

Social Entrepreneurs of Bangladesh: Shougat Nazbin Khan

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Executive Summary:

This paper seeks to illustrate on a regional based social entrepreneur named Shougat Nazbin Khan and her foundation H.A Foundation, which is currently operating in Mymensingh of Bangladesh. With an analysis of activities conducted within the organization and the services its provided, various points have been extracted.

Initiating through an overview on the organization the paper flows with analysis of background information on the founder, reasoning behind the entrepreneurship venture, personal traits of the founder, contribution of the venture to the society and economy, discovery of funding and exploration of challenges has been done. Deducted from analyses, some logical recommendations and a conclusion has been presented with citation of sources.

The organization has been founded in 2014 by IUB alumna Ms. Shougat Nazbin Khan who has also been associated with various famous international organizations such as The Commonwealth, UNDP etc. The organization implements developmental projects such as renewable energies, teaching of entrepreneur skills, providing technological knowledge. The prime aspect of the institution is the formation of a school named as H.A Digital School and college. As coherent as the name, the school provides education by making use of digital technology with a very subsidized amount of payment and the total number of students increased significantly. Primary sources of funding include prize money from the founder and international funding. Limitations and problems have been presented fairly. The paper ends on a note of lessons learnt and making suggestions. Overall, the organization is inspiring for the youth and such initiatives can be considered ideal despite barriers and limitations.

All in all the foundation has immense potential and can be considered as a model irrespective of its limitations, however initiatives have to be adopted for better results.

Table of Contents:

Sl,no	Topic	Page Number
01	A Glimpse on H.A Foundation	4
02	Knowing the Founder: Who is Shougat Nazbin Khan?	5
03	The Genesis of Shougat's Journey	7
04	Prized Qualities of Shougat: Secret to Success	9
05	Crafting a Legacy: Benchmarks in Economic and Social Development	11
06	Exploration of funding and Unpacking Challenges	13
07	Lessons From Shougat	15
08	Closing on H.A Foundation	15
09	Ethereal Counsel for H.A Foundation and Shougat	16
10	Bibliography	18

Table of figures:

Sl no.	Topic of figure	Page number
01	Shougat Nazbin Khan	5
02	Sustainable Development Goals	8

A Glimpse on H.A Foundation

Social entrepreneurship ventures are rapidly developing in Bangladesh particularly since 21st century as the population has increased significantly. With changing times, skilled populace is essential for a developed country. The economy of Bangladesh is incrementally progressing and despite significant improvement there is room for a lot to be done. Amongst many projects H.A Foundation formed by Shougat Nazbin Khan located in Tarkanda Upazila in Mymensingh of Bangladesh stands out primarily due to its regional based improvement project which focuses on decentralization, philanthropic activities by the founder, skill development, impartation of entrepreneurship skills, health counseling, multifaceted development as well special focus on renewable energies, which is relatively new in Bangladesh.

Under the authority of the foundation, the first project started was H.A Digital School and College in 2014 which charges a minimal fee. The educational institution imposes a nominal tuition fee, concurrently providing complimentary textbooks, school uniforms, and transportation services. The school saw almost 100% increase in its second year of journey where the student number increased from 305 to 600. They are well equipped with modern devices such as PC, CC cameras, laptops and projectors. Considering development of women, more than 90% of the teachers are women.

H.A Foundation's exponential expansion has expanded the community's perspective on technology as a catalyst for nurturing the abilities of the youth. Shougat believes in the substantial potential of this model in fostering peace, mitigating severe poverty, and advocating for environmental sustainability and development. Thus, they essentially improvise on developing environment friendly technologies such as renewable energies and low cost systems. For example, they developed a low-cost irrigation system in 2015 and Ms. Khan, the founder won a prestigious Green Talent award for it,

Ms. Khan, a laureate in the field of science, a social entrepreneur, an advocate for education, an environmentalist, and a proponent of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh, intends to initiate educational initiatives for the offspring of sex workers and other marginalized youth. The objective is to impart knowledge on environmental issues and empower them to secure a livelihood that is sustainable. Thus, their arena of expertise involves alleviating disadvantaged communities from poverty as well.

To summarize, H.A Foundation works for socio economic development on a regional basis in different areas, such as women empowerment, providing quality education to children, skill development and seeks solutions to social problems through the reference frame of sustainability and environment friendly technologies.

Knowing the Founder: Who is Shougat Nazbin Khan?

Shougat Nazbin Khan, born in 1989, hails from Mymensingh. Having been raised in Dhaka, she successfully completed her Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificate examinations at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College. Her academic pursuits led her to Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), where she earned her undergraduate degree in Electronics, subsequently attending University College London (UCL).



Figure 01: Shougat Nazbin Khan

In 2014, Ms. Khan founded the H.A Foundation, marking the commencement of a remarkable career trajectory that traversed diverse global experiences. She served as a Visiting Researcher at

the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) in Kanagawa, Japan, from August 2015 to December 2015. Following this, she assumed the role of a Visiting Scholar at RWTH Aachen University, Germany, from April 2016 to August 2016. Notably, she was appointed as a United Nations Young Leader for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2016.

Continuing her impactful journey, Ms. Khan served as the Global Schools Advocate in the Global Schools Program from 2019 to April 2020, spanning a period of 10 months in the United States. Concurrently, she founded Orgasus in July 2019 and has since held the position of Chief Officer. In January 2021, she assumed the role of Climate Ambassador in the Global Youth Climate Network (GYCN).

Throughout 2021, her contributions were recognized with several prestigious accolades. She was rewarded with a Young Ambassador in The Earth Project and an Ambassador of the World Literacy Foundation in April. Subsequently, in July, she was honored as a Fellow in the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), followed by her designation as a Global Fellow in the Starling Collective Fellowship within GivingTuesday in October.

The year 2022 commenced with Ms. Khan being appointed as a Fellow at Student Energy, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Notably, her accomplishments extend beyond her professional pursuits, as evidenced by her receipt of the GREEN PRIZE in June 2021 and her recognition as an Asia 21 Young Leader by the esteemed Asia Society. Further accolades include being acknowledged as Asia Young Person of the Year by The Commonwealth and receiving the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in Development Work. Her acclaim reached new heights when Forbes listed her in the prestigious "Under 30" roster in 2017, highlighting her as one of the top 30 women pioneering change in Asia. Additionally, she was honored with the Green Talent Award from the Ministry of Education & Research, Government of Germany, in 2015.

Knowing Shougat shall cause modified enlightenment of her life and understanding behind the mesmerizing ideas which are reflected throughout her organization and its activities.

The Genesis of Shougat's Journey

Ms. Khan's cognition behind starting her social entrepreneurship venture is her empathetic understanding of her community, epiphany of socioeconomic issues on a community level, awareness of environmental issues, pursuit of environment friendly technologies, utilization of economically viable solutions, affiliation with the SDGs, altruism, humanity, rationality, self-realization and holistic approach to social issues.

Shougat Nazbin Khan founded H. A. Digital School & College, presently teaching 600 students hailing from 50 marginalized communities in Bangladesh, emphasizing the socio-economic progression of women. Within Ms. Khan's pronouncement, the swift proliferation of the institute has augmented the community's cognition of technology as a mechanism for cultivating the acumen of youthful individuals. She harbors an unwavering conviction in the colossal potential of this paradigm to engender tranquility, mitigate severe destitution, and advocate for environmental and sustainable progress. Transcending her endeavors at the confluence of women's empowerment and the provision of high-quality education.

She also articulated that her native village, Tarakanda, is, in numerous aspects, characterized by a state of underdevelopment. In this setting, parents perceive no discernible advantages in imparting formal education to their children. Their logical reasoning behind this notion is that whether children are enrolled in educational institutions or not, their skill development remains stagnant. Consequently, they are confined to a singular vocational option — engaging in fishing, a practice inherited through generations. The extant educational establishments, lacking adequate resources and advancements, contribute to the suboptimal acquisition of skills among the youth. Additionally, the financial constraints prevalent in the community act as a barrier, resulting in the deprivation of educational opportunities for children. Witnessing the inadequacy in the quality of education provided, she conceived the notion of equipping them with both academic and technological prowess through the implementation of interactive and innovative digital technology. Thus, her understanding of the importance of education along with skill development in a community level moved her to start her project which offers education with a subsidized fee along with skill development.

An additional reasoning for founding her organization lies in the empowerment of women at the community level, specifically within marginalized communities where women encounter violence and discrimination based on their gender identity. Given her own identity as a woman, she

empathizes with her gender, having personally experienced their challenges. Consequently, a predominant proportion of the teaching staff within her institution comprises women.



Figure 02: Sustainable Development Goals

On an inferential basis, it can also be implied that she started her organization due to her affiliation with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are to be accomplished by 2030. Though she started her organization prior to being appointed as United Nations Young Leader for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2016, it appears that she focused on various goals of SDGs and implemented in her organization, potentially with the motive to gain a position in the horizon of SDGs. For example, goal number 01 of “No Poverty” as she works to alleviate disadvantaged communities from the vicious cycle of poverty on a regional level. Subsequently her work aligns with “Quality Education” (Goal no 4) as her work is primary based on providing education with life-oriented skills, “Gender Equality” (Goal no 5) as her organization serves the purpose of women empowerment, “Affordable and Clean Energies” (Goal no.7) as she deals with renewable energies which are environment friendly, “Decent Work and Economic Growth” (Goal no 8) as she is working to aid people by gaining skills which shall ensure decent employment, “Reduced Inequalities” (Goal no. 10) as she is working for creating equity between disadvantaged

communities, “Sustainable Cities and Communities” (Goal no. 12) as she is working to create a sustainable region. This finally resulted in her being an advocate of the SDGs.

Therefore, it can be said that her organization is founded upon women empowerment, creating social equity and a potential goal of fulfilling SDG goals.

Prized Qualities of Shougat; Secret to Success

Ms. Khan’s attributes consist primarily high productivity and being farsighted. Her farseeing abilities pave her grand schemes upon which she contemplates and reflects. Her success can be credited to her attributes, which define her identity. Her attributes are her prized possessions.

As discussed previously, Ms. Khan focuses potently on seeking environmentally sustainable solutions to socio-economic concurrent discrepancies. She has established herself with education which can be inferred as a reflection of her diligence. Her global encounters indicate an adventurous soul seeking knowledge and becoming a global citizen. She is a thinker with ensemble thoughts and an observant causing her to be empathetic. Her humanity with an amicable approach makes her strive of rational solutions to socio economic problems. Thus, upon analysis of her background and works, we can infer that her prized qualities paved the way for her.

Apart from visible personal qualities we can consider her works and her thoughts behind them, which will allow us to delve into discovery of her attributes contributing to her success.

Upon the completion of her Engineering degree, she joined as a faculty member at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB). While this position held honor, her true contentment lay in community development. Consequently, she oriented her endeavors in alignment with her personal inclinations. She had to consider a relatively venturesome trail and had to rely on her instincts. Therefore, pursuit of personal fervor in her case and embarking on that journey full of uncertainty and challenges with a strong mind is her prized ability.

A sporadic impediment she encounters pertains to the imperative necessity of establishing credibility among individuals. She maintains the viewpoint that garnering an audience or persuading others becomes redundant once credibility is attained, positing that credibility is the linchpin determining whether one's words are heeded. Thus gaining credibility and all the attempts

she puts at being credible through attaining skills and accomplishing tasks which would position her as a credible person in the eyes of the society is worth of appreciation. Therefore, her seeking credibility and being incredible everyday is another significant attribute of her comprising self interrogation and self improvement through raised consciousness.

However no matter how much meritorious an individual is, motivation, upliftment of status along with levitation from usual self through self improvement is required to survive with noticeable success in the long run. Accomplishments of a person when credited, recognized and honored inspire that person and push them to go forward. Rewards necessarily refine skills and talents. Accreditation acts as catalysts to accelerate moral drive of a person so that their prized abilities are utilized and well claimed activities gain momentum. Such has been the case for Ms. Khan as well.

Ms. Khan has been included in Forbes Under 30 in 2017, which is the first time any Bangladeshi made it to the Forbes list. Inclusion in Forbes not only bestowed upon her the invaluable asset of credibility but also instilled in her the confidence to embark on significant endeavors. The distinction of being the inaugural Bangladeshi personality showcased in Forbes is a source of profound honor for her.

The achievement of the UNESCO Madanjeet fellowship allowed her to pursue the study of Green Energy Technology at the UNESCO Madanjeet Institute of Green Energy Technology in India, which served as a profound inspiration. The realization that she secured this opportunity amid a competitive pool of applicants spanning over 100 nations fueled her determination. The absence of any prior Bangladeshi recipient intensified her dedication her application. Attaining such a prestigious accolade in the nascent stages of her career has undeniably kindled an ambition to materialize and relentlessly pursue her aspirations. This global acknowledgment propels her to persist on the intellectual odyssey, striving for elevated echelons of excellence, as elucidated by Ms. Khan.

Thus, we can notice a pattern that Ms. Khan seeks positions where Bangladeshis have not reached and has a high aim to reach these positions as she goes on.

Therefore qualities in Ms Khan which are worthy of preaching shall be her seeking positions where people of her nationality did not reach which can also be interpreted as patriotism from a nationalistic perspective, spontaneous self progression, pursuit of passion, traveling on a perilous

path to innovate, being confident and self aware, staying motivated, competing with own self, pursuit of credibility, empathetic understanding of the social issues, seeking rational and practical sustainable solutions and being aware of global concurrent issues.

Crafting a Legacy; Benchmarks in Economic and Social Development

The H.A Foundation is projected to exert a substantial influence on both societal and economic fields, given its potential, initiatives, and outlined principles. This impact is envisaged through the avenues of women's empowerment, the cultivation of a skilled human resource pool, the emergence of a generation with robust literacy and skill qualifications, the advancement of renewable energy sources as viable alternatives to current norms, the establishment of an efficient and sustainable societal framework, the elevation of the status of disadvantaged communities, and serving as an inspirational model for young women contemplating ventures in social entrepreneurship. Given the regional focus of this foundation, the envisaged outcome extends to regional development through upliftment of economy and social equity.

In addition to imparting formal education, the foundation extends complimentary Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services, imparts entrepreneurship training, delivers health education, and provides counseling to rural youth and women. Thus, through this foundation improvement of technological knowledge can be expected.

With the improvement of technology, development of globalized and productive citizens can be expected. As people become technologically conscious, it installs a sense of digital security and more productive ways to accomplish things through easy methods. As Bangladesh is moving towards being “Digital Bangladesh” and significant technological improvements are happening every year, it is highly essential for the remote populace to participate in technological evolution through gain of ICT based knowledge. Even from a global perspective, where the world is gradually moving toward 4th Industrial Revolution consisting of Artificial Intelligence, it is essential to have a grasp over technological knowledge and surpass any technological limitation. Also, a lot of work such as outsourcing is done through the effective use of Internet which shall

pave the way for native villagers to consider a different way in life which is different from the conventional methods of income. This shall broaden their horizon in understanding of the economy and enable them to be conscious citizens.

With impartation of entrepreneurship training, more self-employed entrepreneurs shall be available in this region in the long run which shall promote significant economic activity and alleviate the population from poverty and backwardness. Through proliferation of entrepreneur knowledge, self-consciousness is expected to rise among the rural populace which shall enable them to gain more skills and contribute to the society. In fact they might become the very next Shougat Nazbin Khan and carry her legacy as they move on. This shall also inspire other young people, particularly women as Ms. Khan is a woman, to take on more rural based entrepreneurship projects. Moreover, this also indicates an essential prospect; which is decentralization. Usually, the capital Dhaka and its surroundings are under significant development which is becoming environmentally hazardous for the city of Dhaka and as well as its residents. Also this leads to a huge insurge of population in the Dhaka city for pursuit of quality knowledge and skill based work. Thus as Ms. Khan's organization is based regionally and is associated with imparting technological skills, development of rural economy is expected.

Contribution to the society and the economy by her foundation is more visible when we especially take her school into account. In January of 2015, her organization successfully instituted H.A. Digital School and College with an initial enrollment of approximately 300 students. Currently, their student body has expanded to 605 individuals hailing from nearly 50 villages. Notably, the academic performance is commendable, with no student achieving a grade point average (GPA) below 4.00 out of 5.00. Interestingly, students residing in urban areas opt to enroll in this school, attracted by the prospect of receiving high-quality education at a nominal expense. This indicates a progress in education by obliterating income inequalities, creating a sense of social equity in children from diverse households.

Considering extended features of her organization such as development of irrigation and renewable energies, which is fairly new to Bangladesh, a change in the use of conventional expensive tools or energies hazardous to environment is expected. From Ms. Khan's statements we can know that she has engaged in diverse initiatives related to renewable energies across multiple nations. Her research predominantly concentrates on the formulation of hybrid energy systems conducive to

the production of clean energy. In addition to conceptualization, she actively constructs modeling and simulation frameworks to enhance the accuracy of energy forecasts and facilitate in-depth performance analyses of these energy systems. This shall open a new horizon for Bangladesh to advance in the field of renewable energies as well as reduce imports and make Bangladesh environmentally safe. Therefore, her foundation's work also bears environmental significance with bearing economic and social importance.

Therefore, to conclude H.A Foundation will have significant social and economic impact as with addressing environmental issues through women empowerment, quality education, decentralization, widening a horizon of new sources of energies.

Exploration of Funding and Unpacking Challenges

H.A Foundation has a reputable influence in various international organizations and these organizations have had played a pivotal role in shaping the organization through funding. The diligently wonder woman behind the organization, impeccable Ms. Khan has worked and gained different international experiences which guided her to a meritorious discourse, gaining international recognition. Thus, her primary source of funds can be derived as contributions of international organizations on the basis of her activities. She utilizes these funds on her regional philanthropic activities through her organization.

As, hinted out earlier, Ms. Khan won accolades include being acknowledged as Asia Young Person of the Year by The Commonwealth and receiving the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in Development Work in 2021. In her statements, the international recognition garnered through the Commonwealth Youth Award significantly elevated the status of her institution, producing a substantial impact. The accolades not only standardized the quality of her endeavors but also served as a catalyst for establishing collaborative partnerships, securing financial resources, and expanding her professional network. Following her victory, she successfully acquired digital study materials such as tablet PCs and laptops from both individual benefactors and the ICT fund of the Bangladeshi government. The unwavering support extended by the Commonwealth team has consistently bolstered her morale, instilling the confidence to pursue further global acclaim. This encouragement propelled her to achieve success in two highly competitive competitions within the

same year—the United Nations Young Leader (out of a pool exceeding 18,000 applicants) and the MOSAIC Leader program facilitated by Prince’s Trust International as well. Being such an influential and acclaimed person who is well recognized in international organizations, her organization receives adequate funding.

However, reception of international funding is not adequate for any organization to survive in the long run. The absence of government funds is notable in this organization. Considering its status of being a privately owned organization, government funding is not expected at the very base however considering its potential and arena of exercise, government funding can accelerate the organization’s activities. Moreover, a lack of local NGOs affiliation is also noticed. NGO affiliations could significantly boost the activities of this organization and cause more impact.

As of 2023, unfortunately a case has been running, named as **“Shougat Nazbin Khan vs The State”**. The status of the case is admitted under criminal appeal which has been admitted and recognized by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on accusations of money laundering and corruption, where the defender is the state, and the offender is Ms. Khan. The case is filed in *“Faujdari”* court where Ms. Khan is labelled with allegations surprisingly. Therefore, the case is a discrepancy in her foundation’s reputation and will potentially hamper funding from abroad as government is projected to conduct audit and diagnose any possible ethical issues however if proved innocent the organization may resume its philanthropic impactful activities.

Amidst success and momentary problems, H.A Foundation is an impactful organization working to change people’s lives for the better on a regional basis.

Lessons From Shougat

There are essential lessons to learn from the life of Ms. Khan as well as her words.

As a young woman belonging from one of the most underdeveloped nations globally, where issues like gender-based violence, religious extremism, patriarchal structures, gender discrimination, and limited economic empowerment persist prominently, she has encountered formidable obstacles in executing projects within rural domains. Undeterred by these impediments, Shougat remains resolute in her commitment to establish a precedent and serve as an exemplar for young women,

motivating them to strive towards realizing their aspirations. Thus, she can be a role model for the youth particularly women igniting their consciousness and realization of worth.

According to her observation, our young individuals typically initiate leadership endeavors or engage in community development through volunteerism. Nevertheless, the prevalent behavior observed among them is the inclination towards advocacy. She aims to dissuade the youth from this approach. Her counsel to the younger generation is clear: lead through personal example and implement principles in their own lives before advocating or instructing others to do the same. Therefore, her own speech is a message of lesson towards young people.

Closing on H.A Foundation

To culminate, H.A Foundation located in Mymensingh of Bangladesh is an example of how the youth are coming forward to enhance the country's progress from their arena with proper utilization of merit. Since independence of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh has been progressing and the social situation of women has been changing gradually. While, we see significant change, it comes to our attention that more is needed in the grand scheme of things, for times are rapidly changing. Shougat Nazbin Khan and her organization H.A Foundation proves how social barriers, limitations of experience, gender discrimination, economic barriers can be surmounted with hard-work, honesty, integrity, diligence, innovation and leave an eloquent impact. Therefore, to make this earth a better place with youth innovation, H.A Foundation and Ms. Khan lives as an inspiration.

Ethereal Counsel for H.A Foundation and Shougat

Though the organization has amazing potential, some recommendations are to be made which could lead to substantial improvement. Improvement should be made in marketing, social media management, solution of ethical issues, funding and expansion.

Substantial progress is imperative for H.A Foundation particularly in marketing field. Despite the organization had significant rise in the number of students in its 2nd year, it still needs marketing. They can incorporate a customer driven marketing strategy by making proper use of segmentation,

targeting and positioning along with 4Ps of marketing. Though they are positioned to be affordable quality education even in city pupils, this is not adequate considering the big picture. Considering 4Ps of marketing, their price and place can be considered alright however promotion is lacked. Though the organization is a philanthropic organization, due to lack of proper promotion it may diminish in the long run.

Social media management is heavily encouraged for the organization as absence of a Facebook page or a properly well developed website is noticed. At current times, social media is a powerful tool for marketing as well as creating social awareness. As the organization is based on social activities and aims to bring positive changes into the society, social media presence with huge following is imperative. They can make efficient use of tools such as boosting Facebook post or Instagram post with minimal fees. They can also make one YouTube channel and make relatable content in alignment with their organization following YouTube trends. They can also get additional revenue from YouTube ads which shall provide more funding. Thus, social media engagement is mandatory considering marketing and social awareness.

Solution of ethical problems should be the organization's prime concern considering their concurrent legal issues. Transparency with the government, particularly the local government should be made to avoid such conflicts and misunderstandings. Proper diplomacy has to be exercised and any ethical issue within the organization has to be checked to be solved. Taxation, explanation of the sources of funds as well as accounts have to be presented to the government in due time. Having a case running shall impact the organization's philanthropic activities and reputation. In fact, if severities continue, government can decide on permanently closing down the institutions activities as well as seize any foreign fund. Thus, transparency and solution of ethical issues is essential considering flow of funds and general reputation.

There needs to be visible progress in sources of funding which is necessary for expansion. Though it seems that the organization has recognition in foreign organizations, local recognition is more essential because the primary consumers are the local people. Moreover, on a local basis the government is the first to deal with the organization. Thus, more efforts should be put into associating and negotiating with the locals. Furthermore, the organization has been influential on a regional basis on community levels whereas Bangladesh is still a developing country thus this organization needs to be expanded for more impact. Expansion shall be possible with affiliations

with NGOs, receiving government funding, better marketing and social media engagement. Thus, as funding and expansion are correlated these matters should be taken into consideration.

To wrap it up, the recommendations are to be pursued to mitigate losses and loss of reputation and take the organization to a better position.

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