

Dreams come true and bring happiness to society

- Story by an enthusiastic alumnus

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(An affiliate of the University of Chicago, USA)

Area of research: Global Health

Country/Region of origin: Bangladesh /Asia

Syed Emdadul Haque graduated (MHSc in 2009 and PhD in 2012) from the School of International Health of the Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Tokyo, JAPAN. Presently, as Country Representative of UChicago Research Bangladesh, his focus is on global health research over the past 20 years as well as being involved in a variety of volunteer activities. This includes the establishment of a girls' school in his town in Bangladesh, a big dream which he had pursued since he was young, as well as a primary health care center for the people of the community.

Motivation to study health sciences in Japan

Having completed his bachelor and Master's degree in Statistics at the Jagannath College under the National University in Bangladesh (current Jagannath University), Emdad started his career as a development worker and public health researcher in Bangladesh. He focused on public health problems and its impact on society and worked on the health problems of coastal people in Bangladesh from 1999 to 2002. Through learning about health issues, he joined a research project run by Columbia University called "Health Effects of Arsenic Exposure in Bangladesh" in 2003. During this research work, he wanted to pursue further study on global health abroad. He was motivated by Prof. Habibul Ahsan, Dean for Population and Precision Health in the Biological Sciences Division at the University of Chicago.

Following this motivation Emdad looked for suitable places to learn abroad and found that the School of International Health at the University of Tokyo was a good to learn about public health. As he had good public health field experiences in Bangladesh he believed it would come in use when learning about the system focusing on epidemiology on public health aspects at the community level globally. "

So he applied for the Master's Course in the School of International Health at the Graduate School of Medicine and was admitted in 2007 under the ADB-Japan Scholarship Program (ADB-JSP), one of the prestigious fellowships in Asia. In April 2007, at the age of 31 years old, Emdad came to Japan, full of energy, hoping for success in the higher education in Japan. He was convinced that he was joining one of the best universities in the world and the top in Asia which was his dream.

Learnt at the University of Tokyo, JAPAN

Based on the definition of health by the World Health Organization, *“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”*. So Emdad realized that public health is related to all issues, including social determinants. Therefore, his research focused on global health problems, and particularly on environmental exposures. These included water, air pollution, climate changes and its impacts on human health, specifically for vulnerable population including women. He was fully satisfied with his study at UTokyo as he was in close contact with some of the great professors in the field. He had a full support from his supervisor, Professor Masamine Jimba of the Department of Community and Global Health in the Graduate School of Medicine for learning.

“My Supervisor Prof. Jimba is very famous with community health programs, health promotion at the community level, and other global health issues. He is a global health expert and I learnt a lot from him. He always lets the students do research by themselves and I enjoyed learning by myself. Prof. Jimba is very knowledgeable in the field of global health and I learnt a lot from him.”



Graduation day of the PhD course 2012



Annual school tour in 2009

While studying hard, he also enjoyed life in Japan. *“I learnt how to be patient from Japanese people and I now use this knowledge in my daily life. I like the Japanese systems and kindness, thus I believe Japan is my second home.”*

After completing his MHS in 2009, he advanced to the PhD course and was awarded the doctoral degree in 2012.

Back to Bangladesh

After obtaining his PhD degree, Emdad returned to Bangladesh and started his research career as “Postdoctoral Research Scientist” in a global health project under the University of Chicago, USA. After one year, he moved to the United Nations University-IIGH based in Malaysia and focused his research on the MDGs and SDGs as a Postdoctoral Fellow. After completion of this fellowship, he returned to Bangladesh once more to work as the “Coordinator of Research Training and New Program Development” at an international research institute named “UChicago Research Bangladesh”, an affiliate of the University of Chicago.

He now works as the Country Representative for the organization and plays a leading role.

He has been involved in global health research for the last 20 years and has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles. His research has been presented at many conferences in more than 15 countries. He has also supervised Master's and PhD students from different universities and evaluated their theses. Thus, he also plays a part in the professional field globally.

Dreams come true and bring happiness to Society!

When he was living in the town as a youth, he realized that girls' education in Bangladesh was highly needed and that there was no such girls' school for the 100,000 population in his community. Though there were schools where both girls and boys studied together, no schools solely for girls were available. Thus, he decided to establish a girl's school in the town someday. He sounded the possibility of founding one with Mr. Ryusuke Honjo, a Japanese business-person while he was studying in Japan during 2010 to 2012. He mentioned, *"I was a scholar of the Honjo International Scholarship Foundation (HISF) during 2010-2012. Through the different talks each month with Mr. Honjo, I told him about my dream and we discussed it for almost 2 years. After my graduation, I received a fellowship from HISF and returned to Bangladesh. We continued our communication through emails and the occasional visits. Once he told me that he would like to visit Bangladesh and see my school where I studied in my childhood. He came to Bangladesh in 2014 and became interested in giving a fund for the school building construction"*.

Emdad offered the land for establishing the school and the school was constructed in 2015 while he was working at the United Nations University in Malaysia. Every single day he was taking care of the school construction from Malaysia over phone for at least 30 minutes. The school was named **"Emdad-Honjo Ideal Girls School"** as a memory of the friendship between a Bangladeshi and a Japanese. Its color "Pink" was chosen by him as this is a school for girls.



Emdad-Honjo Ideal Girls School; Upazila: Lohagara, District: Narail

"As a founding president, I fully take care of the school in all aspects and manage everything including community meetings, training of teachers, and communicating with government bodies. I report to Mr. Honjo every two months as he is providing the fund for running the school. He also visits Bangladesh sometimes and sees the school updates. We make plans together of the future of the school. "

Within 5 years, the school has become one of the best institutes for the educational development of girls in the local area. Emdad is very happy with the success of the school and expressed, *"The school has*



become popular in the community as the results for the national exams taken by the students are very good, namely with 95-100% passing each year. These results are much better compared to those of other schools in the community. As a private school, this campus is very clean, the building is well organized, and the other systems are good. The team of teachers are excellent, doing hard work for the school”.

Japanese students learning primary health care in Bangladesh - 2013

Other voluntary activities of Emdad includes a non-government research organization called **“Bridge of Community Development Foundation”** (BCDF; www.bcdf-bd.org) which focuses more on health and environmental research and development work for the community people in Bangladesh and beyond, a primary health care center for community people and health research.

“The primary health care center was established for the health care of community people. They can get health care services with low costs at the community level. The data of the patients can be used as a research data for producing new evidence. As I am working in the global health field, thus I have established this health care center where we can provide services and produce evidences through research. Ultimately the evidences will help us for making policies in Bangladesh and beyond. “

Lastly, he leads and coordinates the University of Tokyo Alumni Association in Bangladesh (UTAAB) as its General Secretary. He also takes part in the “UTokyo Study in Japan Project” initiative in Bangladesh.

Future dreams for a good social well-being

Through his activities, Emdad is focusing on several SDGs. He wants to continue his works for a good nation in Bangladesh and beyond. He believes that his work will bring significant benefits to the people and will make a sustainable success for future generation. He is sure that all his work will support the community. He has many connections with Japanese researchers and communities. It will be a good example for all low-resources countries in the world.

Here is Emdad’s message: “Good education, good knowledge for a better human and sustainable society”

(Compiled by Office for Alumni Affairs, the University of Tokyo)