

December 25, 2007

Computer Literacy Program Status Update

Dear CLP Patron:

The Volunteers Association for Bangladesh, New Jersey (VAB-NJ) initiated the Computer Literacy Program (CLP) four years ago. As you know, the primary objective of CLP is to alleviate the “digital divide” through access to computers and other resources of information technology. With your help, we have been able to successfully attain the primary CLP goal - *to promote knowledge and usage of computers among the underprivileged youths in Bangladesh*, and are thriving to attain more.

Expanding the Scope

With the success of the basic computer training, we have added another objective: to leverage the CLP resources to modernize the instruction and learning of other subjects taught in schools, in particular, science, mathematics, and every day English. With that objective in mind, VAB-NJ has launched an initiative to teach children everyday English using custom prepared CDs. A Non Resident Bangladeshi (NRB) entrepreneur has committed the initial funds needed to carry out the first phase of the program: Computer Teaches Everyday English (CTEE) to set up five pilot projects. It is our objective to run the CLP and CTEE as two parallel programs, but complementing each other. The ultimate goal is to use the versatile capabilities of computers to help create a robust workforce capable of exploiting the global opportunities ushered by information technology. VAB-NJ has also introduced a program to introduce Internet in every CLC subject to the availability of Internet provider, and sponsorship. We have introduced internet service to four computer literacy centers. Based on feedbacks, recommendations from an impact evaluation (www.vabonline.org/vabnj/news), and assessments from site visits, we have enhanced the training course adding 8 hours to the originally implemented 32-hour program. Our records indicate that the CLP-trained graduates are significantly better positioned for advanced training and for becoming productive computer professionals having a meaningful impact on the country’s economy.

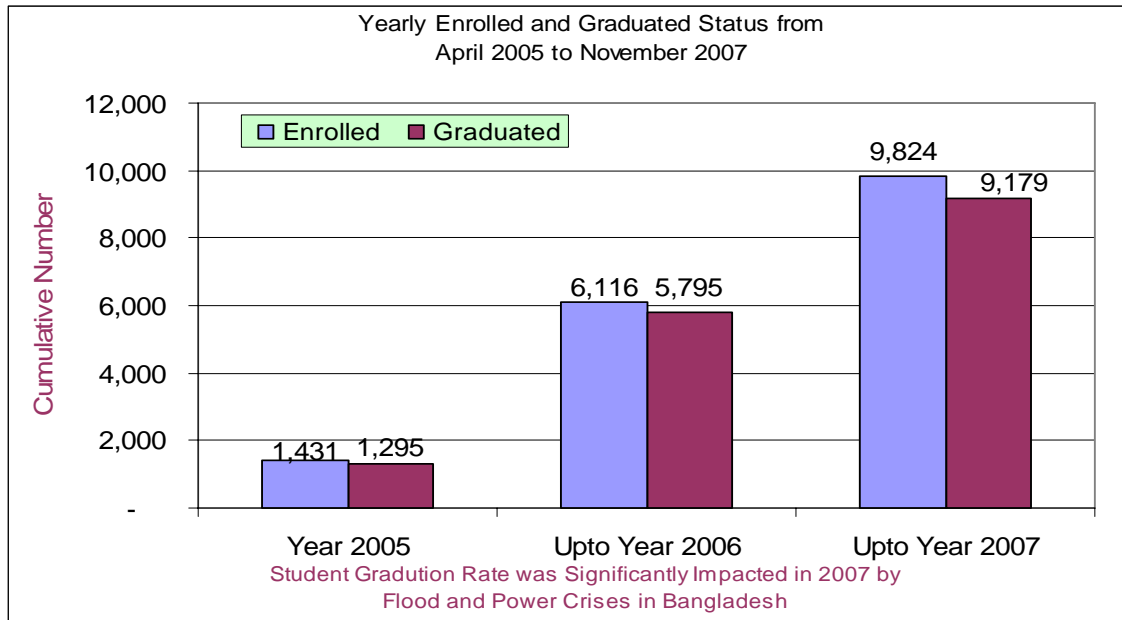
Success of the CLP has attracted Microsoft Southeast Asia to entrust the implementation of its “CLICK” (Community for Learning Information, Communication) Program to D.Net at 13 rural locations. All these 13 CLICK centers are currently running and providing various livelihood information and knowledge services, job training to the rural youths as well as mobile phone and Internet based Helpline, photography, copying and other incoming generating services. There are many stories of how students are being successful in being gainfully employed by leveraging the skills gained from CLP.

CLP Status as of December, 2007

- # CLCs: 60
- 70% the CLCs in underprivileged rural areas
- # districts covered: 28 out of 64
- # teachers trained: 131 (25% female)

- #students enrolled: 9,824
- # students received certificate of completion: 9,179
- Approximately 400 students complete the course every month
- Male-female ratio: 56: 46

CLP Enrollment and Graduate Status



Accomplishments

- In 2007, 18 CLCs have been added increasing the total number to 60.
- All 60 CLCs are in operation under the close and effective supervision of D.Net.
 - Each center is equipped with a computer lab consisting of at least 4 PCs, 1 printer, and other necessary accessories.
 - The teacher incentive program has been revised, under which a sum of Tk. 1,000 per batch (40-hour) is being paid to one CLC teacher and a teaching assistantship program has been instituted, under which a student will be selected base on performance to assist the CLC teacher and will be paid Tk. 200 per batch.
- The length of each course has been increased to 40 hours (2 hrs/day X 2 days/week X 10 weeks).
- Over 8,000 students graduated through October, 2007.
- With the success of its 3 sponsored CLCs, Bank Asia has agreed to sponsor 6 new CLCs in 2008.
- 20 old computers have been replaced with new ones in 20 CLCs.

2008 Activities and Plans

Our Plans for 2007 are as follows:

- Continue to provide necessary funding to run the CLCs established through 2007 including the teachers' incentive pay and the student assistantship program.

- Establish 15 additional CLCs..
- Find sponsors to provide Internet connection to all CLCs where available, as a supplementary educational tool.
- Continue to provide printed training manuals to the students at a subsidized price (50% of the cost).
- Develop and implement CTEE pilot program in 5 CLCs.
- VAB-NJ and D.Net representatives have been collaborating effectively through regular conference calls. VAB representatives are also visiting D.Net in Dhaka and the CLCs.

VAB-NJ sincerely appreciates your support for the program to help Bangladesh. In order to maintain the current level of services to the existing CLCs and fund 2007 projects, your continued support and generous contributions are very important and critical to the overall success of the program. We are inviting you to our 2008 fundraising event, which is tentatively scheduled for **July 19, 2008, at Rutgers University, New Jersey**. Please mark your calendar now; we will contact you with details of that program as the time approaches. We look forward to your participation at the event. Thank you.

Yours truly,

On behalf of the volunteers of VAB-NJ

Zafar Billah