

Poor but talented students got stipend



DC, Gaibandha is distributing the bank cheque of the Stipend.

Under its Scholarship Program, SKS Foundation provided 57 poor but talented HSC students with education stipend in partnership with Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF). A total of Tk. 684,000 was distributed as Stipend while each of the students got a bank cheque of Tk. 12,000. The Stipend Giving Ceremony was held on 17 June 2021 at the SKS School & College Conference Hall, Uttar Horin Singha, Gaibandha.

Abdul Matin, Deputy Commissioner, Gaibandha distributed the bank cheques of the Stipend among the students as Chief Guest with Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation in the Chair.

In his speech focusing on education, Abdul Matin called the students fortunate and urged them to make fortune for other 10 unfortunate students each in future as a payback of this valuable Stipend. The DC asked the students to be more serious in study to make good results in all exams including public one to be worthy citizens of the country so that they could serve the nation with patriotism. He also urged the students to do some better work to push the country forward to reach its desired development.

Rasel Ahmed Liton said that SKS Foundation has been working on the promotion of education particularly of the meritorious students from poor families along with its other development initiatives. The distribution of Education Stipend is a part of that endeavor. He also upheld that SKS Foundation had introduced Bangabandhu Higher Education Scholarship under which 3 university students were getting Tk. 5,000 each per month.

The function was also addressed among others by the Principal of the SKS School & College Md. Abdus Sattar, Vice-Principal Dr. Anamika Shaha, and high officials of SKS Foundation.

Then the DC formally distributed the cheques of the Stipend. Later, he also inaugurated a corner in the name of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Institution's campus with the goal to help students know Bangabandhu well.

Char people must get what they deserve

"Poor *char* people must be given what they deserve. The prime goal of our Prime Minister is- no one will be left behind from development goals. She even spoke on this issue in the National Parliament. She also mentioned some policies and strategies including forming special fund targeting *char* people's development. Now, we need to discuss this in Planning Ministry's Standing Committee overseeing existing challenges for speeding up the development of *char* people."- Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee of Planning Ministry and Former Minister Abul Kalam Azad MP said this in a virtual discussion arranged by the National Char Alliance (NCA).

The virtual discussion regarding 'What *char* people got in the budget and possible needful to do' was organized on 22 June 2021 by NCA. The Event was presided over by Dr. Atiur Rahman, President, National Char Alliance and Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank. Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee of Planning Ministry and Former Minister Abul Kalam Azad MP was the Chief Guest. Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary MP; Dr. Shawkat Ara Begum, Country Director, Practical Action and Partha Hefaz Shaikh, Director- Policy & Advocacy, WaterAid Bangladesh spoke as Special Guests.



Representatives of the NCA are taking part in the virtual discussion.

Making a reflection on the ADP allocation in Budget 2021-'22 for *char* people, Dr. Atiur Rahman said, "The number of people living in *chars* in the country is about 70 lacs. Of the Tk. 100,000 crore allocated for social safety, only Tk. 217 crore has been allocated for the *char* people. With that, only 94,000 *char* people will get money, which is very insufficient." He emphasized, "20% of the social safety allowance needs to be allocated for the *char* people". Dr. Rahman urged taking an effective initiative for building an institutional structure for the people of *char*.

Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary said, "Several activities are on-going in the development of hard-to-reach areas' people. But *char* people must be given priority in the process of development. Hence, special quota system must be arranged for providing services including education and health services. '*Char Card*' must be initiated for the identification of *char* people to ensure services for them." He emphasized, "Allowances should be provided to the *char* people during the 3 months when the chars go under water and that a separate paragraph needs to be written in the budget about the *char* regions." (See page 3)

Assistive devices distributed



Chairman, Saghata union is distributing the assistive devices.

SKS Foundation has supported 19 persons with disabilities distributing assistive devices to the poorest persons in Saghata union of Saghata and Udakhali union of Fulchhari upazila under Gaibandha. The distribution took place on 3 June 2021 at *Saghatra Probin Samajik Kendra* (center for the elders). The persons with disabilities from respective unions got assistive devices according to their disabilities while 2 wheelchairs, 4 hearing aids, 10 walking sticks, 2 black glasses and a commode chair were distributed.

SKS Foundation provided the devices under its Social Inclusion of Disability and Sustainable Livelihood Improvement Project in partnership with *Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation* (PKSF). The Project has been supporting to establish a rights-based society for the persons with disability making them self-dependent socially & economically.

Md. Moshrof Hossain Sweet, Chairman, Saghata UP distributed the devices. The Chairman said, “Bangladesh Government has taken various initiatives to include persons with disabilities into SDG goals. Some NGOs are also sharing their resources to uphold the rights of this segment of the society. It’s appreciable that SKS Foundation has included the persons with disabilities in their development goals.”

MAMOTA project launched



The Inception Workshop is taking place in participation of health & family planning officials.

With a vision to reduce maternal & newborn deaths, *Maternal and Newborn Health (MAMOTA)* project launched in Gaibandha. Dr. Mohammed Sharif, Director (MCH-Service) & Line Director (MCRAH), DGFP graced the Inception Workshop virtually as the Chief Guest. Dr. Faruque Azam Noor, District Consultant (FPCS-QIT) was the Special Guest with Md. Saiful Islam, Deputy Director- Family Planning, Gaibandha in the chair. The Inception Workshop took place on 9 June 2021 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha with participation of national and district level senior health & family planning officials. SKS Foundation is the implementing partner of MAMOTA project in consortium with Save the Children, funded by KOICA.

Appreciating the Project, Dr. Mohammed Sharif said, “Surely, this project will bring improvement of maternal & newborn health status in Gaibandha. We’ll be providing all-out support in making the Project a success.” Dr. Faruque Azam Noor said, “This is the first initiative in Gaibandha district to reduce maternal and newborn preventable deaths. Surely we will get results with our all-out efforts.” Md. Saiful Islam said, “I believe, maternal & child health status of Gaibandha will be improved through MAMOTA project implementation.” (See page 3)

Char community developed safe WASH habits

The *char* people of 4 unions of Gaibandha namely Gidari & Mollarchar under sadar and Kanchipara & Uria under Fulchhari upazila got aware and motivated on safe water, improved sanitation & hygiene habits. A 4-member journalist team found the fact that SKS Foundation’s SHOMOTA Project has contributed in creating positive impacts on safe WASH promotion in the *char* communities. The journalist visit took place on 7 June 2021 following a Press Briefing held at Uttar Gidari village under Gidari union of Sadar upazila.

SKS Foundation, in partnership with World Vision Bangladesh is implementing the water supply & sanitation services in the unserved *chars* targeting to improve gender and disability inclusive WASH in the communities & schools. Prior to the field visit, Hasina Parvin, SKS’ District Coordinator, SHOMOTA project briefed that the purposes of the Project are to make change-agents at community, school and UP level so that they can support to promote safe WASH focusing open defecation free (ODF) communities and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in schools.



Journalist team is interviewing a Char woman on safe WASH habits.

Hasina Parvin upheld, a total of 68956 people including 26,946 females, 26,675 males, 7521 girls and 7814 boys had been targeted as beneficiaries. Alongside a series of promotional activities, 479 sanitary latrines and 580 Tube-wells have been set up to ensure good hygienic environment and supply of pure drinking water. Some hand washing stations have been set up at important public places while 100% inhabitants of a Ward of Mollarchar have been brought under hand washing. The adolescent girls have also been made aware about their menstrual hygiene management.

While visiting the project facilities at different communities, the journalists observed a Courtyard Meeting and noticed personal hygiene issues & management of community women. Being interviewed, Mst. Rozina Khatun, Secretary General of the women team said, “We all are sensitized on safe WASH habits, and we know about regular handwashing such as during food handling, before eating, after toilet and after household chores”. She also demonstrated the proper handwashing.

At Dorichak para in Uttar Gidari village, journalists found a family with high school-going girl named Tahmina Khatun (15). Tahmina is now aware and maintaining MHM while her elder brother, Mosharaf Hossain (28) is a person with partial blindness by birth. Tahmina said, “I had shyness about menstrual issues. Now, I use and dispose pad in a confined dustbin and burn it later.” She continued, “As my brother is a person with dim vision, he had a hard time finding the toilet. Now, the toilet has been bar-marked with red color, and he does not get bumps any more. The toilet has turned inclusive to be used by all of my family members.” (See page 3)

Quiz & Debate competition on child marriage held



Debate competition on child marriage is taking place.

SKS Foundation organized a Quiz & Debate Competition with participation of local adolescent girls & boys with a view to enriching their awareness & knowledge on reproductive health, child rights and prevention of child marriage. The Competition was held on 23 June 2021 at Boali UP Complex, Sadar, Gaibandha under SKS' Action for Socio-economic Security and Rights for Excluded and Marginalized Women and Girls (ASSR for EMWG) project, supported by UKAid in technical corporation with *Manusher Jonmo Foundation*.

M.A. Majed Uddin Khan, UP Chairman, Boali union, inaugurated the Competition as Chief Guest. Adolescent group members and school session students of ASSR for EMWG project took part in the Competition. Adolescent group members won both the quiz and debate competition in the function. Dr. Md. Jafarullah, Sub-Assistant Community Medical Officer (SACMO), Md. Abdus Salam, Teacher, *Khamar Boali Sahebullah Sarkar High School*, and Assistant Teacher Shahidur Rahaman were the judges in the Event.

Appreciating the initiative, the Chief Guest said, "As the nation is facing lockdown, all the students are confined at home and they are lagging behind in their studies. This sort of competition will retain students to continue their studies at home. Alongside, the adolescents will be more aware on their rights and get voice on public speaking as well." He then distributed the prize.

Char people must get

(From page 1) Representatives of National *Char* Alliance member organizations including Oxfam Bangladesh, M-4C, SKS Foundation, Swiss Red Cross, Friendship, Jamuna Samaj Kolyan Sangstha, Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Gana Unnayan Kendra and others participated in the Event.

Char community developed

(From page 2) Alongside, the journalists visited a primary school where a MHM corner has been set up. Md. Ruhul Amin, Headmaster of the school, said, "After setting this MHM corner, the regular attendance of our girls has been increased remarkably as they don't miss school during menstrual period".

Md. Harunnur Rashid Edu, UP Chairman of Gidari union said, "People have been more sensitized on safe WASH habits particularly on personal & domestic hygiene focusing handwashing as COVID-19 transmission is spreading".

MAMOTA project launched

(From page 2) In a presentation on the Project, Shumsuzzman Azad, Project Coordinator, *MAMOTA* upheld the status i.e. MMR: 232/100,000 & NMR: 17/1000 in Gaibandha indicating that the maternal & newborn deaths in the district is comparatively high in the country. It's mentioned that the project would cover 56,669 pregnant women and newborn babies in 10 unions under 4 upazilas of Gaibandha.

Poor *char*-families got Solar Home System

SKS Foundation provided Solar Home System to 42 hard-to-reach & unserved poor *char*-families under Golna & Jhanjhar village of Gozaria union, Fulchhari, Gaibandha. The Solar Home System distribution took place on 7 June 2021 at SKS *Nutonkuri Bidyapith* premises, Bharatkali, Saghata, Gaibandha under SKS' Lightning the Poor & Disadvantaged Families Living in Char Areas project, supported by Andheri Hilfe- Bonn, Germany.

Shamsul Alam, UP Chairman, Gozaria union distributed the Solar Home System while Senior Officials of SKS Foundation were present. Appreciating the initiative, Shamsul Alam said, "It's a very good initiative to help the poor families of *char* who always struggle to meet their needs. Surely, the solar light will give them comfort at the end of each of their tiresome day. We hope, the Project will be contributing to replace kerosene lighting in the poor *char*-families who are still remaining out of electric connection."



Chairman, Gozaria union is distributing the Solar Home System.

Dignity kits distributed

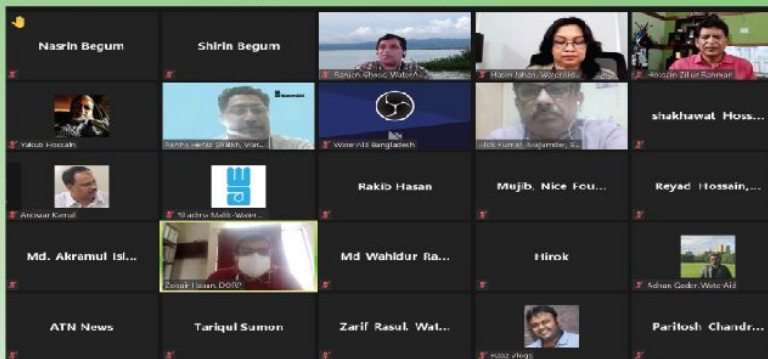
(From page 4) Centering the distribution on 12 May 2021 at Tarapur Union Complex premises, Aminul Islam Lebu, Chairman, Tarapur UP said, "The poor people lost their means due to the flood occurrence and they are in trouble to buy their hygiene kits managing their meals. The dignity kit would be handy to the poor people amid the second wave of COVID-19. These kits would lessen the women's daily burden in maintaining hygiene habits."

Jahanara Begum, Female Ward Member of Tarapur UP said, "The Ward no. 9 is lying on the river bed and got mostly affected during the last monsoon flood. The people of this Ward earn their daily bread by day-laboring. The second wave of COVID-19 has taken away their means. This support will lessen their burden."

Mostly the breastfeeding mothers and middle-aged poor women got these dignity kits. The package of each dignity kit contained a saree, a towel, a menstruation pad, a shampoo bottle, a flashlight, toothpaste and toothbrush, a comb, a soap case, a flute, 3 panties, 6 bathing soaps, 6 packs of detergent powders, and shaving cream with razor & brush.

UNFPA and ActionAid Bangladesh are providing technical support to the GBV Network while SKS Foundation is performing as the Secretariat. The distribution of the dignity kits was conducted by the GBV Network Members i.e. Sinnomul Mohila Somity, UDDYOG Foundation, SDRS, Polli Agragoti Sangstha, Gaibandha Rural Development Foundation, Abalamban, GKS Gaibandha, Udayan Swabolombee Sangstha, Women Development Program and SKS Foundation in coordination with the local Union Parishad and local women volunteer team.

Nat'l Budget 2021-'22 falls short on prioritizing spatial inequities & Covid-19



WASH professionals are sharing views with media people in the virtual Press Conference.

Experts pinpointed insufficient allocation and lack of focus for hygiene sub-sector which remains a key priority to fight Covid-19 and keep progress towards the SDG Goals. They stressed the need for reducing the gap in WASH allocation of resources in rural and urban areas. The speakers upheld this at a joint Press Conference held virtually on 20 June 2021 by WaterAid, UNICEF, PPRC, FANSA-BD, FSM Network, Sanitation & Water for All, WASH Alliance, and MHM Platform.

The analysis presented at the Press Conference reflecting on the proposed National Budget 2021-'22 allocation for WASH showed a slight decline in WASH budget allocation with 119.55 billion in FY'21-'22 from 122.27 billion-taka last year. Following the legacy of previous years, the allocation for the sub-sector hygiene has been overlooked in the 2021-'22 fiscal year regardless the predominance of pandemic. The proposed allocation remains skewed toward urban areas, and that too mainly on the major cities with WASA, and substantially ignored the rural and hard-to-reach areas. At present, the Covid-19 infection rate is showing a notable upward trend in districts indicates an urgent need to scale up hygiene and WASH facilities to combat further spread of the virus transmission.

Spatial inequities between urban and rural areas, the 4 WASAs and 11 City Corporations remain constant as cities and towns continue to receive most of the funding at the expense of rural, char and hard-to-reach areas, despite acute needs. The analysis reflected the gap of deliveries between urban and rural areas widening over the years, revealing that in 5-year period there happens to be almost no change in shares of urban (80% - 83%) and rural (20% -17%) allocation.

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Chairman of the Power and Participatory Research Centre (PPRC) said, "Geographical inequality of WASH allocations remains significant, where cities and towns have received the highest percentage of the allocated funding compared to rural, char, hilly, and coastal areas in previous years." Hasin Jahan, Country Director of WaterAid Bangladesh said, "The Government has proposed to repealed VAT on sanitary napkin, which is a praiseworthy. There needs to be a monitoring mechanism to materialize this change in price."

The Press Conference made following recommendations:

1. A holistic rethinking of WASH allocation priorities should be undertaken to address entrenched gaps in resource allocation between rural and urban as well within the urban spectrum.
2. The initiative taken on water-related environmental and risk reduction projects are commendable, but needs to scale up in disaster-prone areas, particularly in the coastal belt.
3. Good policies are not being followed by good implementation leading to a poor outcome syndrome. Capacity gaps of implementing agencies should be identified as a priority and allocations made to address such capacity gaps.

Dignity kits distributed

Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Emergency Network distributed women's protective & dignity kits among the poor & destitute women who had suffered during last monsoon flood 2020. With support from UNFPA and ActionAid Bangladesh, 10 organizations of the GBV Network, Gaibandha took part in distributing the protective kits in 3 upazilas of Gaibandha district as a humanitarian response.

During the monsoon flood 2020, the poor and vulnerable people of Gaibandha Sadar, Sagghata, Sundarganj & Fulchhari upazila suffered a lot and still facing the effect of sustained damage. Alongside, COVID-19 has worsened the situation and deteriorated the health of people, particularly the destitute women's physical & mental health in these areas. Considering this situation, the GBV Network, Gaibandha distributed a total of 2,172 women's protective and dignity kits to the poor and disadvantaged women. Out of the total packages, 1,822 kits were distributed covering a no. of days in March 2021 and 350 kits were distributed on 12 May 2021. The poor women from 8 unions namely Belka, Tarapur, Gazaria, Fulchhari, Fazlupur, Uria, Kamalarpar & Jumarbari of Sagghata, Sundarganj, and Fulchhari upazila got these dignity kits. (See page 3)



Women are receiving the dignity kits.

SKS Vision Centre Visited

The SKS Vision Centre was visited by Shankar Patrick Costa, Country Director, Andheri Hilfe Bangladesh Office and Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation. The visit took place on 13 June 2021 at the Centre located at Bonarpara College Road, under Bonarpara union of Sagghata upazila, Gaibandha. SKS Vision Centre was set up on 15 December 2020 with assistance from Andheri Hilfe Bonn, Germany with the goal to serve the poorest eye patients at the remote areas who cannot afford for their eye care.



Country Director, Andheri Hilfe, is talking to the eye patients.

The visitors observed and exchanged views on the existing treatment facilities of the Centre. They also talked to the eye patients and got their feedback about the services. The eye patients expressed their satisfaction for having the eye care services free of charge at such a remote area.