

HELPING HANDS

THE EVERY-GROWING NGO INDUSTRY

Developing countries like Bangladesh are rife with corruption and poverty, as a result of which the government is often unable to provide public goods efficiently. It is this gap in providing public service goods that non-government organizations (NGOs), which operate independently of government authorities, attempt to fill in.

At the time of independence, Bangladesh fell under the category of the development 'basket case' (as described by Henry Kissinger's state department), i.e. a country that would always depend on aid. Despite such predictions, major development indicators have shown remarkable progress. Girl-child enrolment rates in schools have doubled between 2000 and 2005; while infant mortality rates have fallen from 97 to 37 per thousand between 1990 and 2010, and the life expectancy in Bangladesh is currently 4 years higher than our economically richer neighbor India.

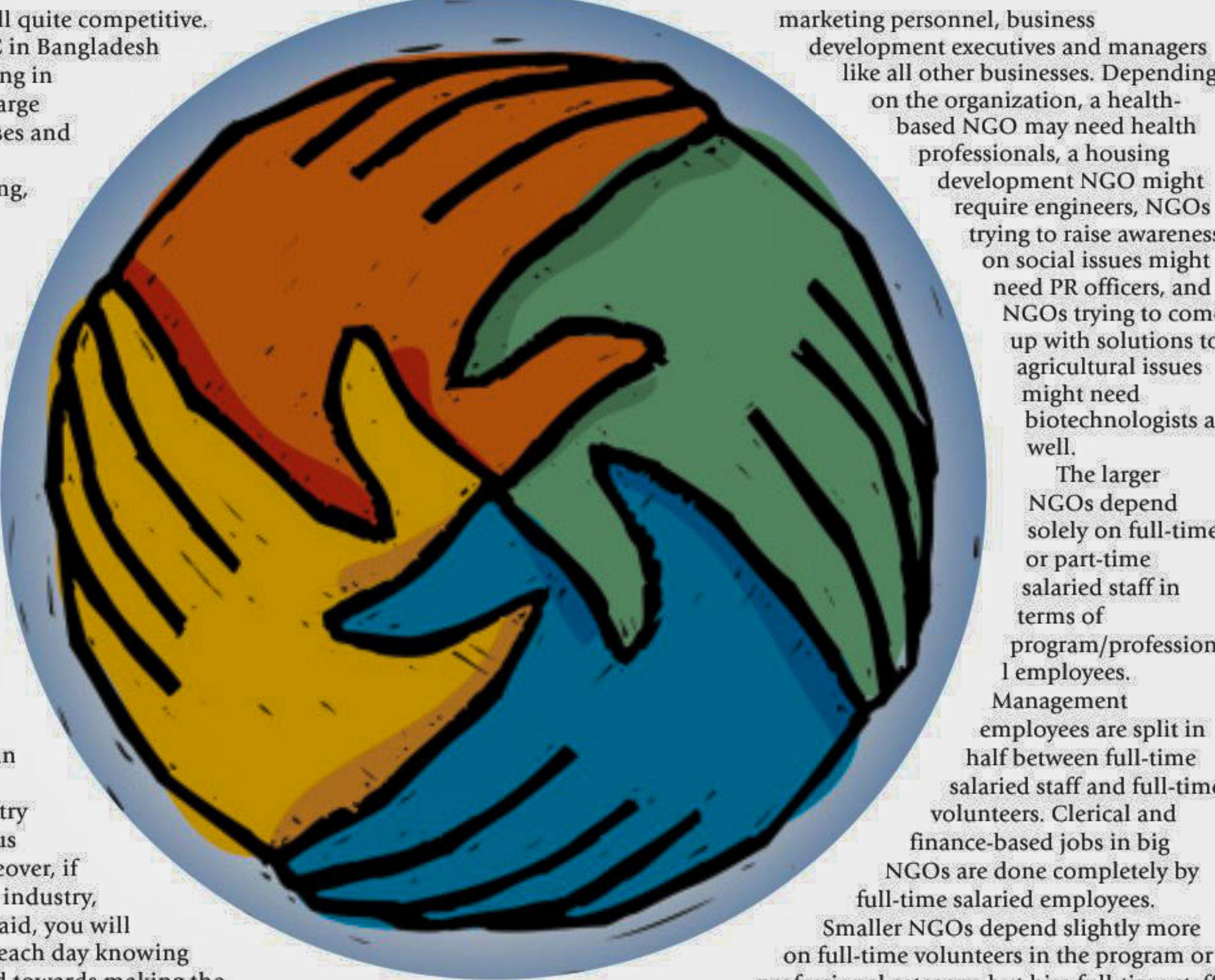
Clearly, we're doing something right. But if the government is still stuck in bureaucratic clout and corruption, who exactly is bringing about these changes? The answer is: NGOs. Today these private sector-led development organizations have flourished in Bangladesh more than in any other country worldwide.

Given the growth of the non-government organizations (in terms of numbers, size and significance as agents of development), Bangladesh is a gold mine of opportunities when it comes to a career in NGOs. Unsurprisingly, young graduates are gravitating towards the ever-growing NGO industry for a fulfilling career.

DEBUNKING THE WAGE MYTH
NGOs are often financed solely by local or foreign aid or charities. Therefore, it is widely perceived that they pay lower wages. This is in fact very far from the truth, since even NGOs run their organizations by keeping sustainability in mind. Their remuneration packages might not exactly be lucrative but most of the time, considering

the market, they are still quite competitive. NGOs such as BRAC in Bangladesh have found ways to bring in revenues to finance a large portion of their expenses and thus are able to pay employees more. Aarong, the chain of stores operated by BRAC hardly needs an introduction. Over 80% of small and big NGOs provide microcredit services, which also help to raise revenues. Given the size and reach of Bangladeshi NGOs such as BRAC, these often pay good salaries.

The myths that this is a place for rich kids have thus been rendered untrue. Young professionals can live a comfortable life with a job in the industry and there is tremendous scope for growth. Moreover, if you are working in the industry, not only will you get paid, you will go home at the end of each day knowing that you've contributed towards making the lives of the underprivileged better. Although wages in NGOs may still remain lower than private industries, young Bangladeshi who are passionate about giving back to the community prefer working in this sector.



marketing personnel, business development executives and managers like all other businesses. Depending on the organization, a health-based NGO may need health professionals, a housing development NGO might require engineers, NGOs trying to raise awareness on social issues might need PR officers, and NGOs trying to come up with solutions to agricultural issues might need biotechnologists as well.

The larger NGOs depend solely on full-time or part-time salaried staff in terms of program/professional employees. Management employees are split in half between full-time salaried staff and full-time volunteers. Clerical and finance-based jobs in big NGOs are done completely by full-time salaried employees.

Smaller NGOs depend slightly more on full-time volunteers in the program or professional category, but hire full-time staff for management, finance and clerical jobs. All in all, there is an abundance of full-time paid jobs and if you have the passion, coupled by strong communication and leadership skills, most non-profits will consider you as a valid prospective employee.

FIND YOUR FIT

The rise of BRAC, a Bangladesh-based NGO that is all of 42 years old, as the largest NGO in the world is reflective of the rise of the non-profit industry as a whole. It goes on to show that NGO jobs entail at least as much if not more potential for growth, as any corporate job. BRAC is arguably the most reputed NGO that a young professional could work at. Other large-scale organizations include Lighthouse, Jaago, Proshikha and Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF), just to name a few. Some of these focus on education as the road to development, while others highlight solutions to social issues and contribute to affirmation of human and women's rights as the path to development.

There are also many more smaller, grassroots organizations that focus on smaller regions, i.e. within a certain city or district. These often look to the communities around their target region when recruiting. If you're a Bangladeshi professional, you will inevitably find out about NGOs around you by word-of-mouth.

Today's Bangladeshi youth is not docile; young people are aware of the multitude of problems faced by the country and they are inspired to be agents of change. NGOs provide a platform to have a career while making significant contributions to society; thus making them a highly preferred sector of employment for young Bangladeshi professionals.

JUMANA ABUWALA

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British Council's Tell-Your-Tale award ceremony

Starting with modest beginnings in 1934, the British Council is currently operating over 190 offices in almost every part of the world, and with over 60 years of operation in Bangladesh, to mark the occasion, British Council Dhaka organized a nationwide competition called Tell-Your-Tale, held across October and November. In response, people across the country have shared their personal tales of growth and fond memories of engagement with the British Council in Bangladesh.

The British Council organized an award ceremony to honour the participants of the competition on Sunday, 14 December 2014, at the Fuller Road branch in Dhaka. The best ten stories will be published in the Daily Star's Shout magazine, the winners receiving library memberships, English learning CDs, and much more. Professor Dr. A K Azad Chowdhury, Chairman (State Minister), University Grants Commission, was present as the chief guest. Cultural personality Aly Zaker was present as the special guest.

Aly Zaker talked about the contributions that British Council has had on the theater scene in Dhaka, recounting the story of the first professional production of Shakespeare's Macbeth in Bangladesh, and the socio-political shockwaves it had during the tumultuous years of coups and counter-coups in the late 70's. He thanked British Council for the workshops and partnerships with foreign theater figures, as it helped develop a fledgling arts community here



back then.

Dr. A K Azad Chowdhury recounted his personal relationship with the British Council library, and how he fell in love with the works of the poet

William Wordsworth. "Despite being a student of biochemistry, I found myself immersed in the world of literature, surrounded by the tomes of knowledge at the library."

The Chairman of University Grants Commission also highlighted how the British Council has been a vital institution for students to engage with, and stressed on the importance of acting as a bridge between local students and UK universities. He also applauded the recent activities of the British Council in enriching the ICT and English language skills of young women in Bangladesh, and spoke highly of the Commonwealth Scholarships handed to aspiring academics in the past. He expressed hope that the British Council will continue enriching and broadening the minds of the local students, at every level.

British Council's country director, Robyn Davis, made the closing remarks: "Everybody's story has been about heartfelt interactions between them and the British Council. We would like to thank them and we can only hope to nurture this relationship in the future."

SHAER REAZ

Masters of Ideation 2014 kicks off

NSU Young Entrepreneurs' Society (YES!) is hosting its signature event Masters of Ideation from the 9th of January. The event – which came to life in 2012 – is in its third year and comprises of two phases, the intra NSU round and the Nationwide Inter University round. Masters of Ideation is a Business Strategy based, case-solving competition aimed at creating a platform to attract, hone and nurture undergraduate students with a talent for solving complex, real-life situations faced in today's business arena. The teams will be judged by eminent corporate personalities from Bangladesh. This year, the participating teams hail from renowned



universities all over Bangladesh. Of the forty odd teams participating this year, only six will go through to the final round for a chance to become Master of Ideation. Since its inception in 1994, YES! has strived to develop business students of the nation and prepare them for the professional world through organizing events with far-reaching implications. YES! has gained prominence in the student community for its signature brands – Ad Maker Bangladesh, Masters of Ideation and NSUers Meet Corporate Icons. Over the years, they have succeeded in creating sensation in the undergraduate business arena through their multifaceted events.

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Readers will be able to subscribe to one free e-learning course each week via the Next Step webpage, and afterwards avail special discounts on regular e-learning courses.

This week's free course is "Generating Creative and Innovative Ideas: Enhancing Your Creativity"

Overview

What makes a person creative? Do you consider yourself creative? Certain personal characteristics have been linked with creativity – for example, a willingness to take risks, the ability to connect diverse ideas, and open-mindedness. Most important, perhaps, is believing that you are creative. Many people get stuck because they think 'I'm not a creative person.' But

everyone has creative potential. This course explores the essential attributes of a creative person. It also describes barriers to creativity and how to overcome these. In addition, it demonstrates how you can enhance your creativity in the workplace.

Target audience

Any individual who wants to be more creative and innovative at work

Expected duration: 1.0 hour