

# BRACU students install Water Purifier at Korail, Mohakhali

**Fahim Mostafa**

A three member team of BRAC university environmental awareness forum, BUEAF comprising of Salzar Rahman, Syed Mehboob Hossain and myself had the opportunity to do some community service experience back in January. It's hard to imagine how a simple 1.8m tall water-filtering unit can drastically change the lives of people living in dilapidated shanties. Termed Sky Hydrant water purification unit, the filter purifies water at the rate of 400 litres an hour. Back in the last week of January the filtering unit was installed in Korail slum, Mohakhali courtesy of BUEAF and SIEMENS Bangladesh.



The scarcity of safe drinking water in slums like Korail needs no facts or figures to establish itself. The need for safe drinkable water free of bacteria, turbidity and other contaminant is a cry that usually falls into deaf ears. Mass awareness program can address this crisis situation but usually never formulates a sustainable system of supplying the basic commodity. The six lakh BDT worth filtering unit came as a lifesaver. SIEMENS Bangladesh had sponsored the installation of 20 such filters in SIDR affected areas. The Bangladesh Army currently maintains the units. The installation of the filter unit in Korail Slum is an extension of the same program. BRAC University Environmental awareness forum was privileged to get the opportunity to work alongside SIEMENS Bangladesh in realizing the program.

Rene Arnt the director of SIEMENS Bangladesh came in contact with Hasibul Kabir, (Lecturer at BRAC University). The three member representative of BUEAF was then selected to install the filter. From then onwards it was onto us to install, educate and periodically monitor the maintenance of the filter unit. BUEAF members had to set aside a lot of time and effort for the cause. Although the three of us were constantly on the move to install the unit other members of

BUEAF- Nahid Sharmin, Nazila Mehnaz, Tanveer Harun Sami, Nabial Nowrin, and Samia Saleh periodically extended their support for the cause.

The filtering unit is fed raw untreated water from infiltration well located nearby. This water is temporarily stored in a 1000 litre capacity tank located 3 meters above the filtering unit. The filtering process consumes no electricity and works comprehensively under the action of gravity. Inside the protective tubular canister is the filtration module, which has thousands of micro fibres clustered together. The fibres have 0.1 micron perforated membrane, which filters out bacteria, and all other contaminants.

The result is crystal clear drinking water. The filter needs to be manually cleaned periodically and students at the Korail Madrasa has been trained to do the work.

Our contribution in this program was manual labour, creating awareness among the slum dwellers and beautification of the adjoining area. After two days of toil to install the unit we decided to paint the reservoir tank. The reservoir tank was hoisted over a metal platform 3m above the ground. In line with the surrounding we used raw lines and pure colours to paint the surroundings. The Madrasa students also thoroughly enjoyed painting alongside us.

After two weeks of preparation, the filter unit was ready to be inaugurated. The children around the slum took full liberty to make it successful. They planned a red ribbon inauguration and one of them even prepared a welcome speech under the guidance of Nahid Sharmin. Rene Arnt, director of SIEMENS Bangladesh; Dr. Fuad H. Mallick, Chairperson of Dept. of Architecture at BRAC University; Mrs. Zainab F. Ali, Director of Student Affairs; Ms Huraera Jabeen and Mr. Hasibul Kabir, lecturers at Dept. of Architecture were present in the occasion. Prior to the inauguration Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Pro Vice Chancellor of BRAC University visited the site with us. He expressed concerns regarding the maintenance of the filtering unit and asked us to monitor the progress of the water distribution scheme in future.

Mrs. Zainab was particularly thrilled with the speech prepared by the slum girl. “We did not have pure drinking water before and we never knew the difference. Now, we have drinkable water thanks to dedicated efforts of our older brothers and sisters from BRAC University. We are grateful!” Her speech encapsulated weeks of hard work and the cause for it. At the end of the day we did not end up with promising facts or figures as to how many lives were saved or how many disease breakouts were prevented. We only have the honest appreciation of a host of people belonging to a neglected community and the satisfaction that a bit of conceited effort has created a big difference into the lives of hundreds.

Fahim Mostafa is a student at the Department. of Architecture BRAC University and a member of BUEAF.