



FINAL REPORT

CollAsia Field Project 2021-2022



Project Title: Children Education Program with Art



Bengal Foundation

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The art education program planned to use selected art works from Bengal Foundation's collections, to connect with children who might otherwise not have access to galleries and museums. The objective is to familiarize children with works by Bangladesh's master painters held in the Bengal collection, by organizing informative virtual exhibitions, and documenting children's activities and art works, so that they learn about conservation and sustainability, and make lasting change towards promotion of well-being and development of communities. Images of the master painters' works will be used as a tool to create dialogue with the children, encourage them to open up to explore and learn from each other and from there to grow their comfort in the artistic realm. The program also opens up possibilities to explore and catalyse latent potential that may lie in children who, because of their social class, are intimidated by arts venues and are therefore marginalised. This is an opportunity to create positive and lasting change for present and future generation in Southeast Asia, by making concrete contributions to advance the sustainable development goals of the UN 2030 Agenda.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The program was conducted in two phases.

Phase 1:

The first phase aimed at introducing the children with the primary colours, colour-wheel and help them get acquainted with the tools and equipment needed for creating art. They were provided with a kit comprising of a set of materials such as primary colours (red, blue and yellow), brushes, sketch books, palettes etc. After briefing the idea of colour wheel, the children were allowed to draw their own colour wheel by using primary colours which they shared as a group with peers. They also produced colour wheel by using three-dimensional craft material and pieces of paper etc. They were then given coloured t-shirts which they got from a lottery game, they formed human colour-wheels by themselves and had fun.

Phase 2:

In the second phase the children were given a virtual tour of an exhibition showcasing selected artworks of some of the founding figures of Bangladesh art. The exhibition presented the Bengal Exhibition Hall, located at Dhanmondi, Dhaka, in virtual format. The children strolled through the gallery space virtually, saw differences in styles, subject matter and techniques evident in the art works. The virtual tour was facilitated by a person who has good knowledge about the artists and their works, shared background information about the artworks and interesting facts about the artists and the process of their art creation. The discussion immediately captivated the children's interest even though they did not have prior knowledge about any of the artists or their works. Different points were made, to discuss what they see and how they interpret it. Simple questions were asked such as what piece he or she liked best or what they think was going on in the artwork and how the work makes them feel etc. Through the above two steps, children were encouraged, had questions that would make them think and spark creativity. At this point they were asked to create their own art using the materials from the kit provided in the first phase. After they finish their artwork, they were asked to show and say a few words about their own creation, and this was recorded on video.

A follow-up conversation was held after about twenty-five days of the program where they shared what they remember from the event, what stoked them most and about their overall experience of the program.

(Please see Appendices for photos relating to Project Activities)

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The children learnt about the Primary colours, secondary colours and colour wheel. They learnt how to create secondary colours (green, orange and violet) from mixing primary colours. They learnt how to work with different media such as pencil, pencil colour, pastel colour, watercolour, or acrylic colour etc. They were able to assess the effects that each media creates. By creating 'human chain colour-wheel' with peers, they enjoyed being able to collaborate and communicate.

In the second phase of the Program, the children were introduced to some of master artists of Bangladesh and learnt about what inspired them to create great art. They gained an understanding of the interconnectedness between art, nature and humanity. This is evident in their reaction and dialogues during the virtual exhibition and also in the follow-up conversation.

The programme fostered curiosity among children in the form of questions, make them think and explore their own world. Exposure through the virtual exhibition and discussion helped develop higher critical and creative thinking, which are integral to personal growth and building a better community.

The program inspired them to wonder, imagine and dream of possibilities for pursuing art in the future.

(Please refer to Appendices page for photos relating to Project Outcomes)

PARTNERSHIPS

Primary Partners:

Bengal Foundation and Alok Shikkhaloy. Bengal Foundation Shared art works from their collection to showcase in the virtual exhibition. They also helped us in the research for finding and selection the most suitable art works in terms of appropriateness for children or the target audience, visual appearance, digital presentation etc. The Teachers and Staff of Alok Shikkhaloy helped us conduct the program smoothly and made it easy for us as externals to have a positive and effective communication with the children.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

I. CHALLENGES

The initial plan was to reach to the children of Friendship School. Friendship is the NGO that works for and with the women living in the char area. Due to the COVID situation, we could not materialise all the necessary steps to make this collaboration a success. It would also be a challenge to move with all the materials and logistics outside of the city to reach the children of Friendship School. We addressed the problem by finding an alternative target group who has a similar context and whole location may pose less of a challenge for the successful implementation of the project. So, we approached Alok Shikhaloy which has kids from the low-income group of the community and the school premise is located within the same city we were working.

II. LESSONS LEARNED

The participating children, considering their social context, are detached from the mainstream art world and have limited access to public amenities. Through this Art Education program, we learned that the creativity and curiosity of kids about art can be sparked when they are exposed to the appropriate environment to do so. The art works used in the virtual exhibition of this program worked as means to create dialogues with children, encourage them to open up to explore and learn from each other. From there they grew their comfort in the artistic realm. The interesting method of execution of the project did not let the children's attention and enthusiasm to dim out. The biggest challenge was to finish all the targeted activities in the limited time period of a single day and still achieve the goals anticipated initially.

QUOTES ON THE PROJECT

‘We enjoyed a lot. We want to have more such programs soon.’

- Quote from the participating children from Alok Shikhaloy.

They saw art works by some of the eminent artists of our country. They learned about them for the very first time and shared their views on the art works very promptly. This was one of the best parts of the whole program. I think this program was very educational for the participating kids and will have lasting effect on their lives.

- Quote from Shawlin Akter, Assistant Head Mistress of Alok Shikhaloy:

‘The project gave a very rich experience to the children in terms of nudging their interest in art and culture. It gave them a solid opportunity to explore and ignited curiosity with colours, artists, techniques, and most of all, courage and possibilities! The project was extremely interactive. I happened to have a club (University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh Nutrition and Wellness) at the undergrad level at a private University in Bangladesh. Since mental health at all levels is our priority along with a good physical health, I found this project having a good potential for future collaboration with my club.’

- Arzoo Ismail
Full time Faculty Member, ULAB (University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh)
Advisor, ULAB Nutrition and Wellness Club.
She worked as a volunteer docent for this project.

The Bengal Foundation Collection is singular in its focus on the forerunners of the modern art movement in Bangladesh. Hence, images of works that have been shared with the children will, we hope, act as cultural symbol systems that will help create stories, build meaning, and prompt their imagination.

- Quote from Luva Nahid Chowdhury,
Director General, Bengal Foundation.

FUTURE PLANS

We had the chance to share about the program with several other school authorities, namely Aroni Bidyaloy', and they expressed their interest in collaboration and cooperation. We hope to continue this project with more school children and reach more schools that are outside of the city. Since the virtual exhibition that hold a major part of our program in terms of cost and also content, is also ready, we will take the benefit of it. We would be able to have such programs with much less funding in future. We also hope to reach to schools with especially able children. For that more research will be needed about how to communicate with them and interact. We will continue with our research on that.

APPENDICES

Photos for the PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Photos for the PROJECT OUTCOMES





