

Helping youths to say something

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“These are the problems that they create for us. We wish to convey this to our families. We want our parents to visualise our problems and may be this will help us develop a better understanding”. Joshim, aged 21, explains the reasons why he and three other members of his group chose problems of adolescent girls and boys as the topic for the video that they are making.

Joshim and his friends got this opportunity to work on a video as part of the Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) established by Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), a non-profit development organisation based in Chittagong district in Bangladesh.

The CMC combines new information and communication technologies like computers, and Internet with traditional media like video and radio.

The Youth CMC grew out of efforts to provide access to ICT skills and facilities for poor youth in the Sitakund area. YPSA has been running development programmes in the area since 1985. YPSA, with the support of the UNESCO, in 2003, has set up a small ICT centre and are doing research in local poverty and potential ICT applications as part of a regional ethnographic action research network.

The centre has trained 200 youth in computer applications so far. In addition to training, the centre provides an opportunity for the youth to apply their skills in multimedia content development.

As part of the programme, eleven participants were selected for

the four-month video training on the basis of a series of tests and home visits. Now they are working in small groups to make short videos on story ideas of their own.

Sabina's group chose to focus on people with physical disabilities. She explains the reason, "Since childhood, I have seen disabled people in this area. Their situation touched my heart, but I could not do anything for them. When I was given the opportunity to make a video, it came to my mind that I can bring their problems in front of everyone and can make people aware of their problems. We have been given scope through this centre to do something for them."

Harun and his group are making a video on a local orphanage. "No one is born an orphan," he says. "The orphanage in Sitakund gets no support. We want to show orphans' situation to the people. We hope this will help mobilise support for the orphanage."

Youth participants have also come together to form an informal social network centered on the ICT facility and linked to YPSA's development programmes. The centre has become a unique local space that is relatively free of discrimination and gender biases and associated with new learning, expression and opportunities. Based on interest and demand, the centre runs regular recreational activities, screens films and organise musical programmes.

The Youth CMC is building on the skills and interest of youth in the network. In coming months, they will start developing TV programmes, which will be telecasted on the local cable networks, will be screened in local tea stalls and in meetings of community groups. The centre also hopes to broadcast the radio programmes developed by the groups on FM radio.

The objectives of this programmes is to demonstrate the feasibility of localised community-based media in Bangladesh, a country that currently has no provisions for community radio or television.

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