Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center E-Newsletter

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Foreword from President

April 8, 2012

Dear Friends,

As I write, BYLC headquarters is abuzz with activity, gearing up for our second Youth Leadership Summit coming up in less than three weeks. This year, we launched an intensive marketing campaign, advertising through digital platforms, newspapers, radio and even billboards. Our admissions team visited several universities in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. The effort has been effective, resulting in an overwhelming 2100+ applications from all seven divisions of the country. Our knowledge team has been hard at work over transnational boundaries, collaborating with faculty from MIT and Harvard University to develop the leadership curriculum. Our team is working hard to deliver an enriching experience for the most talented young people of our country.

Our signature Building Bridges through Leadership Training (BBLT) program continues to grow stronger with the graduation of its eighth class in Dhaka. In parallel, Building Bridges through Leadership Training Junior (BBLT-J) was organized for the first time in Chittagong by BBLT senior graduates. Recently, we had an exciting collaboration with the Global Initiative for Science and Technology, an entrepreneurship accelerator concern of CRDF Global. As a partner organization, BYLC launched the I Dare Business Plan Competition in Bangladesh that took two teams as semi-finalists to Abu Dhabi. We look forward to nurturing such collaborations that open new doors for Bangladeshi youth.

Let me again take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support. Keeping to the spirit of this year’s Summit theme – Leading Bangladesh into the Future: A Journey of Exploration – let us use the coming months to explore new potentials for ourselves and for our country.

Sincerely,

Ejaj Ahmad
Founder and President

THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Board thanks BRAC and Shahid Khalek and Major Salek Bir Uttam Trust

BYLC adopted its 2011 annual report and audited financial statements at its third AGM on March 31, 2012. Barrister Manzoor Hasan OBE, chairperson of BYLC, as well as members of the governing board and the general board were present at the meeting. The board expressed gratitude to Sir Fazle H. Abed and BRAC for their support and assistance in setting up BYLC’s new office in Baridhara. The members also acknowledged the generous in-kind support from the owner of the property at Baridhara, Shahid Khalek and Major Salek Bir Uttam Trust, in facilitating the development of the organization. The audited financial statements for 2011 were approved by the board and plans for program development and future activities of the organization were discussed.
Year in review: 2011

In 2011, BYLC reached out to more than 250 schools, colleges, madrassas and universities to recruit and train more than 150 bright and energetic students. Collectively, they have completed more than 12,000 hours of service in impoverished communities in Dhaka and Chittagong, impacting the lives of over 1500 people through 24 small and innovative community projects. 2011 also saw BYLC host its first landmark Youth Leadership Summit, the biggest of its kind in Bangladesh, which brought together 200 delegates and 50 renowned speakers for three days of learning, networking and deliberation on a wide-ranging agenda. The highlight of the year, however, was the transition to a new 5200 sq. ft. training facility in Dhaka in November 2011. This has given the organization the resource and space to reach out to a greater number of students through its regular BBLT programs and workshops on entrepreneurship and leadership. The trend in applications for the BBLT program and the Youth Leadership Summit 2011 is a robust indicator of the rising demand for BYLC’s programs in Bangladesh.

2100+ applications received for the Youth Leadership Summit 2012

Building on the success of the Youth Leadership Summit 2011, BYLC is set to organize its next Summit this year from April 26-28 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka. Following an extensive month-long campaign in different colleges and universities across different divisions in Bangladesh, the admissions committee received an overwhelming response for the Summit. Through a competitive selection process involving application screening and personal interviews, the committee has selected a diverse group of 450 delegates, representing private and public educational institutions in Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet. To learn more about the agenda and the speaker line-up for the Summit, please visit www.bylc.org/summit2012.

BBLT 8 participants exercise leadership in Kawan Bazar, Kamalapur and Mouchak

Following a month-long training on leadership, participants of the BBLT 8 program, in collaboration with SAJIDA Foundation, implemented six service projects in underprivileged communities in Kawan Bazar, Kamalapur and Mouchak. Over a period of two and half months, the participants, divided into groups of six, conducted surveys to diagnose the root causes of some of the problems facing the community, prepared project plans and raised funds locally to execute their ideas. Group Ogrodut provided training on making paper boxes to unemployed community members, which they could sell to sweet vendors and earn a living. To create employment opportunities, Group Oshtoashi trained their beneficiaries on the techniques of block printing, while Jagoron's project involved an education awareness campaign in the community. In total, the participants of BBLT 8 served 70 residents in the Kawan Bazar, Kamalapur and Mouchak and each participant completed 120 hours of service.

BBLT-J 3 completed in Chittagong

BYLC, as the country partner of Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST), organizes a workshop on business plan writing for the I Dare Business Plan Competition.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 26-28
Youth Leadership Summit 2012

May 12
Admissions open for BBLT 9 in Chittagong; BBLT 10 and BBLT Junior 4 in Dhaka

THE WORK OF LEADERSHIP

Ejaj Ahmad speaks on youth leadership at the UNDP Global Youth Leadership Forum on Inclusive Democratic Governance at the UN Complex in Nairobi on March 17, 2012.

Garrett Wilkerson, former Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy, Dhaka, delivers a lecture on youth leadership at the BYLC Headquarters.

BYLC, as the country partner of Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST), organizes a workshop on business plan writing for the I Dare Business Plan Competition.
Jahedul Islam, BBLT 2 graduate and Lead Instructor of the BBLT-J 3 program in Chittagong, conducts a class on leadership with the participants.

In January 2012, BYLC launched its third BBLT Junior program with 41 secondary school students from 20 different schools and madrassas in Chittagong. The program, organized and taught by the best performing BBLT graduates, has two objectives: to create an opportunity for BBLT graduates to further develop their leadership skills by teaching leadership to secondary school students, and to introduce students in their early teens to concepts of responsible citizenship, ethics and grassroots leadership. Following two weeks of training on communication, problem solving, ethics, teamwork and leadership, the junior participants were ready to translate their classroom learning into meaningful interventions in the community. Divided into six small groups, the participants ran hygiene campaigns and organized interactive art, poetry and reading sessions with 50 children at an orphanage in Chittagong, and collectively completed 492 hours of service.

**Spotlight:**
**Alamgir Hossain, BBLT 7 Graduate**

Alamgir Hossain is currently a second-year undergraduate student in accounting under the National University. He graduated from BBLT 7 and served as a facilitator in the BBLT Junior 3 program. Alamgir is also the head of Dust Free Bangladesh (DFB), a community organization that he founded to address the environmental problems facing his home-town Chittagong.

**What motivated you to launch Dust Free Bangladesh (DFB)?**

Growing up, I always felt proud about my country and its natural beauty. However, it saddens me to see that Bangladesh is considered to be one of the most polluted countries in the world today. I feel that part of the reason for this is our own inaction. We are destroying our environment by littering and dumping wastes everywhere, especially in the cities. So I took responsibility and formed a group with eight friends to do something about it. But it was difficult organizing people and I struggled to manage the project.

I then got the opportunity to receive training on leadership in BYLC’s BBLT 7 program. The BBLT training made me realize that problems in our community cannot always be addressed with our existing technical knowledge. Sometimes they require us to learn new ways of doing things and change our own behavior and habits. Working with students from three different educational backgrounds, namely English, Bangla and Madrassa, I learned how to work in a team where others’ opinion and values may be quite different than mine. On completion of the BBLT course, I became more confident about my own leadership abilities and drawing on the lessons learned during the program, I fulfilled my long cherished dream of establishing an organization to promote a cleaner environment in Chittagong.

**Tell us about the activities of your organization.**

Dust Free Bangladesh (DFB) is a voluntary, non-profit organization. Our main goal is to reduce pollution and to encourage citizens not to litter on the roads and walkways. I learned in the BBLT program that there are two types of solutions to any problem – technical and adaptive. Technical solutions are immediate fixes using our current know-how and adaptive solutions require adjustments in our habits and priorities to bring about long-term change. At DFB, we adopted a similar approach to our work. Our technical solution includes a monthly cleaning of streets by our volunteers, and our adaptive measures include running awareness campaigns in schools, colleges and among pedestrians to motivate them to avoid littering on streets and to dispose waste in designated garbage bins in neighborhoods. DFB organized an event last month with 120 volunteers who cleaned the streets of a zone in Chittagong and educated around 1000 people on keeping our streets clean.

**What impact has Dust Free Bangladesh (DFB) had on your life?**

I would say that I am a more patient and matured person after running DFB. Working with young volunteers is not easy but my BBLT training has helped me to retain core volunteers by motivating them and giving them opportunities
to work for their community. Before setting up DFB, I used to be quite indecisive but this experience has improved my decision making skills. I think I am more reflective now and I don’t immediately jump to conclusions whenever I face a problem. I try to diagnose the problem using skills that I have learned at BYLC and explore different options before making a decision.