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CELEBRATING GROUP EMPOWERMENT

BANGLADESH | Winter 2022

Dear friends,

I'm pleased to share the second semi-annual report on the International Needs Group Empowerment Program in Bangladesh.

Over the last period, your gifts were used to provide hundreds of children and youth with education, nutritious meals, health care, and recreational programs. As you will find in the report, the Naogoan and Jessore Schools have begun introducing new initiatives to further engage students and develop their strengths and interests outside of the classroom. We are so pleased with the reports we have received from the schools and hope you are as encouraged as we are. Thank you for all your support!



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ENCOURAGING EDUCATION

As 2022 comes to an end, we are proud to say that all 150 supported students maintained strong attendance at school this year. They also received new educational materials, like books, notebooks, pens, pencils, and colouring pencils.

Due to multiple COVID-related shut downs, however, we unfortunately saw the school closures affect some of the students' exam scores. The pass rate was 80% between Naogoan and Jessore, and while this was lower than expected, the program coordinator and teachers worked tirelessly to come up with ways of improving the numbers in the new year.



Some of these strategies included:

- More parent teacher meetings - to keep parents informed of the children's progress and report on any issues their child might be experiencing.
- Regular pop quizzes - to help teachers determine how students are doing. For those students that appear to be struggling, teachers will provide them with additional support.
- Daily notebook checks by teachers - to ensure topics are well understood.
- Regular home visits - to ensure healthy home lives and make sure the students are keeping up with homework.
- New educational activities - to create enthusiasm around learning, like spelling bees and general knowledge competitions

FIRST EVER SCHOOL DEBATE

Overall, it was an amazing year for these students, and our teaching staff has done an outstanding job of making learning fun. A particularly exciting activity that took place for the first time at the schools was a debate, with six students from Jessore and six from Naogoan. The topic of discussion was the question: "Is counselling enough to prevent suicidal tendencies in students?"



The students were given two weeks to prepare for the debate. During this time, teachers and the program coordinator coached students on debating techniques, such as pronunciation, argumentation, rebuttal, and presentation styles. On the day of the event, all other 138 students were in attendance, as were many parents who openly expressed how impressed they were by the participants' articulation.

The event was such a success that many students immediately approached their teachers asking to join the next debate, which will be hosted regularly moving forward. The goals of the debate were to foster public speaking skills, boost confidence and curiosity, and improve critical thinking skills in all the students; we are so excited by how well received this event was by the students and communities.



DEVELOPING AND NURTURING PRACTICAL SKILLS



Sewing - During this period, six students from Naogoan and six from Jessore continued their training in sewing, where they have learned how to make clothing such as dresses, tunics, and blouses. Engagement in this program has been inspiring, and we have even seen the enthusiasm move past the teaching sessions; while most students do not have sewing machines at home, they have been practicing their skills by cutting sewing patterns from paper and clothing that no longer fit.

Technology - Another twelve students have been engaged in computer training at the Naogoan and Jessore schools. They are learning the ins and outs of Microsoft applications such as Word, Excel, and Power Point, as well as becoming more efficient at typing. As time goes on, we are hoping to increase the enrollment in these courses and boost the reach of these programs.



Agriculture - Of particular note during this period is the addition of vegetable cultivation training. 30 upper grade students from the Naogoan school were provided with seed packets of gourd, spinach, and red leaf and were instructed on how to plant, care, and harvest the vegetables. The students were encouraged to plant the seeds in unused spaces on their properties. The goal of the training was to reduce the financial burden of purchasing meals on the household, boost the health of the child and the family, as well as support students to develop new skills and hobbies.



HEALTHY MINDS AND BODIES



Checkups - Over the last period, medical camps were held at both schools. 30 children from Jessore and 88 children from Naogoan were examined and provided medicines when necessary. Any were given medicine to combat colds and fevers. Other children were treated for general pains, skin conditions, gastrointestinal issues, and tonsilitis. Each of these children received the care they needed, and their families were extremely grateful for the support.

Personal Hygiene - We also saw encouraging development when it came to daily hygiene. Many students are going through puberty right now, which we all know can be a confusing time. However, teachers have been doing exceptional work to make the students feel comfortable about the changes they may be experiencing. Though shy at first, the students have become more comfortable about asking for support when they need it.



Hand Washing - Initiatives around health and hygiene have also moved from the school and into community. In an effort to raise awareness around the importance of hand washing, students were divided into groups and, with signs, walked throughout the community to help spread the word. Community members were especially receptive to this message coming from children they know and trust. This was the first initiative of its kind at the Naogoan school. Not only was it something we know inspired the community, but it also gave students the opportunity to gain confidence when it comes to sharing important messages with others.





STUDENTS BENEFIT GREATLY FROM ACTIVITIES LIKE THE HANDWASHING DAY AND DEBATE

Munira is 11 years old and has been attending the Naogoan School since 2017. Coming from a very poor family, she understands that without the support of International Needs, she would not have had the opportunity to attend school. She hopes to one day become a teacher in her community and empower children and families in the same way that she herself has been empowered over the last five years. Events like these will help Munira and other students to continue fostering their abilities to engage and educate others.

A DAY WORTH CELEBRATING!



September 29th marked the National Celebration of Girls. The girls were so excited to be recognized and celebrated, and spent the day clapping, singing, and blowing up balloons. This day was also spent educating both girls and boys. Students learned about the harsh realities of child marriage and ways of preventing it; prioritizing and innovating the field of female education; ending domestic violence; and other ways to empower girls.

Despite what many girls grow up hearing in Bangladesh – that they aren't as smart as boys, that they're weaker, that they belong in the home – this day served as an important reminder that girls are capable of so much more than the false narratives and constraints that society has placed on them.



Sukriti is 12 years old and the daughter of a poor family

While her parents wanted to send her to school, they could barely even afford to put food on the table as casual day labourers. Then in 2015, they heard of the Naogoan School and approached International Needs for support. Since then, Sukriti has been attending the school through the support of generous donors. Sukriti loves to dance and play with her classmates. She has also greatly enjoyed her sewing classes. When she grows up, she wants to go to university to become a doctor after seeing so many people in her community die for lack of proper treatment. She is passionate about helping others.

OTHER EXCITING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES



One colourful initiative that came out of this year is known at Naogoan as the “Wall Magazine.” This was a creative project for students to practice their writing, colouring, drawing, and crafting. Their creations were collected and displayed on the classroom’s wall as one big “Wall Magazine,” much to the delight of the children.



More in-classroom fun from this period came in the form of the “Water Transfer Game.” How is it played? Students divided into groups of ten, each being given one glass, one empty bucket, and a second bucket filled with water. The object of the game is to transfer the water from one bucket to the other, transferring the water glass by glass down the line. The team with the most water in their formerly empty bucket wins. The game made for an exciting and laughter-filled afternoon!



Literacy Day was celebrated on September 8th and attended by 52 students from Jessore and 88 from Naogoan. Students were shown the wealth that reading and books can bring; how they can enrich your life, teach you things about yourself and the world around you, and provide you with better employment opportunities in the future. The day also featured music, dancing, and poetry.



THANK YOU!

All in all, 2022 brought many successes to the students and staff at Jessore and Naogoan. There are still challenges that the schools face, and there is still plenty of room for improvement, but we know that many lives were changed this year and many lessons were learned. We're bringing a sense of grace and excitement into 2023 to keep transforming lives and empowering children through generosity and the good will of God.

Thank you for all your support, and we look forward to updating you next time with more good news and stories from Bangladesh!

PRAYER CORNER

Please pray for encouragement for the teachers in Bangladesh, who have been working very hard over the last few months to make sure all of their students are succeeding.

Sincerely,

Festus Addei

Director of Programs and Projects