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SOCIAL ACTION

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"To ensure the ship breaking workers' rights a public policy should be formulated and implemented."

- Dr. Md. M. Maruf Hossain

Professor Dr. Md. M. Maruf Hossain, a renowned marine scientist and former director of the institute of marine science, University of Chittagong has done some valuable research works about the problems of the ship breaking activities. By these works he explored Rights violation and environmental pollution in this activities more

Generally, an eyewash test is conducted to certify that a ship is free from dangerous chemicals and fumes. All those toxic materials are cleaned before starting to dismantle the ships in the seashore area. Most of the times those chemicals are either thrown into the seawater or mixed with the yard's soil somehow. The pieces of metal and iron are

The ship breaking activities started and still continuing in our country as a business. The ship breakers are only concerned about the profit, not about the facilities of labors. They just want the ship to be cut as soon as possible. That's why the labors don't get enough wages, rapid medical treatment, compensation etc.

specifically, Social Action talked with him and got some very important information in this regard.

Social Action:

We know that you have some valuable works on ship breaking industry. According to your experience what do you think about the working condition of ship breaking industry?

Dr. Md. M. Maruf Hossain: As a marine scientist especially environmental scientist, I am very much interested to find out the problems or pollution which are being created by ship breaking activities in the coastal area of the Sitakund, Chittagong. For the research purpose I have visited some ship breaking yards so many times and seen some horrible scenarios of the workers working in this industry. From my point of view the working condition of this industry is not hygienic and healthy at all. In Bangladesh the dismantling process of scraping ships is not done in a scientific way. The ships are not properly cleaned before beaching.

staked haphazardly on the yards, which could be caused for severe accidents. Some life taking and dangerous toxic materials are also found there, like-Mercury, asbestos, PAH's, PCB's, black oil, glass wool, PVC's, PCB's etc. Many of these



Workers are carrying iron pieces to load on track

chemicals are highly persistent, carcinogenic and toxic for aquatic biodiversity and human health. The workers who have to stay there for almost the whole day are being affected by these kinds of pollutants discharging from the ships.

S.A.:

Would you please, explain about the problems of workers working in this industry?

M.M.H.:

The problems of workers are beyond to explain. I can say some major problems.

Firstly-The ship breaking activities started and still continuing in our country as a business. The ship breakers are only concerned about the profit, not about the facilities of labors. They just want the ship to be cut as soon as possible. That's why the labors don't get enough wages, rapid medical treatment,



Dr. Md. M. Maruf Hossain

compensation etc.

Secondly- In the ship breaking yards all the works are done manually and sometimes the workers are forced to work more than their capacity in a short time which caused major or minor accident very often.

Thirdly- There are no hospitals near to the shipyard areas so that the labors could get rapid treatment after any kind of accident.

Fourthly- The workers are not provided any kind of protective tools like-masks, gloves, boots, goggles, helmets etc. They have to work on bare foot and without any protective gear at night or in rainy days also.

Fifthly- There are no good arrangement for pure drinking water, healthy food, hygienic toilet and living place for the labors.

(See Page-3)

Without ensuring the human rights of indigenous people how can we rescue biodiversity ?

Mohammad Harun
Program Officer, YPSA

There are multifarious indigenous people live in Bangladesh. The indigenous people are a part of our biodiversity. In attendance of the indigenous people our country's biodiversity is so nice than other countries of the world. Their living style is absolutely different from the majority people. Most of them live in the hilly areas in different districts of Bangladesh. Chakma, Mog, Murang, Khasia, Tipra, Saotal etc. are the well-known ethnic communities in Bangladesh. All of the ethnic communities have an individual language, they have individual alphabet also. They believe on different type of religions. They are citizens of this country but most of them are not being treated as citizen. They are oppressed and deprived in various ways.

About 400 families of indigenous people live in hilly area in different places under Sitakund Upazilla and Mirsarai Upazilla, 37km. north from Chittagong city. They are the indigenous people of Tipra community. These people are deprived from all basic needs like; Education, Health, Land and Residence, Safe drinking water etc. These people have no land of their own. They have to live a gipsy life, moving from one place to another. Only few Bangalee (people of plain land) peoples own most of the lands where they live. These land lords let the indigenous people live on their hills (which they have taken as lease from government for a long term) for cultivating Jhum (Slash & Burn), gardening and nursing trees, but when the trees are full-grown and fruitful they (land lords) remove them from the land. Again they build their house in another land lord or government Khash hill. Moreover, they cannot build their houses in the hills belonging to the government. The government forest dept. pushes them out from those lands also.



A suppressed tribal family. Their house was burnt, allegedly, by some local people

For this, the tribal community lives a very poor and distressed life. They live an inhumane life in their poor shelter made by bamboo and thatch on the slope of the

hill. Their only source of income come from the sale of firewood in the local bazar. Some work (both male and female) in the govt./landlord's garden. But their wages are less than Bangalee labor.

There is no social security for female members of tribal community. Most often they are attacked by Bangalee young people and raped or physically abused. So the tribal parents try to arrange early marriage of their daughters. Most of the girls are got married when they are of 12/13 years. Sometimes oppressed persons go to local govt., but they can't achieve real justice from them.

If the situations go like this we may loose these communities, which create a great diversity for our country, after a certain period. So our question to all "Without ensuring the human rights of the indigenous people how can we rescue biodiversity?"

Social development organization YPSA has been trying to improve living status and ensure rights of indigenous people for last 5 years. Major activities of YPSA are to raise awareness about Rights, family planning and maternity health and to ensure their education, health service, local govt. services and also to provide training on entrepreneurship development.

YPSA has also taken initiatives for the indigenous children to get them admitted into the local government schools. REFLECT circles (groups of discussion) are being implemented in their villages to increase their consciousness and to mobilize them for obtaining their civil, human and land rights.

YPSA is now involving the local civil society and representatives of different classes and professions for a permanent solution of the indigenous residence problem. Their movement is becoming stronger day by day. We along with the local people hope that government will take rapid initiative to provide khash land for the indigenous people to solve their residence problem. #



A tribal girl

Source : YPSA Photo Archive

Source : YPSA Photo Archive

Another disabled by the accident in ship-breaking yard

Mahfuza Akter
Associate Program Officer, YPSA

Md. Sharif, a worker of ship breaking yard, being disabled by an accident in the ship-breaking yard of Sitakund, is now tossing about in pain on hospital bed, who was about to go Middle-east with in three month for the betterment of his life. He lost one of his legs. The accident occurred on 11 September'04 in Ziri-Subeder ship yard at Fultola Bazar area of



Victim Sharif with his mother

Sitakund, Chittagong, when a big iron pipe fall on his leg. He was brought to Chittagong Medical College hospital and it was found that the bones of his right leg and hand broken severely. So, the responsible doctors cut his leg during operation. Now he needs proper treatment. But his family can't effort the cost for his treatment anymore. The owner of the yard said, he gave 10 thousand taka for Sharif's treatment and he won't give any more money for him. His father said that is not enough. Sharif was the main income source for his big family. His father, Mofiz, has a very limited income. Sharif came Chittagong to earn money. It seemed to him that the income from shipyard is not adequate to get decent life. So, he decided to go Saudi Arabia in search of a better future. All his dream and hope blown in the wind after this tragic incident. Now he has only the memories of his past-life. Lying on the hospital bed he sometimes asks his mother how he will live in his future. Mother, Shefali, bursts out in tears. Meanwhile, YPSA demands proper rehabilitation for Sharif from the owner's side. Accidents in ship breaking yard is a very common thing, as it's a risky job. But there are no medical and compensation facility for the labors. Every year businessmen are getting billions of taka as profit from this industry, by the hard work of these workers. In exchange of this, couldn't they expect their rights to be fulfilled? #

Source: YPSA Photo Archive

"To ensure the ship breaking workers'...

From Page 1

Sixthly- The ship breaking yards are very much polluted by the toxic and metallic fragments, pieces of iron materials discharged from the ships which are not only dangerous for the workers but also for the local community and the bio-diversity of the ship breaking area.

Seventhly- Above all the labors of the ship breaking industry don't have the security of their life. Accidents are the regular company of their life.

S.A.:

What is your realization about the rights violation in the industry?

M.M.H.:

Yes, the human rights are seriously violating in this industry. As the government has not recommend it as an industry, the rules of industry for the labors and environment are not being applied there. But the ship breaking activities are being carried out under the Factory act. The ship breakers are not following the rules of that act also.

S.A.:

Do you have any recommendation or opinion to protect these workers' rights?

M.M.H.:

As there is no policy for this industry and its not recommended as an industry the ship breakers should follow 'Factory act', under which the ship breaking activities are being operated, to protect the workers' rights. To ensure the workers' rights permanently the ship breaking activities should be considered as an industry and a public policy should be formulated and implemented for this industry. The whole ship breaking activities have to be made risk free. A regular investigation should be arranged to observe the over-all situation of the shipyards.

As there is no policy for this industry and its not recommended as an industry the ship breakers should follow 'Factory act', under which the ship breaking activities are being operated, to protect the workers' rights.

The competent authority instead of the seashore areas for dismantling the ships should select a `certain isolated and protected scrapper's yard and developed technology could be used for cutting and loading iron pieces.

I want to mention that , the international pressure group GREEN PEACE has alerted the Bangladesh Government to the fact failure to acknowledge the problems of ship breaking, could eventually result in enclosure of Bangladesh ship breaking yards due to international pressure, which will not be a good thing for a developing country like Bangladesh.

S.A.:

What are your recommendations about a public policy to ensure human rights in ship breaking industry?

M.M.H.:

We know that ship-breaking activities are playing an important role in our country. Considering the positive facts of this industry like- a large amount revenue income (tk.8000 million/yr.), a big sector of employment (at least 200000) and its importance in building sectors, it can be said that the industry is playing a very important role for our country. To utilize it in the development of our country we should come forward to control its negative sides. A public policy, to ensure the human rights and eco-friendly ship breaking is very much essential. Actually, it's a high time to formulate a policy about ship breaking activities. The ship breakers, civil society , local people of the ship breaking area can raise voice and the government should take immediate initiatives to formulate and implement a public policy for the welfare of the ship breaking activities and the welfare of humanity . #

Exit Interview- Why Do Employees Resign?

A.K. M. Ashraful Haque
Finance Officer, YPSA

Now a days most of the organizations in Bangladesh give their remarkable attention to the recruitment process. Efforts are made to prepare job description and improve the flow of information. The employees are also being taken under induction and given higher skill development training for the interest of the organization to get maximum return.

But we do not normally try to find out why many of these employees have left the organization. What is the root cause of their leaving? Who are these people? Are they misfits? Are they encouraged to resign? Are they trained and efficient people and whether such type of loss is regretted?

We hardly bother about these matters. The problem of employees turnover in our country is not approached with the proper scientific techniques that we normally apply at the time of recruitment.

As managers we do not even bother to find out the types of employees that we are losing. Are they all inefficient people? Are they only the good ones, for whom organization has invested lot of money for their training and development?

It is seen from the past that mostly the trained and brilliant employees leave the organization.

Its seemed that we are playing the role of a professional training institute which are producing skilled staff and managers for other organizations. We do not calculate the financial cost for replacement of trained employees. The cost of recruitment expenses on account of personnel attrition is usually very high. To minimize this cost, an organization should take necessary steps and make a plan.

First- We should preserve records of employees leaving and analyze data relating to those employees.

Second- We should conduct 'Exit Interview' of the employees leaving the organization. A senior manager, preferably the HRD Manager should conduct the interview and find out reasons for one's leaving the job.

Third- Analyze the data relating to the employees and causes of one's resignation. The findings should be circulated to all the senior managers of the organization, who should make appropriate action plan to remove the causes of resignation of the employees.

Fourth- With cessation of employment of key employees, sometimes valuable and secret business information's are lost. Manager should make a plan to prevent such kind of loss.

Fifth- Preserve the data of separated employees for at least 6 years. The

manager should pay attention to employees resignation and analyze what might have been done to prevent the loss from taking place.

Sixth- The interviewer should be sufficiently trained to conduct the exit interview and analyze proper findings.

A very few organization of Bangladesh routinely conduct exit interview. In the process, we can learn a great deal about the organization and take corrective measure to improve the situation. Organization gets valuable informations relating to the organizational affairs and opportunity to correct the situations.

The questions should not be complicated to the interview. It should be easy to answer. A sample questioner is given below:

Questionnaire for Exit Interview:

(What you say it will be kept secret. Relax and feel free to say anything for the greater welfare of this organization)

- 1) Can you tell me why you started looking for a job?
- 2) Why you decided to go from this organization?
- 3) What you are doing now in the organization?
- 4) Did you enjoy your work?
- 5) Did you achieve anything?
- 6) Did your supervisor appreciate your efforts?
- 7) What type of your involvement in decision-making process of your department?
- 8) Did you receive adequate information regarding your organization?
- 9) Without taking prior permission from your supervisor did you take any decision in your own working area?
- 10) What did you like the best in the organization?
- 11) What did you like the least?
- 12) Can you tell me your idea regarding making the organization best working place?
- 13) Tell something regarding getting

your new job?

- 14) Can you tell me about your present colleague?
- 15) Tell your honest opinion about the working environment of this organization?
- 16) Comment about the benefit package of this organization?
- 17) In your eyes what are our strength and weakness of the organization?
- 18) Why people leave our organization? State your opinion regarding leaving.
- 19) How is your relation with your supervisor?
- 20) Was your grievance perfectly handled by him?
- 21) How often your colleague/supervisor visited you in the house? Did you visit their houses?
- 22) Do you think you did not have enough opportunities to prove your potentialities here?
- 23) Was the work monotonous?
- 24) Did your line chief care for you?
- 25) Have you any plan to come back to our organization?

Yes to ship breaking, No to rights violation

Muhammed Ali (Shahin)
Associate Program Officer, YPSA

Ship breaking industry is a growing industry of Bangladesh. Everything in this world has some merits and demerits. Ship breaking industry is also one of those things. Experts say that its an example of classic 3D industry (Dirty, Dangerous and Demanding). Every year government is collecting almost taka 8000 million as revenue. Millions of people are directly and indirectly involved with this industry. Most of the Iron materials to build structures, bridges, roads in our country have been produced from this floating Iron Mine. It could earn foreign exchange by exporting construction materials and steels to some neighboring countries. On the other side, the violation of human rights, accidents and environmental pollution is the common scenario of this industry. The workers of this industry don't have any working security, medical facilities, financial support and satisfactory amount

of wage. That's why a voice from the society demands to stop this industry. But its not what we should want. Because of the headache we should not cut off our head. What we need that is proper care. To stop and control the demerits of the ship breaking industry, we need a public policy, which could ensure human rights and protect environment from pollution. Today's urge from the civil society is 'YES TO SHIP BREAKING, BUT NO TO RIGHTS VIOLATION.' To ensure the worker's rights and sustainability of the ship breaking activities I can consider some recommendation of the civil society, which is given, below-

1. Government should include this industry under the ministry of industry and formulate a policy so that worker's rights could be ensured and it could be eco-friendly.
2. Environment, human rights and

economy these three things should be considered in formulating the public policy for this industry.

3. By formulating a policy workers' list, specific working hour, compensation for the accidental death and injury in yards, working security, appointment letter, training, permanency of the job and insurance for the labors should be maintained.

4. In spite of having the certificate from the explosive department the toxic gas explosion often takes place. This matter should be investigated properly.

5. After making the ship gas free (in true sense) it should be beached to be

compensation, treatment and security for the labors.

12. The participation of the political people to influence the policy makers for formulating a public policy should be ensured.

13. All sorts of middle men or contractors should be eliminated to run the ship breaking activities. The ship owners should directly involve in the whole activities.

14. The interests of all levels of people, related with the ship breaking industry, should be considered in formulating the policy.

15. Some orientation courses could be arranged for the ship owners about workers' rights.

16. The approach roads to yards should be repaired and pitched.

17. An investigation or taskforce team of expertise about the ship breaking industry can investigate the human rights condition of the industry regularly.

18. The prospect of the ship breaking industry should be positively presented in media besides the risks, problems

Child Worker of Ship Breaking Yard



His name is Rashed, a child worker of Sitakund ship breaking yard. Only nine years old. Home district Bogra. He started to work here one year ago. He works with the loading group. He collects small pieces of iron and gathers these in one place. Later he loads these pieces on the truck. He has to work in the yard from dawn to dusk. He gets only 40 taka per day. Often he feels that its tough to take breath, as the shipyard is too stuffy and smoky. One day he was taking rest in working time. The contractor of the yard kicked him. He was insulted more than feeling pain by this. Rashed has not seen his mother for a long time. He wants to go home. But he can't. The unwritten rule of the ship yard is 'no work, no pay'. They are very poor. He has to earn money for his family. He has to survive, though the work is very risky.

scrapped.

6. Fire stations and hospitals should be set up as soon as possible for the welfare of the workers and avoiding severe loss by any accident.

7. The ship breaking activities should be conducted in a separate zone like dockyard.

8. The ship breaking activities should be operated in a planned and hygienic way. A layout could be designed before starting to break the ship.

9. Ship owners should avoid the tendency treating the ship breaking industry as profit oriented business, they should try to give it an industrial shape.

10. The access in the ship breaking yards should be assured to explore the real situation.

11. Owners and contractors both have to take the responsibility in providing

and environmental effects.

Social development organization YPSA is doing advocacy works for a public policy to ensure human rights in ship breaking industry.' The major purpose of the project is to influence the public policy makers for formulating a special policy for the ship breaking industry. Besides YPSA there are also some other international and civil society organizations which are working for a better, secured and planned ship breaking industry. We hope one day the dream of formulating a policy for the ship breaking industry would be come true. #

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HR-management for YPSA

Ayesha Parvin Kanta
Administrative Officer, YPSA

To answer the questions of tomorrow YPSA is conscious of the need to improve HR-management in their organization. Therefore YPSA has asked for assistance from Heidi van Haastert, a professional from overseas.



Heidi is speaking in a work-shop

On the first of July 2004 YPSA started to work together with Heidi van Haastert to develop HR-management in their organization. YPSA recruited Heidi with help from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). This organization, with its headquarters in the United Kingdom, sends professionals from European countries to developing countries at their request. Heidi van Haastert worked in the Netherlands as a human resources advisor in several organizations for about 15 years. She

decided to interrupt her carrier in the Netherlands to share her knowledge with people in developing countries. She has committed herself for two years to work.

YPSA started in 1985, in the year of the youth. Now, after nearly 20 years, YPSA is a well-known NGO, not only in Chittagong, where it is based, but also in Bangladesh, in European countries and by international donor-organizations.

The current donors of YPSA, to support developing all kinds of projects for the poor and hardcore poor people, require high quality work. To be able to answer the questions of today and tomorrow YPSA realizes the importance of developing their HR-management. The Chief Executive of YPSA is conscious of the improvement needed in HR-management in his organization to answer the questions of tomorrow. Now it is time for YPSA to develop a sustainable HR-management policy for the next 5 years. Therefore YPSA asked for assistance from a professional overseas.

YPSA carries out 17 projects. 197 Fulltime employees and 110 part-time employees give their service to YPSA. The employees are young, highly educated and highly motivated to develop their country. To give satisfaction to the claims of the donors YPSA should give high priority to a structural education policy for the employees. The job descriptions and the yearly job evaluation system need an update. The managers need to be coached in a different style of leadership. They will take on HR-management in their jobs and so also need training. Heidi will train them in all the relevant HR-tools.

The intention is that after two years the managers are capable of using HR-management tools. Another important issue is a good personnel management information system and that will also receive attention from Heidi. With a good personnel information system and well-trained managers the chief executive will be able to continue his renewed sustainable HR-management. #

Citizen dialogue about health problem at Mirsarai

Md. Giash Uddin, Project Officer, YPSA

"The health facilities in Mirsarai Upazilla, Chittagong, are quite inadequate. There are almost four lakh people in this upazilla but only one hospital, which have, only thirty beds. Besides this, there are many limitations of this hospital. Such as medicine, doctor, food, nursing, electricity etc. Moreover there is a allegation against doctor for taking illegal money from patients."

Speakers in a citizen Dialogue about health problem of that upazilla said this, which was held on 20th August at Mirsarai upazilla auditorium in Chittagong organized by Mirsarai Human Rights Coalition and YPSA.

Allhaz M. A. Zinnah (M.P.) was the chief guest of this opinion-sharing meeting. Abdul Kium Sarker (U.N.O.) and other representatives from civil society were

addressed the meeting.

Human Rights Coalition of this upazilla arranges this kind of program to change their society from the



Speakers in the citizen Dialogue with local M.P.

grassroot level. But in this meeting the Civil Society members of this upazilla presented all types of health related problem of their upazilla.

The chief guest said health facilities should be improved in Mirsarai

upazilla immediately. He promised to the presence that he would take necessary steps for the well being of people. Program Coordinator (YPSA) Md. Mahabubur Rahman gave an important speech about the role of YPSA from 1985-2004 in this area. He also added that this organization would continue of doing something more for the betterment of the nation. Training officer of SAP-Bangladesh Munir Uddin Shamim gave a speech about Human Rights, mainly he focused that without ensuring the Rights, sustainable development is quite impossible, and the government is unable to ensure human rights without the help of the civil society. #

Source: YPSA Photo Archive

Source: YPSA Photo Archive

ICTs for Poverty Reduction !

Debobroto Chakraborty
Program Officer (ICT4D), YPSA

Are ICTs useful tool for the poor to use in their own development....? If so, under what circumstances...?

"The new technologies that are changing our world are not a panacea or a magic bullet. But they are without doubt enormously powerful tools for development. They



Source : YPSA Photo Archive

Poor students should have the computer access

create jobs. They are transforming education, healthcare, commerce, politics and more. They can help in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and even contribute to peace and security." Kofi Annan,

United Nations Secretary-General, November 2001

Hundreds of billions of dollars per year are spent on information and communication technologies (ICTs), reflecting a powerful global belief in the transformatory potential of these new technologies. For multinational corporations, certainly, ICTs have become essential. Globalization demands such great flows of information and processing of information that it simply could not take place without ICTs. But what about a more direct relationship between ICTs and development? What, for example, do ICTs have to offer the poor? Some clearly believe the technology has a lot to offer :

"This new technology greatly facilitates the acquisition and absorption of knowledge, offering developing countries unprecedented opportunities to enhance educational systems, improve policy formation and execution, and widen the range of opportunities for business and the poor." World Bank 1998:9

All these suggest that information and communication technologies (ICTs) is of great potential for poverty reduction in developing countries, focusing particularly on those rural areas that are currently least effected by the latest advances in the 'digital revolution'. But what does the present scenario tell us? Still today the global digital divide threatens to deprive millions of people of the benefits that are attainable from having access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The uneven global distribution of access to the Internet has highlighted a digital divide that separates individuals who are able to gain access to computers and the Internet from those who have no opportunity of doing so. The United

Nations has noted in its Statement on Universal Access to Basic Communication and Information Services :

"The information and technology gap and related inequities between industrialized and developing nations are widening: a new type of poverty - information poverty - looms. Most developing countries, especially the least developed countries are not sharing in the communications revolution". UN, 1998

However, international aid agencies, governments and NGOs are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about the potential for generating rural development through the use of ICTs.

Knowledge is a central foundation of human and economic development. Technological revolution in ICTs in the North has led to the emergence of a knowledge economy but the inability of developing countries to maximize the benefits of this revolution is a significant barrier to their participation in this knowledge economy. Knowledge transfer through education and training has been a central concern of rural development initiatives over the years. Recent developments in ICTs offer great potential to support and enhance education and training for development. Given the particular constraints to education and training in rural areas it is here that the potential impact of ICTs on knowledge development is the greatest.

Information and communication activities are a fundamental element of any rural development activity. While education and training develop cognitive skills, it is information that gives content to knowledge. The extension of agricultural information in particular is evolving beyond merely transmitting messages (although this is still important). (See Page 10)

Welcome to YPSA

Mr. Caspar Viereckel (Germany)
Ms. Mareike Boller (Germany)
Ms. Johanne Kuebler (Germany)
Ms. Genevieve Livernoche (Canada)
Ms. Amelie Chretien (Canada)
Mr. Noor el Sobhan (Canada)
Ms. Maryse Trudel (Canada)
Ms. Katja Schentuleit (Germany) and
Mr. Robin Pick (Germany)

We are pleased to
welcome you to
work with us as

Aungshee, to encourage the grassroots entrepreneurs

Md. Shah Jahan
Program Officer, YPSA

In the study it is observed that only credit cannot ensure the permanent positive economical change of target people. Keeping the view in mind Micro Enterprise Development Program (MEDP), one of the major programs of YPSA



Source: YPSA Photo Archive

The inaugural ceremony of Aungshee

has been providing technical support along with credit support to the micro entrepreneur. Through experience it is realized that the main obstacle to develop entrepreneurship is marketing. Grassroots entrepreneur does not know how to market and how to compete with big entrepreneurs. As a result they are losing their inspiration to become a good entrepreneur. Realizing this importance of product marketing YPSA has been giving the priority to marketing the grassroots entrepreneurs' products through MEDP. Earlier a display and sale center namely Aungshee has been established in Chandgaon R/A, Chittagong town under the WEDE (Women Empowerment through Decent Employment) project, supported by ILO-WEEH Project. Through this center, products of entrepreneurs are to be displayed and sold among the local and foreign customers. The goal of Aungshee is, 'enabling Grassroots entrepreneurs economically sustained through assisting marketing their product.' Aungshee's role is to provide marketing linkage for YPSA's entrepreneurs and other NGO's entrepreneurs with local and foreign market through this center. Any grassroots entrepreneur can use this center for marketing their product but the following will be given priority;

- Ø Women Entrepreneur of MEDP under YPSA.
- Ø PSCP (Participatory Savings & Credit Program) group member of YPSA
- Ø Entrepreneur of EDFC (Enterprise Dev. Forum Ctg.) member organization
- Ø Any other Entrepreneurs who are involved with NGO

The center has established as commercial basis so all type of commercial activities will be maintained regarding this center. Initially the center focusing on local market but in long runs there is a plan to catch up foreign market also. To meet up this objective Aungshee has participated trade fair in abroad. If there is any order from other country the center is ready to export its product. #



Source: YPSA Photo Archive

Women are making fence-made Handicrafts to sell

MHIB-for providing medical treatment to the hard-core poor

Micro Health Insurance for Rural Poor Women in Bangladesh (MHIB) project works in Sitakund as one of the major health service component under YPSA's existing health program. This project gives priority to the poorest of the poor, poor and lower middle class who constitutes about 70% of the total population. As most important and urgent task, YPSA encourages and mobilises the common people especially existing group members to bring under the coverage of MHIB, and hence provide all sorts of treatment including pathological support. The main working pattern of this project is to cover the client under the card and provide facility to the card holder like nominal doctors visit charge, up to 25% discount on medicine, 30% discount of pathological test even free medicine and pathology support to the special client. Cardholder and non-cardholder all can get medical facility from the clinic. The objectives are to cover poor women and their family under health services through MHIB, to reduce risk delivery providing clinical service through delivery center and to ensure qualitative & less expensive pathological test through Pathological center. MHIB is an innovative project of YPSA supported by ILO-WEEH project. It started on March'03 as a new health service component along with YPSA's existing health program. Basically through this project YPSA has been providing the clinic based all sorts of health related service including pathological service facility to the target people with low cost, effectively and efficiently. In Sitakund there are 41 satellite clinics and one static clinic, YPSA Health Service Center, has already been established for ensuring service for the target people under YPSA's health program. One Full time Doctor, three Medical Assistant/Paramedics, one Pathologist have been working for this service. Through a competitive package this health related services are ensured. #

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

Vashkar Bhattacharya
Associate Program Officer, YPSA

In Bangladesh a large number of the people are disabled. Actually government and non-government organizations did not have statistic report regarding the disabilities. According to the 'WHO (World Health Organization)' 10% of the people are disabled. According to this report, about 13 million are disabled in Bangladesh. 50% of this number is visually impaired. Because of various diseases and different incidents the people are losing their eyesight, such as different types of problems in the time of pregnancy, illiteracy, superstitions, diseases, incidents and different kinds of causes after being birth. Most of the girls become pregnant early because of early marriages. As a result, the mother and the newly born baby loses their vision

due to lack of vitamin A.

The educational position of blind women in Bangladesh: There are 5 government schools for the blind in 5

Generally the blind men are marrying sighted women. On the other hand, the blind women do not get this opportunity. A few blind women get married blind men with their mutual understanding.

divisional cities in Bangladesh. There are only 20 seats for girls and 30 seats for boys in each school, which are

insufficient. Besides that there are 64 schools under integrated program in 64 district. But there are no accommodation facilities for the girls. Therefore, they are depriving from education. There is only 1 non-government school for the blind girls, which is going to be discontinued because of having several problems. In that case, the conditions of the education for girls are very poor. In spite of having various adversities to make hard endeavor some girls are continuing their studies individually and getting support of their families. As a result, it helps them to continue the higher education.

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Women as victims of violence

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Second, various community leaders actively oppose women's rights in order to maintain their own power positions within the community. These community members feel their status is threatened by women's emancipation and resent women's participation in the public sphere. Local leaders try to enforce age-old patriarchal traditions and discourage women's empowerment.

Third, although many laws are in place to protect women, enforcement of these laws is lax and ineffective.

Fourth, most women do not have the means to achieve financial and social independence and self-reliance. In recent years more and more

women have entered the workforce and earned wages, however, the majority of women are still dependent on men financially and socially. As such, women are in a vulnerable position and must tolerate various abuses at home because they lack alternatives

Fifth, the community has become rather desensitized to the sufferings of others. Community members, having a host of problems themselves, fearing retaliation by gangsters and hoodlums, and perhaps aware of the lax law enforcement,

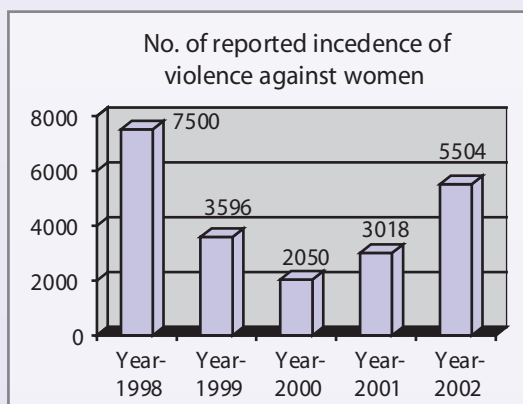
fail to take a proactive role to end violence against women.

Many other factors have also contributed to the current situation of women in Bangladesh and the alarming increase in the rate of violent acts against women. The factors are all interrelated and the problem is very complicated. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to the current problem of violence against women. It has become increasingly evident that laws and policies alone will be

ineffective, rather collaborative multifaceted efforts are required to address this serious social problem.

Gender inequality and violence against women is not a problem of women only. It creates obstacles towards peace, advancement and development. Development can be achieved if society is committed to the rights and dignity of women, who are half of the total population of the country. Therefore, collective efforts are required on behalf of the citizens to create to pressure on the GoB, NGOs, policy makers and

international activists to find ways to ensure justice of violence against women. Through these efforts the contribution of women in building a civilized, dignified and peaceful society can be established. We invite all conscientious citizens to step forward and join in the struggle to create an equitable and fair society for all of us. #



Human Rights Coalition A Tremendous Concept at Coastal Areas

Mohammad Zahed Hasan

Program Officer, YPSA

Every human being has equal human rights. It is an universal outlook. There should not be any restriction in human rights based on place, color, sex, language, age, religion, political opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status. In Bangladesh, Human Rights violation is so sheer and naked that its consequential affects and the victims are severely endangered day by day. Major human rights violation issues at costal areas are child labor practices, violence against women, trafficking of women and children, and other systemic human rights abuses. The government does not also carry out the basic rights inscribed in the constitution of Bangladesh adequately. Unless the empowerment process is spread in the nooks and corner of the costal areas of Bangladesh, the rights violation process against the helpless people will be mounting. As a conscious individual we should take initiative to control the rights violation condition. It is the high time to be coalesced and organized us, which are called Human Rights Coalition (HRC), to ensure the basic rights and need of the helpless people in the costal areas.

WHAT IS HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION (HRC)?

Human Rights Coalition is an organized group at local level (Upzilla) of Civil Society Organizations. The concept includes professional bodies like journalist, doctor, teacher, member of business association, voluntary & social welfare organizations, non-government organizations, trade unions, community based organizations, student forum, special interest group and citizens group who does not involve in party politics. Government official & local government members are also not included in this concept.

ROLE OF HRC AT COASTAL AREAS:

HRC at coastal areas can play a vital role in empowering the grassroot people and women to a great extent. Local level

leadership can organize the civil society of the locality and make them conscious. They can also help the women to have participatory outlook and conceptual ideas about different laws. HRC is involved mainly in the awareness activities, molding the people and appraises the situation to the local law and order-enforcing agency by government. They can organize research about human rights situation and select the issues for which they should do advocacy work. They can also take various advocacy programs for protection and assistance to

the victims who are suppressed by violence. They will be change agents both within the civil society and government institutes.

HRC IN SITAKUND & MIRSARAI UPAZILLA:

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) a leading social development organization in Chittagong has taken initiative to form Human Rights Coalition with the support of South Asia Partnership (SAP) - Bangladesh and AED/BHRAP



HRC (Sitakund) demanding justice for two raped tribal girls

in two coastal areas of Chittagong (Sitakund, Mirsarai). They have already arranged trainings, human rights situation researches, diagnostic workshops and some voluntary programs. They also have some achievements. A few days ago when two tribal girls were raped the HRC of Sitakund demanded justice strongly and they gave memorandum to UNO of Sitakund. As a result the rapists were arrested immediately. In future HRC of both Upzillas will take different programs like citizen dialogue, awareness of grassroots women.

It can be concluded that Human Rights Coalition a tremendous concept at coastal areas in mitigating human rights violation and it could be worked effectively to protect the human rights violation at costal areas people in Bangladesh. #

ICTs for Poverty Reduction !

From Page 7

It is becoming more open, more participatory and more demand driven, involving interactivity, negotiation and two-way information exchanges. There is a new emphasis on the acquisition of information and enabling the rural poor to request information specific to their particular livelihood needs. Communication specialists increasingly recognize the enormous potential of ICTs to support

and enhance these changes.

Information and communication technologies may therefore have a greater role to play in giving 'voice' to the poor; that is, in making the poor information providers more than information recipients. Here we must remember that the focus is not on technology but on how to use different technologies for specific purposes like:

- To empower and enable people living in poverty to change their own circumstances
- To demonstrate practical ways that

ICTs can contribute to strategies to reduce poverty

However, effective application must first overcome the 'ICT fetish' that dominates much development thinking at present, and which creates a series of identified opportunity costs.

We still have to pass a significant milestone to overcome the existing digital divide. But we must start trying to integrate ICTs within existing community development structures right now. #

Using potentiality one can overcome

Nur Mohammed

Associate Program Officer, YPSA

Zahanara Begum, a woman of Gulia Khali village under Sitakund Upazilla of Chittagong district. She is about 45 years. Her husband's name is Nur Alam, a marginal farmer of this village. They have three sons and two daughters. At the beginning of her married life the family of Zahanara was dependent only on her husband's income. About 6 years ago, Zahanara's family was in very tough situation in respect of livelihood of her family.

They didn't have any property or enough family income sources except a few paddy lands. She said "Our daily life was very hard & problematic. We could not make-up the basic needs and rights of our family. So we had to live with sorrows and sufferings. In that time, I involved myself with YPSA's savings group and I began to deposit few amount (Tk.10) as regular basis in each week. I also attended in various group discussions & meetings, which were organized by

YPSA. Through those meetings my eyes were opened and I decided to change my future by getting the support from YPSA". Zahanara took Tk. 3,000 from YPSA as loan and purchased some Khas land. Then she started to cultivate seasonal



Zahanara is working with her sewing machine

vegetables and other crops. After repaying the first loan she received another loan from YPSA. She bought a milky cow from the local market and continuingly got benefit from that. In

July 2002, Zahanara has been selected as WEDE (a program of ILO) member and she received firstly Entrepreneurship Development and Business Management (EDBM) training and later ADVANCE TAILORING training. After getting the trainings her life got a drastic change when she received Tk. 8000 from YPSA as loan. By that loan and some own savings, she purchased a new tailoring machine and some cloths with furniture. Through these initiatives, she is going to make her dreams towards reality. At present she has 7 cattle and 7 goats, some own land, a new house on a place of 16 decimals. Now her monthly income is around Tk. 8000 and her family enables to meet the basic needs and rights. She believes that if anybody relies to his/her potentiality, he/she must overcome. #

Source : YPSA Photo Archive

Hello! I'm Kanako Ohara from Japan

Hello! I'm Kanako Ohara from Japan and I'm working for NOWZUWAN as a foreign volunteer since mid-October. I work for NOWZUWAN for two and a half months and also the same duration for BWCA in Dhaka. So far, my stay at NOWZUWAN has been a great pleasure. I sometime teach English at Non formal school of NOWZUWAN and other times, help providing support / rehabilitation for the disabled children in Patiya, observe the homestead

gardening project or micro-finance program in the villages etc. Since my major was Japanese studies in my university, I have no profound knowledge on developing countries or development related works of NGOs. That is why I've been learning (rather than actually helping out!) each and every day. The cultural difference between Bangladesh and my home country is unquestionably big, and almost everything I face here makes great impact on me. Many people I meet here tell me, "Japan is rich, and Bangladesh is poor and it's very bad". It's true it's said that Japan is the second richest country in the world and Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries. I hear about so much corruption in the government, air pollution in the city is unbearable, seeing half-naked children picking up garbage on the street is heart breaking, social restriction especially women are strict (to my eyes) and all. There's so much to be done for this situation for sure. HOWEVER, I want to question, "Is being rich the most important and greatest thing?" Of course money is important to achieve minimum level of living quality, but I've faced some great quality of Bangladesh as well. That is the hospitality and warm welcome from people, especially in the rural area. That is the passion of local NGOs that are so enthusiastic in improving the current situation of their country. #



VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN

From Page 9

At present about 100 girls are studying in different colleges and universities. As far as I know the girls who accomplished their higher education, only a few of them are working at different government & non-government organizations.

Social states: The women of Bangladesh do not get all kinds of equal rights like the other countries in the world. At this point, visually impaired women are being treated similarly. Naturally the women are endurable and yielding minded. In that sense, generally the blind men are marrying sighted women. On the other hand, the blind women do not get this opportunity. A few blind women get married blind men with their mutual understanding. I think, our social perception is to perform all kinds of household job, which is difficult for visually impaired women. One visually impaired girl, I want to mention that can complete all types of household work smoothly. Some times they need little bit cooperation from sighted persons. So we have to make social awareness regarding them.

Finally to fulfill the socio-economic requirements that the action plans are continuing which are too little according to the needs. In this regard it is very important to take appropriate steps for making awareness regarding the disabilities by the help of the government and non-government organizations. A social development organization, named YPSA, is continuing some activities for the well being of the disabled people. Currently the Bangladeshi media is also playing important role to aware the people about disabilities. #

Website:

www.vashkar.tk

Women as victims of violence: Bangladesh

Abdulla Al Mamun
Program Manager, YPSA

Violence against women remains a prevailing social problem in contemporary Bangladesh. Brutal attacks on women have become commonplace and widespread across the country. Daily news reports are filed with atrocities including physical and psychological torture, sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, forced prostitution, coerced suicide and murder.

The rate of these reported violent acts has been rising consistently and at an alarming rate, especially since the early 1990's. Considering that violence against women still remains

one of the most under-reported crimes in Bangladeshi society, this new trend especially worrisome. Since many incidences go unreported, it is implicit that the actual occurrences of violence against women are far more numerous than the reported numbers.

As a result, statistical data is incomplete; however, the general trend is overwhelmingly clear: women in Bangladesh are at increasing risk of being victimized. Bangladeshi women are vulnerable and insecure both in the domestic

and public spheres.

Several factors have contributed to this dreary situation.

First, patriarchal attitudes are deeply entrenched in society. Traditionally men have been in a dominant position and women in a submissive one. This is perceived not only traditional but also natural. Furthermore, there is a tendency, particularly in village areas, to legitimize the patriarchal attitudes on the basis of tradition and orthodox religion.

(See Page-9)

Editorial

Ship breaking, the sector that be focused only after the severe accident of labors. Very few of citizens know the real scenario of ship breaking activities. YPSA as an social development organization has initiated a campaign for public policy for this industry. A public policy for this sector can be the answers to social, economical and environmental questions of today's

Save Children from AIDS, Drug and Violence



The context of SOCIAL ACTION reflects the writer's opinion. Consequently, their points of view and morality are not necessarily similar to those of YPSA. The articles and pictures contained in this publication could be republished and reprinted with proper recognition.

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