

The Advocacy Project- Summer 2012 Peace Fellow  
Final Report  
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**Introduction:**

I lived in the frantic, hot, humid, and loud city of Dhaka, Bangladesh for nearly three months. I developed both professionally and personally in some of the most dramatic ways I've ever experienced. While the experience as a whole was an incredible opportunity for growth, it was not easy. I learned a lot about the world of microfinance and the true effects it had on the community I worked with.

**The Future of My Host:**

My host organization in Bangladesh was BERDO (The Blind Education and Education Development Organization). While many good things can be said about The Advocacy Project, I found few positive things about BERDO. BERDO offered little support and was most focused on generating an income. I saw very little programming being done. I would guess that about 75-90 percent of the time spent by staff was in generating funds, not providing services. I was very disappointed when I asked the executive director of the organization what his goals were for the future of BERDO and his response was, "Build another 3 floors for my building". When I asked him what he would use these floors for he had a hard time coming up with a response. The current office building already has a floor empty.

BERDO does provide some much needed services and I was very happy to see the micro-financing program and its benefactors in Barisal, Bangladesh. However, the amount of money being borrowed and the amount of money in the budget to be lent doesn't seem to match...I'm not sure why. All of the borrowers are asking for larger loans and BERDO says they don't have the funds to lend them more. They received a program evaluation in 2001 and have made none of the changes suggested in the evaluation.

I have suggested that The Advocacy Project no longer partner with BERDO. I think there are other organizations that could use the services of The Advocacy Project more effectively and appreciate them more.

**The positives:**

I grew more in those three months than is conceivable. I know the effects of my time in Bangladesh will be hard to fully understand until years from now but I already know I'm a more patient, understanding, and resilient person for it. I will work hard to make sure the principals and practices I believe in and were partially shaped by this experience will contribute to a more meaningful society, community, and environment. In this way the project was a success. I hope to continue my relationship with The Advocacy Project and JJCF and I look forward to any future possibilities to work with the two organizations in the future.

