



6th Year, 1st Issue (January – March 2024)

SKS School & College Welcomed its Refreshers



The Chairman of SKS School & College, and Chief Executive of SKS Foundation is addressing the audience.

SKS School & College welcomed its new college students with a warm reception. The reception was held on 14 January 2024 at SKS School & College premises upholding the theme "He Nabeen Eso Alor Michile".

Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chairman of SKS School & College and Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, addressed the students as Chief Guest. He said, "A dream that benefits not just yourself or your family, but everyone in society– that's truly a big dream. And the bigger the dream, the bigger the person you become." He continued, "To be a big person, you need knowledge and to gain knowledge, you need to learn. And for this you need to come to an educational institution." He added, "The light of knowledge empowers people and deters wrongdoing. It prevents misinterpretations and societal harm. So, SKS Foundation prioritizes spreading education alongside other development programs." (See page 3)

Talents Awarded Scholarship



SKS Foundation awarded 78 talented students with its annual scholarship 2024. The handing over of the scholarship was held centering the observance of the Independence & National Day of Bangladesh, 26 March 2024. The ceremony took place at SKS School & College, Gaibandha.

Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar Handed Over in Festive Celebration

SKS-sponsored *Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar 2023* was handed over on 9 February 2024 in a festive celebration held at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh *Shilpakala Academy*, Dhaka. Masud Ali Khan, an *Ekushey Padak*-winning renowned actor, graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. Mamunur Rashid, another *Ekushey Padak*-winning theatre activist, was the Special Guest. Among other dignitaries, renowned theatre activist & organizer Nasir Uddin Yusuf, Chairperson, *Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar Bastobayon Committee*; Sara Zaker, Co-chairperson of the Committee, and Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation- the sponsor of the event, attended the celebration. (See page 3)



The winners & organizers are on the dias of the *Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar* festival.

Care Bangladesh Visited SKS' Program



The Care Bangladesh team is interacting with the community people.

A delegation of Care Bangladesh visited SKS Foundation's programs in Gaibandha. The 5-member Program Support Leadership Team (PSLT) including the Head of Government Affairs & Award Management (GAAM) Unit, Director- Finance, Director- Information & Communication Technology (ICT), and General Manager, People & Culture visited SKS Foundation and respective programs on 7 February 2024. The senior officials of SKS Foundation accompanied the delegation during the visit. (See page 3)

Marginalized Got Ramadan Food Package

SKS Foundation, in collaboration with Muslim Aid, distributed Ramadan Food Package to 150 marginalized families in Rangpur City Corporation on 24 March 2024. Due to price hike of essential goods, many low-income families struggle to afford nutritious meals during Ramadan, particularly for *Iftar & Sahri*. Recognizing this, SKS Foundation and Muslim Aid jointly provided food packages to the deserving families.

Shahnaz Parveen, Additional District Magistrate, Rangpur, graced the distribution ceremony at Rangpur Sadar Upazila Model College as the Chief Guest with Shahadat Hossain, Councilor, Rangpur City Corporation in the chair. Mohammad Mahfuzar Rahman, Executive Director, Muslim Aid Bangladesh, was present as the special guest. Each Food Package contained 10 essential items: 20 kg rice, 3 kg potato, 2 kg onion, 1 kg dal, 1 kg salt, 1 kg dates, 2 kg popped rice, 1 kg chickpea, 2 liters of cooking oil, and 4 packets of noodles.



A marginalized family is receiving the Ramadan Food Package.

Water Crisis Deepens with Climate Change

(from page 4) To mark World Water Day 2024, FANSA- Bangladesh of which SKS Foundation is the Secretariat organized the webinar. Aligned with World Water Day 2024 theme, 'Water for Peace', the event emphasized the significance of water in fostering global stability and prosperity. Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director of BCAS chaired the event. Dr. Md. Mujibur Rahman, Professor of Civil Engineering, United International University (UIU), and Ex-Professor & Head of Civil Engineering, BUET & Ex-Director of ITN-BUET, presented the keynote, followed by a panel discussion with specialists & professionals in the field of water & climate change who upheld their valued insights concerning water governance, integrity to end water poverty & instability. Around 100 professionals joined the webinar across Bangladesh.

The keynote stated that over 2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. Nearly half of the world's population experiences water scarcity and 80% of wastewater flows untreated, further jeopardizing water quality. Crisscrossed by rivers, Bangladesh faces a water paradox. Millions lack access to safe drinking water due to a confluence of challenges. Contamination is a major culprit: arsenic lurks in groundwater, poisoning wells. Rising sea levels push saltwater inland, tainting coastal freshwater supplies. Declining river flows and diminished rainfall, fueled by climate change, further strain resources. Over-extraction of groundwater resources depletes reserves, while untreated industrial and domestic wastewater further contaminates freshwater sources.

The event highlighted the need for improved data collection and monitoring systems for informed decision-making. The event recommended investment in research, education, public awareness of water conservation, and increasing cooperation and collaboration on water management strategies at local, national, regional, and international levels is a must for ensuring water security & safety.

Annual Sports & Cultural Program Held



The children are participating in an art competition in the event.

SKS Foundation, with support of PKSF, organized the Annual sports and cultural program under the ENRICH Project. The event took place on different dates across 4 locations respectively: 4 March 2024 at Bharatkali High School premises; 7 March 2024 at Kamarpara High School premises; 9 March 2024 at Piarapur High School premises; and 9 March 2024 at Jugirpara Govt. Primary School. Chairmen of the respective union graced the events with their deliberation and distribution of prizes to the winners.

The program brought together school-children from Education Support Centers, their parents, the members of youth committees, and the members of *Probeen Clubs*. The program's activities included sports and cultural performances like fun, traditional, and popular games, dance, singing, poem recitation, and drawings. Alongside, friendly football matches between young and elderly participants were unique and heartwarming to the events. Special recognition was given to the year's best children and elderly individuals, who were honored with crests and monetary awards.

International Women's Day

(from page 4) As the Chief Guest of the event, Mst. Anzua Begum, Merry, Female Vice Chairman, Fulchari Upazila, led the discussion and rally. The rally started and ended at the school premises, wherein began the discussion. She said, "Fazlupur is a river-racked area wherein the people are not advanced, let alone the women. So, we need to work more to uplift women in *chars*; for this, women must react first to claim their rights."

SKS also published special supplements on national and local dailies, and its sister concern Radio Sarabela FM 98.8 broadcast special programs centering the observance of the day.

Women Forum Meeting Held

(from page 4) The day-long meeting focused on critical issues i.e. existing sanitation facilities in public spaces are not women-friendly, absence of separate female toilets is hindering women's mobility, etc. The Meeting emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts to elevate sanitation standards in Gaibandha. The members agreed to develop a concrete action plan tailored to the specific needs of each ward.

The Women's Forum decided to advocate for the municipality to allocate a designated budget for the city's sanitation system in its upcoming financial year. Additionally, ward representatives formulated individual action plans aimed at demanding improvements of sanitation systems, waste management practices, and the consistent flow of water for drinking & toilet facilities.

SKS Hosted Disaster Preparedness Fair



The fire service squad is demonstrating a mock drill at the Fair.

SKS Foundation marked National Disaster Preparedness Day 2024 by hosting a Disaster Preparedness Fair in Gaibandha. The Fair, held on 10 March 2024, at the Sundarganj Upazila premises,

aimed to empower schools to take a lead role in fostering community resilience against disasters and climate risks.

Organized under SKS' *School-led Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Risks (SLCRDCR) Project*, the Fair was inaugurated by Md. Oalif Mondal, Project Implementation Officer (PIO) of Sundarganj Upazila as the Chief Guest. Chaired by Md. Ibrahim Khalilulha, Chairman of Belka Union, the event was attended by Md. Abdul Momin Mondal, Education Officer of Sundarganj Upazila, as the special guest.

The day-long Fair attracted a diverse range of participants. The Fair accommodated a variety of engaging activities including rally, stalls, discussion, mock drill, drama, etc to raise awareness and preparedness towards building a disaster-resilient community.

SKS School & College Welcomed

(from page 1) Md. Abdus Sattar, Principal of SKS School & College, presided over the ceremony and Dr. Anamika Shaha, Vice-Principal of SKS School & College, delivered the speech welcoming 180 students in class XI for the 2023-2024 academic year and enlightened the students to pursue their education.

Alongside the current & former students, teachers and parents attended the ceremony concluded with a cultural program presented by the students.

Care Bangladesh Visited

(from page 1) The visit covered Gaibandha's *char* prevalent and river-scattered villages under Sundarganj and Sadar Upazila in which SKS Foundation and Care Bangladesh are jointly implementing 3 programs. The delegation looked into the program interventions and the impact on the lives & livelihoods of the communities. To dip into the deep, the delegation also had meeting the with community people comprised of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), Flood Preparedness Program Volunteers, Girls Forum, and Farmers Group at One Stop Service Center located in Akotabazar village of Belka Union of Sundarganj Upazila. Alongside, the delegation observed plinth raising, production of organic fertilizer, and Farmer Field Business School's activities in South Ghagoa village, Ghagoa union of Gaibandha Sadar upazila. Later, the delegation had a view exchange meeting with the projects and senior officials of SKS Foundation at its Head Office, Gaibandha and emphasized on the sustainability of the progress.

Bangladesh Makes Strides in Sanitation, More Investment Needed

A review of Bangladesh's progress in implementing the commitments of the 7th *South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN)* highlighted both success & challenges in the country's sanitation efforts. The review found significant progress in open defecation reduction, policy formulation, and data collection on sanitation. However, challenges are remaining particularly in remote areas and with regards to building a safely managed sanitation.

On 28 February 2024, the reflection came up in a Webinar, organized by the FANSA-Bangladesh secretariat- SKS Foundation. Engr. Tushar Mohon Shadhu Khan, Additional Chief Engineer (Planning), Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) graced the Webinar as the Guest of Honor. Dr. Tanvir Ahmed, Professor, Civil Engineering Dept. & Director, ITN-BUET presented the sanitation status in line with 7th SACOSAN Commitments. The Webinar was joined by WASH specialists, professionals and representatives from FANSA-BD member organizations across the country.



The review noted that 79% of the WASH budget is allocated to urban areas, while only 21% goes to rural areas. Despite the fact, rural areas have played a larger role in the overall progress in sanitation promotion.

Speakers emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between the government and private sector to address the challenges. This will help ensure that water and sanitation issues receive the priority they deserve in Bangladesh's development agenda. They pointed out that more extensive investment is needed to achieve the SDG-6.

Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar

(from page 1) A 9-member Jury Board watched and evaluated 33 dramas staged in 2023 for the award. The Award was given in 9 categories i.e. Best Production, Best Director, Best Playwright, Best Female Actor, Best Male Actor, Best Light Designer, Best Set Design, Best Costume Design, and Best Music Composer. The Best Production Award-winning theatre group received Tk. 100,000 as prize money, crest & certificate while winners in other categories each received a crest, certificate and Tk. 25,000 as prize money.

Introduced in the past year, with cooperation from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the *Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar* has turned to be a national festival of the theatre-loving people.

Water Crisis Deepens with Climate Change

Climate change is intensifying & placing immense strain on freshwater resources. The crisis is further compounded by data gaps, unreliable monitoring systems, and a lack of investment in research, education, and public awareness. Experts emphasized a collective responsibility, locally, nationally, regionally & globally, to ensure a sustainable water future for all. This call for action came up in a webinar titled "Water for Peace: Where Are We?" organized on 21 March 2024, the eve of World Water Day. (See page 2)



The WASH professionals & stakeholders joined the Webinar on World Water Day 2024.

Save the Children Visited SKS Foundation

A delegation of Save the Children-Bangladesh visited SKS' Child and Mother centric program supported by Save the Children. The delegation observed the progress and impact of different projects being implemented in Gaibandha. The delegation included the Deputy Country Director, Director- Program Development Quality, and Director- Programs.

On 12 & 13 February 2024, the delegation visited various activities relating to the well-being of mothers & children in remote *char* areas of Gaibandha. They met and exchanged views with the community people of Dighalkandi and Guabari village of Haldia union of Saghata upazila, Gaibandha. The delegation also observed the services of Union Health & Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC) of Uria Union, Fulchari, Gaibandha.

The delegation had the debriefing meeting with senior officials of SKS Foundation headed by Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, at the SKS Head Office, Gaibandha and emphasized on the partnership to be strengthened to be beside the disadvantaged.



The Save the Children team is interacting with the community women.

International Women's Day Observed



The community people of Fazlupur union are marching in the Day's rally.

To advocate for gender equality, SKS Foundation observed International Women's Day 2024. Centering the theme, 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' SKS joined the rallies organized by the local government in district and sub-districts on 8 March 2024. Alongside, SKS' *Community-based Resilience Women's Empowerment and Action (CREA) Project* chalked out elaborate programs, including a rally, discussion forum, and quiz competition at remote & river-scattered *Char Chandorsar* High School of Fazlupur Union under Fulchari Upazila of Gaibandha. Alongside the students & teachers of the school, community people and local journalists attended the event organized on 7 March 2024. (See page 2)

Women Forum Meeting Held



The Women Forum members are in the meeting.

In a bid to advocate for the Safely Managed Sanitation Services (SMSS) in Gaibandha Municipality, the Women Forum Meeting was held under the 'Rising for Rights for Strengthening Civil Society Network in South Asia to Achieve SDG 6' Project.

As many as 26 Women Forum members from 9 wards of Gaibandha Municipality met on 15 February 2024 at SKS Foundation Head Office, Gaibandha. They discussed the updates of the WASH, particularly the sanitation scenario of Gaibandha Municipality centering the service availability and access of LNOB to Sanitation facilities. (See page 2)