



Agami Newsletter

DECEMBER 2010

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- Gala evening with Salman Khan
- Agami project updates
- Testimonials in support of Agami
- A perspective on residential teaching
- Fundraising efforts in 2010
- Fiscal update for 2010



About Agami:

Agami is a US-registered non-profit charity, dedicated in promoting basic education for the underprivileged children in Bangladesh. Our aim is to provide educational materials and access to education and support, with an end goal of making our project villages self-sufficient.

AGAMI CONTACT INFO:

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From the President of Agami : Looking into the Future

~ Babu Rahman



As I look forward into 2011, I am filled with hope and excitement. Agami has big plans for the upcoming year, and we'd like you to be part of them.

This year has certainly been a different one. The current recession has left many of us jobless, and others justifiably scared about their finances. However, it is at these times that I am reminded of what my mother used to tell me all the time: "Always remember there are those less fortunate than you." It's this kind of talk that pushed me into philanthropy, and it's why I continue.

Similarly, I believe that even though many of us are in dire straits, there are millions of children struggling to survive in Bangladesh. They are fighting to earn a living. Their parents may earn a few hundred dollars in one year. And they are still trying to send their children to school because they understand that education is the best way out of poverty. It is this burning belief that keeps us all going that keeps Agami's mission relevant and alive.

Agami is looking to grow even more in 2011. We aim to support more projects, raise more money, and build out our organization so that we can scale to support our growth in a sustainable fashion. We are embarking on multiple high-profile projects, and these will help take Agami to even higher levels of accomplishment and visibility.

So, I ask you, please join hands with us and step forward into a better future. You have supported us strongly in the past. We will need your support even more going forward if we are to accelerate the winds of change and really create lasting socio-economic change in Bangladesh.

Agami Newsletter Editorial Board:

Executive Editor : Sabir Majumder

Associate Editors : Farinaz Kabir, Akile Kabir and Murshida Chowdhury

An Intimate and Memorable Gala Evening

For the first time in its history, Agami hosted a second fundraiser in the same fiscal year. On October 30, 2010, Agami hosted a gala evening that was an experimental endeavor to reach out to the mainstream community. Recent Google award winner Salman Khan, founder of Khan Academy that provides free video tutorials on a wide array of subjects, was the chief guest for the event.

The evening commenced with a hearty hors d'oeuvres and a five course dinner from Salang Pass along with an open bar, generously stocked by Stroth-Hall Cellars, for the guests. Dr. Babu Rahman, president of Agami, gave a thorough inaugural speech going over details about its projects and answering questions as they were posed to him. Dr Yusuf Haque, CEO and founder of SliceX, conveyed his message from a donor's perspective of "Why Agami". Dhaya Lakshminarayanan took the stage to entertain the audience with her "Comedy is a formula--setup and punch," But it's also personal: "Nobody else can make a joke about being an Indian girl growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, and going to MIT."

As Salman Khan, a vibrant and eloquent speaker who didn't need a microphone to capture one's attention, took the stage, the audience hardly needed any encouragement in seeking out questions or sharing comments. Surrounded by his family, Salman Khan was the main attraction of the evening. Agami is forming a healthy partnership with Khan Academy as it combines its efforts to make education more affordable and easily accessible to the generally disadvantaged children of Bangladesh.

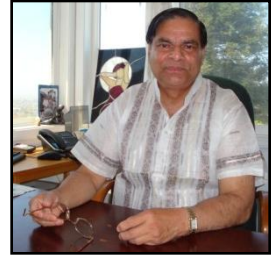
It was a memorable evening, made possible by the support of key sponsors including Salesforce, Ameriprise, YouSendIt and International Produce Group.



Doshgram High School : An Update

~ *Matin Ahmed*

We started Doshgram High School on January 13, 2008 with 31 students in a low lying area of Sylhet district annually ravaged by floods. Classes up to grade VIII continued for three years in rented shops in the village market. We collected approximately \$ 30,000 in donations from institutions and individuals so far. The funds were used to pay teachers' salaries, teachers' training, text books and supplies, stipends to needy students etc. We also managed to build all the walls of a 100' X 50' school building on a higher ground through extensive digging and hauling.



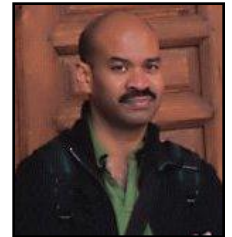
Now there are 73 students, mostly female in three classes with 6 teachers. Two of the teachers are specially trained in Math and English. Eventually this will be a vocational school.

The school urgently needs a roof, doors, windows and wall plaster so that the students can move to class rooms from shops in the market.

Joint Initiative by HoV and Agami

~ *Adnan Yusuf*

House of Volunteers (HoV) is a registered student group at MIT consisting of students and young professionals. We are recognized by the MIT Association of Student Activities (ASA), and are funded by the MIT Graduate Student Council, alumni contributions and other external sources. HoV focuses on devising low-cost, high-impact solutions to empower the education sector in underdeveloped communities around the world. Along these lines, HoV is currently working on three projects in Bangladesh: Books for Bangladesh (Book Drive), Open Source Computers for Bangladesh (OSCEP) and E-Curriculum for Bangladesh (iSchool).



OSCEP is a low-cost, high impact solution based on open source software, which promotes computer and computer-based education at primary and secondary schools in underprivileged communities in Bangladesh. In addition to furthering computer literacy and computer-based education, OSCEP also intends to encourage adoption of open source platforms and products, and promote the culture of volunteerism amongst youth in Bangladesh.

Plans are afoot for HoV to operate its OSCEP program at various Agami-run schools in Bangladesh in direct partnership with the organization. The program will be operated by members of various HoV chapters in Bangladesh, mostly university students. In addition to embracing the spirit of social work, as ambassadors of the various institutions of higher education that they attend, we hope these students will inspire, through their dedication and hard work, young, impressionable minds at remote rural schools to aspire to continue their education. They will also impart invaluable computer education while making overall learning fun.

Khan Academy Video Translation Project

~ Nisar Ahmed

Salman Khan is a familiar name to anyone who has the slightest interest in social entrepreneurship and/or innovative thinking in education. Even though his story has been told many times in the mainstream media it is worth mentioning here one more time. Born in to a Bangladeshi father, Salman Khan started by tutoring his cousins in New Orleans through online video while he was working as a hedge fund analyst in Boston. His initial video lessons posted on YouTube received widespread attention, including from Bill Gates. What started as a tool for distant tutoring soon became a pioneering and revolutionary virtual learning platform on the Internet, the Khan Academy. Salman Khan, a graduate of MIT and Harvard, has produced more than 2000 learning videos covering the entire spectrum of math and science subjects including Pre-Algebra, Precalculus, Algebra, Linear Algebra, Arithmetic, Differential Equations, Geometry, Trigonometry, Biology, Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Physics, Probability, Statistics, and many other subjects.

As a provider of basic education for underprivileged children in Bangladesh, Agami quickly recognized Khan Academy's wealth of instructional videos to be a tremendous learning resource for the children of Bangladesh. Agami started pondering a project in translating Khan Academy videos into Bangla and making them easily available to students in the Bangla speaking world. Around the same time Khan Academy was funded by Google to translate its videos into major world languages. Through initial talks, Khan Academy found Agami to be the prime candidate for the Bangla translation project, as the goals and objectives of these two organizations matched very well. Further discussions between Agami and Khan Academy resulted in an understanding of the two organizations whereby Agami will produce Khan Academy videos in Bangla and will distribute them in Bangladesh.

Agami has already mobilized a team of volunteers in Bangladesh that will soon start producing Bangla videos. A parallel Agami team in the USA is also being formed to take the responsibility of project management and quality control of videos. This two-year project is expected to start in the first quarter of 2011. If you are interested to help as a volunteer, please contact Nisar Ahmed (nisar@agami.org) or Tanjeem Ahsan (tanjeem@agami.org). Visit [Khan Academy](#) and [Agami](#) for more information.

The success of Agami's projects relies on your passion and generosity.

GET INVOLVED NOW

For volunteering opportunities in:

- project administration
- fund-raising
- reporting (from BD)
- marketing
- grant writing
- monitoring

Email: Babu Rahman
babu@agami.org

CONSIDER DONATING NOW

Send your checks to :
Agami, INC.
P.O. Box 3178, Fremont,
CA 94539

Or go online:

<http://www.agami.org>
and click on DONATE
NOW to make a secure
donation through PayPal.

All donations are tax-deductible

CORPORATE MATCHING:
Many companies will match certain portions of employee donations to charities. Please check with your HR department about this policy.

Why I Support Agami?

~ *Sitara Khan, Donor*

When I met Sabir Majumder about four years ago at a local gathering of chemists, biologists, and pharmacists from the San Francisco Bay Area, he approached me with a special request for supporting Agami for its school projects in Bangladesh. At the time, I did not pay much attention, but I started attending Agami events because of his persuasion. To my pleasant surprise, I have been learning a lot about the details of these value-added Agami educational projects for underprivileged children.

I like Agami because its organizers are efficient and it's volunteers are committed with full of inspiration. I am impressed with the transparency of the overall project and fund management. Agami organizers always showed flexibility and thoughtfulness in project development for existing and new schools. They have been exploring new ideas and gathering demographic data from relevant communities and organizations both here and in Bangladesh. Agami's latest fundraiser event in a professional setting, an effort to connect with mainstream Americans, is praiseworthy.

I have been supporting Agami within my means and limitations since 2007. I wish to continue this support and partnership with Agami for the greater good of our global communities. It is needless to mention that education is the only effective tool in eradicating global poverty, especially in Bangladesh. I urge all global citizens, especially the non-resident Bangladeshis, to come forward in supporting Agami financially or otherwise.

I strongly believe that my dream of establishing my own school in rural Bangladesh will become a reality in the near future through my ever increasing attachment with Agami. I wish to see Agami as a full-blown mainstream non-profit organization working for the causes of needy children.

Why Agami?

~ *Akile Kabir, Volunteer*

Bangladesh may be a developing country in which the vast majority of the population struggles to maintain its livelihood. However, the potential and resourcefulness Bangladeshi people is no less than that of any other country. In order to meet this potential, people must have their basic needs, starting from childhood. One of these basic needs is education, the means by which people can realize their interests and enter the workforce as confident adults. Furthermore, young students should be able to learn in encouraging and enriching environments. Unfortunately, opportunities for doing are often so scarce that instead of spending time in school, young children are forced into labor in order to support their families.

This is the kind of scenario that Agami wishes to prevent through raising funds and implementing school projects throughout Bangladesh. Through the passionate efforts of Agami's members, schools in neglected areas may receive the kind of support that they do not get from the government. Through community fundraising activities and corporate sponsorship, Agami enables students access to better facilities and supplies such as solar lamps, computers and new uniforms. By providing vocational training, Agami also seeks to ensure that these children know how to utilize the skills they learn in school, after they graduate.

As we face this period of economic hardships, we should remember those who live with so much less than we do, making it even harder for them to achieve an income that we would still consider meager. As fortunate members of this society, we should happily take on the responsibility of supporting organizations like Agami that selflessly looks towards improving the lives of young students in Bangladesh.

Resident Teaching – A Concept Rooted in Our Tradition



~ A perspective by Nisar Ahmed

Over the last 20 years Bangladesh has made great progress in education: the youth literacy rate is above 70% and enrollment in primary education is above 90%. However, despite this progress, the dropout rate is still more than 30%, and as many as 40% of Bangladeshi children are still growing up without a basic primary education.

Although education is the top priority of the government, a large number of economically disadvantaged parents cannot afford to send or keep their children in the conventional education system. It is not surprising that Bangladesh, with 49% living in poverty and with a 48% rate of child malnutrition has so many children growing without basic primary education. For families living below the national poverty line, educating their children is a luxury they can ill afford, even though primary education is free for all. Instead of staying in school, children are helping their families make ends meet. So, is there a way to break out of this the vicious cycle “poverty equates to malnutrition and lack of education”?

Underprivileged families, like any other, want their children to get education and know that it is essential for improving their economic and social conditions. But it is hard for them to compromise with their day-to-day survival. To send kids to school, parents have to believe that their livelihood is not at risk. There are two ways to overcome the dependency on children for family livelihood: by providing economic support to compensate for missed child help, and/or by making education flexible so that families do not have to compromise on their day-to-day survival activities.

Resident Teaching is a flexible model that can offer access to education for the children of underprivileged families struggling for survival. In this model, a learning center is established with resident teachers capable of teaching classes 1 through 5. All teachers will live on campus with their families and be available to offer lessons as and when students have time for it. Teachers must be provided with necessary incentives and supports so that they can be worry-free and concentrate on their teaching responsibilities. In addition to offering textbook learning, the village learning center can become a demonstration center for eco-friendly agriculture including fish, cattle, poultry, and fruits/vegetable farming. In the longer term, the learning center can grow into a village center providing healthcare and other economic activities.

The concept of resident teaching is not a new or revolutionary idea. A similar concept is the village ‘Paath-shala’ that existed in old rural Bangladesh. The ‘Paath-shala’ was run by a teacher, known as the ‘Pondith’, out of his home. While he took care of the children’s education, villagers looked after the well-being of the teacher and his family. It is time for us to revisit this old traditional method of teaching as we look for a potential solution for the 40% of children falling out of the modern day conventional learning system.

Fundraising Efforts in 2010

~ *Farzana Sultana*



We, at Agami, would like to thank all our supporters for helping to make our fundraisers this year a great success. Our Annual Fundraiser event in May 2010 was held at the TiE Center in Santa Clara and was sold out like the previous year.

It was a fabulous evening with a 10-course dinner catered by Tandoor House, a heartwarming performance by Dina and her little song birds, and the rock and roll sensation by Tritone Paradox. The evening was rounded out by a famous Bangladeshi singer Anila Chowdhury, who sang with her husband Aniket, friend Shujon and Pradosh Sarker on drums (tabla).



Elaborate presentations on our projects and financials were made by the board members and project coordinators. Two of our interns, Monisha and Ejaz, touched the audience with their presentations. They spoke from their hearts about visiting Agami schools in Bangladesh and how helping the children really impacted them on a personal level. The event was emceed by Razab Chowdhury and Sophia Rahman, and included silent auctioning of paintings donated by well-wishers of Agami. Agami was also officially recognized by San Jose councilman Ashu Kalra with a plaque commemorating Agami's community service.

Thanks to the many teams of volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure perfect execution of the fundraiser event, we were able to raise about \$41,000. We fell short of our goal of \$50,000. Our estimated total project costs for this year would have been \$89,500 if we funded all existing projects as well as pipeline projects.

Looking to supplement the shortfall through another fundraiser event that was geared for the mainstream audience, Agami arranged for its first Gala event on October 30th at India Community Center. The guests enjoyed an eclectic evening with dinner and live comedy including a keynote speech from Salman Khan, entrepreneur and founder of The Khan Academy. This event aimed to raise funds for our 10 ongoing and 3 upcoming projects. Agami plans to launch multiple new projects in 2011 as it discontinued a couple of school projects in 2010. It also aims to spread education to a larger underserved area throughout Bangladesh and as such plans to discontinue funding once a project is self sufficient within five years.

The sluggish economic recovery and general uncertainties about the upcoming year contributed to the cautious flow of donations to Agami. But we will persevere. Like 2010, Agami is planning on its Annual Fundraiser event by the end of May 2011 and an additional mainstream Gala event around October 2011.

We urge that you continue your support as YOU have in the past and fill the gap in Agami's funding needs. Please take a moment to visit our website (www.agami.org) and make a tax deductible donation.

Financial Update for 2010

~ Imtiaz Chowdhury



In my year-end financial report in 2009, I predicted 2010 to be a challenging year for Agami. It indeed was. Although the U.S. economy performed better than last year, we noticed a sharp drop in individual donations.

In 2010, donations received from individual donors are down by 18% from the previous year. At the same time, Agami's operational expenses increased by 19%. Organizing two fundraiser events this year caused our operational expense to climb up. The tables below compare Agami's revenue and expenses in 2010 to the previous fiscal year.

Table 1: Agami revenue

Revenue	2010	2009
Donations (individual & corporations)	\$46,389	\$56,686
Sponsorship, ticket sales, auction etc.	\$12,582	\$8,252

Table 2: Agami expenses

Expenses	2010	2009
Project costs	\$54,170	\$59,214
Administrative expenses	\$ 9,862	\$ 7,310

This year, we have so far disbursed a total of \$54,170 for different projects. The following table gives detailed breakdown of our project expenses.

Table 3: Project expenses

Project	Amount
Lalitnagar, Rajshahi	\$ 2,250
Khulna	\$14,110
Alok School, Dhaka	\$ 6,920
Bagerhat	\$15,000
D Light (Solar light fee)	\$ 185
Doshgram Girls School, Sylhet	\$ 6,396
Aila reconstruction support	\$ 4,309
Pearabag School, Dhaka	\$ 5,000
Total funds disbursed	\$54,170

Despite the fiscal challenges we faced this year, Agami managed to honor its pledge to the donors: for the seventh consecutive year, Agami used 0% of donors' contributions to pay for administrative expenses. Increased revenue from ticket sales and corporate sponsorships helped us maintain operational expenses well below our revenue from these sources. However, Agami needs more donations before this year ends in order to maintain its growth and to enable more children to go to school next year.