



THE ASIA FOUNDATION
YOUTH AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE:
AUTHENTIC CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN BANGLADESH
FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD (JULY 1 -SEPTEMBER 30, 2015)

Report Summary

Democracywatch (DW) is implementing the Youth as Agents of Social Change: Authentic Civic Participants in Bangladesh. YASC Project in implementing (Ramna, Khilgaon, Mohakhali, Mirpur, Dhaka University and Mohammadpur area) in Dhaka and Municipality area in Mymensingh District.

During the reporting period DW have completed three training for the community youth group at Dhaka. Besides that two major events have been completed at Mymensingh. Consultation with political leaders programs in Dhaka and Mymensingh were planned but could not accomplish because of the lack of representation of all student political leaders. It is to be noted that because of the two big nearest festival this time a few success history have been completed. Secretariat members and youth were also engaged them with the project proposal writing and short film competition.

Background

Recent Bangladeshi newspapers include numerous dismal reports on politically motivated abductions and killings 53 people were abducted in 2014, contributing to the more than 250 abductions in the last four years, allegedly conducted by members of the major political parties.¹ Seen as a symptom of an increasingly dysfunctional and highly polarized political system, local media has also noted “the major parties bear nothing but deep hatred...for one another, so much so that violence is the norm. Over the past two decades, Bangladeshi politics have grown increasingly confrontational and volatile, stifling the country’s development. Mirroring these concerns internationally, the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor named “politically motivated violence” a serious human rights violation in the country.

For Bangladeshi youth, who constitute 65.7% of the population of 160 million, ⁴ this polarization creates obstacles to cultivating an authentic civic and political voice. Recruited into this social order from a young age, and with an eye towards their loyalty rather than innovation or leadership potential, youth civic participation is often party-controlled, violent, and extremely partisan. Parties provide “perverse incentives” for membership, such as “opportunities of earnings from toll collections, holding onto seats in the residential halls, getting jobs, likelihood of future political appointments and, most importantly, getting away with committing crimes in campus. Further, while an astonishing 89% of youth have voted in at least one national election.

OBJECTIVE 1: An independent Youth Network, which can be sustained and scaled up into a youth movement for authentic civic participation, is supported.

Secretariat members of Dhaka and Mymensingh including the community youth network members are playing important roles for ensuring the authentic civic participation. The following success stories will help us to understand that view.

Success Stories in the last three months are given below;

Mymensingh Part:

1. International Youth Day celebration

The secretariat members and community youth network members of Mymensingh have arranged a rally for celebrating International Youth Day (IYD) on August 12, 2015. The **Deputy Director Youth (DDY) of Mymensingh MR. Rakib Uddin** was the Chief Guest of this event. The event started with a human chain at 10 am in front of Press Club. Later, a rally from Mymensingh Press Club to Zila Parishad Bhaban was also arranged. In total, 160 youths participated in this event jointly arranged by Democracywatch and IPDS.

On that day, the DDY was well briefed about the YASC project, expressed interest, and assured us of his continuous support regarding any kind of youth activity in Mymensingh under this project. He also told that he is very much pleased about YASC activity in Mymensingh.

Through this program, youth volunteers from different organization gathered in one place and shared how they can work together to ensure a better future for the youth of Bangladesh.

2. International Peace Day celebration

The secretariat and youth network members celebrated International Peace Day in Mymensingh on September 21, 2015. DW celebrated this program with different youth based local organizations like Mati, Santimitra, and MMC etc. Santimitra was one of the lead organization of this event. On that day, more than 250 youths from different organizations including 60 DW-YASC network members participated in the rally and discussion sessions. A big colorful rally started from Kachijhuli, circled through Town Hall Morhand finished at Kachijhuli. The secretariat members also arranged art competition and distributed clothes among the poor children.

In this event, Father Eric Brother of Santimitra was present as the Chief Guest. His presence motivated the young volunteers. He said, “Bangladeshi youth are very much intelligent and hard worker. In future youth of this country will be leader and effective active citizens”.

3. Human Chain against Child Abuse

On August 12, DW and IPDS arranged a human chain against child abuse in Mymensingh when child abuse in various part of the country arose in rapid rate. A total of, 160 youth network members participated in the program. This event had a great impact among the local community. Through this event the community people especially the youth became more aware of child abuse incidents in the society and committed to protect such heinous act.

Dhaka Part

1. Seminar on Uterus and Breast Cancer

Nahid Parvin, a secretariat member represents the Urdu Speaking Linguistically Minority Community of Mohammadpur. She had arranged a two hours awareness raising seminar on “**Uterus and Breast Cancer**” on October 7, 2015 at Bihari Caomp, Mohammadpur for the disadvantaged women and girls of Bihary Community with the cooperation of Nari Pakkho (a national women rights based organization). Through this seminar, a good number of women and girls became aware and they promised to spread this essential message to their respective family members and relatives.

2. YASC members joined in the Youth Parliament Program

Theme: Youth and old - we are all in this world together: respect old aged because it is your future.

Objective: To make a fruitful interactive session with the policymakers on various national issues.

More than 30 YASC secretariat members and community youths joined in the event on August 6, 2015 at PKSf Dhaka. It was a prestigious event where DNCC Mayor, eminent writers, civil society representatives, and journalists joined and inspired the youth for making a peaceful Bangladesh.



Youth secretariat and network members with the DNCC Mayor Mr. Anisul Haque during the program

3. Workshop on Social Media

Objective: To make aware about volunteerism, and how to use the social media effectively.

A workshop on social media was organized on September 10, 2015 by the Secretariat members of Dhaka for the Community Youth Social Network groups to increase the capacity of the youths at ASA University Bangladesh. This workshop inspired them to be active social activist in future.



One of the secretariat members facilitating a session

4. Workshop on Communication & Volunteerism

Objective: To develop the communication skill.

A day long workshop has been completed on Communication and Volunteerism on October 4, 2015 at ASA University Dhaka, through the cooperation of the authority of ASA University. Where YASC secretariat members and Youth network members had vibrantly participated.



Youth network members during the Workshop

5. Participation in CAMP Cool

Objective: To ensure a safe footpath for all kind of people including physical challengedone.

This was a 3 days (6-8 October, 2015) residential training where young people got skills and knowledge about urban transportation and healthy living system. 8 YASC secretariat members and community youths joined the program. Through this three days program youth community members gathered information about the traffic system of Dhaka city and the major causes for the traffic jam and how to resolve the troubles. This program was organized by the Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB) at their venue.



Secretariat and youth members received certificates

6. World Mental Health Day observation

Theme: “Dignity Matters”

Objective: To increase the awareness about the mental health.

Secretariat and youth network members observed world mental health day on October 10, 2015.



Secretariat and youth members with Hyder Hossain, afamous contemporary singer during the program

Activity:

- Civic engagement
- Meet with famous person
- Gathering knowledge about mental health issues

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase in youth awareness and capacity for civic consciousness and authentic participation; Youth civic participation movement supported.

A total of three training have been completed from July, 1 to September 30, 2015 for community youth network members. 85 youth from different institutions have been participated in the training among them 28 were female(See Annex, 1). As per schedule a lot of important contents have been discussed like: what is youth agents, social issue and responsibility, network, communication, fund raising, advocacy, motivation, solution of conflict, problem identify

& solving method, leadership, Meeting, organization, project planning and proposal writing etc.



Small group presentation during the training at Democracywatch

Participation selection process: Firstly, Secretariat members requested the different educational institutions head for giving the advertisement for collecting the participants and collected the interested students' biography through Facebook, email and personal contact. In the meantime DW secretariat members also inspired students for increasing their interest for participating in the training through their inter-personal communication. After collecting the biography, secretariat members have arranged one-to-one interview sessions for selecting the suitable one for the training.

The Methodology of the training: Some important methodology have been used in this training such as Open discussion, Question and answering, Small group work, Role play, Individual and group presentation and Display of flip chart.

Training Facilitator: The Secretariat members had conducted the training for community youth network members with cooperation of DW staffs and management.

Participant's level: Most of them are the students and studying in Graduation and post Graduation level. One of the female participant was physically challenged (deaf and dumb).

Community Youth Network Training at ASA University

ASA University Bangladesh (ASAUB) Language Club jointly organized a training session with Democracywatch on 13-14 August 2015, titled "Youth as Agents of Social Change." The Asia Foundation's "Youth as Agents of Social Change: Authentic Civic Participation in Bangladesh"

project seeks to promote youth as agents of positive social changes in Bangladesh. The project addressed the need for solidarity among the youths dedicated to changing the socio-political landscape of Bangladesh and to promote youth awareness and civic consciousness in today's Younger generation. The participants learned to employ different skills to promote leadership qualities and networking. Prof. Dr. Dalem Chandra Barman, Vice Chancellor of ASA University Bangladesh awarded certificates to the participants. The training session was inaugurated by Professor Md. Muinuddin Khan, Advisor, ASA University Bangladesh. Mr. Khalequzzaman, Registrar, ASA University Bangladesh, the Co-ordinator of ASAUB Language Club, Ms. Diana Ansarey along with teachers from different departments were also present on the occasion.



Trainees during the Certificate Award session at ASAU

Result:

- After receiving the training participants shown their eager interest to involve them with the community development initiatives
- Participants got the proper knowledge about the civic participation in Bangladesh perspectives.
- They also inspired and committed to develop the social project for the development of their own respective community.
- They felt grateful for engaging them with YASC social network system.

Request:

- Participants also requested to arrange a four days residential training for the greater understanding about the each contents of training.

OBJECTIVE 3: Youth Network expanded; Innovative projects implemented by youth groups.

Opportunities, Issues and Challenges

1. Money is the main problem for those kind of successful events
2. Collaboration with different youth leaders is another most challenge
3. Manage guest and place for those kinds of events

How to overcome the challenges

1. Managing money from different line of budget activity
2. Secretariat members have made a strong communication with the different youth leaders which is helping to overcome the situation effectively
3. Managing guest and place of government permission by providing the extra effort of youth

Activities Planned for the Next Period

For the following due activities DW-YASC has the plan for accomplishing as early as possible. The possible date for the due activities are given below;

Dhaka

- Refreshers course for the Community Youth Networks members at Dhaka will start from October 20, 2015 and will complete by the second week of November 2015.
- Political consultation meeting with different political youth representatives is something difficult at Dhaka. After all our youth members are trying to manage the leaders for arranging this challenging event.

Mymensingh

- Refreshers course for the Community Youth Networks members at Mymensingh will start from October 28, 2015 and will complete by first week of November 2015.
- For arranging the political consultation meeting with different political youth representatives youth members are trying their best and hope next month we will be able to complete the meeting.