

Neer (Home)

A Home for Elderly and the Street Children of Bangladesh

Guided Thesis

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By

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**Author's Notes:

Portions of this paper were written for the following classes: Cultural Studies, Community Development, Practicum I, Research for social change, Fieldwork, Social and Environmental Justice, Practicum IV, Social Entrepreneurship and Globalization. Some names of individuals have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

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Abstract

This guided thesis is written in two parts. The **first part** illustrates the need for and a proposed design of a community development project that focuses on building a combined care facility. The facility is intended to serve both as a senior care home and an orphanage. The proposal seeks to introduce this concept in Bangladesh, and utilize the lessons learned to expand on to other parts of the continent, the world and even to approach toward more innovative concepts. The proposal was developed based on the learnings from the MAICD program at the Northwest University, the author's fieldwork experience at a senior care facility in Washington, and additional research. The **second part** of this guided thesis includes three independent essays supplementing some key concepts that the author used to strengthen development-related values, research skills and project planning. The essays may or may not directly relate to the project that is discussed in the first part, however, they do relate to the readings, activities and learnings during the MAICD program.

Part One: The Project

Introduction

Bangladesh is my homeland, a country where massive scale development drives are needed, and it is needed now. It is frustrating that even after 48 years of independence, Bangladesh is still stuck in the third world, with the tag of a “developing” country. On the other hand, countries like Malaysia are already far more developed than Bangladesh, even though Malaysia achieved independence only fourteen years before we did (New World Encyclopedia). They have shown the world that if any one person is willing to take the lead, be it of smaller or bigger endeavors, development is possible.

The project “Neer” came into being because I wanted to contribute to this development through addressing the issues that I feel are important. My concern is about the poor elderly people and the street children of Bangladesh, especially female children (Raja and Ashrafi). I feel it is very important to do something for them, so these groups do not feel abandoned and helpless. My plan is to build an organization that is both a senior care home and orphanage. It will be a facility where elderly residents will meet the children’s need for parents, and the children will meet the elders’ need for belongingness. The project is named “Neer” - a Bangla word, which means “Home.”

Problem Statement

The area of Bangladesh is 147,570 square kilometers, roughly the size of Illinois. But in this small country there are 162.9 million people (United Nations Development Program). More than 13 million people live below the extreme poverty line (below \$1.90 per day) in Bangladesh, with most of them being elderly (The World Bank). Bangladesh got her freedom in 1971 after

the Liberation War. But after the liberation, the country went through periods of poverty and famine, as well as political turmoil and military upheavals (About Bangladesh). The country still faces a constant threat of natural, political and economic uncertainty. There are structural efforts from the government to improve the lives of the poor elderly people and the orphan street children in Bangladesh with the help of giant multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Fan). Recently some local non-government organizations (NGOs) are also growing. All these institutions have taken several initiatives, however, most such efforts fall short of effectiveness due to multiple roadblocks. It is hard for only one or two organizations to cover everything and alleviate the root causes behind the suffering of poor elderly people and abandoned/orphaned street children, especially girls. Notably, there are many orphanages in Bangladesh in absence of a foster care system, and the concept of senior care homes is only emerging. The effectiveness of these institutions from the aspect of the social and psychological needs of the target groups is questionable.

Although two very different demographic groups, nurturing young orphans in the same facility as a senior care could effectively complement the psychological and social needs of both children and elders (Siddique). Residents of standalone senior care facilities and orphanages only allow both groups to live and interact with a very homogenous group, allegedly resulting in psychological dissatisfaction and in the children's case, poor quality of learning due to lack of parental guidance. The literature review and empirical data collected for this paper suggest there could be benefits in integrating orphanage into a senior care home.

Purpose of the Project

This project is intended to assess the potential effectiveness of combining a senior care facility and an orphanage under the premise that that the senior people crave belongingness and the company of children, while the orphans do not receive parental guidance in their respective facilities (Siddique, How Globalization can be leveraged in my dream project). A way to bridge the gap is to be able to combine both kinds of facilities. While I have had some exposure to senior care homes during my fieldwork and I had visited few orphanages back in Bangladesh, the viability of merging the two operational models remain to be assessed. The project proposes to build the facility at a small scale and explore the logistical roadblocks or sources of synergy and so on.

Project Proposal

Proposed Intervention

The idea of this project stems from the thought of ethical vision of human rights, and remedying the inequality that certain demographics face in Bangladesh. As mentioned before, the intervention is to build a facility where poor, senior people would be able to live and receive primary healthcare, and at the same time the facility will accommodate orphaned and abandoned children, especially females in order to provide them with an environment that is not completely deprived of parental essence. The organization ideally needs to be self-sustaining so that it is never completely dependent on the inflow of donor funds.

The proposed structure, detailed in the in this part of the guided thesis, could be considered by nonprofits in their long term strategic planning for sustainable development. Besides the potential improvement in quality of life and growth, key expected operational

synergies include healthcare facilities, academic resources, facility maintenance and supply chain among others. Key risks or points of concern include financial sustainability, willingness of the senior residents to welcome and mentor children in the same facility, and finally selection of residents for a facility that is free of cost.

Goals and Objectives

1. Providing the target groups with safety from extreme weather, pollution and abuse.
2. Restoring hope and provision of basic needs such as food, medical care, clothes for the target population.
3. Rehabilitating the orphaned and abandoned children with interpersonal development skills through education, medical care, self-esteem development and social living skills.
4. Providing the opportunity of social interactions beyond the respective homogenous groups.

Required Resources

To build this organization, various kinds of resources are needed. Below is a preliminary list of resources, which the scope is not limited to:

1. **Physical Resources:** A physical campus with customized design to house healthcare equipment, educational facilities, sports options and an appropriate kitchen. The initial scale is yet to be determined, and will be decided upon having a concrete picture of obtainable donor funding. However, initially a 30-50 bed, retrofitted facility may be realistic to start with, as this project is supposed to only set an

- example for more such organizations to come into being. To keep costs low, the facility will be in the outskirts of the capital, Dhaka.
2. **Human Resources:** Trained staff for primary healthcare, including psychological treatments; academic instructors; and finally, administrative staff. It is instrumental to be able to provide basic healthcare to all residents, and academic support to the young residents. Psychological counselling is another imperative as we are not only going to stay focused on fulfilling the residents' basic biological needs. The institution will be dedicated to making sure that the residents' feelings are heard and acted on. Sourcing of such experts should be conducted locally as there is no shortage of technical skills in these areas. However, in order to align on the vision of the founders, and also to achieve global benchmark quality of service, trainers may be hired to conduct the initial capacity development of the staff.
 3. **Intangible Resources:** In order to build and grow this facility, a strong network of donors and support organizations will be important. Goodwill among the local communities is also vital, as such initiatives are prone to criticism, resident overflow, quality degrade and so on.
 4. **Financial Resources/Budget:** The budget will depend on the scale of the institution at the beginning of operation, and the ramp up plan that could vary by the vision of the sponsor. The initial intention is to seek sponsorship from large multinational NGOs headquartered in Bangladesh such as BRAC or Grameen Foundation. The average investment in a senior care franchise in the US, including start-up costs, ranges from \$92,847 to \$315,122, according to Franchise Grade, a franchise research firm. Initial costs involved with opening a senior care franchise include the franchise fee, training

related expenses, marketing fees, and more (Pearson). Typically, with the exception of assisted living facilities, senior care franchises cost less than investing in a franchise within many other industries.

Considering that the pilot facility will be in Bangladesh, there should be some reduction in real estate and personnel costs. However, this proposed facility will combine an orphanage, hence there should be some upside considered into the average investment estimate. At the moment, the investment estimate that we would like to put forward is \$400,000, or Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 33,000,000 at ~BDT 87 per US Dollar exchange rate.

The total investment requirement (\$400,000) includes an average estimate of franchise cost (\$250,000), additional working capital to rent property (\$100,000), and finally, additional investments due to the inclusion of an orphanage. (\$50,000). These additional investments may include sports equipment, school supplies etc.

Risks and Mitigation

As mentioned earlier, key risks for the project sponsors financial sustainability, willingness of the senior residents to welcome and mentor children in the same facility, and finally selection of residents for a facility that is free of cost.

In order to mitigate the financial sustainability risks, the project needs to be sponsored by strong enterprises with alignment with the mission of the organization. The willingness piece of it is going to be handled through an ongoing trial and error during the implementation of the pilot project.

Finally, the prioritization of residents will have to be dealt with by developing a careful, comprehensive screening process that is fair and non-controversial. Typically, with such services, the demand exceeds supply by a great extent. Fair screening is key to stay on course. Controversies may arise from any given angle, including, criticism around the assessment of financial position, allegedly favoring some religion over others, physical condition of the chosen residents and so on. Sometimes one may even expect resistance from local elites due to political reasons. Establishing non-controversial screening protocols is going to be instrumental in avoiding such confrontations.

Success Criteria

Success criteria for the project will be set based on annual milestones after acquiring funding and incorporating the organization, as described below:

Year 1: Drawing adequate attention from the target communities through media coverage of the vision and mission of the organization. At least 3 mentions of the initiatives in major news media would be considered a success.

Year 2: Developing a non-controversial methodology for screening potential residents. With limited capacity and unlimited demand, screening would be instrumental for the organization to prioritize and take in residents. Similar to any public development organization, this screening methodology has to be completely transparent and immune to controversy.

Year 3: Achieving stability in operations and experience of the residents. Moving past the fire drills due to the inexperience of the management, gaps in implementation plan that will be identified once the plan is in action, lack of morale or belongingness in the different teams etc is critical to reach a stage stable enough to ensure appropriate service to the residents. This will

be measured by various metrics through residents' satisfaction surveys and also by using external consultants for audits.

Key Personnel & Stakeholders

Key personnel and stakeholders that will be responsible for implementing this project are noted below.

Target Demographic	Poor elderly especially beggars who lives in the street; and street orphan children
Potential Sponsor	BRAC and/or Grameen Foundation
Project Manager	Zenith Siddique
Project Advisor	Kristina Chaffee, Saleh Chowdhury
Implementation Team	Zumman Siddique, Zannah Siddique, Shafqat Islam

Timeline

Detailed timeline can only be determined upon completion of the baseline research, to ensure the level of dependencies and prerequisites for the project. The below table gives a high level timeline in five distinct phases.

Phase	Description of Work	Start and End Dates
Phase One	Conduct baseline research to understand if the hypothesized plan has reasonable potential to work.	Present – Dec 2019
Phase Two	Identifying ideal location with a reasonable size of the target population and a balance of property prices as well.	Q1 2020
Phase Three	Pitching proposal to large donors and support organizations including BRAC and Grameen Foundation, to secure seed fund.	Q2 2020
Phase Four	Leasing property, preparing the facility with appropriate equipment, recruiting staff for the organization and advertising about the organization.	Q3-Q4 2020
Phase Five	Turning the key for the facility, monitoring and evaluation, upgrades and modifications to the model and continue as a going concern.	Q1-Q4 2021

Conclusion and Way Forward

Despite the proposed project being the first of its kind, I am confident that we can bring it to success with the right kind of support from the sponsors. I expect this pilot to set an example for other social entrepreneurs and expand on this concept to make it better, more viable and sustainable.

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Part Two: Supporting Essays

Essay 1: Contextualization

An academic definition of contextualization would be: “putting language items into a meaningful and real context rather than being treated as isolated items of language manipulation practice only” (British Council). Cultural contextualization is the practice of designing programs and processes with attention to particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place and time. With respect to this guided thesis, contextualization refers to illustrating the background of the projects that I am considering for my vocational career, in order to align the readers with my motivation and visions. I expect this part to help the audience deeply understand the true need for these projects, the potential of expanding to other geographies or even concepts, and the factors that drive my interest in this project. As a disclosure, this discussion on contextualization will not only cover the project proposed in the first part of this thesis, but will also bring in other supplementary vocational ideas that I have worked on throughout the course of my ICD degree.

Role of Contextualization in Program Design and Implementation

In social innovation, the processes that encourage design, implementation, and interventions are heavily influenced by contextually appropriate practices. It helps the program leadership to address several core elements at the ideation as well as the implementation stages.

Faculty collaboration: It helps to form a partnership across the right disciplines or functions, and with the right community stakeholders. The collaboration from community stakeholders is important for the vocational projects that I am interested in. Without

contextualization, the identification of such stakeholders can be misguided. For example, without the right context, the project proposed in the first part of this paper could seek support from NGOs that are not focused on both the target demographics. NGOs that focus on only street children may not want to or have the resources to expand their focus, and vice versa.

Training material development: Contextualization helps in the development of instructional materials for employees, with the goal of aligning their performance and motivation to the organization's original founders. It also helps ensure interactive teaching and professional development. Working with contextualized curriculum is critical to ensure that the orphans receiving education at the proposed institution, receive training/coaching in the most relevant skills or topic.

Continuous improvement: Contextualization at the beginning stages of a project helps plan the path toward continuous improvement in the desired theme and with the right goals in mind.

Contextualization, Innovation and Implication for Vocational Goals

Similar to most learning tools, grasping the context of something is handled by individuals very differently. Therefore, creative thinking is an absolute must to ensure the effectiveness of contextualization for every kind of learners/audience. There are some key areas where I can use the values and practice of contextualization in my future vocational work, such as effective goal setting for vocational projects, engaging stakeholders from various cultures or background into a single vision, and finally driving continuous adaptation and improvement in my approach to vocational activities.

In the cultural studies class, I have learned about how different cultures work. In my final paper of cultural studies, I wrote about building a chain of “Rural Remote Schools” in South Asian emerging economies like India and Bangladesh. The idea of remote schools was that teachers from the best schools around the country would teach students online. In the book “Cultures and Organizations,” Greet Hofstede explained about the influence of Communication Technology on the amalgamation of cultures. He described how technologies will bring people from around the world together in a “global village” (Greet Hofstede 391). This directly feeds into the idea of using technology to reach the rural corners and creating a platform where the urban teachers would meet the rural students that are deprived from their expertise and knowledge (Siddique).

The critical component of the plan was to work with rural public schools so that we get the establishment and logistical support. We would set up big screens with projectors and internet connection at the public school premises and bring the best education to even the most inaccessible parts of the country (Siddique). I had to conduct my research at that time on India, because our requirement was to research a different culture other than our own. This is a classic example of contextualization playing a critical role in effective goal setting and engaging stakeholders. The research on India gave me adequate context to frame the remote school project, create a high strategy and finally set success criteria.

One point to note here is that the world is gradually losing the strict cultural boundaries that it once had. It is mentioned in the book “Unclean,” we mentally encompass a group of people whom we recognize as ‘my kind’, ‘my tribe’, ‘my clan’ or ‘my family’ etc. (Beck 100). Gradually we have been including more and more non-biological relations to these circles (Beck 100). This may be an indication of the trend that the world is becoming one family now a day.

Even when that happens, there is always going to be the need for considering cultural context for global development projects.

Macro Cultural Contextualization

Going back to the discussion around my original project, the main purpose of the plan to build such an organization is to address the development gap that exists in the third world countries. According to Meghnad Desai, we do not pay sufficient attention to the poor. We always think that we will work for them but most of the time we do not get enough time or ways to work for them. Desai also commented that, “I would love to think that if we could give the money directly to the poor citizen of the country not to the government.” (Hanlon 382). He thinks that if poor people get the money they will somehow make efforts to get out from poverty, which is more effective than relying on the government to utilize tax revenues to improve the condition of the poor (Siddique, Community Development Final Paper). This requires contextualization with the socioeconomic and political landscape of the developing countries, which is significantly different from the other parts of the world. Bringing in the example of Bangladesh, tax administration is very weak and corrupt there. Also, historically since independence in 1971, we have had only one party staying in power for longer than one term. Lack of stability is another factor that does not allow the government to utilize tax revenues to the fullest potential.

The senior/orphan care institution that this project seeks to establish is based in Bangladesh. Macro-cultural context is important for such projects as the context in most cases defines the approach. Below is an analysis of the Bangladeshi culture using the Hofstede indices.

Power Distance (55/60)

Bangladeshi culture has high power distance, where the relationship between employer and employee, teacher and student etc. is driven by ranks and usually not collaborative. An example would be that at most Bangladeshi workplaces, it is not common to see junior employees speak their mind unless asked. There are clear hierarchies and chain of command even for idea sharing, as the employees with relatively more power control the flow of information. The strategic decisions, be it at workplace, or at home, usually follow a top down approach.

If we compared Bangladesh to other neighboring, Muslim countries such as Malaysia or Indonesia, we can see power distance is comparatively lower in the other countries where everybody in the society has their own position and respect, relatively speaking. Specially, the gap between people from various professions, such as a taxi driver and a white collar employee, is not as wide as it is in Bangladesh (Abir). I am comparing Muslim countries because of the common perception that the Muslim countries are usually conservative and backward.

Masculinity/Femininity (45 out of 50[A1])

Bangladeshi culture is Masculinity oriented, although the society has femininity inscribed in its approach toward overall hospitality and caring for others. There is a high bar for hospitality in the Bangladeshi culture, which needs to be maintained in the services of the proposed institution. Although contradictory, these characteristics make sense if combined with the power distance metric. If there is a power gap between the male and the female, the culture naturally leans toward masculinity.

Bangladeshi society is a patriarchal one, where males have more power and respect than women. The wives are supposed to abide by their husband's words. Masculine norms encourage

confidence, competition, task orientation, determination. The male children grow up with the drive of career growth; striving for material prosperity and wealth, while the female children are taught to be kind and nurturing, to sustain warmth in relationships. In other words, the female children grow toward modesty and solidarity.

There have been some positive changes in terms of women empowerment in Bangladesh. They are focused on three themes: the value of women's income or skills in household management, reducing household poverty and the benefit of an educated women who can support children's education, and the improved language and conduct of educated women.

There is an example of a great father who provided education to his three daughters despite living in a very conservative society where women strictly follow religious rules and regulations. His name is Md. Selim Uddin. He made sure that his three daughters marry after completing their education and finding formal jobs. He told, when asked, his various life experiences led him to realize the importance of women's education and economic empowerment (Men Care). This is not a news in developed countries like the United States, but is a matter of triumph in the rural landscape of Bangladesh.

Individualism/Collectivism (50 out of 60)

Bangladeshi culture is strongly collectivistic. Normally we have strong, profound bonding among their relatives and families. Bangladeshi people believe in close long-term commitment to the group, to family, extended family or in relationships. Even employer/employee connections are perceived in good terms, very close to that of a family. As explained before, decisions are top down, however, still very much a result of group discussions between the people perceived to have similar level of power.

The developed countries have moved more toward individualism, which makes the dynamics of the society drastically different from countries like Bangladesh. Senior care homes are well accepted already, as it is often the choice of the individual. The choice is not as easy in collectivistic society as there are several decision makers involved.

Relevant Insights from the Cultural Indices

My primary takeaway from the discussion above is that the head of a Bangladeshi family will decide where and how their parents would live. It is important for the project to consider this because, it will often depend on the perspective of the male members whether this project would be helpful to their parents. Targeted communications about the project while building awareness would have to consider this factor.

Being a masculinity oriented society, people of Bangladesh value male administrators, although the trend is changing now in the urban areas. As the entrepreneur of this organization, I may have to work against some societal forces in order to gain initial success.

By the collectivism indicator, senior care homes should not have any market or need in the society. However, the right contextualization is when we consider that the organization being proposed is for the poor people. The reality is that even if they have the bonding and willingness to help, they often cannot afford the cost of the daily needs of the elderly members of the family. This kind of organization is becoming necessary for those poor elderly and street children^[A2].

Example of Localized Contextualization

After reading “Child Sponsorship: A Funding tool for sustainable development,” I got to learn many things that would be helpful in the context of Bangladesh (Brehm). Child Sponsorship programs are speedily growing for the past twenty years and they really are helping

in the development of the community. Many child refugees and orphans are resulted during the time of 1920s to the '40s' when Russian Revolution, Spanish Civil War and Second World War happened (Brehm). Most of the major child sponsorship agencies grew in Europe (Brehm). They sponsored children from different countries and communities. They help these children in their education and also help them for the betterment of their life. This got me to thinking, although Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world, and is the result of a 9-month long war, there is no such agency that help sponsor kids in Bangladesh.

After reading this article I have learnt how a child sponsorship program help the community for development. When I will get back to Bangladesh, I will work on this because lots of children from Bangladesh needs help. I will talk to relevant organizations about this matter and ask them for their support. I know that, there are also arguments against child sponsorship, but personally I only see the good thing that comes out from that. Many children get their own home, siblings, parents, education, good food and so on. Everything has positive and negative sides, but the main point is if more good things come out of this compared to the negatives. In the context of Bangladesh, I do believe the benefits of this program would outweigh the cons.

Experience of using Unique, Local Assets

I have worked with a local consulting firm in Bangladesh on a project for the World Bank that was focused on assessing the effectiveness of the Social Safety Net programs jointly funded by the Government and the World Bank. This was the first step in my life that made me realize the actual passion of my life. After working on this project, I realized the suffering of the elderly people of Bangladesh who live under a certain income level. I want to work on sustainable

projects to alleviate the sufferings of those poor elderly people (Siddique, Qualitative Study Proposal). Anyway, the intention of mentioning this project is pointing out the fact that the main project sponsor, the World Bank, used the local consulting firm as the local asset to conduct the project. This is due to the fact that utilizing local assets helps with contextualization for project design, implementation and evaluation.

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Essay 2: Qualitative Research

The fieldwork that was part of my MAICD degree requirements, was immensely helpful in strengthening my conviction for the project that is proposed in the first part of this guided thesis. The qualitative research method was very effective in collecting relevant data for the project proposal due to the nature of qualitative research, which is to translate meaning from non-numerical data to assist us understand the dynamics of social life.

Origin and Definition of Qualitative Research

Decades before we named them qualitative research or qualitative inquiry, it was popularly in use. Sociologists and anthropologists used to ask questions about people's lives, the social and cultural contexts in which they lived and so on (Merriam & Tisdell 6). By nature, qualitative research usually involves human and other living beings, as there are some aspects to them that cannot often be expressed in numbers. Bogdan and Biklen (2011) point out that Chicago Sociologist in the early 1900s emphasized "the intersection of social context and bibliography" that holistically defines the emergence of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell 6).

I chose qualitative research for my fieldwork and research because it is primarily an exploratory research. Qualitative research is a social science tool that researchers use by gathering non-numerical statistics. It helps to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. It helps uncover the beginning of trend shifts in thoughts and opinions, even when there are little or no quantitative evidence, and dive deeper into the problem. According to Tisdell, "qualitative research is interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their

experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell 6). As an example of qualitative research – it gives a total information rather than giving a percentage from any survey asking how, why type of question. The most basic thing of qualitative research is that “it uses words as a data... Collected and analyzed in all sort of ways” (Merriam & Tisdell 6). My vocational interest is all about understanding the underprivileged poor elderly and street children and finding a better solution to help them in future. During my fieldwork, I have realized many new things that I was not even thinking about before that, which was made possible by the very exploratory nature of qualitative research outputs.

Utilization of Qualitative Research in Fieldwork and Proposed Project

For my fieldwork as a part of my MA ICD program requirement, I worked with Aegis, an Assisted Living Memory Care Provider. The reason behind choosing this organization is to know about the American model of senior care homes. Eventually I will go back to Bangladesh and work on my own project, but working with Aegis helped me delve into deeper things about working with the elderly. Since I used qualitative research throughout my fieldwork, I understood that it is very important to figure out the basic questions that summarize the motive of that entire research project. As cited by Merriam and Tisdell, Maxwell suggested researchers to focus on – “what questions are most central to your study and How do these questions form a coherent set that will guide your study” (Merriam & Tisdell 78)?

For the fieldwork research, I used the book *Field Working Reading and Writing Research* book Sunstein & Chiseri-Straters. They talked about understanding, positioning and checking in on oneself. Sunstein and Chiseri-Straters presented three questions to help monitor assumptions, stances and blind spots (Bonnie Stone Sunstein 115). These questions are: What surprised me,

what intrigued me and what disturbed me [A3]– all of which are aimed at acquiring deeper qualitative observations (Siddique). These three questions helped me understand the reality at a reasonable depth (Siddique, Course Textbook Application).

What surprised me[A4]

The surprising revelation for me while working with Aegis was that, I realized that they live a better life in a community of their own, which would be difficult if they stayed home with their working children or relatives. When people get care and love, life becomes much easier. Since I am from a different culture, I used to think that it is inhumane or inappropriate to leave the elderly in the senior care home. But when I worked with Aegis, I realized that people get better facilities if someone actually can afford senior residences. I personally would consider myself fortunate, if I get the opportunity of staying in such facilities at my older age. It is a better system that the developed countries made possible and effective, and it makes more sense from most angles that matter. They provide services that surprised me. For example, they have some premium services like 24/7 care staff to assist with health care needs, activities of daily living, and making their residents comfortable and happy. They have elegantly designed common areas and well-decorated private apartments. They also provide weekly housekeeping, laundry services, chef-prepared meals with locally sourced and seasonal produce. There are friends and family events to share and welcome visitors to their community, available medical service include in-house primary care doctors, physical and occupational therapists, podiatrists, in-house pharmacy and so on. It fascinated me even more that they also provide Spa service. Of course, these are all possible for Aegis as it is a premium facility and not really realistic for the project that I am envisioning. However, it gave me an idea about the scope of what is possible.

What intrigued me

I define “intriguing” as things that are new to me and create an urge to look deeper into. It is different from surprises in the sense that intriguing factors do not include completely unexpected things. Aegis[A5] is an assisted living memory care provider. It is a little bit different from regular senior care facilities. But I also researched other regular senior care homes, and found that they are very trustworthy and provide decent-quality service. During my research, I have learned that assisted living is basically the providing of affordable, secure and reachable accommodation with access to care services for active elder persons. These people are self-regulating, with or without assistive device and usually need some form of care and support regarding their everyday activities. The difference between senior care home and assisted living is that assisted living offers housing, meals, assistance with medication, personal care tasks and some skilled health care services to supplement the personal care. But care homes provide such services to individuals that have complex health conditions and require constant medical support.

The thing that specifically intrigued me is there are many levels of taking care of seniors[A6]. The details of making their lives better are really interesting and can get pretty complex. The reason of my fascination with all these facilities is that I have never seen such facilities for elderly before, my experience with elderly care was completely home-based. When I was researching all that information I bought a book named “Caregiver’s Handbook”. It has all the information of becoming a caregiver, elders diet and health, social and mental well-being, personal care, day-to-day nursing, first aid emergency and end-life-care. This book helped me relating with the work of the employees of Aegis.

My experience at Aegis also helped me with new, intriguing ways of seeing things. I have observed the employees and residents at Aegis and gathered ideas about how the culture of

operations is different from what have seen back in Bangladesh – what stands out, what is more effective and so on. With all that information, I got many ideas to implement in Bangladesh. As an example, I understand now regular cultural events are a critical tool for the mental health of the residents.

I recognize the fact that I worked with the privileged or financially solvent elderly, and my project is for the poor elderly. However, it is still useful as I want to qualitatively explore every side of this field. It got me to thinking about my strengths and how they play into the process of creating cooperative social action, and the role that I must play in leading social change in the future, has been another huge lesson from my fieldwork. Volunteering at Aegis has helped me realize the importance of considering the psychological aspects for the elderly. I will have to change few tactical aspects of my own project. For example, it is not enough to give only food and shelter to the poor elderly. At the older age people can get sick anytime. If I cannot arrange full time nurses, it will be a big issue that may and will snowball other issues. Surprisingly enough, this was never part of my consideration.

Another issue is, when people grow old and they have less strength in their body and they behave like children. They have vision issues, hearing problem and so many other problems like that. Dealing with the elderly needs more patience. There are several residents in Aegis that have Alzheimer's. They keep going back to the same memory and keep telling the same story again and again. They forget what they had said few minutes ago. All such cases, regardless of specific mental/physical issues, demand constant care.

What disturbed me

I will admit that I was fascinated by the things that I have observed at Aegis. The only thing that was disturbing to [A7]me was how much different was the condition of people from the

same age group in my country. In the United States, people may utilize the social security program and structured retirement funds to save and pay for their care in old age, at least to a certain extent. Availability of student loans, health insurance etc. allows them to manage their children's studies and healthcare costs better. On the contrary, in Bangladesh, very few people at their old age remain self-dependent, partly because of the lack of structured services around retirement[A8] income, lack of government support and also lack of long term financial planning skills. In addition, institutions like this are also not committed to maintaining or are regulated to maintain acceptable standards of services. Most such facilities are dependent on donor funding and prioritize frugality over the quality of life of the residents. I understand that we are a century behind in terms of development, wealth, independence and so on, but this only made my conviction stronger that we need these facilities in our country now and not a decade later[A9].

Thinking in terms of the above three factors i.e. surprising, intriguing and disturbing, helped me understand the realities and requirements of senior care at a deeper level. I was able to connect my previous knowledge and misconceptions with my new exposure, and achieve a stronger qualitative understanding of the space. In order to become a leader/entrepreneur in this area, I need to be able to coordinate the ICD values with the learnings described above.

The Relation between Qualitative Research and ICD Values

“Believe, that change is possible”. [A10] In the social entrepreneurship class, we were taught about this concept. To me, this motto covers both faith and the appetite of development. Bornstein and Davis in their book *Creative Confidence* talked about the concept that everyone can be a change maker (Bornstein and Davis 83). The point of social entrepreneurship is that it is open for participation from everybody in the society, individually and collectively. Social

entrepreneurship is not bound by skills, financing or self-interest, rather can be approached by anyone and everyone with a sustainable idea to serve a development cause. It is not identifiable or addressable through a quantitative lens, rather requires vision and subjective judgment to believe in entrepreneurs and change agents.

External change agents are necessary before community development can occur. It is also true that anyone can get engaged in social actions once they feel passionately about the issue they are addressing. Based on my experience I can say few things in order to get engaged in social work – 1) it is important to get specific, 2) it is mandatory to have a clear concept of what the purpose is, and finally 3) patience and constant motivation. Qualitative research is a very effective way to address the first two points (Siddique).

Understanding the values, process and outcomes of community development within their own context and role is instrumental. It is important before starting a project to know the audience. Thinking about the stakeholders qualitatively helps draw a mental picture of the outcome and then essentially work backwards to make that happen. I am deeply connected with my own project. My husband I have been planning about building a senior care home in Bangladesh for a few years now. We are empathetic about the poor, old people in Bangladesh. Four years ago, we visited deep, rural areas of Bangladesh for a project. At that time, we realized how miserable can be a life of a poor elderly people. We came back home with utter disappointment, because we did not have enough money to take care of them. We wanted to build something sustainable. These motivations were the results of our qualitative observations from that visit.

It is also important to understand, respect and recognize the work, values, capabilities and objectives of groups involving all sections of the community and build relationships based on

mutual trust. Since my plan is building a home for both elder and orphaned street children I should maintain a good relationship with the organizations that follow same ideology as mine. Combining this with knowing how to work with communities and others to identify opportunities to develop participation and inclusion and how to overcome barriers to these – is the holy grail of succeeding in community development work. I have learned this while working with Aegis. I started working with them with a different plan but ended up finding a different way. But it worked well. I worked with the privileged elderly, and my vocational project is for the poor elderly. However, it was still useful as several of my observations from that time are universal for projects like this. Only qualitative judgments can swiftly transform observations from one landscape to another, of which my fieldwork experience is a great example.

All of these values are very important for my project plan as the ICD values give me a strong framework. I chose qualitative research because it is the kind of research that encompasses the notion of inquiring into, or investigating something in a systematic manner. I think this is the kind of research which works more effectively for the kind of project I am interested in.

There are couple of other distinctive features of qualitative approach that I think are very useful in the practice of community development. Participant-researcher's relationship is one of them. when people do qualitative research, they get directly involved with the participants during group discussion and participant observation. It automatically creates a bonding and it is very helpful for the research also for community development because when people get involved with people personally, they better understand the reality of their situations.

Another one is unique capabilities of online and mobile qualitative research. Online and mobile technology offer unique enhancements to qualitative research design. I took several of

mobile interviews for my thesis. It is a very useful practice for the community development because even when I am in the USA, I can get all the information I need for developing my project and helping my country.

Social Reality of the Target Group and Potential Role of Qualitative Research

The first part of this guided thesis paints a picture of how small and poor Bangladesh is as a country. In addition, Uddin in his article *Socio-Economic Status of Elderly of Bangladesh: A Statistical Analysis* explains about Bangladeshi culture that, although it is a norm for Bangladeshi people to take care of their elderly, this practice is changing due to mass poverty among other things (M. Taj Uddin). The author also notes that 15% of the elderly people are not involved in any income generating activities due to lack of physical fitness and other causes.

While all of the above are objectively pointing out that the poor, elderly people in Bangladesh live a miserable life, the complete picture of this issue is not only their financial or health problems, but also their psychological distresses, which is really very important and not easy to capture without utilizing qualitative analysis. Elderly people go through severe psychological illness because of “loss of abilities, intellectual process, work role and occupational identification (retirement), loss of intimate relations and lots of other reasons (Doshi Dhara R). They need to be treated differently. They need community based care facilities, counselling service and all those programs requires experience.

These findings are anecdotal though, in other words, the outcome of the first step in a qualitative research. Anecdotes play a very instrumental role in qualitative research, especially in matters like this, because, when quantitative analyses tell us to take it easy because “majority” is

not being affected by something, qualitative research tells us to go fix the situation for the “minority”.

As far I understand, the main reason of all these problems that I am trying to address is poverty. The government also does not have enough resource to take care of these problems. It is important to work on sustainable projects to alleviate the sufferings of these target groups. For that reason, I also researched on some Bangladeshi elder care facilities and some orphanages, as I want to know what they think about this project and if they had any opinion about this matter. When my nephew, at my request, interviewed some poor, senior persons from the street - some of them were very happy to know that they can get a place to sleep, but to our surprise, some were indifferent. It was like they kind of accepted their fate. He also spoke with some street children, some of them are very excited about school. They wanted safety and security.

One very important outcome of my qualitative research post-fieldwork was the revelation that there are initiatives emerging in Bangladesh that tie closely to my project. In Bangladesh, there is an elder care home name Subarta (Subarta Senior Citizen’s Residence and care center). It is a very new kind of social business model for Bangladesh. Subarta was established in 2009. Mrs. Salina Akther is the owner of this organization. She used to be a housewife, but she wanted to serve the humanity, and initiated this organization. Her goal is to ensure various service to elderly and challenged people, developing resourceful manpower for caring of elderly and develop a sustainable small specialized property for elderly. Their service quality is very good since it is a for profit social business, which is again a different operational model than mine. Because my focus is the lower-income group elderly whose livelihood depends on begging. However, the initiative of Subarta is very admirable and also gives me an opportunity to gather some lessons and qualitative insights from their experiences.

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Essay 3: ICD Values^[A11]

My learnings around the International Community Development (ICD) values has had tremendous^[A12], positive effect on my thought process and my future path of life. The program taught me to reflect, change, lead and dream; gave me exposure to possibilities; and prepared me for my vocational goals. The values that I learned here catalyzed a personal transformation by building a philosophy of service into my thought process, with special focus on social justice and co-powerment. This essay illustrates the transformation and its various aspects and drivers.

Personal Transformation

I was a business student in college, but I did not like the course materials of my undergraduate program. Those were the longest four years of my life, as I almost lost interest in studies and was dragging my feet toward the finish line. After college, I joined an organization and my work was related to my undergraduate education. But I was not very happy about it. Then I realized that I needed to change my career path immediately. In 2015, my husband and I moved to the United States, and lived in Boston for two years. I did some volunteer work during that time, for Red Cross and a couple of local organizations. I started to like working for those events. With the blessings of the Almighty, I later got enrolled into this program that would help me do that exact same thing. There were many challenges, but I was intrigued enough to survive through the program.

When I enrolled in this program, I knew I wanted to work for nonprofit. My passion was broadly focused in social work, without any specific idea about the narrower scopes. I found my true point of interest during the program. We all had to work in some kind of nonprofit

organization/project for our fieldwork. I chose to work with senior residents at an assisted living facility. The reason I chose this was that I grew up in a poor country where there are no facilities for underprivileged poor elderly or street children. I have seen them live a very unhealthy, inhumane life. They do not even have sleeping bags or tents for shelter. Many sleep on the sidewalks or under the bridge. Poor elderly people beg for the food. Street children get abused by people, sometimes even by the police. There is not enough resource for the government to take care of them or protect them from abuse. This situation made me feel helpless. Being from such a country means poverty is more of a normal phenomenon to me more than the people that were raised in more advanced or wealthy countries. I will admit that I never had to deal with poverty myself, and I learned to accept that it is natural to have that in a society. However, the more I grew up, the more this acceptance faded away and I started pondering ways to fight it, initially from my own place through dispersed, small, ineffective charity, and later pushing myself beyond that and focusing my academic and career goals around this.

The program taught me how to think about development in a structured and effective way. I don't know if I transformed as a person or a social worker, or the latent wishes and skills simply surfaced in the past two years through focused exercises of mind. What is important to me is that now I am motivated enough to go deeper into strengthening my abilities and utilize them to do good for the society.

Social justice and my vocational aspiration

In my mind, Social Justice is being fair between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit as well as the unstated terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges (Social Justice). I believe if people are not fair towards

each other, an imbalance can emerge, which is very unhealthy for the coming generation and eventually it destroys the society. I also believe that, social justice is not only for human, but also for the environment and other members of our ecosystem.

In the book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Foster talked about several key things relating to this including wealth disparity. He mentions, “The American term of wealth is ‘mammon’ and Jesus condemns it as a rival god: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve god and mammon” (luke 16:13). - (Foster 82). This is really a very good description of reality of our present world. Now a day, people are very materialistic. Most people think about themselves and materialistic achievements so much that they forget about other people. They forget that there are people that are starving, who do not have clothes or shelter – basically deprived of all basic needs. But if we believe in God, materialistic possessions are the opposite of it. Because God wants us to help his creations first. To bring in a different religion’s teaching, in Islam, “sharing one’s wealth with the poor is recognized as an effective means to atone for sin” (Georgetown University). So, it is clear that God’s scriptures instruct us to use our money to serve the ones that lack the capacity to earn money and take care of their families. When God gives us that extra amount of money, he wants us to help the poor.

I deal with the knowledge that millions of people are living below the poverty line through my faith that my contributions will eventually start or at least join a snowball effect and change their situation. If we can follow our respective religions properly, our collective life becomes simple and easy and beautiful. It also helps us treat every person equally, with respect, without prejudice. Interestingly, ICD values have also taught me that sometimes we discriminate against the poor people without even realizing. One example would be - according to Pellow,

“the ideology that supports dumping on poor nations is also racist, because the peoples of most poor nations are primarily non-European peoples of color and poverty is highly correlated with race around the globe (Pellow 10).

Having said that, the public organizations that govern the economy and national administration, also share the responsibility of helping the poor. In the book *The Art of the Commonplace* Berry says that, “A good human economy, that defines and values human goods, and like the Great Economy, it conserves and protects its goods” (Berry 224). For example, USA has less poor people than any developing country, because they have a great economic system. They have health care. On the other hand, poor economy does not have the financial strength to provide any kind of insurance policy. It’s a paradox that can only be solved by acting together.

Environmental equity is sharing of environmental impacts by community. According to Moe-Lobeda, “my life impacts the communities from whose land comes the oil to fuel my car, produce my plastic products, and fly my food from other continents” (Moe-Lobeda 209). She is essentially referring to the fact that every community have some policies and laws of their own. And every member of the same community groups life is somehow impacted by the others’ activities. I have seen this kind of thoughts in action during my fieldwork. Most of the members of the Aegis are elderly. Medicine and cleanliness product is their day to day needs. They try to use less chemical product because chemical is harmful for the environment. They use ceramic plates and glasses for the meals. If sometimes they need to use disposable plates or glasses, they use paper plates which is compostable. Having said that, environmental compliance is expensive. Aegis, being an assisted living facility in one of the richest countries in the world and being targeted toward the affluent demographic, may find it easier to care about environment and go the extra mile.

Social justice is necessary, but it also is expensive. Prioritization is one of the major dilemmas that aspiring social entrepreneurs would face while considering the costs to all parties involved. With the above realization, the span of stakeholders is broader than any commercial organization for a social enterprise. I am concerned that my project will be a poorly funded one, at least in the beginning, and it will be a matter of prioritization between environmental well-being and the financial solvency of the organization. However, we may find ways to contribute to the environmental efforts to compensate for whatever harm we do to the environment i.e. repay the ecological debt.

The Element of Co-powerment

Co-powerment is a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both side of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other. I interpret co-powerment as the empowerment of multiple groups through each other and via connected projects. “There are still too many people in God’s world whose life is insecure and whose survival^[A13] is a daily challenge but we know this is not what God intends to Gods creation” (Myers 147). Indeed, so many people are in suffering and distress, our only option to achieve our development goals faster is to focus on co-powerment, which is the main theme of my proposed project in Part One of this paper.

Since I want to work on a big initiative, my project plan is not only an old care home but also an orphanage in the same establishment. It will be a combined facility where comparatively stronger elderly residents will mentor the children, and the children will be providing the elderly residents a sense of closeness and intimacy. My target is the poor elderly people who do not have any house or money and whose children are incapable of taking care of them. At the same time, I hope the facility can be a solution for the poor kids who also beg for their livelihood. Most of

them do not know who their parents are. I want to make sure these unfortunate kids get shelter, food and education. I do not want them to take this organization only as an orphanage. This will be a home for them. The elderly will take care of them and guide them. I know this is a big challenge for me, as it is a completely new concept for Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi people.

Other Ways to Help

There are other ways to help in developing countries that are also effective and sustainable. For instance, collaborating between various sector, parts of societies and even genders, help us ensure that we are gathering our strengths to resolve our development issues.

As an example, Petra Kuenkel in her website talked about co-creating a better future together, which is really inspiring. She said -

“In my work with many international multi-stakeholder initiatives it became increasingly clear that the future of our world depends on effective collaboration between different sectors of our global and local societies, between different institution and between men and women. This calls for a paradigm shift in the way we conceptualize and implement change for the common good jointly” (Kuenkel).

She also talks about a Collective Leadership Compass that is used to diagnose, design and implement a pattern of human interaction that furthers tangible results. This compass is like a foundation for my future work. Using this tool will help me become more efficient, more effective, better at learning quickly and more adaptively. I believe that one person can come up with a unique idea but it is not possible for only one person to make a huge change. When people work collectively they become more resilient. It is a very important capacity in a complex, interdependent and quickly changing world.

Why I Believe Co-powerment is more Effective and Sustainable^[A14]

While there are several ways one may go about developing the world, I believe co-powerment is more effective than the most. Co-powerment seeks to find and leverage dependency between more than one target communities or groups, and strategizes a way to empower them all through mutual contribution. If designed correctly, it is a failsafe tactics. To use an architectural metaphore, I almost view co-powerment as a keystone, the final piece placed during construction that locks all the stones into position, allowing an arch to bear weight. In terms of my project, the central idea is to serve the unmet psychological demand of the elderly residents and the orphaned children. Other facilities pool in external resources such as psychological experts, entertainment activities and so on, which are certainly valuable, but not perpetually effective or sustainable. Putting the elderly and the children together in the same facility, I am hoping that the psychological aspect of the care is going to be taken care of through co-powerment, i.e. mutual exchange of resources between the two groups. This will be more effective, sustainable and will reduce reliance on external intervention.

My philosophy of service and my vocational ambition

The concept of service has often referred to the process of ensuring that individuals fulfill their societal roles and receive what was their due from society (Social Justice). What I understand is, doing one's part to do good for the society is the gist of service. But for some causes, for some cases you may have to go above and beyond and dedicate yourself full time for the service.

I am from Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a poor country. It is hard for many Bangladeshi village people to arrange meal for three times. For them, "well-being is a full stomach, time for

prayers and a bamboo platform to sleep on – A poor woman in Bangladesh” (Myers 156).

Millions of people live under the poverty line. A number of poor elderly people take on begging as their profession in their last stage of life and live in the street. Changing the lives of these people would need much more than simply “doing one’s part.” It is going to require the collective empathy and effort of many people, and that has become the philosophy of service for me.

A few years ago, my husband and I worked with Keystone in a project for the World Bank that was focused on assessing the effectiveness of the Social Safety Net programs jointly funded by the Government and the World Bank. At that time, we had to visit some rural areas of Bangladesh. We realized on that trip, how miserable were the lives of the people at the bottom of the pyramid. This was the first time we realized the actual passion of our lives. We decided that someday if the Almighty wants, we will create an organization that would help the underprivileged in some manner. [A15]

The philosophy of service is also only effective when focused on the right void to fill. I have seen several organizations including the government, undertake the wrong projects, projects that would not help solve the root cause or core sufferings of the target groups at all. One thing I would like to talk about in this regard is what Uddin explains about Bangladeshi culture that, it is a norm for Bangladeshi people to take care of their elderly not only because of culture but also for religious values. However, this culture is changing due to mass poverty, changing social and religious value, influence of western culture and rapid socio-economic and demographic transition (M. Taj Uddin). The true picture of this issue is not only their financial problem or health problem but also their psychological aspect, which is really very important. Elderly people go through severe psychological illness because of “loss of abilities, intellectual process, work

role and occupational identification (retirement), loss of intimate relations and lots of other reasons (Doshi Dhara R). They need to be treated differently. They need community based care facilities, counselling service and all those programs requires experience.

My philosophy of service also considers prioritizing issues that are relevant to the ethical implications of service. There are some ethical issues regarding my project. The norm and culture of Bangladesh is taking care of elderly family members. Bangladeshi culture does not like the concept of old care homes. But those who live in the villages sometimes cannot take care of their parents or elderly family member. It is a survival issue for those poor elderly people. They live a poor unhealthy life because of financial deprivation, diseases, negligence and socio-economic insecurity. I am thinking of taking care of their problem even if it is a matter of ethics to send the elderly people to old care home. In my philosophy of service, the benefits to the target population outweighs the dogma or customs prevailing in the society.

Before concluding, I would like to quote from Clawson's book of Everyday Justice that, "Living for just ourselves isn't an option, because everything we do impacts other people" (Clawson 186). I am very motivated by his words. I don't want to be someone who has never done anything in their life for others. This is the reason I chose to work on Aegis for my fieldwork so I could gain perspectives and use my experience to work on my own project. In light of the ICD values, I believe I am now better equipped with clarity and motivation to be successful at my service.

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