

Integrated Development of Vulnerable & Disadvantaged Children (IDVDC)

Background of the Initiative:

Street children and vulnerable orphans are in a destitute situation in most nations. As in many developing nations, in Bangladesh also, the major problems of street children include insecure life, physical and sexual abuse by adults of the immediate community, harassment by law enforcement agencies, inadequate access to educational institutions and healthcare facilities, and lack of decent employment opportunity. Thousands of children on the streets of Bangladesh are being denied their rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognizes that every child is entitled to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Following the hardship and abuse of life on the streets, many children suffer trauma and psycho-social disorders. Children living on the streets are often abused or oppressed by police and local goons, who frequently beat them, ask for money, and take away their valuables. The society at large keeps a distant and discriminatory look towards these children, which further isolates them from the mainstream society.

There are limited child development centers, vagrant homes, or orphanages in Bangladesh, whether run by the government or the non-government agencies, and the standard of care provided in these institutions often raise questions, while the lack of their monitoring leads to bigger questions.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) projected the number of street children in Bangladesh to be 1.5 million in 2015 and it is estimated reach close to two millions by 2025, while the government claims the current number is 3.4 million. The given situation clearly reveals that there are no comprehensive and reliable statistics available on the actual numbers, living conditions, needs and interests of children living on the streets.

Policies and laws regarding vulnerable children notwithstanding, their situation on ground has not changed much. In the 6.2 section of the National Children Policy, it has been stated that the Social Safety Net has to be expanded to ensure

the rehabilitation of all poor children and street children. In addition, the National Plan of Action for Children (2005-2010) also clearly emphasizes the urgent need for "education and empowerment." Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes the right to education for all including disadvantaged children.

However, the reality is different. A socioeconomic analysis report says that 51% of children are abused verbally in different dimensions and 20% of children are abused physically. Girl children face way more sexual harassment compared to boy children. According to studies, a total of 14.5% of street children face sexual harassment and exploitation (Street children in Bangladesh, a Socio-Economic Analysis 2005, ARISE, Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare.)

Addiction to drugs is common among street children. A working paper of 2011 noted that 27 of the 36 children who participated in individual interviews reported that they were regular users of one or more types of drugs. Dandy (snipping glue) and ganja were the most common drugs taken by them. Of the 119 street children who participated in the PGDs, 61 (51.26%) reported that they were regular users of dandy and ganja. Some abandoned street children reported that they experienced not only cigarettes, ganja, and dandy but were also addicted to heroin and injection. This means that the soft drug led them to take hard drugs. Moreover, they were under the umbrella of injecting drug users (IDUs) (because they always meet IDUs). The majority of the street children of all categories who participated in the PGDs did not have any knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including AIDS. Similarly, street children did not have any idea about the benefits of using condoms during sex acts. (Source: ICDDR, working paper no. 175 December 2011 ISBN: 978-984-551-330-2).

Daffodil Foundation

The [Daffodil Foundation](#) has been working for a long time with disadvantaged children and implemented several projects, especially related to improving development opportunities for street children and shelter homes, developing social protection mechanisms against child abuse, and exploitation which produce a significant impact on the lives of disadvantaged children.

However, to bring a long-lasting impactful change in the lives of street children, it was felt through experience that a holistic programmatic approach is needed. So the Daffodil Foundation established the Daffodil Institute of Social Sciences

(DISS) at Ashulia, in Savar, on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and is piloting its IDeVC project.

Eventually, a model for serving these vulnerable children will be developed and demonstrated for wider replication by anyone intending to change the lives of these hapless children.

Daffodil Institute of Social Sciences (DISS)

Its goal is to help street & disadvantaged children develop the attitude, knowledge, and life skills that will lead to employment and empowerment and ensure their entry into the mainstream society. If street children get basic education and develop life skills today, they will grow up as competent citizens of the country and contribute positively to society. Street children need support and services to protect, respect, promote, and fulfill their rights. DISS has been working in a way to protect child rights through implementing its '**Integrated Development of Vulnerable & Disadvantaged Children (IDVDC)**' project.

DISS is currently engaged in establishing finally an independent children's shelter home for 4000 children under the master-plan at Daffodil Smart City, at Ashulia near Dhaka city. This growth and development have been the product of a strategic thinking. DISS has integrated basic education for livelihood security with standard residential facilities for street & disadvantaged children aiming for their sustainable employment and assimilation into the society, ahead. As per the plan, DISS, in the first phase, has purchased land and constructed one Nine-storied building to accommodate 400 children from its core fund.

In the pilot phase, spanning February 2022 to December 2023, the target is to create the abode for the first 125 children. DISS expects the IDVDC project from 2024 to 2028 will ensure long-term intervention with 500+ children.

The DISS philosophy is to provide support to homeless, deserted children for their holistic development through education and vocational skills training within a residential campus. DISS believes that each child is unique and each child should be given the opportunity to fulfill his or her dreams and every child deserves a childhood.

One of the most difficult challenges facing children living on the streets is marginalization from their communities who commonly see them as dangerous mischief makers and thieves. Cultural programs and public events at the DISS contribute to community sensitization. Encouraging interaction between

children living at DISS and the neighboring communities helps change public perception and assists to promote reintegration of the children into the society at large.

Objectives of DISS:

The main objective is to support and rehabilitate the Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children, helping them to grow to their full potential through education and specialized hands-on training in different trades with employable skills and child development services. DISS is involved in an interim arrangement from the street to the world of security, work, and decent citizenship.

The specific objectives are:

- To ensure the social and economic security of helpless, poor, and distressed children.
- To help the enrolled children of DISS to grow with their in-born potentials and merits in terms of self-development, economic growth, and social change as part of evolved citizenship through education and training in different trades.
- To develop the necessary infrastructure and support facilities for DISS for the rehabilitation of ultimately 4000 children.
- To provide the children with balanced food, safe & secure shelter, clothing, physical and mental healthcare, formal education from KG to PG, life skills, and livelihood skills training on different trades for self-employment or wage earning.
- To motivate them to change their attitude and mindset towards a high level of moral values and lifestyle to become worthy, responsible, and disciplined citizens of the country.

Target group of DISS:

1. Orphan street children who reside, sleep, work and play on the street;
2. Disadvantaged most vulnerable family's children without parents;
3. Children staying with an extended family member but pass time on street for hunger and lack of care;
4. Mother died, married again, and settled somewhere else, or father also is married again, and settled somewhere else;
5. Father has left and mother works in other's houses and the child passes time on the street;
6. Parents are suffering from incurable diseases and are unable to work, and the child has been engaged in begging;
7. Father is untraceable and mother is suffering from an incurable disease while the child is engaged in some menial work or begging;

In the above-mentioned cases, the child's ages should be between 5 and 12 years. The selection team will ensure that the target population is not discriminated against. Both boys and girls will be given the same opportunity.

This project is Innovative due to these reasons:

Project Management:

- **IT Based program management, database, monitoring, and reporting:**

DISS uses SmartEdu platform (developed and designed by Daffodil Family), which is an LMS type software, to ensure paper-free and environment-friendly program management. During the pandemic, the SmartEdu was fully functional and DISS employed different functional tools like monitoring the staff activity, procurement and requisition, daily staff task, staff meeting, reporting, children's database, children's progress, etc. using the software, our staff did not attend physical meetings. If any incident occurs at the home and require real-time assistance or and new initiative approval, the frontline staff puts the requirement in the SmartEdu app and the management gives the necessary approval.

- **Specialized human resources deployment**

DISS is accessing services and technical advice from government institutions, NGOs, UN agencies, and Civil Society Organizations, and promoting the spirit of volunteerism as a cost-effective project management. DISS recruited need-based specialized and dedicated staff for the children's home. Currently, seven full-time staff and eight part-time staff are engaged working with the home and have got specializations in management, psycho-social counseling, general teaching, ethics education, certified medical practitioner, sports and game, music, art, caregiving, and ICT. DISS also gets expert support from different sectors as needed. For example, UNICEF, Shishu Polli Plus, SCAN Bangladesh, and the department of social welfare (Government of Bangladesh) have visited the home and given expert opinions to DISS for further holistic development. Moreover, DISS receives health-care support for any special cases from Enam Medical College, National Institute of Ophthalmology, and National Children's Hospital which are public/private entities in nature. There are also exchange programs with senior citizens and professionals.

Program Intervention:

- **Comprehensive support:**

Generally, various organizations, including the government, provides partial support for disadvantaged children in Bangladesh. For example,

the department of social welfare is not providing livelihood development support; other NGOs also manage programs to provide drop-in-center support (daytime only) or support sheltering without drug detoxification service, etc. But, DISS provides diverse and innovative, fruitful services for mental and physical health, nutrition, livelihood training (under outcome-based curriculum), safe accommodation with food, life skill education, moral/religious education, technical education (by developing a special curriculum in association with Daffodil International University and Daffodil Foundation), community-based support, entrepreneurship development, job placement and social inclusion;

- **Networking with like-minded organizations to ensure enrollment:**

DISS has signed MoUs with Social Business Student forum, LEEDO, to use the resources to enroll the children in the center considering the cost-effective manner and utilization of existing resources. DISS accesses healthcare support from the local hospital, and clinic managed by the government and private sector. A MoU was signed with Enam Medical College, Savar for health care support for the children with a subsidized rate. They had considered a 25% discount on all medical costs for our children.

- **No Service Closure:**

All the organizations and service providers support children (up to 18 years) and later on send them back to their homes or other places (including government agencies as well). But, DISS enrolls children from 05 to 12 years old, supports them up to the rehabilitation stage, and attempts to settle them in the society. No service closure age has been fixed in the program.

- **Entrepreneurship Training:**

DISS also emphasizes entrepreneurial development in line with the government's vision for self-sustenance, and hence it trains the children in basic skills of business and self-sustenance as well..

- **Youth Volunteerism:**

Another, unique initiative taken by DISS is to promote youth volunteerism to engage in nation-building roles, contribute to child protection, and develop them as future leaders in the child rights sector in Bangladesh apart from their regular jobs. DISS has engaged itself with the Daffodil International University through exchange of volunteers.

Research and Innovation:

DISS collaborates with research and innovation programs where academicians from home and abroad, the government of Bangladesh and Daffodil International University get engaged.

School for Development Learnings:

Number of short courses were initiated and more to be introduced very soon, for the professionals working and willing to work in human rights, child rights, and in the development domain. The program will be initiated in collaboration with Daffodil International University. Internship opportunities for graduated students will be offered soon;

Life and Livelihood:

DISS has already changed the livelihood pattern of its first 30 disadvantaged children and improved ethics through religious education and development being the change agent.

Abandoned Children to Well Taken Care Future Citizens: An Abysmal Situation to Positive Impact:

In Bangladesh, most of the cities and towns, particularly the metropolitan cities, have been witnessing the phenomenal growth of the unfortunate street & slum children over the last three decades. We basically emphasize the below categories among such children:

The most vulnerable children are mostly parent-less due to these reasons:

- Broken family children of either divorced/separated
- Abandoned family children have become homeless, shelter-less, ill-fed, ill-clothed, and devoid of parental care. They often run away from their homes due to domestic violence, family conflict, poverty, overpopulation, unemployment, family feud
- Divorced parents (either father or mother alive), river erosion and rural-urban migration due to chronic poverty, floods, cyclones, and lofty hopes of better job opportunities in the cities of these vulnerable children
- Absent father or mother, and the child is growing up with severe disrespect and neglect in their society within an abusive situation.

Impact Case study: 1

The baby's name is Arif (Pseudo-name: for child's protection). Only 8 years old. The father is unknown. Child Arif came into the world anonymously. Someone had hoodwinked Arif's mother through a false promise of marriage. We have rescued this child from a home in an abandoned situation where his mother handed him over permanently by signing a stamp paper. Then one afternoon, our social workers visited him and rescued him.

Now this child is much better and is getting all the basic needs and facilities. Here he has got some good friends, teachers and also a good environment as well. He is also getting a quality education, safe accommodation, and other facilities. DISS is working hard to build Arif's future.

Impact Case study: 2

Niloy's (Pseudo-name: for child's protection) family has two brothers and two sisters. One sister is married and her husband is working in garments sector. The elder brother is not able to take responsibility for Niloy. As his sister's husband, Suman Mia, works in garments for a low-paid salary, he also cannot bear the expense of Niloy. His father died about 4 years ago. And after 9 months his mother also died. Finding no support anywhere, Niloy started living out of a tea stall on a street. The DISS team rescued him from his vulnerable situation and admitted him to the DISS as its first enrollment. It is worth noting that this child has been helped by DISS in various ways several times even before he was admitted to the institution. In this institution, he is getting an Ethics education from a professional teacher as he wants to be an Islamic Scholar in the future. He is learning to become a leader and how to lead a team perfectly. Besides his regular curriculum, he is also getting technology-based education and training, and there is a remarkable transformation of him.

Value-based Goals:

DISS is really trying to and will play a good role to develop harmony among the government and local, and international policymakers. DISS is strictly committed to following government compliances, international rules, child protection policies and acts, and all other compliances. Besides maintaining all, we have the objective to earn the satisfaction of Almighty Allah SWT.

DISS Inspiration:

Daffodil Family chairman Dr. Sabur Khan visited the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, KISS (world's largest child-home, in Odisha, India) several times, and he was inspired to establish the DISS under the Daffodil Foundation. DISS is basically a dream project that will make concerted efforts towards inclusive education for the most vulnerable, homeless children to achieve inclusive development with integrated service. DISS, will provide support until the rehabilitation whatever in job, entrepreneur, family or social reintegration and develop the DISS as a model in Bangladesh.

DISS Goals in the Community:

- a) Increase Acceptance of the children in the community;
- b) Create an opportunity for the disadvantaged child in the NGO community, and a trustworthy relationship;
- c) Increase social harmony and community participation toward child protection and rights;
- d) Forty youth volunteers to be established in career and in leadership positions in development and private sectors soon;
- e) 2000 adolescents and more to be established as entrepreneurs in livestock, poultry agriculture, and the microfinance sector; and
- f) The acceptance of DISS to be increased in the country, and more children enrolled through referral support of national NGOs, CBOs, local police stations, and other stakeholders.

IDVDC Model & DISS Initiative Features:

Replicable Model:

- Develop a children's rehabilitation and development model in Bangladesh and be accepted by the national and international actors. The model comprises a comprehensive support system and multi-sectoral approach. Most other program approaches are to support partially and one aspect only, like only education, or drop-in-center support, or health-care, or livelihood development, etc.
- Several NGO, INGO, CSO, UN agencies, and Government agencies have taken note to replicate the model in/outside of Bangladesh. Some have initiated steps towards this.
- Three memoranda of understanding have been signed with the other NGOs to support to implement the model on an ad-hoc basis.

Sustainable Model:

Institutional sustainability:

- Established a 10-story large building for the children with a dedicated campus area around it;
- Developed a link with the Daffodil Foundation and Daffodil International University to carry out the services for the children;
- Developed capacity for the DISS staff member by the Daffodil Foundation, the salaries are given by the Daffodil Foundation;
- Networking with the like-minded organizations to carry on support for the children; etc.

Financial Sustainability:

BDT 2,80,00,000/- (Two crores and eighty lakhs taka) fixed deposit to a scheduled bank has been done and the interest is used for the DISS management and operations.

Dr Sabur Khan, honorable Chairman of the Daffodil Family (DF), has declared that one-third of his assets will be donated for charity, and all present costs of DISS shall be borne by the DF income. DF has 5000 employees, who are committed to contributing to DISS operational expenses.

Long Term Sustainability:

For the long-term sustainability of the project, DISS has considered several aspects for raising funds:

- Sponsorship & contributions
- Social Business initiatives
- Agricultural, livestock, poultry enterprises

As part of Program sustainability, the project will explore linkages with government services and facilities. Children will be entitled to free books, birth registration, General Diary, Disaster preparedness training, and immunization through project initiatives. Besides, health services will also be sought regularly from government offices.

For the long-time financial sustainability and support of the children, a one-to-one sponsorship program will be developed, where individual sponsors will

come forward to support a single child with his food, accommodation, education, and other development-related needs.

New ideas of enterprise development and social business will also be explored so that the profit of those enterprises can be contributed to the children. Considering the geo-economic prospects of the project-area, agricultural, livestock, and poultry initiatives will be given preferences.

At the same time, Donors from social development and corporate sectors will also be explored who can support the initiatives for the long term. The project will also develop a linkage with the national and international donors, development agencies, corporate, and government for further support.

Scalable Model:

DISS enrolled 30 disadvantaged children in the program in the first phase. It has the option to provide support gradually to 4000 children in the center. Considering the geographical location, need, and capacity, DISS can scale up the services around the country. Apart from this, other organizations and institutions replicate in other areas of the country.