



Global Connections and Exchange

Bangladesh

April 2007 - June 2007

This News Letter is to update schools in our network, our donors and other interested readers about the activities and progress taking place within our program in Bangladesh.

Do you have something you would like to add to the newsletter or are you interested to learn more about our program?

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The Global Connections and Exchange Program in Bangladesh has established Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in 27 secondary schools throughout Bangladesh. These schools and their partner schools encompass a population of almost 50,000 students. The program's main goals are to increase global dialogue and educational opportunities by installing modern computer equipment with Internet access in schools, and to develop training and learning projects for teachers and students.



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US Ambassador to Bangladesh Inaugurates Khulna Alia Madrasa ILC

On 11 April, 2007, U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis formally inaugurated the Internet Learning Center at Khulna Alia Madrasa. During the inauguration ceremony, Butenis told to the media that the center would enable *madrasa* students to learn about the American way of life. She said the center's installation will strengthen the ties of friendship between Khulna Alia Madrasa and the American people. Moreover, Ms. Butenis reported that the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State has introduced Internet Learning Centers at 27 secondary schools in Bangladesh in the last two years in cooperation with Relief International – Schools Online. (RI – SOL).

Butenis told the media representatives at the ceremony that she was very happy to learn that religious curriculum is paired with secular education and modern information technology training for *madrasa* students. Mr. Firoz Alam, deputy commissioner, Khulna, presided over the function, which was also

addressed by Alia Madrasa Principal Mr. Abu Saleh. Several hundred students of the madrasa along with their teachers, community members, and government officials attended the event which was widely covered by the electronic and print media in Bangladesh.



US Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis at the opening ceremony of the ILC in Khulna



Khulna Alia Madrasa Advocates for an Inclusive Information Society on World Information Society Day

World Information Society Day 2007 was celebrated in Khulna Alia Madrasa on 17 May to remind the world of the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society to create “a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society” based on fundamental human rights. UNESCO has referred to these societies as Knowledge Societies based on four fundamental principles: freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and equal access to quality education. In 2007, UNESCO dedicated the Day to the principle of universal access to information and knowledge.

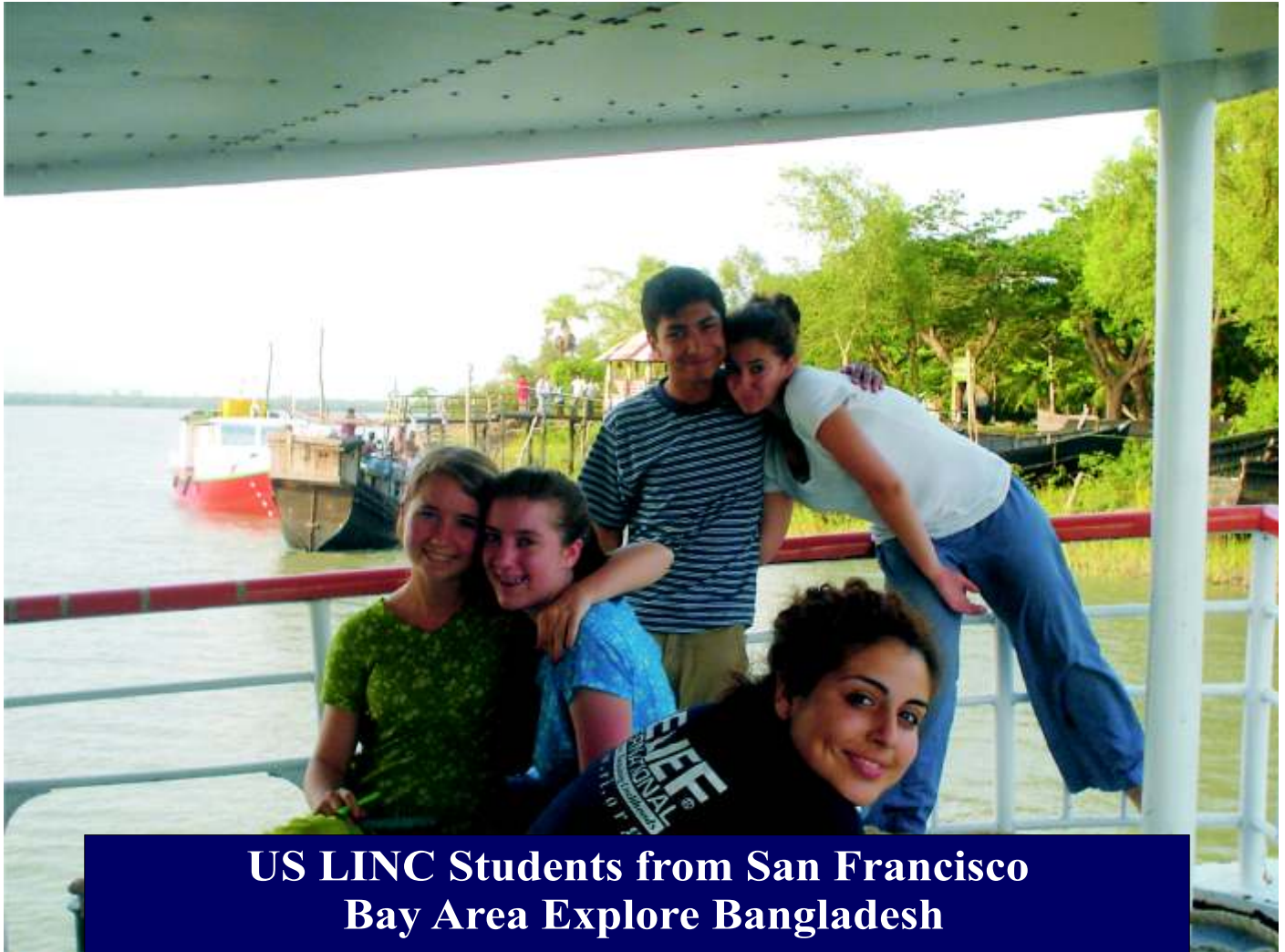
Khulna Alia Madrasa organized a discussion meeting at the ILC attended by the Khulna District Education Office, Mr. Mijanur Rahman, the Chairman of Khulna Press Club, Mr. Mokbul Hosein Mintu, the Principal of the madrasa, Mr. Moulana Md. Saleh, the Vice Principal, Mr. Moulana Md. Abdus Rajjak, the

teachers, Professor Golam Mustafa Shindaini and Ms. Nura Zakia Sultan, and RI – SOL Cluster Operations Manager for Khulna Jessore, Ms. Nura Zakia Sultana. A number of other teachers, community members and students of the madrasa also attended the celebration. In the opening speech of the celebration, the District Education Officer expressed his gratitude to RI – SOL (www.ri.org) and the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (<http://exchanges.state.gov/>) for introducing ICT-based education projects in the Khulna Alia Madrasa.

A 16-year old madrasa student who was given the floor to speak about his experience with GCE projects noted that the “ILC has opened up a new horizon of knowledge and information. It has created an opportunity to learn new communication tools like the Internet, through which we can be connected to our peers around the world to learn. With the

help of the ILC, we can enrich ourselves on a daily basis with new information and knowledge.” In his speech, the principal emphasized the need for ICT skills in daily life and urged his students to learn about the computer and the internet, so that they can compete in the changing job market. He also stressed the importance of building an inclusive information society.





US LINC Students from San Francisco Bay Area Explore Bangladesh

Under the Linking Individual Knowledge and Culture (LINC) program ten US students from the San Francisco Bay Area visited Bangladesh from April 1 to April 19, 2007. The main topic of this exchange was “Environment and the Community.”

During the exchange, the US students visited many places around Bangladesh and met a number of local organizations to learn about local social development. They visited the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) in Munshiganj, Democracy Watch in Gazipur, Waste Concern in Jatrabari and *Ekmattra* in Mirpur. Next, the students visited the Radix apparel factory in Kashimpur, 40 kilometers from the capital city.

The US LINC students also visited the Joydevpur Girls High School, a GCE school in Gazipur and took part in a drawing program called “Drawing for the Future” with the Bangladeshi GCE students. As part of the exchange program, the US students stayed with Bangladeshi families and absorbed a great deal of the culture.

Students also attended a three-day Environment and Science camp at BRAC TARC in Savar. At the camp, the US students had the opportunity to meet the group of Bangladeshi LINC students who would travel to the US in May 2007. Lastly, the US students visited Sundarban, the world's largest mangrove forest.

Global Youth Service Day 2007



On April 22, the schools throughout Relief International – Schools Online's GCE network in Bangladesh observed Global Youth Service Day 2007 with the slogan "Youth Changing the World." The day was celebrated in several districts across Bangladesh including Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur. The schools organized youth led community service projects, a student rally, and a small discussion on the role of youth in community development and civic education.

This year, the theme of the celebration in Bangladesh was 'education for all'. The students devised projects focused on education

and the environment like tree planting, gardening, waste management, etc. In addition, the Chowara Girls High School in Comilla, one of the GCE schools, received a Disney Minnie Grant from Youth Service America to host a literacy camp as part of its GYSD celebration. Relief International – Schools Online has been celebrating Global Youth Service Day since 2005 as part of its Global Connections and Exchange Program in Bangladesh.

Literacy Project with Youth Service America's Disney Minnie Grant 2007

This year Chowara Girls High School, one of the 27 GCE schools in Bangladesh received a Disney Minnie Grant to implement a community service project for Global Youth Service Day 2007. The students of the school designed a project to host several literacy camps in their community. The opening ceremony of the camp was attended by government representatives, local NGOs, elected representatives, members of the School Management Body, teachers, students, community members and media representatives.

With the grant, 40 students from Chowara Girls High School purchased study materials for the literacy camps and invited about 100

children from the community who had never had an opportunity to go to school to attend free lessons. The event was widely covered by local print media.



Mother's Day Celebration

GCE Bangladesh schools observed Mother's Day on May 13, 2007 with various activities. The modern version of Mother's Day was first observed in the United States in 1907 by peace activist Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia. Her efforts eventually bore fruit in 1914 when US



president Woodrow Wilson declared the second Sunday of May as to be Mother's Day and made it a national holiday.

Chowara Girls High School in Bangladesh invited students' mothers to attend a ceremony at its Internet Learning Center. The Girls Power Club members ran a discussion group moderated jointly by GCE lead teachers and RI – SOL staff. RI – SOL Cluster Operations Manager, Ms. Biva Nag, explained the history of the day and the roles a mother can play in the education of her children. The participating students talked about how their mothers help them in their daily lives and how their mothers have played a crucial role in getting them through school. The headmistress reminded the participants that every girl should be educated to be a good mother.

Bangladeshi Students Participate in Online Conference on Globalization

Bangladeshi GCE students participated in the Eighth International Internet Conference 'Agenda 21 NOW!' on May 9, 2007. The theme of this year's conference was 'globalization'. Students from Siraj Uddin Sarker Vidyaniketan in Tongi, Gazipur and from Chowara Girls High School in Comilla joined several hundred students from around the world to discuss how students can impact climate change, fair trade, communications and sustainable development.

This 24-hour online conference was a joint project of the German UNESCO Associated Schools (ASP net Germany) and the Baltic Sea Project, and involved

over a thousand students (aged 14+) and educators from around the world.



World Environment Day 2007 Celebrated in GCE Schools

GCE students of the Uttar Badda Kamil Madrasa (religious school) celebrated World Environment Day (WED) 2007, a global event celebrated on 5 June around the world. This year's WED's slogan was "Melting Ice—A Hot

Topic." The WED theme selected for 2007 stressed the effects that climate change is having on polar ecosystems and communities, and the subsequent consequences of this around the world.



Students and teachers of the Uttar Badda Kamil Madrasa took part in a discussion on global warming and the potential impact it could have on Bangladesh. Many of the participating students heard about climate change for the first time in their life and were very enthusiastic to learn more about it. RI – SOL staff and the lead teacher helped students find information about climate change using internet search engines like Yahoo and Google. At the end of the day, about 200 students of the madrasa knew that climate change is a reality.

Journalism Club Celebrates Press Freedom Day



Local journalists attend meeting at the ILC in Jessore

The Journalism Clubs at two GCE schools in Bangladesh observed World Press Freedom Day 2007 on May 3 and discussed freedom of the press and the issue of safety in journalism. Members of the Journalism Club at the Badsha Faisal Islamic Institute in Jessore invited internet journalists from the Daily Lok Shamaj, the Daily Grammer Kagoj and the Daily Spondon to attend the celebration to discuss journalism and journalists' safety concerns in Bangladesh. The participants said that journalists in any society play an important role in upholding democratic values and it is their duty to hold the public and private sectors accountable. They also voiced their concern about the increased violence against journalists in Bangladesh.

The Chowara Girls High School in Comilla also organized a workshop and discussion group at the ILC to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. Local representatives of national electronic and print media outlets worked as advisors for this workshop while RI staff members moderated a discussion group on security concerns of journalists in Bangladesh. The students learned some basic principles of journalism and why it is important for a journalist to maintain high ethical standards. Journalists from CSB TV Channel, ATN TV, NTV, Boishakhi TV, BD News, the Daily Moinamoti, the Daily Ruposhi Bangla and the Daily Meghoti attended the workshop and discussion group.

April Online Collaborative Project: Imagining the Future

In April, Bangladeshi students and their peers in other GCE countries, including those in the US, took part in a project entitled 'Imagining the Future'. This internet-based cross-cultural collaborative project allowed students to envision a future where there will be 'education for all'. Students shared ideas on many different topics and made recommendations on how their communities could reach this goal in the future.

Eighth grader Golam Rabbani thinks “the government, NGOs, and other powerful men, can help every student in our country to read and write. Perhaps, a country with a modernized education system can help us”. Yusuf M.T. High School student from Comilla states: “I know developed countries have a sufficient number of schools for the disabled. But here in Bangladesh we do not. The affluent in our country should invest in schools for the disabled; otherwise these children will not have a future.”

Tenth grader Tumpa Saha from Chowara

Girls' High School in Comilla considers, “Illiteracy is a curse. It is a social curse. It is the root of ignorance and backwardness. It stops people from marching ahead and from setting up an ideal social fabric.” She adds, “Unfortunately 65% of our population is still illiterate and that is a sad picture. Most cannot read nor write and for this reason are lost to the world. To reverse this problem UNESCO is working to get 'education for all' in the world by 2020. If my country is going to reach this goal it must get some economic support from fellow countries, build more educational academies, and create more of an industrial infrastructure to create more jobs”.

" Early this morning the first students began classes at the Wild Wood High School in southern St. Mary's County. This school is the second of two new schools in the area, meant to alleviate the severe overcrowding in the school system.....The decision to build these schools came from the overcrowded conditions in the four existing public high schools, and pressure from parents. Many of these parents wrote letters to our County Commissioners, asking them for more funding for the school system.These schools also open up more jobs, both for teachers, janitors, and bus drivers. Smaller class sizes mean more personalized attention, and so the students will get a much better education. A better education means that they will be better equipped to handle their future jobs."

- Sarah Duff, USA, August 20th, 2015



RELIEF
International

Political Changes page 1 | 2015 | Home | Early 2015

Breaking News: Political Changes Worldwide Lead to "Education for All"
Newsdate: April 2015

Students from around the world celebrate as their communities enjoy improvements in health, economic security, political participation and the environment. Read below to find out how these changes happened in communities around the world.

Political Changes in the US

NEW SCHOOLS OPEN
By Sarah Duff
August 20th, 2015

Early this morning the first students began classes at the Wild Wood High School in southern St. Mary's County. This school is the second of two new schools in the area, meant to alleviate the severe overcrowding in the school system. "I'm really glad to be going to this new school" says Kristi E., 16. "We were really overcrowded in that tiny building."

The decision to build these schools came from the overcrowded conditions in the four existing public high schools, and pressure from parents. Many of these parents wrote letters to our County Commissioners, asking them for more funding for the school system. Local builders also exerted pressure on the commissioners, as they have been prevented from building new homes for several years now by lack of space to put the incoming children. "Our business really suffered" says Ken R., 36. "Now we can start building again."

The area can now be developed, and there are plans underway for a new movie theater and shopping center to accommodate the people who will be coming to live here. While most consider this a good sign, many people do not like such progress. "We like the trees," says Rachel T., 25. "It just wouldn't be the same if they cut them all down."

Recent test scores also played a role in this decision. Since the spring of 2007, standardized test scores have been steadily dropping. Maryland now has some of the lowest test scores in the nation, scores that the government hopes will be improved by these new schools.

These schools also open up more jobs, both for teachers, janitors, and bus drivers. Smaller class sizes mean more personalized attention, and so the students will get a much better education. A better education means that they will be better equipped to handle their future jobs.

There is more room in the county now, and we can bring in more people. This will benefit not just the school system, but every business run in the area. More people will mean that there will be a larger selection from which to hire, guaranteeing a good employee. These new schools will benefit everyone. "After trying to get them to do this for years, I'm glad they finally got around to giving us new schools!" says Lynn D., 64.



GCE Bangladesh and LINC US Students Draw for Future

On April 5, 2007, GCE students in Gazipur participated in a drawing program entitled "Drawing for the Future" with the visiting US exchange students under from the Linking Individual, Culture and Knowledge (LINC) program. Ten US students and about 30 Bangladeshi students from Joydevpur Girls High

School and Rani Bilashmoni Boys High School took part in the event. Later, the art works jointly completed by the Bangladeshi and US students were displayed on the school campus with the occasion of Global Youth Service Day 2007.

Bangladeshi Schools Celebrate Earth Day 2007 with Hopes of a Greener Future

Relief International – Schools Online Bangladesh extended its support to the Badsha Faisal Islamic School in the Jessore district to celebrate Earth Day 2007. The school organized a number of events, including a tree planting program, which brought together students, parents, and community members. Teachers and students also took part in a rally

which crossed the city and which ended with a group discussion at the GCE Internet Learning Center. Thanks to the day's festivities, the students, teachers and their community became acquainted with the idea and goals of Earth Day.

Teacher Professional Development Program for Jessore, Comilla and Chittagong Teachers

RI – SOL organized three Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training sessions in the Jessore, Chittagong and Dhaka clusters. The TPD took place on April 15-18 at the Internet Learning Center of the Bangladesh Faisal Islamic Institute in Jessore. Ten participants from Jessore cluster schools attended the training. In Chittagong, the training was held at the Agrabad High School between May 21 and 22 and was attended by 36 teachers. RI – SOL's Comilla cluster organized the TPD on June 28. Twenty teachers from the Comilla cluster participated in the training.

The TPD training included sessions on cross cultural communication through internet-based projects, online forums and various aspects of monthly collaborative projects. The

teachers also practiced using technology in academic activities, with the GYCP wiki-space getting most of the attention. In the Comilla cluster, teachers experienced video conferencing for the first time. In summary, the training was very useful for educators who recently joined the GCE program as education lead teachers.

RI – SOL Education Officer Sajeda Begum and Education Coordinator Eather Newaz worked as lead trainers for the TPD in all three clusters. To build on the successes of the first round of TPD, RI – SOL Bangladesh hopes to organize a series of refresher TPD programs in all GCE clusters around Bangladesh in order to boost the spirit of GCE in ILCs and schools.



Chittagong teachers participate in a teacher professional training

GCE Public Meetings in Bagerhat and Rangunia Villages

RI – SOL often organizes public meetings in GCE schools to raise awareness of the goals of the Global Connections and Exchange Program and to generate community support for the program in Bangladesh. The meetings also serve as public relations events to make community members aware of the technology services available at the GCE Internet Learning Centers. Recently, RI – SOL organized two public meeting in two Gono Biddyalaya Project (GBP) schools in the Jessore and Chittagong cluster respectively.

The public meeting at the GBP Rangunia Folklore School was attended by local government officials and local council members, teachers and educators, representatives from local media, officials of the Gono Biddyalaya Project and RI – SOL staff. RI – SOL has set up ILCs in 5 folklore schools in partnership with GBP, an indigenous NGO working to ensure education for poor youth in rural areas.

In the Bagerhat district, the public meeting at the GBP school was attended by high-level

government officials and local community representatives. At the Bagerhat meeting, the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (Sub-district Executive Officer) expressed his gratitude to RI – SOL and the US Department of State for extending technological support to the GBP folklore school. He said that students at this school would be able to widen their knowledge with the newly available computers and access to the internet.



RI – SOL Jessore Khulna Cluster participate in International Knowledge Management for Development Workshop

Zakia Sultan, RI – SOL's Jessore Khulna Cluster Manager, represented RI – SOL Bangladesh at a two-day international workshop on Knowledge Management for Development held in Khulna, Bangladesh. *Amader Gram* (Our Village) of the ICT4D

Project of Bangladesh Friendship Education Society in Bangladesh organized the project. The event was attended by NGOs, KM4D experts, and international donors such as UNDP, the Canadian Embassy, the Embassy of Japan and Khulan University.

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