

GULSHAN ARA SCHOOL COMPUTER LAB:

Location:

147/H East Rajabazar
Dhaka-1215
Bangladesh

Objective:

This project is aimed at high-school-age poor kids living in the slum areas in Dhaka, who have finished their middle school from volunteer institutions like Gulshanara School (GS) with which SpaandanB is currently involved. By finishing middle school under extremely difficult economic and social circumstances, these kids (and their families) have shown enough motivation and interest to improve their life, but most of them cannot continue their studies for various reasons. Since the number of kids dropping out from these schools starts to increase rapidly after grade six (only a handful go on to pass SSC and almost none go to college), almost the entire group of these students are at risk of dropping out of the education system and out of the productive job market. The current project is aimed at training at least some of these kids in using simple, *job-specific* computer software (designed specially for local markets), which they can handle, *before* they drop out of school and out of the job market.

The initial project will be based on students coming from GS, and the software training will be aimed at garment factories, because most kids at GS come from families working in garment factories. Eventually it will include other areas where a good job prospect can be identified. These trainings will, by design, be very limited in scope, because they have to be at the level these kids can handle in a reasonably short period of time (at most 6 months). The idea is not to aim at some general computer training, but to provide minimal skills to land a job and survive. The long-term idea is to keep in touch with the local industries and businesses and the future challenge is to design training programs that match with their demands and create a broader market for these skills.

SpaandanB has initiated a partnership with a local software company DataSoft (www.datasoft-bd.com) which has the necessary expertise and interest and has volunteered its services. From its own experience, DataSoft has argued that certainly after tenth grade, but even as early as after eighth grade, it is possible to train some students from schools like GS in simple computer skills within a short period (6 mos) which will help them getting a job, provided the training is *'focused on a particular trade skill'*. In partnership with SpaandanB, DataSoft has agreed to:

- i) Create, *at its own expense*, focused job-specific training programs, initially geared towards the need of local garment factories. (DataSoft has already supplied software/training for some local garment factories, and thinks that the target group of students can be trained to use them.)
- ii) Provide volunteers for training and maintenance of a computer lab initiated by SpaandanB.

- iii) Join forces with SpaandanB to create similar free-access computer labs at other suitable places, with focused training in various other trade skills if the program becomes successful (e.g. one single student finishes the training and gets a job).

Contact Information:

Bangladesh:

Selina Nowroz Choudhury
68, Elephant Road
Dhaka – 1205
Bangladesh
Tel: 8615258
E-mail: jrc@bangla.net

USA:

Khandker Muttalib
Jaha Afroz Hamida (Flora)
2200 N.W. 46th street
Gainesville
FL – 32605
USA
Tel: 352-376-4597
E-mail: muttalib@phys.ufl.edu

Budget:

Estimated budget = \$2000

Monitoring Procedure

Bangladesh liaison will provide at least an yearly report on the implementation and progress of the project. SpaandanB EC members will visit the lab during their visit to Bangladesh.