



FOUNDING
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL!
10/28

ACEF News letter OCTOBER 2023



↑ 2023 ACEF Bangladesh Study Tour

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▶URL https://acef.or.jp/mail_mag_2023october/
※English version available on homepage!

Thank you for always reading ACEF's email newsletter. We send this newsletter to our members, donors, and everyone we have met through events to share updates on ACEF's activities in Japan and our collaborative projects with partners in Bangladesh. Today, we have 8 articles to report and inform you about various topics.

Foreword

Introduction to ACEF community

"Crisis is the parent of opportunity."

Former Vice Chairman and Finance Committee Chairperson, Makoto Kawami

"In 2020, ACEF celebrated its 30th anniversary, establishing a vision and mission and now embarking on a fresh journey. However, reaching this point was not an easy path. Having been involved with the financial committee established in 2011 for 12 years, I keenly realize the continuous challenges, especially in financial aspects. However, within those challenges, I've learned that crisis is often the parent of opportunity.

Entering the latter half of the 2000s, ACEF's income plateaued, while the need for funds to meet the requirements of BDP schools continued to rise. In the 2010s, various factors made the financial situation even more challenging, necessitating reductions in both fund transfers and administrative personnel. A critical situation loomed over the survival of the ACEF movement.



Around 2020, breakthroughs began to emerge. BDP initiated attempts at self-sustaining funding through microfinance, starting with crowdfunding. Additionally, new activities, administrative support by students through service learning and internships (arising amid the COVID situation), and online outsourcing and pro bono work injected new life into the secretariat. Enduring the harsh reality and confronting it head-on, the founding goals of "providing schools" and "nurturing young people with a mission in Asia" deepened further. This led to a new expansion into "collaborative work" and "co-education" based on the stance of individuals with dignity.

Currently, the income level has not increased significantly since the 2010s, posing a significant challenge. However, examining the sources of income, crowdfunding has emerged as a new contributor, and grants have also become substantial. The ACEF movement is evolving into a force contributing to a broader "symbiotic society." Without fearing the "pain of childbirth," I hope to move forward with optimism."

“Living Together, ACEF and me” Kazuko Takasaki

"It has been more than 30 years since I participated in the second study tour. When Mr. Funato approached me, it was around the time my second son entered a boarding school, and I was considering returning to work. Without knowing much, I thought, 'Maybe I should go for about a week since it should be okay to leave home.' Looking back, I wonder if it was a good thing not knowing much at that time.

The scene when I landed in Dhaka was a sight of confusion and surprise. I couldn't figure out where I was, what was happening, with crowds of people and beggars overflowing. It was a moment of speechless astonishment.

Being invited mainly and meeting neighbors in Dhaka, I, as a humble individual, was given the opportunity to think about what we could do together. This has become the starting point of my involvement with ACEF activities. Since then, I have visited Dhaka many times as an ST member and for work, accumulating numerous encounters and experiences. The second study tour has always been the place for reflection and return.

ACEF has also undergone significant changes. I sincerely hope that young people will actively seek new discoveries and experiences."

Our Vision

ACEF aims to create a society where people can share in the joy of living together knowing that the dignity of each person will be respected.

Our Mission

To fulfill a calling to live in solidarity with others, ACEF seeks to work in partnership with the peoples of Asia.

ACEF aims to provide educational opportunities for growth for younger generations so that they will be equipped to build a world where people of different cultures and ethnicities can respect each other.

ACEF is committed to connecting the peoples of Japan and Bangladesh by creating spaces where each can learn from each other and experience mutual growth.

New BDP Director

Message from Mr. Hemanta Koraya



Konnichiwa to honourable ACEF Chairperson, Board Members, ACEF Director, Staff, Japanese friends and all well-wishers.

I am happy to inform you that BDP management appointed me as Director from October 01, 2023. I am ever thankful to BDP Board members, BDP staff, ACEF and my friends in Japan. Humbly to let me introduce myself with you precisely. I am Ignatious Hemanta Corraya, have been working with Basic Development Partner (BDP) for more than 25 years. Before BDP, I worked with World Vision Bangladesh. My involvement in children, women and community development of Bangladesh is more than thirty years or so which started when was in World Vision Bangladesh.

My work in BDP has paved the way for me to have a good relationship with rural communities, understand their struggles and find ways to mitigate and navigate the problems.

I am fortunate to have a good relationship with so many Tomodachi/good friends in Japan. The friendship between ACEF and BDP has been over 30 years or more, and I was fortunate to visit several times to Japan to strengthen the bonds between ACEF and BDP. And also found new Japanese friends and renewed old bonds. I was so happy visiting many Japanese Kindergarten, Elementary, High schools, Colleges, University and Churches.

Over the years, my work in BDP has taught me that there is no future for children without education which starts from basic to quality.

BDP is a Child-focused national NGO has been working for the holistic development. BDP has been especially working in the field of Pre-primary, non-formal primary and vocational education for the poorest children in Bangladesh.

Primary Education in the fundamental rights of every child and it ensure in our constitution. Currently, BDP is facing some challenges especially financial stability but I believe that BDP has a lot of friends and well-wishers who support the BDP cause no matter what, as the bright eyes of children smiling are cherished in their hearts when they have visited BDP schools in Bangladesh. I would like to continue running the good BDP Primary Schools with the support of Japanese friends in the upcoming days. Presently I am graced by the almighty to be the Director of BDP, which for me is just another new challenge with opportunities for my resume. I believe my work with the communities and children of BDP will remain the same as before and also with my BDP team/colleagues. I hope that BDP and ACEF especially members and supporters will continue their work and have a strong friendship in years to come as before.

I would like to give especial thanks to all the Elementary, Junior High, High school, College and Japanese University students for their long years concern love and support to the poor BDP students. Earnestly thanks all the donor partners, church members especially ACEF and Board members. Please pray for me that I can continue my work for the development of children and women in Bangladesh with all of your prayers and support.

みなさん、とてもありがとうございます。またあいます。

Ignatious Hemanta Corraya
Director, Basic Development Partners (BDP)





About Legacy Donation and Inheritance Donation

At ACEF, we have received donations through bequests and inheritances from individuals with connections to us in the past. Recently, we received an inheritance donation from Mr. Hiroshi Sasaki and Mrs. Kumiko Sasaki under the designation of "Mother's Will." Mrs. Asako, the mother in question, had a longstanding relationship with ACEF with our board members during her lifetime. She had a keen interest in ACEF study tours and Bangladesh. Recently, Mr. and Mrs. Sasaki came across the reports of this year's study tour participants on the Facebook page of the current board members. Imagining that Mrs. Asako, who always held ACEF in her thoughts, would have appreciated the updates, they decided to make a donation from the inheritance. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Mrs. Asako, as well as to Mr. Hiroshi Sasaki and Mrs. Kumiko Sasaki, for their warm sentiments.

ICU Service Learning Fundraising on GoFundMe

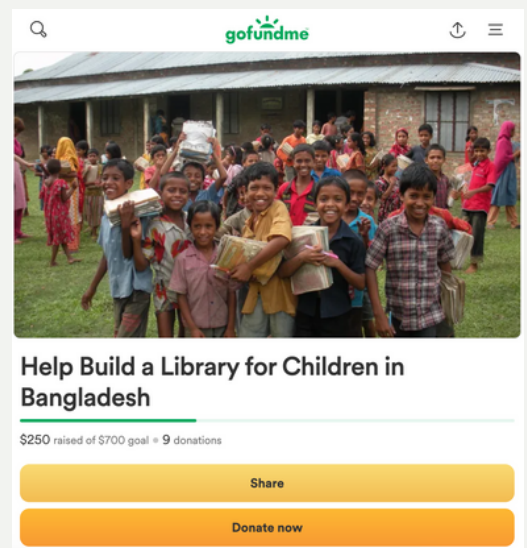
Dear ACEF members and friends,

<https://gofund.me/bd069199>

Some of you may have met me at the seminar on 9/24, but to those of you who haven't my name is Ethan. I am currently studying at ICU in Tokyo and taking a service learning course in partnership with ACEF. I would first like to thank everyone at ACEF for their extreme kindness and acceptance of me and all my classmates who have been working with ACEF so far.

Over the past month, my classmates and I have been working with ACEF to try and raise money for installing a library in one of our BDP partner schools, while also trying to raise awareness about ACEF at the same time.

Our goal is to raise around 100,000 yen to install a library. We created a GoFundMe page for anyone around the world to donate and help us reach our goal. We are currently more than one-fourth of the way there! My classmates and I would greatly appreciate it if you could share our GoFundMe with anyone you know to help us install a library. No donation is too small!



Best wishes, Ethan



Column

October 27th is Reading Day! Book report on "International Cooperation in the SDGs Era"



■ **The authors are three individuals, all of whom have been involved with ACEF for over 20 years:** In Chapter 2, Noriko Inoue has been working with ACEF for nearly 30 years, and her travels to Bangladesh have amounted to an impressive 57 visits.

Handling Chapters 1 and 3, Michiko Ono, inspired by her participation in ACEF study tours during her university days, has become an active advocate of children's safeguarding, both domestically and internationally. Responsible for Chapters 3 and 4, Mikiko Nishimura, similarly influenced by her participation in ACEF study tours during university, is now teaching sociology of education and international education cooperation at the university level.

■ **The main theme of the book is international cooperation:**

It explores what fosters individuals through international cooperation, through the experiences of participants who have formed connections across borders. It investigates what Bangladeshi children, who graduated from schools supported by ACEF, think and how they live after graduation. This explores the mutual aspect of international cooperation.

■ Chapter 1 - About Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a country where over 90% of the population speaks Bengali, and it is an Islamic nation. It gained independence after a nine-month war in 1971. Originally part of Pakistan, known as East Pakistan since 1941, the movement for independence strengthened due to the economic disparities and the imposition of Urdu, instead of Bengali – the language spoken by the majority in East Pakistan. Bangladesh is a pro-Japanese nation. While some may imagine a warm climate, the reality is that from June to early October is the rainy season, and from December to around February, it becomes intensely cold to the point of survival being challenging without warm clothing.

~ The Pros and Cons of Economical Growth in Bangladesh ~

Until the 1990s, Bangladesh was often perceived as one of the poorest countries, but post-2000, rapid economic development has occurred, primarily driven by the manufacturing sector. Today, the airport where tattered clothing was a common sight, is now overflowing with people from the middle class and above. Economic progress is evident in the cityscape, with an increase in paved roads, the establishment of luxury hotels along the roads, and the towering presence of skyscrapers. However, economic disparity has also widened, with the lives of the impoverished remaining unchanged, and they are forced into challenging lives with rising prices despite no improvement. Additionally, there are those who cannot work in a secure labor environment.

~ Education System ~

In Bangladesh, there is a five-year primary education and a seven-year secondary education. The government has made primary education (elementary school) compulsory and provided financial support by making tuition fees free, and implementing measures such as supplying wheat and rice for attending school regularly. However, there are grades with national exams for certification, and without passing, students cannot proceed to the next grade, making it impossible for everyone to graduate from even primary school. Moreover, not only passing the exams but also achieving good scores is crucial as it affects the subsequent years, leading to a situation where students are pressured by the exams. Due to these circumstances, there is a growing enthusiasm for education from a young age among the affluent class.



by Haruka Kato
International
Christian University



~ The Bright and Dark Side of Improved Enrollment Rates ~

As mentioned earlier, due to the increasing interest in education, the enrollment rate for primary education is close to 100%. However, only about 80% can graduate from primary school, and 67% can continue in to secondary school, indicating that there are still many children left behind in terms of educational opportunities. In terms of the gender gap in enrolment and completion rates, government initiatives such as distributing scholarships to girls have significantly alleviated the disparities. Recently, having a higher education level for women is considered advantageous in finding a better marriage partner. However, the societal preference for women's labor is not as favourable, and some parents feel the urgency to marry off their daughters early, leading to a significant number of children getting married while still pursuing their education. Consequently, Bangladesh is said to be the fourth-highest country globally in terms of child marriage rates.

~ Bangladesh as an MDGs Honor Student and Expectations for SDGs Achievement ~

Bangladesh received high international acclaim for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), despite remaining challenges. This recognition has drawn attention to Bangladesh's potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education indicators for SDGs include a 100% completion rate for primary and early secondary education, improving infrastructure in schools such as electricity, internet access, clean drinking water, and toilet facilities, as well as creating a comfortable environment for students with disabilities. The government, in collaboration with the private sector, is expected to continue efforts toward achieving these goals.

(International Christian University, Haruka Kato) To be continued

Come meet ACEF at 1 1/3 Minami Mitaka Church Bazaar!

Service Learning students will be preparing Bengali tea at the Minami Mitaka Church! Please come and join us.

Minami Mitaka Church: From JR Kichijoji Station or Mitaka Station, take a bus and get off at "Mitaka Nokyo-mae," just a 2-minute walk away. You can use any of the following buses:

- From Kichijoji Station: 01 to "Musashisakai Station South Exit," 06 to "Chofu Station North Exit"
 - From Mitaka Station: 54 to "Senkawa," "Koko Gakuen Higashi," or 55 to "Nogaya"
- Feel free to bring friends and come by!



Rerun recording of ACEF's 2023 Autumn Seminar

Follow the ACEF Youth YouTube channel here !



Part 1
<https://youtu.be/SAfrx15KowU?si=btd4dffdR3po8zXm>

Part 2
<https://youtu.be/CR7I-FqNtCs?si=CD4EX2WoXAqKZkGe>



ACEF Youth: 6th meeting was held

"ACEF YOUTH" refers to the youth division of ACEF. Within ACEF, there are members from high school students, university students, working professionals, and others, each involved in various activities related to their specific areas of interest, such as education, development, and poverty alleviation. ACEF YOUTH is a team formed by these members. Many great ideas have been discussed at the meeting, Please look forward to it!

ACEF YOUTH engages in diverse activities, including SNS broadcasting and volunteering for handicraft activities at the ACEF office in Waseda. Each individual's passions are utilized. If you are interested, please feel free to contact us!



ICU Service Learning: 2023 Autumn

ACEF Youth

Participating in the event organized by the Japan-Bangladesh Society, 'Education for Children of 'Bengali' Living in Karachi.'



"On October 14th, I attended a seminar conducted by Associate Professor Michiko Ono from the Faculty of Social Welfare Design at Toyo University. The theme of the seminar was the education of the "Bengali" people living in Karachi, Pakistan. The term "Bengali" in Karachi refers to Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh and Muslims from the Arakan region of Myanmar. One significant challenge I learned about is that over 60% of the estimated "Bengali" population in Karachi is stateless. In the context of Pakistan, which has a highly identification-focused society, these stateless "Bengali" individuals face difficulties such as lack of citizenship, inability to secure decent employment, no access to long-distance transportation, bank accounts, and welfare services. Regarding the theme of education, those identified as "Bengali" are unable to progress beyond the ninth grade. However, there is little to no movement addressing the issue of statelessness, both internationally and domestically. Currently, local support for the impoverished is barely keeping these individuals afloat.

Given the complex situation in Pakistan, it is challenging for the international community to significantly raise awareness or provide support. Nevertheless, in such circumstances, grassroots efforts to raise awareness and support local aid organizations become crucial. I believe that the involvement of civic groups and societal activities is essential."

(ACEF Youth, Asumi Yamada)

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