

'I am fifteen'

Tales Told by Teenagers



Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

I am Fifteen, the Future is mine!

Tales Told by Teenagers

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Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

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Dedicated to

The millions of Bangladesh adolescents
who continue to dream in the face all adversities,
the new generation which wants to march ahead toward
a Bangladesh of boundless possibilities



Preface

We are all aware that both the *Education For All* goals and the *Millennium Development Goals* declared in the year 2000 are due to reach their completion in 2015. As we touch the deadline, with significant progress made, it becomes clear that these promises will not be met within deadline. This year, the world will agree upon new frameworks – for education and for sustainable development more broadly, which will help set the tone and the focus of government policies and action from now until 2030. As a signatory to both these declarations, Bangladesh has undertaken many positive initiatives to meet the targets. Keeping this in view, the Global Action Week 2015 (26 April to 02 May) was designed to find out the current status in terms of education of those, born in the year 2000.

A campaign on the theme *I am Fifteen, the Future is mine! I Vote for Education* was carried out across Bangladesh. Fifteen years have gone by since the adoption of the Dakar Declaration and it is high time to take stock of the progress that has been made so far and identify the challenges that are still being faced by governments, communities, teachers, learners and the general public. The campaign carried out in 7 Divisional Headquarters of Bangladesh was an attempt to reach out to all those boys and girls who were born in the year 2000 and hear from them the stories of their life, and find out where they stand now; whether they are in school or dropped out or whether they haven't had the opportunity to enroll at all. With the help of local resource persons, hundreds of young boys and girls participated in the story telling sessions and shared their own experiences. This publication is a selected compilation of their real life tales of sheer grit, determination, and in some cases frustration and hopelessness. Some of the stories also reflect the day to day struggle, challenges and future dreams of the fifteen year olds.

We wish to express our gratitude to all the young participants, their parents, teachers, and our partner NGOs who were involved in the entire process and helped us organize the events. It would have been simply impossible for us to carry out this campaign without their earnest support and participation at the field level. My thanks go to all my colleagues, in particular to Tasneem Ather, Mostafizur Rahman, Abu Reza, Fardhana Alam Soma and Moksedur Rahman who worked tirelessly for days and nights to put all these together. A special thanks to Professor Shafi Ahmed for his constant support and inspiration that have made this publication possible. We are ever so grateful to him. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to all the Board Members who have always been there to support us. Last but not the least we acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of Grameen Phone Ltd and New Zealand Dairy Products Ltd for their support and inspiration.

We hope that these real life tales will be taken into consideration by the policy makers and they will come up with ways and means for helping these youths to overcome their challenges and fulfill their dreams. We believe that there will be a time when all citizens of Bangladesh will become enlightened and literate and contribute to the building up of a productive and resourceful society.

Rasheda K Choudhury
Executive Director
Campaign for Popular Education



Editor's Note

This is a unique anthology. A collection of tales told by teenagers, to be precise, of the fifteen years olds. The most significant period of an individual's physical and psychological development. These story-tellers have only two things as common factors; they belong to Bangladesh, a land traditionally known to the outside world for natural calamities and poverty, secondly, all of them were born in the conjunction of the second and third millenniums. These stories can be treated as some confessional monologues articulated in a spontaneous way. The stories were, in a way, commissioned manuscripts. These teenagers were located at diverse contexts of Bangladesh. In the smelly ghettos of the towns; in the idyllic paths of the villages far from the madding crowd; in some schools that symbolically represent the starving population; in some work-places where the oily and swaety faces of children remind us of *Les Miserabelles* or the adolescent David and Oliver as created by Charles Dickens; and also in some middle-class drawing rooms.

The first few short sentences of the stories may seem a little monotonous to the readers. But we crave the reader's careful and sympathetic attention to identify his or her location of residence and the occupation of their parents. You will start to feel the differences and diversity. The stories are of various lengths, short and comparatively long. One may deduce the reasons from there; why someone is more articulate and the others shy. The stories are being presented to the non-Bengali speaking readers in some kind of multi-layered edited forms. Most of the stories were much longer. Without any training of story-telling, the 'writers' had been shaky, unskilled, somewhat ignorant about organized writing and above all not very forthcoming. A lot of the stories had been produced orally. The speakers do not have any minimum writing skill. Some kind volunteers took dictation. The editing staff of CAMPE undertook the rigorous work of reading and primarily correcting them in spelling, syntactical patterns and organization. I attest that they had been extremely careful to maintain the original spirit and vocabulary. Then the stories underwent a more professional editing for the Bengali version. Hundreds of adolescents from all corners of Bangladesh took part in the process of story-telling. A competent Jury finally selected sixty nine of them for a volume in Bengali. For aggressive constraints of time coupled with the intensity of intention to get them translated into English, keeping as far as possible the tone, mood and character of the individual stories enforced a decision to select forty two out of them. This selection is in no way a reflection on those stories, which couldn't be included within the two covers of this present volume.

Beyond the statements of the teenagers, the readers will easily find a true social picture of Bangladesh. In a very natural way, the critical issues that negatively regulate the education system of Bangladesh, such as, eve-teasing, early marriage of girls, ignorance of the parents, break away of families, domestic migration and above all, the monstrosity of poverty have entered into the bodies of the stories. The readers will encounter pangs of hunger, weeping of the disabled and the androgynous persons, pain of loneliness and spilt families, tears of depression and failures. Such experiences will make them anxious, hurt and sometimes weep. The tellers speak of multiplicity of wishes that range from becoming doctors, teachers, army and police officers to successful farmers, so on and so forth. Which indicates the present day mind-set of the new generation that claims scrutiny for any future development plan of the country.

In fine, I earnestly ask everybody to do from his or her own standing as much as possible to fulfill the dreams of these teenagers.

Shafi Ahmed



could be an ideal teacher
Want to a successful garment worker
ad a dream: I would become a journo
A sad souls dream
Want to be a policeman
Want to be a lawyer
Want to help the Santal community as a teacher
Want to help the helpless girls as a teacher
Want to be a physician
I will become a police officer
I want to become an ideal teacher
I want to be a teacher
I want to serve people as a physician
The dream to become
Want to build up a Golden Bangladesh
I want to be a doctor
I want to be a Golden Bangladesh
I want to be a member of the army
If I could be a member of the army
Want to be a doctor
The dream was to become a doctor
Want to be a member of the army
Want to help in rural development
Had a dream to become a doctor
Want to find a job at
Either a sportsman or a grill-smith
Want to be a successful farmer
The dream of beco

Want to be a lawyer

Tuli Dutta (Cox's Bazar)

I was born at Cox's Bazar on January 5, 2000. Well, my paternal home is at Patia of Chittagong district. My father's name is Tapan Dutta. A physician by profession, he died on August 17, 2009. My mother is Champa Dutta. She is a housewife. We are five brothers and sisters in all. As ill luck would have it, three of us are visually impaired. At present, all of us are dependent on our elder sister.

At the time of my birth, one of my eyes had been blind, the other one was alright. I started my studies at a public primary school. From Class I to VII, everything has been alright. When I was at the eighth grade, the disaster came upon me. I studied in the hours of day and at night too. That did the damage. My only good eye couldn't take the pressure. Just a week before my Junior Certificate Examination, God took away the light from my right eye. Everything was just darkness for me. But I did appear at the exam. The teachers read out the questions to me and I answered them accordingly. Unfortunately, on the day of exam. on Agriculture, I put my roll number wrongly on the OMR registration form. That undid me. I got plucked.

One more year. I passed through all kinds of sufferings and depression. However, Mr Abdul Samad, the Head Master of the Government School for the Physically Impaired came forward to help me. On February 10, 2013, I got admitted into that school. Now I'm a student of the tenth grade.

I look forward to become a lawyer as I finish my studies. Firstly, I will be a HSC graduate from Chittagong College, then I will study law at Chittagong University. As a lawyer, I will try my most to ensure justice for the poor.

Want to help the *Santal* community move forward

Niren Soren (Rajshahi)

My name is Niren Soren. I am a student. I belong to the indigenous community known as *Santal*. As a group of people, we suffer from poverty. But I have heard that once upon a time the *Santals* were a well-to-do community. However, in our community everyone is poor. I am a very lucky boy. With the grace of God, I study in a school and stay in the hostel of the Christian Missionaries. If I have stayed back at home, I could not have any access to education.

In the hostel, children from different communities live together. We have much fun here. But in matters of studies, we are very regular. We go home only in the vacations. The house parent of our hostel takes adequate care of us and helps us in our studies. The teachers are loving and friendly. The environment of the school is quite nice. I want to continue my studies. I want to play a leading role so that the *Santal* community can move forward.



Want to help the helpless girls as a teacher

Halima Khatun (Pabna)

I am Halima Khatun. My father's name is Helal Hossain and my mother is Ramani Begum. I live in a quiet lovely village of Pabna district. The village is green with sundry trees and plants. I love my village very much. The twittering of birds makes me awake every morning. On one side of our house is the hospital for the mental patients. On the other is the Hindu holy site of Anukul Thakur's residence. Thousands of people assemble there. A village fair takes place every year. People crowd in the fair.

I am now a student of Class X in the Humanities stream. I want to become a teacher in future. I love my school very much. I go to school everyday. I love to go. But the school is quite far from my house. There is no transport to commute. So I have to walk down. There are some boys who tease us. My father is a little afraid these days. Mother rather wants to get me married early. Even some of the neighbours make gossip about me. That takes away my urge to go to school. Some of the girls of the locality got married early and some of them are mothers by now. One of my class-mates had the same fate. Such instances depress me.

But I want to go ahead. I won't give in. Now I'm fifteen. I want to be a teacher in the future. Then I will stand by all the helpless girls. I want to speak out loudly that women too are human beings. I want to plead to everybody that we should stop child marriage. We must stop it. We must stop eve-teasing. All girls should enjoy security on their way to schools. Women should become independent. In the next fifteen years, I want see that all girls enjoying safe journey to and from the schools. As a teacher I will always take care of that.

Want to be a physician

Nusrat Jahan Tithi (Rajshahi)

I am Nusrat Jahan Tithi. I was born in a beautiful village named Nalbata. My father is Nurul Alam. He works in an office. Because of the profession of my father, I had to stay in different parts of the country in diverse environments. Now we live in Nandangachi. I am student of Class X in Nandangachi Girls' High School. All my teachers love me very much. In the family, I am the eldest among the brothers and sisters. Probably, that has given me the sense of responsibility. I am very choosy about my likes and dislikes. I like sports. I have won a trophy in badminton. I do regularly take part in the cultural programs of the school. And books are my best companions.

Facing hurdles and challenges is a part of life. None can succeed without overcoming them. I too have the same experience. Mine is a conservative and religious family. There are so many do's and don'ts in my family. At one point, I was asked to say good bye to badminton. I failed to have the approval of the family. Anyway, I gave more attention to my studies. But hurdles persisted. Some boys used to regularly tease me on way to my school. I just ignored them. However, my father became very worried. He tried to marry me off. I couldn't stand that. I also became adamant. Then I reported the matter to the Head Mistress of my school. Anyway, that worked. That helped me. I am still continuing my education. I got A+ in my Junior Certificate Examination. Then my father felt proud of me.

I am still young. But my experience tells me that a doctor is a very important figure in the society. So I want to be a doctor. I want to serve the society as a doctor.

I will become a police officer

Zebin Afroj (Sylhet)

I am Zebin Afroz. My father is Minhazuddin. And my mother's name is Nargis Sultana. She is a housewife. I call my father *abbu* and my mother as *ammu*. My father is a doctor. For professional reasons, he lives in the city. Me and my mother followed him. I am the single issue of my parents. I have grown within the concrete walls of the city. Mother has been my best companion. Most of my memories are connected with my mother. And she has the largest contribution to my state of growing up. But still I had to spend so many lonely hours. And as I grew up, I found myself as the animal of a different planet. My mother has been my companion in sports and I learned to read and write under her guidance. She taught me the alphabet. Then I was admitted into a kindergarten school close to our house. The first day in the school. That memory is still living in me. My mother hardly got out of doors. So my father took me to the school. My father talked to the headmaster of the school. He asked me to touch my left ear. But I failed. I had been too young to do that. Then he said, "You are too young, I can't admit you in the school". I got afraid and began to cry. That worked and he allowed me to get admitted. Now I'm a student of Class X. I am a student of one of the very famous schools of Sylhet. Jalalabad Cantonment Public School. I work hard to succeed.

I love my country very much. I want to build up my country as a prosperous land. I feel so bad as I hear of the victims of petrol-bombs. I want a liberal society. A society without any violence. So I want to become a police officer in the future. I will see that the criminals get the penalty they deserve. I will inspire others to become decent persons. I dream to see Bangladesh as a land of prosperity. I got this dream from my family and my teachers.

I want to become an ideal teacher

Naima Sultana (Comilla)

My name is Naima Sultana. My father's name is Md. Ahsanullah. He is a service-holder. My mother's name is Mst. Parveen Akter. She is a housewife. I am a student of Mohra Sayera Kaderia High School. I was born in Comilla but then our family moved to Chittagong. Now I am a student of Class X. From nursery to Class V, I had been a student of Mohra Grammar School. I spent the best of the days of my life so far in Class V. I took part in all the cultural functions of my school. I cherish those memories. I remember the day on which my mother helped me wear the school uniform. I held my father's hand on way to the school. It had been a strange environment. Felt nervous to talk to our teachers. I learned so many things from them. I love them so much. I study in a different school now. The teachers here are very friendly too. My parents are the closest persons to me. I learned so many things from them.

I have so many living memories in these fifteen years of my life. I had great fun right from the spring festival to Eid-ul-Fitr, the most important Muslim religious festival. Well, there had been some moments of tears too. That's very usual. But I try to forget them. Rather I want to enjoy.

Now I am a student in the stream of Business Studies. From my childhood, I nurtured a love for studies. In the Class, my Roll no. is 4. I am indebted to my parents and teachers for my success.

I want to become an ideal teacher myself. A teacher can help build up an ideal society. I believe, as a teacher I will play a strong role. In 2030, I want to be a successful teacher.

I want to be a teacher

Md. Sabbir Khan (Khulna)

My name is Sabbir Khan. My father's name is Md Kabul Khan and my mother is Lucky Begum. My father is a small trader and my mother a housewife. We are three brothers. I am the eldest. I was born at Natun Bazar of Khulna city. My parents are illiterate. The locality is adjacent to the river Rupsa. With the passage of time, the topography of our area has changed a lot. Yet the touches of nature can still be felt. I remember how I did enjoy bathing in the river or angling during my childhood. At the age of five, I got admitted into Natun Bazar Government Primary School. On the first day in my school, everything seemed quite strange to me. I could find some friends on the very first day. I do still remember the quick breakfast, running to the school to meet friends.

After the completion of the primary level, my father took me to Khulna Alia Kamil Madrasa. I have appeared at the School Certificate level examination this year. We are, in fact, poor people. That somehow affects my studies. It's quite difficult for my father to run the family and also to manage some funds for the education of three children. At one point, my father wanted to take me out of the school.

I was a good student. So the teachers tried to help me out. They allocated some money for me from the welfare fund. Some of our friends managed a cheap transport to commute to the school. At that time, my father stopped funding me and asked me to drop out again. But the teachers could convince my parents. I started tutoring some students to earn some money. Now I understand the value of education. So I want to become a teacher and want to help poor students.

I want to serve people as a physician

Rozina Khatun (Khulna)

My name is Rozina. I am fifteen. My mother's name is Kulsum and my father is Abul Sheikh. It's quite some years when my father died. My mother is a domestic assistant in a house. With her meagre income, we can just pull on. We live in the Moilapota area of Khulna. The environment of this area was too bad earlier. But now things have improved. I study in the UCEP school of Khulna. In the initial days in the school, I could not be friendly with others. But gradually that state is over. Now I have many friends, The teachers too love me very much. My mother had to work hard so that I can continue my studies. The cost of studying in the UCEP School is quite low. My mother says to me, 'Always try to be clever. Then you can work well. I want to be a proud mother. People would say Kulsum's daughter is a bright girl.' I know how difficult it is for my mother to spend some money for my education.

Now I'm a student of Class VIII. No stipend is offered to the students of this school. That could have helped us. My tired mother sometimes asks me to drop out. There are some boys who tease us on way to school or coming back. My mother feels worried. Very worried. I reported about this to my teachers. That worked.

In my future life, I want to be a doctor. I want to help the poor people. I want to see my mother becoming happy .

The dream to become a doctor

Ulysses Noel (Faridpur)

I am Ulysses Noel. I am fifteen. My father's name is Bapi Adhikari and my mother is Bithika Roy. My mother works in a office. My Father lives in the United States. I am the only issue of my parents. I did not have the company of my parents much. I live with my grandparents. I love them. I have grown up in Faridpur town. Did not have much opportunity to see the rural Bengal. Honestly speaking, I am a pampered child. Did not face any challenge in my life so far. My grandmother took me first to the Adventist International Mission School. Then I got admitted in Faridpur Government Girls' School. Now I am a student of Class X in the science stream. In my childhood, I felt impatient with the thought of becoming an adult. That childhood is gone. Now I think that was a better time.

One incident still bugs me. One day, while coming back shopping, a middle-aged man made some offensive gestures and said some nasty words. There were some people around. But no one objected to it. I felt very bad. From that day, I knew that women have to be courageous to find a place in this society.

My parents, grandparents, friends all wish that I would become a doctor in future. I also have the same dream. One day my father said, 'As a doctor you should take care of the poor patients'. I want to realize this dream of all who love me.

Want to build up a Golden Bangladesh

Md Sheikh Russel (Jamalpur)

My name is Sheikh Russel. My father's name is Md Sobhan Sheikh and my mother is Fatema Begum. We are in all 7 members in the family. I am the third issue of my parents. I have one elder brother and one elder sister. My father was a very good soul. He was always a caring person, particularly to the family. He also loved my mother very much. Always tried to fulfil any demand from any of us. My mother is also a very simple person. At my mother's suggestion, I got admitted into Bagerhat school of Jamalpur. Earlier, I got the knowledge of the alphabet at home and joined a madrasa nearby. But in either of the places I couldn't continue my studies. We didn't have enough money.

Then I got to know about a NGO school run by *Aparajeyo Bangladesh*. Studying was free there. My mother met the officer of the organization and subsequently I got admitted. I worked hard and became a very good student. I stood first in each grade up to six. Well, the teachers helped me a lot. I got a scholarship. That too was very helpful.

Around us, most of the people are poor. As I grow into a man, I want to help them all. I will prepare myself in a way so that I can help build up my society. Now I am a student of Class X. By 2030, I want to contribute to the welfare of the country. I know the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of our Nation has not come true as yet. I want to build up a golden Bangladesh free from hunger and exploitation.

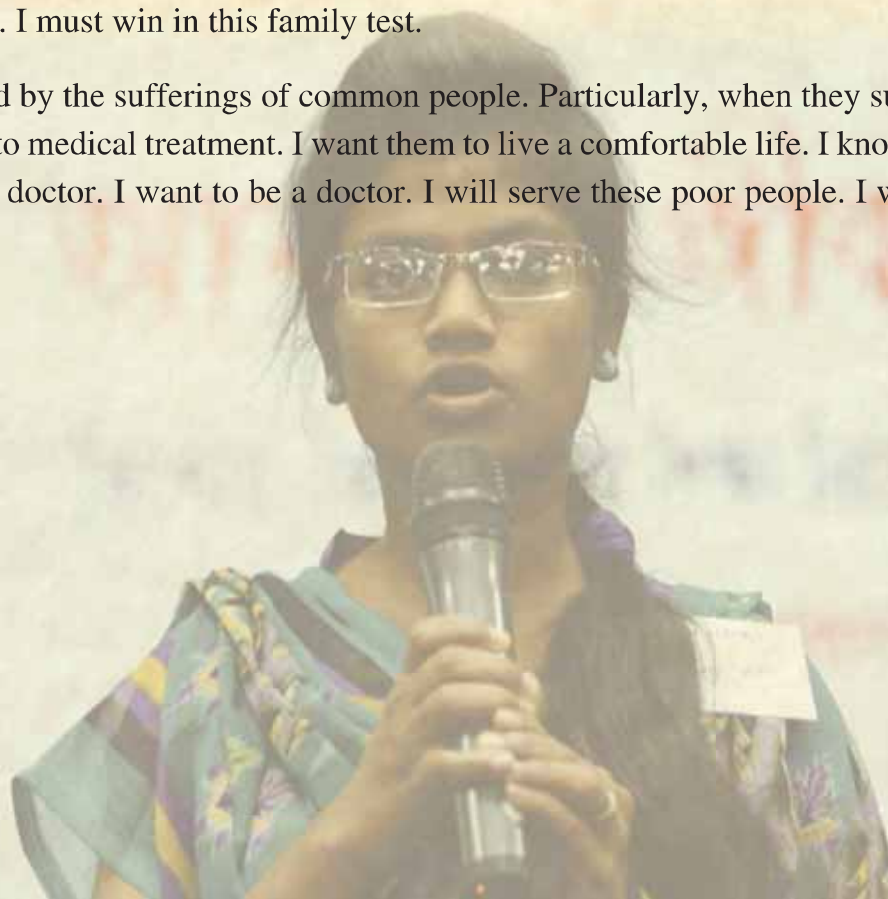
I want to be a doctor

Karima Sultana (Dhaka)

I am Karima Sultana. This year I have appeared at the School Certificate Exam. I am a student of the science stream. My father's name is Md Imadul Haque Sikder and my mother is Masuma Rahman. We are two sisters and one brother. I come from a middle class background. I received a lot of affection and adoration since my birth. My mother's wish is that I will set an example in the society as a woman.

However, I myself wove so many dreams from my childhood. And I work hard to get these realized. My first target is to get admitted in a very good college. But now I am facing a serious problem. And it has its root in my own family. My father and some close relatives want to get me married. But I want to continue my studies. However, my mother and brother are on my side. I must win in this family test.

I have always been touched by the sufferings of common people. Particularly, when they suffer from various diseases and don't have any access to medical treatment. I want them to live a comfortable life. I know many of them who don't have the money to pay the doctor. I want to be a doctor. I will serve these poor people. I will try to offer all kinds of cooperation.



I want to be a Judge

Tunan Jeena Tanwi (Barisal)

I am Tunan Jeena Tanwi. I am fifteen. My father's name is Md Enayet Kabir and he is a public servant. My mother is Sahana Akter. A housewife. We are two brothers and two sisters. My elder sister is a student of the Higher Secondary level. She needs some extra private tutoring to cope up with her studies. My brother goes to the nearby school. I have a brother who is physically disabled. Sometimes my father suffers from financial problems. We live in west Kaunia of Barisal. Most of the people of this locality are educated. There are a number of educational institutions in this area for young persons. Even the poor children go to the schools.

My mother initiated me to education. She used to take my elder sister too to the school. I also used to accompany them. That was the beginning of my love for school. One day, I too got admitted. My first school was Aswinikumar Sishu Niketon. It has an excellent environment. My love for it increased. The teachers were very loving. I used to take part in many extra-curricular activities such as, drawing, dancing and singing. There was prize for 100% attendance in the school. That gave a regular push to me. Graduating from my first school, I struggled to get admitted in the best school of the district. I failed. But I didn't lose heart. Next year, I again competed for it and I did succeed. In 2013, I appeared at Junior School Certificate Exam. I did well and got a stipend in the talent pool. That was a day of rejoicing for our family. Now I'm a student of Class X. I want get very good grades. But one thing I have understood that the women are repressed in our society. Even when they seek justice in the court, they are deprived of it. So I want to be a Judge in future. I will specially try to redress the woes of women in our country.

I will overcome disability, I will be a Ph D in IT

Faisal Md Ibrahim (Chittagong)

My name is Faisal Md Ibrahim. My mother is Hosnara Begum and my father's name is Md Ismail. My mother is a housewife and my father lives abroad. I was born In Saudi Arabia on Aug. 8, 2000. Three months after my birth, I became ill. I suffered from small pox. My eyes also got affected. My family could not primarily understand the magnitude of illness. Surgery was done on my eyes. That undid me. I became blind. After a year, my parents came back home. Everyone was very happy when I was born, but now I have become a burden for them. As I grew up, I came to understand that. I could hear the joyous sound when my friends play in the ground. But I can not take part in it. That depresses me very much. I moan, I will never see the beauty of this earth. Will never feel the joy of this world.

Anyway, I had to see an eye specialist regularly. One day, he informed my parents of a school for the blind in the locality. In 2008, I got admitted into Class I of that school at Chittagong. Beginning of a new chapter in my life. I was older than other students. My Head Master was very kind and caring. He managed special tutoring for me. I could catch up with others. I have now gained a different confidence. I think I can do everything and any thing. This year, I have appeared at school leaving certificate exam. Now I am a fuller person.

I nurture a dream. I will be a good human being and one day I will study Information Technology and earn a doctorate degree in that discipline.



I will be a doctor

Lima Rani (Dinajpur)

I am Lima Rani. I was born in 2000 in the village Gangapur under Dinajpur district. My father is Madan Kumar Devsharma and my mother is Shurutmai Devi. Ours is a cool and calm village. My father died of a heart attack in 2005. I have got a brother. We two became simply helpless after my father's death. Then my mother was working at Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Society (RDRS), an NGO. Her monthly salary was BDT 1000. It was too little to run the family. My mother's contract with RDRS terminated. That was a real blow for us. I was then a student of Class II. The Head Master of the school was kind. He managed a government stipend for me. My elder brother was then a student of Class VI. In view of our miserable conditions, my uncle took my brother to his house. However, in 2006, mother got another contract with RDRS. She used go to the office in the morning and come back in the evening. I was left at home all alone for the whole day.

Mother used to leave my food on a hanging jute rack. On the hot days boiled rice sometimes got rotten. Another day, Mom unmindfully left the food on the table. A dog came in and ate it. On all such occasions, I had to fast. After 2005, Mom couldn't take appropriate care of mine. She had to be so busy that she couldn't even find time to get me to school for admission in Class VI. But I continued to work hard. I stood first in the exam.

I am a student of the science stream. I now tutor students of the primary schools. My teachers are very helpful. They always inspire me. I dream to become a doctor. With my determination I hope that I can be a doctor in future.

Will establish a school for free education of the poor

Md. Sajjad Hossain (Chittagong)

My name is Md Sajjad Hossain. My father's name is Md Abu Taher and my mother is Saleha Begum. I am fifteen and now I read in Class IX. We are three brothers and one sister. We live in the Chandgaon area of Chittagong. I come from a poor family. I have to continue my studies under great hardships. The name of my school is Ananda Multi-Media International School. I am studying in this school for the last 5 years. My family has a dream about me. But I want to be a teacher. I want to contribute to the society. I know that quality education is not ensured in our schools. I want to take care of that as I become a teacher. There is no school in our village for the poor children. They remain deprived of education. I will establish a school where the poor can have free education. If I can do that, it would be great.

I remember, when I was in Class IV, one of my friends could not take part in the exam. He had no money to pay the fees. It touched me deeply. I know the government is trying for the development of education. But I also want to play my individual role as I become a teacher.



I want to be a politician

Suprabha Haq (Rangpur)

I am Suprabha. We live in Munshipara, Rangpur. This is good area to live in. There is open ground in front of our house. Boys and girls assemble in the afternoon for sports. There is a tea stall nearby, run by Hashem uncle. In the joint family, we are more or less happy. My father is a journalist while mother a teacher. Anyway, I am not a backward student. There was a notorious boy in our school. Everyone was afraid of him. One day I gave him good beating. From that day, I became a leader.

When I was four, my father took me to a school. As a good girl, I commanded love from all. I faced no serious problem for my studies. I can remember one thing. Then I was in Class VI. Our friend Eva one day entered the class and started crying. We all got scared. On enquiry, we came to know that some wicked boys teased her on way to school. We reported it to our teachers. We had another girl in our Class named Sushama. She was a champion in karate. Sushama fisted the wicked boys out of the road.

Anyway, now I am a student of Class X of Rangpur Cantonment Public School. The school is my second home. From my childhood, I am always restless. Teachers often scolded me for that. But I too have a dream. I want to see a society where there is no room for repression and injustice. I want to be a politician. Only good politicians can bring about meaningful changes in the society.

Want to be a police officer

Swadhin Talukdar (Rangamati)

I am Swadhin Talukdar. My father is Mongsui Talukdar and my mother is Apruma Talukdar. My father's place of work is Rangamati. Our village is known as Lemuchharipara. I have grown up in this village, which is a nice abode of nature. But sometimes the villagers get entangled in quarrel over the possession of land. Some people try to illegally take over the land of the indigenous people. So we live an anxious life.

I got admitted in a local school. Mother used to take me to the school. Now I am a student of Class X. There is not much problem to my studies. My parents help me, so do the teachers. Everybody loves me. I want to study as much as I can. Then I want to become a police officer. My education can take me there. This is the dream I cherish. As a police officer, I want to serve the people. I will protect them from the oppression of the wicked people.



Nursing a dream to become a doctor

Maruf Ahmed (Sylhet)

My name is Maruf Ahmed. My father is Masuk Miah and my mother's name is Aflatun Nesa. My father is an agricultural worker while my mother is a housewife. I was born in the village called Chhatol. We are three brothers. No sister. There are some public schools and madrasas in our village. But I studied in a NGO school run by BRAC. I read up to Class III. I failed to pass the exam. So the school didn't allow me to continue. I still hope to find a place in any public or any other BRAC school. If I get that opportunity, I will work hard and continue my studies. I dream that one day I will be a doctor. If I fail, then I will become a trader in animal feed.

I can't walk normally. My hand trembles as I eat. But my friends and the neighbours love me very much. I dream that all my brothers and villagers will have the access to education. When my two brothers would complete their education, I would like them to fly overseas in search of jobs. They will earn more and we will no longer remain poor.



I want to be a famous actor

Md Sohel Howladar (Khulna)

My name is Md Sohel Howladar. My father Md Selim Howladar. My mother is Parveen Aktar. We come from a village of Barisal. My father often used to torture my mother. One mid-night my mother took me to my paternal aunt's house on the other side of the river. But the aunt's family forced my mother to go back to my father. Tortures followed. It was all for dowry. He didn't even love me. When I was in Class III, one day father beat my mother so much that her legs got fractured. That was the end to my studies and I was sent to work. One day I stayed back home. My father beat me very harshly. Then I left the house for Dhaka to stay with my elder brother. There I joined a garment factory. But I felt unwelcome in that house and came back to the village again. Incidentally, I met an aged woman. I told her the story of my life. She was kind. She took me to the office of one NGO, *Aparajeyo Bangladesh*. I found a space to stay.

I was again enrolled in Class III. I worked hard and got good grade in the exam. I got a chance to join a training course of UCEP. I love to act roles. I took part in several productions of *Aparajeyo Bangladesh* performed at different sites of Khulna. I have played a role in an ATN Bangla TV production.

I want to become a popular actor in future.

Transformable Dreams: a teacher or a trained person in sewing

Kalpana Kurmi (Sylhet)

I'm Kalpana Kurmi. My mother's name is Sonamoni Kurmi while my father is Lakshandhar Kurmi. We are 5 sisters and 1 brother. I am the youngest of them. My father used to work in the tea-garden. My elder sister read up to Class nine. Then I was a student of Class five. All on a sudden, my father broke his right hand. And that brought a disaster to our family. It meant a stop to education of all of us. I needed some money to get admitted in Class six. But we didn't have that. The family responsibilities were borne by my mother and brother. But I still look back. Had we have the money for my schooling, then after completing my studies, I could become a teacher.

I always thought that I will play an active role to eradicate illiteracy. Education is like light. It can help people to find their paths. Being a teacher I could have contributed to the development of the society. Please allow me one opportunity, I will prove my worth. However, I would like that at least I am given an opportunity to have training in sewing. I will weave my dream on the clothes.

I want to be a nurse

Sumi Aktar (Faridpur)

I am Sumi. My father's name is Md Halim and my mother is Jharna Begum. My father is a rickshaw-puller while mother works as a domestic assistant. We are three sisters with no brother. I am the eldest of all. I too work as a domestic assistant like my mother. My monthly salary is BDT 1000.

I was born in the Nimtali slum of Dhaka. As a child, I saw children going to school. Even those children with whom I play in the afternoon. That somehow created in me the urge to study. I shared my wish with my mother. She didn't show any interest. I felt so bad! But my playmates informed about the *Surovi* school. The advantages available there. In fact, they came to our house and implored on my mother to send me to school. Then my mother took me to *Surovi* school. I got admitted there. The start of a new life. I don't really have any words to say how great the feeling was on the first day in school! When I was in Class six, want and sufferings of our family multiplied. I stopped going to the school. I dropped out and went back again to the work of domestic help.

But still I want to continue my studies. Moreover, I want my sisters to be educated. If that opportunity ever comes, I will make the best of it. In future, I want to be a nurse. This profession beckons me. I can help the ailing persons. I still nourish the dream. May be, I don't know whether I will ever succeed.

Had a dream to become a nurse

Amena Begum (Sylhet)

This is Amena Begum. Md. Lal Miah is my father. My mother's name is Renuka Begum. We live in Bahubal, Sylhet. We are four sisters and one brother. I am the third. My father is a rickshaw-puller. My mother works as a cleaner in a factory-office. The elder sister's marriage broke down. Dowry was behind it. She is the mother of 1 son and 1 daughter. The boy reads in Class III. The girl is 4 years old. Now my sister works as a domestic help. My brother is a student of a college.

My father is 75. Can't pull the rickshaw well. The brother earns a little from private tutoring. I went to school till Class V. Then with no material help available from the family, I dropped out. With some monetary help, I still hope to continue my studies.

I always wished that I will be a nurse in future. That occupation fascinates me. I had some training in tailoring. But I don't have the money to buy a sewing machine. Hardships have a negative effect on me. I just want to get out of this vicious circle of poverty.

Want to be teacher

Md Mehdi Hasan Rabbi (Khulna)

My name is Md Mehdi Hasan Rabbi. My father is Md Jahangir Hossain and my mother is Rahima Khatun. We live in Khulna. I was born in a poor family. My father was a day-labourer. The whole family was dependent on his income. At the age of 5, I was admitted in the school. I used to attend the school regularly. I stood first in the Class.

Suddenly, my father died in a road accident. Darkness had its full spell on our family. I stopped going to school. My mother had to take the responsibility of the family. But it was not to be. She found that she was not equal to the task. Frustrated, one day she committed suicide down the wheels of a running train. I could not take it. I left the house for unknown destination. Tired me, I was sitting by a road. One young woman found me. She listened to my tearful tale. She took me to the office of *Aparajeyo Bangladesh*. I got admitted in Class five in the school run by this organization. I got a stipend. In the Junior Certificate Exam. my grade was A+. Now I'm a student of Class IX.

I want to be a teacher in the future. That's the profession I admire. In particular, I want to teach the poor children, the destitutes.



If I could be a member of the army

Sankar Murmu (Joypurhat)

I am Sankar Murmu. My father is Shukra Murmu. My mother is Shuksoni Murmu. We live in a village named Mahipur. It's a nice village on the river. We are 3 brothers and 1 sister. There are a number of schools in our village. My father is a farmer. He works as an agricultural worker in the plots owned by others. The family depends on his income. It's simply a tough hand to mouth business. We can't have food everyday even. We have no land to ourselves. My mother met an accident wounding her left knee. She cannot do any thing challenging. She can't help the family with any income any more. At one time, I used to attend the Mission School. After Class V, I moved to another school. but after Class VIII, I couldn't continue any more. Well, my other siblings are still going to the school. Some money is to be spent for their education. So, in order that they can continue their studies, I am working now. I am a technician in a garage. I see my friends going to school everyday. That's not a joyful but a painful sight for me.

I still ponder that one day I will restart my studies. After that I will join the army. I will enjoy my life. As an army personnel, I would serve the people and the country.

Want to be a teacher

Romena Aktar Fatema (Jamalpur)

My name is Romena Aktar Fatema. My father's name is Md Rahim. My mother is Halima. I am fifteen. I don't have a father. Mother works in a house as a domestic help. I look after my siblings at home. As a child, I got enrolled in a school in my village. Enjoyed my school very much with my friends. We had so much fun. But poverty drove us from the village to the city of Dhaka. We know, work opportunities are more in the mega city. At Dhaka, I don't go to the school any more. But I always wish to attend any school again. I see a lot of girls of my age going to school. That makes me more sad. I wish I could join them. But poverty won't let me do that. I think if someone would have convinced my mother about the good uses of education, she would have taken some measure to send me to school.

In future, I want to be a teacher. I want to take care of the poor children like me. I would teach them for free. I don't want them to work at other persons' house. I pray for help from all. By 2030, I want to be a teacher. That's what I am looking forward to.

Want to be a police officer

Shahnoor Akter (Pabna)

I am Shahnoor Akter. I live in the village Galsaria. I am fifteen. My father is Bakul Hossain. My mother's name is Taslima Begum. In my childhood, I used to go to school. I read up to Class IV. My school was Central Girls' Government Primary School. My mother used to take me to school. She was worried if as a girl I would face any problem. But this could not be long. For reasons of poverty, I had to drop out. I know this happened more for the reason that I had been a girl. My friends go to school. I feel a sort of being abandoned. Had I given the opportunity, I would have proved that I too can achieve.

I love my country very much. I want to come to the help of the helpless girls like me. I want to change this society. I want to see that like me nobody remains deprived of education. Corruption is one reason why our country is not properly developed. I want to see into that. So I want to be a police officer.



Want to be a police officer

Ona Akter (Barisal)

I am Ona Akter. I am fifteen. We live in Barisal. My mother is Nilufa Begum. She is a housewife. My father's name is Md Nur Islam. He is a day-labourer. I was first admitted in a primary school. Then I got enrolled in the secondary school too. Well, every thing was not easy. We are poor. But my parents wanted me to continue. They wanted me to work hard. But eventually I failed. Poverty did not allow me to move ahead. I still hope that I can have some chance in the future. I want to go back to the school.

My dreams are shattered. I had a dream that one day I will become a police officer. That's how I want to serve the society. Another chance, and I will make my dream true.



Want to join the army

Palash Marma (Chittagong)

I am Palash Marma. I don't have a father now. His name was Aungthoichi Marma. My mother is Afruma Marma. She earns from joom cultivation. My brother reads in Class V and the sister is a student of Class III. However, I dropped out when I was in Class IV. I wanted to continue my studies, but couldn't. This hurts me very much. I am sad for another reason. After my father's death, my mother has married again. I have two more siblings from my step-father's side.

My dream is to join the army. I want to know how can I do that. I will do every thing required for that. And given a chance for education, I will go back to my studies.



The Dream was to become a doctor

Bishnupada Das (Rangpur)

I am Bishnupada Das. We live in a remote village in Rangpur. My father, Narayan Chandra Das, is by occupation a fisherman. My mother is an agricultural worker. Her name is Minati Das. when I was in Class III, my father was suddenly found to be suffering from cancer. And that was the end to my education. It was extremely difficult for my mother to maintain the family and pay for the treatment of my father out of her meagre income. So I was left to take up my father's profession, fishing.

The income is never certain, once it is BDT 250, next day it is 200 or less. I could add up only that. But cancer took away all of it. Cancer deprived me of education. Dream rested far away from my life.

I had a dream in my childhood. I will become a doctor one day. I will try to look after the poor patients of the village. I will be beside these helpless people. But the dream still haunts me. If ever I can go back to school and continue my higher studies in science, I will earnestly try to be a doctor. By 2030, I want to establish a cancer hospital in our locality.

That dream is lost

Pakhi Hijra (Rangpur)

My father is Md Abu Jafar. He is a rickshaw-puller. Our village is called Balapara. This is a beautiful village. Rail tracks go to unknown ends through this village. Enough of green around.

I know I am a strange kind of person. An androgynous fellow. I am not much of a welcome person in the society. That makes me sad. I could never think of going to the school. But the urge was within me to go to school. I silently saw other children going to the school. In the childhood, I also dreamed of going to school. And after that I would take up a profession. I will help my family. I will serve the society.

As a child, I didn't know my body. When I discovered who I am, then my dream was over. Well, not actually over. I want to see that the dream is being realized through my nephews and nieces. When they will become adults they will earn a lot, I hope to stay with them peacefully and honourably. Then no one will make bad comments about me.



Want to help in rural development

Mahbuba Akter (Sylhet)

My name is Mahbuba Akter. My father is Aynul Huq. My mother is Sakhina Begum. My father is a fisherman. Me and my mother help father in fishing. We are in all five brothers and sisters. Ours is a poor village. There is a school in my village. But I had been never to there. But school-going children always create within me the urge to go to the school. My family is very poor. My parents cannot afford to send me to school.

In my childhood, I saw the doctors clad in their white aprons. I then dreamed if I could be a doctor like them. I still want to go to school. I want to be a successful person. I want to see that all my siblings are educated. But I know that is not to be. So as I grow up, I will try to play an important role in rural development.

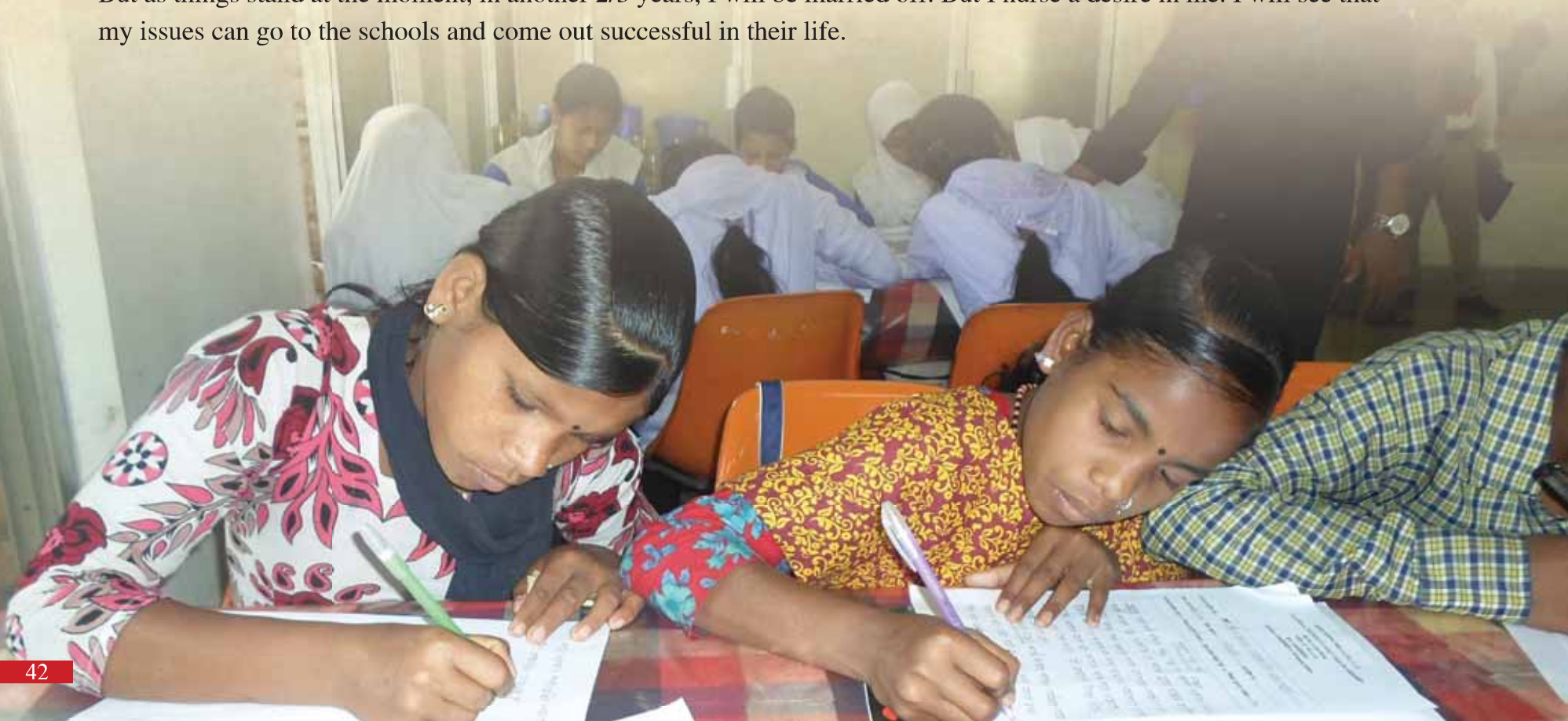


Had a dream to become a doctor

Poly Akter (Habiganj)

My name is Poly Akter. My father is Phul Miah. He is a mason. My mother is Saheda Begum. She is a housewife. The name of my village is Baniachong. A lovely nice village with 7 schools in it. I very much like to go to the school. But my parents didn't allow it. There is a garment factory in our village. My father wants me to join the factory. He thinks that women don't have to have any education. Sometimes he had been furious on me as I wanted to go to school. But my mother is on my side. They often have debate on that,

In my childhood, I had a dream to be a doctor. I still hope there could be some chance for me to go for higher education. But as things stand at the moment, in another 2/3 years, I will be married off. But I nurse a desire in me. I will see that my issues can go to the schools and come out successful in their life.



Want to find a job after my studies

Jasmine (Rangpur)

My name is Zahidul Islam and my mother is Jahanara. My father is a rickshaw-walla. Mother works as domestic help in another house. We live in the village called Mulatoli. We are very poor. That stood against my going to school. From the family income, it's very difficult to ensure a hand to mouth living. For some months, I went to school. But nobody in the school liked to mix up with me. My clothes were tattered and not clean enough.

I started working in someone's house when I was 10. If I made any simple mistake, the penalty is physical beating. There was no food for me on that day. I had to work almost round the clock. I wanted to leave the place. Ma said, 'Don't do that. Your small income also is good for the family'.

I had a dream that one day I will find a job as I complete my studies. But studies eluded me. The house where I worked had school-going children. That was a painful sight for me. At one point, I could not take the sufferings any more. I left the house. But alas! I could only change the address of my workplace.

But I am confident. If I get a chance, I can do well in studies. I can establish myself as a successful person in the future. I just want to say, no child should be deprived of education.

Either a sportsman or a grill-smith

Md. Sagor (Rajshahi)

I am Sagor. My father's name is Md Alauddin. He is a mason. My mother is Ayesha Begum. She works in a garment factory at Dhaka. When I was 10, my father divorced my mother and married another woman. The step-mother didn't like my going to school. Everyday there took place a quarrel on it. That undid me. I felt so bad. Others go to school and I don't. At the age of 12, I joined a shop as a worker. We were poor. So my income lessened some burden of my father.

I feel if there was no quarrel in our family, I could continue my studies. I had a desire to become a famous sportsman, a player of football or cricket, may be. Now I work in the store from morning till night. Studies apart, I don't have any leisure for sports. The opportunity of studies is gone. No room for sports too. Now I look forward to any training in some area so that I can have a job. I have seen those smiths working with iron bars and turning them to grills for use in the establishments. I want to be a grill-smith now.



Want to be a successful farmer

Sagor Pattadar (Faridpur)

My name is Sagor. My father is Chanda Pattadar. My father died when I was only two. My mother's name is Phulbaru. She looks after our land. Our village is situated at the coastal area of Faridpur. I have 2 elder brothers. They work in the garment factory in Dhaka. I help my mother in various chores. My father left a big amount of debt. We are now paying that back. Hardships and helping my mother at work did not allow me to go to the school. That depresses me. If my father would have been alive, I might have gone to school now.

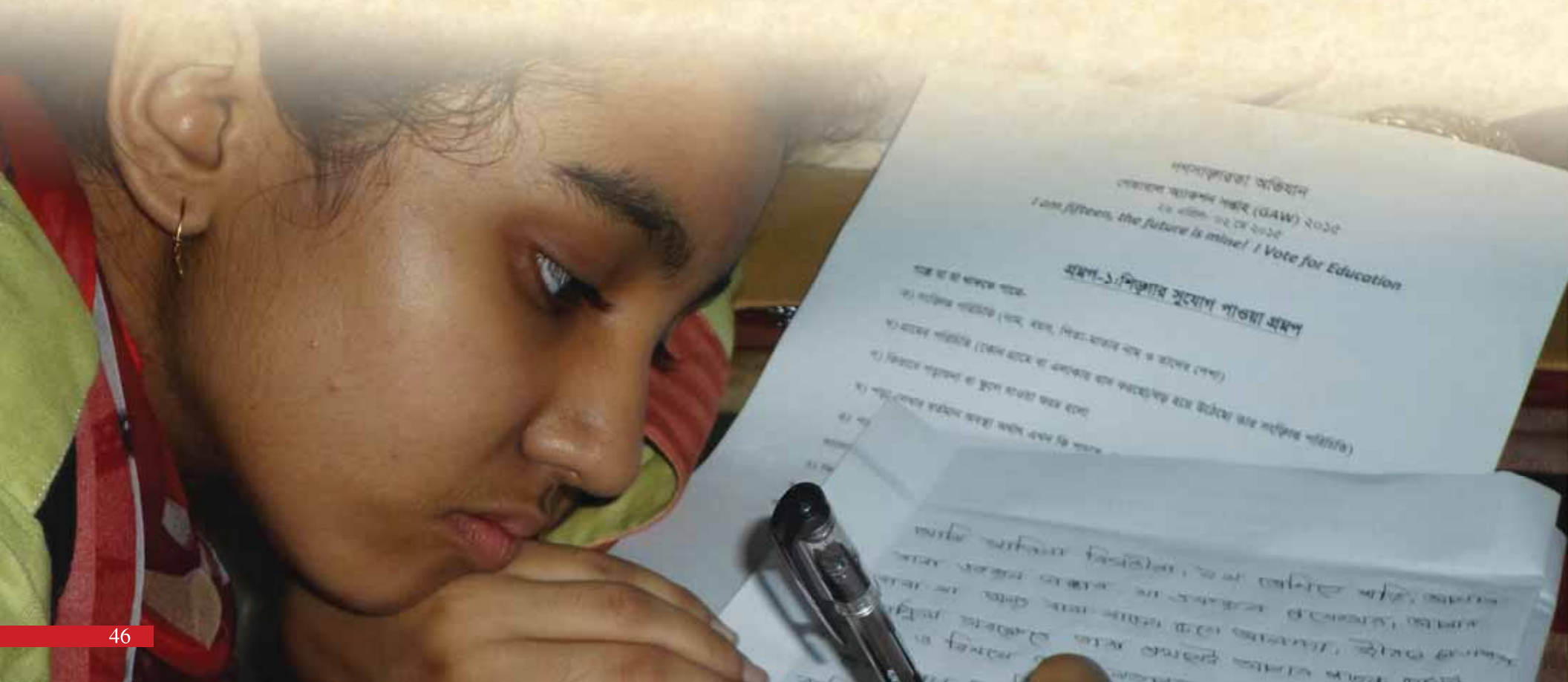
I had no dream to be somebody as I grow up after completing my studies. There was no scope for that. In the next 15 years, I want to grow more vegetables. I want to be a successful farmer.



The dream of becoming a doctor

Minara Aktar (Faridpur)

I am Minara Aktar. I am fifteen. My father is Sheikh Ruthfa. My mother is Rahima Begum. I look after the domestic chores of our family. The name of my village is Taramajhi. We are a poor family. I cannot take part in sports. I don't have the time. I have a younger sister. She also does not go to school. My father doesn't like women to go to school. But I love to go to school. I have seen a doctor coming to our village. She talked so nicely, listened so carefully to what others say. I admired her very much. If I was allowed to study, I would have worked hard to become a doctor. I am sure I could make it. But fortune is not on my side.



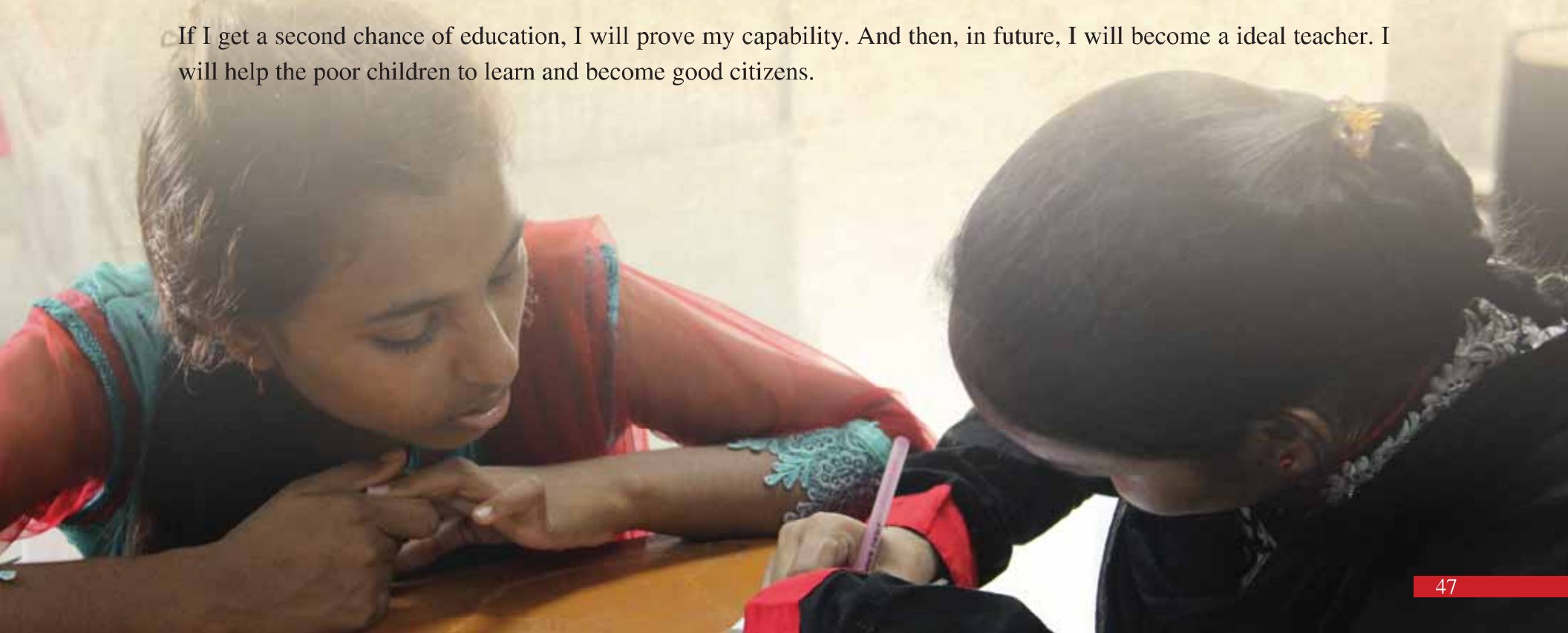
If I could be an ideal teacher

Panna Akter (Mymensingh)

I am Panna Akter. My father is Nazrul Islam and my mother is Rehana Begum. She is a housewife. We live at Nandail under Mymensingh district. My father is a poor farmer, a sharecropper really. I read up to Class Two in a BRAC NGO school. My parents could not afford my going to school. In the BRAC school, I had nothing to pay. But while at the third grade, I have to pay. My father cannot pay for me. I am out of school for the last 3 years. I help my mother in her domestic chores. I don't like doing that. I want to be a successful person.

As I see my friends going to school, my heart aches. I want to be their companion. I talked about this with my parents. But they only expressed their helplessness. But everyday, I dream that I am going to school. I want to go to school. I want my right to education.

If I get a second chance of education, I will prove my capability. And then, in future, I will become a ideal teacher. I will help the poor children to learn and become good citizens.



Want to be a successful garment-worker

Rowshan Ara (Manikganj)

I'm Rowshan Ara. My father's name is Nasir Uddin and my mother is Selina Begum. We are two sisters and four brothers. All my sisters and brothers live with my paternal grandmother in the village. Three years ago, my parents migrated to Dhaka and took me with them. My father is a carpenter and my mother works in a house as a domestic assistant. Earlier, I also worked as a domestic help in different families. Two years back, I have joined a garment factory. Out of my salary, every month I send some amount home.

I don't want to think anything else about my career. I wish to become an expert and successful garment worker. I want to be an independent person. This would be my permanent profession. I want the security of my job. I want to be successful financially and thereby climb the stairs that would take me to the upper strata of the society. I want to make everyone happy in my family. I want to stand on my own.



Had a dream: I would become a journo

Nayantara Putul (Barisal)

My name is Nayantara Putul. My father is Alam Mridha and my mother's name is Baby Begum. My father is a day-labourer and my mother is a domestic assistant in a house around. We are five brothers and sisters. I am the youngest one. We live in the slum of Palashi. My sister has been given books for free from her school. That helps her to continue her studies. But I don't have the access to that. Nobody ever came forward to help me in my studies. So, I am an out-of-school girl. However, I always had the passion to go to the school. After the completion of my studies, I dreamed to become a journalist.

With any kind of help, I still want to read and write and learn.



A sad soul sans dream

Humaira (Barisal)

I am Humaira. My mother is called Fatema Begum. My father is Md. Rashid. We are five brothers and sisters in all. Poverty drove me out of the circle of education. My father is no more. If someone comes forward to help me out, I would still love to go to the school. Moreover, I would like to see that my brothers and sisters are also going to the school. Everyday I see the children from our neighbourhood going to the school. That sight hurts me to the core.



Want to be a policeman

Al Amin (Barisal)

I am Al Amin. My father is Syed Mir. My mother's name is Aklima. My father is a rickshaw-puller. My mother works in a brick-field. The whole day, my parents work outdoor. I have two siblings, a brother and a sister. I am the eldest. So I have to look after them. More often, I have to do the cooking too.

I nurture a dream. I would become a policeman as I grow up. Then I will have the capability to take care of my sister and brother. And they would become successful persons in future. We live in an open space nearby the stadium. So we are almost compelled to meet people of largely diverse backgrounds. Crimes take place off and on. As a policeman, I will try to restrict these crimes. I want to put an end to them.

I know some persons can learn even when they are adults. I look forward to such an opportunity. I still want to be educated. As I build up my career as a policeman, I will bring smile to my mother's face. That's my dream.



Want to serve people as a doctor

Md Imran Miah (Mymensingh)

I am Md Imran Miah. I am fifteen. My father is Md Haris Miah. He is a farmer. My mother is Nasima Aktar. She is a housewife. I live in a village called Chamaru under Mymensingh district. We are 2 brothers and 1 sister. I never got a chance to go to a school. I do help my father in his work in the field. We are a poor family. My mother liked me to go to school while father didn't like the idea. I understand that had we not been so poor, I would have gone to school.

I had a dream that one day I will become a doctor. I will serve the poor people. I still dream that I will get some magic chance. I will complete my studies. And I am a doctor. By 2030, I want to fulfill my dream.





‘এখন আমি পনেরো’

আমাদের জীবনের কথা

দুর্বার তারুণ্যের সংগ্রাম ও সম্ভাবনার কাহিনীগাথা



গণসাক্ষরতা অভিযান

I am still young. But my experience tells me that a doctor is a very important figure in the society. So I want to be a doctor. I want to serve the society as a doctor.

I want to become an ideal teacher myself. A teacher can help build up an ideal society. I believe, as a teacher I will play a strong role. In 2030, I want to be a successful teacher.

In my future life, I want to be a doctor. I want to help the poor people. I want to see my mother becoming happy .

But one thing I have understood that the women are repressed in our society. Even when they seek justice in the court, they are deprived of it. So I want to be a Judge in future. I will specially try to redress the woes of women in our country.

I want to see a society where there is no room for repression and injustice. I want to be a politician. Only good politicians can bring about meaningful changes in the society.

I want to become a popular actor in future.

In future, I want to be a nurse. This profession beckons me. I can help the ailing persons. I still nourish the dream. May be, I don't know whether I will ever succeed.

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I love my country very much. I want to come to the help of the helpless girls like me. I want to change this society. I want to see that like me nobody remains deprived of education.

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