

a. Institution: Colorado College
Student: Tashbid Shafat Sattar (Nawar)
Title: **The “Shaanti” Project**
Dates: June-August 2014
Location: **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Section 1

b. Summary: The aim of the Shaanti Project was two-fold. First, we hoped to raise awareness on trauma and PTSD in Bangladesh in light of the many disasters that have plagued our country. Second, the project conducted a training program to equip professionals with the knowledge and skills to help victims of future disasters or other such traumatizing events. The participants of this program met to create an action plan for a support team that would help tend to such victims in the future.

c. Other Fund-raising Efforts: For the half-day workshop on trauma management, a registration fee of \$5 was charged for adults, and \$2.50 for students. All proceeds then went to the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology at the University of Dhaka.

d. Details on the Project: The Shaanti Project partnered with the University of Dhaka (DU) and the Bangladesh Clinical Social Workers Association (BCSWA) to carry out these goals. To raise awareness about the issue, we partnered with the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology of DU to host a day-long seminar and workshop on trauma management and the presence of PTSD in Bangladesh. The seminar took up the first part of the day, in which speakers presented lectures on the challenges Bangladesh faces with regards to mental health, the kinds of events that may lead to the development of PTSD, how such trauma can negatively affect individuals and society, and certain methods that can be used to treat trauma and PTSD. The speakers included occupational therapist Karen Heaslip and psychologist Jessica Hall from the Centre of the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), an organization that worked extensively with the victims of the Rana Plaza tragedy. The second part of the day consisted of a workshop on trauma management conducted by Lipy Gloria Rosario, a specialist on the subject. A total of about 200 people attended the event. The chief guest of the event was Mesbah Ul Alam, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, who pledged that the government would begin to include psychological support in their formulation of disaster relief.

For the training program, we partnered with BCSWA and the Department of Social Welfare and Research of DU. The program lasted 5 weeks and attracted a group of thirty volunteers, mostly clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and counselors. Several experts came in and conducted sessions on first aid training for trauma victims and methods of treatment such as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing), Transactional Analysis, and CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy). This group of volunteers is to ultimately form a support team and help achieve our long-term goal of providing psychological support to disaster victims.

Section II

a. The Project is grounded in the belief that a sustainable peace in any society is linked to the peace of mind of its citizens. The Bengali word “Shaanti” means both peace and calmness. Victims are often unable to lead normal lives after experiencing heavy trauma. Many who fell victim to the textile factory fires in 2012 and the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 have refused to return to work. Many complain of haunting nightmares. One rescue worker in the Rana Plaza disaster named Omar Faruque Babu, hailed a hero for his efforts to find bodies under the rubble, later checked himself into a hospital. Faruque Babu was disillusioned after witnessing the effects of the disaster. Soon after, he hanged himself.

Further, Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. Terrifying events seem to occur all the time, from natural calamities like cyclones and floods to horrific disasters caused by the indifference of man, such as those experienced in the textiles industry. Our society is unlikely to be at peace when so many of its citizens are suffering and left uncared for.

It is for this reason that we sought to raise awareness on the issue of trauma and PTSD, and invited a government official who can actually make a long-term difference. By pledging to incorporate psychological support in the government’s formulation of disaster relief, Mesbah Ul Alam has given us hope about the future of trauma management in Bangladesh. Moreover, our team of thirty volunteers hopes to make a long-term difference by providing psychological support. The Team is to meet again next week and set up an action plan on monthly meetings and working with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Dhaka University’s Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology has been active in the past with regards to treating trauma after disasters, and the team will be incorporated chiefly in Dhaka University’s efforts in collaboration with the Bangladesh Clinical Social Workers Association.

This project was valuable to me as I have volunteered at mental health organizations in the past and have developed a great deal of empathy for those struggling with mental health. I grew up with a psychologist mother who is devoted to mental health issues and has always sought to help others. I returned to Bangladesh shortly after the Rana Plaza tragedy, an event that took nearly 1200 lives, and, witnessing the kind of demoralizing impact it had on our entire society, dedicated myself to making a difference.

I also knew that I would learn a great deal while conducting this project. I hope to work long-term in the non-profit sector, and this project was valuable in helping me understand the internal workings of the sector. I learned a great deal about handling bureaucratic processes, and organizing large-scale events. I also hope to see the non-profit sector collaborate with the government in managing disasters. Working with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief is our first step in that direction.

b. “This project was valuable to me as I have volunteered at mental health organizations in the past and have developed a great deal of empathy for those struggling with mental health. I believe that addressing mental health should be an integral part of the development process. While I learned a great deal of practical information about handling bureaucratic processes and organizing large-scale events, I also learned first-hand that a few people can make a tangible difference in the world.” -- Tashbid Shafat Sattar (Nawar)



Seminar on
PTSD and Trauma Management in Bangladesh

Saturday 23 August 2014

Keynote Speech:
 1. Psychological Management of PTSD through EMDR by Prof. Shamim F. Karim, DECP, DU
 2. PTSD and Occupational Therapy by Karen Heaslip, Occupational Therapist, CRP, Savar

Special Guest : Dr. Abdallah Al Mannan, Head & Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Dhaka Medical College, Dhaka
Chief Guest : Mr. Masabul Ul Alam, Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh
Chaired by : Professor Shaheen Islam, PhD, Chairperson, DECP, DU

Venue: Special Seminar Room, Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhabna, University of Dhaka

Organized by: Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, University of Dhaka
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