender-disaggregated data. The groups discussed each indicator in detail and its importance to give us accurate and valuable information on the challenges and needs faced by women in the workplace.

The insights gained from the consultation session will help the BSR team refine the framework to achieve the objective of ensuring that companies and organizations collect necessary and useful gender-disaggregated data to make data-driven decisions to tackle the challenges and needs of women in the workplace.
As part of UNGC’s Making Global Goals Local Business campaign, each year the UN Global Compact recognizes a class of SDG Pioneers — future business leaders working at any level of their company who are using business as a force for good to advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“Leadership in the 2030 era requires change agents. Change agents don’t sit around waiting for the future to happen. They create it. They do not choose the path of least resistance. They stay on the course, also when they are ridiculed or fought. In the end – they win. They have the future on their side.” – Lise Kingo, CEO & Executive Director, UN Global Compact

The Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) has been actively participating in the SDG Pioneers programme of the UN Global Compact over the years. In 2019, the SDG Pioneers programme focused on youth, defined as people who are aged 35 and under. GCNB received a number of strong applications from member companies, young individuals who are committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). After an initial screening process considering the requirements to be a participant at the programme, the selected applications went through an internal review process conducted by the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) team consisting of Ms Shahamin S Zaman, Executive Director of GCNB and Sayeed Mohammad Musabbir, GCNB Contact Person.

After the internal review process, the top 5 applicants were selected for an external review process with reviewers from academia, the UN system and Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) company members. The external reviewers included Ms Farzanah Chowdhury, Managing Director & CEO of Green Delta Insurance Company Limited, Mr Fakhrul Hassan, DGM (HR), SQUARE Pharmaceuticals Limited, Mr Asad Karim Khan Priyo, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, School of Business and Economics, North South University and, Mr Simon Pickup, CSR Specialist, UNICEF Bangladesh. After conducting a thorough and rigorous review process by the esteemed external reviewers, Mr Mashook Mujib Chowdhury, Manager (Sustainability) of DBL Group was selected as the 2019 Global Compact Network Bangladesh SDG Pioneer.

Mr Mashook Mujib Chowdhury was acknowledged by the CEO of the UN Global Compact Lise Kingo as the SDG Pioneer from Bangladesh for his sustainability efforts towards SDG-5 (Gender Equality) at the United Nations General Assembly on September 2019. He represented Bangladesh and his sustainability efforts at the DBL Group at the SDG Pioneers event.
The UN Global Compact launched a new programme this year called the Young SDG Innovators Programme. Globally 11 local networks are participating and Bangladesh is the only country from Asia to partake in the programme.

The Young SDG Innovators Programme engages young professionals from companies that are members of the UN Global Compact to learn how to catalyze the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to develop new business models, products and services. It is a 10 month long programme where each company team (called innovator teams) will find a challenge related to the SDGs that is relevant to their companies and come up with a solution in the form of a new business model, product or service that has a positive impact on both the company and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Bangladesh, there are 10 GCNB member companies who are participating in the programme. The companies include BRAC Bank Ltd, Green Delta Insurance Company Limited, SQUARE Group, DBL Group, Mutual Trust Bank Ltd, Index Group, Leadership Excellence and Development (LEAD), Tosrifa Industries Limited, Yasin-Knittex Industries Limited, and Epyllion Group. In total, there are 38 participants from the 10 companies with 28 male and 10 female participants.

On October 3rd, 2019, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) team organized the Kickoff workshop for the Young SDG Innovators Programme. The objective of the Kickoff workshop was to initiate the innovators (participants) into the programme by aligning their expectations with the objectives of the overall programme and also discuss the structure and design of the 10-month programme.

On October 21st 2019, Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) hosted a Mentors Dinner with 5 mentors from Bangladesh who will be mentoring the innovator teams including Mr Vaibhav
Garg (Director of Talent Acquisition, AccorHotels), Mr Rakib Avi (Senior Programme Manager, Social Innovation Lab, BRAC), Mr Mohammed Zahidullah (Head of Sustainability, DBL Group), Mr Abir Ahmed Chowdhury (Senior Technical Specialist, International Development Enterprises – IDE) and Mr Mamunur Rahman (Digital Specialist, BBC Media Action).

On October 22nd, 2019, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) organized the 1st Project Camp (called Onboarding Project Camp) which was facilitated by Mr Bijon Islam, CEO & Co-Founder of LightCastle Partners and Mr Sayeed Mohammad Musabbir, Network Programme Manager for the Young SDG Innovators Programme in Bangladesh. The 1st Project Camp focused on Breakthrough Innovation, SDG Lens for Innovation and Breakthrough Pitch to initiate and ideate the innovator teams with cutting edge materials for coming up with breakthrough innovations for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
The UN Global Compact New York Office developed the SME Playbook to build knowledge, awareness and also advance supply chain sustainability within SMEs in December 2018. The Toolkit was piloted in Bangladesh by the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB).

Towards piloting the playbook, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) partnered with BRAC Bank Ltd, one of the largest private banks in the country with a pool of 150,000 SMEs. Other than the large pool of SMEs, BRAC Bank Ltd also consistently conducts capacity building workshops and programs for SMEs and hence the GCNB partnered with BRAC Bank Ltd for piloting the SME Playbook in Bangladesh.

The process of piloting the programme was quite extensive and exhaustive. Initially, the Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) team took a 1-day workshop with 30 employees from the SME division of BRAC Bank Ltd inducting the BRAC Bank Team on the SME Playbook and the plan forward in piloting the toolkit. The workshop also included a group discussion session followed by presentations from the groups focusing on a SWOT analysis of SMEs in Bangladesh.

The Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) and BRAC Bank Ltd partnered with ILO Bangladesh and embarked on a plan that included 3 capacity building workshops with 60 SMEs in 3 batches followed by a flagship event as per the requirements of the New York Office while localizing and contextualizing the content of the toolkit and structure of the workshops and the event. On September 17-19, the BRAC Bank Ltd, ILO Bangladesh, and GCNB team conducted 3 workshops with SMEs from the manufacturing, trade and service sectors consisting of 60 SMEs in total. The workshops included 3 modules; Supply Chain Sustainability, Supply Chain Management and Supply Chain Traceability with a focus on the UNGC’s 10 Principles.

After the 3 workshops, towards organizing the Flagship Event titled, “SME Sustainability Day 2019”, Global Compact Network Bangladesh (GCNB) engaged in a consortium partnership with BRAC Bank...
Ltd, ILO Bangladesh, UNICEF Bangladesh, and DBL Group. Followed by the Flagship Event, UNICEF Bangladesh hosted factory visits to local companies for SMEs to gain hands-on experience and exposure to practical knowledge to build further practical understanding.

On October 14th, 2019, the partners organized the SME Sustainability Day 2019. The event was geared towards discussing opportunities to deepen participants’ and especially SMEs’ understanding of the importance and impacts of operating in a sustainable manner, share practical ways of putting sustainability at the core of business strategies, identify gaps and challenges by sharing good practices and dive deeper into decent work and human rights as core elements of sustainability.

The event was attended by 145 participants from UNGC member companies and organizations, businesses, SMEs, banks, civil society organizations, NGOs and others.

Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator, SDG Affairs, Prime Minister’s Office, the Government of Bangladesh; spoke at the inaugural ceremony as the Chief Guest. Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator; Bangladesh; Kamran T. Rahman, President, Bangladesh Employers’ Federation; Lila Rashid, General Manager, SME & Special Programmes, Bangladesh Bank; Mari-lou Dupont, Manager, UN Global Compact Office, New York; Shahamin S. Zaman, ED, Global Compact Network Bangladesh and Selim R. F. Hussain, Managing Director and CEO, BRAC Bank; also spoke at the ceremony at a city hotel in Dhaka on October 14, 2019.
The event also included a technical session with 3 different workshops facilitated by the partners including a session by Ms Mari-Lou Dupont (Senior Manager, Decent Work and Social Sustainability, UN Global Compact) on Advancing Decent Work in Global Supply Chains: How to Build a Buyer/Supplier Dialogue on Decent Work, Ms Belinda Chanda (Operations and Program Support Specialist, Improving Working Conditions in the RMG Sector, ILO Bangladesh) on ILO’s Better Work Bangladesh Programme and Mr Simon Pickup (CSR Specialist, UNICEF Bangladesh), Ms Zakia Haque (Local Representative, CCR) and Ms Monira Parveen (Nutrition Officer, UNICEF Bangladesh) on Children’s Rights & Business.

The inaugural session and technical session were followed by a certificate giving ceremony to all SMEs that participated in the workshops.

On October 15th, 2019, close to 40 participants (3 batches) went on field visits on to ACI, DBL Group and GQ Bangladesh. The purpose was to gain access to the way these companies are promoting sustainability within their own companies through their operations and strategies and how SMEs can get market access through relevant opportunities offered by these sustainability efforts.
SMEs are the backbone of Bangladesh’s industry. So, we need to build their capacity towards responsible and sustainable business.

- Shahamin S. Zaman
  Executive Director
  Global Compact Network
  Bangladesh
Mashook Mujib Chowdhury is helping one of the most reputed companies of the RMG sector in Bangladesh, DBL Group to streamline the sustainability agenda within its business operations.

As a Manager of Sustainability in DBL Group, his primary focus has been to promote five of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 3 (Good Health & Well-being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Through his role at DBL Group, he has embarked on multiple initiatives for women empowerment in terms of hygiene career development, motherhood and children. For example, the NGO Phulki provided 6,500 women with SRHR training, and DBL themselves are providing women with highly subsidized sanitary napkins at only 12 cents per pack through their Women Health Initiative. DBL Group’s Female Supervisor Leadership Program has helped the women workers adopt supervisory positions, hence helping them shape up a whole new career path, which can lead to management positions. The Mothers@Work program in partnership with UNICEF is helping the working mothers become better in taking care of their children. 313 pregnant and lactating mothers are more aware of maternity protection and breastfeeding after the initiative. DBL Group is supporting their children’s education expenses: 8,365 children were provided scholarships worth $526,616 in 2018. All these have helped DBL Group achieve reduced absenteeism (3.6%) and turnover (2%) and added production ($1.4 million).
Mashook is leading the publication of Sustainability Reports for DBL Group after he joined the Sustainability Department in 2015. Effectively showcasing not just the financial outcomes of their business operations, but also the tangible and measurable social and environmental impact of DBL Group’s work. Using the SDG Compass as a guide, he linked the programs with different SDGs, defined priorities and set goals for the year 2020 which was reported in DBL Group’s Sustainability Reports 2016 and 2017.

DBL has also been recognized by the Global Compact for SDGs 1 and 5 in the SDG Industry Matrix under the Industrial Manufacturing category. Now, they are in the process of integrating and reporting the progress. Already, DBL signed an agreement with CSR Centre and amfori for a women empowerment program called “Shobola”. DBL Group is currently providing technical support. The project began in 2019 and is targeting Bangladeshi factories to train workers into female supervisors.

“I have nominated Mr. Masook for his extensive and relentless work for ensuring the livelihood, safety, good health as well as decent workplace in DBL. He has ensured a true meaning of women empowerment through his work and initiatives and living by the well-known instance “You empower women, you achieve SDG goals ”. An empowered woman not only improves her livelihood but also contributes to her family, community, and society as a whole.” – Farzanah Chowdhury, CEO and Managing Director, Green Delta Insurance Company Limited and Jury Member.

Given that the factories employ thousands of workers, DBL Group’s “Bandhan” Fair Price Shop was established in 2008 to fulfill their daily necessities. The model has been a pioneer in the industry. Mashook has been leading the expansions of the shops since 2014: with 7 shops in the different factory complexes. “Bandhan” provides all necessary goods at the factory price of manufacturers through zero-
cash, zero-interest transactions, which reduces the expenditure of workers by 15% to 20%. They are also providing highly subsidized (up to 75%) sanitary napkins in the shops and women salespersons for the convenience of the women. The shop has been recognized under SDG-1 by the Global Compact’s SDG Industry Matrix. With “Bandhan” as an inclusive business model, he has also made DBL a member of the Business Call to Action.

DBL Group has been an active and valuable member of the Global Compact Network Bangladesh. Their policies, practices, and sustainability strategies are in alignment with the Ten Principles of the Global Compact. For example, the Female Supervisor program addresses Principles 1 and 2: women workers can more freely share their grievances with their empowered women supervisors. Education support to workers’ children is encouraging them to pursue higher education, reducing the chances of child labor since affordability for education is a challenge for the parents. For Principles 7, 8 and 9, DBL Group has multiple environmental programs to reduce the effect on raw material usage and resource consumption. Under his guidance, the DBL Group has now moved further by integrating the SDGs. He is now leading in monitoring and reporting DBL’s performance regarding the 10 Principles and the SDGs through DBL Group’s Sustainability Reports.

“The impressive growth story of Bangladesh is driven largely by the country’s noteworthy performance in promoting women’s education and participation in the labor force. Mashook and his team have done an outstanding job of promoting women empowerment in Bangladesh and thereby contributed significantly towards the country’s quest for attaining sustainable development.” – Dr Asad Karim Khan
Priyo, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, School of Business and Economics, North South University and Jury Member.

Mashook joined DBL Group in the ready-made apparel sector back in 2013 as a Corporate Executive working with compliance in the factory for over one and a half years, understanding legal requirements, buyer codes of conduct, and social and environmental auditing. He has been working with Sustainability issues since joining and was transferred to the Sustainability department in 2015. He is a champion of sustainability, presenting the case to buyers, development partners, and different delegations as well as having the privilege of presenting in front of the honorable Ministers and Ambassadors from the Netherlands and Germany.

His contributions to sustainability are not restricted to DBL Group. He is actively raising awareness in the local community through an initiative called the “Community Knowledge Exchange Programs”. Topics include women’s health and hygiene, the importance of breastfeeding, women empowerment and financial literacy. He believes in SDG goal 17 that the sustainability agenda cannot be pursued alone through a single person but requires partnerships with multiple organizations.
Leadership in the 2030 era requires change agents. Change agents don’t sit around waiting for the future to happen. They create it. They do not choose the path of least resistance. They stay on the course, also when they are ridiculed or fought. In the end — they win. They have the future on their side.

- Lise Kingo
CEO & Executive Director
UN Global Compact
GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK KENYA

Engaging the Young in Regenerative Farming

Felister Orangi
Assistant Farm Manager, Ololo Farming Company

The Farm at Ololo, part of the Ololo Safari Lodge is located on the southern border of the Nairobi National Park. Our vision is to become a demonstration farm with a focus on regenerative farming and sustainable eco-tourism. We plan to train, educate and empower a future young generation of farmers and environmentally sensitive youth in Kenya. One of our key missions is to demonstrate how, even on a small scale, an organization can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the areas of human rights, environment, labor and anti-corruption.

Ololo believes that one of the key ways to ensure the healthy future of our planet is to support youth to understand and have a collaborative connection with the natural world. Only then will they love and protect it. If we show the youth that agriculture does not have to be a destructive agent that aids climate change as it stands now, rather it can actually be one of the agents that save the planet, thus we can have hope of a healthier planet in the future. Ololo Farm is still in the early stages of implementing its strategic plan. However, there are important strides that we have already made through working with students and youth, over the last 6 months.

Working with Youth

Our aim, in working with the young in particular, is to provide a platform that enables them to create sustainable and profitable enterprises. Currently, Ololo offers internships to young people who want to practically implement what they have already learned in school.

Youth from fields such as organic farming, crop science, and agri-business have had the opportunity to work together at the farm, to create a regenerative model for the Ololo Farming Company. If these internships work well with Ololo, some of these interns can possibly be given an opportunity to continue as employees with the Ololo Farming Company as the farm develops and grows. Thus being able to implement the projects they have helped develop within the ‘Model’. Ololo envisions being a ‘hub’ that facilitates the development of useful skill sets that will enable these young people to go forth in creating sustainable and profitable enterprises.
Additionally, Ololo is interested in ensuring inclusion in its work with youth. This has led the company to focus in particular on employing young deaf people in our community. Our deaf staff have become an integral part of the company’s employee structure, and have taught other employees at Ololo to be inclusive. As a result, most of the farm employees have embraced basic sign language with these young deaf people.

**Engaging School Children**

Ololo conducts one-day farm tours for children from schools in the local community. The farm tours involve the introduction of wildlife to children through a game drive in Nairobi National Park in conjunction with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) educational department. This introduction to the National Park has also provided a springboard for discussions on the importance of conservation of nature. The children are then taken to the farm, where they learn how to work with nature to create sustainable productive human habitats through regenerative farming. The students learn with a hands-on approach to how the outputs of different systems become inputs for other systems in the farm, reducing waste, increasing efficiency of energy and creating a positive impact on the environment. These systems are formed from our holistic approach to raising poultry and livestock, organic vegetable production, composting, water recycling, mushroom production, beekeeping, and nutritious cooking.

Ololo is starting this programme initially focusing on one particular school, St. John’s Primary School located in the Kibera slum area. Ololo Farm supports a project that enables students from St. John’s to have three-day on-farm visits every month. Through the three-day on-farm visits at Ololo, the students are learning how to, take care of the soil, grow food on large and small spaces, take care of poultry and livestock, make nutritious meals and to connect with each other through social activities such friendly football games.

Ololo has generated sponsored support for the school lunch programme, by providing nutritious eggs and capital funds used to purchase lunch ingredients. Ololo is currently working with The Nice Coffee
Company based in Australia, which uses all the profits from its coffee sales to help schools in high poverty areas. The vision of this partnership is not only to provide a safe school environment and healthy lunch programme at St. Johns but to enable the school to find a space to produce their own food and include hands-on environmental education in their curriculum. Ololo is hoping to encourage interested students to involve themselves in a sustainable and regenerative lifestyle. With the St. Johns School project being the pilot project, its success will aid in replication of the project in other local schools.

As Ololo Farm’s work with the youth and children develops further, we are open to partnerships with organizations and individuals in similar work, that can help develop the project framework and replicate it in other schools and farms.

“Climate change is moving faster than we are, but we don’t give up because we know that climate action is the only path.”

Antonio Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General
Empowering Youth to Build Skills and Opportunities through Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship

Tatiana Sakharuk
CEO, Global Compact Network Ukraine

Issue

Young people in Ukraine (aged 10-24) represent 14.9% of the population and have grown up in one of the most turbulent episodes of Ukraine’s modern history including the immediate aftermath of Ukraine’s independence (1991), the “Orange Revolution” (2004) and the “Euromaidan Revolution” (2013-2014). Many young people in Ukraine have been unable to find access to the labor market or business opportunities, due to a lack of relevant skills and competences, insufficient work experience, non-inclusive education and training and an environment not conducive to entrepreneurial risk and endeavor. As a result, many young people have migrated seeking better alternatives abroad.

Innovative Response

UPSHIFT Ukraine is an innovative programme that blends leading approaches to youth and adolescent development, social innovation, and entrepreneurship to empower marginalized young to become social innovators and social entrepreneurs. Its core objective is to empower young people to identify challenges in their communities and create entrepreneurial solutions to address them.

The programme combines social innovation workshops, mentorship, incubation and seed funding, to equip young people with the skills and resources they need to identify problems in their own communities and design solutions for them. While young people build social and entrepreneurship skills, UPSHIFT positively impacts the wider community through the indirect benefits of the products and services that young people design, as well as changing the perceptions of young people as positive change agents, rather than a problem to be solved.

Upshift In Action

UPSHIFT delivers skills that support future opportunities and employment for the most marginalized and vulnerable youth. Young people develop transferable skills through both the training elements and the opportunity to work collaboratively in teams, in a supportive environment, to identify, solve social problems. Some teams might have a stronger focus on an entrepreneurial approach. One such group had a strong interest in the skateboard community of Kharkiv but were not satisfied with existing
They wanted to push boundaries and develop an affordable quality electric skateboard. They are very proud to have developed the first Ukrainian made an electric skateboard. Their project is supported by the municipality which allocated them a license to provide shows and rent their boards in the city park. They organize workshops teaching other young people how to assemble, repair and upgrade their boards and promote the safe use of personal electric mobility devices. While the boards are made from stock pieces, they plan to develop a control software of their own.

**Collaboration**

In the summer of 2019 UNICEF and Global Compact Network in Ukraine (GC in Ukraine) has signed the Memorandum of Understanding aimed to enhance partnership and supporting the implementation of the UPSHIFT project in Ukraine. GC in Ukraine united many stakeholders around the project: business, local authorities, academia from different regions of Ukraine. Local authorities committed to promoting the program among youth at their territories in order to find the most motivated target groups, able to bring changes to society. The business gained loyal young generation of start-ups and innovators. Academia promoted dual education, making closer connections between students and businesses.
Farming is varied and unique to each country and culture, and the fruits of agricultural labor inform and sustain the unique tastes of a people. Consequently, keeping the agricultural industry well and functioning is a modern-day priority everywhere in the world. In the case of Indonesia, due to the lack of farmer regeneration, agricultural production is projected to see massive declines in the imminent future. However, several companies are working to preserve crops that are essential to Indonesian cuisine.

Bango Soy Sauce produced by PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk. has introduced the “Program Petani Muda” to encourage farmers regeneration to ensure that the #KelezatanAsli Indonesian cuisine can still be maintained from generation to generation. All culinary lovers can now support this program by joining the #PetaniUntukIndonesia movement, which is currently being promoted by Bango through a special packaging of “Cita Mallika”.

Hernie Raharja, the Foods, and Beverages Director PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk. Explained, “As a brand that is always committed to promoting and popularizing Indonesian cuisine, Bango considers that applying sustainable agriculture principles and encouraging a new generation of farmers are now increasingly needed. Farmers who are not regenerated can cause land depreciation and decreased productivity of quality agricultural products. If the quality of food materials declines, it will be difficult for us to keep enjoying and preserving the Indonesian culinary varieties that we are always proud of.”

Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik shows that within a period of two years (2016 – 2018) the decrease in the number of farmers in Indonesia (i.e. 4 million farmers) is actually quite significant, which one of the causes is lack of farmers’ regeneration. 65% of all farmers in Indonesia are now aged over 45 years, and they tend to be relatively low in productivity. Moreover, in rural areas, only 4% of young people aged 15-23 are interested in working as farmers; the rest choose to work in either the industrial, small-medium industrial or informal urban sectors because they are seen as generating potentially higher incomes.

Since 2001, Bango, through the Unilever Indonesia Foundation in collaboration with Gajah Mada University and other partners, has been developing the Mallika soybean farmers through the “Program Pengembangan Petani Kedelai Hitam”. In practice, 100% of the local black soybeans used to produce Bango Soy Sauce have met the Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code (USAC), an environmentally friendly farming method standard that also improves the welfare of farmers, which is in line with one of the pillars of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP).

Furthermore, to encourage more farmers to return to their farms and ensure the availability of long-term supplies of quality food, Bango has initiated the “Program Petani Muda” to collaborate with The Learning Farm Indonesia. This program will gradually provide intensive training for 30 to 40 potential farmers.
young farmers about life skills through farming education, which should have an impact on improving their welfare. This rare opportunity will also open up opportunities for them to become agents of change.

Nona Pooroe Utomo, the Executive Director The Learning Farm Indonesia said, “Bango and ‘The Learning Farm’ have together developed the curriculum of ‘Program Petani Muda’ to encourage the spirit, knowledge, and skills of the younger generation to continue rejuvenating the culture of farming in Indonesia. For 100 days, 60% of the development funds will be devoted to providing all the participants with farming material, which is divided into four major groups: soil, crop-fisheries and livestock farming, fertilization and pest control, as well as planting business analyses. The other 40% of material will be focused on developing soft skills such as time and financial management, entrepreneurship, healthy lifestyles, English, computer skills, and communication. We hope all participants will be able to spread their knowledge and inspire more young people in their respective districts to make farming a stronger, more promising profession.”

Believing that encouraging the regeneration farmers in Indonesia will have a greater impact through these joint efforts, Bango is seeking to persuade all the #KelezatanAsli Indonesian culinary lovers to support this program through Bango’s special packaging, namely “Cita Mallika”, wherein each package will provide a farmer training to those Indonesian youth who wish to explore this profession further.

Bango’s special packaging of “Cita Mallika” was designed by Indonesia’s proud fashion designer, Didiet Maulana. He said, “My journey to visit the Mallika farmers in Lendah Village, Kulon Progo, has opened my eyes to this brand that has been built with such love. The selections of color, visual characters from traditional weaving, and the stories that I got from this journey are all contained in the ‘Cita Mallika’ motifs. Hopefully, it describes the happiness and optimism, as well as the beauty of cooperation, which will continue to exist between Bango, farmers, and connoisseurs of #KelezatanAsli Indonesian cuisine.”

Moreover, the back of the packaging contains the inspiring stories of four Mallika black soybean farmers written by the famous writer, Dee Lestari. “Based on my experience while interacting directly with Bango black soybean farmers, I have woven into these stories a ‘Dari Tanah Tani ke Piring Saji’ theme in the form of short prose about their ups and downs, struggles, and dreams. To further inspire culinary lovers to support this program, they are welcome to access the complete semi-documentary stories at www.bango.co.id.” Dewi said.

“Through this program, Bango hopes that farmer regeneration can be achieved because the younger generations should have more confidence and high interest in the farming profession. Through encouraging and maintaining this regeneration, high-quality food supplies will be guaranteed and the preservation of the #KelezatanAsli Indonesian cuisine will be able to continue.” Closed Hernie.
GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK TURKEY

Mobilizing Youth on Campus

Akbank Supports Young Entrepreneurs

CaseCampus, Akbank’s entrepreneurship program launched in 2015 in collaboration with Endeavor Turkey, met with young entrepreneurs in 2018 and continued to enjoy widespread popularity. Guided by the principle that “no training is as educational as a case study,” CaseCampus offers participants innovative training and learning opportunities with real-life stories and dilemmas from Turkey’s leading entrepreneurs.

CaseCampus brings together successful “Endeavor Entrepreneurs” with third- and fourth-year undergraduate students, graduate students and those who graduated within the last five years, and are under 30. Participants should consider entrepreneurship as a career option. The program offers budding entrepreneurs a new, innovative, applied environment of learning and networking.

CaseCampus, as an entrepreneurship education program aiming to support the youth along their journey towards becoming an entrepreneur, thereby increasing the value they generate for the national economy, is now supporting the youth interested in entrepreneurship and having a high potential therein. Throughout the program, the participants are examining the dilemma faced by companies at the stage of growth, and are looking for alternative solutions for such dilemma, under the leadership of entrepreneurship academicians, through case studies focused on successful entrepreneurs who have grown up in Turkey and opened up to the world in the recent years.

For the program offered freely to university students from all cities of Turkey and to graduates of universities during the last five years, applications are accepted via casecampus.org website. Applications are evaluated carefully, and 75 finalists are eligible to participate in the program as CaseCampus Fellows.
In the year 2019, during the CaseCampus organized in the format of a Bootcamp program of 4 days, the participants have found the opportunity to closely know the world of entrepreneurship through workshops and training seminars focused on the entrepreneur frame of mind. The program brought the students and young graduates interested in entrepreneurship as a career option together with successful Endeavor entrepreneurs in innovative education and network environment. Thanks to this program, the participants have had the opportunity to take part in the workshops with the entrepreneurship academicians from the leading universities of Turkey, and to listen to panels attended by successful entrepreneurs and investors, and to evaluate and assess from the point of view of an entrepreneur many different dilemmas through case studies of role model Turkish entrepreneurs.

Up to now, around 450 youngs in total are graduated from CaseCampus. 60 of the graduates initiated their own ventures and took their first steps towards entrepreneurship with the help of the CaseCampus either during or after the program. These entrepreneurs are being continued to be supported by different programs carried out again by Endeavor and Akbank.

**Akbank creates and produces social benefit for the community by the Young Volunteer Project**

Young Volunteer is an initiative that encourages university students to take part in social responsibility projects organized in collaboration with NGOs. This effort offers university students (two- or four-year college students as well as graduate students) between 18 and 26 the chance to make contact with NGOs and participate in their voluntary activities.

Every year, Akbank invites university students from all over Turkey to be a volunteer in social responsibility projects organized in cooperation with various Non-Governmental Organizations, and thereafter, to be a guest of Akbank in the Concert.
Akbank’s aim is to increase communication and cooperation between Non-governmental Organizations and university students, and also to introduce new volunteers to Non-governmental Organizations. Akbank also tries to popularize volunteering between the youth and support them to grow up as socially responsible individuals. Therefore, Akbank creates and produces social benefits for the community.

Project sustainability is one of the priorities, therefore, Akbank further expands the impact of the project every year. Akbank develops the project by online questionnaires answered by young volunteers. In addition, further feedbacks received from NGOs at the meeting hosted by Akbank CEO at the headquarter.

The fourth edition of The Young Volunteers Project was held in June-November 2018. During this project term, the number of collaborating NGOs rose from five to 10, a total of 9,000 youth applied to participate in voluntary activities, and 2,600 were selected to take part.

The volunteer youth participated in a wide array of social responsibility initiatives. These included hobby workshops with elders at sheltered housing, activities with disabled athletes, “Orientiring” activities with the protected youth, coast cleaning activities, cleaning and animal care in Yedikule Animal Shelter, handing out soup to the homeless, painting the walls of Kagithane Onder Elementary School, making and painting cat houses for street cats, coming together with children who have down syndrome and prepared ‘happiness packages’ for newborns with down syndrome, signing language workshop and produced a rights-based video for the deaf.

The volunteers were then invited by Akbank to a concert featuring the singer Kalben at Volkswagen Arena on November 24, 2018.
CSR Centre at a glance
In an ever-changing world where global trends of the increasing population put a constraint on both natural and financial resources, challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, weak governance structures and stringent trade constraints and restrictive policies, it has become all the more important to give the very highest priority to innovation and technological advancement. This should be the focus of Bangladesh in leveraging the expanding youth population in Bangladesh.

I would like to mention that this year’s “Report on CSR in Bangladesh 2019: Encouraging Youth as Change Makers” gives a glimpse into the young minds that are engaging and implementing creative ways to advance the SDGs in Bangladesh. This is the seventh report that the CSR Centre has published and each report has a different focus in terms of the thematic issues. This year’s report highlights issues such as youth and entrepreneurship, youth in technology, the social impact of youth initiatives. As Bangladesh moves gradually to a middle-income country, we would need to build the capacity of our youth force through appropriate soft and technical skills so they can contribute in a meaningful way in achieving both the SDGs and Vision 2041.

It is time we create an enabling environment for the youth of this country to become future leaders – for fulfilling such a role there must be more hands-on training, greater knowledge sharing and special attention should be given to fostering a culture of innovation and creative thinking. We must also encourage our youth in all spheres of development work and in businesses with more internships and apprenticeships.

Lastly, I would like to further emphasize the need for enhancing the scope for sustainable partnerships and collaboration – with development partners, the private sector and the government and encouraging young people to be a part of the development process.

Faroq Sobhan
Chairman,
Board of Trustees, CSR Centre
& GCNB Representative, Bangladesh
Let me begin by thanking all of our valued friends, partners and esteemed Board Members in bringing us so far on our CSR journey not only in Bangladesh but also globally.

Over the last eleven years, the CSR Centre has evolved with the commitment and compassion of not only the individuals but also teams who have emphasized on the urgency and importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the contribution made by both the private and public sectors in making change happen in Bangladesh. This has been a journey that is creating the SDGs Agenda 2030 into a reality through the consorted efforts of all stakeholders across all the sectors. The CSR Centre promotes responsible business through mainstreaming the 10 UNGC Principles. Its track record in project implementation with development organizations has impacted the CSR landscape and stimulated private sector engagements in materializing the SDGs in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is in pace with the global movement to build awareness on critical issues of sustainability and CSR Centre acts as a catalyst to bring forth such transformation as an implementer and thought leader. The Centre hopes to build strategic partnerships with those entities that have the same vision and mission to create a sustainable future for all. We together need to measure impact where vast investments have taken place.

This issue of the “Report on CSR in Bangladesh 2019: Encouraging Youth as Changemakers”, highlights the immense contribution of Bangladesh’s youth in developing a better world. Often these innovations are unknown to us and the CSR Centre would like to take this opportunity to encourage youth mobilization for social, environmental and business development.

As a large majority of the population of Bangladesh is the youth. We have a remarkable advantage to create a young, vibrant workforce which can invent, implement innovative ways to promote the SDGs through all spheres whether it be as entrepreneurs, as job seekers or as volunteers – the world is at their hands – the future is their future to create and make better in a planet that has so many challenges to address and yet there must be optimism and energy to discover and create a sustainable future. Let us together encourage these young minds to build a green planet for tomorrow.

Shahamin S. Zaman
CEO, CSR Centre
& ED, GCN Bangladesh
ABOUT THE CSR CENTRE

CSR Centre is a Trust established in September 2007 to encourage and expand responsible business practices in Bangladesh, regionally and globally in various sectors. The Centre hosts the Secretariat for the Global Compact Network Bangladesh. It is an organization dedicated to raise awareness about CSR and encourage responsible business practices in Bangladesh to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The primary objective of the Centre is to become the major source of information, resources and advisory services on CSR in Bangladesh and the operational principle is to contribute to achieving the human development targets set in the SDGs through private sector-led growth.

The Centre provides capacity building initiatives on CSR and other social compliance issues, guidance on international standards (SA8000, BSCI and more), private sector engagement and multi-stakeholder dialogue for development partners, national and international companies and works closely with relevant Government Ministries.
MISSION
To be recognized as the Centre of expertise for CSR in Bangladesh by sharing knowledge and providing expertise and services to promote sustainable development through responsible business practices.

VISION
To be the source of CSR resources for companies seeking to engage in CSR activities. These activities are also key strategies for corporate excellence in order to maximize stakeholders’ benefits.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES
- Advise companies for CSR strategy development
- Provide training and facilitates workshops on topics of CSR to motivate private sector & NGO
- Facilitates forums and seminars to engage stakeholders for advocating responsible business practices and CSR
- Developing CSR case studies and for sharing best practices of CSR
- Facilitate stakeholders to become CSR champions.
- Engage with CSR projects in different sectors and thematic areas
It is usually said that we at the United Nations, need to be able to talk to young people… However, it is not only about us talking to them, but also about ensuring young people talk to us, influence the way policies are developed, and participate in policymaking.