



## POETS – Promotion of Environmental Education and Friendly Practices through Scouts

### The Results

Ten remote villages in Bangladesh have received environmental and health messages through the Scout and Rover Scouts who have participated in POETS.

The Scouts and Rover Scouts have developed skills in the areas of Environmental Education and Primary Health Care.



Scouts take health messages to remote villages in Bangladesh

Scouts, through their active involvement in the community, now have an understanding of the issues facing the community.

The image of Scouting in the community has improved.

The bonds and the relationship between the Scouts and the community have been strengthened.

### The Reasons

Bangladesh is a relatively new political entity and it is a country with a large population facing serious challenges in the area of health and the environment. Lack of knowledge and traditional practices have contributed to the vicious cycle of poverty exacerbated by malnutrition, diarrhoea, an alarming rate of infant mortality, various communicable diseases and environmental problems.

Communication is regarded as a powerful force for community education and behaviour change. Communication plays a crucial role in social change in developing countries. Bangladesh Scouts have found that the technique of communication through child to child, child to par-

ent, and child to community is very effective in imparting community education to initiate behaviour change.

Bangladesh Scouts have been engaged in community development activities since the 1970s. Recognising the needs of the community and to extend the social role of Scouting, Bangladesh Scouts began to incorporate health related programmes into its community development activities. As the health of the population depends on the health of the environment, activities relating to the environment have also been introduced from national to local level.

Twinning projects have also been undertaken with other Scout Associations and NGOs, e.g.:

- BACH - Bangladesh Australia Child Health Project with Scouts Australia.
- Bangladesh Korea Joint Community Development Project with of Korea Scout Association.
- Bangladesh-Japan Joint ORT Project with the Scout Association of Japan.
- UNICEF - the implementation of Promotion of Oral Rehydration Therapy (PORT).

The evaluation reports of these projects showed a positive and significant change in respect of behavioural change.



Bangladesh: Bangladesh Scouts

# Strategic Priority 2

Adolescents – supporting their transition to adulthood



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## The Methods

With the experience of these projects and the very positive evaluations, Bangladesh Scouts elicited support from the Asia-Pacific Scout Foundation to implement the Promotion of Environmental Education and Friendly Practices through Scouts (POETS). This was the first project supported by the Asia-Pacific Scout Foundation, selected by competition.

The Scouts in the project areas, along with non-Scout students held workcamps at the selected villages and disseminated the health and environmental messages through child to child, child to parent and child to community contacts. They worked on most of the components of Primary Health Care and important environmental issues, i.e.

- Child Health Care,
- EPI,
- Oral Rehydration Therapy,
- Nutrition,
- Usage of safe water,
- Installation of sanitary latrines,
- Cleanliness and personal hygiene,
- Kitchen gardening,
- Tree plantation,
- Introduction of economy wood stove,
- Use of renewable energy, e.g biogas,
- Protection of the natural environment.

To be able to take the messages to the communities a baseline survey was undertaken. A Village Development Committee was formed in each village participating in POETS. This committee involved the Scouts, representatives from the community, officials from the community and Scout leaders. This committee is responsible for the management, sustainability and development of the project.

The Scouts and Rover Scouts needed to receive training in the messages to be taken to the villages. Proficiency badges

have been developed for Scouts and Rover Scouts relating to health and environment issues.

Through these activities the image of Scouting has improved within the communities and beyond. Scouts have had the opportunity to work with the community to identify the needs, find effective and cost-efficient solutions and see the fruits of their labour by applying the Scout Method.



Scouts demonstrate health procedures to the villagers

## Our Learning

The ideal situation demands that every citizen becomes a health and environment worker. As Scouts and young people are tomorrow's active citizens, they should become health and environment workers. POETS has achieved this for Scouts and non-Scouts in ten villages in Bangladesh and there are now plans to extend the project to other villages.

Scouts can contribute to behavioural change in communities through communication.

The child to child, child to parent and child to community approach is attractive and effective.

The project is cost effective and replicable.

Most of the health and environment problems are social problems with health and environment consequences. It needs the concerted efforts of all actors to address the issue. In this project Scouts and Rover

Scouts were involved to help them to understand the issue, work with the community to find solutions to the issues and disseminate messages to improve health and environment practices.

The key message taken to the communities in the villages is:-

*If we destroy the soil, we starve*

*If we pollute the water, we sicken*

*If we infect the air we breathe, we die.*

## Our Future Plans

Building on the success of the project to date the plans for the future are:-

- To carry out follow-up activities to sustain the achievements to date.
- To replicate the project in adjacent villages.
- To involve more Scouts in behaviour change through communicating important health and environment messages in the community.

For further information please contact Bangladesh Scouts at: [scouts@bangla.net](mailto:scouts@bangla.net)



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