

AN EVER SHRINKING SPACE



#ResearchMesearch
I have been searching for an apt translation for *ghreena* ever since I read a comment on a Facebook page carrying a story on sexual harassment on the streets of Dhaka. The comment read

something like this: *I have ghreena for individuals who harass pedestrians but I have even more ghreena for women who don't cover their bodies adequately.* I saw the comment a minute after it was posted, but in that time it had already acquired 45 likes. In the world of instant gratification, instant social support, instant backslapping, there was no space to contest that man's *ghreena*. He had been congratulated for speaking for a segment of the people who, as repayment, used ad hominem to attack whoever had the courage to argue with him. A mini-cult was created. Barriers to entry were set. Another set of *us* and *them* put in place. And that created a *ghreena* in me, which is why I know that *ghreena* is not the same as hate. *Ghreena* has an element of disgust that hate does not. And I felt ashamed for feeling what I felt. Because in that moment I too became a pawn in the game of *us* and *them*. I had allowed one man's extreme views to alienate me, prevent me from wanting to understand where he came from and what caused him to think the way he did. In that moment, there was no space for a conversation. There was a lapse in the inherent human want and need to understand another person. There was only a space for judgment, where all parties thought they were better than the other. Till that feeling passed.

And then Rajon was beaten to death. And the *ghreena* in me returned, when I saw a repetition of that same cycle of posting on Facebook, this time a video featuring the killing, the congratulatory messages, the celebration, the many



in the name of protecting the people, which end up perpetrating violence including mob violence. This is perhaps the category under which Rajon's killers fall. Rajon allegedly stole food, and so they took matters into their own hands, even when Rajon asked to be turned in. In the same vein, all the people who wanted to kill Rajon's killers the way they killed Rajon would fall under this category had they actually done what they wanted to do.

2) There is an increase in police brutality and oppression as government officials and law enforcement personnel are entitled to break the law, using the rise of militia as an excuse to use force. The extensive use of extra judicial killings, more popularly known as death during crossfire, is an example of this. When individuals are arrested, they have to be brought under the auspices of the law, not killed in crossfire. But in a country where the law can be bought and sold, this is inevitable.

3) Citizens live in fear and cynicism that results in under-reporting of crimes, frustration, and self-censorship. The frustration of the people is perhaps evident from the number of people who protest now than they used to, online and on the streets (and for that we can perhaps thank the anti-Ershad movement in the 1990s and the Shabbag movement of 2013 for teaching our people that they can take to the streets, that they indeed have a voice).

4) Increase in crime rates as the culture of impunity becomes the norm. And then, back to square one.

As the cycle continues, *ghreena* becomes a part of citizenship, part of people's everyday experience. In an unequal world, perhaps nothing else is left and that's why we have *ghreena*, the lowest common denominator; we direct it towards everything that makes us uncomfortable, challenges our sense of safety, being, knowledge, understanding. And we strike because it is only in that moment that we feel that we have power.

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"likes" followed by protests and then protests about sharing a video that hurt the senses so brutally. And again, I was ashamed because the *ghreena* I felt for the killers was perhaps the same *ghreena* that they had for the boy they killed. I could say mine was justified; but if you asked them, they would say the same.

So maybe it's *ghreena*, this pervasive feeling of hostility, hatred, and disgust built into a mass of rage that is one of the biggest problems with the world today. After all, we are so very quick to feel that deep, writhing emotion that clouds all judgment, blinds all vision, and divides all of humanity. But the question remains: where does this come from?

The cycle of impunity
Lionel Nichols in his book *International*

Criminal Court and the End of Impunity in Kenya says, the state "must not only secure criminal convictions and a commitment to the rule of law, but also restore public confidence in the functioning of the criminal justice system" to end not just the culture but the cycle of impunity.

In Bangladesh, we are smack in the middle of that cycle. The cycle is such that a culture of impunity breeds a culture of impunity. In order to break that cycle, the wheels must be taken apart and those wheels could be certain people sitting on top who benefit from the maintenance of this cycle, or certain policies that reinstate public trust and faith, or the building of "good" citizenship and empathy (but not in the name of nationalism, but in the name of humanity). Or all

of the above. But let us take a moment to understand that cycle.

In Bangladesh, the culture of impunity is not just the idea that those who commit crimes will not be held accountable, but that those who have power and money will not be held accountable. The best example is perhaps the war criminals who amassed wealth and political power and escaped being held accountable for rape and murder for over 40 years. And the most recent example is of Rajon's killer paying Tk. 6 lakhs to get out of jail and out of the country. Such examples of injustice, lack of due process and integrity in legal processes, and corruption and rent-seeking in public institutions lead to several outcomes that feed into the cycle of impunity:

1) It creates vigilantism and militia

More efficient, more productive

How ICT can pave the way to better results in the development sector

SHAZIA OMAR

BA NGLADESH is surprisingly on the forefront of innovation when it comes to mobile and digital solutions to problems. With the 'Digital Bangladesh' campaign, the efforts of the ICT ministry and A2I, we have seen a huge burst in activity among tech startups and mobile solution providers. Union Information Service Centres are making online registration for various services possible. Many citizen support services have been digitised. Not only in the public sector do we see these changes, but also in the development sector.

Many leading donor agencies and development organisations are seizing opportunities to use technology to increase efficiency of service delivery, enhance targeted responses to meet individual needs, improve monitoring and evaluation of impact, optimise field force workflow and provide evidence to policymakers. Grameen Kalyan is using mobile phones to link marginalised people in remote areas with doctors. Population Council is using mobile video games to educate and raise awareness among the poor. Water Aid is using GPS tracking to keep track of deep tube-wells. Government of Bangladesh's multi-donor social transfer programme, Shiree, is using mobile-based platform to track asset transfers to 250,000 extremely poor households and smart phone apps to help manage the workflow of field officers.

Mobile-based banking, identified by the Gates Foundation as one of the top five innovations - likely to make the eradication of extreme poverty possible - is being used to deliver money to disaster victims by Plan Bangladesh and Oxfam. CLP experimented with mobile money transfers to financially include people living in the *chars*. These innovations are drawing global attention and can be scaled up locally.

What is important is not so much the technology, the value of which is by now well-proven, but the effectiveness with which it is applied to enhance and, in some cases, transform the management of pro-poor development processes. Management is key. Managers who are unable to innovate - or worse, unscrupulous managers who are only interested in personal rewards - may abuse new technology. One lesson from implementing ICT solutions is that it takes time to overcome entrenched resistance to change, for managers to start seeing new technology not as a threat but as an opportunity. Proper incentives

problems. Transfer programmes that suffer from leakages can use more robust data systems to increase transparency. Money flow and invoicing can be made digital for greater clarity. Without proper tracking of financial flows, effective budgeting is not possible.

Enrolment and targeting systems can benefit from the creation of a digital database which may also serve as a baseline survey. This database then exists for future ongoing or periodic studies without requiring a repetition of the initial baseline legwork.

Management systems and ICT must be as

what is working and what is not, real-time! Impact measurement is another challenge that is often not adequately addressed by programmes - both NGOs and GOs. The multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of poverty means simply measuring income is not only challenging but also insufficient. Again, innovative tools and indicators can help solve the problem. This is also necessary when tracking the specific needs of special populations, such as adolescent girls, or pregnant mothers, or skill-less youths, for example.

To make decisions, we need information. This information needs to be accessible, in a format that responds to our questions and actionable, to tell us what to do. Monitoring implementation and outcomes helps to generate timely lessons for improved impact and communication to the public and policymakers.

Data and analysis can also help identify the challenges and opportunities associated with different contexts and intended beneficiary groups; support cost-benefit analysis that enables policymakers to make more informed comparisons between cash transfer design options (and with investments in other sectors); deepen understanding of the political economy of cash transfers; track whether and under what circumstances transfer delivery supports access to and use of financial services etc.

With the current infrastructure for IT as strong as it is in Bangladesh, development practitioners and government players are well-positioned to explore innovative ways of managing data. Bangladesh has been a pioneer and leader in many areas of poverty reduction. Here is another space where we can lead the way. Let's be creative and see what sort of exciting solutions we can create!

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Digital tools can empower the poorest by bringing them into the feedback dialogue. This gives clients of programmes the scope to steer their own growth and lodge grievances if necessary.


need to be in place to encourage organisations to adopt new approaches.

Gathering data is a lengthy process and often the data NGOs receive is out of date. Meanwhile, most NGOs have large forces of field officers who are dealing with beneficiaries all the time, but they convey their data to their supervisors in an anecdotal way. We are not maximising data gathered from field level for decision making. Monitored data needs to be fed back to management and decision makers in time to be useful, not outdated. Dynamic data at the fingertips is now a reality easily achievable with the help of mobile-based monitoring platforms.

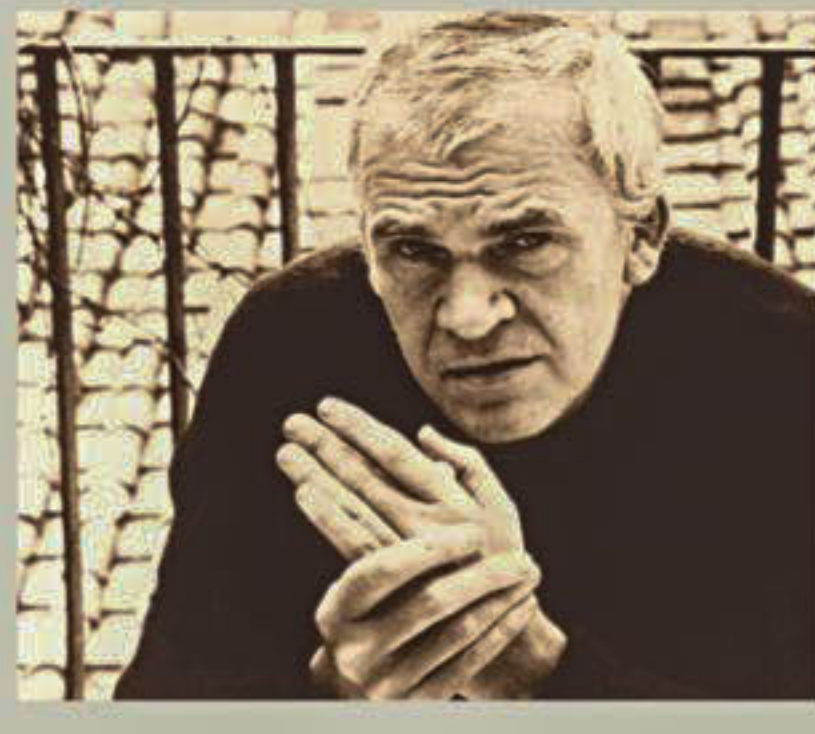
Beneficiary verification and registration is another challenge that leads to accountability

simple as possible given the programme requirements, and appropriately tailored to the country's existing capacity constraints. Adding ICT to programmes that are already in implementation can sometimes be expensive. It is more efficient to design projects with ICT at the core of the design to reduce costs, save time, create learning loops and achieve better results.

Digital tools can empower the poorest by bringing them into the feedback dialogue. This gives clients of programmes the scope to steer their own growth and lodge grievances if necessary. Gender disaggregated data can help ensure that women also experience the benefits of economic growth and development programmes equally. For best results, managers need to know



QUOTABLE Quote



MILAN KUNDERA

Hate traps us by binding us too tightly to our adversary.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Linguine or penne
- Doles (out)
- Crooked
- Visibly stunned
- State of concentration
- Golf peg
- Misery
- Chiding sound
- Blink of an eye
- ... de la Cite
- Taxagcy.
- "Law & Order: SVU" co-star
- Really stoked
- Fence supports
- Heavy metal
- Yoga need
- Comic bit
- Fast sailing ship
- Language suffix
- Chopping tool
- Spanish gold
- Detonator
- Zellweger of "Chicago"
- Taunt
- Fall flower

DOWN

- Singer Page
- Pale
- Irving Berlin's "Blue..."
- Decimal system base
- Clumsy
- "Olympia" painter
- Nest item
- War room topic
- Shoulder ornament
- Big singing groups
- Charged particles
- Even
- Wee bit
- Math course
- Spotty ailment
- Beauty contest
- Report card signers
- Long skirt
- Supply the food for
- Outspoken
- Make blank
- Easy runs
- Look upon
- Earthy prefix



Yesterday's answer



BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

