

Observations on Primary Education of Underprivileged Children in Bangladesh

Summary Report

By Mahib Rahman, Jacksonville, Florida, USA

It was my pleasure to work as a summer intern with the Agami Education Foundation (AEF) in Bangladesh, a sister organization of Agami Inc, USA. The Agami School Program is meant to greatly improve education quality for underprivileged children throughout Bangladesh. This goal is accomplished through charity to raise funds, which allows this non-profit organization to provide funding directly to the schools. As these schools are underprivileged, the gracious funding allows them to continue to operate and nourish students in a way that facilitates rapid growth and development. Thanks to the generous assistance from Agami, these children are given opportunities to learn that they otherwise would have been unable to experience. The students have a chance to learn about the mechanics of the world and gain a proper education that will allow them to blossom and continue to grow into joyful and intellectual adults with the capabilities to contribute greatly to society in Bangladesh and across the globe.

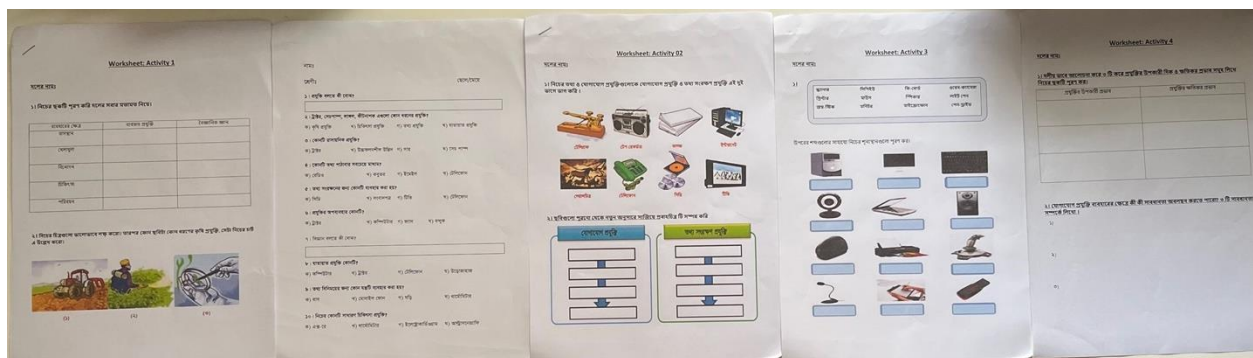
The school that became the focal point of my internship was the PSD Pearabag school, located at 3/A Greenway, Baro Maghbazar, Dhaka, 1217. The experiences I had with both the teachers and students at this underprivileged institution left a profound impact on me. Witnessing the determination and resilience of these students despite their challenging circumstances left an indelible mark on my perspective.

The aspirations and ambitions of the students I encountered during my time at the Pearabag school were truly inspiring. In the midst of adversity, they held on to dreams and goals that showcased their unwavering spirit. This resilience in the face of adversity reminded me of a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, an inspirational leader, peaceful activist, and legendary humanitarian, which my father, a university mathematics professor, often shares with our family: "If we are to reach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." These words resonate deeply with the reality I witnessed at Pearabag school – the potential for positive change embodied by these children is immense.



Students in grades 3-5 collaborating on a worksheet depicting numerous technologies

The Pearabag School classroom in which I was seated included grade levels three, four, and five, the standard elementary school grade levels. The students were seated on benches in a cluster seating arrangement, with numerous students at one large desk. I immediately noticed the use of fans instead of air conditioning and the tight grouping in a somewhat crowded learning environment. Despite this, the students were very clearly eager to learn and persevered. Soon after the preliminaries were completed, the first worksheet was passed around. All the worksheets included numerous visual representations related to science and technology, and they provided students with an opportunity to work with one another.



Samples of the student worksheets

As the students began to make progress on the first worksheet, I immediately began to notice the underlying beauty of the interactive education process, which is comparable to that of Montessori education (a method of learning and education that was derived by Italian educator Maria Montessori), which, I myself, have experienced. The students of the Pearabag school were given a chance to think on their own feet. The students are greatly encouraged to demonstrate their creativity and think outside the box. Collaboration between the students was promoted, as they sat in groups and had the opportunity to work together on the assignment at hand. To answer the required questions, the students used logic and reasoning to truly understand how different mechanisms work, as they explored reality. The students were also encouraged to think about the reasoning behind their answers, to truly understand the processes behind everything they learned

about. Notably, the class was extremely involved in the discussion, with numerous students raising their hands to voice their opinions as they demonstrated their involvement and engagement with the discussion topic. The children were often applauded for giving correct answers, which provides a reward for their engagement and encourages other students to do the same. The discussion continued to cover various technology related topics, such as methods of long-distance communication including letters, telegraph, and telephone. The teacher and students dove into the advantaged and disadvantages of each, and then went on to discuss newer technologies and their global impacts. Despite the environment, all the students work diligently and passionately. There is a clear dedication and burning commitment to learn all sorts of new information. The friendly and casual relationship between students and teacher is one to be cherished. The students feel that they can enjoy talking with their teacher, rather than feel stressed or worried. As a result, the class is filled with happy students who are easy to talk to. They will happily give their thoughts and opinions when prompted.



Students discuss the worksheet contents with one another as they answer questions and think critically

During my time observing and interacting with the teachers and students, I gained valuable insights into their daily lives. I learned that these students, who pursue elementary education, face numerous challenges, including studying in makeshift sheds and sharing bathroom facilities with three to four families. The school lacks basic amenities like air conditioning, refrigerators, a proper dining area, a library, and computers. Despite these glaring disadvantages, the students exhibited a tenacity and commitment to learning that left me humbled.

Coming from a background that includes Montessori experience as a student and an observer, I felt immensely privileged to engage with the Pearabag students. This experience transformed me into an agent of change, igniting a desire to contribute positively to their lives. The time I spent with these young learners wasn't just a fleeting internship; it became a defining moment that will remain with me throughout my life.

Reflecting on this experience, I've come to realize that whatever career path I eventually choose – be it engineering, medicine, law, or any other field – my true calling lies in making a difference in the lives of underprivileged communities. The glaring disparities I witnessed in terms of housing, access to clean water, sanitation, and quality education compelled me to take action. I'm determined to be part of initiatives that involve building homes, raising funds, and creating solutions for clean water and sanitation. Furthermore, I'm dedicated to contributing to their education, fostering an environment of peace, justice, and knowledge for these marginalized groups.



Giving my introduction to the students

My internship with the Agami School Program has left an indelible mark on my worldview. The experiences at the Pearabag school have solidified my commitment to driving change in the lives of underprivileged children in Bangladesh. The journey I embarked upon as an intern has now evolved into a lifelong mission to be a catalyst for positive transformation. As I move forward, I am resolute in my ambition to contribute to education, access to basic amenities, and a brighter future for the remarkable students I had the privilege to meet and learn from. Our future is in the hands of younger generations, and their education is immensely critical for their success, and the success of the entire world. Increased budget allocations will allow these underprivileged schools to raise their own standards of education, and the young children will be provided with the dynamic education that they deserve. As a result of all that has been done so far, these children can continue to grow and expand their knowledge of the world. However, this is only the beginning. More generations must be fostered in a similar way, so that countless children can advance to the next chapter of life with a fulfilling education that supports their chosen path for the years ahead.



Group photo to commemorate the occasion

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About the Author:

I am Mahib, a student enrolled at Stanton College Prep High School located in Jacksonville, Florida, USA. In my time attending the school, I have cultivated a profound inclination for assisting my peers and community members. This endeavor brings me immense contentment, as I find solace in extending my aid to others, whether it involves academic cooperation, active involvement in local philanthropic activities, or providing a sympathetic ear. Stanton's environment, far beyond academics, has emphasized the significance of communal support and empathy. Alongside my academics, I have come to enjoy various extracurriculars including sports such as football and tennis. Having enjoyable pastimes is key to living a fulfilling life. I am dedicated to upholding these principles of communal support, empathy, and happiness as I embark on my journey.

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References:

Agami Inc, 2023, www.agami.org/.

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