

RfP-ACRP BANGLADESH ACTIVITY REPORT FROM 2019-2021

The RfP-ACRP Bangladesh Chapter has devoted all its potential energies to a significant achievement in the arena of peace and interreligious cooperation in Bangladesh since the last assembly.. The people of Bangladesh usually observe their religious ceremonies and festivals in a peaceful atmosphere. They have long been exercising tradition of their communal harmony, although some isolated incidents do occur occasionally. But our government is determined to ascertain a happy state of religious tolerance and communal harmony. In keeping with the previous activities, RFP Bangladesh has tried to move forward even in the difficult situation of COVID-19. Here we have mentioned some unreported activities from 2019 to 2021

ACRPB = Asian Conference of Religions for Peace Bangladesh

RfPB = Religions for Peace Bangladesh

CRC = Chittagong Regional Committee

2019

- **2019:** RfPB member Masum Ahmed, Interfaith Youth Network Convener Nadia Afreen, Sashan Barua, Ujjal Deb & Tazin Akter received fellowship(s) from the Finland based Network of Traditional and Religious Peacemakers. They attended two fellowship workshops held in Bangkok from 5th-14th August 2019 and 5th- 9th February 2020. They pledged to work internationally and regionally with other fellows to end conflict and violence regarding FoRB in South and Southeast Asia. They were awarded grants for their interfaith projects separately in December 2019 and later. RfPB SEA-AIR project monitored their activities until the end of the project.
- **March 28, 2019:** An extended meeting of RfP Bangladesh held at RKK Bhavan regarding the project implementation policy and upcoming National Consultation to be held in July 3, 2019 in preparation of the 10th World Assembly.
- **April 9-13, 2019:** RfP Bangladesh delegation headed by Principal Sukomal Barua (President, RfPB) and Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey (Executive President, RfPB) visited Osaka, Japan for attending ACRP 2019 annual Executive Meeting held from April 9-13, 2019.
- **June 28, 2019:** An awareness creation event held in Chittagong for children and women rights and their dignity under the ACRP flagship project. RfPB Chapter with the cooperation of the Tokyo Secretariat contributed to the implementation of this flagship project by organizing a “Children’s Rally” and a “Discussion Meeting” at Probotak Songha Auditorium & the surrounding area where children, guardians, teachers of different schools, and the invited guests participated.

July 01, 2019: RfPB started a monitoring project for two years (from July 01, 2019 –June 30,2021) in collaboration with RfP International on “South Asia: Advancing Interreligious Dialogue and freedom of religions or Belief (SEA-AIR). This project is carried out jointly by FCA,SNF,SEM, INEB, IRW,WFDD, BMF, RfP-I & its affiliates. Rev. Kyochi Sugino, Deputy Secretary-General of RfP-I and Dr. NHM Abu Bakar, Secretary-General of RfPB signed a joint agreement to implement the project.

July 3, 2019 : Bangladesh National Consultation in preparation for the 10th World Assembly of RfP held at Hotel Agrabad Conference Room, Chittagong. Rev. Kioyoi Sugino, Deputy Secretary-General of RfP International was present in this consultation as a keynote speaker. It was one of the main processes of the preparatory work towards World Assembly that include Project Work, Religious leaders’ regional meetings, Youth and Women Pre-assembly Consultations, and National Inter-Religious Councils.. The main theme of the Consultation was ‘advancing shared wellbeing of the global community. The consultation was divided into 3(three) sessions: (i)Inauguration &, cultural program, (ii) Discussion meeting: Paper Presentation & (iii) Group discussion. In the sessions, five scholarly papers were presented on the sub-themes under the following heads: (i) Caring for Our Common Future by Preventing and Transforming Conflicts, Including War and Terrorism ---Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey, (ii) Caring for Our Common Future by Working for Sustainable and Integral Human Development -- Mr. Sreepati Das: (iii) Caring for Our Common Future by Protecting the Earth-- Prof. Dr. Rasheda Khanam, (iv) Caring for Our Common Future by Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies-- Prof.Dr. Biman Chandra Barua, (v) Caring for Our Common Future by Advancing Positive Peace --Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar.

August 19-24, 2019: An RfPB delegation headed by Principal Sukomal Barua (President), Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey (Executive President) & Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar (Secretary-General) visited Germany for attending the 10th World Assembly (2019) of Religions for Peace held in Lindau from August 19-23. The Assembly was to agree on common action towards Caring for our Common Future and Advancing Shared wellbeing. 900 religious leaders, representing diverse faith communities from 120 countries, gathered in this Assembly to discuss key themes including preventing and transforming violent conflicts, promoting just and harmonious societies, advancing sustainable and integral human development, and protecting the earth. Its declaration codifies the delegate’s commitments to common action including support for the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, the International Campaign to abolish Nuclear Weapons, and the Peace Charter for Reconciliation and Forgiveness. The experiences of different sessions of the assembly were instructive to the delegates of RfP Bangladesh.

- **August 23, 2019:** RfPM and RfPB leaders announced a joint statement during the RfP 10th World Assembly held in Linda, Germany on the refugee problem affecting both Myanmar and Bangladesh under Track II Consultations. Both chapters expressed serious concern over this tragedy fallen upon our fellow human beings and firm determination to

build confidence and strive to find a peaceful and just solution to this tragedy of the refugees compelled to flee to Bangladesh and be sheltered in different refugee camps there.

- **November 21-22, 2019** : RfP Bangladesh hosted the Second High-level Summit of Buddhist and Muslim Leaders at Long Beach Hotel, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh for overcoming extremism and advancing peace with justice. The summit was supported by the Religions for Peace International Trustee Group and organized by International Forum on Buddhist Muslim Relations (BMF), The representatives (40) of International Network of Engaged Buddhist, International Movement for a Just World, Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah, Religions for Peace and The Network for Religious and Traditional Peace Makers participated in this Summit. Honorable Minister of Home Affairs, Govt of the Republic of Bangladesh Asaduzzaman Khan, MP, sent a message wishing success of the Summit.
- **November 26-30, 2019**: Ms. Semonti Barua , a member of RfPB Interfaith Youth Network, participated in the Asia Interfaith Youth Peace Camp held in Manila, Philippines. 60 youth leaders representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, have attended this camp. Semonthi participated in several insightful workshops at this gathering.
- **December 10-13, 2019**: RfPB president Principal Sukomal Barua visited China to a seminar "Interfaith exchanges and shared future for mankind" sponsored by CCRP (China Committee for Religions and Peace) held at Beijing Friendship Hotel from 10-13 December 2019. He led the section titled "Cultural Values of Religion" in the Seminar. Prof. Dr. Barua Chandra Barua of Pali and Buddhist Studies Department, Dhaka University also participated in the seminar.
- **December 11-12, 2019**: Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar (Secretary-General, RfPB) visited USA to attend an *extraordinary* session of the RfP World Council titled Multi-religious and Multi-stakeholder Partnership for Peace and Development held in New York. Around 200 religious leaders from the global, regional, national, and local levels, together with 50 scholars, practitioners, and organizations engaged in interfaith work as well as foundations, governments, bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies joined in this conference to further advance the outcomes of the Assembly.

2020

- **January 14 and 15, 2020**: The Asia-Pacific Women of Faith Network (APWoFN) held the first online symposium, titled "The Reality of Human Trafficking in Asia" where Prof. Dr. Rashida Khanam Participated Bangladesh. on behalf of RfP Bangladesh.
- **March 25, 2020**: RfPB leaders participated in a Global webinar on "Redefining Leadership, Re-Envisioning Faith, and Reconstructing Humanitarianism" organized by RfPI.

- **July 28, 2020:** RfPB leaders joined the Global Webinar organized by RfPI on IRC Development - Securing Representative and Inclusive Governance.
- **September 9, 2020:** RfPB leaders joined the third Global Webinar organized by RfPI on Interreligious Council (IRC) Development, focusing on Strategic Communications and Media Engagement.
- **September 30, 2020:** RfPB leaders participated on a Global Webinar on Interreligious Council (IRC) Development organized by RfP International.
- **September 2020:** RfPB leaders attended Religions for Peace (RfP) Inter-Religious Council (IRC) Development Webinar on Financial Accountability and Resource Mobilization.
- **October 14-15, 2020:** RfPB Secretary-General Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar presented a report on the COVID-19 situation in Bangladesh at ACRP, EC meeting held online. In a different session Executive President Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey spoke on the issue of finance and resource mobilization related to “Development of Inter-Religious Councils/IRCs
- **October 23-24, 2020:** Prof. Dr. Rashida Khanam delivered speech online on “Gender Equality and Culture: Culture: Keeping Faith and Transforming Tomorrow” at the “Asian Consultation on Women, Faith, and Diplomacy: Keeping Faith and Transforming Tomorrow” on Oct 23, 2020 organized by ACRP. The consultation also focused on the “Development of Inter-Religious Councils/IRCs”.Dr, NHM Abu Bakar also attended this consultation.
- **November 10-13, 2020:** Principal Sukomal Barua, Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey, Prof.Dr. NHM Abu Bakar and Prof. Dr. Rashida Khanam joined online in the different sessions at the Assembly held in Lindau, Germany on Women, Faith and Diplomacy. Over 1,000 representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other religions virtually met to discuss new forms of policymaking, with a focus on women and diplomacy in this Assembly.

2021

- **March 11, 2021:** A meeting on the progress of the Flagship project held online with Rev. Masamichi Kamiya (Senior Advisor, ACRP-RfP). RfPB leaders Principal Sukomal Barua, Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey, Prof.Dr.NHM Abu Bakar, Dilip Barua & Rev. Kanchan Barua were present in this meeting. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar, who is coordinating the project on behalf of RfPB, assured that all events related to this project will be completed before the Assembly.
- **March 17, 2021:** Second event of ACRP Flagship project ‘Children Fast in South Asia’ held on March 17, 2021 at Ramu Jagatjyoti Shishu Sadan (Ramu,Cox's Bazar) to ensure the child rights against the Child labor and female child trafficking. Different NGO representatives also participated at this event.The event started with children's music followed by an alphabet rally where everyone participated with colored placards and banners with various slogans written to ensure children's rights against child labor and

female child trafficking. After the rally, everyone met in the auditorium where a seminar was organized on the dignity of children towards building a better future. Different NGO representatives like Mrs. Rita Malakar(Director of Children Assembly), Ms. Tazin Akter (SEA-AIR network), Ashok Barua, Kanchan Barua(Treasurer,RfP Bangladesh), Ale Barua, Sanu Barua, Prof.Uzzal Dev, and a couple of RKK members participated and delivered a valuable speech in the seminar. Children were also advised on important issues, such as friendly behavior and absolute tolerance as well as focusing on their studies in the seminar. Although this Flagship Project event was held in a pandemic situation, multi-religious people spontaneously supported and participated in the rally, seminar, and lunch program.

- **June 8-9, 2021:** Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar, Prof.Ranajit Kumar Dey, Mr. Dilip Barua, Rev. Kanchan Barua & Dr. Sreepathi Das virtually attended the SEA-AIR Final Conference on FoRB Policy and Practice on behalf of SEA-AIR Monitoring Project of RfPB. RfPB successfully runs this project for two years from July 2018 to June 2021 on Interreligious issues and Freedom of religion and Belief.
- **January 13, 2021:** Held an ACRP Virtual Summit on Human Trafficking" where Prof. Dr. Rashida Khanam presented a paper on "The state of human trafficking in Bangladesh" and RfPB Secretary-General Dr. NHM Abu Bakar was present online.
- **April 01, 2021:** RfP leaders attended a seminar on "Positive Peace within the Context of Multi-religious Collaboration". It was co-hosted by Religions for Peace and the Institute of Economics and Peace.
- **June 10,2021:** Dr.NHM Abu Bakar participated in the 2nd quarterly ACRP Secretary Generals meeting online on behalf of RfP Bangladesh.
- **June 17, 2021:** A seminar held on Freedom of Religions and Belief (FoRB) with the religious leaders of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar region at Taiwah Restaurant under the sponsorship of SEA-AIR Network project of RfPB. Rev. Kanchan Barua (Treasurer, RfPB) presided over the seminar where Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey (Executive President, RfPB) was present as a Chief Guest in the Seminar. 35 religious leaders from Muslim, Hindu, Christian & Buddhist communities were present there and most of them praised RfPB for taking initiative to publish the Bengali translation of the resource guide titled "Shanthir Pathnirdeshika".
- **September 23, 2021:** Prof. Ranajit Kumar Dey (EP, RfPB) & Prof. Dr.NHM Abu Bakar(SG,RfPB) virtually attended the High-Level Dialogues on 'Leave No One Behind: Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Sustainable Development Goals' and imparted their opinion in the context of Bangladesh. This dialogue was organized jointly by the Freedom of Religion or Belief Leadership Network (FoRBLN), International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB), African Parliamentarians for Human Rights (AfrIPAHR), & the Faith for Rights Initiative, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR).

- October 01, 2021:** The third awareness creation event supported by ACRP flagship project (The Children Fast in South Asia) was held on October 01, 2021 at Alutila-Uluchhara Poura private primary school of Rangamati District. The venue of the event was in a very remote area of Rangamati district and far away from the city. Most of the students, teachers and local leaders, NGO representatives were present in the event to uphold the significance of the awareness program against child labor and female child trafficking. After a small procession nearby the school, the students took photographs with different slogans bearing placards on all right issues of children. Later all of them gathered in a hall room for a seminar on education on the dignity of life. Headmistress Gourika Talukder presided over the seminar where RfP leaders (Dilip Barua -AGS, RfPB, Eng. Dipak kasha -President, RfPB Rangamati Chapter) addressed the gathering. They said that ACRP strongly believes in the respect of human dignity and human rights since these are fundamentally important prerequisites to eradicate poverty and racial and religious discrimination. Under this theme, RfP Bangladesh became engaged in advocacy activities against child labor, child marriage, and child trafficking, and those for improving the status of women in societies and promoting self-support in communities, while re-affirming their fundamental rights in households, villages, and cities and offering opportunities for vocational training. Prof. Milan Tanchaingha, Andamoni Chakma (President, SMC), Headman Robidan Karbari, Manik Barua, Subadarshi Bikkhu (Principal of Pagoda) delivered their valuable speech in favor of RfP standpoint and have shown gratitude for this event. RfP leaders on behalf of the project distributed some study materials to the students.
- October 02, 2021:** The fourth event of ACRP flagship event was held at Noymile Tripura Para Junior High School, Dighinala, Khagrachari under the leadership of RfPB-CRC leaders Vice-Principal Debaprio Barua, Sashon Barua, and Biswajil Barua. This school is about 137 kilometers away from Chittagong city. Most of the populations of this area are deprived of education due to their poor economic condition. Child labor along with early marriages of female children is the usual scene of this area. To appreciate and grace the presence of RfPB leaders on awareness creation event against child labor and female child trafficking School Managing Committee President Mr. Krishna Kishore Tripura, Head Master Mr. Tapu Tripura, Assistant Head Master Haralal Tripura, Assitant Teacher Ratul Tripura, Amrita Chakma , Saremony Tripura, and others were present in the school premise. They advised the students to move for rallies with various slogan bearing placards in a disciplined way. After the colorful procession of students in the surrounding area, all of them gathered in a hall room for a seminar titled “The Children First in South Asia: Advancing their wellbeing in Bangladesh” and delivered their feelings and impressions on the protection of human rights of children along with the need of their education and dignity in life. The Seminar was presided by RfPB leader Sashon Barua, and the children were entertained by snacks and study materials on behalf of the flagship project after the seminar.

- October 04, 2021:** The fifth event of the ACRP flagship project was held at Bandarban Sowelock Govt. Primary School (Mazar Para, Sowelock Union Sadar, Bandarban). Rev. Kanchan Barua (Treasurer, RfPB) and RfPB Bandarban Chapter President Dr. Aung Tha Loo organized led the whole event. This awareness creation event on education on the dignity of human life aimed at empowering the vulnerable such as women and children under the theme “the Children first in South Asia”. The event started with a very colorful event with the placard procession of children on the road and the school premises. Various slogans were written on playcards regarding the awareness against child labor, the need for education, and female child trafficking. After procession all students, teachers, guardians. After rally all participants of the event gathered in a hall room for a seminar chaired by Dr. Aung Tha Loo. Among the present guests U Ching Marma (Chairman, School Barua, Ale Barua and Joymala Barua and Rev. Kanchan Barua delivered their valuable speeches emphasizing education on the dignity of life. At last, some study materials and a snack were provided to the children.
- October 10, 2021:** The last but sixth event of ACRP flagship project was held at Scout Training Center, Railway Zone, Kamalapur, Dhaka . Nadia Afreen Khan (Convener, RfPB Interfaith Youth Network) conducted and lead the whole event in collaboration with Pather School (Kamalapur and Gulshan Branch). The children of this school are deprived of regular education and have no idea about their rights as human being. Most of them are engaged in different kinds of temporary work to feed themselves. Even they have no permanent shelter. The event started at 01pm with their chorus songs “We shall overcome (Bengali version)” following a seminar along with light brain games. RfPB-EC member Journalist Selim Reza presided over the seminar where Prof. Dr. NHM Abu Bakar was the Chief Guest.Pather School founder Sakir Mati, Nadia Afreen, RKK representatives and some others on dais delivered their valuable speeches. Sakir in his speech solidarity with the vision of RfPB and its flagship project.All speakers of the seminar said that everywhere, regardless of gender, ethnicity, orientation, religion, nationality, caste, creed, or physical ability all children should be treated equally and given equal rights, privileges, and opportunities in all aspects of life. The children were served launch packed on behalf of the flagship project after the event. As part of this event, some study material were donated to Bright Star Junior High School, Kalyanpur Burnt Slum(Pora Bosti), Mirpur, Dhaka after an outdoor event.

Prepared and submitted by:



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