Time for Health Care in Bangladesh
How Time Banks can Improve the Healthcare System

Tag Words: Healthcare in Bangladesh, TimeBanking, Johnson & Johnson, Poor Rural economies

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Summary: There are limited resources for the people of Bangladesh, especially when it comes to healthcare. Incorporating a Time Banking system in Bangladesh, where doctors and nurses could offer their time in return for another service, would enable the people to gain appropriate health care when needed. Currently, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have helped improve healthcare in Bangladesh and decrease the rate of malnutrition and infant mortality. We hope to engage multinational pharmaceutical companies that focus on healthcare, like Johnson & Johnson, to invest in getting Time Banking to the people in Bangladesh.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiU1BE94GKU

The Neglected People of Bangladesh
Bangladesh is a country where a majority of the population suffers from poverty. With an unstable government and a quickly growing population, Bangladesh has a major issue with its current healthcare system. Most of the people of Bangladesh live in rural villages with limited resources and are not able to afford medical care. Unfortunately, the wealthy are the only ones who can afford better healthcare by going abroad to countries like India where the technology and equipment are much better. The medical centers that are currently functioning are in poor conditions, causing the existing health and dental care practices to be privatized (1), they are no longer open to the public. The equipment and facilities are outdated and are not sufficient to treat patients (1). This is an issue for those who are living in poverty and in wealth in Bangladesh. The people need help, they need a system where they can receive the treatment they need from a reliable source.

Causes of Poor Health
The poor, who are unable to obtain proper treatment for their injuries and illnesses, become injured or ill in many ways. Illnesses are developed by the tropical weather and an unhygienic lifestyle. Due to the poverty and a lack of proper living conditions, there are many diseases caused by the environment as well as pollution from the main city areas. Injuries are common due to the manual labor and work that is available to these people (2). Those who work in factories are constantly exposed to harsh working environments and little or no protection from fires (2). Factory fires in Bangladesh are very common and very dangerous. The Bangladeshi sweatshops and factories are constantly being featured in news articles around the world for being life threatening and unsafe. The buildings are unstable and the latest death toll due to a factory collapse was almost 1,000 people (2). The government has made minimal effort to reduce the number of injuries and death and officials are easily bribed by factory owners to overlook the conditions.

Healthcare Professionals and NGO’s, a Part of the Issue or Solution?
There is not much interaction between healthcare professionals and the villagers. The villages typically have a couple members of their community who are herbalists and use their limited knowledge on treatment using plants to help those in need (2). For these people their natural resources are crucial for survival and live in rural areas, especially areas near the shore where many are fishermen. Many villagers fear getting ill because there is no guarantee of treatment or medication, resulting in the illness getting worse and eventually leading to death. Villages are also located far from the main city, Dhaka, where most of the modern hospitals and facilities are (2). Transportation becomes another issue for the villagers who are used to walking and have no cars or bus systems. There are only dirt roads and paths for walking. The healthcare professionals reside in the city and do not venture into the villages since they are aware that the villagers are not financially stable and treatments are expensive. Affordability is a huge road block for most people of Bangladesh.

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s) are starting to build programs to micro-credit medical programs to develop a national insurance (1). These programs are the few initiatives taken to actively improve the quality of life in Bangladesh. At the moment, the government requires public taxes to fund the national health system which puts those living in poverty in a tight situation. These people, who already cannot afford simple daily necessities, have to work hard to pay for taxes for the health system that doesn’t cover them.

**Time Banks, a Solution for Healthcare**

The treatment of the poor in Bangladesh continues to be neglected because of the lack of resources. It is crucial for the development of the country and for the welfare of the people that outside sources contribute ideas and resources for improving the life in Bangladesh. For people who cannot afford healthcare, it is necessary to utilize another way to get the healthcare every human is entitled to without the use of money. Time Banking is a perfect solution to this issue of healthcare. Time Banks have become a more popular method for people around the world to use their resources and skills wisely. Instead of using currency, the Time Banking system allows the exchange of skills rather than money. Time Banking is a system where people exchange their time and service for another person’s time and service (3). For example, someone can give an hour of their time utilizing their skills in aiding a neighbor, who in return will do something for him/her using his/her own set of skills. This is very economical and is especially useful in areas where people cannot afford to pay for basic services, such as plumbing, automobile repair, or landscaping (3). New York City is a great example of how successful Time Banking is. There are communities where the citizens exchange their talents and this builds a strong bond within the community (4). There are currently over 20,000 members, 194 communities, and over 930,000 hours of community service done just in the Unites States (5). For a country with a dense population of diverse people with various backgrounds, Bangladesh can benefit from this type of system.

The people of Bangladesh can utilize the Time Banks, including the community exchange networks, to take care of the sick and injured in their families and neighborhoods. However, adequate funding is needed to help support this system. Although there are nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to improving the quality of life in Bangladesh, there are large companies that may be more efficient. NGO’s are nonprofit, therefore sometimes struggle to maintain enough money to financially support their cause. A famous pharmaceutical company,
like Johnson and Johnson, would be ideal. Johnson and Johnson is a multinational company whose focus is to develop the science and technology for medicine. They have taken many initiatives to improve the quality of life for people around the globe. Jonson and Johnson has donated $603.3 million in cash and products to over 700 programs located around the world in over 50 different countries (6). Most of their research involves developing treatments for illnesses and diseases, however their various partnerships expand their reach to different fields. A few of their partnerships include Safe Kids Worldwide, Missionaries of the Poor, CASA, the Task Force for Global Health and more (6). If Johnson and Johnson funded a project related to the health care in Bangladesh, then the Time Bank system can be installed. Doctors, nurses, and other health professional can use their skills and travel to the villages to aid the poor. In return, the villagers, who are typically skilled laborers, can work for the health professionals by making clothes or doing household chores. This project can change millions of lives and revolutionize the healthcare around the world.

A Proposal to the Johnson and Johnson Corporate Giving Program
The Johnson and Johnson Corporate Giving Program is a funding opportunity for organizations looking for grants to support their cause. The Johnson and Johnson Corporate Giving Program supports community based programs that improve health and the quality of life for people around the world (7). The Time Banks are ideal candidates for a grant because of the nature of the program. The Time Banking system improves the community by building a network of reliable and productive people and has the potential to improve health by providing the means to connect villagers to health professionals. In this case, it will be used to change the healthcare system in Bangladesh and directly affect the people who live there and suffer from poverty.

There are three main objectives for reviewing grant requests:

1. The project/ company has to be involved with saving and improving lives, specifically maternal and child health (7).
2. The project/ company has to build a healthcare capacity, with a focus on building the skills of people through education (7).
3. The project/ company should be involved with preventing diseases and working with communities to educate them on improving their lives (7).

The proposal will request a grant for about $10,000 to $250,000 based on the amounts for sample grants. A similar program, Task Force for Global Health, received $452,636 for support and another program, Safe Kids Worldwide, received $600,000 (7). The Time Banks are expected to be a low cost initiative, since it involves an exchange of skills. The project simply needs volunteers who are willing to start networking and creating the system where villagers can communicate with health professionals. A major cost would be to provide transportation for the doctors and nurses to travel from the main city area to the rural villages. The health professionals and villagers who will become a part of the Time Bank system will not be paid with money, since the focus is to undergo moneyless transactions so the poor can receive the healthcare they need by giving their time to the doctors as laborers.

The Johnson and Johnson Corporate Giving Program requires that the organization is fit for public broadcasting and will not accept unsolicited applications (7). Grants will not be given to
individuals, for debt reduction, capital campaigns or endorsements, or publications (7). The Time Banks are focused on the improvement of human life, healthcare, and can be used to prevent diseases if used in Bangladesh for the development of a healthcare system. If partnered with Johnson and Johnson, Time Banks can be the tool that will reduce costs, unite people, and save lives.

**Time Line of Events**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date, 2014</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June, 2014</td>
<td>Create a plan for the establishment of a Time Bank system in Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>July, 2014</td>
<td>Send proposal to Johnson and Johnson for review</td>
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<tr>
<td>August, 2014</td>
<td>If proposal is accepted, start implementing the budget and contacting medical facilities in Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>September, 2014</td>
<td>Work with Johnson and Johnson to establish a network between the villagers and the health professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>October, 2014</td>
<td>Monitor progress and record the data received on patient evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td>November, 2014</td>
<td>Improve system if there needs to be any improvements</td>
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**Letter to Johnson and Johnson**

Sharon D’Agostino  
Vice President  
Worldwide Corporate Contributions & Community Relations  
Johnson & Johnson

1 Johnson & Johnson Plaza  
New Brunswick, NJ 08933-0001

Dear Sharon D’Agostino,

My name is Ummay Mahmud and I am a student at Rutgers University. I recently read about Johnson and Johnson’s efforts to improve the quality of life around the world by working on various international projects. I have always wanted to improve the healthcare system and your work with Global Public Health and UN Women have inspired me to start my own efforts to make a difference in the world. I have done some research and found an organization that I think you will be interested in because of its innovative way of helping people in small communities. The organization is called Time Banks and it provides an efficient way to build a strong network of people who are resourceful and economical. Time Banking is sharing and exchanging
people’s time instead of money for goods and services. This system is economical and can provide a lot of use for a community with low income families or for those living in poverty. Time Banks will also create a close community bond, improving the environment for children growing up in dangerous neighborhoods.

I am proposing to develop a Time Bank system in Bangladesh to improve their healthcare. Bangladesh is a country where a majority of the people live in poverty and would benefit greatly from an improved healthcare system. Currently, only the wealthy can afford the privatized medical facilities, which are only located in the city, far away from the villagers who are in dire need of help. If the Time Banking system was established in Bangladesh, then I would recruit health professionals who work in the city of Dhaka and they will travel to the rural villages to aid the people there. In exchange, the rural villagers can work as laborers and fulfill tasks for the doctors, nurses, etc. The money requested from the grant will be used to provide transportation for the health professionals who will be volunteering their time. Since this is a Time Bank program, no one will need to be compensated with money, it will be strictly an exchange of skills.

This program will be the beginning of an international initiative to improve healthcare around the world. Johnson and Johnson’s participation will only improve its already great reputation and it can be a part of something that will revolutionize healthcare. I hope you will consider this proposal and I will be sending an official proposal soon. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ummay Mahmud

References:

Letter to the Editor:

To: Moazzem Hossain, editor@thefinancialexpress-bd.com

Dear Moazzem Hossain,

My name is Ummay Mahmud and I am interested in how the health care system in Bangladesh can improve. Time Banks are becoming a more effective system to improve the health and lifestyle of many people who cannot afford to take care of themselves and their family. I have written a letter to the editor expanding on this idea. Please consider publishing my letter to the editor. I have attached this letter in a document in this email.

I read the article, Reducing Rural Poverty Through Microcredit, by Muhammad Zamir and agree that it is crucial to access credit in order for borrowers to succeed in a skilled trade. Although this article focuses on the discussion and research done to prove the benefits or consequences of microcredit, I thought of the Time Banks as another solution to poverty.

As a Bangladeshi I feel strongly about helping the people in Bangladesh improve their lives. I came across the Time Banks system and realized that the health care in Bangladesh would improve if this system was implemented. Time Banks is a system of “pay it forward.” A person working in a field with a certain skill set can exchange their time for someone else’s time and skills. This will allow the people of Bangladesh to have resources when they do not have the money.

Please contact me at this email address with any questions regarding the Time Banks idea and with any ideas you have yourself. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

Ummay Mahmud

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2014/06/16/39667