

# **INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK-PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVES TO PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK: THE EXISTING PRACTICES AND GAPS: BANGLADESH CONTEXT**

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## **Introduction**

In Bangladesh, history of professional social work education has just crossed the 50 years. The Academic social work in Bangladesh emerged with the recommendation of The advent of academic social work in Bangladesh has come from the recommendations made by UN experts on welfare for the establishment of a programme of professional welfare practice. The recommendation highlighted the need for scientific knowledge in the solution of acute and large-scale social problems (*Watts, 1995*). It was felt that, the increasing urbanization and industrialization together with landlessness and impoverishing condition had weakened the joint-family system and had also put serious limits on the role of voluntary and charitable sectors (*Moore, 1958*)(*cited in Watts, 1995*).The Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR) was established in 1958 as a constituent College of the University of Dhaka. It was jointly sponsored by the then Central Government of Pakistan and the United Nations Technical Assistance Program. Subsequently after the emergence of Bangladesh the then College of Social Welfare and Research Centre was merged with the University of Dhaka as an Institute in March 1973(*ISWR, 2009-2010*).

Within the more than five decades of Journey of Social work in Bangladesh, Still now, social work has been continuing as an educational subject rather than professional aspect. Not yet in Bangladesh, social work treated as a profession, the graduates of social work not recognized by the state as a professional social worker and no accreditation institution has exist in Bangladesh for social work profession. Considering the number and activities, Bangladesh is one of the largest NGO based country. In Bangladesh, roughly two million employees are working for NGOs, but they are treated as NGO workers as because they have come from different academic background, a few portions of employees come from Social Work background without having professional recognition and they have treated as general University graduate just like other discipline. A significant number of informal religious, spiritual and philanthropy based social services has been continuing in Bangladesh, but there is no meaningful relationship in between Social work, NGOs and philanthropic Initiatives in Bangladesh. No doubt, this is one of the big gaps in terms of demand and supply side of social work and social services.

## **Social Work Education in Bangladesh**

Each year a mentionable number of social work graduates have awarded from Universities of Bangladesh Social Work. According to the recent data on June, 2012, the graduation and masters of Social Work degree offered by 4 public universities, 2 private universities and 57 affiliated colleges through national university of Bangladesh. Near about 5000 students have completed their graduation on social work and 3000 students completed their masters in Social Work.

### **The Chronology of Social Work Education in Bangladesh**

- 1958 The Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR) was established as a constituent College of the University of Dhaka.
- 1964 The Department of Social Work was initially started as a college of Social work under the affiliation of University of Rajshahi.
- 1972 The Department of Social Work, University of Rajshahi was evolved as a separate and independent department under the faculty of Arts.
- 1973 College of Social Welfare and Research Centre was merged with the University of Dhaka as an Institute.
- 1992 Bangladesh National University has established as a parent university of Bangladesh which was primarily established to affiliate all the universities and colleges and under the National University the graduation and masters of Social Work degree offered by 57 colleges.
- 1994-95 Social Work Department of Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology launched its journey.
- 1998 Social Work Department of Gono University launched its journey.
- 2005 Social Work Department of Jagannath University launched its journey.

2007 Bangladesh Council for Social Work Education (BCSWE) was established (ISWR,2010-2011, www.sust.edu/departments/scw.www.ru.ac.bd/swk/index.html)

According to the syllabus and academic records of the 4 public universities of Bangladesh, The major outlines of Social Work Education in Bangladesh has given below:

### **A Short outline of Social work Education in Bangladesh**

#### **Vision and Mission**

1. To produce efficient professional social workers;
2. To teach and give the students theoretical as well as practical knowledge in relation to socio-cultural development.
3. To produce skilled and efficient Social Work graduates who can engage themselves in multidimensional developmental activities in the country.

#### **Nature of Social Work Discipline**

Social Work discipline is based on different knowledge systems coming from psychiatry, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, statistics, law, etc. Apart from these knowledge systems the students of Social Work also learn computer- based knowledge, Bangla and English language, environment-based knowledge, public policy and administration, project management, etc. Social Work usually deals with the problems of individuals, groups and communities. Since ours is a developing country in Bangladesh context, emphasize developmental social work, but it does not mean that clinical social work is entirely ignored here. Students are in fact taught developmental and clinical social work simultaneously.

#### **Field Work/ Internship Activities**

The student of social work apply the theoretical knowledge learn from the classroom and other sources practically in the field while working with people through social welfare agencies. This program is called *internship* in social work language. The students of undergraduate and graduate levels are required to perform internship in different groups for 60 (Sixty) working days under the supervision of internal and external supervisors. There are 18 to 20 governmental and /or non-governmental organizations providing social welfare services here in Bangladesh where the students of Social Work perform their internship.

#### **Research Activities**

The students are required to complete three theoretical courses on social research/ social work research at undergraduate and graduate levels.

#### **Seminar Activities**

Seminar paper on burning socio-cultural and development issues need to be presented before the students and teachers by every formed group of student in each terminal semester of an academic year. (ISWR, 2010-2011).

Almost the syllabus and the academic procedure are common in all Universities and a good coordination and academic system has exist within all Universities .But due to the absence of accreditation system and accreditation authority, the degree has been treated as an educational degree and not as a professional degree. Due to the lack of professional recognition and less opportunity of social work professional job opportunities, major portion of Social Work graduate has employed in the different field –that field are not appropriately related with social work profession. Just for example, work for financial institutions, Government services and Private commercial Institutions. A few portion of graduate work for NGOs and national and International development agencies, due to lack of professional recognition; they are not recognized as professional social worker. Only those graduates involved with social work teaching profession - treated as social work professionals.

The social work education in Bangladesh almost covers the standard of social work accreditation according to the standards of International Social Work, but due to the lack of recognized accreditation authority, the professional acceptance of Social Work as a profession in Bangladesh still now a dream not in reality. Recently, Bangladesh Council for Social Work Education (BCSWE) has established with the vision of ensuring accreditation of social work. On the last March,2012, Bangladesh Council for Social Work Education (BCSWE) organized the day-long conference t the Institute of Social Work and Research of Dhaka University titled `Contextualization

of Social Work Education in Bangladesh: Challenges and Policy Dimension' where the Education Minister act as the chief guest.

He committed to the participants for initiatives for accreditation of social work. This is the first time initiatives of Bangladesh, but due to lack of proper planning, coordination and communication with International and National level policy advocacy, still now accreditation of social work is too far from the existing scenario.

### **The Indigenous Social Work and Social Thoughts in Bangladesh Social Thoughts in Bangladesh: Which has created the foundation of Social Work in Bangladesh?**

Bangladesh has long history of Social thoughts which has significantly contributed in Social changes and positively improved the social development and organized the communities in Bangladesh in terms of Social action and Community development. No doubt, the major social thoughts came on colonial period and adopting with the changing society of Bangladesh. For this study, I just present a few number of social thoughts and philanthropic institutions but it does not mean that this list is only contributing the modern social work in Bangladesh, this is only a representation and also unique in terms of dedication, social philosophy and philanthropy.

#### **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar : A compassionate reformist (1820-1889)**

Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyaya was born at Birsingha in Midnapur. He was also known for his charity and philanthropy as "Daya-r- sagar"– ocean of kindness, for his immense generosity. He always reflected and responded to distress calls of the poor, sufferings of the sick and injustice to humanity. Vidyasagar did not believe that money was enough to ease the sufferings of humanity. He opened the doors of the Sanskrit College to lower caste students (previously it was exclusive to the Brahmins), nursed sick cholera patients, went to crematoriums to bury unclaimed dead bodies, dined with the untouchables and walked miles as a messenger-man to take urgent messages to people who would be benefitted from them.

His fearless championing on behalf of widow re-marriage ends in success. Vidyasagar took the initiative in proposing and pushing through the Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856 in India.

#### **Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941)**

Rabindranath Tagore is generally hailed as a versatile genius in the arena of fine arts (all branches of literature, music and painting). Tagore was also one of the pioneers of rural development in Bangladesh and India. Tagore's concept of sustainable development is rooted deep in rural regeneration as majority of the population of Indian sub continent reside in villages. It has two major planks: i) Cooperatives and ii) Panchayats. In both the cases, Tagore calls for revival of the spirit of the rural masses so that they could be self-sufficient and free from dependence on outside assistance ('to approach the authorities with begging bowls' so to say) for their economic and social uplift and empowerment. Tagore lays greatest stress on instilling the spirit of self-confidence and unity in the minds of the rural folk (through proper education) so that they could, on their own, fight off the maladies afflicting rural Indian sub continent. Tagore holds, only by inspiring the rural masses to form cooperatives and panchayats by their own efforts. Tagore always encourages the application of modern technologies for rejuvenation of rural Indian sub continent, but all these should be within the framework of a regenerated rural society based on self-help and freedom from outside interference. (Basu, 2009).

#### **Begum Rokeya and her Movement (1880-1932)**

Begum Rokeya was an inspiring figure who contributed much to the struggle to liberate women from the bondage of social malaises. Her life can be seen in the context of other social reformers within what was then Indian sub continent. To raise popular consciousness, especially among women, she wrote a number of articles, stories and novels, mostly in Bengali. She criticized oppressive social customs forced upon women that were based upon a corrupted version of Islam, asserting that women fulfilling their potential as human beings could best display the glory of Lord. In 1909, after the death of her husband, Rokeya established a high school in her beloved husband's memory, naming it Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School. Begum Rokeya also founded the Anjuman e Khawateen e Islam (Islamic Women's Association), which was active in holding debates and conferences regarding the status of women and education. She rejected discrimination for women in the public arena and believed that discrimination would cease only when women were

able to undertake whatever profession they chose. In 1922 she founded an organization "Naritirtha" for the upliftment of most wretched women "prostitutes". She could open homes for the female child of these destitute to impart education and to elevate them to healthy living.

### **Philanthropic Social Initiatives in Bangladesh**

#### **The Ramakrishna Mission (1897 to till now)**

The Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897, is a humanitarian organization which carries out extensive medical, relief and educational programs. The aims and ideals of the Mission are purely spiritual and humanitarian and have no connection with politics. The service activities are based on the message of "Jiva is Shiva" from Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda's message of "Daridra Narayana" to indicate that service to poor is service to God. The mission's activities cover the following areas, Education, Health care, Cultural activities, rural uplift, Tribal welfare, Youth movement etc. The mission has its own hospitals, charitable dispensaries, maternity clinics, tuberculosis clinics, and mobile dispensaries. It also maintains training centers for nurses. Orphanages and homes for the elderly are included in the mission's field of activities, along with rural and tribal welfare work. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramakrishna\_Mission).

#### **Anjuman Mufidul Islam (1905 to till now)**

During nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the Muslims of the sub-continent were going through a difficult period, formed Anjuman Mufidul Islam in Kolkata in 1905. After partition, Anjuman's office was setup in Dhaka in September 1947. Anjuman has been involved in a number of humanitarian and social development activities mainly serving the poorer section of the community. Over time, it has continuously improved and expanded the activities and currently these include collection and burial of unclaimed dead bodies, free ambulance services, running homes of orphans for boys and girls, running Technical Institutes, running junior high schools and other service related activities for poverty alleviation & rehabilitation of the people living below poverty line. For the rich and able, it has a "Daphon Sheba Project". Anjuman has been implementing a "Poverty Alleviation Project". Under this project applications are received from poor and deserving persons through its branch offices and assistance is provided in cash & kind. (<http://amibd.org/aboutus.php?cid=32&sid=6>).

#### **Kumudini Welfare Trust (KWT) (1943 to till Now)**

Ranada Prasad, a fairly rich man, dedicated himself to the service of the suffering humanity. In 1943 a dispensary and outdoor facility .R.P. Shaha thought that the foremost requirement to achieve women's freedom and establish their rights is education for women. R.P. Shaha dedicated himself to draw a synthesis of modern and traditional education for women and established the Bharateswari Homes in 1944. After reaching the pinnacle of success, R.P. Shaha placed all his companies and businesses in a "Trust" with a view to use its proceeds for public welfare; "Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal" (KWT) thus came into existence for poor and distressed people. He had used his entire wealth to establish in a remote village a hospital to provide free medical care and impressive educational institution Bharateswari Homes to promote education among women. The major welfare activities of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal: Kumudini Hospital, Nursing School, Women's Medical College, Village Outreach program, Bharateswari Homes, Trade training School. (The Daily Star, 2010, <http://kumudini.timdmp.com/>).

### **NGOs in Bangladesh: Evolution, Success and Criticism**

The history of NGOs in Bangladesh could be traced way back to the British colonial period. Since the British era, NGOs in its traditional form have been working in Bangladesh as different religious trust-based schools, hospitals and orphanages. However, NGOs in Bangladesh got a radical transformation and turned into agents of development in the post –independence era. Since 1970s NGOs, therefore, have become a part of the institutional framework of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh. The NGOs, especially the large ones in effect, have infiltrated into an operational arena which has traditionally been the "exclusive domain" of the government. Donors have played a significant role in advocating for the NGOs as an active partner in poverty alleviation projects in Bangladesh (Sobhan and Bhattacharya, 1990). The NGO sector in Bangladesh is an inseparable part of our society. Gradually, NGOs started to work in the field of group formation, credit, formal and non-formal education, health and nutrition, family planning and MCH (Mother and child Health)

gender development, poultry and livestock, agriculture, sanitation, environment, human rights, advocacy, legal aids and in many other fields. Untiring efforts and intrinsic zeal have led NGOs towards assisting the poor in poverty alleviation and to empower them in every aspect of social life (Mohiuddin, 2002). In the wake of government failures to address the problems of unemployment, poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation, NGOs have gained recognition as effective development agencies by marshaling the creative energies of the poor to solve their own problems. The changing global environment realized the important role of the NGOs and eagerly recognized the NGOs as development partner.

NGOs in Bangladesh are now in the third stage of their growth. In the late 1970s, there occurred a gradual shift from the first generation strategies that is, relief and welfare services to the second-generation strategies characterized by small-scale, self-reliant local development initiatives for building people's capacity. Throughout the 1980s, this thrust continued. Pursuing the third generation strategies that focus on the policy changes at different levels is recent phenomenon visible since the early 1990s. (Haider, 2011)

Considering the long development journey of Bangladesh, the approach, programs and activities has changed according to the peoples need as well as the donor's perspective. The following table has given an idea regarding the evolution of NGOs in Bangladesh.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Major sectoral focus</b>	<b>Major programs</b>	<b>Target audience</b>
Before 1971	Charity and Philanthropic initiatives	Hospital, School, Orphanage	Rural People
1971-80	Relief and Rehabilitation Health	Relief distribution Rehabilitation work Tree plantation Primary health care	Rural poor
1980-90	Women Empowerment Education	Women Empowerment Income Generation Adult Education Non Formal Primary Education	Rural poor women Poor Children
1990-2000	Micro Credit Human Development	Micro credit Awareness Training Skill Development Training	Rural poor women Poor Children
2000-2010	Food Security Program Climate Change and Disaster Management Rights and Governance	School Feeding Program Disaster management &Response Rights for minority, land and women	Rural and urban poor Women and Children Coastal and Char people
2010-till now	Policy Advocacy Governance	Food security, democracy, strengthening local government	Civil Society Government policy makers Media

The size of the NGO sector in Bangladesh is remarkable; it consists of the following organizations:

- Total NGO registered in Bangladesh are 58,000 according to Social Welfare ministry of Bangladesh. But all of them are not active, only 20,000 NGOs are active in Bangladesh. (Daily ProthomAlo).
- 2161 NGOs registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB, 2012).

Near about two million NGO workers have been working for NGOs in Bangladesh, and within this number a significant portion is female worker. In terms of GDP the NGO sector in Bangladesh is one of the world's largest – 6%-8% of GDP is produced by the sector. No doubt, NGOs has played a pioneer role in the field of poverty alleviation, women empowerment and human development in Bangladesh.

Due to lack of professional education and skills, many criticisms have been observed about the NGO sector in Bangladesh. The Existing Gaps and Dilemma of Charitable Institutions, Religious Charity, Govt. Social Service, NGO Initiatives and Professional Social Work Education in Bangladesh has given Annex I.

Some common criticism of NGOs of Bangladesh has given below:

**Critics-1:** In the field of humanitarian action and response, there have also been strong criticisms of NGOs which have not lived up to expectations in providing assistance in emergency situations, with critics pointing to institutional self-interest by individual NGOs, a lack of coordination leading to duplication of effort, limited understanding of local circumstances among international NGOs and a somewhat naive approach to the underlying causes of conflict and instability (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

**Critics-2:** NGOs is that they impose their own agendas and become self-interested actors at the expense of the people they are in theory supporting. For example, NGOs may sap the potential of more radical grassroots action from social movements or organized political opposition by drawing such activity into the safe professionalized and often depoliticized world of development practice (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

**Critics-3:** Hashemi (1995, cited from Lewis and Kanji, 2009))described the incidents of local violence that resulted when an NGO fielded candidates from its own landless group membership for local elections, members of the local power structure responding with intimidation and violence.

**Critics-4:** Bangladesh civil society had non-governmental, voluntary and self-sustaining relationships and organizations long before the plethora of new NGOs arrived there. Such community-based arrangements and traditional leaders included the informal council of elders (often known as the panchayats), the shalish, the religious trusts, the local matbars, the landholders, religious leaders and even the money lenders. Also, such grass roots services included orphanages, schools, colleges, mosques, temples, churches and places of prayer and religious instruction. Whenever necessary, the rural leaders also lobby the politicians and bureaucrats for building roads, supplying drinking water, preventing flood, fighting epidemics and relief distribution during natural disaster. The large NGOs, well funded and well organized, have undercut those traditional leaders, relationships and organizations; though not democratically chosen and sometimes accused of hostility towards social change and economic development, they command influence in the civil society, and still ready to assert themselves.( Zaman, 2012).

**Critics-5:** Indeed a dichotomy has been unfolding in Bangladesh between the Muslim ulama and the NGOs working as the intermediaries of the Western funding agencies. Conservative Muslims who look upon those voluntary organizations as cultural adversaries have challenged the NGOs. And in the last few years, in several towns and villages, the ulama have used fatwa to discourage the NGO work, particularly those supported by the Christian Missionaries accused of religious conversion of the poor people. The focal point of most fatwa had been the family, marriage and divorce, and purdah, which included women's personal status in relation to the rest of the community. The core disagreements between the religious leaders and the NGOs deserve a resolution through a dialogue between the two sides. Only an interactive acceptance will increase the NGO capacity to work for a social mobilization where women could participate without any serious hindrance from the conservative challengers. (Zaman, 2012).

#### **Why These Questions Raised Against NGOs?**

In Bangladesh, the recruitment of NGO staffs at grass root level to senior level come from any discipline without having academic background and professional skills of social work. Due to the lack of coordination in between the professional social work educational institutions and NGO sector of Bangladesh, as a result, the NGO workers have delivered their services through some conventional approaches and their own policies and procedures of concern NGOs. Finally due to lack of professional competency the mentioned criticism occurred, which has easily possible to minimize through appropriate using of social work practice. One of the good example of Levels of Development-Focused Practice in International Social Work provided by Richard J. Estes:

## Levels of Development-Focused Practice in International Social Work

Practice Levels	Major Focus Area
<b>Individual &amp; group empowerment</b>	Individuals and groups learning, through self-help, mutual aid, and con-scientization strategies, how to perceive and <i>act on</i> the contradictions that exist in the social, political, and economic structures intrinsic to all societies
<b>Conflict resolution and peace building</b>	Efforts directed at reducing (1) grievances between persons or groups or (2) asymmetric power relationships between members of more powerful and less powerful groups
<b>Institution building</b>	Refers both to the process of "humanizing" existing social institutions and that of establishing new institutions that respond more effectively to new or emerging social needs
<b>Community building</b>	Through increased participation and social animation of the populace, the process through which communities realize the fullness of their social, political, and economic potential; the process through which communities respond more equitably to the social and material needs of their populations
<b>Nation building</b>	The process of working toward the integration of a nation's social, political, economic, and cultural institutions at all levels of political organization
<b>Region building</b>	The process of working toward the integration of a geopolitical region's social, political, economic, and cultural institutions at all levels of social organization
<b>World building</b>	The process of working toward the establishment of a new system of international relationships guided by the quest for world peace, increased social justice, the universal satisfaction of basic human needs, and for the protection of the planet's fragile ecosystem

Richard J. Estes, DSW ,United States-Based Conceptualization of International Social Work Education , University of Pennsylvania ,School of Social Policy and Practice

### **The Ngo Workers: Need To Develop Them As Paraprofessional Social Worker**

According to the above mentioned discussion, it has proven that the paraprofessional social work is the major burning need for Bangladesh country context and it is easily possible to upgrade the existing NGO workers as paraprofessional social worker through appropriate training. A good example has already been conducted in Para Social Work Training Program in Tanzania, conducted by Susan Becker Ph.D., MPH, for addressing the needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and their families.

### **Best Practice of Develop Paraprofessional Social Worker in Bangladesh**

Eco Social Development Organization is one of the pioneer non-government organizations of Bangladesh with the leadership of professional social worker. ESDO has worked for with the vision of an equitable society free from all discrimination. ESDO has launched a program on 2006, named Promotion of Rights for Adibashis and DALITS Improvement Programme (PRADIP) for ensuring and promoting rights of extreme minorities of Bangladesh. The ESDO management has successfully promote the Paraprofessional social work and through this approach the project has successfully ensuring the rights and access of extreme minority and the PRADIP project has recognized by all concern stakeholders as one of the best performing project in terms of long term sustainability and appropriate way forward for inclusion of extreme minority in the society. 60 staff has involved with PRADIP project for delivering rights and services and the ESDO management conduct initially a 4 weeks training in light of social work methods and strategies as because those staffs are not come from social work discipline (ESDO, 2011). After successful training course, they have played the role of Paraprofessional social worker and creates enabling environment for extreme minority community. The details Critical Best Practice on Social Work: The PRADIP Project has given Annex II.

## Conclusion

In Bangladesh, Social Work practices still now a big question. A big gap has existed in between Theory and Practice of social work. The graduates of social work not significantly involved with social practice. Due to the communication and understanding gap in between professional social work and other actors in social services field including of Charitable Institutions, Religious Charity, Govt. Social Service, and NGO Initiatives, as a result effective change and sustainability for the target audience still now questionable and less recognized by the state and concern stakeholders. In many cases, contradiction, overlapping and ill competition with mainstreamed institution (for example, local government and rural conventional rural leaders feel less importance due to NGO intervention and in many cases NGOs are less interested to sensitized or involve them with development initiatives).The Professional Social work educators and the BCSWE can play the appropriate initiative for filling the gap. The paraprofessional social worker is the demand on reality for sustainable development of Bangladesh as well as the world.

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