

### মরিয়মের চিঠি

মরিয়মের বয়স ১৬ বছর। শান্তিগ্রাম কোডেক মহিলা সমিতির সদস্য। ছোটবেলায় স্কুলে পড়ার সুযোগ হয়নি মরিয়মের। তাই বলে মরিয়মকে নিরক্ষর থাকতে হয়নি। মরিয়ম এখন নিরক্ষরতার অভিশাপমুক্ত। তার জীবনে এ সুযোগ এনে দিয়েছে কোডেক পরিচালিত শান্তিগ্রাম বয়স্ক শিক্ষাকেন্দ্র। অনেক সংকোচ আর জড়তা নিয়ে মরিয়ম দু' মাস ধরে বয়স্ক শিক্ষা কেন্দ্রে পড়েছে। মরিয়ম এখন মোটামুটি লিখতে পড়তে জানে। অক্টোবর মাসে মরিয়মের ভাই চট্টগ্রাম থেকে বাড়ীতে চিঠি লিখেছে। মরিয়ম ঐ চিঠি পড়ে সকলকে শুনিয়েছে। শুধু তাই নয়, মরিয়ম তার ভাইকেও চিঠি লিখেছে।

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মরিয়মের মূল চিঠি

# "The mind is everything. What you think, you become."

Buddha

2020 to guide this cycle. The KMPDTT team organized a workshop and selected some KM champions on August 2022. These KM champions agreed to contribute to CODEC by providing important information and support for continuing CODEC's learning progress. As part of the activity, this quarterly KM report is published to keep on track with the current issues from different project activities. This report contains stories, lessons learnt and after action reviews from CODEC's projects and programs all over Bangladesh.

Learning is a continuous process. As a learning organization, CODEC has always been keen to incorporate modern mechanisms into its learning cycle. The Knowledge Management, Program Development and Technical Team (KMPDTT) was formed in

### CREDIT LINE

Editors Quazi Wafiq Alam, Director, Program and

Knowledge Management

Parsha Shanjana, Sr. Manager, Program and

Knowledge Management

Md. Sauban Masud, Sr. Program Officer, Program and Knowledge Management

Nowshin Matin, Sr. Program Officer, M&E

Contributors All KM Champions, MEAL focal and Project

Leads

Year of Publication September 2024

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### Director's Foreword

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this document, which highlights the remarkable achievements and transformative initiatives led by CODEC. Each story and project detailed here is a testament to our unwavering commitment to improving lives and fostering sustainable development in Bangladesh.

From Soma Akhtar's courageous stand against child marriage to Tapati Goldar's journey towards financial independence, these narratives showcase the profound impact of our work. The USAID-funded Nature & Life project in Teknaf, the School Feeding Programme in Ukhiya and Teknaf, the Shopnojatra Project, and the UNICEF-supported Education Project for Rohingya children are just a few examples of how our efforts are making a tangible difference in communities.



Our projects, such as the Sarjan method for integrated farming and the extensive tree plantation initiative, demonstrate our dedication to environmental sustainability and socio-economic development. The introduction of Rainwater Harvesting systems in Teknaf further underscores our commitment to providing sustainable solutions to pressing challenges.

The CODEC-Enrich Program has empowered individuals like Tapati Goldar to contribute to their families' financial stability and future. Similarly, the Education and Protection for Refugee Children (EPRC) project on Bhasan Char addresses critical child protection concerns, ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children through community-based mechanisms.

These successes would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our team, the support of our partners, and the resilience of the communities we serve. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in these initiatives. Your contributions have been instrumental in driving positive change and inspiring hope. As we continue our journey, let us remain steadfast in our mission to empower communities, enhance education, and promote sustainable development. Together, we can build a brighter future for all.

Warm Regards, **Quazi Wafiq Alam**Director, Program and Knowledge Management

Community Development Centre - CODEC

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### **Lessons Learned**

This study aims to enhance the lessons learned from the projects by exploring key questions related to project mplementation challenges and outcomes. It provides valuable insights into the strategic implementation process and examines the challenges faced during the project. Furthermore, it explores how these challenges were addressed and provides a comprehensive understanding of the lessons learned. Additionally, the study seeks to identify potential next steps based on the context-driven outcomes. By addressing these, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of project implementation and offers valuable recommendations for future endeavors.

Empowering Futures: How Education and Community Intervention Rescued Soma Akhtar from Child Marriage and Sparked Lasting Change in Mymensingh

Soma Akhtar, a 13-year-old girl from Kandapara village, Mymensingh, faced the threat of child marriage due to her family's financial struggles. Despite being an excellent student with a passion for learning, her education was jeopardized. Soma opposed the marriage and, with the help of CODEC, her parents were convinced to cancel the arrangement. As a result, Soma returned to her studies and became a top student, as well as a vocal advocate for girls' education. Her story illustrates the transformative power of education and the importance of timely interventions. Soma's courage and determination inspired other families in her village, proving that, with community support and determination, the cycle of child marriage can be broken, leading to lasting social change.

In Kandapara village, cultural norms and financial hardship drive families to marry off young girls. In Soma's case, her marriage was arranged at 13, putting her education at risk

### how did the team **respond**?

- Gathering community support in opposition of the marriage
- Targeted counselling for Soma's parents on the harmful effects of child marriage
- Raising awareness about the harms of child marriage in school events and community meetings

Soma's personal opposition to her arranged marriage was a pivotal moment in changing her life trajectory.

Her case illustrates the need for multi-faceted strategies—individual, family, community, and organizational support—to combat child marriage and promote education.

This case illustrates the need for multifaceted strategies—individual, family, community, and organizational support—to combat child marriage and promote education.





### learning?

Soma Akhtar's determination to oppose child marriage, despite societal and financial pressures, emphasizes the crucial role of individual agency. The timely support was instrumental in preventing her marriage and putting her back on an educational path, showing how community and organizational involvement can lead to significant positive outcomes. Soma's success not only empowered her but also inspired others in her village to prioritize education over early marriage, demonstrating the ripple effect of individual achievements on broader societal change. The case underscores the need for ongoing community engagement, continuous support for at-risk girls, and targeted efforts to address child marriage for sustainable, long-term impact.

### Transforming Primary Education in Bangladesh: Key Insights and Lessons Learned from the Esho Shikhi Project's Holistic Approach

The Esho Shikhi Project, is aimed at improving primary education in Bangladesh. The project seeks to increase learning opportunities, enhance teaching quality, and build the capacity of educational mentors across eight divisions, fifteen districts, and eighty-one upazilas, benefiting 10,000 schools, 10,000 head teachers, and 20,000 Bangla teachers. Key objectives include engaging parents and stakeholders in their children's education, reintegrating dropout students, strengthening teacher capacity to deliver high-quality Bangla instruction, and increasing access to quality teaching materials. Additionally, the project focuses on improving district and upazila-level planning and support, while enhancing the resilience of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to recover from natural hazards and disasters.

## lessons from

4 districts In the disaster-prone area of Patuakhali, conducting regular mock drills and preparedness activities effectively reduced disaster risks. Additionally, implementing a flexible syllabus in these vulnerable regions helped mitigate learning gaps, ensuring students could continue their education despite disruptions.



In **Sherpur**, the project **introduced reading and writing competitions** that were new experiences for many students, who showed great enthusiasm in participating. This excitement was mirrored by their parents, who expressed immense pride in their children's achievements, signaling a rise in parental engagement. The celebration of national days, which included these competitions and prizes, proved to be a significant morale booster for both students and the wider community.

In **Kishoreganj and Chattogram**, the project focused on **enhancing the leadership and preparedness of head teachers** through scripted guidelines for community engagement and Education in Emergency (EiE). The training equipped head teachers with the skills to conduct regular and effective School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, while also fostering literacy and reading habits among students through structured agendas.



### Empowering Local Communities through Eco-Friendly Production in Teknaf

The USAID-funded Nature & Life project in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, is being led by CODEC, with a focus on sustainable livelihood development. The initiative provided a betel nut leaf cutlery production machine (Leaf Plate Machine) to a local entrepreneur, Mr. Monir, who contributed 20% of the total cost. The project aims to repurpose the abundant betel nut leaves, typically discarded as waste, into eco-friendly cutlery. This initiative not only creates a new source of income for Mr. Monir but also introduces a sustainable alternative to plastic plates. The biodegradable nature of betel nut leaf cutlery aligns with environmental goals, offering a solution that minimizes environmental harm. Though new to the region, the intervention holds great promise for market expansion and improved financial stability for local entrepreneurs like Mr. Monir. Additionally, the local Range Officer has been actively supporting the project, providing ongoing assistance to ensure its success.

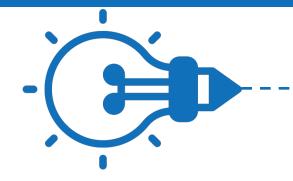
The initiative aimed to foster Mr. Monir's entrepreneurial development, despite initial concerns about his financial capacity, as he successfully provided his share and took responsibility for factory space, infrastructure, and raw materials, while the project supplied the leaf plate machine.



The selection of Mr. Monir proved effective, as establishing a sales contract with Enroute Greeneries Ltd. secured a steady market for the products.



The higher price of the plates compared to plastic, coupled with lower local demand and power outages affecting production efficiency, led to a decline in sales.





Mr. Monir has shown initiative in expanding his business by actively seeking new customers, while consistently supplying products to Enroute Greeneries Ltd., secured through a project-facilitated sales contract. This agreement has provided him with a reliable market and a steady income stream, helping establish his product in the market.







The project has demonstrated that properly utilizing waste, such as betel nut leaves, can be a valuable resource, turning it into **biodegradable products that significantly reduce plastic pollution**. This initiative has also shown the potential to provide an additional source of income for local communities, particularly for betel nut garden owners, including women. However, lessons learned indicate that insufficient production levels can hinder business growth, underscoring the need for increased capacity. To further develop this entrepreneurial initiative, hiring and training additional staff is recommended to meet market demands, alongside investing in better infrastructure and addressing technical challenges.

### Empowering Young Changemakers: Shopnojatra's Journey Towards Education, Environmental Stewardship, and Community Transformation in Bagerhat

Shopnojatra is committed to the well-being and rights of children in underprivileged communities across the Bagerhat district. Alongside educational support, the project fosters awareness on issues that impact children's lives and futures, including environmental protection. One of the project's key objectives is to cultivate environmental stewardship among these children. On World Environment Day, June 5, 2024, children from the centers actively participated in events under the theme, "Our land. Our future. We are #GenerationRestoration." They engaged in various meaningful activities, recognizing their role as the generation that can help restore the environment. The day's observances included Art competitions and rallies, community clean-ups, and a street show on climate change.

Students organized art competitions and community rallies, showcasing their environmental concerns and encouraging community involvement.







performance at Mithakhali Bazar, focusing on climate change, pollution, and environmental sustainability. The event was attended by local leaders, including Union Parishad representatives, and emphasized the importance of individual actions to combat global warming and protect the environment.

In Rampal Upazila, children identified the neglected condition of the "Foila Hat bazar" (local market) and initiated a **community clean-up**. This act inspired community members, demonstrating that maintaining a clean market is achievable through collective effort.





Approximately **100 people** attended the children's street show, receiving impactful messages on environmental responsibility. Audience members expressed intent to adopt eco-friendly practices.



Children demonstrated teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills, reinforcing their roles as agents of change within their communities.

Foila village now benefits from a cleaner, more hygienic market space, with community members encouraged to use designated waste bins. Market authorities committed to maintaining these standards in the future. The Shopnojatra project aims to empower children as community leaders who advocate for education, health, and environmental protection.

## What can we do better with the community?

- Enhanced support for maintaining cleanliness in public areas such as markets and bus stops is needed.
- Increased budget allocation for public events and day observances would enable a more extensive outreach.
- Creative, colorful posters could be used to attract greater community participation in future events.

Deworming Campaign Implementation *by SFP*  17
Enhancing Success in the CODEC-UNICEF Education
Initiative at Camp 4

### **After Action Review**

In this study, the collection of project action-oriented challenges and outcomes is facilitated through the utilization of the After-Action Review (AAR) tool. After the completion of each project activity, the project staff, under the guidance of the KM champion, conducted an AAR. The primary objective of the AAR report was to address four fundamental questions: determining the intended actions, assessing the actual occurrences, understanding the reasons behind any disparities, and identifying potential areas of improvement along with corresponding strategies.

### Deworming Campaign Implementation by SFP

Since 2017, CODEC has been implementing the School Feeding Programme (SFP) in the 33 FDMN camps of Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila. As of June 2024, CODEC-SFP reached 3397 Learning Centers (LCs) and supported 243,353 learners (127,372 boys and 115,981 girls). The primary goal of the program is to reduce malnutrition, alleviate short-term hunger, and improve attendance by providing each learner with a 50g fortified biscuit upon attending the LC.

### However,

Recognizing that children aged 5-16 are prone to parasitic worms, increasing the risk of anemia and malnutrition, CODEC-SFP conducts two annual Deworming Campaigns.



Difficulty scheduling time with Health Authorities

Engagement with educational partners for advocacy meetings

Securing approvals from relevant authorities







### **Events and Key Learnings**

CODEC-SFP was well-prepared to carry out the 1st Round of the Deworming Campaign scheduled for May 23-29, 2024. However, the campaign was postponed due to an extreme heatwave and the impact of Cyclone 'Remal,' following directives from the Civil Surgeon Office and RRRC. The campaign eventually commenced on June 5, 2024, but encountered further challenges due to Year-end Assessments and Placement Tests in Learning Centers. Coordinating with 25 Education Partners was complicated by these assessments and the approaching Eid holiday, which delayed the submission of vital consumption reports. Key challenges included severe weather conditions, the complexity of coordinating with multiple stakeholders, and scheduling conflicts with health and education officials. Despite these obstacles, CODEC-SFP successfully implemented the campaign by maintaining effective communication and collaboration with the Civil Surgeon Office, RRRC, and Education Partners. For future campaigns, improving contingency planning for weather disruptions and better aligning schedules with stakeholders will enhance the campaign's efficiency and minimize delays.

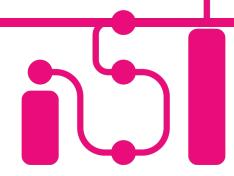
## Enhancing Success in the CODEC-UNICEF Education Initiative at Camp 4

CODEC, through its UNICEF-supported Education Project, aims to provide high-quality education for Rohingya children, ensuring their safety and security within Learning Centers (LCs). The project fosters strong relationships with stakeholders, including community leaders (Mahji, Imam), CIC (Camp in Charge), site management, and parents. These relationships are critical for community engagement, promoting child education, child safeguarding, and gender equity in the learning environment. The field team regularly conducts meetings with community members to raise awareness about the importance of child education and safeguarding. Knowledge Management (KM) observations focused on evaluating the effectiveness of communication, stakeholder engagement, and program implementation.

### **CHALLENGES**

Resistance from some community members regarding the LC construction.

**Logistical challenges** in coordinating meetings with the community, CIC, and site management.





CODEC team members, in close

### REALITY?

CODEC successfully executed its educational initiatives, including the construction of Learning Centers (LCs), in close collaboration with CIC (Camp-in-Charge) and the local community. However, during the construction of an LC in Camp 4, a group of community members deliberately obstructed the process by planting small trees on the site, falsely asserting it was a protected area. Their intent was to exploit the situation for financial gain from CODEC. Upon facing this obstruction, the team promptly reported the issue to CIC and site management. After a thorough investigation, CIC confirmed the community members' misconduct, ruled the land suitable for LC construction, and directed the area to be cleared. With the collective support of CIC, site management, and community leaders, CODEC successfully resumed construction without further delay.

collaboration with CIC, site management, local community leaders and community people, worked diligently to resolve the issue. The swift response from these key stakeholders prevented long-term disruption to the project. Community leaders, including influential figures like Mahji and

Imam, played a pivotal role in eas-

ing tensions and rallying support for the project's success. 21 Harvesting Hope

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### **Stories that Inspire**

This section consists of a collection of tales sourced from our committed team spread throughout Bangladesh. These accounts showcase the various projects we've undertaken in partnership with the local people and communities we cooperate with. Each story provides insight into the people and groups we've joined forces with, revealing the shared development and advancement we've encountered in our day-to-day work. These narratives stand as evidence of the influence generated by our combined endeavors and the motivating voyages of the individuals and communities we support.

### **Harvesting Hope**

In 2015, Kohinur Begum's family faced severe financial difficulties due to her husband Babul Hossain's prolonged illness. Living in a disaster-prone coastal region, they constantly battled crop failures caused by high salinity, which limited farming to the monsoon season, making them dependent on other regions for food. For over 38 years, CODEC has pioneered support for coastal communities. Since 2019, the CODEC PPEPP-EU project has focused on socio-economic development in these areas through innovative technology. Kohinur's family, identified as an ultra-poor household, previously relied solely on small-scale fish farming once a year. In September 2023, through a grant under the project, they adopted the Sarjan method—a dual technique combining vegetable cultivation with fish farming in wetlands, increasing land productivity and income.

Initially hesitant, Babul Hossain embraced the new technology with guidance. In just six months, he doubled his profits, selling 400 kg of vegetables like tomatoes, gourds, and pumpkins for Tk. 120,000/-. He also leased additional land to expand his crop variety, inspiring neighboring farmers.



Supportive guidance in overcoming skepticism toward new technologies and highlights the

**Sarjan method's value** in saline-prone regions, improving income and stability for families.



Contribute to **poverty reduction and resilient livelihoods** in target areas of Bangladesh.



Sustain livelihoods and **income generation** among target households.

**Improve household nutrition**, focusing on women and children.

Enhance access to agriculture and nutritionsensitive services









### **Planting for Tomorrow**

This year, Bangladesh has faced intense heat waves throughout the summer, with projections showing increasing temperatures in the coming years. Planting trees offers an effective solution to counteract rising heat, while also providing shade, disaster protection, and nutritious fruit for local communities. CODEC has launched an extensive tree plantation initiative across the Bagerhat and Khulna districts, funded by CODEC's resources, ERIKS Development Partner, and BSRM. The initiative has also established a dedicated support team in Bagerhat to ensure smooth operations. This project represents the largest tree-planting effort in the region, involving students in planting 100,000 trees, an unprecedented number for Bagerhat. At the core of this program are students, who hold the responsibility of planting and nurturing these trees, symbolizing the future of Bangladesh's environmental stewardship. CODEC aims to instill a sense of accountability in young people, entrusting them as "guardians" of these trees. By actively engaging students, CODEC believes they will foster a deep appreciation for environmental preservation, actively contributing to a sustainable future.



#### Green Initiative







### how did we start?

**Nursery and Horticulture Visits:** Teams assessed nurseries in Begerdanga, Boyra, Doulatpur, Gopalganj, and Bagerhat, gathering data on tree availability and pricing by June 7

**Site Selection:** CODEC carefully selected areas with administrative support for planting, including plans for tree protection measures.

**Collaboration and Communication:** Engaged with local agriculture departments, school authorities, media, and community stakeholders, with all meetings set for June 25 to discuss project plans.

So far, the children led 11,805 plantations



## Rainwater Harvesting for Safe Drinking

Nurul Absar, a dedicated 37-year-old member of North Domdomia VCF in Teknaf, faced immense struggles in accessing safe drinking water. In Teknaf's dry season, clean water is scarce, forcing Nurul and his family to rely on unsafe sources, putting their health at constant risk. Recognizing the urgency of the water crisis, CODEC's Nature and Life Project, with USAID support, introduced Rainwater Harvesting systems as a sustainable solution. Nurul was selected as a beneficiary and received a system designed to collect and store rainwater for household use. For Nurul's family, the Rainwater Harvesting system has been transformative. This straightforward system collects rainwater from the roof. filters it, and stores it in a tank. With this clean water supply, they no longer worry about availability, using it for drinking, cooking, and household needs. Neighbors also benefit, collecting water from Nurul's system. The initiative highlights that sustainable solutions like Rainwater Harvesting can enhance community health, and foster broader advocacy within communities.

- Expanding access to safe drinking water in water scarce regions.
- Enhancing community health and well-being by reducing reliance on unsafe sources.
- Fostering the adoption of Rainwater Harvesting systems within the community.





Now, I no longer have to endure the stress of finding clean water elsewhere or risking our health with unsafe sources. This **Rainwater Harvesting** system has restored our dignity and well-being.

- Nurul Absar

## **Homemaker to Entrepreneur**

Tapati Goldar is a hardworking woman dedicated to securing a brighter future for her family, which includes her husband, an agricultural worker, and two children. Although her husband's income covered the family's basic needs, Tapati wanted to contribute financially to ensure her children's future. Realizing that one income would limit their potential, she sought opportunities to help manage expenses and save for her children's education. Tapati joined CODEC-Enrich Program as a teacher at the Afternoon Education Support Centre, which boosted her confidence. Through the program, field workers introduced her to income-generating activities (IGA) training. She began with cow-rearing training and, with her husband's support, secured a loan of 200,000 Taka from the CODEC Loan Office to buy a cow. She invested part of this loan into her husband's farming endeavors, creating a diversified family income. Recognizing that profits from cow rearing would take time, Tapati also took training in poultry rearing, starting with a few chickens to meet household needs. However, she faced challenges with poultry rearing and, after discussing these issues with the CODEC Enterprise Development Officer, switched to duck rearing. This pivot proved successful, and Tapati continued expanding her duck and cow ventures, adding a steady income alongside her teaching role.



Today, Tapati owns assets valued at around 250,000 Taka. She now saves most of her farm income for her children's future and no longer relies solely on her husband's income.

Becoming an entrepreneur has not only brought her independence but also financial confidence.









- Women's involvement in incomegenerating activities fills nutritional gaps and alleviates poverty.
- Empowering women with economic roles increases their respect and acceptance within families.
- Access to resources and support is crucial for women to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams effectively.

# Safeguarding Children through Collaborative Protection

In response to the Bangladeshi government's decision to relocate Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char starting December 4, 2020, a significant challenge emerged: ensuring the protection and well-being of refugee children. The CODEC Education and Protection for Refugee Children (EPRC) project addresses critical child protection concerns, including unaccompanied and separated children, child-headed households, child marriage, abuse, neglect, child labor, and education disruptions. These issues are exacerbated by the isolated environment of Bhasan Char and the vulnerability of the refugee population, necessitating a robust community-based response. To tackle these challenges, CODEC has established and strengthened child protection mechanisms through the formation of 10 Community-Based Child Protection Committees (CBCPC). These committees are instrumental in preventing and responding to child protection issues. For instance, Ahmad Ullah, a dedicated CBCPC member for Shelters 27 and 28, exemplifies the impact of this initiative. Since joining in April 2023, Ahmad has undergone extensive capacity development training, including six sessions on CBCPC mechanisms and additional training on child protection services, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and positive parenting. His proactive efforts include preventing child marriages, conducting door-to-door awareness campaigns, and referring 60 critical cases involving medical issues, child labor, school dropouts, and more.



### Ahmad Ullah's reflections

- Effective child protection requires selfinitiative and constant communication with CODEC officers, volunteers, and relevant authorities.
- Daily vigilance and a sense of personal responsibility are crucial in ensuring children's safety.
- Community education and empowerment are key to sustainable child protection.

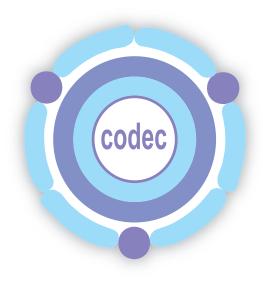


The EPRC project has empowered CBCPC members like Ahmad Ullah to make a tangible difference in child protection. Notable achievements include preventing five child marriages, conducting over 100 awareness visits, and referring 60 cases involving serious child protection concerns. These efforts have significantly enhanced the safety and well-being of children in Bhasan Char, fostering a more protective and informed community.

Whenever an incident occurs, Ahmad Ullah immediately steps in to report and resolve it. He has been instrumental in stopping child marriages and ensuring children's safety from various risks, including drowning and school dropouts.

- Robi Ullah, a resident of Cluster 28





#### Credits:

AKM Humayun Kabir Md. Shofiqul Islam Sankar Kumar Biswas

Ahad Ali Md Alauddin

Nelofar YasminMd Morsedul HaqueKhadija BegumMd Sakib HossainMd Monir HossainMd. Farhad-Uz-Zaman

Faisal Arifin Khadija Islam K.M.Alamgir Hossen Monir Hossain Abdur Rahaman Bhuiya Liakat Ali

Pulok Kumar Sen Md. Nur Uddin

Uma Das Md. Farhad-Uz-Zaman Md. Saber Md. Rafe Ahmed

Ranjan Bhattacharjee Md. Ahsanul Arafat Jowel

Sujay Paul Md. Ziaul Hoque
Lutfunnesa Md. Jahidur Rahman
Q.M Iqbal Hosen Md. Hasem Uddin
Sanaullah Kawsar Junaid Hossain
Aktaruzzaman Tapan Kanti Dey
Md: Nasir Uddin Md. Kamrul Hasan
Mohammad Faridul Islam K.M. Ashgar Ali Haider

Md Rashel Miah Avijit Majumder
Sk Al Mehedi Hasan Md.Mazaharul Islam

Md Anisur Rahman SM Tanvir Cover Photo:

Md Alamgir Hossain Shawkat Osman Wahammad Mahuhukur Dahman Krishna Kanti Nati

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