



# Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB)

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## VAB Annual Report - 2018

In 2018, VAB completed 20 years of providing quality education and skill-training for high school students in rural Bangladesh. Over the two decades our strategies for program delivery evolved in relationship to resources provided by our generous and loyal supporters.

In 2018, VAB partnered with 78 rural schools in 20 upazilas in 18 districts of Bangladesh. 60 schools were in 12 clusters of 5 schools each. The limited resources of VAB enable it to help only a very small number of rural schools out of the estimated 18,000 countrywide. From 2018, a strategy VAB is pursuing is to concentrate its efforts in a few upazilas rather than in dispersed areas, with the aim of making a real and noteworthy difference throughout a whole upazila. By itself, this is a fruitful service to the country. There is also an expectation that remarkable differences in a number of upazilas will attract the attention of the media and policymakers, planners and funding agents nationwide. This, in turn, may help the application of the VAB program, evaluated to be the most effective set of measures for sustainable quality education, spread at a wider scale in rural Bangladesh.

### Evaluation of the VAB program.

In 2017, an independent Evaluator compared the situation in the schools during the five-year period, 2012-2016 when the set of VAB measures was applied in the schools, with the situation prior to VAB's intervention in the five-year period 2007-2011. The findings of the Evaluation Study, made available in 2018, confirmed that during 2012-2016, there has been a significant increase in enrollment, a moderate decrease in drop-outs, and a remarkable improvement in pass rates of students in public exams. Interviews with major stakeholders – students, teachers, school management committee members and community leaders – indicated that the total effect of the VAB measures have been extraordinary in terms of imparting quality education, developing overall institutional strength, and generating community support for education. The Evaluation Study concluded that there was no known alternative program to achieve the same quality and quantity of results with the same limited budget. The Study also confirmed that the composite effect of the different measures listed in the table below have generated an intrinsic but demonstrable positive change in the quality of learning and teaching in the VAB schools. The Executive Summary of the Report is available upon request.

### Program delivery.

Data on delivery of VAB's multi-measure program in 2018 are given below.

#### VAB's Student Empowerment Measures

**Scholarships** to **1,820** students

**Tutoring** to Grade VI students in **12** schools

**Students' Clubs** in Debating, Sports and Voluntarism in **50** schools

**Mentoring Students' Club members** in **50** schools

**Assistance for participation in Math Olympiads**

to **362** students of **50** schools

#### Students' Competence Enhancement

**Training in computers** to **7,500** students in **40** schools

**Training in English Conversational Skills**

to **140** students in **43** schools

#### VAB's Teacher Empowerment Measures

**Honorarium** given to **24** teachers in **12** schools

**Training** in English and Math to **40** rural teachers

**Training in computers** to **174** teachers in **50** schools

**Training in English Conversational Skills**

to **43** teachers of **43** schools

**Headmasters' Seminar** for **26** participants

#### VAB's School Empowerment Measures

**37 computers** given to **36** schools

**Furniture** provided to **10** schools

**School Improvement Workshops** in **35** schools

#### VAB's Community Empowerment Measures

An **Education Fair** organized for **15** schools

**Parent-Teacher Meetings:** 32 meetings in **32** schools

**A Football Tournament:** **Shyamnagar** in **Satkhira**

## Special programs.

▪ The **Employable Skills Programs** in electrical, mechanical, auto shop, and dressmaking continued in 2018 in eight schools. VAB is proud that these programs are being carried out with local funding. ▪ A **Tiffin Program** was initiated at one school in 2018, thanks to the generosity of a Patron concerned about hunger and malnutrition. One nutritious meal containing egg, fruit and bread is provided to everyone in the school. ▪ A **Health Monitoring Program** for high school boys and girls was initiated in collaboration with the expatriate doctors' Charity, PEDSI. ▪ The **Self-help Education Approach – SEA** incorporates new educational theory on student learning as an alternative to the traditional teacher lecture. After a successful pilot project in 2017, VAB initiated the SEA program in which students learn lessons by themselves, through self-help and helping one another in a group, with the teacher as a facilitator and mentor. ▪ A **Performance Index** for VAB to evaluate itself was developed in 2018.

## Significant accomplishments of students.

VAB takes pride in initiating activities such as debating and sports as measures of self-learning and character building. Overcoming the income divide and the urban-rural divide, these students compete with the best of the best at the national level. As an example, amazingly, Ponchopukur High School became the National Champion for High School Girls Cricket. Other examples include: D. M. Academy High School became runner up in Football for High School boys. Safirunnesa High School came to the Semifinal level in Khulna Division in Pushti-Prothom Alo National Debating Contest. A student from Kathalbaria High School became the Divisional Champion in a Quiz Contest.



Ponchopukur Girls High School at Nilphamari Sadar Upazila is rejoicing as the National Champion in Girls Cricket for High Schools.

## VAB Retreat.

After two decades of promoting quality secondary education in rural Bangladesh, VAB organized a Retreat to assess critical challenges ahead, formulate strategies and actionable measures for addressing challenges, and ensure VAB's long-term sustainability. Three main topics were under consideration: Program, Finance and Organization. The day-long Retreat held in Deer Park, NY on August 5, 2018, came to a number of important conclusions. One significant conclusion was that in order to ensure its long-term sustainability, VAB needs to build up the VAB Trust Fund so that the Trust Fund income can be a substantial source of financing for program execution in the future.

## VAB's Annual Meeting.

The above conclusion was reconfirmed in the VAB Annual Meeting held in Jamaica, NY on December 2, 2018. The Meeting and the VAB Board of Directors decided to accelerate building up the VAB Trust Fund with a goal of reaching the \$1,250,000 level in the next five years. This would essentially require some adjustment in the allocation of VAB's annually mobilized resources between the annual budget of VAB Bangladesh for program implementation and what could be set aside for the purpose of the VAB Trust Fund. In deciding on the adjustment, the central aim of the Board was to maintain the VAB's program of work at an adequate and workable level in the interim period.

VAB is entering the third decade of its operation with a unanimously agreed solid plan for resource mobilization and a proven program. The idea that poor, disadvantaged and hapless rural children can be stimulated and be productive with competence in twenty first century skills is exciting. We at VAB are moved by the changes we are observing, inspired by what the children can achieve with a little additional guidance and support, and feel greatly excited about the prospects in the coming years. We hope, our Patrons and donors can share that excitement, and contribute to the realization of the dreams of the needy rural children. We also invite our readers to visit our website ([www.vabonline.org/home.aspx](http://www.vabonline.org/home.aspx)) and Facebook Page under "Volunteers Association for Bangladesh" to know more about us and guide us as we go ahead.

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