

Rajshahi Child Conference Demands Special Allowance for Street Children



In Photo: Guests are seen listening to the demands of children

Rajshahi Region: Alokito Shishu Project-Caritas Rajshahi Region organized a day-long child conference at Caritas Rajshahi Regional Office on May 16, 2024. Ms. Tuktuk Talukdar, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi District, was present as the chief guest, which was presided over by Mr. David Hembrom, Regional Director of Caritas Rajshahi Region.

During the conference, a child associated with the project presented several demands to the representatives of government and other institutions. These demands included providing food, clothes, shelter, education, and healthcare for street children, ensuring access to technical and skills-based training, creating opportunities for sports, allocating a special budget for street children, and arranging allowances for them.

The chief guest said, “The government is already offering various services to street children. However, it cannot be said that these services are sufficient. More opportunities must be created for them. We are keen to work together with organizations like Caritas and others who are involved with street children. Only through concerted efforts can the issue of street children be resolved.”

Other speakers emphasized the need to develop employment opportunities for street children, particularly for those with high skills and potential. They noted that the government provides various facilities that street children can take advantage of.

Ms. Hasina Mumtaz, Deputy Director of the Rajshahi District Social Service Office, attended as a special guest. Ms. Lee McQueen, consultant from Caritas Germany for the Alokito Shishu Project, representatives from various government and non-governmental organizations, journalists, and 60 street children involved in the project were attended the event. A children's drawing competition was also organized as part of the conference, with prizes awarded to the winners at the conclusion of the event.

Three Street Children Provided Foster Parenting Support in Dhaka

Dhaka Region: The Gabtoli Drop-In Center (DIC) of Caritas Alokito Shishu Project-Dhaka provided foster parenting support to three street children for the period of one year. The agreement was signed on February 28, 2024, between the foster parents and Mr. Shawrab Rozario, Acting Regional Director of Caritas Dhaka Region.

According to the agreement, Caritas will provide a monthly allowance of Tk. 7,000 to each foster parent for one year. In return, the children will be cared for as part of the foster family, ensuring they receive proper safety, nutrition, education, and protection. This initiative aims to provide street children with the opportunity to grow in a nurturing family environment.

The event was attended by the children, their foster parents, members of the Child Protection Committee, and journalists.

Free Eye-Camp Organized in Dhaka

Dhaka Region: The Arambag Drop-In Center (DIC) of Caritas Alokito Shishu Project-Dhaka organized a free eye camp on February 28, 2024, with the support of BARDO Eye Hospital. A five-member team from BARDO, including a doctor, nurse, technical supporter, logistics supporter, and the hospital manager, facilitated the program at no cost.

A total of 33 children and 18 guardians received support from the camp. Among them, two children from the DIC were diagnosed with chronic eye issues, and three guardians were advised to undergo cataract surgery. The guardians expressed their gratitude for arranging this valuable opportunity.

Media Campaign for Birth Registration for Street Children Held in Mymensingh

Mymensingh Region: A media campaign on “Problems, Challenges, and Necessary Actions for Birth Registration of Street Children” was held on June 10, 2024, at the Caritas Mymensingh Regional Auditorium, organized by the Alokito Shishu Project. Mr. SM Mazharul Islam, Regional Executive Officer of Zone 2, represented the Mayor of Mymensingh City Corporation as the chief guest. The event was presided over by Mr. Apurbo Mrong, Regional Director of Caritas Mymensingh.

During the campaign, speakers highlighted the struggles faced by street children due to the lack of birth registration. Children said, “Without birth registration, our future is uncertain. Like other children, we also want to attend school, but we can't because we lack birth certificates. We also miss out on government facilities. We earnestly request the government to provide us with birth certificates through a simplified process.”

Chief guest Mr. Md. Mazharul Islam, Senior Assistant Secretary of Mymensingh City Corporation, addressed the issue, saying, "There is currently no system for applying online for the birth registration of children whose parents' identities are unknown. “We will inform higher authorities about this issue so that these children can receive their birth certificates easily and without any hassle”. A total of 30 participants attended the campaign.



In Photo: Speakers are seen speaking at media campaign

Wheelchairs distributed to Five Disabled Children in Dhaka

Dhaka Region: Alokito Shishu Project-Dhaka held a significant event at the Gabtali Drop-in Center (DIC), on January 3, 2024, where five wheelchairs were distributed to disabled children, thanks to the generous contribution from the Lions International Foundation Dhaka.



In Photo: Wheelchairs are being distributed to children

The event was not only a moment of joy for the recipients and their families but also a testament to the effective collaboration between local donors and organizations in improving the lives of vulnerable children. The wheelchairs provided will significantly enhance mobility and independence for these children, reflecting the ongoing commitment to support and uplift those in need.

The distribution was attended by Ms. Quamrun Naher, Program Officer for Early Childhood Development (ECD) at Caritas Dhaka Region, Mr. Mijanur Rahaman Bappi, President of the Human Rights Commission in Darus Salam Thana, Ms. Rabeya Sultana, a news presenter for Fulgun TV and a member of the Child Protection Committee (CPC), Journalist Mr. Mijanur Rahaman, and Ms. Maksuda Begum, a representative of the Social Welfare Project.

Training on Child Rights, Policies, and Laws Successfully Conducted

Central Office: A two-day long training program focusing on Child Rights, Policies, and Laws organized by the Alokito Shishu Project of Caritas Bangladesh (CB) took place at the Dhaka Region office of Caritas Bangladesh on 11-12 March 2024. Mr. Daud Jibon Das, Director-Programs of CB, inaugurated the training program, with Mr. Shawrab Rozario, Acting Regional Director-Dhaka, delivering the welcome speech.

The primary aim of the training was to equip staff members of the Alokito Shishu Project from Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rajshahi regions, and BARACA with a comprehensive understanding of various crucial legal frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Child Act-2014, Labour Act, Child Policy, as well as other pertinent national and international policies and government initiatives related to children. A total of 28 staff members of CB participated in the training program presided over by Ms. Kusum Gregory, Program Officer- SWVC of CB.

The training was led by experienced facilitators, including Lee Macqueen, Consultant of the Alokito Shishu Project, alongside Mr. Sonjoy Mondol, Ms. Strala Rupa Mollick, and Mr. Jamal Uddin from World Vision Bangladesh. It significantly enriched the participants' understanding of critical aspects concerning child rights and protection.



In Photo: Children are seen attending Capacity Building Training in BARACA

Children's Conference Calls for Enhanced Protections and Rights for Street Children

Dhaka Region: Alokito Shishu Project-Dhaka organized a children's conference on Child Rights at the Bangladesh Training and Research Foundation (BTRF) Auditorium in Mirpur on June 10, 2024. The main objective of the conference was to raise awareness of children's rights, ensure their protection, and take effective steps for their development. Ms. Syeda Zakia Noor, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, was the chief guest at the event, which was presided over by Mr. Shawrab Rozario, Regional Director of Caritas Dhaka.



In Photo: Ms. Syeda Zakia Noor MP is seen speaking at the Child Conference organized by Caritas Dhaka Region on June 10, 2024

At the conference, a boy and a girl from the street children community shared their life experiences, while other street children voiced their demands for birth registration, educational assistance, healthcare, safe shelters, and technical training. During the open discussion, two members of the Child Protection Committee from the project highlighted the risks involved in implementing the project activities. The speakers appealed to the chief guest to take steps toward implementing children's rights at the policy level and enforcing the Children's Act 2013. They also called on both government and private organizations to step forward in the protection and development of children.

The chief guest promised to address the children's issues by raising them as agenda items in the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women and Child Affairs, ensuring their resolution in line with children's rights and demands. Additionally, representatives from the Bangladesh Shishu Academy and the Department of Social Services (DSS) announced plans to provide various government facilities, including child protection allowances.

A total of 80 participants, including officials and representatives from government agencies, NGOs, and private institutions, attended the event. Among the attendees, 35 were street children. A keynote speech was also delivered by Dr. Md. Nurul Islam, Professor at the Social Welfare and Research Institute of Dhaka University.

BARACA Empowers Youth by providing Vocational Training

BARACA: BARACA organized a free health camp aimed at providing healthcare services to underprivileged street children, as well as women, men, and elderly members of the community on January 28, 2024,. The camp was supervised by the Camp Civil Surgeon, with Md. Mohsin Mia, Coordinator from the Civil Surgeon Office Dhaka, leading the initiative alongside a team of medical professionals including Dr. Parveen Mitu, Dr. Kamrul Nahar, Dr. Sakibur Nahar, and Pharmacist Md. Shafiur Rahman.

A total of 175 individuals benefited from the health camp, which included 13 male children, 4 female children, 122 men, and 16 women. The camp provided treatment and free medicines for various health issues such as cold, fever, cough, dental problems, ear infections, skin diseases, body aches, and general weakness.

This initiative aimed to address the healthcare needs of neglected populations within the community, ensuring access to medical care for those who often go without it.



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NEWSLETTER



Twelve Children Receive Child Protection Allowance in Mymensingh



In Photo: Children pose for a picture after receiving allowance

One child's family used the funds to repair their house, while another invested in goats. Five families started small grocery businesses, and two more began tailoring businesses. In addition to these entrepreneurial endeavors, the allowance was also used to purchase educational materials such as books, notebooks, pens, school bags, and uniforms for each child. As a result, these children are now able to attend school regularly, and their families' incomes have begun to improve, marking a positive step towards a more secure and hopeful future.

Caritas Mymensingh: A total of 12 children associated with the Alokito Shishu Project in Mymensingh were granted Tk. 16,100/- each as part of the Child Protection Allowance on May 30, 2024. This allowance was provided under the “Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh (CSPB) Project, Phase-2,” of the Directorate of Child Social Services. The support was provided as a part of long-term to the underprivileged street children for their welfare and future security.

The distribution of the allowance was made possible through the efforts of the project staff, who engaged in networking, lobbying, and advocacy with both government and private organizations. The impact of the allowance has already been significant.

Thanksgiving Ceremony for Local Donors Held in BARACA

BARACA: BARACA hosted a special Thanksgiving Ceremony to honor and appreciate local donors who have supported the organization's initiatives on May 28, 2024.

During the program, Mr. Russell Moon from the Social Welfare Office addressed the audience, emphasizing the need to focus on meeting essential needs, especially in light of shrinking donor budgets. A representative from BLAST reiterated their organization's dedication to assisting impoverished women and children by providing legal aid and ensuring access to justice.

While addressing Vice President of the local Medicine Market compared BARACA to a family, highlighting the importance of working together to support the children in need. Abul Kalam Azad, a member of the Child Protection Committee (CPC), commended BARACA's efforts, referring to their work as a noble service to humanity.

While speaking, Mr. Nazmul Haque from Kotwali Police Station encouraged efforts to engage with the local charitable elite, suggesting that zakat donations be directed towards supporting BARACA's marginalized children, helping them reconnect with their families and secure a brighter future. The event was attended by 20 participants, including representatives from the Social Welfare Office, UCEP Nalgola School, Kotwali Police Station, Nagar Health Centre, and the Billalshah Medicine Market.

Children in Rajshahi marks international International Mother Language Day

Rajshahi Region: Caritas Rajshahi Alokito Shishu Project celebrated 21st February International Mother Language Day at 2 separate places under the region.



In Photo: A child is seen being provided dental treatment

A rally in memory of language martyrs and Wreath laying at Court Shaheed Minar led by Mr. David Hembrom, Regional Director, Caritas Rajshahi Region and another rally led by Md. Faridul Islam, Jr. Program Officer, Alokita Shishu from Padma DIC, 8 No Road, Padma Residential area to Vodra Smriti Amlan Wreaths were laid in the square.

After the wreath placing, the importance of Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day was highlighted among the children at Padma DIC. A total of 94 street children, 7 Guardians, one CPC committee member and 22 staff members of Caritas Rajshahi Region were present in the day celebration ceremony.

Issue-Based Advocacy Campaign Held in Rajshahi

Rajshahi Region: Caritas Rajshahi Alokito Shishu Project organized an issue-based advocacy campaign at the Ward No. 19 office of the Rajshahi City Corporation on May 25, 2024. The campaign aimed to address the pressing needs of street children in the area and was attended by both government and non-government officials. During the meeting, Mr. Faridul Islam, Junior Program Officer of the Alokito Shishu Project highlighted the activities of the Drop-In Center (DIC) and outlined the objectives of the campaign.



In Photo: Speakers are seen discussing at issue-based campaign i

The project surveyed two slums within Ward No. 19, identifying a total of 75 street children. Among them, 17 children had digital birth registrations, 52 had non-digital birth registrations, and 6 children had no birth registration. The campaign focused on converting the non-digital birth registrations to digital and ensuring that those without birth certificates received them. Additionally, it advocated for sewing training for street children and their family members, along with discussions on providing further Safety net benefits in the slum areas and including an allowance for street children in future Annual Development Programs (ADP).

As a result of the discussions, Councilor Mr. Tohidul Haque Sumon, who served as the chief guest, promised to provide sewing training using two machines available in his ward.

Children join rally on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

Rajshahi Region: Caritas Rajshahi Alokito Shishu Project organized a leadership development training for street children. The training aimed to equip the participants with essential leadership skills to enable them to positively influence their communities.

The session covered topics such as the definition and importance of leadership, the different types of leadership, qualities of an ideal leader, and the responsibilities of a leader. Additionally, the project staff facilitated discussions on child law and child protection, empowering the children to understand their rights and duties within their community.

Through the Alokito Shishu Project's leadership development initiatives, street children from the slums are becoming leaders. These children are now taking active roles in identifying neighborhood problems, calling hotlines when someone in their community is in need, and sharing information about neighborhood issues through family visits. They also help organize children's club meetings and assist in collecting attendance signatures, fostering a sense of responsibility and community engagement.

A total of 20 participants, including 12 girls and 8 boys, took part in the training, demonstrating the project's commitment to nurturing future leaders among marginalized street children.

Coordination Meeting with Local Donor Groups Held in Rajshahi

Rajshahi Region: A coordination meeting with local donor groups was organized by the Alokito Shishu Project under the Caritas Rajshahi Region on June 6, 2024. The meeting was attended by 20 participants, including 5 women and 15 men, with Junior Program Officer Md. Faridul Islam leading the discussions. The main focus of the meeting was on the activities of the Alokito Shishu Project, the Drop-in Center (DIC), and the collection of local donations.

During the meeting, Md. Faridul Islam emphasized the support received from local donors, including financial donations, educational materials, clothes, and other necessities from kind-hearted individuals and institutional owners. Contributions such as winter clothes, nutritious food, tiffin, sewing machines, and free medical care and medicines have been instrumental in enhancing the lives of the children in the project. These donations are either utilized for the children's development or distributed directly to them.

The meeting participants highly appreciated the efforts of the project, sharing the services offered by their respective organizations.

As a result of these efforts, the project has been able to provide free healthcare to 30 children (13 boys and 17 girls) with the help of a doctor from Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital. All the children are currently in good health and actively participating in project activities.

In-focus



20 children from BARACA pose for a picture after taking part in a book festival



BARACA Children participate in inter-district school sports and cultural competition



Children from BARACA receive gift after participating in painting and cultural competition



Children are seen attending Leadership Training Program in Rajshahi



Community people are seen attending a meeting to combat drug abuse



Community people are seen attending social group meeting conducted by BARACA



Representatives from GOs and NGOs are seen attending a tri-monthly meeting in BARACA



Children in Mymensingh receive foods and new clothes



Local donors are seen attending a thangs giving program organized by BARACA

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