



Dialogue with Mayoral Candidates in Dhaka

After a decade, City Corporation Elections was held in Dhaka on 28 April, 2015. Before the election, the mayoral candidates participated in debates and different events to show their commitments towards a sustainable city.

World Vision acknowledges that children living in urban poverty remain especially vulnerable to human rights violations with slum environments associated with adverse health, social, economic, environmental and educational outcomes. At the same time, if city authority promotes childrens' participation in the development processes; activate a city-wide Children's Rights Strategy; establish a Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism and allocate children's budget, children may enjoy the advantages of urban life, including access to educational, medical and recreational facilities. For all these purposes, City Corporation would be the appropriate platform.

Considering the context and appropriateness, World Vision Bangladesh (WVB) organized a dialogue with the proposed candidates of Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation. Major candidates for the Mayoral position, child right activists, representatives of child centered organizations, child forum members, service providing agencies took part and raised issues in the dialogue where candidates addressed the concerns and reflect through their commitment. National television channel Ekattor broadcasted the gist of the



Children's Questions and Candidate's Commitments

Playground: According to National Child Policy 2011, 'Measures shall be taken to ensure quality recreational, sport and cultural activity for the children. Each educational institution shall have playground, sports equipment. There shall be children park and sports center area wise. The town planning shall include compulsory playground for the children'. A children asked, as the numbers of parks and playground are decreasing through illegal encroachment by the land grabbers, what actions will be taken by the candidates if they win? The candidates promise to increases the number of playground and recreational spaces for the children. Also, they will remove the illegal encroachment of the several playground from Dhaka.



'I am committed for working with children where all the slum children will practice a life with full dignity' - Anisul Huq, Candidate - Dhaka North City Corporation

Child Marriage: Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. One-third of Bangladeshi women now aged between 20-24 were married off by the age of 15. In slum areas 80 percent girls aged between 12-18 got married. One child asked that most of her friends are compelled to be married at an age of below 18. She is scared that even she could get married at an early age and thus will be unable to continue her education. In replying her question, the candidates promised that they will act for increasing social awareness to prevent child marriage especially in slum areas.

Water Logging and Traffic Jam: Both Dhaka and Chittagong go under water in every rainy season. One child raised the issue that traffic jam usually increases during rainy season and it becomes very difficult for them to move somewhere. He also asked why authority starts maintenance work during rainy season? The candidates replied that they will work for removing the blockage of the drain to address water logging and work for reducing traffic jam. They will try to enhance coordination among the departments.



Children's Questions and Candidate's Commitments

Natural Disaster and Earthquake:

Recent earthquake of Nepal and the tremor and panic created in Bangladesh draws more attention to the disaster preparedness specially for children. Due to lack of proper implementation of Building Code and proper maintenance, possibility of building collapse is increasing. Some 78,323 buildings will be destroyed completely if a 6-magnitude earthquake



shakes Dhaka originating from its beneath, causing havoc throughout the densely populated capital city. Though, earthquake is disaster for all groups of people, yet children and women are particularly more vulnerable as they remain at home and schools most of the time. One child drawn the case of Zihad's death and expressed concern about their vulnerability to natural disasters and earthquake. The candidates replied that the culprit for the Zehad's death should be punished and they would apply all the rules and laws to reduce vulnerability of the children. They will emphasis on building code implementation if they win!



*"I will open help line to address the problem, especially to be hearing from the children. As the prison is moving to Keraniganj, the area will be the Disneyland for Dhaka South's children"—
Mohammad Sayeed khokon, Mayor Candidate, Dhaka South City Corporation.*

Birth Registration: Birth registration provides the first legal recognition of the child. Without a birth registration, children may lack access to services like health care and education. About 63 percent of the slum children in Dhaka have no birth registration.

A child told that for slum children are deprived of their rights for not having birth registration and asked what could be the strategies from the candidates to address the issue. They replied that they will work for the birth registration of the children. Even they will ensure zero cost process for this registration process.



Children's Questions and Candidate's Commitments

Child Labour: Children's engagement with hazardous job is another alarming issue in urban areas. Although dependable, comprehensive and up-to-date information on child labor in Bangladesh are not available, Bangladesh is among the 74 countries where significant incidence of child labour and forced labour is still observed.

A child asked, 'we see children work around us. Even, some children work for 12—14 hours in a day. What roles City Corporation may have in preventing child labour? The candidates answer that poverty is a core reason for child labour. They will work for the sustainable development and prevent child labour.'

Eve Teasing: A child says she is scared to go school for eve teasing. Also, she seldom discusses the issue with her parents or guardians as she is scared of the eve-teaser. The candidates promise to increase social awareness and effectiveness implementation of laws for preventing eve teasing.

Education: A child raised the issue that though there are many schools in Dhaka, they have very few schools for the slum children, street children, child laborers and disable children. Also, they lack the required facilities. She asked what strategies city corporations may have in this regard. The candidates committed that they will ensure all the facilities for the poor children in the schools after being elected.

Can the candidates do anything for removing formalin and other chemicals from the fruits? The candidate replies that they will try to restrict the use of formalin and apply laws in this regard.



Acknowledgement:

Anisul Huq, Sayeed Khokon, Zonaed Saki and Nader Chowdhury—Mayor Candidates

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ANNEX: The Children's Queries

1. Honorable Mayoral Candidates, we are aware that there is no alternative of sports and entertainment to help children flourish. According to National Child Policy 2011, "Each educational institution shall have playground, sports equipment. There shall be children park and sports center area wise". On the contrary, the number of playground in Dhaka city is decreasing day by day. Consequently, children are being engaged in different anti-social activities. Also, there is no particular place in Dhaka for entertaining children. After being elected, what will be the measures to increase the number of playgrounds and entertainment venue for the children?
2. The rate of child marriage is still quite high, particularly in urban slum areas. The parents are also compelled to think about their daughter's marriage due to social insecurity. Though relevant laws exist, implementations are lacking. After being elected, what will be your strategy to prevent child marriage?
3. We know that during the celebration of Bengali New Year females have been tortured. We also face problems for the miscreants during going to the schools. Even, they scare us to remain silent against eve teasing. After being elected, do you have any particular plan to prevent eve teasing?
4. Digging of roads and drainage increases particularly in the rainy season. Many places of Dhaka are completely drawn even after a moderate rainfall. Traffic jam usually continues for the whole day. And we face problem to reach in the school in time. It becomes very difficult to move somewhere. After being elected, what measures will you take reduce water logging and traffic jam?
5. Birth registration is mandatory for receiving any citizen right. But, most of the children living in slum or street do not have birth registration. As a result, they are deprived of their rights. After being elected, what will be your strategy to address this issue?
6. We saw a child named Zihad died after falling into a water pipe. Similarly, children and women are more vulnerable to earthquake and climatic disasters as they stay inside buildings most of the time. After being elected, do you have any particular plan for child protection during earth quake or climatic disaster?
7. Use of Formalin and chemicals in the food is detrimental to the child health and their growth. We take poison with our daily food. Though, there is law in this regard, use of formalin continues. What will be your strategy in this regard after being elected?
8. We see children work around us. Even, some children work for 12/14 hours a day. What role may City Corporation have in preventing child labour and inhibiting their involvement in hazardous work?
9. One third of the total population of Bangladesh is children. But, the children's opinion are not taken into consideration while budget preparation and policy formulation. There is no committee for the children where they could complain. There should have a Child Development Cell in the Wards and City Corporations. Will you ensure child participation in different committees?
10. Though, there are numerous schools in Dhaka, numbers of schools are not adequate for the slum children, street children, child laborers and disable children. Numbers of schools are not adequate around the slums. What will be your strategies in this regard?
11. Scattered wastes are quite visible in Dhaka. Numbers of existing dustbins are not adequate. Most of the dustbins are broken where open dumping is practiced. Thus, our city is being polluted earnestly – air pollution, water pollution and sound pollution are continued to increase. What would be your initiatives for ensuring clean Dhaka?
12. One third of the total populations of Dhaka city reside in slums. Yet, access to safe water and sanitation facilities for poor slum dwellers are almost non-existent. Slum children frequently suffer from mal nutrition and health problems. Besides, the number of public toilet is very limited in Dhaka. Even, the existing toilets are not women and child friendly. Will you take any initiative after being elected to ensure access to safe water, sanitary latrine and public toilets?

