

Stepping out of the Circle

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The Christian Cooperative Credit Union Limited was established on 03 July, 1955. This 63-year old union was pioneered by a Catholic priest named Father Charles J Young to address the financial crisis of the poverty-stricken Christian community during that time. The popular name of the union is 'Dhaka Credit' initially started with 50 members having a collection of 25 taka equivalent to less than half-a-dollar.

For a long period of time, its activities were limited to small area having a few members and two products. In 2005 the organization celebrated its 50th anniversary with only 03 savings and one loan products having total assets of 6.15 million US dollars. But at present in July 2018, this organization has nearly 40,000 members having total asset equivalent to 72.81 million dollars. It has now **75 products** and a number of Social Development Projects and initiatives in and around Dhaka for the sustainable development of the community. Now 'Dhaka Credit' is the largest union and the role model of cooperative credit union in Bangladesh.

When I got involved with this unique movement of credit union, I have some specific purpose. My father, Christopher Gomes, served Dhaka Credit for 08 years (1983-1990) as the Secretary. He also served as the Board Director. I observed him and his fellow people having passion for credit union and sacrificing for the community. We used to get angry for not giving us time, instead he spent for the social work, but when I grew up, I saw his leadership, it made me proud and happy. I have tasted the sweetness of hardship, trusted for leadership and gained courage for coming out of the boundary. Like him, I was involved with the social work since my teenage that made the difference to think out of the circle.

As mentioned earlier for a long period of time, Dhaka Credit's activities were limited within Dhaka City area and having only two products. In 2008, after becoming the Secretary of Dhaka Credit, we the new Board gave top priorities to the following key issues of the organization:

-  Discipline in employee administration having code of conduct and code of ethics,
-  Formulated organization's vision, mission and objectives,
-  Commenced 03-year-based Strategic Plan and set specific targets for organizational growth and development, hence, encouraged the staff members.
-  Team Spirit among the employees as well as the Board Members to work together for the betterment of the community.

Mission of Dhaka Credit

Improving the living standards of members by providing affordable and competitive services - achieving financial viability, operational efficiency, competitive advantage position, members' satisfaction, employees' satisfaction and good co-operative governance.

For adopting these changes, indiscipline and incompetent employees were dropped out while talented, capable, mission-oriented employees and leaders were encouraged heading towards us to become a part of the organization of US \$ 21.81 million from US \$ 11.06 million in three years time.

Having leadership experience in National and International level and as personally a Businessman I liked to see the opportunity coming out of the boundary to take new challenges. Hence in 2014 after selected as the uncontested President of this Credit Union, I took initiatives to increase products and began lucrative projects for the greater benefits of the members. Our team management also supported in generating new ideas. Therefore, definitely it is a work of team effort both from the management and employees part. My Purpose, goal and vision are:

“To make our Credit Union a center to meet all the needs of the members for their dignity and self-dependence from the birth to death. Our money will stay within us for the betterment of the movement ”

Having this in mind and with the consultation of concerned professionals, we have started new Financial Projects (Loan Scheme) and Force Saving schemes along with the previous schemes. Dhaka Credit at present has the following products and projects:

Savings Product:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Savings Account 2. STD Savings Account 3. Housing Deposit Scheme 4. Credit Account 5. Dhaka Credit Bee Saver Product 6. Smart Savers Product 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Monthly Savings Product 8. Aged savings Product 9. Education savings product 10. Festival Savings Product 11. Millionaire Savings Scheme 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Marriage Savings Scheme 13. Long Term savings deposit- for 6 Months, 1 year, 2year, 3 years & 5Year 14. Troimasik Savings Product 15. Double Deposit Scheme
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Loan Products

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Loan 2. Own share Loan 3. Top up Loan 4. General C.C loan 5. Capacity Based Loan 6. Higher Education Loan 7. Higher Education Support Loan 8. Professional Training Loan 9. Car Loan 10. Flat Purchase Loan 11. DC Flat Purchase Loan 12. House Building Loan- 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Metropolitan House Building Construction Loan 14. SMB Loan- 15. Credit Ceiling Loan- 16. Business Loan 17. Industrial Loan 18. Consumer Product Loan 19. Bill pay Loan 20. Gym Loan 21. Solvency Loan For Abroad Education 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Solvency Loan Going Abroad 23. Loan against MSP 24. Loan against ESP 25. Loan against Asp 26. Loan against MDS 27. Loan against LTSD 28. Loan against DDS 29. Loan against TSP 30. Open installment loan 31. SOD loan 32. Competency Based Loan 33. Emergency Mother & Child Treatment Loan
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Others Products and Services of Dhaka Credit

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Share Protection Scheme2. Loan Protection Scheme3. Health Care Scheme4. Funeral Support Fund5. Health Project6. DC Ambulance Services7. Samobaya Bazar (Cooperative shop)8. DC online TV	<ol style="list-style-type: none">9. DC online News10. Samabarta (monthly published magazine with all the information)11. Bernard MC.Carthy Library12. Archive13. Student Program14. Spoken English Course15. Confectionery Training16. Chinese Cooking Training17. Sewing Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none">18. Handicrafts projects19. Job Linking Cell20. DC Security Service21. DC Resort & Training Centre22. Cultural Academy23. Dc School24. Dc Child Care & Education Centre25. Dc Girl Hostel26. DC Gym27. Real Estate Project
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The Dhaka Credit has 45 Sub-Committees which are very vibrant and smoothly working voluntarily for the community. We try to involve as many members possible in the committee to make the members feel their ownership. Specially the Women Committee and Youth Committee are playing a very vital role for empowering Youth and Women of the society by organizing different significant programs.

For the Sustainable Community Development launched Social Enterprise projects:

Starting new projects has been the demand of the time. Hence our Management Committee found the opportunity to come out of the circle to take some new challenges with extension of some innovative projects that are yielding effectively in the community impacting the lives of the union members and common people.

Cooperative Shop, International standard Child Care and Education Center, Security Service, Resort and Training Center, Driving Training Initiative, extended Girls' Hostels and school which are completely new avenues in cooperative movement in Bangladesh. I believe these projects will add great values not only to union's members, but also common people in our society in the long run. The number of beneficiaries of the Credit Union now simply doubled or tripled after intervention of these social projects in this union.

During the work of our management committee, we endeavored projects such as two **Cooperative Shops** - one in the ground floor of the union's headquarters and another in the campus of Savar Service Center. In all, 32 employees including college-university students have got employment in these two shops.

International standard **Child Care and Education Center** is launched in the union's own land at Dhaka's Monipuripara where 12 trained teachers and support staffs are employed to bring a great benefit for more than 31 children of the hard working mothers. We took this initiative as 50% of the employee of the organization is women and they will be benefitted mostly.

Dhaka Credit Security Service, first of its kind in the history of the union, has been introduced under the supervision of a retired defense officer. A training center is established in the Savar Service Center campus to continue security force training and provided their employment. Total 177 security guards of all religions are working in the union's headquarters, branch offices and also deployed in other offices and companies.

Resort and Training Center, a new thought of lucrative project is pioneered under our management committee in the union's own land property very close to Dhaka city. Different stakeholders of other offices, educational institutions and companies are renting the resort venue to serve their purpose.

Driving Training Initiative is one of the new concepts initiated through signing contract with Nitol TATA to train the unemployed youths irrespective boys and girls for their 1-month driving training to get employment. First batch of 15 applicants are processed to sent for this training. We have decided to provide loan for them upon completion of the training to buy cars of their own to run the transport business.

Extended existing Girls' Hostel for adding more values to the female students for their higher education. In all, 178 girl students are getting opportunity to have their secure accommodation, balance diets and convenient study environment for higher education at low-cost.

We also extended **Credit Union School** which is a completely new avenue in cooperative movement in Bangladesh. Total 22 staffs including teachers and administrative workers are employed in this school that is being run in our own building. Total 313 students are studying here from Play Group to class ten. Another project **Cultural Academy** extended for cultural development of the growing generation. The two academies located at Tejgaon Church campus and Nodda Service Centers have 11 staff members having 175 students learning dance, fine arts, song and various musical instruments.

We run **Special English Language Course** for the intermediate level students to improve their language skills. We have also introduced **IELTS** through some experienced teachers of British Council. So far more than 1,441 male and female students have successfully completed these courses to develop their better career. Many of them are studying in foreign universities at this moment.

The other social service projects are running very fruitfully to benefit the people with a great return for the union and its members. They are **Ambulance Service, Gym, Health Care Service, Students' Work Program** for their present and future development, **Monthly Samabarta Publication**, on-line

news service **dcnewsbd.com**, internet-based tv network **dctvbd.com**, and **Real Estate Department**, which are progressively advancing towards benefits of the relevant stakeholders and their tangible positive change and holistic development.

Our long cherished dream was to establish a medical complex having a 300-bed **Divine Mercy General Hospital** including a **Medical College**, a **Nursing College**, and a **Nursing Home** to ensure quality health service to our members and common people. This project is under process for a great reason including to help our students to become quality doctors, and it is the crying need in our country right now.

How to think out of the box is a great example of this Hospital. Basically Medical loans lead to think about Medical Insurance Scheme and it leads to Hospital and Medical College as a lot of money has to be paid to other organizations

Being the President of such a great cooperative credit union has been a great achievement and blessings in my life. I have learned a lot. The path is not at all straight but crooked and full of hills and boundaries. Still we have to fight daily to make people even the clergy people to look out of the boundary to the future. My expectation is not achieved in a day. I always appreciated the voluntary leadership from the very beginning of my young age. Being member of a traditional leadership family, I developed and learned my leadership practice at my childhood. Later I was actively involved with various youth organizations both at local and national level since college and university days.

I am also very much involved with the YMCA as well. I was elected as the first ever youngest President of National Council of YMCAs of Bangladesh for the tenure 1997-1998, represented the Bangladesh YMCAs at the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs as its Executive Committee member since 1999 through 2007, and again from 2011-2015. I was elected as the President of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in the year 2015 for the president quadrennial. At the World Alliance of YMCAs, I was elected Executive Committee member for the tenures of 1998-2002, 2002-2006 and 2010-2014.

I served Dhaka Credit as the director in the management committee for the term 2005-2008, Secretary for the term 2008-2011; and President for the term 2014-2017 and re-elected for the term 2017-2020.

Our vision for the future is to bring about utmost benefit of the members of Dhaka Credit. I want to start a new dimension and dynamic changes in our credit union for meeting the demand of the time. Our purpose is also to set an example of utilizing the credit union's funds for the best use of human resource development for promoting qualitative change of all people irrespective of cast, creed and ethnicity. It's a milestone in the cooperative credit union history in Bangladesh. Therefore, Dhaka Credit becomes an ideal one for other credit unions in Bangladesh and they are also following the path of Dhaka Credit by taking new schemes and savings and social projects.

Definitely this will help take place a huge positive impact on our community as well as the whole society. END