Afroza Yasmin of British Council Bangladesh, Laura Stone Head of Geography at Burlington Danes Academy and Rivers of the World Project Manager Ros Croker
Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy (Tanmoy)

Is an editorial cartoonist for the Dhaka Tribune- an national English daily of Bangladesh.

He is also an assistant editor of "Unmad," the longest running South Asian satire magazine.

Apart from his work as a political cartoonist, Tanmoy also creates comic books, graphic novels, and children's book illustrations.

He has exhibited his work in Bangladesh, Nepal, Iran, and in the United Kingdom.

As one of the founding members of the Bangladesh Cartoonists Association, Tanmoy wishes to continue telling stories of Bangladesh and his generation in a global context through graphic novels and comic journalism.

He continues to create ideas into lines and lines into forms from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

rivers of the world - Bangladesh
The River Surma

The River Surma is a major river in Bangladesh. It rises in northeast Indian region of Assam, flows through the city of Sylhet, goes on to feed the River Meghna, one of the three major rivers of the Ganges Delta. The Meghna River flows south past Dhaka and ultimately enters the Bay of Bengal. The total journey from source to mouth is 946 km.

The Surma is prone to flooding in the monsoon season between the end of May and the middle of October. Nearly 80% of the annual average rainfall in Sylhet occurs between May and September. Conversely, during the dry season, from November to April, the Surma can run dry leaving the region with severe water shortage issues.
The river divides the city of Sylhet into two parts. 40% of the city’s water is drawn from ground water pumped via tube wells and the river provides the remainder. Some of this supply is treated at a purification plant and then piped into homes and offices. The remainder is drawn directly from the river and from the canals and storm water drains that feed into the Surma. But the water of Surma River is being contaminated daily by the direct and indirect disposal of the solid wastes, domestic and municipal sewage and agricultural run-off.

Population and industrialization in Sylhet are increasing at an alarming rate and the density of population is extremely high in and around the city area. Domestic, industrial and hospital wastes, both solid and liquid are being dumped into canals that feed into the Surma.
The city of Sylhet, with a population of about 500,000 is one of the largest cities in Bangladesh. The Sylhet region is well known for its tea gardens and tropical forests. The city is also known for its business boom; being one of the richest cities in Bangladesh, with new investments of hotels, shopping malls and luxury housing estates, brought mainly by expatriates living in the United Kingdom. More than eight out of 10 Indian restaurants in the UK are owned by Bangladeshis, the vast majority of whom - 95% - come from Sylhet.

The departing workers are known locally as Londonis and the money they send back not only supports their families, it has also helped to build kindergartens, schools, mosques, health centres, hotels and shopping centres. A little money from the UK goes a long way in Bangladesh, and Sylhet is now one of the richest towns in the country with the area's economy largely built on British curry.
Since rivers form an integral part of Bangladesh's history, tradition, literature, culture and sports, boat races have been and still define an important element of folk culture. For centuries Nouka Baich, or boat races have been taking place in the subcontinent. Every year, a baich would bring together young and strong farmers, fishermen, carpenters and many more from nearby villages for a thrilling contest that would eventually bring about the year's winning team.

These boat races were not only a major source of yearly entertainment for the villagers, but also a way to prove one's superiority in terms of strength and sense of navigation, especially for long-time winning villages. Even though, these yearly boat races have now lost a little bit of their popularity and also the thousands of spectators who would crowd up the riversides to watch the event, boat races are still happening in many parts of the country.
Israb Ali High School and College was partnered with Chadwell Heath Academy in LB Redbridge

What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World
We are happy as well as proud participating like this program. Our pupils are also delighted and inspired. We believe that such a program will be very helpful for our students.
‘After two years of taking part in Rivers of the World our students now think about the world differently. They think about themselves globally. You can see much of this in their drawings and ideas.’

Farhana Ferdushe Haque, Link teacher, Israb Ali High School & College, Sylhet
Syed Rashad Imam
Tanmoy (2012)
River of Life

The students decorated a rickshaw by doing cut & craft work using plasticine cut outs and hand painted figures. All the motif design and drawing regarding river life can be found in rickshaws from the rickshaw garages beside Surma River. The motifs of the designs are such as birds, fishes, butterflies, alligators etc.

Tamanna Tasmeem
(2013)
Working River

The students of Israb Ali High School depicted the overall working environment beside River Thames through their artwork. Over flowing city over Thames was the main context of the artwork. Students browsed through the web and collected many pictures to use as reference to create their artwork.
MC Academy was partnered with Bishop Douglass School in LB Barnet

What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World?
Getting educational facilities for better learning. Providing direct access to education networks, and communities of interest in education and learning.
Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy (2012) Resourceful River

Students made a single page comic of a little boy name Jalal and his friend river Surma. Through Jalal they created a visual presentation on how establishing a dam in the Surma River is a bad use of its own resources. Students went through all the parts of professional comic art such as story boarding, character design, composition, framing, line drawing, inking, making speech bubbles and digital coloring.

Tamanna Tasmeem (2013) River Culture

As like river overcomes boundaries and flows from one nation to another, culture does the same. Living thousand miles away from UK, the students of M C Academy, Bangladesh still has a strong connection with British culture through the famous fictional characters and artists of British culture. The students of M C Academy made a Pop Art with the British characters that they are fond of. Such as James bond, Mr Bean, etc. Through the process They learned to use saturated colours to create pop art which is genuinely very British in style and that they have never tried before.
Sylhet Government Pilot High School was partnered with Southborough High School in Surbiton, RB Kingston upon Thames.

What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World?
Grow awareness of disengaged student’s educational, social and cultural life. Improving confidence to do or learn something. Improving attendance in school.
Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy (2012)
River City

Students made a “History map” from historical photo references. The map shows the evolution of sylhet city beside the river bank of surma in course of last 100 years. The map starts from the British colonization period, through our 1970’s liberation war and ends up in recent time where the over constructed city is occupying the river.

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy (2013)
Polluted River

In response to Southborough High School’s comics on river pollution, students of the Sylhet Govt. Pilot High School also started a comic on history of Thames’ river pollution. But what started as a comic art, turned out to be more like a page from a graphic novel. Students carried out a very strong sketchy style all through their work. The story they chose from history is about Michael Faraday, one of the first people to realise the deplorable condition of the Thames and how we conducted experiments to prove it.
Dakshin Surma Nasiba Khatun Girls' High School was partnered with Central Foundation Girls' School in Bow, LB Tower Hamlets. Dakshin Surma is situated at Bhartokhola on the south bank of the Surma close to the Kean Bridge beside Sylhet Railway Station. It was established in 1978. Our high school includes primary section consisting boys and girls. There are three two storeyed buildings. We have twelve rooms, a special Computer Lab, a Science Lab, a library, sufficient sanitation facilities and a pond. The natural sight of the school is very charming. The results of our public examinations are satisfactory.
What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World? We hope that this partnership will help us to improve our teaching and our students will get a chance to share their ideas in broad areas.
Syed Rashad Imam
Tanmoy (2012)
River Culture

The students painted a traditional form of scroll painting ("pat chitra."). The theme of the painting is a cultural / religious / mythical song on sufi shahjalal crossing the surma river in his prayer rug. In ancient times the “patua” (artists of the scroll painting) use to sing with the ‘pat chitra’ (scroll painting) to describe the painting. The students did the same with the art work in the video. The sequential drawings from the scroll painting tell that it is probably the oldest form of comic art from this region!

Syed Rashad Imam
Tanmoy (2012)
River of Life

Inspired by the English Artist/Textile designer William Morris, the students created a textile design on the theme of river life. The designs contains flora and fauna - elements from nature.
Siraj Uddin Ahmed Academy was partnered with Addington High School in LB Croydon. What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World? Each other sharing with good communication and well benefited teachers and students. Visit they another country and make good relationship. As a result day by day increase and developing our well expectation in English. Training, seminar, well picture show, and nice co-operation for the purpose and VDO conference exchange of greetings. The student will be visited country and reach there knowledge.
Syed Rashad Iman Tanmoy (2012)
Working River

Students sewed a ‘NAKSHI KANTHA’ (a type of traditional embroidered quilt) which tells the tale of fisher man, boat man, rock collectors and all those people who work and live near the river. This ‘nakshi kantha’ is usually done by woman from rural areas in their leisure time. So story from their everyday life becomes the main subject of this embroidered art. And that is why this style and medium suited working river theme perfectly.

Syed Rashad Iman Tanmoy (2013)
River City

The students of Sirajuddin Ahmed Academy took their inspiration from British artists like Freedy Boo and many other vector artists to create a simplistic representation of London city and it’s underground tube which surrounds the river Thames. Though the artwork which combines lively figures, simple shapes and figurative designs that look like a digital vector graphic, it was actually hand made by the students with paper and scissor!
Mohammad Mokan High School and College was partnered with Burlington Danes Academy in White City, LB Hammersmith & Fulham
What do you expect from your participation in Rivers of the World?
I expect from this partnership that our students will inspire in painting and they will be able to share their experience with each other about drawing the natural scenery.
‘After this workshop my students started to ask me lots of questions about the history of London, the Thames and the Surma River. This is something they did not do before. This workshop has boosted their curiosity and desire to learn.’

Abdul Malik Raju, Link teacher, Mohammad Mokan High School & College, Sylhet
Syed Rashad Imam
Tanmoy (2012)
Polluted River

Students recycled and transformed waste into a work of art.

Syed Rashad Imam
Tanmoy (2013)
Resourceful River

Back in 18th and 19th century, ships were the only means to transport resources from all over the world to the docks of river Thames. Students from Mohammad Mokan High School & College studied and copied designs of old British ships and elements from old dock and shipyards such as anchors, wooden trolleys & barrels etc. From that they made a brilliant black and white chess board like artwork.
The British Council and HSBC Bangladesh welcome you to the opening of ‘Rivers of the World’ artwork exhibition today, 16 January 2013, 5:30 PM, at Rabindra Sarobar, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The exhibition features vibrant and beautiful river thematic artworks made by the talented students from ten Bangladeshi and UK Schools, with inspiring supervision from Bangladeshi artists – Syed Rashed Imam Tanmoy and Tamanna Tasmeem. The exhibition also includes artworks by young students from around the world.

The ‘Rivers of the World’ exhibition is open to all.

The Rivers of the World exhibition was inaugurated by the renowned artist Ahsan Habib on 14 October 2012 (poster right). The exhibition took place at Rabindra Sarobar, Dhaka from Monday 15 to Friday 19 October 2012.

The 2014 RoTW Exhibition Poster is shown above.
In September 2012, London celebrated the Thames Festival, where Rivers of the World, an art exhibition, was a huge attraction of the event. 18 countries participated and sent in their artworks in which they drew rivers belonging their own countries.

In this festival, artist Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy and his mentor Ahsan Habib, with a team of students from six schools in Sylhet, represented Bangladesh. They chose to prepare artworks portraying the life and culture across Surma River, which is known to be the longest river in the country.

This initiative undertaken by the British Council’s Connecting Classroom project was supported by HSBC Global Education Trust and City of London Corporation.

The six participating schools were Sirajuddin Ahmed Academy, Mohammad Mokan High School and
College, Israb Ali High School and College, Dakshin Surma Nasiba Khatun Girls High School, MC Academy (Model school and college) and Govt Pilot High School, all situated at the banks of Surma River.

The artworks are a depiction of the stories of their lives, people and culture. In December 2011, the team from British Council along with Tanmoy, conducted a series of workshops in each of the six schools where they worked on the following four themes namely River Culture, River Pollution, Working River and Resourceful River.

The open-air exhibition took place at the Rabindra Sarobor and the Dhaka Art Centre. Their artworks included a nakshi kantha sewed by the students of Bangladesh, pat-chitro (a traditional form of scroll with paintings on it), a contemporary style comic book and a decorated rickshaw hood; the students also recycled and transformed the art workshop wastages to a beautiful piece of art. They also made a map depicting the social values and cultural heritages of Bangladesh.
The art exhibitions were a huge success, which not only resulted in a healthy liaison between the two countries but also helped them explore and appreciate each other’s culture, traditions, struggles and people. After the successful events taking place in 2012, Tanmoy was yet again determined to visit London in March 2013 and organise workshops for the Connecting Classroom project.

This time around, the students in London created art pieces based on Surma River. The children created comic strips where they tell the story of a British fish who fights the pollution in Surma, with his friends who happen to live across the river banks. They also took a keen interest in Bangladesh’s culture and made special masks that are used during Pohela Boishakh’s Mongol Shobha Jatra. The masks represented local customs, lifestyle as well as riverside animals.
The artworks were later digitally coloured and collaborated by Syed Rashad Imam (Tanmoy) and Tamanna Tasmeem for the exhibition. Meanwhile, they and the students in Bangladesh decided to work on an illustration that required them to gather inspirations about the River Thames and its localites. “This year Bangladeshi students have worked with their partner schools in the UK. Their focus was the river Thames. This has helped them research and know about this British river. Similarly, the British schools’ students worked on Bangladeshi rivers to produce artworks based on the changing culture of the Surma’s riverside communities. The workshops were a very educational and enriching experience for students,” stated Afroza Yasmin, project manager for this initiative.

After their return, the workshop progressed with mindful spirit and effort from the whole team. The British Council and HSBC are launching ‘Rivers of the World’ art exhibition from January 16-19 this year. It will be held at Rabindra Sarobar, Dhanmondi, Dhaka and a week later in Sylhet.
Just around the riverbend

Rohini Alamgir looks forward to the launching of the British Council’s exhibition of artwork by Bangladeshi and British youths.

In the first year of its inception, six schools from the UK and six schools from Bangladesh focused their drawings on the Surma and Thames rivers, respectively. Artists Syed Rashad Islam Tamnoy and Tarnima Tasmeem led two-day workshops on the Surma River for the participating schools in preparation for the exhibition. UK artists took the same approach for the UK schools, and the focus was on the Thames. “It’s given us a glimpse into what we can do, how we can connect with other cultures and other people, and see the kind of collaborations we can make,” said Charlie Jett, 15, a Year 9 pupil from Southborough High School, who participated in the RoW 2013.

If you could imagine the world at your fingertips, what would you visualize?

The Thames Festival Trust, the British Council’s Connecting Classrooms project, and the HSBC Global Education Programme’s vision was to find one common theme to bring together children from around the world. Their chosen topic was nature, and their idea was to “promote a greater understanding and appreciation of nature and rivers across the participating countries. That’s how Rivers of the World (RoW) began. Ranging from the UK to Ireland, Argentina, Dubia, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, RoW has travelled the globe on a flow of fantastic, creative artworks based on local rivers.

Richard Crook: And the world saw the kind of collaborations they created and was amazed. This was the idea of this success, the founders decided to carry on this bilateral project in 2013, but with a slight twist. This time, they decided to increase the learning curve for the students involved and exchanged the topics, because, as Richard Crooks, the head of art at Southborough High School stated, “We are trying to create awareness that life goes beyond the borders of Cheshunt and Sunbury... it is about understanding that in diverse cultures and the people of each land, via presentations. Tamnoy described the experience, stating:”

“The children are learning something very new. They are getting a different idea about what art is. They are also getting a genuine understanding of different lifestyles. For a kid, it doesn’t necessarily matter whether the river is polluted, or what the history of the river is, or the politics that surround it. What they really care about is how another kid thinks and what his ideas are.”

Thanks to the Thames Festival Trust, the British Council, and the HSBC Global Education Programme for their continuing support in making this project possible.
River culture
Bishop Douglas School

New year’s rally is a very popular practice in Bangladeshi culture. Everywhere in Bangladesh, including people besides the Surma River, a rally is arranged consisting of masks and mascots. Students from Bishop Douglas High School made an artwork representing the Bangla New Year rally. While making this artwork, they learned how to make masks with paper-cuts and paper-mashies. These masks represent local customs, life styles, fishes, riverside animals and also many fantasy creatures.

Descriptions and photos by
Tamanna Tasmeen

Sylhet Govt Pilot High School, Bangladesh

The Laurent Michael Faraday
In a short duration of 19th March this year students of M C Academy created a comic strip on the theme of a river pollution and came up with a comic strip on the theme of river pollution. The students of Sylhet Govt Pilot High School also started a comic on the history of Thames River pollution. What started as a comic art, turned out to be more like a page from a graphic novel. Students carried out a very strong sketch style all through their work. The story they choose from history is about Michael Faraday, one of the first people to realise the deplorable condition of the Thames and how experiments were conducted to prove it.

M C Academy, Sylhet, Bangladesh

As like river overcomes boundaries and flows from one nation to another, culture does the same. Living thousands of miles away from the UK, the students of M C Academy, Bangladesh still have a strong connection with British culture through the famous fictional characters and artists of British culture. The students of M C Academy made a Pop Art with the characters that they are fond of. Such as James Bond, Mr Bean etc. Through the process, they learned to use saturated colors to create pop art which is genuinely very British in style and that they have never tried before.

River pollution
Southborough High School

Students of Southborough High School made a one page, 22-panel comic on river pollution. The comic has some simple, but powerful message about river pollution, waste management and recycling. While making the artwork, all the student went through every professional steps that a comic book artist needs to go through - story writing, story boarding, pencilling and inking are only few of the mentionable steps.
Resourceful river

Dakshin Surma Nasibah Khatun Girls’ High School, Bangladesh

Inspired by the English artist/textile designer William Morris, the students of Dakshin Surma Nasibah Khatun Girls’ High School created a textile design on the theme of river life. The designs contain flora and fauna—elements from nature.

River city
Sraraj Uddin Ahmed Academy, Bangladesh

The students of Sraraj Uddin Ahmed Academy took their inspiration from British artists like Freddy Boo and many other vector artists to create a simplistic representation of London city and its underground tube, which surrounds the Thames. Though the artwork combines lively figures, simple shapes and figurative designs that look like digital vector graphics, it was actually hand made by the students with paper and scissors.

Burlington Danes Academy

Hasan Raja (Prince the King) was a Bangali poet, mystic philosopher and folksong writer and composer whose name and the songs he wrote are part of the history and cultural resources of the Surma River, which was a big inspiration for his songs. In tribute to this legendary poet, the students of Burlington Danes Academy made an artwork with his song lyrics. The students learned how to write Bangla letters, made stencils out of it and then spray-painted the whole artwork. The students enjoyed making it so much that the principal of Burlington Danes Academy gave permission and the students actually spray painted the whole artwork in their school wall.

Mohammad Mokan High School & College, Bangladesh

Back in the 18th and 19th century, ships were the only means to transport resources from all over the world to the docks of Thames. Students from Mohammad Mokan High School & College studied and copied designs of old British ships and elements from old dock and shipyards such as anchors, wooden trolleys, barrels, etc. From that, they made a brilliant black and white chess board-like artwork.

Working river
Chadwell Heath Academy

Wood Block printing is a very famous medium of art and boutique in Bangladesh. The students of Chadwell Heath Academy did wood block printing about the most eventful thing about the Surma, which is boating.

Israb Ali High School, Bangledesh

The students of Israb Ali High School depicted the overall working environment beside Thames River through their artwork. Over flowing city over Thames was the main context of the artwork. Students browsed through the web and collected many pictures to use as reference to create their artwork.
The workshops featured a variety of artistic styles. Following thematic structures like "river culture," "river pollution," "resourceful river," "working river," etc. Tanmoy and Tasneem chose to work with their students to create installations like Pihela Bolshak masks, comic strips about pollution, graffiti born of song lyrics about the rivers, and Bangladesh pattern blocks to depict the interaction of people with the river. "Most of the students here in the UK didn't have any idea about Bangladesh," said Tanmoy, "but by the end of the day, they understand about pollution, and they understand about the river."

"Students of Deakaun Jumma Nasiria Khatun Girls High School stating, and the promise of enriching the minds of not just students, but of people all over the world. "There will be another exchange visit for UK teachers to visit their partner schools in Bangladesh and, most importantly, the schools will start to work internationally on joint curriculum projects," she said, explaining further that the RotW project has led to the International Schools Linking Project where educational resource packs are being developed for teachers worldwide, using these artworks and rivers as a foundation for engaging lesson activities for the classroom.

"People from different places and different cultures have different experiences and views. And they're not necessarily the same ones that we have. They've seen things that we probably don't have any idea about. They're affected by the world in a different way than we are," notes Preslav Kostov, 14, a Year 10 pupil at Southborough High School who is a participant in this year's exhibition, proving that the core goal of this project has been massively successful. Students (and teachers) from across the globe have not only come together on one platform to create something beautiful together, but they've learned much about one another and about each other's countries and cultures. This is truly out-of-the-box learning, and who thought it could have been this much fun?"

Starting from January 16, the RotW exhibition is coming to Dhaka, Bangladesh. Inaugurated by the British Council and HSBC, the exhibition will be displayed indoors at the Dhaka Art Center and outdoors at the Rabindra Sarobar, both located in Dhakmond. Running from 3pm till 8pm, the exhibition will feature the young artists from the six Bangladeshi schools and four UK schools, amid the works from the other participating countries. The guests of honour for the event include famous writer and activist Abdullah Abu Sayeed, cartoonist Ahsan Habib, Associate Editor of Prothom Alo Anisul Haque, British High Commissioner Robert W Gibson, CEO of HSBC Andrew Tille, and Director of Partnerships and Programmes of the British Council Robin Davies.

Whether you go for the art, or are more drawn by the music of Chirak,