

## Field Trip Bangladesh

November 2019

**from Claudia Jerger**

Corporate Cooperations YOU Foundation

## YES CENTER

Cox Bazaar



### General Background Information Bangladesh:

Human Development Index: 136 of 189

country	148,460 square kilometres
population	169 million inhabitants
population under age of 15	31.6%
population under age of 65	5.1%
population density	1,145 inhabitants per square kilometres – most densely populated territorial state in the world
population growth per year	1.6% (2015)
official language	Bengali
capital	Dhaka (17.6 million inhabitants)
other large cities	Chittagong (4.5 million inhabitants), Khulna (one million inhabitants)
political system	parliamentary democracy, constitution of 1972

religious groups	Muslims (90%), Hindus (10%), other (0.8%)
economy	belongs to the low-income countries of the world (LDCs)
per capita income in a year	1,080 US dollar (2014)
currency	Bangladeshi Taka (1 Euro=85.5 taka, January 2015)
rural population	66%
urban population	34% (2015)
industry	most important branch: textile industry
population living below the international poverty line (less than 1 US dollar per day)	43.3% (2010)
population living below the poverty line (less than 2,122 kcal food per day)	24.8%
extremely poor people (less than 1,805 kcal food per day)	16.4% (2015)
literacy	58.5% of women older than 15 and 64.6% of men can read and write (2015)
malnourished children under the age of five	32.6% (2014)

### Team:

The delegation visiting the YES Center Cox Bazaar consisted of:

Members of UNITED TEAMs (YOU Foundation & HOPE87): Mr. Robert Ottitsch, Mr. Rezaul Karim and myself.

The onsite partner organisation that manages the premises, the courses and sustainability is YPSA Bangladesh.

### Personal General Impressions:

Wherever you are in Bangladesh, you experience a welcoming culture, friendliness and respectful interaction that is overwhelming. No matter how poor the people are, they all help each other, share what they have and commit themselves to social engagement. Many of them though they have nothing or not much commit themselves to voluntary service for good causes. The youth is full of positive energy and wants to do everything with all its power to advance their country of which they are very proud.

Especially the youth is very proud of being "Bangladeshis" with their hearts and conceive the desire to be part of its country as „Change Agents“ to bring it forward. This attitude of the young people is extremely felt everywhere.

At every city, which I visited during this trip, I was received by the local police at the entrance to the cities/villages, not because it would be more dangerous for foreigners than in other developing countries, but because in case of danger or natural disasters the official authorities must know who is in the nearby areas. Some police agents also accompanied us to schools and projects as they are interested in seeing the commitment to the poor.

The traffic is everywhere extremely congested and very chaotic. On some days it was extremely difficult to attend more than one project in a day.

From Cox Bazaar to Chittagong the cyclone BulBul alarm reached our delegation and airports were shut down.

The enormous commitment and participation of the entire "communities" and the parents must be addressed in all projects. No matter where a site visit took place, the whole community gathered around the project to show themselves as an integral part and responsible for the implemented project.

### **YES CENTER Visits:**

The first visit to **YES CENTRE TANGAIL** the ESPRIT delegation consisting in Mrs. Kate Deckman, Mrs. Dilini Murray and Mr. Zahid Abed accompanied our YOU Foundation delegation.

Mr. Abed, who is in constant contact with the YES Centers and our UNITED TEAMS leader Mr. Rezaul Karim, informs himself about the progresses and needs. This constant interaction is very much appreciated by all partners and encourages the interaction and the Centres managements.

PC equipment was also delivered by Mr. Abed to the neediest YES Centers.

In addition to the professional courses, all YES Centers deliver workshops and lessons of different important education subjects, such as human rights, gender equality, and engagement in voluntary actions/projects.

The second **YES CENTER VISIT Cox Bazaar** was only visited by the YOU Foundation delegation. Here are some updates:



In a self-initiated programme by the youth students of the YES Center Cox Bazaar a Health Camp in the big refugee camp of the Rohingya is provided.

This also shows how much the youth is sensitized for social concerns and their already acquired skills make humanitarian aid actions possible.

The YES Center Cox Bazaar is the only youth education facility in the whole area. In this rural district there is nothing for the youth and the location and easy access are of major relevance, so as the professional course offer.

Courses proceed for any year now and 53 were successfully finished until today.

The Center offers vocational training in:

- Hotel Management
- IT and ICT
- Tailoring
- English
- Tourist Guide

The course offer is aligned to the local needs and perspectives and tourism is one of the main income possibilities in the region. Hotel Management is the most successful and most requested vocational training and Cox Bazaar already allowed some of the YES CENTER alumni professional jobs in the hotel industry.

Cox Bazaar is one of the main holiday locations in Bangladesh.

Most of the students and alumni actually visit and use the YES Center during their spare time as a „community center“, since there is no other place to meet, talk and discuss for the young people in the whole area. The YES Center therefore also acts as a community center to entertain and unite youth where they decide on social engagement actions to start. A part from the Rohingya Health Camp the YES Center students are also engaged in environmental and „beach clean-up“ programmes, promotion of blood donation (most delicate subject, because many people believe that donating blood takes away their spirit), smoke-free-days and more.

Young women also stay quiet often the whole day at the YES Center, not only because they live in nearby villages in huts without electricity, but also because they feel save there and can get access to the internet.

Volunteering lessons from ex alumni where they talk about their new working experience are also most welcome in the centre.

All students regularly mentioned their big appreciation for their teachers, the relationship and confidence they experience. Most of them also discuss personal matters with the teachers, others often with the only person they can talk to. We can say that teachers actually also act as life coaches who therefore are emotionally bonded to students issues.

At the same time the YES Center Cox Bazaar unites the most traditional and conservative minded students groups. The area is very conservative and whilst the young women still visited the centre covered in black Burkas or Hijabs in 2016, today most of the women are not covered or show their faces. This can also be considered a great success of the YES Center for women empowerment.

Men and women didn't have contact or discuss with each other. Now they sit, talk and discuss each other and learn together. Another incredible success story.

The DRR training courses that the ESPRIT delegation could also see at the YES Center Tangail certainly take also place in Cox Bazaar. These courses are very well visited. The students and very often also their parents and community members participate in the courses that are very much appreciated.

Students reach the Cox Bazaar YES Center on foot, often from far, because there is no public transport in the whole area and rickshaws are too expensive for the youth.

Some of the successful students that ended their tailoring courses received their own sewing machines and already manage their own businesses from home.

They are very proud and report that they can help to generate enough income for their families and are considered as active family members now, receiving big respect from husbands or parents, especially from male family members.

Students at YES Center Cox Bazaar are younger than for example in Tangail and in average they are 18-22 years old.

Four young men of the YES Center wished to show us the city of Cox Bazaar and acted as our tourism guides. The passion in showing us the locations and their homes was a very wonderful experience.



**THANK YOU ESPRIT FOR EMPOWERING YOUTH, ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN AND FOR GRANTING EQUAL CHANCES AND REALISING THE YES CENTERS WITH YOU FOUNDATION.**

(Images and Videos will follow by wetransfer)