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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Arjumand Faisal Interview Narrative

3-30-2006 interview in Islamabad, Pakistan

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The **East-West Center Oral History Project** strives to capture the Center's first 50 years as seen through the eyes of staff, alumni, and supporters who have contributed to its growth.

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Arjumand Faisal

3-30-2006 interview in Islamabad, Pakistan

Personal Background

I'm a medical doctor who got training in public health and changed my career from seeing patients to seeing populations and worrying about them. I was born in Karachi on the 9th of March 1954 at the Holy Family Hospital, at quarter to eight in the evening. I had one elder brother and an elder sister.

My parents had migrated from Kanpur, India, and my uncle was the first mayor of Karachi. We had a very huge house. It had 22 bedrooms, and that's where the whole family used to live, meaning my other uncles and aunts and their children. So we had a very full childhood, interacting with people, hearing stories from the elders, sitting out under the huge peepal tree in the evening that we had in our backyard where people would talk about their day, their lifestyles, other stories, the events, wherever they have gone, so I think that's where I learned to converse with people and express myself.

Then I joined the Froebels Cambridge High School where my name really got changed. My real name is Faisal Arjumand, but in the school it just got entered as Arjumand Faisal. So ever since all my records show it, so I have to carry this name.

My most memorable childhood moments are of rejoicing together on everything, especially on festivity. It was great fun because we were all together, so everything was done unitedly. The foods were cooked and shared, going out for offering prayers was a big event. Several cars would move out. So it was a lot of fun being together.

Especially I loved the part of storytelling where people would come and narrate the events, and that really fascinated me, and I would dream how it's occurring.

No, we never talked about migration. Probably nobody wanted to talk about it because I learned, from bits and pieces here, that it was a difficult event. My parents and others, they had to move towards Bengal and then to Bombay and they had to take different routes and then come to Karachi. During that period, my mother lost her sister because she became very ill and couldn't be treated and she died. So I think nobody wanted to talk about it and everybody looked forward. There was no looking back.

So maybe that is also a part of my personality that I don't look back. I keep looking forward, always in front. I don't recall much of the past, but I do recall all these things happening. But the worst were the deaths, because then it was an extensive mourning. My uncle died very young, the one who was the mayor, so there were a lot of people coming in.

But I do recall the big parties. As being the mayor, he would invite the prime minister or others, so they would come to the house, and I do remember some security guard picking me up because I was strolling in the house, and I wasn't aware that I'm not allowed to move around. I got so worried. Why have these policemen picked me up and they're carrying me? So there were some frightening moments, also. Then we moved out of that house in 1963, so I was about nine years old. From '63-'74, we lived in rented houses in Karachi, and I went into a school which was nearer this new house. I moved out of Froebels Cambridge High School and moved into this new secondary school, which was later called Quaideen Secondary School. "Quaideen" means leaders, and the ambition of our principal was to produce leaders for Pakistan. It was a small school, but it had good education.

English medium, and when I graduated from there, I moved into the D.J. Science College, which was the leading college in Karachi, and it used to take the cream of the students. I was very fortunate to get a seat in there and spent two years. While I was a student, the war between India and Pakistan broke out, in 1971. I was doing theatre and at that time I had a group of youths called “Budding Talents” in Karachi, and we used to have some events at that time, so I had to stage a play. It was a French play, and I can tell you the title in English - *Dinner With the Family* - which is a tragedy, played in comedy.

So we had to stage that in Karachi and I had played the leading role at the age of 16. When, a few months after this, the war broke out, PTV Pakistan Television talked of doing a program on war. So one of the producers had seen me acting, and they invited me to participate in that program as a participant, and I was interviewed with “What is the role of the student.” Whatever I spoke there, in a brief spell, a few minutes, really was liked very much by the then regional director of that station.

When the program finished, he called me and he asked me to anchor the program from the next day, which was a very big surprise. From the very next day, I started conducting about a 90-minute live show on television on war. Since there was no activity in the evening, because it was a total blackout and everybody was indoor, and the only activity people had was to watch television, they all watched me. The next morning, when I walked out of the house, people were looking at me and turning and talking about me and pointing towards me, and I thought there was something wrong, so I looked at my clothes and turned around to see what’s wrong. Why’s everybody pointing towards me? I didn’t realize what was happening.

Then people started coming to me and started shaking hands and saying how good I was in the program and they really liked it. Then I realized what's happening. So I became a star overnight. There were press interviewing me, there were magazines interviewing me. I was there every night on television, with a live program, without any script at the age of 17. I did this and it was a very strange world. Suddenly my world changed because wherever I would go, people would know me. That's where I started losing friends, because they wouldn't like it. If you would go to a restaurant, people would come and ask me for an autograph or would like to shake hands or like to talk to me. If I go to the beach with friends, people would gather around me and I could not say no to them. So they started getting fed up and they started moving out, and then I started realizing what is the hardship of being famous.

So I started going into the back again and not in the limelight so much. I changed my hairstyles, I changed my spectacles, and I tried not to look what I used to look on television. When I finished my college, then I joined Dow Medical College.

I got the offer from a television station to become the producer after that, and when I told them that I have also gotten the admission in Dow Medical College, Mr. Aslam Azhar, who was the regional director, said, "I withdraw my offer." He said go and be a doctor. So I went into the medical college and I started. It was really difficult for me because it was my father's dream. He always wanted to be a doctor, but his father died at a very early age and then he had to take the burden of the family. He couldn't become one. My brother had become an engineer, so he wanted me to be the doctor. I just followed his desires, basically.

I always wanted to be a film director, that was my passion. I've been painting since my childhood. As I look into my report cards, I see my first class - I mean the B first class, the *[inaudible]* nursery class, written in my father's handwriting - interests and hobbies: painting. So I've been painting from that time, and I've been in theatre also, producing plays, and I was managing this youth group which had 450 members. Every month we would do an activity we would call "Budding Talents." Initially the press thought that I was too presumptuous about it, but when we did a function every month, they started realizing. What we would do, we would find some youth who have extraordinary talent. So people who knew photography, then we would do their exhibition. People who were painting, we would organize their exhibition. People who knew singing, we would organize their show.

So every month, around the same date, was a function. The press would report about it. First the dailies, then the weeklies, and then the monthlies. By the time the month would end, there was another function, so this cycle started repeating and people started seeing the name of "Budding Talents" almost daily, everywhere, floating around.

So we started being recognized and I was leading the group, and this group ran from 1972 to '77, when we were all about to become professionals. Five years, and then at that point we realized we could not continue it anymore because our final exams were coming. It was the last year, so we closed it, but we did many activities. So it was a very powerful, full of life, life.

At that time, also, after finishing television, I was also working in radio. I was reading news, I was participating in radio plays, doing announcements, conducting programs, and different activities on radio also. I also was a sub-editor of a children's newspaper, which

was a weekly, and that was the only newspaper for children in Pakistan. I don't know how many countries have a paper for children, and I was a sub-editor, so I was working in that. I used to work all the time. That habit has continued, I think, 'til today. I keep on working all the time.

Life Before EWC

Save a Human Life/Patient Welfare Project

So in the medical college, again, it was a very full life. When I went there, I had a very strange experience. When I was in third year, on the very first day, a boy came who was in a coma. He was brought by another boy. They were both young, early twenties maybe?

My professor looked at the boy and diagnosed him to be suffering from tuberculosis meningitis. So he told the other boy that you have to buy these injections and we have to give this gentleman, who was comatose, these injections every day 'til he recovered fully, and it may be for three months or so - not from the coma, from the disease of meningitis. Then we will put him on tablets.

So the boy asked us how much these will cost, and we told him it would cost about 60 rupees a day (about \$6 at that time). He burst into tears and started crying, so I asked him what's the matter. He said "Look, we all have come from East Pakistan" - which had become Bangladesh by then - "and this boy who's comatose, and he has lost all his family there. He's the only survivor. My father was killed and I have a mother and sisters. We both study and I work also and feed them and from where am I going to afford 60 rupees and buy medicine for him? I can't afford it and he will die, who will pay for it?"

I said to him, “Don’t worry, we’ll do something.” That day, at that moment, I asked my group mates. I said let’s pool in and buy the injections for today. So we pooled in the money and we bought the injections. I came back home and discussed it with my parents, so we collected a few hundred rupees, and arrangement was made for a week or so. But then I spoke to my friends, I said, “Look, people like him, we saw the first case was like this and there’ll be many like this and we need to do something.”

Then I came up with the idea of a project called “Save a Human Life.” What we did, we were 300 students in the class and there were 300 beds. Each one of us was allotted a bed in the hospital. Sorry, let me simplify it. We were 300 students and there were 30 wards in the hospital. Ten of us were going to each ward. In each ward there were 50 beds. So each one of us had five beds to look after. So I told my classmates that what you need is to care for five people who are admitted in your beds. If they need anything, then we will get it for them. I said I don’t know how, but we are going to raise money.

Then I went to the student’s union, spoke to the social secretary, and we formed this group. Under the patronage of the social section of the Dow Medical College student’s union, I started this project – “Save a Human Life.” The money came in, from every corner. Every student participated. They were endowed in collected money, and we had lots and lots of money. We were able to take care of every single patient who needed either the medicine, surgical supplies, clothes, or if he was a laborer, if he was in hospital and couldn’t earn a living to feed his family, we supported that also.

So the whole hospital was covered and I ran it for several years, as long as I was in the medical college. When I came out, people who were there - juniors - they had formed a registered body, and now they are there with a different name - Patient Welfare

Association, PWA, they are registered bodies and they are doing such kind of service. But what is interesting, that other hospitals in Pakistan, when students learned about it, they have also established a Patient Welfare Association. But the great part is nobody knows that it was my idea, and I have that story, the first story, and the first pamphlet still with me when we started this ward fund.

Our logo was “You can miss a lunch or forgo to drink one or two Cokes in a week. Donate to the ward fund, it will save one life.” So that’s how we worked and we progressed. Another logo that I had for my “Budding Talents” was very interesting - “Don’t give me a place to stand, but I shall move the world.”

Work in Public Health

So that’s why believing in ourselves, not asking anybody for help, and moving forward. We always believed that without other’s help, we should learn to move. So with that slogan, even after graduation and during my medical college, we launched other projects also. We found clothes for the students - the students participated in collecting clothes for the infants. The women who were coming to the Civil Hospital at Dow Medical College were so poor that they didn’t bring clothes, even to wrap the babies. In winter months, I saw when I was posted in the obstetric ward, that some of the infants died by morning. When we came for the rounds, we learned that the mother gave birth and the infant died because of cold.

So I launched this project, and we collected 900 yards of clothes in three days, and then the girls stitched it into proper pieces according to the advices. We donated it to the wards, which lasted for several periods, and we bought sweaters and things that we gave. Anyhow, I moved out of medical college and by chance I came into public health. I

always wanted to be a medical specialist, but through several stages it happened that I ended up in public health.

Life at EWC

Application Process

Then I saw one day an advertisement about Hawai'i on the notice board of the Aga Khan University. I was teaching there in the Department of Community Health Sciences. Fifty percent of the time I was teaching public health and 50 percent of the time I was seeing patients as the supervisor of the family medicine program.

And there I saw this ad, one day while walking back home, on the notice board, East-West Center scholarships. I said, "Well, let's try," and I just applied. Then the brochures from East-West Center started coming and I found them extremely appealing. This was in 1986. In that year 700 students had applied. I was among the four who got selected. We had to write a few papers and things and justification of why we wanted to go there, then we were short-listed, then we had to appear before a panel - I think it was six people - and most of them were - USEFP [*United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan*] was responsible for it. There was one Pakistani in the panel and then about five or six - I think five - foreigners, I think all Americans.

I still remember the question the lady asked me. Tell me one good reason why you would come back to Pakistan and not stay there, and I asked her in return tell me one good reason why I should stay there? (Laughter) And I told her that I have a very full life here, and I have a good house. I come from a good family background and I have all the facilities that one looks for, so I don't see the reason why I should pay in the hardships of living with the American citizen's face. I said I don't have to wash my car; I

don't have to polish my shoes or clothes. I quoted several things. So she said, I still remember the remark, "Very smart."

Choosing EWC

Anyhow, I got selected for Open Grants because I wanted to go into public health and that was the only program that was suited for taking that field. At the same time I got the Aga Khan University Scholar Award, the first award that they granted, which entitled me to go to any university that I liked. So I had applied to North Carolina, Johns Hopkins, and McGill in Canada, and I got admission in all three.

Here I had East-West Center, so it was a very tough choice, because there were two other people who got this award, and they opted for Johns Hopkins. When I told people I'm thinking of going to Hawai'i, people thought I'm mad. Why am I making that decision? I should go to North Carolina or McGill or Johns Hopkins.

Then I spoke to one person, Professor Holger Hanson, he was from University of Connecticut and was teaching at the Aga Khan University. He said, "Look, Arjumand, the university really matters for the first job. That's where people ask you from where you have graduated. The rest is people see what you have done. Nobody asks you from where you've graduated. It's a meaningless thing. You may have studied under a tree, but if you are better than others and you are performing, nobody will ask you."

So I followed his advice because my internal desire was going to go to East-West Center and the reason was its brochures. The way they attracted me, you know, the way it described the people from different cultures and their interactions and the pictures it had. You know, they were so humane and it matched my personality. So I really liked it, and the weather, and plus I dreamed of going to Hawai'i since my childhood.

I don't know, I've always thought of Hawai'i since my very childhood. I heard that name, I don't know why, I remember it. So I decided about it and AKU Scholars Award agreed to give me part of the funding, which allowed me to take my family. So I took my family and for the initial few days I was in Hale Manoa, but then I rented a place near the university. It was a nice townhouse, and I invited my family. So they joined me and we really enjoyed our time in Hawai'i.

Best Memories/Interaction with Students

The best part was the teaching I got was not through the seminars or interactions there or at the university. I think I learned most in the kitchen and after-dinner discussions. I really learned how people perceive things differently, how people interact, and how one issue is seen so differently by others. There used to be nights of fun. Every country would celebrate their nights. There used to be hundreds of nights because there were so many people celebrating something there, in Hale Manoa, and that was very good learning.

My wife would come and join me in these things, and my children would come and the openness, especially the beautiful lady Rose Nakamura, she was so welcoming and so loving. That would really encourage. It was a very different environment there in the university. So she was so loving and she created a very different environment. And then my program officer, Glenn Yamashita, they would welcome my children, hug them and they would really love to be there. I would feel so comfortable. Every family was loved and we felt so much at home.

She is a marvelous person. She has given love to I think hundreds and hundreds of people. She is like a godmother and I still have very lovely memories. If you meet her,

tell her that we still cherish those great memories of her. Everybody was so welcoming. The whole environment was so friendly. The receptionist and everybody would offer help - that was such a lovely environment. It really changed my personality. I have never seen people offering help so much and coming from such different cultures. Surprisingly, the Chinese group became my best friends there, and I used to love their food and they started loving mine. So we started changing and cooking for each other. I would give them my food and they would share their food because they were very close in the same rooms, and we were in the same kitchen. It was great fun.

On so many nights we tried to project Pakistan. I came back to do a research project here and took back two suitcases full of small things which we displayed in the International Fair. We tried very hard to perform a dance show, also, but some of the Pakistani friends who were there, they really objected very hard and on the last day we had to withdraw because they became very angry with us and we couldn't do what we wanted to. My wife took great pains to organize all that.

So I have very, very good memories, and I do remember that I was graduating on the 19th of December, and that I went in August.

It was MPH, master's in Public Health. It was 16 months. Usually people do it in two years. I finished it in 16 months because I was teaching, so I was able to take more courses and finish them earlier.

Then I went to Glenn Yamashita in August and told him please book my seat for the 20th of December, 7 a.m. in the morning, because I had checked with the flights and they told me. He said you must be kidding, no Pakistani goes back so early. I said look, if I stay a day, it will become very painful to go back. So I don't want to take the risk. I want to go

back immediately. The day I finish I should go back, because the more I get opportunities to work here - I had some offers to join some friends. They had worked in Pakistan, Melinda Wilson, John Wilson - John Wilson used to teach at East-West Center in one of the programs, he was a faculty member, and Melinda was with an American organization, both a lovely couple. They had adopted children from several countries and used to live in Hawai'i. They said they were interested if I – They inquired a bit if I would be interested to join Melinda's company. I can't recall the name, but I regretted and I said if I will stay, and work for two years - because my visa allowed me to work for two years - and Glenn was thinking I would take up the Ph.D. program, but I did not. Until that time I was so sure that I would continue my 50/50 percent. I was a very good clinician. My appointments ran up to two and a half months in Aga Khan University when I left, though I was doing family medicine, but I was always full.

Practicing at Queen's Hospital

Even in Hawai'i, I made arrangement with Queen's Hospital, and I used to go every Friday to see patients, and Bogdan was the person there, Dr. Bogdan, and he became so friendly - but since I couldn't sign, I would see the patient and prescribe everything, and he became so confident with my diagnoses and prescriptions, that he would just take and sign them and let it go. I mean, that I thought was a great honor for me, that he had so much confidence, because the American doctors can face the court very easily if they do anything wrong.

I was seeing Hawaiians, many very old people, because very old people would come from old people's homes, they would be brought in wheelchairs and I would see them and talk to them and make the diagnoses. I'd ask for the investigations and prescribe

medicines and Dr. Bogdan would just see and he'd say, "Oh! you've done a marvelous thing. You're 100 percent correct."

Initially he used to examine them and hear their stories and everything, but after a few visits he realized that all my things were perfect. So that gave me tremendous confidence, that I can work even in America and see their patients, I'm equally good. That really helped me, was to boost my confidence, because here I was teaching in Pakistan, without degrees. I just had a membership degree in community medicine when I went and had done the Part 1 of the fellowship degree. But it was all Pakistani degrees. But when I went there, and on the first day when I was being taught epidemiology, I challenged the teacher. I said, "The definition you gave of epidemiology is three years old, and now we have a new definition. It has changed." Since I was teaching state-of-the-art things, I was right on top. She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Yes, haven't you read it? Epidemiology used to be considered two D's, and the third D was also added."

Dynamics of disease. It was determinance and distribution of diseases, but a third D was added. Now it's distribution, determinance and dynamics of diseases. So it opened up a totally new horizon of looking at things, which were not looked at before. So she was quite surprised and she didn't believe me, but you know I was so strong in saying that and so confident that she really had to look back.

Then she called me and said, "You're right, and how do you know this?" I said to her, "Well, I've read Mausner and Bahn," which was the latest book at that time for epidemiology. She really liked it and since then we became really good friends. That I really liked.

Life After EWC

Joining USAID in Islamabad

When I returned from East-West Center -- there I was also nominated for the outstanding student award, though I did not get it, but I was nominated. I conveyed this here to the Aga Khan University, and then Dean Michel from the [UH] School of Public Health sent a letter about me to the head of the department. John Bryant, who was the chair of the department, writing about me how much I contributed at the school in different ways and how many activities I participated in. He was really looking forward to building a direct relationship between the Department of Community Health Sciences.

By me being there, he realized what kind of potential Pakistan has, so he wanted to develop a joint faculty program in which we could exchange. So a lot of new ideas came up, so my chairman was very proud of me and then he shared a lot of things with the dean of AKU [Aga Khan University]. They were very happy that I'd done so many things and I made presentations about the university, about the Aga Khan Foundation and everything.

So the public relations department became very active and they shared about my activities and things at the East-West Center, and it all appeared in the newspapers, including that I was nominated as the outstanding student. It so happened that I went to a conference which I was attending with another professor there - he asked me to accompany him - and there, Ray Martin, who was the head of the health section in USAID Pakistan, was reading a magazine. When he introduced me, this is Dr. Arjumand Faisal, so he looked at the page and said, "Oh, is this written about you here in the magazine? Are you the same Arjumand Faisal?"

I said, "I don't know," so I took the magazine and looked at it and saw it was all about me. I said, "Yes, I think so." He said, "Can we walk out of this conference?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Please, I need to talk to you now." I said fine, so I took leave from my professor who took me to the conference, and I went with Ray Martin up to a room at Taj Mahal Hotel at that time, now it's called Regent Hotel. So we went to his room and he said, "Look, I'm about to launch a \$62 million project in Pakistan, Pakistan Child Survival Project, and I've been looking for a person like you. What this magazine talks about, you fit into that role, and I would like you to join USAID and take lead in this project."

I said, "Look, I haven't thought about it. I want to build my career as a clinician. I've been practicing clinical medicine and I've just returned and I haven't thought about it. I'd have to talk to my university..." He said, "No, you can't say no to me. Think about it. Come and talk to me." I said, "OK - I'll do that. Let me think."

I reached home and then I got a phone call. It was again Ray Martin. He said, "I've spoken to USAID about this, we are sending you a ticket, and you are coming for one official interview on that date." I said, "Ray, give me time. I have to talk to my university. I have to think about this." He said, "You can think about it, but come for the interview." And here I get a letter from USAID and a ticket to come to Islamabad, and he again calls me and says, "You are coming for the interview. You may decline the offer, but come for the interview."

So there I go and I appeared before people. As soon as I finished the interview, there were people to take me around Islamabad because I think I came to Islamabad after 18 years or so. Maybe more, so yeah, more than 20 years after. So I was not aware of what

Islamabad was like, and then they had a car for me and a person who took me around, showed me what prices, what kinds of places to live and everything. I said, “What are you people doing to me?” They said, “We are preparing you for this because you’ll be joining us in the next two weeks.” I said, “That’s impossible.”

But I returned back. I spoke to my chairman and he said, “Well, it’s a great opportunity and since you’re going to USAID, you will be the first person who will be moving out of the AKU department and contributing to the health system in Pakistan, so we will feel proud of you. It will be very good and we will allow you to go. There will be no binding.” Though they had given me the Aga Khan University scholars award, according to that I had to come back and serve the university, but they allowed me.

So I moved into this program, but unfortunately before we could launch the program even - we’d just started to launch it – then the Pressler Amendment came and USAID was stopped in Pakistan. So we knew that USAID would close in the next year or so (when the funds already received would dry out). Well I was there, still working, trying to mobilize whatever money we had and make the best use of it, and again in USAID, after the first year I got the meritorious honor award, which very few people get. From the mission director. And I learned a lot in USAID. It was very, very helpful.

I think whatever I had learned in Hawaii I could apply here and I interacted with people coming from Harvard University whom we hired as our technical assistant team. So they were very leading people and I got opportunities to interact with them and learn constantly.

Joining WHO

Then a WHO delegation came to evaluate the Child Survival Project, two components - Control of Childhood Disease Program and Acute Respiratory Infections Control Program. And USAID designated me to be part of the team with them, of the evaluation team. I spent three weeks with them. This delegation I worked with them for three weeks and we presented the report and they were leaving. We said goodbye to them. I was at the National Institute of Health for the last meeting. They were leaving for the airport, we said goodbye, the car moved, and then the car stopped. The car reversed and I saw this gentleman rolling down the window and he asked me, "Would you like to work with WHO [*World Health Organization*]?" And I said, "What?" He said, "Would you like to work with WHO?" I said "I'm employed by USAID." He said "OK, maybe as a consultant." I said, "Fine, why not?" And the car moved ahead.

So just after a few weeks, I guess, I got a call from WHO and they wanted me to come over for three months as a short-term consultant in WHO/EMRO [*Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean*] Alexandria [*Egypt*]. So I spoke to my boss, Lois Bradshaw and she said, "Well, we can allow you leave without pay, and you can go." She said, "You should go. It would be a very good opportunity because USAID will close in a year and a half, so it will be a good opportunity for you."

So I went to WHO, but I went for six weeks. I told them, "I can't come for three months," so they accepted that. In the third week they offered me a job, and they said, "We would like you to take this job permanently. We have a position, but you'll have to go through this whole application process." I said, "Well, I'm not prepared for that. I'm working in USAID, I'll have to ask them, and I'll have to talk to my family." They were

kind of puzzled because a UN job, very few people decline UN jobs. So I came back. I spoke to my wife. I spoke to my parents and they all supported the idea. So I ended up going to WHO, but I didn't like the bureaucracy. It was too complicated for me.

In Alexandria, and it was too complicated. I think within the first six months I went to the finance department telling them that I want to resign, what will be the implications. They calculated and they told me that I'll end up paying \$80 thousand if I resigned, so I realized I couldn't. I didn't have \$80 thousand at that time. Then it worked out and as soon as possible, I left WHO and came back to Pakistan.

Work as Independent Consultant

I started working as an independent consultant and the World Bank hired me initially for the first three years. I went to WHO in '93. I returned from Hawaii in '88, I joined USAID in '89. I returned in December '88 and I joined in '89. From '89-'93 I was at USAID. In '93 I went to WHO, '96 I returned from WHO and then I became an independent consultant from '96, '97, '98.

I worked mostly for the World Bank as their consultant in health. In '99 and 2000 I worked mostly for Asian Development Bank. Then London School of Hygiene hired me as their consultant for a year or so and then I finished work with them in 2002.

Meanwhile, others also hired me, like Family Health International, PSI - Population Services International from USA, Future's Group from USA as team leader for their projects in Pakistan, and other organizations. Family Planning Association of Pakistan, and others.

But in 2002 I formed a group of consultants. I realized I was working for the others but was not being able to give 100 percent because there were limitations and restrictions.

When I work as an independent consultant, I'm hired by somebody else and then I work with constraints, because I wanted to work more openly, so I founded this group - we named it The Professionals Group - but before launching it, my friends thought that I'm too well-known now, in the circle, so they wanted me to take the benefit of my name, so we changed the name and we called it Arjumand and Associates – AAA – (A group of Consultants).

There were four initially who joined with me and we formed this group, but one of them got the offer in the UN service, so he left. Then we were initially three, we started working, then another one after a year thought of forming his own NGO and he's moved out and formed his own NGO. Then after two or three years, the one person who was left with me, he found a job with an American organization which was very lucrative and very high up position, so he also moved out to that.

But Arjumand and Associates is established, and in the first three years of our functioning, we did about 30 projects. I was the team leader in many of them. We have dealt with international firms and international universities, like London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Currently we are working for Johns Hopkins University. Emory University also approached us but we couldn't do it - we were overloaded at that time. So it has been a period of continuous growth.

EWC's Impact

Well, I learned to smile, a lot. That was a major change. There were certain personality changes in me. I developed a great understanding of why people, different people, react in different ways. For example, we were having an intercultural course seminar at the Center, and they were asking how do the brides dress up in your community. I

mentioned well, they wear red clothes, and somebody got up and said, “Red? Oh my god! Red on a wedding day? It can’t be possible.” I said, “Why? Red is the color of weddings.” “Red is not the color of weddings!” So it started opening up my mind. It really opened up my mind a lot to adapt to others, to understand others, and to feel why people would react, to become much more tolerant and to really open up.

In public health, I learned a lot – the courses. I found that my colleagues that went to Hopkins, when I came back, I really found I was more enriched than them, and it really reflected when you were working. They were very bookish. They only knew the theories, but East-West Center had taught me to evolve into a society and to live with a society in a different way. So I thought that I had much more skills, a better human being and a better person to understand things than them. Though they may be theoretically much more stronger in epidemiology or maybe biostatistics or something, but I found that I had a better understanding of the systems and things and of people.

How would I want to be remembered, well, just people would think that I was an understanding person. That’s all. That I could really understand, because I do try to understand people and East-West Center contributed a lot in that manner. But my mentor Aslam Azhar, who is the chairman of the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation in Pakistan Television, also taught me how to value poor, because it was at that time when I learned how to value poor and I could see him respecting people.