

# SOHAY

## Annual Report 2008



## Message from the Executive Director

I am very pleased to present the 2008 annual report of SOHAY, an NGO based in Dhakkin Khan, Uttura, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Last year was a time of review and reflection for us. We have adopted change and action to make us stronger in responding to the challenges of the new millennium.

There have been some significant efforts made by us to develop the people who live in the slums in SOHAY working areas. Consultations were held in order to refocus on education by the staff of SOHAY, all SOHAY programmes are carefully designed, well articulated and planned and offer benefit to the target group. Furthermore, the executive committee members have been constant guides in our search for more feasible future strategies for development, empowerment and capacity and confidence building of the project's beneficiaries. I believe that it is our moral responsibility and social obligation to assist the poor people of Bangladesh who are working hard and desperately looking for support to change their economic conditions. In addition to that, I also believe education, skill development and job creation are the way forward for Bangladesh to overcome poverty and move to a middle income country. Humans are the only resource in the world that, unless nurtured properly will actually turn into a liability because they eat. If nurtured properly however, they can become the best resource in the world.



On behalf of the executive committee and staff, SOHAY would like to express sincere thanks and heartfelt appreciation to all of our beneficiaries, donors, well wishers and friends. We welcome and seek feedback, both positive and negative on our activities and especially for future interventions.

Zamila Sultana  
Executive Director

## Introduction

This report will give an insight into not only the achievements of SOHAY in 2008, but also the challenges it faces to implement its various programmes. In 2008 SOHAY worked on childrens' education, economic empowerment and women and child rights. SOHAY works in six



slums in the Dhakhin Khan area, most of the slum dwellers have migrated to Dhaka in search of a better way of life.

In Bangladesh, although primary education is theoretically free for all children; the reality is that children who live in urban slums often do not attend school.

Since the beginning, SOHAY's programmes have targeted families to enhance their knowledge, confidence and capacity. It has achieved these goals through the establishment of childrens' groups, parents' groups and womens' groups.

It has increased awareness among parents of the importance of their children's education; in 2008 it assisted 158 slum children to study at Government Primary School. It has also informed families about the necessity of being economically self sufficient and hygienic.

In addition to the above, SOHAY also ensures robust and transparent finance, administrative and human resource procedures are in place. Donors' contributions are managed in a systematic and accountable way.

## Goal

The goal of SOHAY is to widen the vision of poor people to create disciplined, self confident, educated and skilled human resources in Bangladesh to eradicate poverty to meet with the Millennium Development Goals.

## Purpose

SOHAY's purpose is to provide education, knowledge and skills to the poor to assist in their efforts to achieve sustainable human, social, economic, physical and environmental well-being.



SOHAY takes this as its purpose in the hope that people will understand the benefits of public services such as education, primary healthcare, and water and sanitation that they are entitled to and in turn will demand these services that will

contribute to a sustainable livelihood.

## Working Strategies

SOHAY uses different strategies to meet its goal and purpose. SOHAY always actively engages with the slum dwellers, local duty bearers and school authorities to successfully implement its programme. This allows us to raise awareness among parents and children to create an educational, supportive environment in the slums. It is also important to sensitise school authorities to help assist slum dwelling children to study at Government Primary School.

Some of SOHAY's other strategies focus on the importance of empowering women and teenagers through the establishment of groups and information sharing. It also helps them to become economically self sufficient by providing skill development training and making links to the job market or encouraging individual entrepreneurship.

## Working Areas

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world; its population is a staggering 142 million and is rising dramatically by the day. Approximately 38 percent of Bangladesh's population live below the poverty line,



meaning a large proportion of the people struggle to meet their nutritional needs. A large proportion of these people live in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. It is full of urban slums, the amount of people living in these slums has more than doubled in the past decade and reached a shocking 3.4 million in 2006. Most of the inhabitants living in these slums are illiterate and unskilled and are forced to work long hours in exhausting, menial jobs just to provide one, sometimes two meals of rice and potatoes a day.

Almost 90 percent of the slum population lives below the poverty line surviving on less than \$1 a day resulting in a high malnutrition rate.

SOHAY works in six urban slums and surrounding areas in Dhakkhin Khan Union, Uttara to enhance their capacity to engage in different types of employment.

## SOHAY Programme Activities

All programmes are planned through its programme team. The team is responsible for ensuring that all projects are on track as per the goal and purpose. Various reports such as the quarterly report and the monitoring report are prepared to review the programme activities and to ensure they are on the right track. It is also important to keep all donors informed of the progress of the programmes.

SOHAY activities are focused on of raising awareness among slum dwellers about the importance and benefit of education.

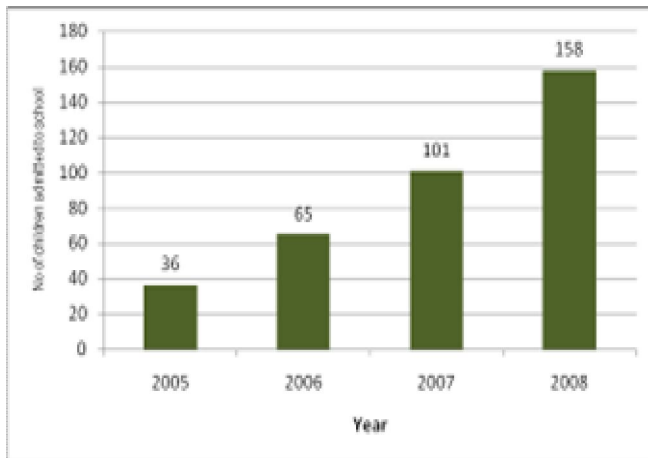
## Slum Children Education Programme

Most slum dwellers are illiterate, they are unaware about the importance of their children's education and the majority spend more than ninety percent of their income on food and rent leaving very little left for anything else. This makes it simply impossible for them to afford to send their children to school.



Generation after generation has remained illiterate. SOHAY strongly believes that education is imperative to develop one's life and as a basic international human right, thinks everyone should complete at least primary education. For this reason, it campaigns for slum children to study at Government Primary School.

Figure 1



SOHAY also provides school uniforms for the school going children. In 2008, SOHAY provided 158 sets of school uniforms for the children who attend Dhakkhin Khan Government School. These school uniforms play an important role in the children's continuation of

education in Government Primary School. It stops exposing families' economic condition to others, helps children to mingle easily with other students and helps them to be treated equally by teachers.

The childrens' admission to school, uniform distribution, free school books and teaching are all important factors but there are many other factors that are equally important for the success of students. Such factors include, creating an educational environment at home, establishing a place where books can be kept, assisting children to complete homework, common community interest and parents' support.

SOHAY has been assisting slum children to attend school since 2005 and with the help of its donors has been able to scale up its activities. In 2008 it began its 'SCSERP' programme which is funded by the Manusher Jonno Foundation.

The objectives of SOHAY's education programme are therefore clearly focused on the following areas:

- Stamp out the stigma of education among slum families
- Slum children's admission to Government Primary School
- Increase and sustain school retention rates
- Create an educational environment in slums
- Motivate parents to support their children's education

## Implementation Plan

To implement the programme SOHAY involves all stakeholders to



make a positive contribution to its target groups to achieve the programme's purpose. For example, SOHAY works with children, household members, school authorities, union parishes, local Thana Health Complex, the water and sanitation department and civil society organisations. SOHAY also works with

government institutions to build human and social capital for poor communities in Bangladesh.

SOHAY carefully prepares its implementation plan to come in to contact with the right stakeholder at the right times to ensure momentum of programme to achieve its goal and purpose. It has adopted a flexible approach and ensures the strategies are based on communities' needs. It changes its working modalities to achieve the purpose.

The following are core activities:

- Pre-schooling sessions to prepare the children for the schooling in future. .
- Education support sessions to motivate children to complete home work at home.



- Parents' sessions to help develop the women and men's logical thinking and capacity to engage with local government and public representatives on policy and government services
- Womens' sessions to create awareness about education, gender equity, health-hygiene, sanitation etc and ability to read & write
- Networking with local duty bearers.

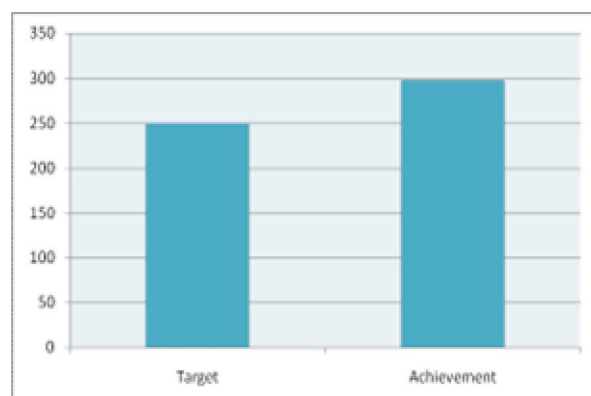
The below table illustrates SOHAY's education support activities in 2008:

Table 1 Total Number of Children SOHAY engaged with in 2008

Centre Name	School Going	Pre-Primary	Total
Noa Para	50	22	72
Noguria Bari	33	21	54
Sarder bari (Grave yard)	9	28	37
Sarder Bari (Pond Side)	9	22	31
Mollah Bari	14	29	43
Mia Para	43	17	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>297</b>

Figure 2 SOHAY achievement rate in 2008

Figure 2 shows that SOHAY aimed that it will work with 250 children in 2008. At the end of the year it found that it had engaged with 297 children. The success rate was a phenomenal 118.8%.



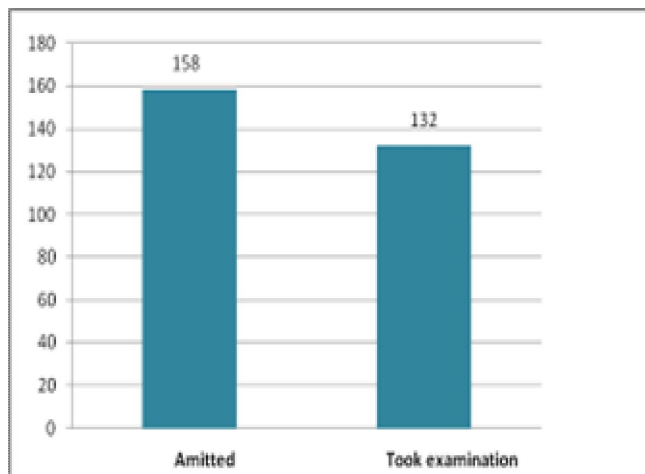
This achievement rate would

not have been possible if all children aged 5-11 in SOHAY working areas had not been engaged with educational activities. This has been possible because parents in these slums are now aware of the importance and benefit of education.

SOHAY had created and spread a 'wave of education' through Uttura Thana through its slogan "shikkar alo gahra gahra jalo" which means 'turning the education light on in every home'.

Figure 3 SOHAY supported children retention rates 2008

Dropout rates are often very high in primary education in Bangladesh; in 2007 it was 47 percent. Last year, SOHAY admitted 158 students; out of the 158, 132 took their examinations at the end of the year.



This makes the retention rate in SOHAY working areas is 84 percent. Of the remaining 16 students, SOHAY is aware that 8 of them migrated to other areas and got admitted to primary schools. The other 8 migrated to villages and SOHAY is unsure whether they were admitted to local schools or not.

The above figure clearly highlights the fact that in addition to children being admitted to school, free school books and teaching, there are also many important factors that are crucial for children to continue and succeed at school. These factors include uniform, creating an educational environment at home, establishing a place where books can be kept, assisting children to complete homework, common community interest and parents' support.

## Case Study One

Md. Robbani lives with his mother and two sisters in Mia Para at Dhakkin Khan Union, Dhaka. His mother is a maidservant and his father a petty businessman. His father left their family some years ago to marry again and does not provide for their family. They came



to Dhaka at the beginning of 2007. Robbani is the youngest in his family, fortunately his family live in one of the slums where SOHAY work. SOHAY staff motivated his mother to admit Robbani to school. All teachers in the school immediately identified his talents. Last year he achieved the highest grade in the whole school and got promoted from class

three to class four. Robbani desperately wants to continue with his studies and hopes to one day become an engineer.

Robbani's family is also very poor and they are worried about the future of his education. SOHAY thought it would be a good idea for him to join its new Economic Empowerment Programme. This programme, as explained above, gives Robbani skill training so that he can earn money to pay for his studies. His family also agreed and Robbani joined the programme.

Without the intervention of SOHAY, Robbani's special talents would have gone unnoticed.

Considering the country's economic situation and demography there are thousands and thousands of children like Robbani who have the

potential to succeed in education. SOHAY strongly believes that this approach is the way forward for Bangladesh to achieve MDG two – Universal Primary Education for all.

## Economic Empowerment Project (EEP)



The job market for slum dwellers, especially the women and young teenage girls is very limited because of social, cultural and educational reasons and their lack of skills. They often work as maidservants or in the garment trade. They earn just enough to scrape by and in general have a very low standard of living.

SOHAY, upon discussion and after reviewing the local market and business opportunities came to the conclusion that if they were able to provide skill development training such as tailoring would be suitable for them. This would enable the young people to sell the products in the local markets and establish links with local business houses that would create sustainable livelihood opportunities for them.

With this view in mind, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 it began its Economic Empowerment Project (EEP).

SOHAY has already trained 18 teenage girls living in its working slums on tailoring. Some of them already earn handsome money. There are huge employment opportunities available for this group of people. They are now earning money for their families and are respected within their households. SOHAY strongly believes that this is the way forward for Bangladesh to achieve MDG one – to eradicate extreme poverty.

## Case Study Two

Miss Rubina Akhter lives in a slum with her parents at Noa Para at Dhakkin Khan Union in Uttara in Dhaka. She has five brothers, three



of which are now married and have moved away. Her father is a vegetable retailer and her mother a maidservant.

SOHAY helped her attend primary school from class one to four. Unfortunately, due to Rubina's parents' low income and the international price hike, which hit her family hard, she

was forced to drop out of school when she was promoted to class five in 2008. She then gained employment as a maidservant where she earned little money. Rubina didn't like this job and came to SOHAY to ask the staff if there was anything they could do to help her for a better future.

SOHAY offered her a skill development training opportunity in which she can earn more money and develop her life. She undertook a three month course (provided by SOHAY) in tailoring. She is now earning a good income and is saving to buy her own sewing machine. She also bears her younger brother's educational expenditure. Rubina feels that this is the turning point in her life.

## Other Activities

### Birth Registration Program

Birth registration certificates are an important document that have not been previously given to children, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh declared that all of her citizens should receive birth registration certificates. Slum dwellers are illiterate and unaware of the advantage of holding them. This is



where SOHAY stepped in and made them aware of the importance of these certificates. In 2008 SOHAY assisted 1237 people (including men, women and children) to receive Birth Certificates.

### Health Awareness and Immunisation Activities

The infant mortality rate for Bangladesh is 47 per thousand births and the number of children dying under the age of 5 is 61. SOHAY therefore raises awareness among slum families about issues relating to healthcare. It discusses issues such as, the importance of immunisation, safe water, diarrhea, sanitation, and the care of pregnant women, family planning and many other health issues. It also informs families of their right to free healthcare services provided by the Government.

## Voter ID and Poll Vote Campaign



SOHAY, under the partnership with the election working group raised awareness about the national ID card and encouraged people to register their name on the voter list in 10 different wards in Khilgaon and Shutrapur, Thana in Dhaka. Under the programme, SOHAY organised 7 rallies,

conducted one-to-one consultations, group gatherings and exposure meetings to explain the importance of voter ID cards to the people in its working areas.

SOHAY activities were highly focused by the print and electronic media, the election working groups and the central committee.

## Challenges

It is important that SOHAY highlights the challenges it faced in 2008 to implement its programme activities.

1. **Changing the attitudes and mind shift:** SOHAY has to work hard in its working areas with the slum families to change their attitude to believe in the value of education. Many of them argued about the benefit of primary education because they have seen many people completed their primary education but they still live in slums and do menial jobs such as rickshaw pulling. It was a hard task to convince them that their children's lives can change with education. Through primary education campaign the percentage of educated people is increasing. It will not take long for them to become frustrated with being educated but have no opportunities to utilise their knowledge. It is therefore very important for something to be

done nationally with regards to employment opportunities and job creation.

2. **Creating an educational environment at home:** Education is not easy and children need the assistance and support of their families to continue education and complete homework. An educational environment at home plays a crucial role in succeeding at school. Unfortunately, the home environment in slums is unsupportive and unsuitable for the children to learn. SOHAY worked hard to create an educational environment. It is a slow and steady process and will never happen overnight, however SOHAY, through meeting with parents is slowly but surely starting to create an educational environment in slums. To achieve MDG two, planners need to think about these encompassing issues as well as other factors.

3. **Community common interest for educational support:** Several slum families, sometimes 30 families, sometimes 200 families live in one place, each family has only one single room to live in. As many families live in one place and all their children are not the same age, it is very difficult to bring them all together to create an educational environment in slums, especially after sunset when children need to study. SOHAY, through its continuous efforts using diversified methods and strategies and hard work was able to create an educational, friendly environment in its working slums. SOHAY has found it is very important for childrens' education and retention in school. SOHAY strongly believes that this element should be incorporated in all educational support programmes to achieve MDG 2 – universal primary education.

4. **Money plays a critical role: Education cost money.** Quality educational institutions do not operate on thin air. All world class universities know that to produce high caliber students, funds are needed to attract the best lecturers. The same goes for primary education in Bangladesh. More money needs to be invested by the government and donors as these young children have the equal right to quality primary education, just as students in the developed world do.



## Donors

SOHAY would like to express sincere thanks to all of its donors who have contributed to SOHAY programme activities to change the lives of so many poor people. Without your kind support, we would not have been able to achieve what we did in 2008. Thank you!

### Personal Donations:

Daniel Shimmin – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities.

Sarah White – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities.

Peter and Vidya Evans – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities

Sarah Sanyahumbi – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities.

Kathryn English – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities.

Yolande Write – Personal contribution to SOHAY programme activities

### Organisational Donations

Hope For Children – A UK based non-government organisation.

Manusher Jonno Foundation – A Bangladesh based non-government funding organisation.