Anandalok School
Educating Tomorrow’s Nation Builders in Bangladesh
Best Wishes to Anandalok School

Bangladesh has immense potentials. Over the last decade the country has made tremendous progress in life expectancy, education and economic growth.

The main strength of the country is in its younger generation, more than 30 million of them go to primary and secondary schools. If we can just properly educate them, the country will be one of the most successful countries in the world in a very short period of time. The other side of this fact is also a bit saddening, if only a few percent of our children cannot make it to the schools that implies over a few million children will have no access to education, and these children are definitely from the poor families in remote areas. Although the government promised to spend 6% of the gross domestic product in education, the present education budget is less than 2.5%, and the most alarming fact is this number has decreased over the years. So our dream of sending every child to school may not be fulfilled very soon.

Since the Government cannot do it alone, it is important for private organisations to extend their helping hand in education. One such initiative is Anandalok School of NETZ. I had the opportunity to visit a few of these schools and I was mightily impressed. The schools are based on the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, which is putting the children’s capacities and needs in the centre. One of the schools was even named after Jahanara Imam, whom we call as the mother of all martyrs in our liberation war. I believe NETZ is sincerely trying to provide modern and secular quality primary education for children mainly from extreme poor families.

I wish them all the success and am waiting to see a significant impact due to their sincere efforts. I hope everyone will come forward to join them in their heart-warming initiatives.

Yours sincerely,

Muhammed Zafar Iqbal
Writer
Professor, Computer Science & Engineering
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology
Who is NETZ?

We are qualified to do this work –
because of experience, networking and closeness

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice (short “NETZ”) is a charitable and independent organisation registered in Germany and Bangladesh. Since 1979 full time employees, volunteers, supporter groups and enterprises have been committed to end poverty in Bangladesh. Together with partner NGOs in Bangladesh, NETZ is working to strengthen self-help capacities of extremely poor people, to improve their children’s access to quality education and to support them claiming their human rights. Through all of these actions, long lasting and far reaching structural changes have been enabled. Since 2006, NETZ has been focusing on quality primary education of children from poor families. Since then we provided an access to primary education for more than 23,000 children.

NETZ is regularly in close contact with government officials and non-governmental experts. As a member of the Multi Lingual Education Forum NETZ also collaborates with CAMPE, a national level Bangladeshi civil society network on education. Furthermore, NETZ cooperates with Handicap International for a better integration of children with special needs in schools.

NETZ-supported projects are not implemented in a “top down” approach, but initiatives are supported from the grassroots level. The civil society and local people are involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation. We belief in a comprehensive and sustainable partnership approach in our projects, which therefore have long lasting effects and can be carried on by the civil society after the project has ended.

The Head Office of NETZ is located in Germany and the NETZ Country Office in Dhaka, where the main part of our staff members are working. The colleagues at the NETZ Country Office are responsible for quality and financial management of the supported projects.

The implementation of NETZ-supported projects is done through NGOs from Bangladesh, e.g. Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) and Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF). Both organisations work locally in a profound and committed way. GUK and JCF have manifold experiences in the construction of schools in remote areas as well as in the implementation of schools that are managed by communities. NETZ has been working closely and trustfully with both organisations since 2002.
Background

Rabindranath Tagore, a pioneer of educating tomorrow’s nation builders: “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

Education is an integral part of the fight against poverty of NETZ in Bangladesh. As a part of the organisation’s strategy, NETZ currently focuses on primary education to prepare the youngest generation of ultra poor families to become change makers of their families and thus contribute to nation building. Anandalok School is an innovation of NETZ and its local partners which enables children particularly from poor families of remote areas to enjoy quality primary education. The schools are established, run and sustained in close cooperation with the local community. The concept of Anandalok School is inspired by the outstanding Bengali poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. Apart from his creative pieces in the world of literature and artistry, Tagore was a pioneer in out-of-classroom education and creating learning atmosphere open and enjoyable through the establishment of Shantiniketan, “The Place of Peace”, north of Kolkata, India. Anandalok, the common name for all community schools supported by NETZ, is also coined from Tagore’s diction— meaning “world of joy”.

Anandalok believes in:

▶ Providing every student an unrestricted opportunity to develop academically, physically and socially to their full potential.

▶ Encouraging students to enjoy their process of learning.

▶ The enjoyment of quality education, taught by qualified, trained and supervised teachers, offers an important chance for children to complete the cycle of primary education and to obtain required competencies for their future.
Primary education in Bangladesh – supporting the poorest children

In Bangladesh, 60 million out of 150 million people live in poverty despite fruitful soil and economic growth. The country is rich in culture, but half of the children do not have the possibility to complete primary education. More than 3 million school-age children do not have access to education. Half of all girls and boys who join a primary school drop out before completing primary education. The poorer the family, the more likely the child will not continue school or will even not get enrolled. Still there is a lack of thousands of schools and ten thousands of teachers. The “Education for All” education index for Bangladesh published by UNESCO is one of the lowest worldwide.

The Right to Education is established in the international “Convention on the Rights of the Child”. The Government of Bangladesh committed itself to the national programme “Education for All”. But this big task takes time and the government relies on the support of NGOs. NETZ takes this responsibility and contributes to the achievement of the 2nd Millennium Development Goal in Bangladesh: “Primary education for all children”.

Shojib is 11 years old and a class 5 student at Anandalok School. “After my final examination I want to continue studying. I like going to school!”

“I only went to school up to class seven”, says his mother. “But I want my children to have a chance for a better education. That is why I am also member of the School Management Committee of Shojib’s school and attend regularly in our monthly meetings. Furthermore, I go to the school almost every week to talk to the teachers, students and other parents. It is great that all students live in the neighbourhood of the school. Therefore, everybody knows each other and the school is an inherent part of our community life.”

Shojib lives together with his mother and an aunt. His aunt will complete her high school this year. “Shojib is a smart boy. Only his spelling needs some further improvement. Therefore, we are learning together from time to time. I am sure that he will get a good job later – may be even nearby our district.”

(Text/ photo: Anna Gaessler)
We have been observing the educational situation closely for many years. We have gained deep knowledge from our projects we implement with local partners. Our assessment in brief follows:

**There are not enough schools** in remote and inaccessible areas: Children living with their families in remote areas often have to cross rough terrain by foot to reach the next school. One hour per way is very common. Parents feel very uneasy because of this. Therefore especially girls are often not allowed to go to school. The national average of literate people is 65.5%. In the chosen project region it is merely 5.5% up to 12.1%.

**Children of poor families** get enrolled rarely and drop out more often: The parents can not bear the costs for school materials. Children, who are mal- or undernourished, cannot follow the lessons with full concentration. The quality of teaching at governmental schools is often very poor. Additional lessons from private teachers become hence necessary but are unaffordable for poor parents.

**Children with special needs** are left out: For a long time school attendance excluded children with mental and/ or physical disabilities, who amount to 10% of all school-age girls and boys. If they attend in schools, they appear only irregularly. Most schools are poorly equipped with material, technical and personnel facilities to provide support to them. Furthermore pedagogical skills for comprehensive student-oriented teaching methods are rather underdeveloped. Teaching children with special needs is not sufficiently covered in governmental teacher’s training course. The number of students with physical and/ or mental disabilities in remote rural areas is well above average because of malnourishment and the lack of a proper medical infrastructure.

**Children of religious minorities and indigenous groups** are marginalised: Children of vulnerable groups, e.g. Dalits or children of indigenous groups like Santals or Oraon, are often discriminated by classmates and teachers. Although they formally have access to schooling they often drop out due to being stigmatised by teachers and peer students.

**Lacking quality of education**: Primary education in Bangladesh covers five school years. But only 55% of all children reach grade 5 because of the insufficient quality of education provided at schools. A high number of children has to repeat class. The average duration of primary schooling up to graduation is 8.6 years. Teachers are poorly trained: At least 24% are not skilled at all. There is hardly any professional supervision of teachers. Therefore many teachers in rural areas skip lessons. The school’s equipment is deficient and the classes are too large. One teacher often looks after up to 100 children in one class. This tremendously
Anandalok School: A school for everyone

The objective of Anandalok School is to set an example of quality primary education for children of poor communities in Bangladesh. It is educating the next generation of nation builders from rural Bangladesh. Anandalok School strives to be the best institution for rural children, particularly from ultra poor families. It provides them a platform to develop themselves as secular, progressive and creative members of an open and tolerant society. Thus they will be able to contribute to the further development of our society.

Students

Anandalok School students generally come from poor, particularly ultra poor families of rural communities. However, any girl and boy for whom Anandalok School is the only educational institution within at least one kilometre distance from their home is also encouraged to enrol as well. The spirit which drives the schools is not leaving any child without education. With its comprehensive approach, Anandalok School ensures inclusive education for children with special needs and Adivasi students in the catchment area. A full-fledged Anandalok School has a total of 180 students enrolled from pre-primary to class

Tasmin and her little brother Tuhin are both Anandalok School students. “Tuhin is in class I now. His teacher already taught him a lot. She did not only ‘impart’ knowledge, but also taught him our traditional dances and songs. Furthermore, the school regularly organises sport events. Especially Tuhin is always exited about them”, says their mother.

She went to school up to class 9. After her marriage she became a housewife. “I am glad that my daughter has more opportunities to shape her life now-a-days. Tasmin has a dream. She wants to work after finishing high school, maybe as a teacher or a doctor.” And she continues: “All parents hope the best for their children. It is also my dream that Tasmin and Tuhin will lead a good life later on. My children are my hope!”

“I want to become like my elder sister”, says Tuhin. “She can read very fast!” Also her teachers are impressed by the 11-year-old girl. They praise Tasmin as a bright girl and very interested in the lessons. Especially in English she is outstanding with her speaking and reading skills.
Teachers

Each Anandalok School has three qualified full time teachers. In addition to that, one school manager supervises three schools. Besides outstanding human values, the minimum qualification for a teacher is higher secondary certificate. However, most of the Anandalok School teachers have a Bachelor degree. The Teacher-students-ratio in each grade is 1:30.
Parents meeting at Matia Anandalok School. As parents care most about their children’s education they are ideal school supervisors. Please help us to expand and continue with this progressive model!

Parents

Anandalok School involves parents or guardians of students from the very beginning of the school establishment. Teachers meet parents every month to discuss the progress of the students. They also discuss operational issues of the school. Furthermore, parents receive orientation on issues like education-supportive interaction with students at home.
Local community

For Anandalok School, the local community is the owner, initiator and protector of the institution. The community forms an interim committee to support and supervise the school’s establishment. Later it establishes the School Management Committee (SMC) to ensure the smooth operation of the school. They mobilise local supporters to donate land for the construction. The community also helps teachers in conducting annual surveys to identify all school-age children in the locality. Apart from land, the community also raises local funds for the school.

Teaching model and curriculum

Anandalok School follows a child-centred interactive teaching approach. Putting children at the centre of the learning process, teachers play the role of a facilitator. The curriculum of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is followed to keep the students in the mainstream education system. Furthermore Anandalok School curriculum promotes the intellectual, social, physical and personal development of the students by providing opportunities for creative projects, sports and cultural activities. After one year of pre-primary education and five years of primary education, the children participate in the official final examinations. Following the successful passing of the exams, the students are supported to enrol at a secondary school in the area. A national-level board of advisers, comprised of different experts in education, reviews the teaching model and curriculum of the School regularly.

Abdullah Mia is chairman of the School Management Committee (SMC) at Kobi Sufia Kamal Anandalok School. “Our main task is to ensure a good management of the school. I meet the other eleven members every month. Among them are teachers, students, parents and local people who are interested in enhancing the quality of education at our school.”

He has been working as a doctor for 26 years. Therefore he is also the responsible person for the facilitation of the health camps which take place at the school twice a year. “I belong to the SMC since the school was established. In 2008, we selected the teachers and students. Today we see these students in class six or seven in High School. This makes us very happy.”

“Abdullah Mia is a very committed person. Many other people would expect to get paid for the work but he does it voluntarily”, says one of the school’s teacher.
Where we work

The schools are located in remote areas of Bangladesh, at present in the districts of Gaibandha, Kushtia, Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Rangpur. Except for Kushtia, all present schools are located in the embankment and char areas—a landscape shaped by the Teesta river. Every year people are suffering from a seasonal income crisis: the famine-like “Monga”. During the monsoon sudden floods appear, which often go along with land loss. This makes life uncertain. Insufficient infrastructure worsen these problems. Many people suffer from food insecurity, because they cannot produce enough and the purchase of additional food is too expensive. The rate of malnutrition is well above national average. Ultra poor families spend up to 80% of their income on food.

The main risks to the success of our intervention is serious flooding. To avoid damages at the school buildings, the land has been elevated to a level of at least 30 cm above the previous highest water level. During the famine like season in October and November, children receive a warm meal for at least 30 school days. This ensures regular attendance in school.
How we work

Location, construction and equipment of schools

Every school site has the size of 0.33 acres. In most cases, the land is donated by people from the community. Each Anandalok School is constructed cost-efficiently. The buildings have a ramp for children with physical disabilities, three classrooms, a teacher’s office with an attached library and three toilets. Every classroom is 30m² in size and receives sufficient natural light. One room is particularly designed for pre-school students. All schools are equipped with learning and teaching materials. These are complemented with self-made materials over time, e.g. seeds or jute sticks for Maths lessons or simple toys made out of coconut leaves. Every Anandalok School has an open space where students assemble at the beginning of the school and play outdoor games in leisure time. The school campus is beautified with a small garden of flowers and plants.
Shahanaj Parvin, 32, is an Anandalok School teacher. “When I graduated from high school I wanted to become an advocate. But as the college was too far away from my home I decided to become a teacher. I never regretted this decision. I love to pass my knowledge to the new generation. It fills me with joy to see how much my students already learned and what this means for them!”

Since December 2008 she works at Kobi Sufia Kamal Anandalok School in Gaibandha. “Many things changed since I started working here. Back then, many parents did not understand why education is important for their children or why the students have to come to class in time. Also many girls were taken out of high school around class 6 and were married off. Their parents brought forward the argument that they also lead their life without a high standard of education. But after putting a lot of efforts in parents’ meetings and involving the community we reached awareness for the importance of education. Now many parents want their daughters to finish their education.”

Training of teachers and school managers

The teachers and school managers participate in a comprehensive 12-days workshop discussing basic pedagogical aspects, the school concepts, child-oriented teaching and learning methods and the creation of a joyful learning environment. A 5-days refresher training is provided to the teachers, which deepens the basic course’s content, reflects the practical experiences and connects teachers from different schools. Six times a year follow-up trainings are conducted: i) 1-day refresher training for teachers of pre-school classes, class 1 and 2; ii) 2-days refreshers training for classes 3, 4 and 5. During the refreshers trainings, teachers share their experience, discuss problems and best practice and draw up the lessons plans for the following months. In addition, the teachers participate in subject-specific trainings on Math, Bengali, English and Science. As part of these trainings the teachers have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on student-centred learning and teaching methods.
**Student selection and out-of-school support**

Each Anandalok School has six grades (pre-primary and classes 1-5) with 30 students each. At least 50% are girls. Regular communication with parents of female students, ultra poor families and from marginalised communities is conducted. Furthermore, close contact with parents of children with special needs is kept. (e.g. children with hearing and visual impairment, speech impediment, blindness, polio or mentally impaired children). We motivate all these families to enrol their children in school and try to overcome obstacles.

**Establishment of School Management Committees (SMC)**

From the very beginning of the project, community people are motivated to take responsibility for their school. The local community holds the legal ownership of the school and the land on which the school is built. Through trainings and guidance by project staff, the capacities of the school management members are strengthened. Management and supervising tasks are gradually handed over to them.

**Health camps**

Two health camps are organised per school each year. Doctors provide basic health treatment to all students and if necessary for their siblings too. The service also includes vaccinations and deworming.

**School meals**

During Monga, supplementary food is provided to all students, for approximately 30 days from October to November, to strengthen and maintain the children’s concentration and health.

**Creative learning environment**

Different activities as student’s project, sports and cultural events are organised to foster the creativity of the students. Further, a small library is set up at every school.

**Regular contact with parents**

The teachers are in continuous dialogue with the parents of all students, especially with parents of potential drop-out students.

**Local level Advocacy**

Regular discussions about primary education with representatives from local authorities, educational institutions and NGOs are conducted on district level.

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**Successful completion of primary education**

Since 2011, Anandalok School students of class 5 have been participating in the official examination for primary schools. All Anandalok students who took part in the exams so far, have passed successfully. More than 80% of the graduates achieved “good” or even “excellent” grades. Given the difficult conditions in remote areas of Bangladesh, these results are a great success.
Core quality characteristics of Anandalok School

- Innovative and sustainable model for quality primary education in remote areas of Bangladesh
- International standard of teachers-students-ratio
- Qualified teachers who are regularly supervised and trained
- Child-oriented teaching-learning model
- Value-based education
- Competencies are gained without unhealthy competition
- Close partnership of the schools with parents and community
- Development of cultural skills of the children is ensured
- Enjoyable learning atmosphere for children
- Close supervision by community, NETZ and its local partner organisations
Financial sustainability

An endowment fund is set up for each school. All parents of Anandalok School students who can financially afford, pay money into this fund. Extremely poor people give in kind contributions to the school.

For the construction and the setting up of the schools, NETZ succeeded in mobilising foreign funding from the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. However, these grants are only given on condition that a certain share of funds is mobilised through donations from private persons, foundations or companies in support of the Anandalok Schools. We are grateful to all supporters from Germany who donate money. Without their support, we could not apply for grants.

Anandalok Shikkha Foundation, a Bangladesh civil society organisation is supporting NETZ to develop the strategies for the sustainability of the schools. For the continuous success of Anandalok School support from Bangladesh is very important! People and institutions from various backgrounds can directly contribute to the improvement of primary education of ultra poor children.
Transparency

“Does my donation really reach the poorest in Bangladesh?” People supporting Anandalok School want to make sure that their contribution benefits the poor people effectively and brings about sustainable change. Therefore, NETZ staff and our partner organisations are committed to clear principles. We have a dual responsibility: on the one hand towards individual donors and institutions providing grants, and on the other hand towards the extremely poor people in Bangladesh we are working with. All financial resources entrusted to NETZ are utilised in a cost-effective way. NETZ reports truthfully and transparently about its work in Bangladesh and is constantly monitoring the supported projects.

Since 2002, the German Central Institute for Social Issues has awarded the DZI Seal of Approval to NETZ annually. This DZI seal certifies the careful handling of donations and the proper financial management of our organisation. Furthermore NETZ is an active member of the Association of German Development Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO) and follows the ethical standards stipulated in the Code of Conduct for Development-Related Public Relations. In addition, we follow the VENRO Code of Conduct for Transparency, Organisational Governance and Supervision.
Where we need your support— for the education of children from poor families in Bangladesh

We kindly request you: Provide your important support to children from poor families in Bangladesh! Your financial contribution gives these children the opportunity to develop their talents – and to become tomorrow’s nation builders. The scope for a better future! We request you to support the maintenance of an Anandalok School. A direct partnership with a school is possible.

Donate to Anandalok Schools

Your money will be used to complement local communities’ contribution and to keep an existing Anandalok School running. Everybody – you, your family members, friends and colleagues – can contribute! Each amount of money donated — small and large — is important.

From Bangladesh: Please issue cheques in the name of the “NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice” and post your contribution to the attention of: Team Leader Education, NETZ Bangladesh, House 40, Road 4/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh. Or you can directly deposit your donation to the following bank account: Account Name: NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice; Account No: 2810010001561; Bank: BASIC Bank Limited, Dhanmondi Branch, Mannas Tower (1st floor), House 54, Road 4/A, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh.

From outside of Bangladesh: Please deposit your donation to: Account Name: NETZ Bangladesh; IBAN: DE 82 513 900 0000 0000 6262; BIC: VB MH DE 5F. Or donate online: www.netz-bangladesh.de/donate

Your partnership with an Anandalok School – we keep you posted

As part of your partnership with an Anandalok School we will provide regular updates to you: through annual reports, our website and pictures of the school that you are supporting. Our statement of accounts provides you transparent information about our finances and the project’s procedure.

We thank you very much for your interest. Your contribution is very important and crucial to educate tomorrow’s nation builders!

We are glad to be at your disposal — for your questions, suggestions and donations please contact:

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Anandalok School: At a glimpse

NETZ supports primary schools run by local communities with an improved teaching and learning concept for pre-primary level and classes 1 to 5 in remote areas of Bangladesh. Ten of these educational institutions, called Anandalok School, have been built and equipped since 2008. NETZ envisions that the local people will gradually take the full ownership of the schools and will be committed to ensure the education of future generations. In 2013, 2,852 girls and boys are enrolled at 33 schools. Half of them are from extremely poor families. Each year, 30 children are newly admitted to each school. Doctors are visiting each school twice a year for health check-ups. The quality of the lessons is enhanced through intensive training and professional supervision of the teachers. The national curriculum is followed and complemented by child-friendly learning materials.