

MDMP Report
By
Munimah Bint Ahmed
ID: 14269007

Submitted to the
Masters in Development Management and Practice (MDMP)
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)
BRAC University

December, 2015

**In Partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters in
Development Management and Practice**

Table of Contents

Introduction – What is Development?	2
MDMP Program	5
Work-Placement	8
ICCCAD – a description of the center and the work it does	8
Experience at ICCCAD	9
List of Works Completed at ICCCAD	15
Move to a 2nd organization, NACOM – continuation of Internship	18
Meeting between GED (General Economics Division, BD) and CDKN	20
Significance of Politically Correct Demeanor	25
Arrival at EducationAid – the Internship Adventure Continues	28
Building a State-of-the-Art Library:	30
A Learning Experience, not just a Library Experience: (Direct Activities)	33
Training of Librarians:.....	35
Lessons Learned	36

Introduction – What is Development?

To get started on writing this report, which will determine the successful completion of my Masters, I had to face quite a few hurdles. The report was to be based on the “internship” experience followed by the conclusion of the academic courses, of the Masters in Development Management and Practice (MDMP) Program. My internship experience was not a very conventional internship experience – rather it turned out to be a series of internship experiences.

During my Masters in Development Management and Practice at BRAC, I came to be more familiarized with the world of development as a whole. The Masters classes I attended, along with my work experience in the development sector, instigated me to ponder about the concept of development. Although development entailed the development of nations, the development sector appeared to be more of a political diaspora to me, essentially losing the true essence of development in its holistic sense. Whereas NGOs and other development actors aimed to compete with each other for the attention of donor organizations and engaged in modes of work in compliance with donor mandates and the entertainment of donor expectations, very often development at the root levels would get stagnant. Beneficiaries are not bothered by the global or national discourse but unfortunately their lives are very often dictated by both national and global politics. Although there are many organizations that do good work within the development sector that aid the strengthening of some communities, more often than not development gets caught up in a battle of bids and project reports aimed to meet donor expectations. Often times, donors fail to understand the cultural norms that are dominant within a nation and the ways of life that have been in practice. They set overly-ambitious goals for projects, without considering the varying outcomes that could come about as a result of these goals – whereas they might believe that development is happening according to the submission of the project reports and their “planned” program visits, development could actually be hindered in trying to paint a picture where development is taking place. When subjected to such stringent standards of donor expectations, what can employees of the development sector do but try to gloss over the image of the development work that they are actually being able to undertake? But are donors really that blind in not to recognize the development behind the scenes? Or are they merely turning a blind

eye to what is actually developing? Is their objective one of goodwill or is their objective to establish presence within nations they deem “weaker states” as per their definitions? Who defines a developed nation versus a developing one? Who defines development? What is development really?

Definitions are subjective, just as the definition of development is. Observing my own family’s actions, I could not help but think that the aid they provided by means of “Zakaat” was also development of its own kind. Very often the world is fast to slam Islam these days in the name of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalists. And in doing so the Islamic principles, which are in essence fundamental to the ways of Islam, are often overshadowed. The concept of “Zakaat”, one of the three principles of Sadaqah Jariya, an Islamic concept, is one that promotes aid without any personal gain. The more one has, the more one has to give – a means of distribution of wealth within a society. However, such a concept of Islam will rarely be discussed, for we are too busy fighting the “terrorism” war against Islamic fundamentalists. Now this is by no means an Islam-centric paper; however, for me to delve into the topic of development I felt this was relevant. For throughout my life, I observed my parents and their attitude of giving, which was dictated by their faith and belief system. The aid they provided helped many in the past and continues to help people. Every month they provide one meal a day for 28 children at a “Madrasa orphanage”. They also provide monthly medicine stipends for 30 senior citizens, in the amount of Tk. 1000/person; many of these senior citizens have no family to look after them any longer. Additionally, aside from the salaries that are provided to the employees who work at our home (at an hourly basis), they also bear the education expenses of each of their children. In my eyes, this too is in essence a true form of aid, aimed to help in the development of causes they want to help with. Ultimately, it all lies within intentions – if the intention of an organization is truly to do work that will not only benefit the organization but also the beneficiaries and stakeholders of the organization, then it is a positive mechanism of development. Similarly, if the intentions of individuals are to help others without expecting anything in return, a way of life forged by their belief system, then that belief too is a positive one and the mechanism of development.

The more I observed the intrinsic battles waged by donor organizations and often-times-struggling local development actors, I could not help but question my decision

to continue work in such a platform. True I wanted to contribute to positive change in essence, but I questioned myself if that would be possible through just any development sector job that I hold. Since at the moment I do not have enough capital or collateral for a loan to undertake my own initiative, my options were to either continue as an employee within the development sector or to partner with like-minded people with access to resources and thereby start a development initiative of our own. However, there was also another possible option in the back of my head, the roots of which had been planted in my mind during one of the classes of my “Research” course. We had been handed an assignment where we were to discuss some news stories, as per the criteria provided by the Professor. One of the first things I observed was the stark lack of female presence in any of the features, presented under the section for the Capital Market. Although I should not have been surprised, the naked visibility of the matter did catch me slightly off-guard. I wondered about the possibility of undertaking a research on female absence within the capital market. When the time came for my internship the prospect of undertaking my work placement at a brokerage house within the Dhaka Stock Exchange came to mind - enjoying charts, analysis and the sweet reaping of an acute quote, I thoroughly thrilled in the mechanisms of the capital market. Additionally, through my internship I would be able to analyze my earlier observation about gender dynamics, within the capital market mechanisms as well. An added bonus would be the experience I gathered at the brokerage house, for I knew it would prove valuable experience for in the long run, as my family operates a trading house in the Dhaka Stock Exchange. However, upon consulting with the BRAC administration, I was informed that such an experience would not be considered relevant, which I thought was a fair enough claim and so began my search for internships, to complete my Masters education.

MDMP Program

When I initially enrolled in BRAC for the MDMP program, I was employed full-time at an international NGO called Swisscontact. I was working for a project called “Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labor” (SkillFUL) as the Officer for both Communications and Gender. Although some of my colleagues suggested I join the Masters in Development Studies (MDS) program of BRAC, I joined the MDMP program as recommended by a fellow colleague and former associate of BRAC

Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). However, once I joined the program, I actually realized it was slightly stringent for full-time workers, who were engaged in a formal workplace, where a 9 to 5 job, was actually a 9 to 5 job. I realized that the undertaking of four courses every semester was quite difficult to accomplish, while maintaining a job at the same time. Whereas for some it was possible to do, for others it wasn't – probably because we are each of us individuals, and have our own distinct styles of operation. However, as I started to engage more with the faculty and peers at BRAC, I realized it had translated to quite a comprehensive learning experience.

The MDMP program was very useful in giving me an all-encompassing overview of the development sector of Bangladesh –our classes ranged from topics of sustainable development, national health management systems, urban dynamics, agriculture, climate change, governance, research to project management. The class on sustainable development was a well-structured introduction to development in how it's being shaped at present. The global learning experience with Columbia University, led by Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, was indeed one of the perks of the entire program; through that one class we were informed of the evolving of the development sector as a whole, from a temporal, global, as well as sectoral perspective. Our Professors for almost all courses were well-suited to the respective courses, as well as quite cooperative with students. For almost every course, we had to hand in a “term-end paper” on a relevant subject studied for that topic, whereas for some we had to hand in a few more than just the term-end one. Similarly, for most of the courses we also had to deliver presentations – most of these presentations were conducted via “group-work”. Whereas the presentations enabled us to learn how to collaborate and manage an assignment in a team together, the term-end papers were especially useful in allowing each of us room to let our creative juices flow. Almost each of the papers helped me craft an innovative “project proposal” of sorts of my own, all embellished with ideas that I would not have bothered to think through, had these assignments not been due. However, the only drawback in the cases of these papers were that since most of them were term-end assignments, we did not get a chance to have them back from the Professors with their critical comments, which may have helped us realize if we were thinking in the right direction, or if we needed to steer a different way, which way it should be. But this was partially the responsibility of the students too, and since we

did not ask for the papers to be handed to us for review, I cannot speak much on the students' behalf in this case – however for the future, a system could be engineered whereby students are given their papers back with the Professors' comments, as it enables them a chance to better comprehend their own understanding of the subject matter that had been studied.

Additionally, although the MDMP course was quite a comprehensively structured one, the lack of option to choose at least two or even one elective, was quite limiting, especially for a Masters level program. For instance for a student like me, who was especially interested in topics such as Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E), Proposal Development, Professional/Report-Writing, and Gender, I was quite disappointed. Whereas the Masters in Development Studies offers topics such as Gender and M & E, as full courses to students, we were introduced to these topics through mere one-day sessions: M & E was covered via “Program Management for Sustainable Development” through one of the lectures, whereas Gender was taken on by a lecture through the “Research” course. Although for the former, the Professor did mention throughout his lectures the importance of M & E, personally I think, the topic would have been much better covered if it had been offered as a separate course altogether. Given the lack of national expertise we continue to face with regard to M & E, and its different, evolving forms, I can't help but think that this topic deserved far more attention. If our universities are unable to grow a pool of local M & E experts, it is only natural that we would constantly have to turn to “Regional Consultants”, when developing and/or implementing Projects and Programs. Similarly, the fact that Gender was completely overlooked throughout the entire Program, aside from one lecture delivered by the Research faculty, was another glaring gap. For a program like MDMP, it is absolutely instrumental that the option for electives remain, at least for topics so significant as Gender and M & E in today's development sector. If “managers” (which I presume is one of the objectives for a program like MDMP) are not trained at length in these topics, then the functioning of managers at Program/Project Management levels stand to be hampered, for these are cross-cutting issues in almost every area of development these days. Even if they choose not to be experts in the area, they would at least have to have fundamental knowledge, so they are able to work with consultants or different teams, when operating within the management framework.

Work-Placement

When I joined the MDMP program I was engaged in a skills development project called “Skills for unemployed and underemployed labour” (SkillFUL). Having been a part of the project and the Swisscontact organization, I was already aware of some of the ins and outs of development with regard to the vocational skills industry, as well as livelihoods based on agricultural growth and market linkages. The project phase was over at the same time that the third semester of my MDMP classes were to resume – feeling the pressure of tackling a full-time job and four Masters level courses in the previous two semesters, I thought it to be a good time to put my career on hold, to complete my academics. When the time came to complete an internship under the BRAC MDMP program, I took it as an opportunity to give climate change a try, as I had grown an interest in the topic, through the length of the Program. The issue of climate change had been completely new to me – just like the general public, I was aware of the hotly debated topic of global warming, but that was pretty much the extent of my knowledge. MDMP introduced us to the building blocks of climate change, as well as the discourse of global politics that reign in the control, use and access of natural vs. man-made resources and energy processes. Being a nature-promoter myself, I thought that I should give the challenging dynamics of climate change a chance, and so through the networking of a fellow classmate, I joined International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), a global center of excellence on climate change and development research based in Bangladesh.

ICCCAD – a description of the center and the work it does

ICCCAD is one of the four research centers of the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), one of the oldest private universities in Bangladesh. It is a tripartite partnership between IUB, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). ICCCAD consists of a Secretariat, a Management Team, and three program teams of Climate Change Governance, Climate Change Finance and Urban Climate Change, each led by respective program managers. The Secretariat comprises Director, Deputy Director and Office Secretary, whereas the Management Team comprises Coordinator of Communications, Coordinator of Knowledge Management, Officer of Finance and

Accounts, and Senior Research Coordinator. ICCCAD currently has two operational programs, the Climate Change Governance (CCG) Program and the Climate Change Finance (CCF) Program, with another budding program, the Climate Change Urban program in its initial stages.

Experience at ICCCAD

Initially I joined ICCCAD as a Research Associate and was to find an area of interest within the organization, where I could engage myself in depth. Upon joining I discovered the different areas of climate change that ICCCAD had already or was contemplating, involvement in. Some of these areas were COP 21, Loss and Damage, Resilience Academy (a platform for global doers and thinkers to come together for exchange of ideas), Gobeshona (a platform for existing as well as aspiring researchers), Learning Hub Event (a joint initiative of Planning Commission of Bangladesh and ICCCAD to promote knowledge and awareness of climate change developments, within the national actors), Climate Finance Transparency Mechanism (CFTM), Carbon Calculator Initiative, Partnership Development, among others, in addition to the three programs of ICCCAD.

Initially I had interest in engaging myself with a few of these initiatives; however, my first and foremost role was the maintenance of the Director's schedule and correspondence. When I first met with the Director, I was quite excited about working for ICCCAD and the climate change forefront in general. He assigned me the responsibility of maintaining his schedule and corresponding with his associates regarding his calendar, while advising me to find an area of engagement within ICCCAD that suited my interests. However, till I was to find an area of interest, alongside the maintenance of his schedule, he asked me to work with the head of the Climate Change Urban Program. Albeit a bit reluctant in my head, I said yes, as I really wasn't in much of a position to bargain. Why reluctant? Because right off the top of my head, I knew this was not really what I had in mind when I joined ICCCAD as an almost Masters graduate.

Although I joined ICCCAD as a "Research Associate", my role was no more than that of a personal assistant and an intern. When I first joined ICCCAD, the center housed a fair amount of "Visiting Researchers" (VRs) and a few Bangladeshi core staff and project personnel. However, to any newcomer it was easily visible, that researchers

were mainly foreign and Bangladeshis were few and far in between. Additionally, during the meetings I also came to realize that some key tasks that required careful planning and building-up of, were also being handed to VRs, although there were present “local staff” who may have been capable of completing such tasks. I couldn’t help but question myself at that point, whether any of these foreign VRs who may have been Masters students, would have been asked to take on the maintenance of a calendar as a primary task. No, it wasn’t an ego-bruising on my part, at that point – but merely objective rationalism. The VRs were internationals who came to Bangladesh for a short while, mainly to gather knowledge and/or experience for their personal purposes and would leave, once their work was done. In other words, their first priority was one that had little to do with Bangladesh’s national interests, and more to do with completion of a thesis or work experience, that would add to their resume claiming how they had “successfully worked a while” in a LDC like Bangladesh. On the other hand, when locals were engaged with relevant work for ICCCAD it acted in the national interest in every which way – local employment, local development of skilled researchers, local development of knowledge base, local overall growth and local representation in a platform that was globally affiliated.

If the model was one of knowledge exchange between VRs and local aspiring researchers I would have understood; a mechanism whereby VRs would be mandated to spend at least 50% of their “work hours” engaged in honing the knowledge of local aspiring researchers, to aid them in gaining the skills required to be deemed a researcher of global standards, would have made sense. What they did with the rest 50% of their “ICCCAD time”, be it the furthering of their own agenda, or furthering of ICCCAD’s program initiatives, would be a decision left to the mutual understanding of the VRs and their respective supervisor. However, as an observer and a BRAC Masters student of the MDMP program, a program that heavily emphasized the significance of sustainable development, I could not help but feel that if VRs were not engaged in proper ways for the development of local research potential, then such a platform for “knowledge exchange” was falling short of its optimal utilization, from a national perspective.

I am not one of those individuals who is a promoter of closed economies or against globalization for the greater good, under any means; as a matter of fact I’m all for

exchange of knowledge, skills, technology and labor, between nations. But what I am an advocate for is fair trade. And when trade between any two parties occur, it is important that both parties equally benefit from the trade-off. The terms of trade in this case, is extremely significant. In our MDMP program we had a few courses where we discussed the concepts of control, access and use of resources. Prior to the MDMP classes I had also been familiarized with the concepts via workshops conducted by SkillFUL's Project's donor, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). When thinking in terms of control, access and use of resources from a "trade lens", it is very important that the weaker party is aware of its "weaker" stance, and thereby protects its interests. Protection of already existing resources should be the first priority of the weaker party in any kind of an exchange or trade scenario. Why is this the case? Because from the perspective of the "weaker party", the trade-off should lead to strengthening of overall position of the party. Whereas for the "stronger party", fulfillment of the proposition may merely be a deal of comparative advantage, for the weaker party, the first objective should be further strengthening of overall position, followed by any other objectives of comparative advantage, enhancing relations or sheer goodwill. In a world where nations are coming together to battle the bad together, this may sound profit-motivated and even slightly harsh at first, but when looking at it from a logical perspective, this is actually one of the more sensible ways of reducing the gaps of inequality and inequity. Only, when players are of a level playing field, can they actually work well together in partnership, without risks of being taken advantage of by the "stronger party". And so, in any form of exchange of resources, it is vital that the weaker party recognize themselves as the weaker party, identify the relevant points of weakness with respect to the exchange at hand and the existing resources of the trading party, protect their interests first with regard to those specific points of weaknesses, and then put forth the terms of trade.

With regard to the roles and responsibilities of VRs, as opposed to the roles and responsibilities of the local "freelancers" and "interns" engaged in ICCCAD, the organization's assignments seemed to be allocated in a manner, which did not seem to have in mind the interests of either ICCCAD, as a Bangladeshi think tank, or aspiring Bangladeshi researchers, as a first priority – but then again, this was my personal perspective based on my initial interactions and observations at ICCCAD.

Additionally, one of the biggest issues with handing over topics of extreme significance to “internationals” was the abrupt halting of an initiative once one of the VRs left. For instance one of the programs that I had extreme interest in, since joining ICCCAD was the Climate Finance Program. However, I found out that the program was inactive at the time – an IIED staff had been sent to look into the Program and apparently it had more or less been a one-man operation. He had been the one to set it up, to implement as well as to network amidst all the local actors, by himself without the formation of any team. Most of the individual’s work had been to do with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and after a while, when he was offered a job with the GCF, he accepted the offer and left Bangladesh to go work in South Korea, at the GCF headquarters. Since then the ICCCAD Climate Finance had come to a halt because nobody was aware of what working with the Program entailed or what the next step should be – as a result, for the longest time, there remained no follow-up of the program. Personally, I felt the Climate Finance Program (CFP) was a significant one for ICCCAD – if my BRAC Masters had taught me anything, it was the vitality of control, access and use of resources. And for a center like ICCCAD, the CFP should have been a major concern, especially in terms of future planning with regard to capacity-building, networking and thereby possibly project/fund-sourcing, as the program was directly linked to the GCF. To put the entire and sole responsibility of a program as such on an international IIED staff and not have the involvement of any ICCCAD IUB staff in the particular initiative, seemed, frankly speaking, quite thoughtless and poorly planned and managed to me.

Upon mingling with and talking to some of the core ICCCAD staff, as well as members of the Climate Governance Program, a few of us who had interest in the Climate Finance Program decided to form a team, to once again get the Program up and running. There were around 4 of us, which seemed like a good number of people to initiate the continuation of the Program, after the undue pause due to the resignation of the one-member staff of the Program; additionally, one of the members who was part of the team we tried to form was heading the Climate Governance Program and had already worked in some of the cross-cutting issues of Climate Finance and Governance, with the ex-colleague, and so had some basic knowledge of different components of the Program. He encouraged me to show initiative and take the

necessary steps to resume the Program in full capacity again. When I expressed interest to the Director, ICCCAD to join the program (because while keeping track of the Director's schedule and coordinating his meeting dates and venues, I had been asked to find my own area of interest), I was told that a Skype meeting should be set up with the ex-colleague who had been in charge of the Climate Finance program and he should be asked for a reading list of all relevant Climate Finance materials. Additionally the first step would be for all those in ICCCAD interested to join the Climate Finance Program, to agree on a suitable time for the Skype session and be present for the meeting. The list of people interested in taking part in the program was around 10-15 – I couldn't help but be slightly surprised as this had been a program that had been operational at ICCCAD for a while but suddenly everybody had an interest to partake in it then! I wasn't even sure if there was enough work within the Climate Finance landscape of ICCCAD at the time for the pool of such a large group of interested potential participants. But then again, during my short while at ICCCAD this was one of the management discrepancies I had observed – everybody was involved in everything. In comparison to Gibika (a livelihoods Project) and the Climate Governance Program, which had a proper team and allocated members to suitable assignments, most of the other programs and initiatives fell quite short, precisely due to lack of proper management. Either there were too many people involved in the same assignment or assignments/projects were manned by individuals – both management methods that could prove lethal to the objective of a research center like that of ICCCAD's.

What ICCCAD did have to offer in terms of research though was Gobeshona. Primarily my understanding of Gobeshona was that it was a means through which aspiring researchers could develop themselves to be full-fledged researchers. ICCCAD being the result of a tripartite partnership between IUB, IIED and BCAS, and the hosting center for Gobeshona, I was under the impression that one of the main objectives of the Gobeshona initiative was to nurture local researchers, who did not have the necessary knowledge, resources or options of accessibility, to do so of their own accord. However, that is not the case; although Gobeshona is propelled by a consortium of very influential national and international donor organizations, its main objective appears to be to provide a dais for established scholars to promote their research. The consortium led by USAID also includes BRAC University, IUB, North

South University, Practical Action, Water Aid, World Fish, BCAS, ICDDRDB, Waste Concern, Wageningen University and Research Center, Islamic Relief Aid and Christian Aid, among others. On the side though, Gobeshona has initiated a Young Researchers' Workshop program, whereby aspiring researchers are linked with mentors, with whose guidance they are able to undertake the completion of a research paper. Additionally, day-long workshops are organized on three separate occasions throughout the year, where the young researchers' progress is checked up on by a facilitator, and s/he gives them guidance with regard to areas of focus or shortcomings in their paper. Unfortunately, this is a competitive learning initiative and the maximum number of applicants who are accepted to this annual Young Learners' Program is only 20. Given the fact that Gobeshona is backed by such a powerful consortium of donors, NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs), one would think that this competitive number of 20 could be extended to something such as at least 50 Young Researchers. If providing mentors for all 50 students is the issue of concern, I cannot help but wonder what the objective of having such a well-established and diverse, project consortium is – given the network of each of the consortium partners, one would have thought that providing at least 50 mentors for 50 research participants, should not have been a problem at all. Whereas there are Gobeshona steering committee meetings arranged every month, when it came to the arrangement of a mechanism to give an opportunity to local aspiring researchers or unearthing potential researchers from remote locations, the ICCCAD Gobeshona team did not appear very successful. Nonetheless, this was still a novel and capacity-building initiative of the right kind and I laud ICCCAD's efforts in this aspect.

Another initiative of the right kind that I observed at ICCCAD was led by the Deputy Director of ICCCAD, who was actually core IUB staff. Throughout my brief stationing at ICCCAD, I observed her and the teams led by her try to nurture and properly manage ICCCAD staff – giving due importance to the local staff, rather than priority only to the internationals. Additionally, she also formed and led strategic South-South as well as South-North partnerships for ICCCAD, which established ICCCAD, IUB and Bangladesh as capable players in the global forefront of climate change actors. The Cap Water Project, which aimed to develop capacities in the field for monitoring and assessment of water resources, seemed like a well-grounded initiative and has brought Bangladesh, Vietnam, Brazil and Germany to work

together. The project supported community-based monitoring and was geared to facilitate development of practical modules and units for water resource management. She also headed implementation of programs which would facilitate relevant interchange of knowledge and resources between Bangladesh and other climate-afflicted countries through exchange of visiting Professors, as well as Masters and PHD students. However, I realized that having committed to being the Director's "time-keeper" first and foremost, it really would not have been feasible for me to complete my internship under her guidance.

List of Works Completed at ICCAD

Editing and proofreading of Policy Brief: One of the assignments that I was engaged in was a policy brief that was to be submitted to IIED. It was a draft based on the topic of Urban WATSAN, titled "Bringing Climate Resilience to Noapara Town: A Coastal Urban Centre of Bangladesh". I had been asked to proofread the document, which mainly consisted of interpreting the comments provided by the IIED staff on the paper, to the principal researcher, and in turn putting into words his response to each of the comments, in a comprehensible manner for the staff at IIED. While going through the document, aside from correcting the grammar discrepancies, I had made a few suggestions of my own, pertaining to the knowledge I bore from my Masters. One of these comments that I remember distinctly was on the issue of the formation of a council that would determine the "structuring and planning of the WATSAN facilities" around Noapara. When going through the document I realized that the proposed council severely lacked local representation, and the only local representative was Chairman of the Union Parishad (or a similar high-up position of the sort). To this I had suggested the inclusion of an additional one or two community representatives, for instance, a community member or a Professor of a relevant subject, from the local University. However, my suggestion was shot down – apparently, it would not bode well with the "local leaders" of the community. To this I said something along the lines, that if we who were drafting the policy brief would not **even** suggest the inclusion of such relevant community representation, then how did we plan to increase "community-management", one of the most hotly revered topics of "sustainable" development. Nonetheless, my suggestion was not accepted, and my role for most of the assignment was that of an "English teacher" correcting grammar and overlooking language consistency.

Rapporteur at the Young Researchers' Workshop for Gobeshona: This was one of the better learning experiences that I had at ICCCAD. Although the role I had volunteered for was that of a rapporteur for the workshop, which was the 2nd workshop in a series of 3/4 workshops, I learned a fair amount regarding the development of a research paper and the processes of peer-reviewing and publication that follows. Dr. Haseeb Irfanullah, noted researcher of Bangladesh, facilitated the session and was also very cooperative in answering questions that participants (including myself) had. One of the most important lessons learned during the session was the appropriate selection of journal, where one would want their research published –during identification of the journal one would have to be careful of predatory journals and the authenticity of journals. Additionally, enough research would have to be done to see what kind of articles the journal publishes, because if the article does not adhere to the thematic concerns of the journal, then there is high possibility of the paper being rejected. Dr. Haseeb went on to give pointers and advice on every stage of the development of a research paper - selection of research topic, preparation of paper itself, peer-reviewing, publication and even presentation of the paper. All in all, it was one of the most useful sessions I encountered during my short time at ICCCAD.

Application of ICCCAD, IUB as Observer Organisation for the Green Climate Fund (GCF): While going through the GCF website (which I was doing to teach myself more about the GCF procedures) I had come across the application form for parties to apply as observer organizations, which would enable them to be observers at the GCF board meetings. I informed Director, ICCCAD, about the opportunity and suggested ICCCAD apply for the accreditation process. He received the information with enthusiasm and thought it a good initiative. He asked I coordinate with ICCCAD's Deputy Director and Communications Coordinator to put forth the application. Upon further correspondence on the matter, the Communications Coordinator informed that she was in charge of handling all such international accreditations and had already put together the necessary documents, as she was arranging for a similar accreditation process for COP. However, a few days later she informed me personally that since she was leaving town on an international official tour, she would like me to take on the responsibility of putting together the application form, and provided me some of

the supplementary documents that she had in possession for accreditation purposes. Over the next week, I collected further updated IUB documents required for eligibility purposes and compiled the original 10-page application form, handing it in neatly on the deadline date of September 11, 2015. The successful acceptance of the application qualified ICCCAD, IUB to be an accredited observer organization for the GCF.

Maintenance of the Director's schedule and appointments: Although this may sound like a "side-job", this in essence is actually a full-time job. Coordinator of Knowledge Management, ICCCAD, was maintaining this prior to me; however, whereas he was only in charge of maintaining the Director's schedule and appointments within the country, I was instructed to do so for his schedule both in and out of the country, alongside the maintenance of his flight itinerary and even his airplane tickets. The position entailed being available online 24/7, checking of emails and responding on time regularly, scanning every mail to see where my name had been mentioned followed by instructions for me. Although it may sound like a crucial position, having access to so many national and international climate change actors through the Director's inbox and schedule, it was in reality nothing more than a "secretarial job". My role was strictly limited to locating time and date slots available for the Director to meet with his correspondents, provide him copies of his weekly and monthly schedules, and respond to emails using proper language and mailing etiquette – a job which was quite mundane and draining at the same time, and which was much better suited to an Administrative Assistant. Although I had always been an advocate of the saying "No job is too big or small", from a sense of practicality, I realized that for this to be my primary role at ICCCAD and then figure out where else I could plug myself, was not what I had in mind – my schooling in Sunbeams (one of the better-performing academic institutions of Bangladesh), my double major in Economics and English Literature from Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, my nearly 2-years of work experience from an international NGO like Swisscontact and finally, my Masters education from BRAC University in Development Management and Practice, could not have set me up to be primarily an "Executive Secretary to the Director" at ICCCAD; investments in myself in terms of finance, time and energy, over the course of life had been too high for the stakes to be so low. I knew my skills and knowledge could have been much better used elsewhere. Additionally, if any sort of remuneration had been offered for the position, undertaking such administrative tasks

would have still made sense – however, the fact that I was essentially an intern, who needed to find a position to complete her Masters, was what made my negotiating position a weak one from the get-go. And I was left with not much choice, but to comply, in order for Director, ICCCAD, to act as my supervisor from my place of work, and “grade” me at the end of the internship period, which would have to be submitted to BRAC.

Having an interest in economics, evaluation and analysis, and the dynamics of society’s mechanisms in general, I expressed interest to the Director, ICCCAD to engage myself in research/activities of any of the following initiatives: Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), Climate Finance Transparency Mechanism, Carbon Calculator initiative and the Climate Finance Program. However, during my time at ICCCAD, that was unfortunately not possible.

Move to a 2nd organization, NACOM – continuation of Internship

Thanks to the assistance of a fellow BRAC-mate and a fellow colleague at ICCCAD, I was able to avail, what seemed at the time, a better opportunity, with an organization called Nature Conservation Management (NACOM). I chose to accept the offer at NACOM for two reasons: remuneration and “valuable” work. Prior to my joining ICCCAD I also had a meeting with one of the Directors of NACOM regarding potential work opportunities. When I had first looked up NACOM, I was especially interested to join them as their website showed they undertake work in the field of bio-diversity – although, I had never specialized in the field, I have always been an ardent lover of nature and all things natural.

In the race of life, governments, organizations, enterprises, just human beings in general, often forget the importance of life in general. We pursue the material aspects of life, as materialism has been nurtured for centuries as the primary mode of survival. We tend to forget sustenance of the soul. In my eyes, there are two forms of survival – survival of the body and survival of the soul. Survival of the body entails health, proper shelter, nutritious food, suitable clothes, all aspects for which we need money and therefore means of earning that money, via employment or own business,

to survive. Given the world we have so painstakingly built over centuries, there appears to be no turning back from this mechanism, which is so dependent on the survival of the fittest – be it survival through one’s own skills, capabilities and assets, or survival through support of external circumstances such as strong network of family and friends or a “people-enabling” national system. This “survival of the body” consumes so much energy within the mechanisms of life that we often forget to flip the coin on its other side – the side that supports “survival of the soul”. But this side is equally vital, if not more, for the survival of well-being and positivity within a race and a nation, for the survival of all beings in the world. Survival of the soul entails compassion towards and nurturing of all beings, embracing of the arts, traveling to discover the beauty and uniqueness of different places and what they each have to offer. We are so driven by the man-made material mechanisms of the world, that we often forget to focus on the mechanisms of life, which lay within individuals and within nature. To ensure survival of the essence of this Earthly soul, it is vital that we not always act out of need, but sometimes also act out of a sense of compassion and co-existence. And that is why art and nature have always held a special place in my heart. Which is why when I first realized NACOM was engaged in projects that promoted bio-diversity, I thought it might be an interesting experience.

However, not having heard from NACOM since and also seeing an opportunity to undertake work at ICCCAD, where I had already met and gotten acquainted with a few of the workers, I decided to join there instead. During my stay at ICCCAD, I received another call from Director, NACOM, enquiring whether I’d be interested to work for them, for a paid position. Not being satisfied with my engagement at ICCCAD, I decided to opt for the opportunity. After having learned my lesson at ICCCAD for not following a “professional mode of employment”, and thereby being subjected to undertake work that was not suited to me, for which I was not to be compensated either, I was determined to do things differently at NACOM. After having met with the Directors of NACOM, I was told that I would have to take on a fair bit of work on my plate, and they offered me a moderate salary in exchange. Very promptly I asked for a “Job Description” or a “Terms of Reference”, to which I was informed that they would compile one at the earliest, and I’d have to start work right away, as one of the employee’s contract was to be over soon and I was to take over her responsibilities. Additionally, a delegation was arriving from Climate and

Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) to meet with national actors and other donors, in hopes of furthering partnerships within the climate change landscape of Bangladesh.

CDKN was a DFID and Dutch funded initiative that worked across four strategic themes of:

- Climate compatible development strategies and plans
- Improving developing countries' access to climate finance
- Strengthening resilience through climate-related disaster risk management
- Supporting climate negotiators from the least developed and most vulnerable countries.

The delegation comprised Head of Climate Change and Sustainability, who was flying in from United Kingdom, Regional Director of CDKN Asia and Program Manager of Climate Change and Sustainability, CDKN Asia, who were both from Pakistan. As per the directions of the Director, once the delegation was in town, I was to attend the meetings along with the Director, NACOM, to make note of important exchanges. (Below are parts of the compilation from the CDKN meetings with few stakeholders)

Meeting between GED (General Economics Division, BD) and CDKN **CDKN**

CDKN representatives explained the Program, its mode of operation and its four strategic themes to the members of the General Economics Division (GED) present.

GED

GED members noted how the 7th 5-year plan is being finalized and mentioned how there is a chapter (chapter 7) dedicated to climate change (CC), environmental concerns and disaster. All issues have been categorized as identified by Government of Bangladesh (GoB). GED representatives highlighted how preparation of 7th 5-year plan is currently the Planning Commission's most prioritized task. It was mentioned that implementation of plan will be responsibility of respective ministries but Planning Commission unit are the chief planners.

7th Five-Year Plan

A background of the 7th 5 year plan is provided and it is mentioned how the Plan also instructs on some reconstructing within the Planning Commission: for instance, 17 sectors will now be brought down to 14 sectors through changes such as Ministry of Agriculture will now take on the issues of Forestry, whereas the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) will be solely responsible for matters pertaining to CC. The 7th 5 year plan addresses both adaptation and mitigation needs.

Needs Identified/Way Forward

Current needs of the Planning Commission are found to be within the purview of capacity development. Currently they have training modules developed based on training needs assessment. However they need funds for capacity building for ministry officials as well as at the officer level (such as project directors). When officers are given a project document, they have to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – in this regard, two types of training are required: one of the trainings should be an in-depth one specifically for EIA officer, whereas the other training should incorporate a more holistic approach for higher-end officials that will aid in planning. CDKN expressed interest to have a workshop on climate finance with GED.

At the end of this meeting, two thoughts struck me, the first being the restructuring of the Planning Commission. I could not help but wonder why the Ministry of Agriculture was to take on the responsibilities of Forestry; whereas the title itself claims “Ministry of Environment and Forests”, I found it slightly absurd that the MoEF’s only responsibility would be to tackle issues of climate change.

Were issues of bio-diversity and the survival of forest plants and forest animals, also not an issue of concern, for the MoEF? The minute we affiliate forestry with agriculture, it appears that the only need for forests’ lay within the purview of the sustenance of humans - at least to a layman observer of the meeting, that is what it sounded like. But what of the survival of the flora and the fauna of the forests? How could we completely negate the well-being of all other beings, other than that of humans? Isn’t the ultimate achievement, coexistence after all?

However, I did gain enough exposure throughout my MDMP program to realize that Climate Change had primarily become a crucial area of priority, for two reasons: simply put, money and political power-play. In hindsight, from my Masters education coupled with my short experience in the sector of Climate Change, I realize that the real concerns of climate change, such as climate-vulnerable people, animals and plants, stand the grave risk of drowning amidst the chaos of fund-sourcing and global political power-play.

The second question I had in mind was a simpler one: How much capacity-building of local GED officials could actually be done through a one-time workshop conducted by CDKN? Isn't capacity-building a process rather than a one-time event? Wouldn't GED officials benefit from an ongoing series of workshops rather than a day-long workshop? Often times the result of a day-long workshop is not much more than an event whereby the "experts" arrive to shed light upon the audience, of what "should be done and what should not be done", followed by dining for participants and a report that later claims, that so-and-so undertook "capacity-building" of so-and-so. Was it all in the name of brand promotion or was the objective actual capacity-building and thereby strengthening of members of a nation, who appeared to be a "weaker" state still? I may have had a lot of unanswered questions in mind, but what common sense did dictate to me was that capacity-building would rarely happen through a daylong workshop, and for capacity-building to happen at any level, it would have to be a two-way street. Experts as well as participants would have to exchange views – for most cases vary in context, and experts' opinions would be of no value if they themselves were not acclimated to the local context. If the MDMP classes had taught me anything about participatory methods, it was that experts would first have to learn the local context from participants and thereby jointly produce a roadmap of potential solutions, for the problems at hand.

Over the next few days, the delegation visited a few national and international actors and also engaged in a multi-donor dialogue. During each of the sessions, CDKN representatives tried to present their cases to the audience in hopes of striking a potential partnership. However as more and more of the sessions rolled on, I could not help but think of this "delegation mission" as another means of trying to establish yet

another “donor presence” within a developing nation. And I began to question how much of the work that they actually wanted to do in Bangladesh was actually development-oriented with regard to the nation and how much of it was merely with the objective of setting up shop in Bangladesh. However, I did learn a few vital things that each of the actors we visited had to say. ADB has undertaken a few climate change initiatives, both in the adaptation and mitigation forefront, which is aligned with the Bangladesh government’s 5-year plans – the ADB climate change initiatives all seemed quite proactive.

I was especially encouraged to hear a statement by one of the Additional Secretaries of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) during a visit to the ERD. With regard to the GCF, in a recent meeting held in South Korea, he claimed that there were ongoing talks of a pay-back mechanism, should there be an income-generating method in the (project) instrument; however this was heavily opposed as it would be “morally inappropriate” to take back from beneficiaries whatever little they make. GCF also wants to go for a loan component; however under the UNFCCC the idea is to support LDCs against climate change, so loan mechanisms are not a viable option for LDCs’ interests. Rather feasible financing mechanisms are required from which it would be possible to access finance. He stated that LDCs and SIDs should work together to have a united stand for the GCF mechanisms to work in their favor. In lieu with this it may be best to remain flexible to loan options for mitigation measures, whereas it would be in the best interest for all parties involved to demand full compensation in the form of grants, for adaptation measures. Although I was encouraged by almost everything he had to say, the one flaw I felt there existed in his argument was that it lacked the depth of geographical placement of nations.

Alongside the status of countries (developed, developing, LDCs and SIDs), I felt that geographical placement also had a major role to play that could lead to sustainable development. When countries are within the same vicinity within each other, often times they share similar grounds – be it at the micro-level in the form of family beliefs and ways of life, or macro-matters such as labor, production processes, agricultural production, culture, health crises, gender issues, environmental stressors or natural calamities. This in itself should be incentive enough for regional nations to maintain healthy camaraderie through mutually beneficial negotiations. When we rely on a

system that has been created to measure developed, developing and least-developing countries based mostly on direct or indirect monetary mechanisms, and then form groups for negotiation on the international diaspora based on these, we are immediately eliminating other methods of alliances. Personally I think this is what enables the automatic weakening of bargaining power of the developing and least developing countries/islands/states against that of the developed nations and it is always easier to waive the wants of the weaker. Rather, in the interest of growth of weaker nations, it is vital that they forge alliances not only from monetary perspectives but also on common grounds of regional locations. For instance the position of “LDCs” and “SIDs” can immediately strengthen if they are able to forge alliances based on mutual understanding and common grounds, with their respective regional developing nation neighbors. And then as a group all these nations stand to have higher bargaining power – in a world that is so dependent on imports and exports of goods and services these days, nations need to form strategic partnerships, based on mutual understanding and respect, rather than constantly turning to the “big league players” in hopes of aid and grants. Aid, grants or even migration pacts, should come in the form of rightful compensation for damage that has already been caused by the damagers¹ – the attitude should be that the damagers are compensating for the direct and indirect damage they caused to a nation or a region for that matter, not that the nations that have been damaged are being aided for the sake of a “weaker nation’s” development. What made and/or makes a nation weak or vulnerable is the important question to ask, if we are to attribute cause of damage to the damagers involved.

This is not a means of indicating that we should compile a list of the “oppressor” nations to exist throughout the Earthly timeline and charge them to compensate for the damage they have caused through the obliteration of resources, culture and human morale in general. I just think that it is important the afflicted nations remember why they are afflicted so and do not maintain a subservient attitude when undertaking negotiations. However, this is much harder done than said – and so it is crucial that we do not let history repeat itself. It is crucial that nations do not let the more powerful nations, play them against each other. Alliances should be formed

¹Damagers: damager nations are those nations who may have caused damage to other nations either directly or indirectly through actions that have impacted the globe

strategically to maintain strength within the region as well as across the globe. For instance it is highly ironic that whereas Africa entails either South Africa or just plain Africa, Asia has been segregated to the Subcontinent, South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia. Whereas the terms Eurasia and Australasia signify the merging of continents, the previously mentioned ones signify segregation. My question is, why the segregation? Why in a world that is globalizing so rapidly, should we have such regional segregation? Does that not render the developing or least developing nations, forever developing? It is vital that all developing (be they developing or least developing or island states) maintain better camaraderie for enhanced negotiating powers, so that in unity we can escape the clutching claims of the label “developing” nations. It is vital that all nations comprehend that we cannot let history repeat itself and allow oppression and unhealthy competition to win the war through dirty man-made politics any longer. It is vital that nations form strategic partnerships, regionally and globally, amidst mutual understanding and respect. And as an idealist view as that may be, careful strategy could easily convert such vision to reality.

Significance of Politically Correct Demeanor

However, the question of mutual respect between different parties can easily be questioned in any sphere of life – even in the development sphere where we speak so highly of equality and equity. During the delegation’s visit, I picked them up every morning and dropped them off every evening, at the hotel. Our evenings would not come to an end till late at night, due to reasons such as “shopping” and “dining”. My accompanying them was not left to choice – I had been instructed by my supervisor to do so and I did so without any complaint or even displeasure. I thought to myself, they are colleagues visiting Bangladesh – of course I should show hospitality! However, a rude awakening was indeed in wait for me, for that sense of camaraderie was not entirely mutual. The second evening we were out till around 10:30 pm, but we decided that due to some internal discussions prior to the meetings of the next day, we should still start the day early. The time decided was 7:30 in the morning. I was at the hotel sharp at 7, as decided. The delegates did not come down till almost 20 minutes late, and once they did, they headed over to breakfast – I could not help but find such behavior unprofessional on their part. They could have informed me ahead

of time if they were to be late, or even at least apologized for the tardiness. Although displeased with this turn of events, I did not express my displeasure out loud. A second incident in the evening though, finally did bring out the more aloof side of me. When visiting the Department of Disaster, after the meeting we were offered “Mughlai Paratha” and “Soda” beverages. After the meeting and the snacking was over, we were also asked if we would like some tea. To this, everybody said that that wasn’t necessary, for we had already had the Paratha and Soda. However, the official kept insisting, to which I said that we also had to get going for the delegates wanted to visit Aarong before dinner, and so we were on a time crunch – which was the truth of the matter and it was already 8:30p.m. Knowing that almost all Bangladeshis are aware that visits to places such as Aarong is quite common for foreigners and that traffic can be quite horrible in the evening, I was quite confident that the official would understand and from what it appeared, he did. However, in the car, I realized that the Head of Sustainability and Climate Change of CDKN, did not understand this as much. And she quite rudely “threw a fit” in the car about how “everybody in the team” needs to understand proper etiquette and not make out-of-place remarks at meetings. I knew the comments were directed at me, but I stayed quiet. However, throughout the car ride she repeated similar remarks at least 3 or 4 times. Although I knew she was fishing for an apology, I did not feel she deserved one – I understand my culture better than her, and I knew that the official had not taken any offense, firstly because he had already had the chance to entertain his delegates and secondly because as previously stated, Bangladeshis are both aware of foreign visitors’ shopping in Dhaka for ethnic items, as well as the roads of Dhaka city. Additionally, I was baffled that she now remembered her manners, whereas in the morning, not only did she turn up late for her pick-up along with the other delegates, but without so much as an apology or an explanation, they headed for breakfast, through which I waited some more. Finally, after the fourth time of her complaining about the meeting, I informed them that I was feeling unwell and would not be able to accompany the “team” for shopping or dinner. My supervisor said that was fine and so I got down at the next traffic intersection. In the rickshaw ride home, I could not help but question whether I wanted to work in an organization, where employees were not treated with mutual respect. I had accompanied these delegates the entire time they were there, even entertaining their out-of-work needs such as taking them to the department store, haggling with local shopkeepers, making dinner reservations and

this was how I was repaid. I felt given the fact that she was a visitor in my land, whom I had thus far shown due respect and understanding, she should have had more sense than to almost personally attack me so. That in itself was quite politically incorrect and not appropriate display of respect towards me or my nationality. She was not my friend, nor was I under her or CDKN's payroll. If I was a part of the "CDKN team", then why not put me under a CDKN contract with all the due benefits? Earlier that day I had mentioned in conversation, how I was yet to sign my contract or be aware of my ToR, to which she of course had no comment to put forth. If she did not have a statement to make then, she most certainly did not have the right to make a statement in the car about how her "team" should carry themselves. If my contract was with CDKN that would have been a different story – even if I felt I was not in the wrong, I would have apologized, for she took care of my pay and benefits. But my understanding was with NACOM, and given the fact that I was not under any form of contract with them either, I was grateful that I was my own individual and had the ability to leave that vehicle with my dignity intact.

Over the next few days, the incident plagued my mind. I realized that I needed my hands on that contract as soon as possible. I was not bothered by whether the contract was with NACOM or with CDKN, but I wanted to have an understanding of my job description, as well as a designation as per my contract. I realized I was once again falling victim to the same circumstances as in ICCCAD – I was an intern after all, who needed to complete her Masters and so needed that "supervisor grading and signature". I also realized NACOM did not really have any "bio-diversity" projects at hand in the present – something that I had been secretly looking forward to. Additionally, I was being handed all kinds of work left and right – NACOM was heavily understaffed and I was being asked to either lead/assist in management of the following: all CDKN activities in Bangladesh, Food Security and Nutrition Project Plan for a European Union Program, Third National Communication Plan (TNC) for Bangladesh, INDC-related activities, Proposal Development for NACOM, networking with officials among the MoEF and Department of Environment (DoE). I was not comfortable with this list of work, especially given the remuneration that I was being offered. Additionally it did not seem very logical to take on such a huge chunk of activities, in an area like that of Climate Change, not an area of expertise for me. Whereas assignments such as the TNC and Proposal Development were more

suiting to my skills, given my background in Economics, my strong grasp of the English Language and some of the takeaway from my experience at SkillFUL, Swisscontact and the MDMP Program, assignments such as the Food Security and Nutrition Project was not really one that was well-suited to my skills. If someone who held more knowledge in that area had been handed the assignment, they probably would have been able to complete it in less than 1/3rd of the time that it would take me, and with double the ease. I realized that the amount of work that was being handed to me was not going to be possible to accomplish on my own.

When I spoke to my supervisor about this and about possibly searching for an additional program staff or intern at least, I was informed there was no budget for it. I could attempt to search for an intern on my own, but s/he could not be offered a paid internship. I then made a second proposition to the Directors at NACOM – I asked if I could work from home, to cut down on my travel-time, which I could instead put forth to work. It took me nearly 1.5 hours on the road everyday (commuting back and forth) and I thought this time would be better utilized working from home, especially because there was rarely any need for my presence at the office. I suggested that I will come to work any day that there was a meeting or either of the Directors needed me to work from office. However the response was a no. I soon realized that it would not be possible for me to fulfill all the works that was being asked from me, without hampering quality and remaining acceptably within the deadlines. Given the salary that was being offered to me, it especially did not make much sense to me. And so I handed in my second resignation. For a brief period after that I had attempted to rejoin ICCCAD, but since that did not work out, I decided to end my brief tryst with climate change at that. Climate change and the management of natural resources had piqued my interest during my Masters Program at BRAC University, and so I decided to give this side of development a shot, at least during my “Internship” period. It is safe to say, that it has been a bittersweet experience indeed.

Arrival at EducationAid – the Internship Adventure Continues

A mentor of mine, used to speak of the importance of intentions and that statement had always remained with me. And at a time when I was at a junction of life,

struggling to think what I could do to complete this portion of my Masters, it was that thought of intentions that guided me yet again. I had met a colleague at Swisscontact, who always seemed to have genuine interest in positive change – but he had left the organization and recently undertaken a non-profit learning-gearred initiative of his own. Thinking that it was still a relatively new setup and he could need assistance I chose to give him a call.

Through our discussion I came to know that the institution he had founded was called EducationAid Foundation, and registered as a non-profit organization under the Joint Stock Company Act. EducationAid, initiated in 2010, had thus far constructed two libraries at the local level in the Pabna district, with the aid of funding from the German Embassy under its “Small-Scale Grants” program. EducationAid’s vision is to “provide holistic education for holistic development to alleviate poverty”. The conversation proved to be a fruitful one for both of us – I have always been a strong advocate of **holistic education** myself and needed a place-of-internship where I could contribute successfully, in an environment of mutual understanding and respect, and as it turned out EducationAid was lacking sufficient “human resource” at the moment and could also use the extra pair of hands, to help in its holistic growth. We decided to meet the next day for an informal “meeting”, to discuss areas of potential engagement on my part within EducationAid.

During our meeting the founder and Executive Director of Education Aid explained the goals of the institution further and some of the works that had been completed thus far. Three projects had been successfully finished: 2 high school libraries in Pabna with the aid of the German Embassy and the installation of 36 deep tube-wells in the southern part of Bangladesh, with grants from Qatar Charity and an individual from Canada - both types of initiatives that I thought to be of utmost vitality in today’s world. He handed me a brochure of the organization, where one line in particular caught my attention: “By nature, holistic education means all forms of education, i.e. formal, non-formal, technical/vocational, healthcare, training, awareness raising, environmental issues, food security, safe drinking water, etc. to capacitate the people of all walks of life in Bangladesh for their better employable opportunity.” – I knew that such a thought was aligned with my perspective of development as well. And as idealist as it may sound, if partnered with like-minded

collaborators, I had confidence that a vision as such was attainable too. We discussed the next steps and he informed me of upcoming field visits of his to communicate with the local government amongst some of the districts, where he has plans for further expansion of learning and library setups. On the other hand it was decided that I would help mail him a draft which we could build on and ready, to approach national and international organizations and actors, in the hopes of fund-sourcing. Below is the rough draft that I prepared for EducationAid.

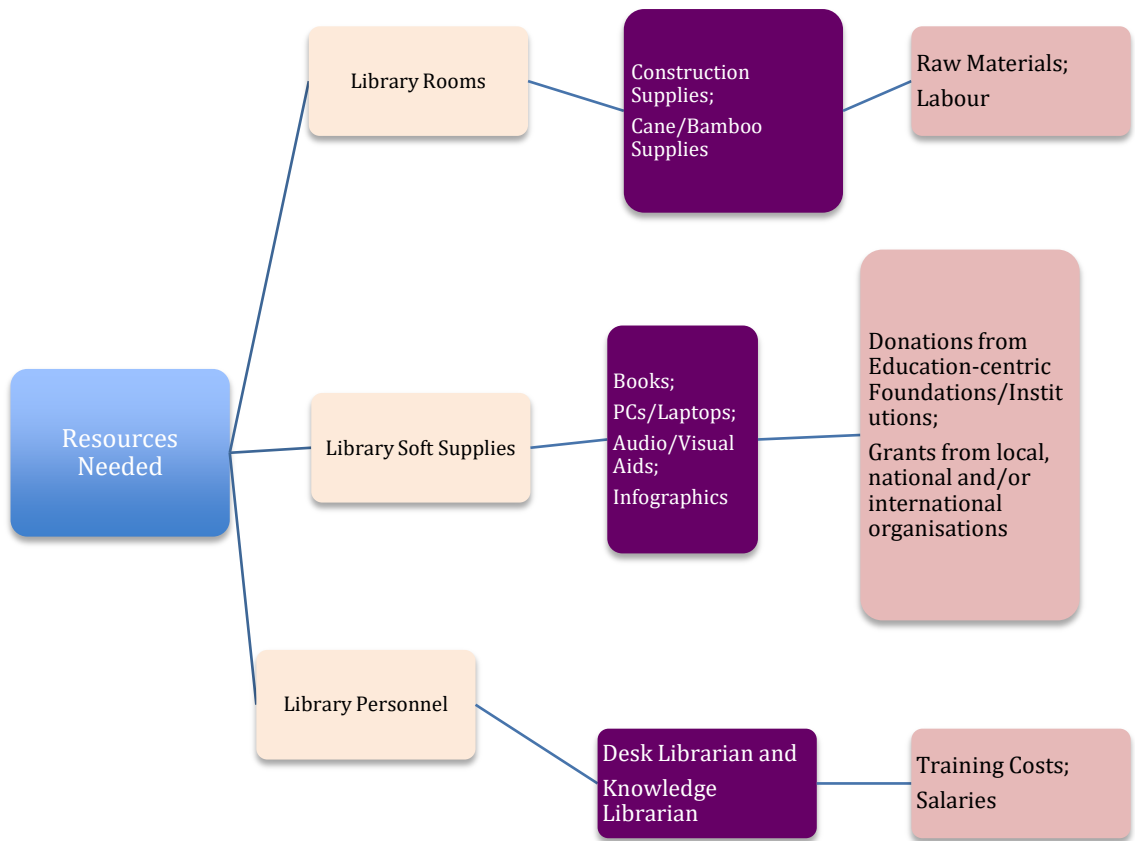
Building a State-of-the-Art Library:

Overall Objective: To provide relevant knowledge and opportunities to locals, in order to grow inclusive and eco-friendly, sustainable communities

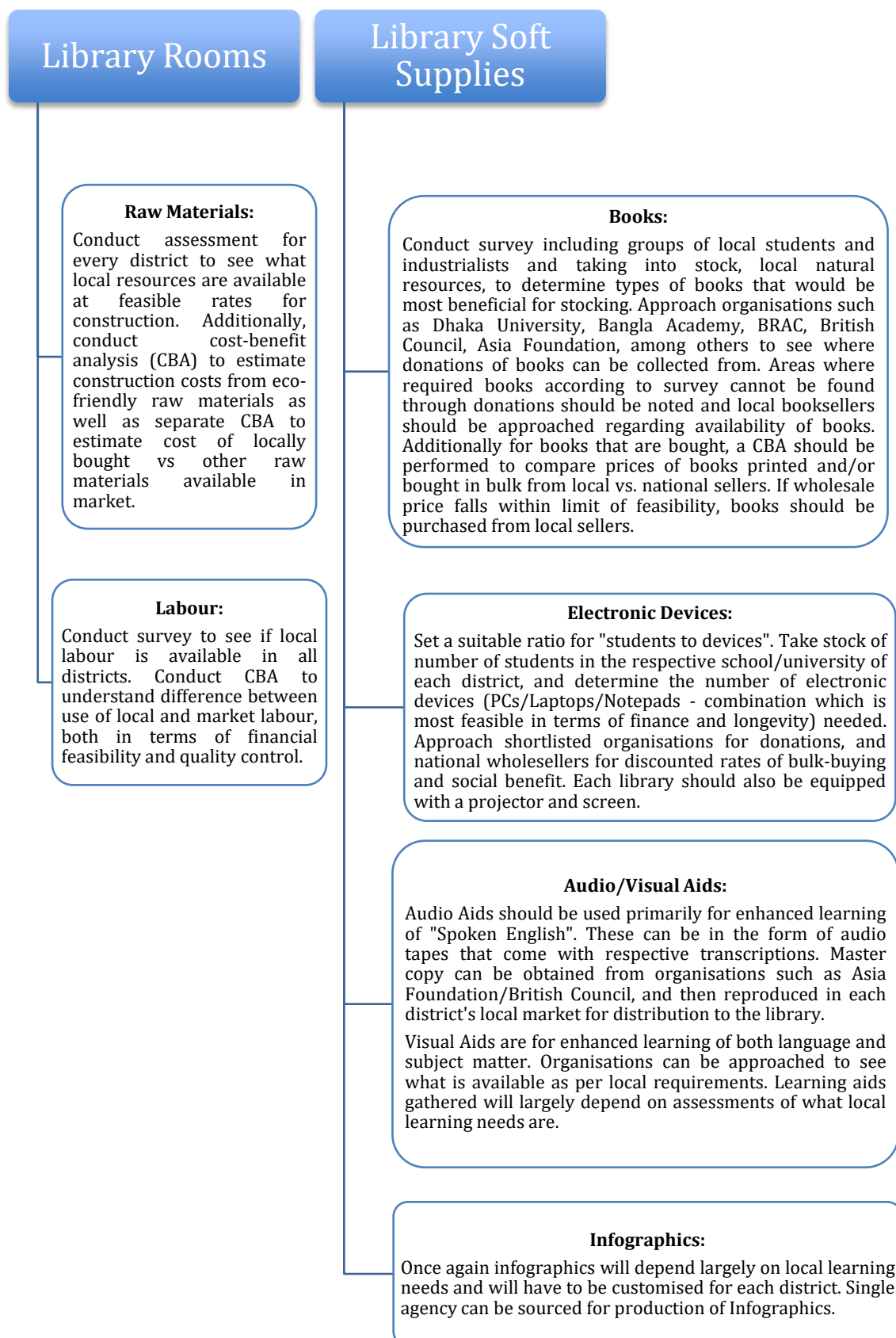
Target Audience: Students from Secondary High School (Class 8 – 12) {this is just a thought – can be modified as per requirement}

Rationale: This is the age group that needs most access to books and resources so that they can complete their studies with adequacy and ease, and decide, in an informed manner, which career path they would like to follow.

Chart explaining the Resources Required for task at hand:



Assessments and Analysis for Resources:



Assessments and Surveys: Assessments and surveys should be inclusive of the following components: local resources (goods and labor) and industries, gender, financial feasibility, eco-friendliness. Education Aid will facilitate the surveys and construct the questionnaire. Agency will be contracted for enumerators to conduct the surveys at field level.

Construction of Libraries: Wherever feasible, library rooms will be made in the most eco-friendly manner possible, as long as it is financially within limit of feasibility. For instance, some of the rooms could be modeled in a “cold storage facility” manner – “Matir bari”, ie if electronic devices will not be affected if left in rooms as such. Each library could also be equipped with a locker, where they could store the electronic devices, if that is the case. “Beth” furniture could be bought rather than steel or wood. However, if local industry is more steel-based and it is easier to access and financially more feasible, then steel furniture could be used. Idea will be to promote inclusiveness and eco-friendliness at the same time. It will depend on the opportunity cost, as to which option is more feasible (going with local industry which promotes inclusive opportunities, or keeping to eco-friendly standards – will vary according to economic and social standards of each district).

A Learning Experience, not just a Library Experience: (Direct Activities)

Categories of Books (aside from the classifications that are derived from the assessments): Science (among other sciences, Cosmology and Physics, are a must), Anthropology, Philosophy, History, Psychology, Cultural Exposure, Arts.

Connecting to a Wider Network: There are programs and options available such as “Connecting Classrooms” and “Global Learning Platforms” through institutions such as the British Council and Asia Foundation. Librarians can be trained on certain aspects through the online sessions available, which they can in turn hold sessions on once every month, for those interested. (Teaching Core Skills in Connecting Classrooms of the British Council website, can be a point of reference for here).

Section for Children: There should be a section of the library where books are available for children. Every week children (ranging from ages 3-8) should be able to visit the library on a certain day, for a 2-hour library session. This part of the Library

Learning Experience can be further planned and expanded, as per local lifestyle and standards.

Computer Classes: Every week, each batch should have a 2-hour computer class available to them. The computer classes should be structured by technical consultants as per the needs of the age groups. All students should be taught how to surf the web fluently and safely.

Corner for Well-being: Every library should have this corner. Can be a corner fit for 4 or 5 people, structured in a manner with positive and healthy affirmations, and with “soft and inviting” finishes. Will be stocked with books that are focused on practices such as yoga, meditation, reiki, positivity, self-help, green living, among others. Students entering this section cannot read other material here or operate devices – they’ll have to respect the atmosphere of “well-being and centering”.

Idea of the Month: Every student can hand in an idea at the library to be run for idea of the month. Ideas can be in different forms – for instance graphic representations, written, formulas, pertaining to art forms, etc. The idea would have to be derived from something they thought of while reading from one of the books, or using one of the electronic devices, at the library. At the end of each month, a 2-hour evening event can be held, where individuals choosing to discuss their ideas, are able to do so. At the end of it, all can do a ballot vote and decide on the “idea of the month” (they can vote for anyone but themselves and votes shall remain anonymous). There can also be a critic’s choice which will be decided anonymously and simultaneously by the librarian. Every month, these ideas can be forwarded to Education Aid. If feasible, Education Aid can publicize or link the idea with relevant actors of the market. (This lets us assess the attributing factor of the library resources and pinpoint, what sort of resource leads to what result. Can help for future planning.)

Movie Night: Every week or every two weeks (for instance Thursday after school hours), a movie pertaining to a relevant theme can be run using the projector. Education Aid can play a role in suggesting the movie themes or names. Every month there could be a writing competition based on a theme or somehow influenced by the

movie, where the write-ups are sent to Education Aid, and the best-“writeup” winner, receives a book as a prize.

Donation Box: Every library should have a donation box, whereby it collects whatever amounts or resources that it is able to.

Training of Librarians:

- **Desk Librarians:** These are librarians that should be able to locate books from the coding system that will be set up in the main library computer. They should be able to keep stock of books, place orders for necessary supplies, aside from lending out and taking back books from students. In a way, they are almost “Library Accountants”.
- **Knowledge Librarians:** These are librarians who should have knowledge on some of the key categories of books present in the library. They should be able to guide students to books and topics as per their area of interest. They should also be well-equipped with knowledge of up-to-date relevant “knowledge websites” and mechanisms of locating articles and relevant resources on the net.

Both types of librarians will have to be trained as per their own set of roles and responsibilities. Education Aid will be responsible for facilitating training of both types of librarians, once libraries are set up and operational in a few of the districts.

Objectives:

- Creating a comprehensive learning atmosphere
- Creating learning opportunities for locals
- Creating non-learning opportunities for locals
- Increasing accessibility of equal opportunities for learning
- Building bridges and providing inclusive opportunities for promotion of ideas and local talent
- Promoting different mediums and types of learning
- Enhancing lifestyle habits through learning
- Creating market linkages between local as well as national actors
- Promoting sustainable (inclusive, economically feasible and environmentally-friendly) development through a comprehensive learning experience

Upon receiving my draft, the ED thought it was a suitable start. We decided that we would modify it further once he was back from field. Additionally, we have decided that along with the German Embassy, we would also draw up a list of potential national and international actors, who could prove to be like-minded collaborators in this notion. It was also agreed upon that the concept of “training-of-teachers” would be looked into, as an upcoming EducationAid initiative.

Lessons Learned

Often times in the development sector, one of the key topics of monitoring, evaluation and analysis, is that of the attribution-vs-contribution factor. Initially I myself was very keen on identifying actors within a cause-and-effects analysis. However, the more I have developed as an individual and as a human being, the more I have realized that the tug of war should not be between what element leads to what – in the battle of attribution-vs-contribution, I feel I now stand as an empowered woman, an empowered individual, an empowered being, due to the contribution of many people, institutions and circumstances of life. And I embrace myself as so.

Since I have been a child my parents have been pillars of strength for me. Albeit a little strict initially, during my times of faltering and flailing, it was their patience and innate faith in me, that always helped me remain strong and rise with hope yet again, to face the challenges of life and successfully overcome them. It was the support of my brother, my family and friends, which always provided me a haven of comfort and acceptance for myself, even when I was ashamed of my actions that I was not too proud of. It was my education in Sunbeams school that created the solid foundation that I needed as an all-rounded achiever, for whom all dreams could become a reality, given dedication and diligence. It was my father’s efforts to enroll me and drive me back and forth from the British Council every week, that nurtured my reading habits and gave me the opportunity to view a children’s movie on the big screen at the library auditorium, when such options were not available elsewhere in Dhaka at the time. It was my experience during my high school years in Malaysia, that I first came to realize how a life of coexistence among cultures, races, religions, and in general the ways of life, can be a possible and peaceful one too. It was my experience in

Elizabethtown College, that taught me the value of a comprehensive education system – it did not matter that we were a small institution of only a few thousand students; we were all provided the opportunity of an above-average education, a well-rounded extracurricular mechanism inclusive of arts and athletics among many other spheres, the options for multiple on-campus jobs, the chance to meet scholars from around the globe who came to deliver lectures at the college auditorium, and for me personally, a chance to visit numerous U.N. headquarters, the Red Cross, the FIFA headquarters, in Geneva and the chance to bask in the glory of memorable Swiss bread, cheese and chocolate. It was my experience at Swisscontact that introduced me to the development sector and taught me how people from such different backgrounds and demeanors, can still work positively together, because of a workplace environment that operated on productivity as well as mutual sense of respect and understanding. It was my experience at SkillFUL, Swisscontact, that enabled me to develop my professional skills while working for a skills development project and understand the strength of an employee contract. My colleagues very fast showed me how colleagues couldn't be friends, for they were to be your work-**family**! When I initially joined Swisscontact I had been facing some difficulties in my personal life; it was my first supervisor, who not only assigned me my tasks at work, but also helped me rebuild the self-esteem and confidence, that I had lost somewhere along the way, through some of the worse decisions of life. It was my experience here that also taught me the strength and the value of learning-by-doing. It was my experience as the Officer of Gender for the Project that empowered me enough to understand the concept of gender dynamics and the harmony of gender empowerment alongside women empowerment, as opposed to the stringent notions of hardcore feminism. It was my experience while conducting the Project Gender study that familiarized me with the WEE approach – women's economic empowerment and the potential power that an effectively operational, Information Management System could hold. I myself was empowered while conducting the gender case study, for it was the first time that I had successfully been able to overcome barriers of “technical difficulty” with respect to data conglomeration, charts and graphs on Excel, something that had previously terrified me, and produced my first analytical case study, along with the support and guidance of colleagues and project superiors. It was colleagues at Swisscontact who informed me of the Quantum course, and I was introduced to the methods of meditation, over a four-day period. It was my academic courses at BRAC that made

me realize, the value of education when wanting to achieve an overall understanding of the dynamics of an entire industry. It was my education at BRAC that introduced me to Jeffrey Sachs, from whom I learned many a key concept of sustainable development. Reasons behind development and how the reasons were rooted in both conflicts and collaboration, at national and global levels, is how BRAC opened my eyes to the circumstances of the world we live in, and how it came to be primarily so. The wide range of work being done at the Bangladesh Agricultural University and the facilities available there would have always remained unknown to me had it not been for the field trip coordinated by the Program and our Agricultural Professor. It was my education at BRAC that first introduced me to the multi-layered dynamics of Climate Change and enticed me to gain some experience and think deeper into the concept and plays-in-position at present. It was my friends at BRAC with whom I enjoyed the little joys of life, such as fuchka and bhel-puri across from the campus building, and talked of development issues across the board. It was the faculty at BRAC and the teachings they provided that evoked me to think deeper into concepts, as well as national and global circumstances, and produce tangible “papers” and thereby construct my own ideas that I may not have done otherwise. It was my experience with BRAC internship part of the Program, that made me realize how employment is only sustainable when there is a sense of mutual understanding between employer and employee. It was also the same experience that made me realize that whereas BRAC MDMP had done many things right about the Program, this in my opinion is what they could have structured differently – after an investment in a Masters education, one should not have to search for an internship; it immediately undermines the value of a Masters graduate in the market. It was a conversation with 2 friends of mine that reiterated the belief I had formed from my work experience, that employment and employers’ attitudes towards their employees, is an equally valuable mode of development. It was also the same conversation that made me realize that when industrialists/businesspersons/entrepreneurs use resources that they have earned or have available, in the aid of communities or families or even just an individual and that too is a form of development. It was my parents’ ceaseless acts of Zakaat towards family, friends and acquaintances, in need, that taught me the inherent value of “giving back what you have earned, for it will again come back to you” – and it was my interest in not just one religion, but all, that made me realize that this in essence is a very metaphysical concept, which some might even call karma! It was

ultimately my own bad choices in life that led me to create my own circumstances, as well as my own good choices in life that helped me create my own circumstances. However, external factors such as a strong family support system, sustainable employment opportunities, steadfast friends and like-minded colleagues/partners, valuable education, healthy competition in place of “dirty politics”, all play a significant role to determine the outcome of every individual. At the end though, what makes me, me today, is the contribution of all – not the attribution of each.

The audience of this report might think the past paragraph a redundant portion of this paper and maybe even question the writer’s sense of sanity. However it was necessary to articulate how I have, for in my hankering with evaluation and analysis, I have come to realize that self-assessment is of utmost importance, to realize one’s own strengths and weaknesses, one’s own assets and liabilities, before making a critical decision. While compiling this paper, I had to face a few obstacles, mainly through some of the experiences I had, while undertaking internship assignments. However, now when looking back at this experience, I realize I have learned a lot about myself as well as the world around me, in my attempt to complete this paper successfully. I realized how important the environment of a workplace is for me, how important it is that I’m able to share a sense of mutual understanding and respect with colleagues, to undertake positive work for positive change. I realize how for someone like me it is vital that I’m either able to partner with like-minded thinkers to pursue interests of any kind of development or I choose to work independently, so as to be able to work while maintaining a sense of overall well-being. I realized how I would also like to aid my father in maintenance of his business. As idealist as these realizations may sound, I truly believe in the possible achievement of these – for I remember clearly from one of my classes at BRAC, about the instrumental role that Alternative Incomes and Livelihoods, can play in shaping individuals and societies. When acting from a part of oneself that couples spirituality with ethics, combined with strategic and well-intentioned visions, I believe anything is possible – however, such efforts would be amplified in magnitude if they were combined with efforts of similar like-minded partners.