



# ASIA 21 IN 2020 | CATALYZING CHANGE, SUSTAINING IMPACT



Asia  
Society

ASIA 21  
YOUNG LEADERS

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# FOREWARD

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As the world's center of gravity continues to shift to the Asia Pacific, so too do global leadership responsibilities. The critical challenges of the day—leadership, sustainable economic development, terrorism, public health, environmental degradation, human rights—can only be addressed by leaders who not only understand their own communities and the issues, but also know how to work effectively in close partnership with their counterparts across borders. This was the premise for Asia Society's Asia 21 Young Leaders Initiative when it was established in 2006. Over the course of three days at the 2012 Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the message of partnership and collaboration was echoed during keynote conversations, discussion sessions, and in informal conversations among close to 100 participants.

As we look ahead to the next phase of the Initiative, we will devote our efforts to providing easier access and opportunity for interaction among all Asia 21 Young Leaders. We want to activate the network, promote leadership in action, and help Asia 21's brain trust tackle Asia's toughest problems in a more purposeful manner. We want to see the Asia 21 movement continue to incubate ideas and create synergies, and also to transform those ideas into actionable projects with broad and significant results. Judging by the camaraderie, goodwill, and desire "to be the change you want to see in the world," demonstrated by participants at the Dhaka Summit, we are more convinced than ever before that Asia 21 is well on its way to reaching this mark in the not too distant future. The Asia Society is delighted to play its small part in catalyzing this process and we remain committed to fostering a new generation of leaders across the Asia-Pacific region.

We are extremely grateful to all our partners who were instrumental in making the Dhaka Summit a tremendous success. We owe special thanks to our founding international sponsor Bank of America Merrill Lynch, the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center, our Bangladesh 21 Young Leaders and to our many partners and sponsors whose generosity makes Asia 21 possible.



Michael G. Kulma  
Executive Director, Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society



# AGENDA

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2012

6:00 PM

**OPENING RECEPTION**

7:00 PM

**OPENING DINNER**

**WELCOMING REMARKS**

**Tom Nagorski**

Executive Vice President, Asia Society

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**Michael G. Kulma**

Executive Director, Global Leadership Initiatives, Asia Society

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury**

State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

9:30 PM - 11:00 PM

**NIGHTCAPS**



## AGENDA (continued)

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2012

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM

#### ASIA 21: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This session sets the stage for the next two days and is designed to get participants to start thinking about their vision for **Asia** and **Asia 21 in 2020**.

##### Discussion Leaders:

**Aaron Maniam**

Director  
Institute of Policy Development  
Civil Service College, Singapore

**Michael G. Kulma**

Executive Director  
Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

#### LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

Selected young leaders deliver succinct remarks on their own journey to leadership, critical choices they made along the way, and the importance of public service and value-based leadership. Followed by group discussion.

##### Discussion Leaders:

**Arnel Paciano D. Casanova**

CEO & President, Bases Conversion  
and Development Authority

**Shaffi Mather**

Advocate  
Supreme Court of India

**Asif Saleh**

President  
Drishtipat (Take Notice)

**Wenchi Yu**

Senior Advisor, Secretary's  
Office of Global Women's Issues  
U.S. Department of State

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#### KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND CONVERSATION WITH:

SIR FAZLE H. ABED

FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON, BRAC

# AGENDA (continued)

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

## CONVERSATION ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Bangladesh youth leaders join Asia 21 young leaders for an interactive discussion on the most pressing challenges facing the younger generation in Bangladesh and elsewhere, to offer innovative ways to address those common challenges and help shape a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous global community.

### **Nazim Farhan Choudhury**

Managing Director  
Adcomm Limited

### **Sabhanaz Rashid Diya**

Founder and Advisor  
One Degree Initiative Foundation

### **Moutushi Islam**

Economic Analyst & Labor Market Consultant  
South Asia Urban Poverty and Local Governance Unit  
The World Bank Group

### **Gen Kanai**

Director, Asia Contributor  
Engagement, Mozilla

### **Ivdad Ahmed Khan Mojlish**

Director, Youth Leadership  
Programs, Bangladesh Youth  
Leadership Center (BYLC)

### **Robin Seong Yun Loon**

Senior Lecturer  
National University of Singapore

Building on the Asia Society's ongoing work on global competency, the last 30 minutes of the session will involve table conversations between Asia 21 young leaders and youth leaders from Bangladesh, with a focus on what it means to be a globally competent leader in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. What are the essential characteristics of globally competent leaders? Who are examples of globally competent leaders, and what lessons can we draw from them?

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

## ASIA SOCIETY/BANK OF AMERICA MERRILL LYNCH ASIA 21 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

### **Presenters:**

#### **Lesley Jeanne Yu Cordero**

Undersecretary for Policy  
and Planning  
Office the President, Philippines

#### **Adnan Malik**

Director & TV Host  
Adnan Malik Productions  
(AMP) / Coke Studio

#### **Sonam Tashi**

Chief Planning Officer  
Royal Government of Bhutan

# AGENDA (continued)

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

## ASIA 21 AND ITS MULTIPLIER EFFECT

The success of Asia 21 has resulted in the recent establishment of two regional projects—the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative and the India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative. Members of these two initiatives share their project goals, activities, milestones, and solicit input on how the larger Asia 21 network can actively engage with these projects.

### Discussion Leaders:

**Mekhala Krishnamurthy**

Social Anthropologist  
Development Practitioner

**Lotfullah Najafizada**

Head of Current Affairs  
TOLOnews TV, Moby Group

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2012

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM

## PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECTS (PSP) SITE VISITS

Participants visit BRAC programs in their Savar locations to interact with project leaders and participants, learn more about their projects, and develop a plan for how to engage with the project going forward.

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

## PSPs GROUP PRESENTATION PREPARATION

The four different groups that “adopted” BRAC projects will use this time to prepare detailed action plans for their public service projects, and a related group presentation which they will present in the subsequent plenary session.

*Lunch served in the meeting rooms.*

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

## GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Groups reconvene to present to the other delegates.

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

## ASIA 21 IN 2020: CATALYZING CHANGE, SUSTAINING IMPACT

What will the Asia-Pacific region and Asia 21 look like in 2020? How can we best mobilize the network to catalyze change and sustain impact? What are our individual as well as collective roles in helping Asia 21 to catalyze change and ensure sustained impact in an Asian landscape that is increasingly urban, modern, and global?

**Aaron Maniam**

Director  
Institute of Policy Development  
Civil Service College, Singapore

**Michael G. Kulma**

Executive Director  
Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

## CLOSING REMARKS

**Michael G. Kulma**

Executive Director  
Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### BY DR. SHIRIN SHARMIN CHAUDHURY

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Tom Nagorski, Executive Vice President of Asia Society; Michael Kulma, Executive Director of Global Leadership Initiatives, Asia Society; Ejaj Ahmed, the young leader from Bangladesh and President of Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center; participants; young leaders taking part in this Summit, coming from twenty different countries; ladies and gentlemen, a very good evening to you all.

It's a great pleasure for me, along with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and we take great pride and joy in joining the seventh annual Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit in Dhaka, as government partner of the Asia Society. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all the young leaders taking part in this Summit, coming from twenty different countries, on my behalf and on behalf of the government of Bangladesh. This is a very special month also, December, which is a month of victory for this nation. Sixteenth December is our Victory Day, so we are very pleased to have all of you come here, and I would like to thank Ejaj for extending the invitation and the very fact that we could host this event in Dhaka.

This is a winter evening, but as soon as I stepped into the reception area, it was so vibrant with the energy, enthusiasm, and inspiration of the young leaders that we could hardly feel that it was winter. However, this winter evening, we gather here with a vision of "Asia 21 in 2020: Catalyzing Change, Sustaining Impact." The new surge of globalization brings with it new challenges pertaining to sustainable economic development, preventing and mitigating environmental degradation, upholding human rights, and ensuring democratic governance. All of these are not confined within the boundaries of each nation, or national boundaries, but are transnational. Innovative solutions, ideas, and strategies are required to meet these emerging challenges. It is therefore important to nurture and build a new generation of young leadership with the strength and commitment, honesty and courage, patriotism and knowledge, to play an active and dedicated role in building the future. I congratulate the commendable initiative of Asia Society in engaging in the process of nurturing young leadership in Asia, by providing a forum to bring young leaders from government, academia, business, corporate, and social sectors together to act collaboratively and explore the contemporary issues and find solutions to them. Focusing on value-based leadership, Asia Society facilitates a network between young leaders for exchange of ideas and sharing of views, which help them develop a better understanding of their own communities and at the same time grapple with the global challenges.

I therefore believe that the Asia Society Summit will play a vital role in shaping this process of sharing, the exchange of innovative ideas, interaction, building expertise, and mutual transmission of the same among the young leaders. It is only the young leaders who behold the promise and the ability to work towards a safer and better future by bringing together government, international institutions, and others to rethink a blueprint of economic growth in the backdrop of world economic recession—advancing social equity, minimizing the differences, and ensuring environmental protection. Catalyzing change and sustaining development, and sustaining the impact of it, requires the young leaders to be groomed in a fashion with education, increased knowledge, and values so that they are equipped and prepared to define the pathways to a safer, more equitable, and inclusive world for all by eradicating poverty, and

promoting decent employment, clean energy, and sustainable use of resources by assigning appropriate priorities. We need young leaders in all sectors, in politics, business, human and social development, art, culture, and science and technology. I quote, “There is no one way to be a leader. People lead in different ways.” This is the view of Sarah Leberman of Massey University.

It is therefore to encourage young people to develop their leadership potential, and in doing so it is important to focus on one’s own strength and to be clear on one’s own thoughts and values. It is important to believe in oneself and one’s causes and avail the opportunities that present themselves.

In discussing leadership we must emphasize nurturing women’s leadership also. It is true that there is a need for diverse and capable human capital which can provide leadership to continue driving the economy and growth of the nations. In nurturing such capable human capital, women are at the center. Women make up 40% of the global labor force, 43% of the world’s agricultural labor force, and more than half of the world’s university students. It is therefore absolutely crucial to promote women’s leadership by harnessing this human capital, not only for the welfare of women alone but the sustainable and inclusive society that we all want to achieve.

What is it that women bring in with their leadership role? There are some leadership traits which are particularly akin to women. Women as leaders are more persuasive, patient, and compassionate. They are good listeners and have a stronger need to get things done. These inherent qualities must be nurtured to promote women’s leadership in their work arena and also in the area of governance. In the language of John Quincy Adams, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ejaj Ahmad, Founder and President, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center and Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

I hope that this Summit will be a very important platform to have a mutual exchange of ideas, of having a true sense of sharing of your thoughts, and through this sharing of expertise, group solutions will come out to make the world a better place.

Let me end on this note with the quotation of Harold R. McAlindon, “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Thank you all.

## ASIA 21: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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This brief opening session was meant to set the stage for the next two days' deliberations, and designed to get the 100 young leaders in attendance to begin thinking about their vision for Asia and Asia 21 in 2020. Having successfully established an amazing network and convened on a regular basis, the participants were tasked to share their ideas on how best to activate the network in a more purposeful way going forward. What kind of Asia do we anticipate seeing in 2020, and what is the role of Asia 21 in creating that kind of future?

Judging by the current trends, we envision Asia in 2020 to be characterized by an increasing number of networks that rely on closer collaborations and exchanges of innovative ideas to come up with practical solutions for our common challenges. Asia 21 is a prototype of the kind of cross-sectoral global movement that will be the hallmark of the future, and the Asia 21 network is ready, willing and able to play an important role in the future of the Asia Pacific region.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND CONVERSATION WITH SIR FAZLE H. ABED, FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON, BRAC

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Sir Fazle H. Abed welcomed the young leaders and delegates to Bangladesh, and shared his personal story of learning how to create change and sustaining impact for people in Bangladesh. He began his leadership story from the time when he joined Shell Oil Company in Bangladesh (known as East Pakistan at the time) after completing his CIMA qualification in London. His time at the energy company provided him insight into the inner workings and management of a large conglomerate. It was during his time at Shell that the devastating cyclone of 1970 hit the eastern coastal regions of the country, resulting in more than 300,000 deaths. The cyclone had a profound effect on Sir Fazle; the comfort and the perks of a corporate executive's life ceased to have any attraction for him in the face of such a devastating calamity. Together with friends, Sir Fazle created HELP, an organization that provided relief and rehabilitation to the worst affected on the island of Manpura, which had lost three quarters of its population in the disaster.

Soon after, Bangladesh's own struggle for independence from Pakistan began, and he joined to help Bangladesh in the Liberation War of 1971. In 1972, he established BRAC (then known as the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance



LEFT TO RIGHT: Tom Nagorski, Executive Vice President, Asia Society (United States) and Sir Fazle H. Abed, Founder and Chairperson, BRAC (Bangladesh)

Committee) on a small scale to provide relief to refugees following the Liberation War. In nine months, 14,000 homes and several hundred boats were built, and medical centers were opened to provide primary healthcare services. At the end of 1972, BRAC reorganized its mission to empower women and children by concentrating on their long-term development needs.

In particular, Sir Fazle spotlighted BRAC's oral rehydration therapy campaign, which was initiated in 1979 to combat diarrhea, the major cause of the high infant mortality rate in Bangladesh at that time. Over a decade, more than 1000 BRAC community workers went door-to-door to teach 12 million mothers how to prepare homemade oral saline. Sir Fazle spoke of the struggles BRAC had to endure to dispel misconceptions about diarrhea and oral rehydration among the rural families. Initially, they had targeted only the mothers, assuming that they were the primary caregivers. After failing to see a big reduction in the child mortality rate, BRAC realized the importance of engaging the patriarchs in the family as well, because they were preventing the mothers from using the oral rehydration technique for reasons best known to them. After the strategy had achieved the desired results, Sir Fazle focused on making the processes more efficient. Instead of going door-to-door, BRAC community workers coached three to four houses at once, so these surrounding families also learned to become part of a support system for each other. Bangladesh today has one of the highest rates of usage of oral rehydration, and BRAC's campaign has been credited for reducing child and infant mortality from 285 per thousand to 75 per thousand. This initial success in scaling up BRAC's oral rehydration project propelled rapid expansion of other BRAC programs.

During the Q&A session, young leaders asked Sir Fazle how BRAC's success could be replicated in neighboring countries. His recommendation was that the first step is to identify the needs and behaviors of those who need help, and then try to come up with simple solutions to address the issues. He emphasized that solutions must be effective before they can be efficient, and that they must have the capability to be scaled up; otherwise it would be difficult to sustain the impact.

BRAC has also gone international, first taking its range of development interventions to Afghanistan in 2002. BRAC launched a program, CFPR-TUP (Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction – Targeting the Ultra Poor), designed specifically for the extreme poor who cannot access conventional microfinance. Since then, BRAC has expanded its development and microfinance services to countries across Asia and Africa, namely, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Haiti.

## CONVERSATION ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP

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Given the youthful demography found in Bangladesh, we took the unique opportunity of engaging twenty youth leaders in a conversation and learning from them what their priorities and aspirations are, what they consider to be their paramount challenges, and how the Asia 21 community could be useful to their generation. As countries across the world lurch from one crisis to another as a result of deep economic downturn, political un-

certainty, and dissatisfaction with leaders and systems, the younger generations are slowly taking action and coming up with solutions. Many organizations in Bangladesh, such as the One Degree Initiative and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC), are helping young people find their own voice and transform their visions of a just and prosperous world into action. Young people without formal positions of authority but with innovative ideas are now changing the face of sectors such as business, information and communication technology (ICT), health, environment, human rights, and development. However, it has been noted that the younger generation in Bangladesh and many other Asian countries are apathetic and hesitant to enter politics. One of the reasons for this is that Bangladesh has been governed by dynasty politics since its birth as a nation, and this has been a key factor impeding youth from joining politics. In addition, students prefer not to be associated with student political groups, as they are responsible for intra-party violence and counterproductive activities that hamper their education. Japan and Bangladesh, countries with dynasty politics, do not have structures and screening processes in place for young people to join politics and climb up the leadership ladder.



The panel, comprising Asia 21 Young Leaders and youth leaders from BYLC and One Degree Initiative, talked about the challenges faced by women leaders, particularly in patriarchal cultures across Asia. Fortunately, a paradigm shift is gradually occurring, where men are becoming more aware of the importance of gender equality and women's rights. One of the discussants talked about how young people are also investing more of their time and efforts in the arts and humanities, which have helped them pick up skillsets and practical learning experiences that have aided in driving change forward. In order to encourage the next generation to take on leadership roles, it was suggested that they be given ownership of the work, a platform to express their ideas so that there will always be fresh perspectives, and opportunities to learn through human interactions and work towards the causes they are passionate about.

## **ASIA SOCIETY-BANK OF AMERICA MERRILL LYNCH ASIA 21 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD PRESENTATION**

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Presented each year at the annual Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit, the Asia Society-Bank of America Merrill Lynch Asia 21 Public Service Award acknowledges an organization that benefits social and economic groups, communities, and the public in the Asia Pacific region. The selection is overseen by the current Asia 21 Fellows Class, a core group of young leaders from across the Asia Pacific, based on project innovation and feasibility, quantifiable impact, sustainability, and growth potential.

The Award consists of prize money of \$10,000, generously donated by Asia 21's founding international sponsor, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, and the active support of the Asia 21 Fellows Class in providing the selected public service organization with access to the Fellows' network and their diverse areas of expertise.

In recognition of their outstanding work in providing quality maternal and child health support in China and India, **Embrace** was awarded the 2012 Asia Society-Bank of America Merrill Lynch Asia 21 Public Service Award. Rajan Patel, Area Manager of **Embrace**, based in Gujarat, India, accepted the award during the ceremonies at the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



2012 Public Service Award presentation to EMBRACE

Past winners include Roots of Health, 2011 (Health of Women, The Philippines); HOME Singapore, 2010 (Migration Economics); Prisoners Assistance Nepal, 2009; Mashhad Positive Club, 2008 (HIV/AIDS, Iran); Odanadi seva Samsthe, 2007 (Trafficking, India); and the Chi Heng Foundation, 2006 (HIV/AIDS, Hong Kong).

## ASIA 21 AND ITS MULTIPLIER EFFECT

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The success of Asia 21 has resulted in the recent establishment of two regional projects, in an attempt to change the narrative and collectively achieve positive results:

1. Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative
2. India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative

### AFGHANISTAN YOUNG LEADERS INITIATIVE (AYLI)

Established in 2011, the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative seeks to nurture a community of next generation Afghan leaders who will educate each other and expand the Afghan dialogue on leadership issues, in the hope of facilitating a pipeline of civic-minded next generation leadership in Afghanistan.

At the inaugural Afghanistan Young Leaders Forum, held in Kabul in October 2011, the participants developed a vision statement for their fellowship year, in which they dedicated themselves to working to help build “a prosperous and united Afghanistan that is economically active in the region.” The leaders agreed to bring about positive change in Afghanistan through policy advice, advocacy, increased networking, and youth mobilization. They also selected “Vision 2014 and Beyond” as the programmatic theme of their fellowship year, because 2014 is the year that the United States and the international community are planning to end their combat operations in Afghanistan, as well as the year of the critical next presidential election in Afghanistan. The group felt strongly that getting the 2014 transition right will be essential to laying a suitable foundation for the country’s future. The key milestones achieved include presentation of position papers at the important international conferences on Afghanistan: the Afghan International Conference in Bonn (December 2011); the NATO Summit in Chicago (May 2012); and the Tokyo Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (July 2012).

The second class of Afghan leaders met this past October, and they are now working together with the 2011 leaders in expanding the breadth and scope of the Initiative. Building on the tremendous work

and invaluable experience gained in the first year, the Afghan fellows from the 2012-13 class will focus their fellowship year on **Ten Ideas for the Next Ten Years**. Essentially, these ten ideas are meant to address the most pressing issues facing Afghanistan that need sustained attention, not only from the Government of Afghanistan but also from the international community. Together with their counterparts from 2011-12, this year's Afghan fellows will identify these ten ideas through the course of a number of discussions and interactions that they will hold with local Afghan communities around the country. At the end of the fellowship year, they will have a series of recommendations for each of the issue areas, which will be shared with the Afghan government and members of the international community.

### **INDIA-PAKISTAN REGIONAL YOUNG LEADERS INITIATIVE (IPRYLI)**

The India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative seeks to help nurture a community of next generation leaders in India and Pakistan, committed to coming together across borders and boundaries to address common issues facing the two uneasy neighbors.

In July 2012, over the course of two days, the inaugural class of IPRYLI fellows engaged in discussions on topics ranging from leadership and values, to the biggest opportunities and challenges facing Indo-Pakistan relations, to the role of the Diaspora communities in mending the bilateral relations. The fellows also developed a joint public service project for their fellowship year. As regards their joint public service project, the fellows came to an agreement to produce a guidebook in graphic form, that seeks to demystify the prevailing misconceptions that continue to exist between Indians and Pakistanis. Tentatively titled *The Eediot's Guide to Indo-Pak Dosti*, the guidebook will attempt to change the narrative of this vital bilateral relationship by presenting a more nuanced portrayal, instead of the one that unfortunately tends to dominate in the region. Using graphics to make the content easily accessible to a wider audience, the guidebook will still cover relevant topics including the costs of conflict, the benefits of trade, and food and water security. The write-ups have been submitted and the fellows are now in the midst of turning them into a graphic format, which they hope to complete by the first week of March. The final product is scheduled to be published by April 2013, and the Asia Society hopes to organize public programs around it in India and Pakistan in the summer.

Members of both the Afghan Young Leaders and India-Pakistan Young Leaders Initiatives participated in the Dhaka Summit. The next phase of engagement is to identify potential areas where Asia 21 young leaders from different countries could work more strategically to address the opportunities and challenges presented to AYLI and IPRYLI. The Summit provided an excellent opportunity for the members of the two sub-initiatives to share their projects with the wider A21 community, solicit ideas for collaboration, extend an invitation to all 800 members of the A21 community to bring their expertise to bear on these projects, and create synergies.

Asia 21 young leaders also started a preliminary discussion on starting a Burma 21 Initiative, similar to the country-specific Afghanistan and India-Pakistan Initiatives, to proactively get engaged in the transition the country is going through at present. Asia 21 needs to think strategically, come up with processes to build initiatives regionally, and invite leaders to endorse opportunities they are involved with. Sector leaders in the Asia 21 community can connect with country chapters that need their help most, and achieve more tangible outcomes.

# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2012

## GROUP PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECTS

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This year, a new component to the Public Service Projects (PSPs) was added, in an effort to make this exercise more purposeful and action-oriented. On Sunday, December 9th, the Asia 21 young leaders were split into four groups and visited nearby BRAC project sites. They interacted with project leaders and participants to explore opportunities for collaboration, and developed a plan for how to engage with the project going forward. The preliminary plans were presented in the afternoon plenary session.

### URBAN PRIMARY EDUCATION

The primary school operated by BRAC offers free lessons in mathematics, social sciences, and Bangla for children whose parents cannot afford to pay for their education. Through their interaction with the students, the young leaders learned that the children loved coming to school, but there were several issues that hampered their learning. These issues and some solutions include:

1. There is no access to electricity. The school is dark, which causes eyestrain for students when they are reading books. Solar lamps can be provided as an alternative to electric lights.
2. Since the school is constructed of tin and has very small windows, summer is a difficult time for students. In general, there is little air ventilation, which can be suffocating. Redesigning the school structure to improve ventilation is necessary.
3. Students study with their books on the floor. Desks can be made to ease the students' discomfort and aid their schooling.
4. Courses on health should be introduced to help children learn about hygiene and nutrition.
5. Books need to be more interesting to grab children's attention and increase their interest in learning. The curriculum should also include content to unleash students' creativity, so that education is more student-centered and enjoyable for children.
6. The teachers speak very little English. A training of trainers (TOT) program could be run for teachers, so that students can learn English from them.

Additional practical solutions include:

1. School alumni should occasionally visit the school to share real-world experiences with existing students.
2. Students from BRAC University can help solve the heating and lighting issues of the school. University students could add this to their community service hours.
3. Asia 21 can help in offering scholarship opportunities to pursue further education once students graduate from the primary school.
4. Field trips could be organized to offer students a chance to see the real world and learn from nature.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

Community health workers (“shashto shebika”) offer public health services by providing medicine for common ailments, treatment for tuberculosis, and nutrition for pregnant women. However, after interviewing health workers and volunteers, five key challenges were identified:

- 1. State of health education.** The health workers have basic knowledge, but there is a lack of treatment for specialized diseases.
- 2. Lack of data and monitoring.** All record keeping is done on paper, and data is not fed back into the system in the most effective manner. Lack of visibility and causality leads to less effectiveness in case detection and less patient satisfaction. There is no way of monitoring ethical use of drugs.
- 3. Lack of clear key performance indicators (KPIs) and goals.** Tracking the activity of health workers is at a minimum, so there are no records of which employee is the most efficient and/or popular with the community. Sometimes, to supplement their incomes, health workers sell more drugs than they need to, and these health workers cannot be identified.
- 4. Lack of career path and incentives within the system.** There is no career path within the system, which leads to a lack of enthusiasm among the workers. Currently the system is donor dependent and two-tiered. Certain workers are commission-based, and others are paid a monthly salary. Neither of these structures offer enough incentives for the workers to act ethically or decide to stay in this career.
- 5. Irregular and insufficient training of workers leads to outdated knowledge and skills.**

It was recommended that mobile technology and web-based solutions could best improve the system and increase incentives for the community health workers.



The proposed mobile phone application would be used to capture patient data and information, and which medicines are being provided by the health workers. With a GPS location and time-stamp, it will be possible to monitor what health workers are doing on the ground. Using this mobile app will increase the earning potential of health workers, because it can help identify where we can use mechanisms to increase their income. Once distinct KPIs are issued, e.g., visit 20 houses every day, each health worker’s activity will be automatically recorded, and workers

can be instantly rewarded based on their performance. The tracking system will also provide information on whether the right medicine is being prescribed, if drugs are being oversold, and if ethical use of drugs is being promoted. If an algorithm is created that can check whether a worker is prescribing drug use ethically 90% of the time, (s)he can be rewarded accordingly.

Since health workers do not have much medical training, a referral has to be made to a doctor when a case proves to be too complicated. Generally, the existing system, with its outdated data collection

methods, does not show whether the referral was followed through, so there is no record of which patients are doing well, and which still require attention. With the mobile app, a referral can be instantly registered along with the patient's details, so it will be easier to recognize which patient has followed through. The app can also notify the worker within two days if the referral has not been followed up, so that the worker can reach out to the patient again and take immediate action. This technology also enables health workers to instantly connect to a doctor, so a new array of medical services is available for the community, and opportunities exist for the worker to earn additional income.

With the support of doctors, health workers can increase the amount and categories of drugs they carry for the community. They may also earn commission on selling nutritional supplements and recipe cards for infants and pregnant mothers.

To identify which community health workers require training, a quiz can be sent by the app at the end of every month for the workers to complete. The quiz answers will aid in determining who needs what type of training. The quiz can also be tagged with an incentive, such that if health workers do well on the quiz, they will be rewarded.

Health workers can also be paid by companies to obtain surveillance data from the houses they visit. This mobile app will not only transform the way health services are delivered, it can also change the way rural health surveillance data is collected. This will make the health sector engage in preventive rather than curative treatment, and also improve the quality of health services delivered on the ground.

### **ADOLESCENT SELF-LEARNING**

There are 12 million adolescent girls in Bangladesh; 63% are married before the age of 13, and 30% have children one year into their marriage. Many girls are forced to drop out of school because their parents or their in-laws want them to concentrate on married life. BRAC took the initiative to start a center in 1993 to help empower these girls with leadership skills and knowledge about reproductive health, HIV, and issues surrounding marriage such as dowry. The center has reached more than 3000 girls aged 10 to 19, and now teaches adolescent boys as well, hoping they will become aware of and fight for gender equality and women's rights in the future.

The program can be a platform for creating a culture shift, including a change in men's attitude about the role of women in society. Community elders are getting used to the idea that girls can go out to do other things than just attend school. The program is not only educating young girls and boys together about issues such as HIV, it is also providing a space where they can interact with each other. In a patriarchal society, young men are now getting accustomed to the idea that their women counterparts can get out and talk about relevant issues and can spearhead change just as well as men.

The program has one laptop for every two students, so every student spends a fair amount of time learning on a computer. Peer leaders receive training every two months and provide the students with guidance on computers and computer interfaces. While the program itself is very interesting, fellows expressed concerns about the content and learning method of the program. The software is in English, and since the students were still learning the English language, this translates to a high barrier to learning how to interact with computer interfaces. There is also no internet access. Given that the future will

largely be dependent on mobile technology, there would be more value in having students learn how to use mobile devices rather than laptops.

The program could also try to connect this learning with career opportunities. There should be more emphasis on training students for computer-aided outsourced and freelance work that will help in generating self-employment and income. There could also be more vocational training, such as teaching girls how to drive or how to become makeup artists.

Asia 21 could look into possible partnership with a local NGO that localizes software and translates it into Bangla, and enable collaboration between that NGO and BRAC. This will enable the centers to have Bangla-interfaced software that would ease the path of students into ICT education.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECT SITE VISIT (MICROFINANCE)**

A majority of BRAC microfinance clients are women, who have used their loans to invest in securing shelter, income generation, and nutrition for their families. By leveraging technology that is available today, BRAC can improve the process of meeting these women's needs and ending poverty faster.

Fellows designed a model called BRACFAST, which will use a tablet to create a BRAC-COUNT on BRACAPPS, an app that will offer unbiased and helpful information that families are willing to pay for. The model will be sustainable by means of conducting surveys within linked communities, which will generate a return that can be used to pay for the rented tablets. BRACAPPS will include information on coupons, market rates, health, education, and finance.



Public Service Project Site Visit (Microfinance)

Fellows presented a live demonstration using the iPad to show how BRACAPPS would work. Upon registering for the BRACFAST program, each rural woman would be provided with a BRACCOUNT number, and the woman would rent the tablet containing the BRACAPPS. BRACAPPS integrates all the different services that BRAC can offer to impoverished families, so all information can be obtained from one place and without the need for excess costs to hire operators or customer service personnel.

If a member of a rural household would like information on where to receive an education, the nearest academic institute, and possible scholarship opportunities, they can click on "Education" to receive information about BRAC projects that provide education services.

If a child has diarrhea or any other illness and it is difficult to contact a doctor, a BRACAPPS user can click on "Health" to receive advice on how to treat general ailments. There could also be an option to save a customized dietary or medicine chart, which may be used regularly by a patient in the household to keep track of prescriptions.

The “MBazaar” and “Coupon” options on BRACAPPS will provide market prices of all sorts of items, as well as opportunities for trading activities, thereby helping small businesses run by rural households to connect to their customers in a more efficient manner. The “Finance” icon will keep track of and display outstanding balances on bank accounts and loans, and offer various options for borrowing and lending funds. These options will help diversify the economic and financial transactions carried out by rural households.

The project coordinators at BRAC are currently reviewing the recommendations shared by each of the four groups based on their observations and interactions during the site visits. The Asia 21 young leaders, upon receiving the feedback from BRAC, will coordinate and engage directly with the projects.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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With the overarching theme **Asia 21 in 2020: Catalyzing Change, Sustaining Impact**, the main thrust of this year’s Summit was to invigorate the network, deepen connections, and activate the diverse yet incredible expertise of the Asia 21 community, so that the community as a whole can play a decisive role in shaping Asia’s future. With this task in mind, the 100 attendees explored ways to leverage their collective expertise to help Asia 21 catalyze the change we want to see, and how the movement can ensure sustained impact in an Asian landscape that is increasingly urban, modern, and global. The kind of Asia we hope to see in the future will be based on these kinds of networks, guided by civic-minded leaders who will reject the “business as usual” mentality and strive to come up with practical solutions to common challenges. With the mission of connecting, convening, catalyzing, and taking action, Asia 21 is the prototype version of the young leaders program, with tremendous potential for bringing about the desired changes.

As the A21 Initiative enters its next phase with an eye on the year 2020, we shift the energy and the focus to “leadership in action” on top of connecting and convening the best and the brightest minds of the Asia Pacific. For instance, Asia 21’s two country-specific special projects—the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative (AYLI) and the India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative (IPRYLI)—have been operational for two years and one year respectively. During the Asia 21 and Its Multiplier Effect session, members of these two initiatives shared their project goals, activities, and milestones, and solicited input on how the larger Asia 21 network could actively engage with these projects. Conversations have also begun on starting another country-specific program in Burma, and regional programming among China, Japan, and Korea.

In an effort to better connect and increase opportunities for collaboration and impact, a private Asia 21 Facebook Group has already been set up. This group will be Asia 21’s main discussion board as a community, where we invite all Asia 21 Young Leaders to share project ideas, discuss critical issues, and provide updates. Judging by the number of Asia 21 young leaders who are now part of this FB group and the regularity of posts, the intended objective of the group is already materializing.

The possibilities for collaboration are endless, demonstrated by the numerous ideas that were shared at the Summit. The challenge now is carrying forward the momentum, following through the pledges, seeing that the projects are completed within set timelines, and expanding synergies across all Asia 21-related programs.