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TSSEP: Using Technology for a Better Society

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YES Alumni Bangladesh organised the Tech Solutions to Socio-Economic Problems (TSSEP), from March 15 to 27, to show high-school students how technology can be used as a tool to solve social problems. The programme was a project of the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and was a development to the 'South Asian Summit for Social Media and Digital Empowerment', which was held in India last year.

TSSEP comprised of a workshop followed by an assignment for the students from the participating schools. Ten schools were chosen to participate -- namely BAF Shaheen School, Cambrian School and College, DPS STS School, Maple Leaf International School, Mastermind, Notre Dame College, Oxford International School, Scholastica, St. Joseph Higher Secondary School and Viganumisa Noon School and College.

Teams of three students from each of the mentioned schools participated in the seven-hour long workshop held at EMK Center in Dhaka on March 15. It was conducted by notable journalists, activists and corporate executives. The students were given the idea of socio-economic problems and the role social media can play to tackle those. The groups also



learned the basics of reporting, news photography, videography and webmaking.

At the workshop the teams were assigned tasks for the next ten days, leading to the final of the event on March 27. In order to win the 'Best TSSEP Award', each team would have to create a video or photo presentation on a specific socio-economic problem and upload it on Facebook. They would have to use social media to spread the word about their projects as well as arrange seminars at their respective schools to share with their friends what they learned at the workshop, to pass on the knowledge they gained. Later, the teams were required to make short videos on how they carried out the tasks to be presented and the winners were chosen by a jury board

which included Rajib Lochan Das, Coordinator of iEARN-BD, and was based on likes and shares on Facebook.

The closing ceremony was held at the American Center in Baridhara, hosted by Gulshan Jubaed Prince and Mayesha Kamal, both organisers of the event. Bilal Faruqi, Cultural Affairs Officer at the American Center, started the event by presenting a video of the workshop which preceded the screening of all the videos made by the participating teams. Alumni Coordinator from the US Embassy, Quazi Sabir Amanullah, thanked all the schools and the students and mentioned how the organisers were inspired upon observing the efforts from the teams. Among the guests were the Coordinator of SPEED Youth, Samia Mallik, and Kazi Nasrin Siddiqua who was the advisor for the pro-

ject. They both emphasised on the innovations that technology bring into the field and were pleased at how this generation has taken the positive step to raise awareness.

Before announcing the winners and distributing certificates among the participants, Viraj LeBailly, Director of the American Center, shared her views. She congratulated and praised the organisers and participants alike referring to them as 'leaders' of the 21st century. The team of Nuphat Purnata, Zahin Ishrat Chowdhury and Jimia -- from Scholastica -- won the 'Best TSSEP Award' for their video titled "Integrate, don't isolate". The video on women's empowerment shared on Facebook garnered around 1400 Likes and more than 300 shares.

"It is a surreal experience. It was a difficult task to portray an issue like women's empowerment in a short video but we are more than glad to have taken this great opportunity," expressed Nuphat Purnata, as the team went on to collect their crest and winners' certificates. They also shared plans on establishing a foundation for women's empowerment and development in the future.

Project TSSEP was supported by iEARN-BD, EMK Center, SPEED Youth, Smallfoot, Mozilla Webmaker, Radio Koler Gan, and Diamondback Productions. SHOUT was the media partner of the event.