

Victory Day Celebrated

SKS Foundation in association with SKS School & College celebrated the Victory Day. Early morning on 16 December 2022, SKS Foundation and SKS School & College paid homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War by placing wreaths at the *Bijoy Stomvo*, at *Pouro Park*, Gaibandha. Alongside, SKS School & College participated in the Victory Day Parade held at Shah Abdul Hamid Stadium, Gaibandha.



Principal, SKSSC, is addressing the gathering.

Upholding the significance of the Day, SKS School & College also organized a discussion forum at its auditorium. The teachers and students took part in the discussion upholding the sacrifices behind the history of our victory, stressing national unity for nation-building to realize the true victory of the day. The function ended with a cultural program featured with patriotic performances.

MRA Visited SKS' Program



Md. Fashiullah, flanked by others, is handing over a blanket to a woman.

Md. Fashiullah, Executive Vice Chairman, Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) visited SKS Foundation on 19-20 December 2022. Murshed Alam Sarker, Executive Director, POPI, & Chairperson of CDF, Mohammad Awal, Executive Director, Credit & Development Forum (CDF), accompanied him during the visit. (see page 3)

5th Founding Anniversary of SKS School & College Held



Mahabub Ara Begum Gini, MP, and Whip of the National Parliament, is addressing the audience.

SKS School & College (SKSSC) festively celebrated its 5th Founding Anniversary on 1 December 2022. The day-long celebration was opened with a colorful rally rounded up Gaibandha town followed by a discussion forum held at the premises of SKSSC, Gaibandha.

Mahabub Ara Begum Gini, MP, and Whip of the National Parliament, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Addressing the audience, she said, "While I was approached erecting this School & College, I proposed a high standard school & college, that was a lack in Gaibandha. You, the students are lucky to have such a beautiful school & college. Now, a good educational institution like SKS School & College is standing near our house and we have to take the full benefit of it."

Abu Bakar Siddique, Chairman, Zila Parishad, Gaibandha, Md. Shariful Alam, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Gaibandha Sadar, and Md. Matlubar Rahaman, Mayor, Gaibandha Municipality was the Special Guest with Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chairman, SKS School & College, and Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, in the chair.

Chairman, Zila Parishad said, "SKS School & College has established itself as one of the best educational institutes in the district. Thanks to SKS Foundation for making this praiseworthy effort alongside its other social development programs."

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer said, "While I was looking for a good educational institute in Gaibandha for my child, I choose SKS School & College fitted with my choice for my child's education because of an education-friendly pleasant environment of the school is very essential for the psychophysical development of a student."

The Mayor said, "To serve the nation, we need quality education. For quality education, we need quality institutions. And SKS School & College is one of the fine institutions for having a supportive environment to produce quality students serving the nation." (see page 3)

Children's Fair Held



Upazila Primary Education Officer is addressing the gathering at Children's Fair.

SKS Foundation organized a *Shishu Mela* (Children's Fair) on 20 November 2022 at the premises of Komolpur Govt. Primary School of Ghuridah union under Saghata, Gaibandha. Under the *Championing Play* Project supported by Save the Children, 40 pre-primary school children attended the Fair with their mothers playing together. They watched videos, took pictures, shared kid stories, played puzzles, and had health check-ups at the Fair.

Sardar Mustafa Shahin, UNO, Saghata, inaugurated the day-long Fair themed "Learning through Play" as the Chief Guest. Rafiqul Islam, Upazila Primary Education Officer, Saghata was the Special Guest with A.F.M. Najnin Sultana, Headmistress, Komolpur Government Primary School in the chair. They pointed out that children like and enjoy playing over conventional teaching. And mother is the main teacher for grooming children's lives. So, every mother needs to learn how to teach her children through playing. Playing makes children joyful and keeps them away from anxiety. Anxiety is harmful to children's future development. Around 300 people mostly women from surrounding areas gathered and enjoyed the Fair.

Daughters & Mothers-in-law Fair Held

(from page 4) Md. Anisur Rahman, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Fulchari, inaugurated the Fair as the Chief Guest. Md. Zakirul Islam, Upazila Family Planning Officer, Fulchari attended the Fair as a special guest while Golam Mostafa Kamal Pasha, Chairman, Uria union, chaired the Event.

The discussants in the Fair upheld, since mothers-in-law play an important role in decision-making in the family, particularly in the care of pregnant mothers and baby delivery, the importance of mutual understanding between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law to realize the special need of each other. Pregnant daughters-in-law and their unborn babies need special care which can be given by their mothers-in-law by feeding well and behaving well with their daughters-in-law to seek healthy babies as the babies' mental, physical, and social health depend on their mothers' health. And for safe delivery, all mothers-in-law need to take their pregnant daughters-in-law to the hospital. Contrary, the daughters-in-law need to take good care of the mothers-in-law.

Among others, Mohammad Matlubar Rahman, Headmaster, Gunvhori Di-Mukhi High School, Baharam Khan, Project Coordinator, the *Promotion of Maternal, and Newborn Health (MAMOTA)* Project, spoke at the Fair. Around 500 people flocked to the Daughters & Mothers-in-law's Fair. The Fair was organized under SKS' *MAMOTA* project with support from Save the Children, KOICA, and the Health Department of the Government of Bangladesh.

Project Inception Workshop Held

With the aim of sustainable improvement of livelihoods and living conditions of flood-affected communities of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, SKS Foundation launched the *Expanded Livelihoods for 2000 Poor Households and Increased Resilience to Flooding in Lalmonirhat*. Md. Kamruzzaman Sujon, Upazila Chairman, Lalmonirhat Sadar, graced an Inception Workshop as the Chief Guest and launched the Project. The Inception Workshop was organized at Upazila Parishad Hall on 22 December 2022.

Chaired by G.R. Sarwar, Acting UNO, Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, Md. Ershadul Alam, Officer-In-Charge was present as Special Guest. Starting from 1 October 2022, the 42-month Project will provide services in 37 villages namely Kulaura, Mogalhat, Khuniagacha, and Rajpur under 4 unions with support of ANDHERE HILFE, Bonn, Germany.



Acting UNO, Lalmonirhat Sadar, is speaking at the Inception Workshop.

Launching the Project, the Chief Guest said, "Choosing project intervention areas is perfect as the project catchment areas are hit by flood and the lives & livelihoods of the communities suffer a lot. I hope the Project will be able to pick the right households under intervention as SKS Foundation has goodwill in the areas." The Special Guest said, "For development, keeping peace and harmony in the society is critical and without harmony, no development can sustain. We need to focus on social cohesion in our development agenda." The Chair concluded the Event by saying, "To succeed in the Project, we all need to work in collaboration and the local elected chairmen and members can play a vital role in selecting proper project participants and monitoring the progress."

Dialogue Held on WASH

(from page 4) The panel discussants and participants of the Dialogue urged that a positive change of mentality toward women is a must to improve the situation of women and children. And the proper education and nurturing which is given by a mother can play a big role to lessen the violence against women. The discussion also focused that the constant flood and river erosion in Gaibandha is damaging the existing WASH facilities which are leading people to unsafe WASH habits. And the situation gets worst during floods when women and children become vulnerable to safety regarding their WASH and healthcare. So, resilient WASH and healthcare facilities especially for women and children should get top priority.

Training of Char-based Agro Input Traders Held



Md. Belal Uddin, DD, DAED, is speaking to the Agro Input Retailers.

SKS Foundation organized a Training for Char-based Agro Input Traders to promote the agricultural products of the char farmers. Fifteen Agro Input Retailers from char-prevalent unions of Saghata, Fulchari, Sundarganj, and Gaibandha Sadar attended the Course. Alongside, representatives of Agro Input Companies and Micro-finance Institutions joined the Training. The day-long Training was held on 28 November 2022 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha.

Inaugurating the Training, Md. Belal Uddin, DD, District Agricultural Extension Department, said, "In the global recession, the Government is trying to increase the agricultural productivity to avoid food shortage. The Government is supporting the farmers with agricultural materials and materials available. So, no one should make an excuse for the shortfall and increased price."

Avijit Kumar Roy, Sr. Consultant, Swisscontact said, "Making Markets Works for the Chars (M4C) project is supporting the char farmers to improve their agricultural productivity so that they can have better lives & livelihoods." Aminul Islam, an Agricultural Input Retailer & Trader said, "Every business turns into profitable in making relation. Being a Retailer, I will help the clients, and they will help me to grow my business. It's like a win-win situation."

The day-long Course covered the cultivation process of seasonal crop rotation, seed selection, pesticide control, finance sources for char farmers and retailers, etc. Md. Hafizur Rahman Sekh, Intervention Specialist, M4C, SKS Foundation conducted the Training.

MRA Visited SKS' Program

(from page 1) Following the 2-day schedule, on 19 December 2022, Md. Fashiullah launched a Blanket Distribution Ceremony organized by Boali Union Parishad at Saheb Ulla Sarkar High School's premises, Gaibandha with support from SKS Foundation. One thousand disadvantaged families from the union received the blankets. In the afternoon, he had a View Exchange Meeting at SKS Head Office, Gaibandha with its senior officials.

On 20 December 2022, Md. Fashiullah launched an Eye Care Camp organized by SKS at Uttar Horinsigha High School premises, Gaibandha. Opening the Eye Camp, Md. Fashiullah urged all to take care of their eyes earlier before going to be worst since the eye is one of the important organs. He also urged the crowd to be attentive to sending their children to the school that ousts the darkness of the mind.

Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, said, "SKS is not only engaged in microfinance. SKS believes in the holistic development of people. So, SKS is driving its development will through financial and social interventions."

Around 600 patients had their eye screening with a prescription in the Free Eye Care Camp while 95 were identified with cataracts and were to be operated on in the SKS Eye Hospital free of cost.

Int'l Day of Older Persons Observed

SKS Foundation observed the International Day of Older Persons 2022 in Saghata union, Bharatkhalai; Kamalerpara union, Saghata and Boali union of Sadar upazila, Gaibandha on 1 October 2022. Centering this year's theme, "The Resilience of Older Persons in a Changing World" SKS' ENRICH project organized rallies, discussion forums, prize money and wheelchair distribution.

To mark the Event, ENRICH- Saghata brought out a colorful rally from Saghata UP premises. After the rally, a discussion forum was held on the premises. Md. Mosharaf Hossain Sweet, UP Chairman, Saghata, addressed the forum as Chief Guest with Samsul Haque, President, Saghata Union Prabin Committee, in the chair.



Two older persons with walking disabilities are being given walking-assistive wheelchairs.

The Chief Guest said, "As the cost of living has increased, the amount of the Old-Age-Allowance needs to be increased to maintain the lives of the elderly people." Samsul Haque said, "Although the older persons have great sacrifice and contribution in nation building, they are not valued. They are neglected and sometimes become victims of violence. We must regard their contribution and value them."

Following the discussion forum, 5 elderly persons as the best elder and 5 children as the best children were given prize money, and 4 walking-disable- older were given wheelchairs.

5th Founding Anniversary

(from page 1) Rasel Ahmed Liton said, "SKS School & College was created based on the needs of this area. I believe, it will be considered an educational powerhouse in this area. All the arrangements have been set to make this Institution education-friendly so that students, teachers, and guardians can enjoy the full flavor of education."

Md. Abdus Sattar, Principal, SKS School & College, urged students to be more attentive in school rather than coaching outside. Presenting the annual progress report of the Institution, he thanked all for the progress as a collective achievement of the SKSSC.

Later, the Chief Guest unveiled the annual magazine 'Nabodoy' of SKSSC, handed over crests to 44 meritorious students who got a GPA- 5, in the SSC exam in 2022, and 2 students who got a GPA- 5, in the HSC exam in 2021. The function wrapped up with a cultural program.

Dialogue Held on WASH & Healthcare for Women & Children

Marking the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, SKS Foundation organized a dialogue on *WASH & Healthcare for Women & Child Protection* on 8 December 2022 at SKS Inn, Gaibandha. Centering this year's theme, 'Build unity among all, stop violence against women and children', the local government, non-government officials, elected representatives, journalists, community leaders, and women and girl leaders attended the Dialogue.

Dr. Md. Abdullahel Mafi, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha, graced the Dialogue as the Chief Guest, and Nargis Jahan, DD, Department of Women Affairs, was the Special Guest with Joseph Halder, Director- Advocacy & Communication, SKS Foundation in the chair.



Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha, is speaking in the Dialogue.

The Chief Guest said, "Women and children are being tortured physically and mentally everywhere. It's happening not only for financial scarcity but also for our negative mentality. So, we need to change our negative mindset toward women and children. Alongside, we need to acknowledge women's needs in their WASH and healthcare. Unfortunately, women's special needs, particularly in WASH facilities, are not recognized. We hardly notice separate WASH facilities in public places, and somewhere the WASH facilities are set far away, and unhygienic that barring women & children to access those facilities. To solve this, we all, GOs, NGOs, civil society, media & community, need coordinated action."

Special Guest said, "Negligence toward women begins from the womb as baby girls are not desired in a patriarchal society. The girls then grow up with negligence in their father's house and later in their in-laws' house. So, they are neglected everywhere. The problem lies in our society and our thinking. Marrying off girls at a young age means killing her dream. For overcoming this, a baby girl should be accepted and nurtured rather than thinking of marrying off."

KM Rezaul Haque, President, Gaibandha Press Club, Dr. Anamika Shaha, Vice Principal, SKS School & College, Md. Mamunur Rashid, Sub-Assistant Engineer, DPHE, Gaibandha, and Dr. Shamima Bilkis, Technical Manager, MAMOTA, Save the Children enriched the Dialogue as the panel discussants. Khondakar Zahid Shorwar, Assistant Director, Field Operations of SKS Foundation made a presentation covering the WASH and Healthcare situation relating to the women and children in the context of the *char* & flood zone. (see page 2)

Umme Habiba Won Manobadhikar Padak 2022



Umme Habiba is receiving the Padak.

Umme Habiba, one of SKS' program participants, won the 'Manobadhikar Padak 2022' (Human Rights Award). *Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)* awarded Umme Habiba for her outstanding contribution to preventing child marriage in her area at Taluk Rifaitpur village under Badiakhali union of Gaibandha. Centering the observance of International Human Rights Day, the Award was given to Umme Habiba and other 6 on 8 December 2022 in a ceremony at the auditorium of the *Muktijuddho Jadughor* (Liberation War Museum) in Dhaka. Gwyn Lewis, Resident Coordinator, UN, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, Country Representative, UN Women Bangladesh, and Ms. Kristine Blokhus, Country Representative, UNFPA in Bangladesh, handed over the *Padak*.

Umme Habiba appeared in the HSC examination in 2022. Being a program participant of SKS Foundation, she has been engaged in preventing child marriage through the *Action for Socio-economic Security & Rights for Excluded and Marginalized Women & Girls* Project since 2019. Habiba found that many of her classmates got married and some were prepared to marry off centering the COVID-19 pandemic. Habiba convinced the parents and brought many of them back to school providing books to continue their studies. Thus, Umme Habiba prevented 10 child marriages and managed 18 married classmates to get back to school.

Daughters & Mothers-in-law Fair Held

SKS Foundation organized a fair dubbed *Daughters & Mothers-in-law Fair* on 16 November 2022 at the school premise of Gunvhori Di-Mukhi High School in Uria union of Fulchari upazila of Gaibandha district. About 40 pregnant women labeled as daughters-in-law participated with their mothers-in-law in the day-long Fair which featured a discussion forum, sport and quiz competition, and stall exhibition. (see page 2)



Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Fulchari, is speaking at the Function.