

1. Introduction

In 1995 a group of experienced development workers put their commitment to Bangladesh into practice by establishing Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), an independent UK-registered charity.

Our vision is of a world in which everyone can thrive.

At DAM UK we support local efforts that challenge poverty and inequality. We focus our efforts on ensuring that everyone in Bangladesh enjoys the benefits of quality education, good health and economic development. And we provide humanitarian assistance to communities in Bangladesh at times of crisis.

We see our work as contributing to the Global Goals' ambition to 'leave no-one behind'.

We work in partnership with Dhaka Ahsania Mission, a leading Bangladesh-registered charity that has delivered quality development programmes since 1958.

This Impact Review summarises the difference made by DAM UK's work during 2021.

We recognise that the term 'impact' means different things to different people. For the purposes of this review we understand impact to mean both the immediate and longer-term changes that result from an intervention. This report draws upon the assessment of impact recorded in project records, in external verification reports and, most importantly, by project beneficiaries themselves.

2. Making a Difference in 2021

2.1 Income and Expenditure 2021

Income (£):

	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	2021
£	204,000	246,000	490,000	182,000	210,000	280,000	310,000

Expenditure by sector *:

	<i>Education</i>	<i>Humanitarian</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Economic Dev.t</i>
2021	50%	21%	14%	15%
2015-20	62%	24%	11%	3%

* Classification based upon each project's primary sector

2.2 Adapting to COVID

During 2021, Bangladesh was impacted by the worldwide COVID pandemic. Many lives were lost and health systems were put under extreme pressure. This led to Government-mandated closures of many public institutions, including schools, with some measures lasting many months. Activities typical of DAM’s normal development work, like public meetings, suddenly became difficult, requiring careful planning to ensure that COVID protocols were observed. Non-essential travel was, at times, banned. Despite this challenging backdrop to DAM’s work, project teams adapted to the changing circumstances, for instance increasing the use of online communication instead of face-to-face meetings. With a reduction in COVID prevalence, the most severe restrictions were lifted in August 2021, with project activities returning to more ‘normal’ conditions for the final few months of the year.



2.3 Education

Context:

The United Nations’ Global Goals call for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Yet in Bangladesh, 6.7 million children are out-of-school and 13% of children are involved in child labour (UNICEF). Despite having made great progress in increasing school enrolment over recent years, progress has stalled and the Government of Bangladesh is struggling to get the last 15% of children, the hardest-to-reach, into primary education.

DAM UK works to ensure that out-of-school children can access quality education and care, with a particular focus on children living and working on the streets of Dhaka. There, DAM runs two drop-in centres that offer a space of safety and respite for children, as well as education and skills development opportunities, health care, counselling and food provision. We are also supporting children living on the streets through an outreach programmes, known as *Odhikar*, a programme that provides education, health awareness and food provision. Furthermore, an emergency night shelter is available for up to 10 girls per night, offering safety and security for those most at risk.

Expenditure: £127,000	Deliverables include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 480 children living on the street received daily nutritious food • 425 children living on the street accessed education classes • 250 children participated in a savings scheme, which offered a safe place to keep money and taught good financial discipline • 412 families were made aware of child rights issues
People reached: 480	
Evidence of impact: 58 children who were previously living and working on the streets have been enrolled in vocational training, offering a pathway out of poverty.	

Case Study: Sunny Akter *

Sunny, aged 15, lives in the slums near to TT Para railway station. Sunny's father is a rickshaw driver, her mother a domestic helper.

Sunny yearns to go to school, but she is the oldest child and her parents insist that she works. So she spends her days working as a domestic helper and her evenings cooking and cleaning for her family at home.

Sunny is envious when she sees other children of her age going to school when she cannot. She aspires to become a police officer, fantasizing about apprehending criminals.



When Sunny joined the *Odhikar* project, she explained her situation to the outreach worker who helped develop her personal profile. She needed to work, but she wanted to secure an education that would enable her to become a police officer.

Through *Odhikar* she undertook vocational training in dress making. This has given her both skills and confidence. She is a talented seamstress.

She now has a plan to get her to her end goal, a plan that she is implementing. Firstly, she is going to buy a sewing machine so she can earn money making dresses. Then, with the money that she makes from sewing, she will pay for her schooling expenses, something that her parents cannot do. Finally, with education, she can realise her dream of joining the police.

** Name has been changed*

2.4 Humanitarian Response

In 2021 DAM provided humanitarian support to Rohingya refugees living in camps in south-eastern Bangladesh and to nearby host communities impacted by the ongoing influx of almost one million refugees. Humanitarian food parcels were also provided to below poverty households in Dhaka.

Expenditure: £54,000	Deliverables include <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 76 toilets constructed/rehabilitated• 6 deep tubewells constructed• 12,960 people have the means and knowledge to improve water safety practice from source to consumption• 1,500 food parcels distributed
People reached 14,460	
Evidence of Impact: 300 people now have access to clean drinking water.	
Case Study: Rashida * Rashida lives with her family in Telikhola village, near to the Rohingya refugee camp. Her husband works as a day labourer, though often struggles to find work for more than 10 days per month.	

Rashida mobility was significantly impaired when she contracted polio as a child. This means that she struggles to secure work. With limited household income, Rashida and her three children often go without food for three days each month.

The family had no toilet in their house, relying on open defecation in nearby bushes or asking neighbours for the use of their toilet.

DAM constructed a toilet at Rashida's house. She is particularly pleased that she doesn't have to rely on her neighbour's sympathy every time that nature calls.



** Name has been changed*

2.5 Health

Context:

Despite considerable progress in the past 20 years, in Bangladesh still 74 million people (48% of the population) are drinking unclean water (World Bank) - water contaminated with health-harming microbes (e.g. E.coli), naturally occurring heavy metals (e.g. arsenic, iron) or salt. Ill health caused by drinking contaminated water limits opportunities to attend school, earn an income or contribute to society; intestinal infections caused by drinking dirty water impair nutrient absorption and healthy growth. Rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh means that people living in towns and cities now have lower access to clean water than those living in rural areas.

Responding to requests from local communities, in 2021 DAM commenced work on an ambitious plan to ensure that everyone in Benapole, a municipality of some 90,000 people in western Bangladesh, has access to clean water, focusing on the peri-urban areas un-served by existing water systems. During 2021 Phase 1 of the project was completed.

Expenditure: £35,000	Deliverables include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 integrated water pump and filtration systems were constructed and handed over to local community management teams • 12 water system local management teams and 24 caretakers were trained • 38 community awareness sessions were held to promote water safety and good hygiene
People reached: 3,300 people have access to clean water	
Evidence of impact: Local management committees continue to oversee the operations and maintenance of the clean water systems, for example the periodic cleaning of the filter units, in the period after the end of the project.	
Case Study - Mr Khan The people of South Kagmari community in Benapole had asked DAM for assistance. Their only water source produced contaminated water. But DAM's surveys could identify no land that was	

suitable for the construction of a clean water system, jeopardising the prospect of work in South Kagmari.

At this point, Mr Masud Akter Babu Khan, a governor at the local primary school stepped in. The school agreed to provide the necessary land. Furthermore, when additional construction expenses were required to build on the flood prone land, Mr Khan paid for the additional work at his own expense.



Mr Khan is a voluntary member of the management committee, actively ensuring that the water and filtration system is kept clean and that routine maintenance takes place as required.

2.6 Economic Development

Context:

COVID took a heavy economic toll. The growth of the previously buoyant Bangladesh economy slowed. Falling order books in Bangladesh's ready-made garment sector, which accounts for approximately 80% of national exports, resulted in Bangladesh's export earnings to reduce by 15% during 2020 (Export Promotion Bureau) and around half of the four million workers in Bangladesh's garments sector to be laid off (ILO). The World Bank reported that the pandemic resulted in a 20% increase in those living below the poverty line.

During 2021 DAM delivered support to below-poverty households that had been impacted by COVID. The project incorporated a humanitarian response to the COVID situation, providing food packs and hygiene kits to households that were struggling as their livelihood opportunities dried up in the face of the pandemic. The project also included a livelihood improvement initiative, offering skills development and cash or input support for nascent livelihood initiatives like rice cultivation and goat rearing, providing families with an opportunity to sustain themselves as economic activities resumed post-pandemic.

Expenditure: £38,000	Deliverables include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 households were provided with emergency food and hygiene kits • 500 people received livelihood training and were provided with a business input package (e.g. seeds, tools).
People reached: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,250 people benefiting from food and hygiene kits and improved livelihood opportunities 	
Evidence of impact: Monitoring visits found that small businesses established during the project were still operating after the end of the project offering a sustainable route out of poverty.	
Case Study: Madhumala Madhumla was born in a poor family in Dakatiya village, Jashore Sadar upazila. Within a few years of her birth, Madhumala lost both parents. Raised by relatives, she did not attend school and married a man from her village at the age of 15. Before long they had one son and two daughters. Madhumala and her husband made their living making <i>chatai</i> mats and selling produce from their small piece of land.	

Then tragedy struck. Their son was involved in a car accident. They had to sell their land to pay for his hospital care and ongoing treatment. They skipped meals. They no longer could afford *bash* (bamboo), the key raw material for their *chatai* mats. Instead they had to survive by seeking out day-labouring opportunities.

Fortunately, their son recovered and came back home. But the family never recovered financially. When COVID arrived, rising prices and reduced day-labour opportunities meant the family were pushed further into poverty, frequently skipping meals.



Madhumala's joined the DAM project "Improving livelihoods for COVID-affected households". The food aid addressed some of her immediate concerns. Meanwhile, she also attended small business training which rekindled her interest in her dormant *chatai* mat business. With the BDT4,800 input support she bought sufficient *bash* (bamboo) to resume weaving. Each mat provides Madhumala with a profit of about BDT200.

Madhumala and her family are grateful for being able to resume the business. Not only is this ensuring that the family has enough income to provide food each day and to cover their son's education costs, they also express their regained self-confidence.

3. Lessons Learnt

DAN UK has been supporting initiatives in Bangladesh since 1995. Lessons learnt include:

- Strong local community oversight has been a crucial success factor. Local voluntary management committees (for instance at clean water systems) have raised awareness of the project's aims, addressed any local concerns, provided a route for feedback and mobilised resources.
- The changing climate continues to increase the likelihood and impact of riverine flooding and cyclonic events in Bangladesh, threatening to undermine development gains.
- Experience from using a range of water lifting and filtration technology ensures that appropriate technology is used according to local community and geological factors.
- Rapid urbanisation has resulted in people living in towns and cities having lower access to clean water than those in rural areas. DAM UK's WASH programming has pivoted to urban areas as a response.
- With community-level and inter-agency networks across Bangladesh and extensive humanitarian response experience, DAM is an effective first-responder at that time of crisis.

- Institutional donors are increasingly paying funds in arrears. DAM UK's ability to pre-finance grants pending the arrival of donor funds is important in ensuring the timely delivery of services to project participants.

4. Delivering our Plans: 2021

The year in review was the first year of DAM UK's new Strategy 2021 -25. Annual objectives guided our priorities during the year, progress against which is summarised below.

(i) Resources: Increase & Diversify

Strategy Objective: we will increase the scale of DAM UK's support to DAM by raising more funds and by diversifying the nature of the resources that we mobilise.

Evidence:

- DAM UK generated income of £310k (up £41k from 2020) while achieving a break-even core budget. A total of £254k was transferred to Bangladesh in support of DAM's work, up £14k.
- DAM UK was able to effectively use unrestricted reserves, reducing the cash flow burden for DAM at times that donor funding is delayed or paid in arrears.
- Work commenced on exploring new potential avenues for the financing of DAM's work, including impact investment.

(ii) Impact: Improve & Extend

Strategy Objective: we will ensure that we reflect on our work, using the lessons learnt where appropriate to inspire changes in policy and practice across our network.

Evidence:

- DAM UK worked to develop an advocacy strategy that seeks to address the reducing international grant funding that is available for Bangladesh.
- DAM UK was active in BOND's Shifting the Power initiative that seeks more locally-led development. DAM UK also engaged with several MPs with regards to FCDO budget cuts.
- A review of DAM UK's impact during its previous strategy (2015 – 20) was completed.

(iii) Capacity: Strengthen & Promote

Strategy Objective: we will improve our internal systems and processes to ensure that DAM UK remains an effective, resilient and trusted development partner

Evidence:

- DAM UK continues to focus on its governance and management processes including budgeting and financial reporting and risk management. DAM UK's policy framework, including safeguarding, remains relevant and up to date. The Council of Management, including its Strategy & Finance Committees, continues to play a strong and engaged governance role.
- During 2021 DAM UK gave additional focus to safeguarding, including Trustee training.