



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Association for Socio-Economic
Advancement of Bangladesh



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CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

We passed by another significant year, dedicating ourselves to working for the welfare and benefits of our beneficiaries. In this year, 2023, we implemented multiple projects in several thematic working areas. 2023 marked the 30th anniversary of ASEAB- underlying a crucial landmark in ASEAB's history.

The last three decades represent our commitment to realizing ASEAB's foundational goals of creating opportunities and an enabling environment for poor people to have

decent and dignified lives. In achieving these overarching goals, ASEAB remains committed to inclusivity, mutual respect, and collaboration. Our primary aspiration is to promote social justice and empathy in society.

Our project/program participants and beneficiaries are our primary source of strength. Their persistent and daily challenges, predicaments, and precarity make us humble and steadfast to strive more resolutely. We learn from their life and

experiences and their everyday struggles.

As we report our accomplishments in 2023, the Executive Committee takes the opportunity to appreciate our partners' invaluable financial help and other assistance, as well as different government and non-government agencies for supporting our work. We thank our dedicated team for their efforts and commitment to the cause of humanity.

ASEAB is deeply committed to realizing the Agenda 2030 and Bangladesh's development priorities. Moving forward, it will continue contributing to different targets and goals of sustainable development. Having completed the 30-year

milestone, we have ultimately landed in the next phase- where ASEAB should emerge as a robust organization not only in terms of program implementation but also in terms of promoting and highlighting people's needs and voices in public policies. Thus, along with programs and projects, research, policy advocacy, and collaboration should be our upcoming priorities. I hope the senior leadership will translate this transformation more strategically.

Sufi Md. Ali Afzal

Chairperson
Executive Committee





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REFLECTIONS

2023 does not like an ordinary year, but it is extraordinary to us as it marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAB. Three decades ago, when ASEAB embarked on its journey, the founder set some prime goals for the organization to achieve. It is time for us to pause and reflect deeper on those goals and dreams. This annual report documenting activities implemented in 2023 shows that we are gradually progressing towards achieving our goals and objectives.

Building on our commitment, we pass every year and implement our activities. 2023 was another eventful year to add value to our past achievements. ASEAB, with its humble strength and capacity, leaves no stone unturned to complement the national development priorities and the global development agenda- the SDGs. This report underlines our active engagement with

multiple sustainable development goals. Considering the looming challenges and complexities surrounding the needs and priorities of poor people- our key stakeholders, ASEAB is enhancing its abilities to serve well and withstand the potential constraints. Nevertheless, ASEAB is fortunate to have a dedicated team, yet efforts should be made to invigorate the team further to face the challenges ahead.

We have identified several agendas 2024. One key issue is to conduct an institutional assessment. We want to set some long-term agendas for the next couple of years. The next level of planning warrants strategic recalibration; we will work on it following the institutional review. It would be vital for us not to be limited to the program/project implementation only but also to focus on

policy research and advocacy roles to translate poor people's needs, priorities, and voices. Thus, the coming years will require more leadership, commitment, and dedication from ASEAB colleagues to deliver on the promises.

With deep gratitude, I remember the guidance and cooperation of the Executive Committee in implementing the activities in 2023. I thank our partners and government and non-government agencies for their collaboration and support. Our program/project participants are our most excellent source of inspiration. Without their support and engagement, our activities could not have been implemented. We are grateful to them for their assistance.

We hope every next year will be more productive than the past year. So, we look

forward to 2024. Moving ahead, we renew our commitment to the wellbeing of our beneficiaries.

I conclude with the note that we will remain steadfast in our commitment and values.

Mahfuja Khanam
Executive Director

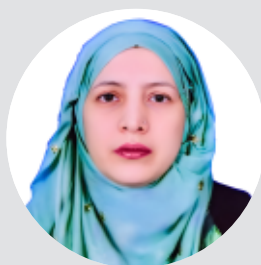


ASEAB MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Sufi Md. Ali Afzal
Chairperson
Executive Committee



Mahfuja Khanam
Executive Director
Secretary to the EC



Md. Mozaffor Hossen
Treasurer



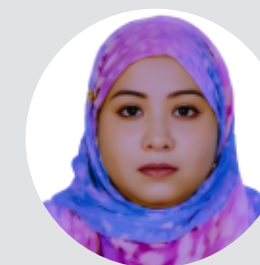
Md. Abdul Mazid
(Mozid Mahmud)
Member



Edwin Ranjan Hira
Member



Abul Kalam Azad
Member



Qazi Farzana Afrin, Ph.D.
Member

SHARIAH BOARD



Professor Md. Mokhtar Ahmad
Chairperson



Meer Monjur Mahmud, Ph.D.
Member



Md. Shahidul Islam
Member



Muhammad Sayeed Ullah
Member



Professor Kazi Minhajul Alam
Member



ASEAB

AN INTRODUCTION



Established in 1993, the Association for Socio-Economic Advancement of Bangladesh (ASEAB), a not-for-profit, non-political, and voluntary development organization, strives to uplift the marginalized people of society with multiple development interventions. Three decades ago, the emergence of ASEAB was rooted in the realities of the country's social and economic context when marginalized people did not have access to resources and could not experience social mobility and innovative ideas. Dr. Md. Shariful Alam with the support of a group of development professionals, social workers, and multi-disciplinary experts undertook this noble initiative to reverse the situation in Pabna district.

In the last three decades, ASEAB played a significant role in transforming the lives of the people of *char* areas of Pabna- the

birthplace- where acute poverty, starvation, illiteracy, floods, river erosion, habitat loss, and a decline in cultivable land have been rampant. Over the years, it has expanded its activities to different regions and transformed it into a national organization, contributing to the graduation of a million people entangled with multi-faceted challenges. ASEAB's work streams have covered more than 10 of 17 SDGs to create livelihood and empowerment opportunities and mitigate social injustice, deprivation, and inequality across almost all the divisions of Bangladesh through different project interventions.

ASEAB is registered with different regulatory bodies of the government of Bangladesh. It obtained registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau in 1995, the Trust Act in 2002, the Microcredit Regulatory Authority in 2008, and the Joint Stock Company in 2009.

<h3>Vision</h3> <p>Creating an egalitarian society that promotes people's social, economic, political, cultural, moral, environmental, humanitarian, and ethical rights and enables poor people to prosper.</p>	<h3>Mission</h3> <p>We aim to improve the living standard of the underprivileged and bring about a qualitative change ensuring sustainable development by emancipating the needy, especially women, children, and physically challenged people, from the clutches of multi-faceted social and economic constraints and deprivation.</p>	<h3>Core values</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serving humanity Mutual respect and empathy Fairness, equity, inclusivity and social justice Effectiveness and sustainability
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Work approach

ASEAB believes in transforming society by improving the living conditions of the needy people of Bangladesh. In this transformative journey it harnesses the power of a dynamic combination of three distinctive approaches, which encompass the following:

Striving to realize rights and entitlement

It helps people understand their rights to development and the strategies for achieving them. Accordingly, it works for a sustainable solution through advocacy and life skill development activities. It tries to establish a harmonious relationship between the community people and the government agencies mandated for different services. While striving to realize people's rights, it employs the rights-based approach to development.

Transforming families for sustainable change

Rather than focusing on individuals, it works for the sustainable development of individuals and their families to create synergy and promote community and collective feelings and cooperation. So, its community-based intervention strategy targets to support the beneficiary families with knowledge, skills, and resources to strengthen the base of this transformation. A family-based approach to change remains a cornerstone of sustaining developmental change, promoting social justice and egalitarianism.

Responding to emerging needs

People in need are often exposed to various development and survival challenges. In such situations, they need immediate responses. ASEAB always remains ready to respond to the challenges stemming from any emergency or crisis to ensure that poor people don't slip back into further poverty.

Programmatic thematic areas

ASEAB programs are spread over the following thematic areas to realize its vision and mission: (1) education, awareness, and empowerment; (2) health, nutrition, and WASH; (3) life and livelihood development; (4) Islamic micro-investment and entrepreneurship development, (5) social justice, rights and governance, (6) disaster and emergency response and climate change, (7) research, training and publications. All thematic interventions aim to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of poor people. Policy coherence and institutional collaboration are prioritized while undertaking any project or intervention, ensuring more significant results from the intervention(s).

Theme 1 Education, awareness, and empowerment

The key objective of this theme is to ensure education opportunities for children from underprivileged backgrounds. Beside formal education, literacy and informal education facilities are provided to women and children of vulnerable communities, considering the context and situations. The interventions raise

awareness among the beneficiaries of different aspects of life and livelihood, eventually creating a sense of empowerment.

Theme 2 Health, nutrition & WASH

The theme primarily seeks to help poor people get access to healthcare opportunities. Under this theme, ASEAB conducts eye treatment and cataract surgery activities. ASEAB has established a formal hospital to offer health care services to the community people. Its nutrition and WASH activities raise awareness and contribute to food and hygiene behavior change. Some of its projects provide services to the Rohingya.



Theme 3 Life and livelihood development

The core mission behind establishing ASEAB was to create economic and livelihood opportunities for marginalized people. It is evident that poor people continue to be inflicted by poverty and cannot realize their potential due to the lack of sustainable



income. Without meaningful employment and economic opportunities, poor people also fail to get healthcare and afford education for children and languish in the vicious cycle of poverty. Thus, in order to reverse the conditions, ASEAB undertook several projects to ensure a decent life for poor people by creating income opportunities and building productive assets. Women and highly vulnerable people are preferred for livelihood projects.



Theme 4 Islamic micro-investment & entrepreneurship development

This theme is part of creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for the beneficiaries. Lack of financial resources is a crucial reason poor people cannot undertake enterprises to improve their economic conditions. ASEAB, under this theme, offers financial assistance to the beneficiaries. One of the major activities under this theme is offering Islamic microfinance facilities. Since Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country, many people prefer not to receive interest-based financial assistance. ASEAB's Islamic microfinance is a culturally appropriate intervention that can benefit everyone regardless of belief. Microinvestment helps build

entrepreneurship, leading to accelerated graduation from poverty. Considering that skills can create employment opportunities, thus enhancing skills is another intervention that ASEAB offers its beneficiaries.

Theme 5 Social justice and good governance

Poverty, deprivation, and denial of rights result from social conditions where poor people's rights are not practically respected. Nevertheless, Bangladesh's constitution explicitly recognizes the rights of all people, but in reality, poor people are deprived of many essential rights. ASEAB is committed to building empathy in society, and accordingly, it encourages people to know their social and legal rights in getting government services and ensuring access to developmental efforts. Lack of information and governance crises make poor people unnecessarily suffer in different aspects of life and livelihood. Therefore, it is essential to inform poor people about the government's services and facilities and their entitlement. The efforts to promote social justice and rights and improve governance can unleash a more substantial commitment in society to empower poor people. ASEAB partners with national and international organizations to ensure social justice and strengthen governance.



Theme 6 Disaster response, climate change adaptation & humanitarian assistance

Poor people are the immediate victims of disaster and climate change, as disasters easily threaten their livelihoods and habitats. While climate change and disasters are realities in Bangladesh, community people should be well informed about the adaptation approaches and strategies to cope with the changing conditions. During disasters, humanitarian assistance is crucial in providing instant support to the victims, particularly the poor people. ASEAB undertook several projects to promote community disaster preparedness and



provided humanitarian aid to many disaster-hit people. Most humanitarian assistance projects are devoted to the well-being of the Rohingya.

Theme 7 Research, capacity building and advocacy

ASEAB uses its human resource expertise to research various issues commissioned by different government and non-governmental organizations. It also helps peer organizations by hosting capacity-building activities. The research outputs help the commissioning organizations improve their policies and strategies. It organizes advocacy campaigns to promote public interests in development policies and strategies.



Governance

ASEAB has multiple layers of governance and management. The General Body (GB) is the highest level of the policymaking board; however, on behalf of the GB, the Executive Committee (EC) regularly oversees strategic and policy issues. Under the guidance of the EC, the management led by the Executive Director implements the programs and initiatives. The Executive Director is the Secretary to both the GB and the EC.

Apart from the regular governance mechanisms, there is a Shariah board with professionals and scholars specializing in Islamic Shariah, and the board functions independently and ensures Shariah compliance in Islamic microfinance and other programs where compliance with Islamic Shariah is required.

30 Years on A Personal Reflection

Md. Shariful Alam, PhD

Founder and Adviser

As ASEAB has passed three decades, it is a fitting moment to reflect on the background and record the context within which ASEAB emerged in 1993. Since my student days, I have developed a passion for humanitarian work. It was further reinvigorated when I joined the civil service in 1986. By joining the civil service, I got ample opportunities to be part of the government's development activities. I worked in different upazilas as part of my role in the field administration.

I led several development initiatives of the district administration, which mainly included tree plantation, disaster prevention and management, mass education, promoting sanitation and water supply, service delivery, fighting against communicable diseases, and economic development for poor people. During this period, I started thinking about building an organization to work formally on socio-economic development. Initially, I felt I should help my close and dear ones and the community through the organization.

However, my thinking substantially changed

when I joined the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) in the early 1990s. Joining the NGOAB was a conscious choice of mine as I had opportunities to work in several other government agencies. I decided to get a posting at the NGOAB to gain hands-on knowledge of the NGO sector and its working approach. It was the time when I could understand the work and role of different NGOs and their organizational processes. So, my choice of the NGOAB was to support my passion for working with poor people in my community.

At the NGOAB, I coordinated the GO-NGO Collaborative Council, which was presided over by the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office. This role brought me a lot of opportunities to interact with leading NGOs in Bangladesh. Due to my role, I visited the field activities of different prominent NGOs and INGOs. Finally, in 1993, while working at NGOAB, I decided to float a formal organization, and ASEAB eventually came into existence.

ASEAB received the initial assistance from Technical Assistance and Rural

Development (TARD), a national NGO funded by CORDAID. The fund helped with capacity-building and human resource development in the formative days. After its inception, ASEAB primarily focused on micro-credit to create economic opportunities for rural people lacking access to formal financing.

ASEAB was registered with NGOAB in 1995 to receive assistance from international donors. I went to the Netherlands to study for my master's course in 1996 and stayed there for the next two years. After returning from the Netherlands, I got actively involved in ASEAB activities. In the meantime, I helped some other organizations emerge, particularly the Organization for Social Advancement and Cultural Activities (OSACA). OSACA became a partner of the PKSF then. The then Managing Director of PKSF, Dr Saleh Uddin Ahmed, extended his assistance in partnering with OSACA.

Over the last three decades, ASEAB has encountered several ups and downs, some of which have become milestones for the organization's growth. During the flood of 1998, ASEAB received substantial assistance from the Concern. Some of my colleagues working with the government helped us to get the funds. ASEAB conducted relief and rehabilitation activities for the flood-affected people.

Due to its peculiar location resulting from intersections by different rivers, including the Jamuna, Pabna sadar upazila has many *char* areas, and the inhabitants are poor and socially and physically isolated. Initially, ASEAB prioritized working with the government to develop a *char* policy to ensure that *char* people get due attention in development policies. The challenges and vulnerabilities of *char* people are different from those of the general conditions. Therefore, ASEAB considered it essential to have a *char* policy to



While working with UNICEF in the early 2000s, I felt that ASEAB should have a strategic plan. Thanks to the support of Concern, we organized a meeting at the Concern Mymensingh office and developed a strategic plan. Though micro-finance was in operation from the beginning, following the strategic plan, we emphasized micro-finance as a key priority. We received initial assistance from CordAid and Muslim Aid UK to start the micro-finance program. The strategic plan was a turning point for ASEAB in its first decade. ASEAB became more organized and formal in its approach and activities following the strategic meeting.

address the unique nature of crises. *Char* people often encounter different disasters, so we also focused on building a brigade of volunteers who could play instrumental roles in disaster preparedness, rescue, and rehabilitation. We developed some *killas* (elevated earthen areas) for shelter during disasters, particularly floods. We built big boats to carry people and their belongings and help them safely reach the *killas*. Therefore, from the beginning, due to the ground realities, we focused on livelihoods, disasters, and climate change management.

While working with UNICEF in the early 2000s, I felt that ASEAB should have a strategic plan. Thanks to the support of Concern, we organized a meeting at the Concern Mymensingh office and developed a strategic plan. Though micro-finance was in operation from the beginning, following the strategic plan, we emphasized micro-finance as a key priority. We received initial assistance from CordAid and Muslim Aid UK to start the micro-finance program. The strategic plan was a turning point for ASEAB in its first decade. ASEAB became more organized and formal in its approach and activities following the strategic meeting.

In 2005/2006, ASEAB received significant support in the livelihood program and was able to bolster its base as a development organization. During this period, ASEAB became a partner of SHOUHARDO (assisted by CARE under USAID funding), *Char* Livelihood Program (CLP), and Food Support for Ultra Poor (FSUP) programs supported by WFP. The scope of these programs was robust and successfully triggered momentum in the organization.

Additionally, in the same period, ASEAB partnered with the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) and NGO Forum for Drinking Water and

implemented projects on WASH with support from UNICEF and DFID. ASEAB's partnership with ActionAid helped it transform its approach.

Apart from service delivery, ASEAB also recognized the value of the right-based approach to development. The organization implemented several projects on Stop Violence Against Women (S-VAW) and disaster management following the REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach. There was a robust debate then on whether NGOs should only engage in service delivery or focus on the right-based approach to development. Though the government provides services, they are far below the actual need; therefore, the need for service delivery by NGOs still exists. On the other hand, development is a right, so this argument cannot be undermined because of service delivery. However, ASEAB adopted a balanced approach between service delivery and rights- it opted to embed both in its strategy.

Since 2006/2007, ASEAB has been implementing health projects. Initially, the District Council (Zilla Parishad) provided some funding, and with this, ASEAB purchased land for the community hospital at Bharara, Pabna sadar upazila. Afterward, it received assistance from the government's Ministry of Health. A German organization, CAP ANAMUR, also provided medical instruments. The hospital now offers different health services (both indoor and outdoor) to the community people.

Because of its proximity, the hospital has become a key facility for people in the community seeking health services.

In 2008, ASEAB undertook initiatives to start a formal school to offer quality education, and accordingly, ASEAB Shikhhkha Niketon (ASN) emerged in 2009 in Bharara, Pabna sadar upazila. Now, ASEAB is considering focusing more on technical education to ensure employment opportunities. The reason for such a policy shift is that students from families of poor economic background cannot continue their education, and in most cases, they drop out at a certain level. However, if they get skills in specific trades, they can easily manage employment and help their families escape poverty. So, alongside formal education, technical and vocational education will be a priority in the coming days.

The Rohingya influx in 2017 added another dimension to ASEAB's workstream. Since the beginning of the crisis, ASEAB tried to reach out to the stateless Rohingya and provided humanitarian assistance. Gradually, it strengthened its work in Rohingya camps with multidimensional assistance by establishing learning centers and health posts. BDesh Foundation has been pivotal for ASEAB in supporting different projects in Rohingya camps. Centre for Zakat Management (CZM), some private assistance from the UK, and BAZNAS Indonesia provided the initial assistance to address the humanitarian crisis.

Several individuals played instrumental

roles in consolidating and advancing ASEAB in its beginning: Shah Abdur Rahman, Abdur Rahman Musa, Prof Minhazul Alam, Abdul Latif Pramanik, Yasin Ali Khan, Prof Naima, Abdus Salam Biswas, and Abdus Samad. They were highly helpful in shaping the organization on the ground. On the other hand, I should also mention the names of the partners that assisted ASEAB in various ways and the organizations are ActionAid, DFID, Concern World Wide, Muslim Aid UK, WFP, Bdesh Foundation, DPHE, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Over the decades, ASEAB has left its footprint in different agenda of development- from health to education to humanitarian assistance. Currently, its activities are spread over seven thematic areas.

Thirty years on, we should focus more on resource sustainability to sustain and consolidate the programs. Therefore, we need to diversify our donor and partner relationships. New areas of interventions are emerging, and so should donor support. ASEAB is conducting an institutional review, and we plan to make some strategic decisions based on the review. As a national NGO, we foresee more roles in policy advocacy to be the voices of the people.

ASEAB emphasizes a family-based development model. We plan our activities in a way that can benefit the whole family. Traditional NGOs prefer to work with individuals, but we are different here. The

family approach develops a culture of empathy in society. Therefore, we underscore the necessity for collaboration and partnerships.

One great lesson we learned is that development interventions should be culturally befitting. Following this, we are making the micro-investment program fully compliant with the Islamic system and values. Our team is working devotedly to transform the whole program. Due to interest, many people cannot join the micro-credit program. Thus, this transformation is a prudent decision of the ASEAB board.

Moving forward, our priorities will be in the following areas: health, quality education, technical and vocational education, Islamic micro-finance, research and policy advocacy, and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, I would say that in the last thirty years, ASEAB has achieved many of its foundational dreams. However, we believe there are still many miles to reach the goal. But I am confident that together, we will be able to attain our aspirations.



ASEAB

A journey of 30 years
serving the people

Projects
127

Money spent
3757227909

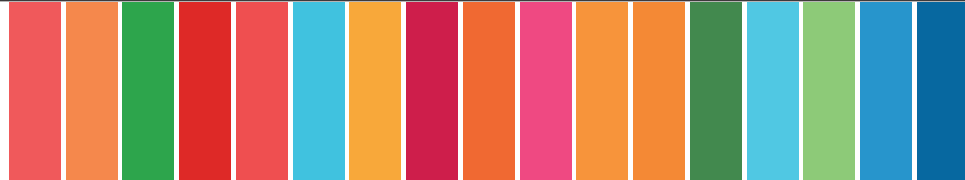
People served
1190837



PARTNERS IN OUR JOURNEY



OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN 2023



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Education, awareness and empowerment

Projects : 4
Spent Tk : 18,565,765
Beneficiaries : 1065

SDG  

Health, nutrition and WASH

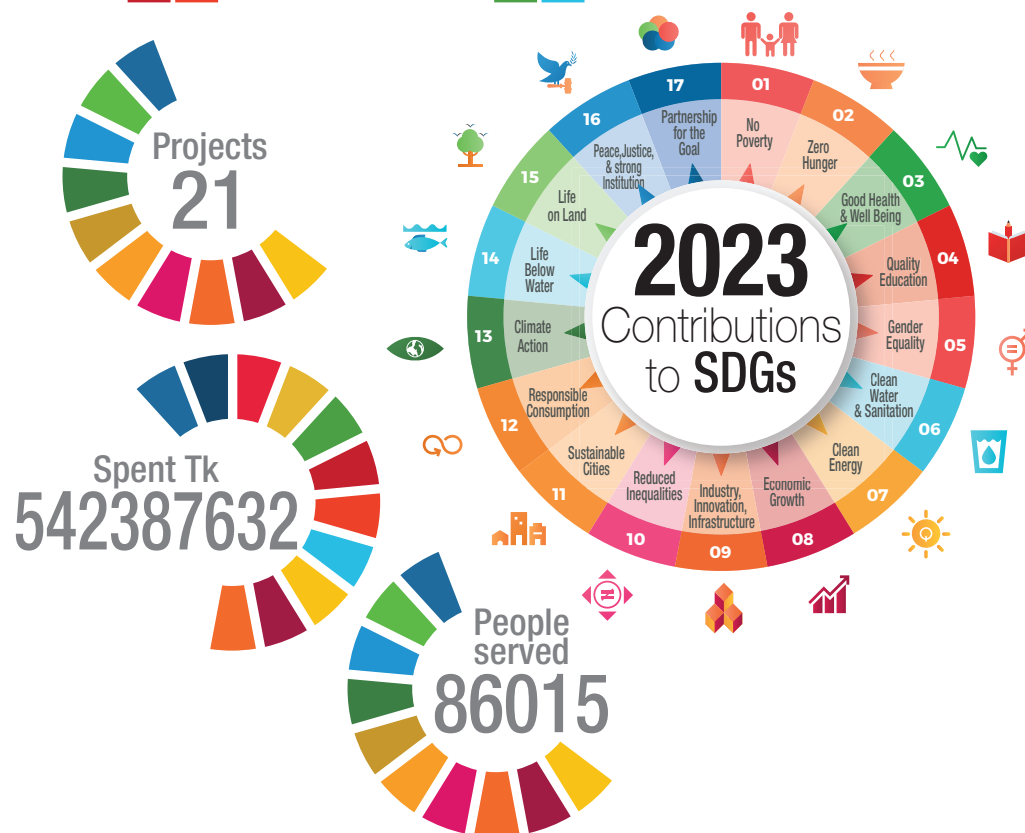
Projects : 3
Spent Tk : 3,285,147
Beneficiaries : 3735

SDG  

Life and livelihood

Projects : 4
Spent Tk : 9,696,693
Beneficiaries : 1119

SDG  



Islamic microfinance and entrepreneurship development

Project : 1
Spent Tk : 373,690,000
Beneficiaries : 7753

SDG    

Social justice and good governance

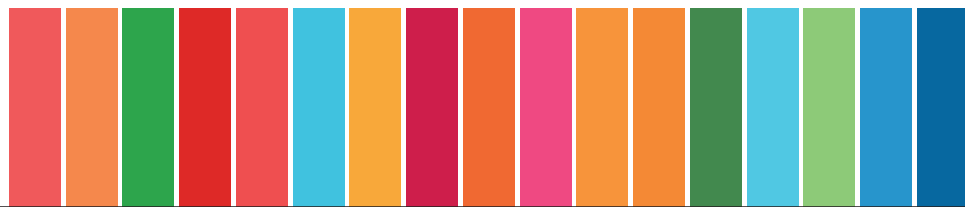
Projects : 2
Spent Tk : 8,512,157
Beneficiaries : 500

SDG   

Disaster, humanitarian and occasional response

Projects : 7
Spent Tk : 128,637,870
Beneficiaries : 71843

SDG  



Health, Nutrition and WASH



Assistance for Eyecare Moving People Forward

Low-Cost Cataract Surgery and Eye Treatments

Since 2019, ASEAB has been conducting cataract surgeries for poor people in Narshingdi, Pabna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, and Cumilla. Due to the lack of affordable medical support, poor people cannot treat cataract problems and other eye-related,

easily curable diseases. Eventually, either they lose their eyesight or become blind. The toll of such an outcome is very high for poor people. It impacts their economic condition and livelihood. When a poor person loses eyesight or gets the vision blurred, s/he loses his/her chance to income. Therefore, cataracts are not only health problems but also development issues. With the financial assistance of the B'Desh Foundation and the



Services offered under the project

- Eye camps
- Eye examination
- Power glass distribution
- Medicines for general eye patients
- Cataract patients selection and surgeries
- Dark glass distribution for cataract patients
- Medicine and follow up after surgeries

Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA), ASEAB has undertaken a new project- Low-Cost Cataract Surgery for the Destitute People of Bangladesh- in 2022, and the project will continue until February 2024. The project seeks to conduct surgeries for 1600 patients and subsequently give medications.

ASEAB partnered with different eye care hospitals to implement the project effectively. The partners are Vision Aid, Dristi Eye Hospital, Grameen GC Eye Hospital, Mostafa Glaucoma Eye Hospital, Dhaka Progressive

Hospital, and BNSB Hospital. ASEAB is expanding its partnership with various eye hospitals and professionals to spread this service in different parts of the country to support poor people in retaining and maintaining eyesight and vision. Appropriate beneficiaries are selected through the government's district, upazila health facilities, community clinics, and local government institutions.

The key features of ASEAB's eye care are low cost, safe surgery, post-surgery follow-up and medication support. Poor people are

not required to bear the costs. ASEAB also periodically organizes health camps to treat people with eye and vision problems. Additionally, ASEAB, through this project, organizes awareness-building activities to ensure that people take preventive measures to protect their vision. ASEAB refers critical patients to better eye care facilities and

bears the treatment expenditure.

Between the start of the project in 2022 and December 2023, 2148 persons received different services from the project. During the period, 1313 cataract surgeries were conducted, of which 682 were female.

Beneficiary stories

When vision means hope and ability

Abdur Razzak manages the expenditure of his family by pulling the rickshaw van, which is his profession. When one's eyesight is blurred, it is challenging to pull the van safely. More importantly, people do avoid such vans for safety reasons. Abdur Razzak got his eyes blurred due to cataracts but could not treat them due to financial constraints. Eventually, both his eye condition and income were deteriorating. In such a situation, ASEAB extended its assistance to Abdur Razaak and helped both his eyes heal through surgeries. Now, he can see well and run his van safely and smoothly. People do not avoid his van anymore.



Halima Khatun is another example of suffering due to cataracts and blurred vision. She is a widow and domestic aid; her sons are day laborers. She used to work as a maid in a neighbor's house, but she had to quit the job due to low vision. For them, it was unimaginable to conduct cataract surgery to heal her eyes and get back the vision to work smoothly. Financial constraints forced her to endure living with almost no eyesight. The costs of poverty are profound. When Halima learned about ASEAB's free cataract surgery services, her situation changed, and she became hopeful about her vision. ASEAB extended its support to Halima in getting her vision back. After the surgeries in stages, she can see now and work. She is grateful to the B'Desh Foundation and IMANA for this invaluable assistance.





Making Health Care Available to Community People

ASEAB Community Hospital and Diagnostic Center

The emergence of the ASEAB Community Hospital and Diagnostic Centre in 2006 was a milestone intervention by ASEAB for the community in Bharara, Pabna sadar upazila. Despite significant improvements in the health sector due to the government's sustained commitment and interventions, poor people still face many challenges in getting affordable and reliable health services. ASEAB's community hospital was intended to help poor people get better health services at a reasonable cost. However, the hospital is open to people of all strata in the community and beyond.

Ever since its inception, the hospital has gradually become a significant health facility for the community, and every year, it has experienced considerable improvements to cater to the needs of the community.

The necessity of the hospital lies in the fact that people living in *chars* are usually deprived of standard health care facilities. ASEAB's hospital has been a big step in minimizing the gap. Women and children have immensely benefitted from the hospital. In 2016, with the assistance of the government's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, it became a 10-bed community hospital. With the inclusion of beds, now the hospital is poised to offer indoor

services.

Women and children are the primary beneficiaries of the hospital's services. Specialist doctors provide services to the people. The hospital also ensures reliable diagnostic services. Moreover, it organizes events and observes different days to raise

community awareness regarding diseases, prevention approaches, and health and hygiene behaviors.

In 2023, 1238 individuals (female- 646, male- 390, and children- 202) received medical treatments from the hospital, while 2094 received diagnostic services.

Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change

Ensuring Safe Drinking Water

Arsenic appears to be a significant challenge for safe drinking water in some parts of

Bangladesh, eventually becoming a public health issue. Tube wells were set up some decades ago to ensure safe drinking water for rural people who used to drink contaminated water from ponds and open



sources. However, this strategy backfired, and in several districts, arsenic was found at an alarming level in tube well water. Due to arsenic and other elements (mud) in water, tube wells, less than 500 feet deep, appeared to be not helping to produce safe drinking water.

In such difficult situations, community people, particularly those not economically well-off, became helpless in managing safe drinking water. Deep tube wells, as opposed to tube wells, were recommended to overcome arsenic prevalence in water. However, owing to higher establishment costs, poor people cannot afford to establish deep tube wells for safe water. As in other intricate and challenging environments, women, in this case, also bear the brunt at household levels. They go to far-flung areas in pursuit of getting safe water. The challenge of fetching safe water from distant areas adds further anxiety to their already challenging lives.

ASEAB, with the assistance of B'Desh Foundation and United Mission for Relief and Development (UMR), undertook a project at the end of 2022 under the title **Clean Water Sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change** to help poor people of Pabna and Jessore—the major districts affected by arsenic. The project continued until May 2023. The

project's overall objective was to decrease arsenicosis and water-borne diseases in 600 households in the Jessore and Pabna district by installing safe water source deep tube wells. The specific objectives were:

- 1 increasing access to and use of safe water and sanitation services by target households;
- 2 improving the personal hygiene practices of target people, and
- 3 developing water user groups to manage and maintain community water systems.

Under the project, ASEAB installed 10 deep tube wells and one community latrine in Jhikargacha and Sharsha upazilas of Jessore district and, installed 1 semi-deep tube well, and conducted platform reconstruction and maintenance for 42 tube wells in sadar upazila of Pabna district. The project incurred US \$ 17000.

ASEAB followed the community-led approach to managing the project. Site selection, monitoring, and technology selection were all done in consultation with community people. Several committees, such as the Project Implementation Committee, Purchase Committee, and Users Committee, were formed to ensure community ownership of the project. ASEAB coordinated with the local administration and the Department of Public Health for technical assistance.



Economic Opportunities and Entrepreneurship

Islamic Microfinance Program

Six years after its establishment, ASEAB started microfinance in 1999 in *char* areas of Pabna sadar upazila to create access for poor people to finances for undertaking economic opportunities. ASEAB concluded that without access to finance, poor people cannot start income-generating activities for a decent livelihood. In 2008, ASEAB's microfinance program acquired the government's Microcredit Regulation Authority (MRA) license to operate.

Considering the majority of people's faith, ASEAB transformed its microfinance program into Islamic microfinance, where savings and investment transactions follow Islamic modes of financing. The Islamic transformation has created more opportunities for the program to reach more people. Due to interest embedded in the earlier approach, some people avoided participating in the program, though they needed financial access for income generation. Interest is severely



IMF status as of 2023

- Group members: 10325
- Groups: 447
- Savings by members in 2023: BDT 37.36 million
- Savings as of 2023: BDT 120 million
- Beneficiaries received investment in 2023: 7753 families
- Beneficiaries received investment as of December 2023: 136557 families
- Investment in 2023: BDT 373.6 million
- Investment as of 2023: BDT 2342.11 million
- Savings as of 2023: BDT 212.03 million

condemned in the Islamic faith, so community people try not to engage in financial transactions based on interest.

ASEAB emphasizes the microfinance program for several reasons. The first one is that poor people must engage in economic activities; otherwise, they cannot improve their condition, and they will continue to be

exploited by the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. The second point is that access to financial opportunities can create hope and resilience among poor people. Eventually, they feel more motivated to work for economic and social progress. Without creating economic opportunities for marginalized people in society, the gap between the rich and the poor will continue to swell, perpetuating a harsh environment of inequality in society and severely undermining social justice and fabric.

An unequal society erodes trust and empathy. Over the years, the microfinance program experienced a significant increase in several areas- group formation, member enrollment, group savings, and investments. Analyzing the investment portfolios in 2023, 71% of investments were in agriculture, followed by 15% in small business. Other areas are poultry, fisheries, and dairy. ASEAB's microfinance program operates in different upazilas of Pabna district and the slums in Dhaka city.

Apart from financing facilities, Islamic microfinance also deals with other aspects of wellbeing of beneficiaries. It supports the members during any distress and provides scholarships to children for education. Several social awareness interventions accompany the program to help the members get a meaningful life. Thus, the awareness and motivation sessions also discuss the qualitative aspect of life. More importantly, members are motivated to give respect to women and invest in girls to encourage them to continue their education. Social vices that

undermine women's rights, such as dowry, early marriage, and seclusion of women from economic opportunities, are analyzed and discussed in the awareness-building and motivation meetings. Improving individual moral standards also remains a core motivation topic.

Investment scenario in microfinance in 2023

Investment items	Amount of investment TK	Investment recipients
Agriculture	265289534	5504
Poultry and dairy	29931832	621
Fisheries	22412724	465
Small trade	56055910	1163
Total	373690000	7753



Stories of resilience and transformation

Md. Rafiqul Islam, when he looks back at his early life, can only remember his sufferings, struggles, and predicaments. Due to poverty, he could not study much and only completed grade V. He was still very young and unaware of life's realities; he had to get married because of the pressures of his parents, becoming further exposed to another challenging aspect of life. Motivated by friends, he thought that the capital, Dhaka, would provide him with some fortune, but this did not happen. His days in garment factories in Dhaka were not very productive. He had to leave Dhaka and return to his home.

After he returned home, he explored options to survive, however, hopelessly. In such a situation, once, he found that an ASEAB staff member met with some community members to motivate them to

undertake economic activities to generate income. Following this, he became interested in ASEAB's microfinance and became a group member of microfinance.

Following the set procedures, he took investment from ASEAB to the tune of BDT 50000 and started doing a small business (vegetable items). He added his group savings to the investment to augment the capital. As the business grew over time, he took investments from ASEAB several times to further scale up it. Now, he is recognized as a key business person (of vegetable items) in the community bazaar. He told the ASEAB staff, "I am doing well in my business, and I can manage my family's expenditures well with my income. I can say I have a stable life, alhamdulillah." He looks forward to more progress in his business and a happy life with his family members. He recognizes that the investment from ASEAB played a pivotal role in the change in life. He seems grateful to ASEAB and its staff for their assistance and cooperation.



Education, Awareness and Empowerment

ASEAB Shikhhkha Niketan

ASEAB is aware that despite the government's efforts, rural people often do not get quality education for different reasons. ASEAB established a formal school, ASEAB Shikhhkha Niketan (ASN), in 2009 to offer quality education to students of Bharara, a *char* area of Pabna sadar upazila.

Prior to its establishment, the children in the region were deprived of education due to the absence of nearby primary schools. This lack of education also resulted in the community not receiving various government facilities. The inhabitants made a living through agricultural day labor and fishing in the river.



Child labor and child marriage were prevalent due to the widespread ignorance about child education. ASEAB Shikshika Niketan has made significant progress in addressing these issues by providing education up to the primary level.

Education at ASN is either free or low-cost. The institution provides education up to class V. In order to create an enabling learning environment for students, it arranges nutritious tiffins during school hours and provides learning materials such as books, notebooks, pens, and pencils.

A team of trained and qualified teachers dedicatedly works to ensure quality education. The school regularly organizes guardian meetings and assessment tests. To offer education more innovatively and attractively, the school organizes extracurricular activities and engages students in life skill development activities. Education department officials also inspect the school's learning quality and facilities.

Over the past 13 years, approximately 384 children have completed their primary education at this school, with an average of 2 children receiving government scholarships annually. The school conducts regular evaluations and rewards students who achieve good results.

Given ASEAB's holistic approach to development, children of children's welfare program (CWP) families are enrolled in this school. This enrollment helps families receive economic support from ASEAB and education for their children from ASN. The school also attaches importance to moral development to make the students responsible citizens and committed to collective good. Currently, 166 students, from nursery to class five, receive education from ASN. Among the students, 89 are female. The graduated students join nearby high schools to continue their education. ASEAB makes special efforts to ensure that graduated students are not dropped out of school in the next stage.

Uddipon School A Ray of Hope for Slum Children

Established in 2008, the school offers formal education from nursery to grade 8 to children from the slums of the Shibgonj area of Sylhet City Corporation. Some philanthropic people established this school to create learning opportunities for underprivileged children. However, after years of establishment, the school encountered some challenges and was about to be closed. Later, the B'Desh Foundation took over the facility and extended necessary financial support to help it run smoothly.

The school deals with multiple objectives: providing education materials free of cost and enhancing the social and moral awareness of the students. However, the key aim is to ensure that the students get education and skills for employment and livelihoods. Currently, 180 students, out of which 111 are

girls, receive education from the school.

All students receive education materials, school dresses, and nutritious food free of cost. To ensure quality education, ASEAB adopts special measures and ensures intensive engagement of teachers in teaching and assisting weak learners. Moreover, the students undergo awareness-building initiatives and leadership training to be equipped with leadership qualities and better informed. Trained doctors routinely see the students and check their health status. During school time, students receive nutritious refreshments. The authority is considering emphasizing computer and ICT education in the curriculum for better job opportunities for the learners. Since the students are from the slums, retaining them in education is always challenging.



Life and Livelihood Development

Sabuj Palli Nari Uddokta and a Family-based Livelihood approach to Children's Welfare

Children Welfare Program (CWP)

ASEAB has implemented CWP since July 2022 and will run it until June 2024. CWP is a unique development model that targets the family to ensure the children's rights. Through intense analysis, ASEAB realized

that the poverty of the families in *char* areas of Pabna sadar and Sujanagar upazila is the root cause of several challenges that constrain the potential of the children, getting the children out of education, in early marriage, and child labor.

Therefore, ASEAB adopted a family-based approach to children's welfare to ensure

Interventions for children

- Education material assistance
- Food and nutrition support
- Health and hygiene awareness

Interventions for family

- Capacity building for income generation to the female members of the student families
- Financial grants for income generation

education, good health, and sound physical and psychological development. The CWP entailed several interventions to achieve the integrated objectives. Under the project, 150 children aged 6-11 years from highly low-income families receive educational materials such as notebooks, pens, pencils, sharpeners and erasers, school dresses, and shoes. The students receive nutritious food during school hours to improve

their health status. Certified doctors periodically check the health status of the children. The beneficiaries are selected following an objectively determined set of criteria. The children have been enrolled in 8 educational institutions in the project areas.

To ensure quality education and develop student leadership, ASEAB conducts several other activities. The guardian committee, formed with the parents of the students, holds monthly meetings to discuss the progress of the student's education. ASEAB, through the committee meetings, motivates the parents to ensure the regular presence of students in classes and improve the conduct and behavior of the students. Guardians are also encouraged to pay special attention to the weak students. Students form adolescent groups as part of leadership development, where they discuss issues relating to life skills, such as quality food, health care, and personal hygiene. The groups are



managed through management committees formed by the students. Each group sits once a month.

Female members from 150 (student) families are engaged in income-generation activities. In order to make the families economically solvent, a series of activities are implemented. All members receive intensive training on income-generation strategies, business management, and trade selections. The popular income-generation trades are beef fattening, goat rearing, cow rearing, poultry, and agriculture. Apart from the economic activities, the female members are engaged in various awareness-building activities to improve their social and moral understanding and enhance their dignity and image. The issues covered in the awareness promotion are hygiene, mother care- pregnant and lactating, taking care of newborn babies, addressing the challenges of dowry and child marriage, resisting violence against women, the necessity for birth and death registration, livelihood and food security, disaster-related issues, government services for citizens, group savings and its management, model rearing, etc.

The female members of the project are clustered in seven groups. Each group has a unique name, but the generic name is Sabuj Palli Nari Uddokta Dol (the Green Village Women Entrepreneurs Group). The group members received 1500000 TK as grants from ASEAB to start income-generating activities. The members also save money in the groups every month. The savings are added to the grants. The group members use

the fund to provide financial assistance to individual members to run businesses. In order to face any crisis, the group members developed an 'emergency fund,' and each member contributes Tk 20 each month to the fund. All financial transactions are managed through banks.

The members usually invest in the following areas: chicken-duck raising, cow and goat rearing, beef fattening, small business, vegetable gardening, and agriculture.

To facilitate the business and economic activities of the members, ASEAB connects them with the private sector and government agencies and facilities. Several members received training on various trades and issues from the government's Youth Development Directorate. The members also established their contacts with government agricultural and livestock offices.

The members developed different skills because of the group engagement and economic activities. Group management helped them gain leadership and entrepreneurship skills and work in a team. Eventually, the members feel empowered and confident. Due to their economic activities, they are better informed about the market dynamics and connected with government facilities.

Apart from financial assistance, the families enlisted in the project received other support from ASEAB, such as Qurbani meat and Ramadan food.

How CWP Helps Families Stories of Transformation through Sabuj Palli

Ria Khatun and the family- progressing together

Ria Khatun is a sponsored student of the CWP, and she studies in grade 3. Ria's parents are poor. Her father is Nazrul Islam, who is mainly a day laborer. Her mother, Aklima, raises some chickens and ducks to manage some extra income to support the family. The family has only five decimals of homestead land and nothing else as immovable properties.

By virtue of Ria's sponsorship with CWP, her mother became a member of the Sabuj Palli Women

Entrepreneur Group, and she received BDT 10000 as an investment from the group to start

economic activities. Complying with group rules, she also made humble savings in the group. Utilizing the money she received, she expanded her chicken-raising activities and leased lands for growing tomatoes and brinjal/eggplant. She already harvested brinjal worth BDT 50000 and expected BDT 20000 more from further selling. She anticipated that she would get BDT 60000 from the sales of tomatoes. On the other hand, now she raises 60 chickens of local varieties.

The CWP investment (BDT 10000) became highly helpful for the family in transforming their economic conditions. Now, Ria's parents dream of developing an agricultural farm. As Ria continues to study as a regular student with help from CWP and without worries, her parents concentrate on expanding their economic activities to ensure a better livelihood.

CWP is helping a day laborer's family overcome poverty

Meem Akhter Maria is the daughter of a day laborer. Her father has no land but only two decimal homesteads. Sometimes, her father does some





her crops. In the meantime, the nanny goat gave birth to a male kid, and both are worth BDT 12000. Now, Sheuli looks forward to developing a goat farm.

CWP enables Rumbia and her family to overcome hardship

Rumbia got married 23 years ago. She has a son, who reads in intermediate class, and a daughter, who is in grade five. Rumbia's husband was a day laborer but passed away ten years back. With the passing away of her husband, the widow faced considerable challenges in managing the family with her minor children. As happens, life cannot be at a standstill. Rumbia also tried to explore opportunities to survive, and she eventually started a small grocery shop alongside her house to make some income to run the family.

As the shop had limited items, her income was usually

agricultural activities, taking land from others on lease. However, the father mainly sells his labor as a day laborer to manage the family. Poverty was their daily life experience.

However, things started changing when Meem Akhtar Maria's mother, Sheuli, joined the Sobuj Palli Women Entrepreneurs Group. She got the opportunity because ASEAB's CWP sponsored her daughter. Sheuli received BDT 10000 as an investment from the group. She utilized the money to buy 10 ducklings of the Chinese breed and a nanny goat. Four months later, Sheuli sold some ducks and got BDT 5500. After the sale, she utilized the money in agriculture by taking 33 decimals of land on lease. She cultivated tomatoes and onions and expected that she would get BDT 120000 from



meager. Moreover, she needs to go to the district town to collect goods, which is expensive. She was highly concerned about the prospect of his business. She desperately needed some capital to scale up the business. In the meantime, she heard that ASEAB was registering students for its CWP, and her daughter was on the list. She became aware of the mothers' group of CWP children. Following this, she became a member of the Sobuj Palli Entrepreneur Group. Observing the group rules and procedures, she obtained BDT 10000 as an investment. With the new investment, she added more goods to her shop, which has resulted in

increased sales and proceeds. She now sells goods between 1500-2000 BDT daily and earns 200-300 BDT as profit. Her son helps her manage goods from the district town. Apart from the grocery shop, she has reared cows on share and got a female cow (heifer) as her share. The price of the cow will be around BDT 50000.

Now, the family finds some comfort and feels confident. The whole family is grateful to the ASEAB-CWP for taking a family-based approach to education and development. Rumbia is hopeful that her daughter will continue her education without difficulties with support from CWP.





Humanitarian Assistance

Creating Hopes for People with no Dream and Country

Rohingya

Empowering through Skill and Knowledge

By this time, it is widely known across the world that the Rohingya are the most persecuted community in the world. Since

2017, more than one million Rohingya have been living in Bangladesh. Due to extreme persecution and torture, these people fled their homeland in Myanmar and were forced to take refuge in Bangladesh. They live in sub-standard makeshift living facilities with minimal basic amenities. Their sufferings know no bounds. Among the Rohingya, the



women folk are more vulnerable due to many reasons- lack of adequate security, low mobility, and low human and professional skills. ASEAB, with financial assistance from the BDesh Foundation, USA, undertook a project titled *Empowering Rohingya women through skill and knowledge* to create some hope for some of the Rohingya women. The

project existed between October 2022 to March 2023 and helped 300 women. The project offered sewing and tailoring training to the participants, and after the training, the participants. The participants were provided with 300 sewing machines and materials (clothes) as input support to start their business.



Stories of resilience and hopes

Stitching Hope: Sominara's Journey of Empowerment

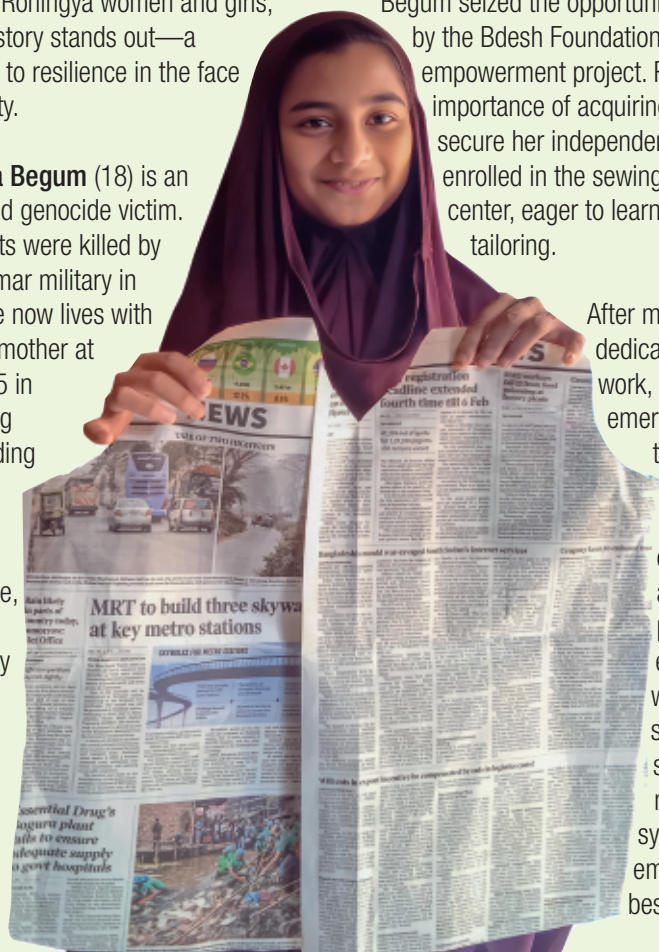
In the sprawling Kutupalong refugee camp, amidst the chaos and despair, a glimmer of hope shines through the efforts of the Bdesh Foundation. Among the countless displaced Rohingya women and girls, Somira's story stands out—a testament to resilience in the face of adversity.

Sominara Begum (18) is an orphan and genocide victim. Her parents were killed by the Myanmar military in 2017. She now lives with her grandmother at block F-15 in Kutupalong camp, finding herself in the harsh reality of refugee life, with uncertainty looming over her future like a dark cloud. Despite the odds

stacked against her, she refused to succumb to despair.

With determination in her heart, Sominara Begum seized the opportunity presented by the Bdesh Foundation's women empowerment project. Recognizing the importance of acquiring skills to secure her independence, she enrolled in the sewing training center, eager to learn the art of tailoring.

After months of dedication and hard work, Sominara emerged from the training program with newfound confidence and a sense of purpose. Her eyes sparkled with hope as she received a sewing machine, a symbol of empowerment bestowed upon



Rebuilding Shelters for Rohingya

Rohingya living in different camps in Cox's Bazar face various types of vulnerabilities and constraints. Camp life means living with harsh conditions, lacking the minimum requirements for a decent life. The harshness

starts with poor and makeshift living facilities- in no way should they be called homes- yet the Rohingya live in those facilities with no privacy and dignity. Children- adults and minors- and parents



share the same room. The living facilities, because of poor conditions, often experience collapsing due to mud sliding, fire, and flood.

Under the shelter rebuilding project, ASEAB rebuilt living shelters for 150 Rohingya families who lost their homes due to mud sliding, fire, and flood. These shelters accommodate 800 family members of the beneficiary families. The project location was in Camp-1 at East Kutupalong. The camp is located in hilly areas, so rebuilding the

shelters was challenging- carrying goods and materials was hard. The beneficiary families became very happy to get their homes rebuilt. They told the ASEAB staff, "Now, at least we find someplace to sleep and rest with some privacy and comfort." However, they urged humanitarian organizations to come forward with more such assistance. The project entailed over 8 million BDTK, and the B'Desh Foundation in the USA bore the whole cost.

Primary Healthcare Services for Rohingya and Host Community

ASEAB launched a new project to offer primary healthcare services to Rohingya and host community people in Cox's Bazar. Kickstarted on 16 August 2023, the project would run until 9 February 2024. The project targeted over 18000 beneficiaries. Human Relief Foundation (HRF) has financially assisted the project. The project is located in Rohingya Camp 1E, Block F (15). The Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) graced the launching event. The project provides health services six days a week, except weekends and government holidays. Under the project, ASEAB recruited trained doctors, nurses, pharmacists, vaccinators, midwives, and volunteers to offer services to the beneficiaries.

Between August and December 2023, 14532 people received treatment and services from the project, out of which

Services offered

- Outpatient consultations
- Anti and post-natal cares
- Health referral services
- Medicine supply against prescriptions
- Nutrition screening and referral
- Communicable and non-communicable diseases screening and management
- Disability screening and referral
- Vaccination and immunization
- Laboratory facilities for RBS, Hb%, urine for PT, dengue test, T. cholesterol, HbsAg, S. uric acid, malaria RDT test
- Nebulization
- Health awareness
- Family planning counselling



10834 were women and children. Many people in the host community also benefitted from the services. Until December 2023, TK 3026018 was spent to run the activities.

ASEAB partners with various government, local government, and non-government organizations to implement project activities effectively.

Testimonials from Beneficiaries

ASEAB Health Post not only provides health services but also has brought the facility closer to the camp

Fatima Khatun visits the ASEAB health post to receive advice and treatment for her family members. She said that when any family member falls ill, they bring them here



to see a doctor and obtain medical treatment and medicine. She underlined that the doctors here provide valuable advice on illness, hygiene, nutrition, and family planning issues that we were previously unaware of. Around 120 to 130 patients receive treatment at this health camp daily. The doctors are very friendly and behave professionally. In the past, if anyone in our family or the camp fell sick, we had to travel to a health camp located far away in the hills. The health post here has immensely benefited many Rohingya women, men, children, and older people. We are all grateful for your services and praying for your well-being, a happy Fatima Khatun mentioned.

Ishaq Kholil, aged 66 years, has been suffering from severe cough, breathing problems, and chronic fever. He has been a chain smoker. After diagnosis, he was given the necessary medication. His condition has improved significantly. He has stopped smoking now. He is in constant contact with the doctor and visits the doctor as and when required. He is happy with the services. He

told the ASEAB staff that due to a lack of appropriate consultation and medication, he suffered a lot. ASEAB's health support seems an excellent relief for this older man.

Asma, aged 12 years, suffered from severe body itching and skin lesions on her hands and back. She received skin treatment after the diagnosis. The diagnosis revealed that she had infected scabies. She was given ointment, oral antibiotics, and other medicines. Now she feels better; the skin lesions disappeared from her hands and back. She emphasized that the medical project should continue to provide support to the Rohingya.



Ramadan Food Support for Rohingya

Ramadan appears to be a challenging time for Rohingya Muslims staying in camps in Bangladesh. Not only the harsh camp lives but also the limited livelihood opportunities become very unfavorable for religious obligations and rituals during Ramadan. Moreover, during Ramadan, Rohingya are haunted by their tragic memories as they gather to have iftar to break fasting. ASEAB, with funding assistance from B'Desh Foundation, USA, Imana, Dar-El-Salam, and United Mission for Relief and Development (UMR), tried to create some peace during Ramadan in 2023 for these people who fled Myanmar due to brutal persecution. ASEAB, together with its funders, provided 1100 food baskets and 2300 iftar packets, and eventually, 7800 Rohingya Muslims had the opportunity to have Sehri and Iftar through

this project. This short-term humanitarian assistance project was implemented in several camps (Kutupalang RC, Camp-1E, 1W, and 2W areas of Ukhiya) in Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh.

Each food basket contained the following items: rice-10 kgs, lentil-2 kgs, oil-1 liter, salt-1 kg, sola-2 kgs, sugar-1 kg, potato-3 kgs, semai-400 gm, powder milk-200 gm, spice-100gm. Iftar packet had the following stuff: puffed rice, fried cake, dates, water, and juice. Among the food packet beneficiaries, 81% were women, followed by 17% children. 45% of women and 45% of children received the iftar packets. Each food basket cost BDT 1862, while iftar packet cost BDT 96. A total of BDT 2597400 was expended to implement the project.



Sponsor a Child Program for Rohingya Displaced Children

Children have been the extreme victims of the ongoing Rohingya conundrum. Neither did they have a pleasant childhood in Myanmar, where they lived before fleeing, nor do the children enjoy an enabling environment in the camps where they live now to grow up with promises and hopes. The camp life- suffocating, harsh, and lack of basic amenities- creates extra pressure on the children. Despite such challenges, several organizations work to bring some hope to Rohingya children and adolescents. Under the 'Sponsor A Child Program for

Rohingya Displaced Children' initiative, ASEAB has been running four learning centers for displaced Rohingya children.

In 2023, ASEAB conducted four learning centers (LCs) with 300 children (boys 147 and girls 153) at four camps. Each LC runs with 75 children. According to the students' standards, each LC is divided into three classes or grades. The number of students in different grades is respectively 95 in grade 2, 103 in grade 3, and 102 in grade 4. Two teachers, one from the Rohingya

and one from the host community, manage the academic sessions and administer each LC. Each grade is taught for an average of 2 hours.

ASEAB provides all educational materials, such as a ballpoint pen, pencil, notebook, eraser, school bag, uniform, chalk, color pencil, etc. The medium of education is Myanmar and the English language. UNICEF provides textbooks and other supplementary books.

Teachers are trained with the help of UNICEF and the relevant sector of the Rohingya camp. Students are served nutritious meals for breakfast three days a week. And improved lunch is provided on

day 1 of the week. Also, nutritious biscuits are offered daily to LC children from the World Food Program.

Around 320 students have graduated until 2023, and 40 have dropped out. Those who graduated have increased interest in higher education; they now prove themselves to be conscious Rohingya citizens. Due to education, the students are aware of their hygiene and social responsibilities.

One of the reasons for dropouts is that girls are no longer allowed to come to LC from their families when they are menstruating, and this happens because of concerns about the safety and security of women and girls.



Occasional Programs



Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Flood Victims in Sylhet

According to the United Nations, flooding in northeastern Bangladesh in May 2022 affected around 2 million people. The flood caused severe suffering to many people from different parts of Sylhet, Sunamganj, Maulvibazar, Netrokona, and Habiganj. Some people lost their livelihood. ASEAB, with assistance from the BDesH Foundation, USA, responded quickly to mitigate the suffering. It provided the affected people with multiple

aid. Immediately after the flood, ASEAB distributed cooked and dry food as the affected people became stranded and took refuge in shelter homes. At the shelter homes, the affected people could not cook, and they needed cooked food. Three thousand flood victim families from Kanaighat, Dakshin Surma, Goainghat, and Sylhet sadar upazila received cooked food. Water jars and bottles were also distributed



among the beneficiaries to mitigate the shortage of safe drinking water.

With the reduction of water, people started moving back home, but in the meantime, many lost their income and livelihood and needed further assistance. Considering this situation, ASEAB provided 2300 families of several upazilas of Sylhet and Sunamgonj with dry food packets instead of cooked food. Each packet contained 10 kg rice, 10

kg rice, 2 kg dal, 1 liter oil, 1 kg salt, 3 kg potato, and 10 oral rehydrated saline. In addition, 25 houses were repaired with the distribution of 145 bundles of tin. Material support was provided to repair and renovate 44 latrines.

The project was implemented under the guidance of the NGO Affairs Bureau and the local administration. Two local NGOs, Save Sylhet and AI-Hera, assisted ASEAB in implementing the project activities.

Beneficiaries	Assistance Type	Items	Amount
5384 households	Food support	Rice	23000 KGs
		Lentil	4600 KGs
		Soybean oil	2300 Liters
		Salt	2300 KGs
		Potato	6900 KGs
		ORS (Saline)	23000 Sachets
		Eggs	3000
	Construction support		145 bundles of tin
			44 latrine materials

Winter Clothes Distribution

As humanitarian aid, winter clothes were distributed among 2000 low-income families. Blankets, jackets, chadors, etc., were given as winter clothing. Most beneficiaries were the impoverished households in the northern part of Bangladesh.



AMWAB Assistance for Economic Opportunities for Underprivileged People

AMWAB partnered with ASEAB to assist underprivileged men and women in starting self-employment opportunities during 2021-2023. Though men were allowed to participate in this initiative, most beneficiaries were women. Under this partnership, 23 beneficiaries received male and she-goats from ASEAB as assistance in kind. One woman received nine hens and one cock. Eight women got sewing machines for self-employment. Analysis suggests that most beneficiaries are doing well. Particularly, those who received goats have benefited more financially as they got several kids from the goats. In the

meantime, they sold out 26 goats worth BDT 245000. The beneficiaries retain 40 goats, whose approximate market price is BDT 400000. Half of those trained in sewing earn a decent income. However, four participants out of eight sewing machine beneficiaries cannot earn other than providing sewing services to family members. They require new ideas and assistance to create income opportunities. All participants received the necessary training and other support services to ensure that they can create economic opportunities. Overall, the partnership seemed to be very helpful to the beneficiaries.

When a goat changed the **economic conditions** of the **physically challenged** Md Ariful Islam

Md Ariful Islam, as a person with disability, cannot walk and consequently cannot engage in any employment. He did not have any income, resulting in perpetual economic hardship. Md Ariful Islam received a she-goat under the AMWAB-ASEAB joint initiative. His luck seemed very kind to him, and just a day after he received the goat, the goat gave birth to a kid. Some months later, Md Ariful Islam sold out the

mother goat and got BDT 8000. With this money, he established a small grocery shop, which is now his income source. The kid was castrated, and the current price of it seems to be BDT 10,000. Castrated goats are usually sold at a higher price and are principal sources of capital and financial assistance for many families in rural Bangladesh. Overall, Md Ariful Islam has managed a modest income source.





Qurbani Meat Distribution

Qurbani meat was distributed among 42438 underprivileged families in 13 districts in 2023. For this purpose, 142 cows and 80 goats were sacrificed. Among the beneficiaries, 11,500 families were from Rohingya camps. Moreover, flood-affected families were another category of beneficiaries. The meat

distribution seemed a happy occasion, though for the time being, for those who did not have the opportunity to eat meat throughout the year due to poverty. About 2/3 kg of meat was given to each family. Due to this initiative, at least for one day, these low-income families could eat beef or goat meat satisfactorily.



