

Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains

ULAB Center for South Asian Studies (ULAB C-SAS)

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Business Administration



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Internship Report Approval Form

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Letter of Transmittal

1 September, 2025

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman,

Senior Lecturer ULAB School of Business (USB)

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

688 Beribadh Road, Dhaka-1207

Subject: Submission of Internship report on “Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains”

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to submit my Internship Report entitled “Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains.” This report has been prepared as a requirement for the completion of my Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

In preparing this report, I have drawn upon the academic concepts and analytical skills acquired during my BBA program, as well as insights from my internship and research experiences. The study synthesizes course knowledge with up-to-date information from project documentation, comparative international cases, and relevant literature to provide a thorough analysis of how foreign aid can support Bangladesh’s maritime sector and blue economy ambitions.

Throughout my academic journey and the report process, I have endeavored to maintain the highest standards of research and integrity, closely following the guidelines and feedback provided by you. I sincerely hope this report reflects my learning and contributes usefully to the field.

I would be honored if you would kindly accept this internship report and provide your valuable feedback.

Yours Sincerely



Mirza Didarul Islam

ID: 221011212

Bachelor of Business Administration; Concentration: Supply Chain Management

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank many of those who helped me from securing my internship to completing and submitting the Internship Report Paper properly.

First of all, I would like to thank my intern Supervisor Mr. Shawkat Tanveer Rahman Sir for his valuable guidance, encouragement, and insights. He guided me throughout my internship process for which I am ever so grateful to him. Without his encouragement and support, my internship might have been an impossible task.

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I also wish to thank Iftakhar Ahmed, from whom I learned about the real-world dynamics of surviving in the corporate environment. His support was crucial in navigating office culture and understanding day-to-day professional responsibilities. His practical guidance and encouragement made my workplace experience much more manageable and enriching.

Lastly, I thank my Family and Friends for supporting me mentally, physically, morally, and financially.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
HR	Human Resources
SCM	Supply Chain Management
ULAB	University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

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Part – A: Internship Report

Chapter 1: Internship Preparation

1.1 Motivation and what I Expect to Learn from this Internship:

My decision to pursue an internship at the Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh stemmed from a deep-seated desire to gain hands-on experience in research methodology and academic writing. As a student majoring in Supply Chain Management, I recognized that contemporary business challenges increasingly require interdisciplinary approaches that combine analytical thinking with research capabilities. The opportunity to work in a prestigious research institution like C-SAS presented the perfect platform to develop these essential skills.

My primary motivation was to learn the systematic process of conducting academic research, from conceptualization to publication. Having been exposed to theoretical frameworks in my coursework, I was eager to understand how research translates into practical insights that can influence policy and business decisions. C-SAS, with its focus on South Asian regional issues, economic development, and strategic policy research, offered an ideal environment to explore complex socio-economic phenomena that directly relate to supply chain dynamics in developing economies.

Furthermore, I was particularly drawn to the center's emphasis on producing research that addresses real-world challenges facing South Asian countries. This alignment with practical problem-solving resonated with my academic background in supply chain management, where efficiency and optimization are paramount.

1.2 Internship Search Process:

My journey to securing this internship began through my active involvement as President of ULAB Kaleidoscope, a initiative under the Center for Enterprise and Society (CES). This leadership role provided me with extensive exposure to the academic and research community at ULAB CES, particularly through interactions with researchers associated with both CES and C-SAS. Through these engagements, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the research work being conducted at these centers and the opportunities available for student involvement.

The connection between CES and C-SAS proved instrumental in my application process, as both centers share the same director and maintain collaborative relationships. My active participation in various events, seminars, and activities organized by ULAB Kaleidoscope had already established my reputation as a dedicated and organized student capable of handling complex projects. The faculty members and research staff had observed my work ethic, organizational skills, and ability to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously during my tenure as club president.

When the internship opportunity at C-SAS became available, my existing network within the university's research community provided the necessary advocacy for my candidacy. The recommendation from CES members, who had witnessed my organizational capabilities and commitment firsthand, significantly strengthened my application. This experience reinforced the importance of building professional networks and maintaining active engagement in

academic communities, as these relationships often provide access to opportunities that might not be widely advertised.

1.3 Internship Interview Experience:

The interview process for the C-SAS internship position was both comprehensive and engaging, designed to assess not only my academic capabilities but also my research aptitude and cultural fit within the organization. The interview panel consisted of senior researchers and administrative staff who were well-versed in the center's research priorities and operational requirements.

During the interview, I was asked to discuss my academic background in supply chain management and explain how these skills could contribute to the center's research objectives. I emphasized my analytical thinking capabilities, experience with data analysis, and understanding of economic systems – all of which are crucial for conducting policy research. The interviewers were particularly interested in my leadership experience with ULAB Kaleidoscope and how I had managed various projects and events, viewing this as evidence of my organizational and project management capabilities.

One of the most challenging aspects of the interview involved discussing my research interests and how they aligned with C-SAS's focus areas. I was able to articulate my interest in economic development, regional cooperation, and the intersection between supply chain dynamics and broader economic policies. This discussion demonstrated my ability to think critically about complex issues and my potential to contribute meaningfully to the center's research agenda.

Overall, the interview experience was positive and reinforced my enthusiasm for joining the C-SAS team. The panel's questions were thoughtful and revealed their commitment to finding interns who could contribute substantively to their research projects rather than simply fulfilling administrative roles.

1.4 About the Organization: Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS)

The Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh represents one of the most prestigious research institutions in the region, focusing on comprehensive analysis of South Asian political economy, regional cooperation, and strategic studies. Established as part of ULAB's commitment to policy-relevant research, C-SAS has positioned itself as a leading think tank that bridges academic rigor with practical policy applications.

The organizational structure of C-SAS is designed to promote collaborative research while maintaining high academic standards. The center operates under the direction of distinguished faculty members who bring extensive experience in both academic research and policy practice. Research staff includes both senior researchers and junior associates, creating a mentoring environment that supports professional development at all levels.

In terms of size and scope, C-SAS is a compact but highly focused organization that prioritizes quality over quantity in its research outputs. The center's business focus centers on producing research that can inform policy decisions and contribute to regional development initiatives.

Chapter 2: About the Internship

2.1 Position Description and Work Environment:

As a Research Intern at the Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS), I was integrated into a dynamic and intellectually stimulating environment that gathered both independent work and collaborative engagement. My position involved supporting various research initiatives while developing practical skills in academic research methodologies, project management, and internal activity timeline and task tracker.

The office environment at C-SAS was designed to promote scholarly activity and collaborative research. I worked within a team of eight individuals, comprising seven members from the Center for Enterprise and Society (CES) and myself representing C-SAS. This interdisciplinary team structure reflected the collaborative relationship between the two centers and provided opportunities to engage with diverse research perspectives and methodological approaches.

My daily routine followed a structured schedule from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, which provided consistency while allowing flexibility for various research activities. However, the nature of research work often extended beyond standard office hours, particularly when events, seminars, or project deadlines required additional commitment. These extended hours, while challenging, provided valuable insights into the dedication required for high-quality research and the importance of meeting academic and professional commitments.

The physical workspace was conducive to both individual research tasks and team collaboration. Access to research databases, academic journals, and reference materials was comprehensive, enabling thorough investigation of research topics. The office also featured meeting spaces for team discussions, presentation rehearsals, and stakeholder meetings, which were frequently utilized for project coordination and knowledge sharing.

My everyday responsibilities encompassed a diverse range of activities that provided comprehensive exposure to the research process. Primary tasks included data collection and analysis, literature reviews, report writing, grant proposal preparation, and survey design and implementation. Each of these activities required different skill sets and provided unique learning opportunities that contributed to my overall professional development. This supportive culture was essential for developing confidence in research methodologies and analytical thinking.

2.2 Key Learning Experiences and Skill Development:

My internship at C-SAS provided extensive learning opportunities that significantly enhanced both my technical and professional capabilities. One of my most significant contributions involved actively participating in the development of the research paper "Fortune at the Bottom of the Bay." This experience provided comprehensive exposure to the research process, from initial conceptualization through final publication preparation.

For this project, I was responsible for collecting and analyzing data related to local enterprises and their supply chain practices. This work required developing systematic approaches to data

collection, and understanding how to extract relevant insights from complex organizational information.

The grant writing experience proved particularly valuable for understanding how research institutions secure funding for their projects. I assisted in preparing and submitting a project proposal to the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and drafting an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). These experiences taught me about the strategic elements of successful grant applications, including project design, budget preparation, stakeholder analysis, and impact measurement frameworks.

One of the most comprehensive learning experiences involved conducting a nationwide survey on youth aspirations across various universities in Bangladesh. This project required developing survey instruments, coordinating data collection across multiple institutions, and managing a database of over 200 responses. The survey focused on employment prospects, entrepreneurship attitudes, and perceptions of democracy among Bangladeshi youth, topics that required sensitive handling and systematic analytical approaches.

Complementing the quantitative survey work, I facilitated Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions that provided qualitative insights into youth perspectives on career development and democratic participation. These sessions required developing facilitation skills, managing group dynamics, and extracting meaningful insights from complex discussions involving diverse participants.

To improve organizational efficiency, I designed an internal activity timeline and task tracker for C-SAS operations. This project required understanding organizational workflows, identifying efficiency bottlenecks, and developing practical solutions that could be implemented within existing resource constraints. The successful implementation of this system demonstrated my ability to identify practical problems and develop effective solutions.

2.3 Connection Between Academic Learning and Professional Experience:

The intersection between my academic background in Supply Chain Management and my research work at C-SAS proved more significant than initially anticipated. Supply chain management principles, particularly those related to systems thinking, process optimization, and stakeholder coordination, provided valuable frameworks for understanding research project management and policy analysis.

My academic training in analytical thinking and quantitative methods proved directly applicable to data collection and analysis tasks at C-SAS. The systematic approach to problem-solving emphasized in supply chain education translated effectively to research methodology, where systematic investigation and evidence-based conclusions are paramount. Concepts such as process mapping, bottleneck identification, and performance measurement found direct application in research project management and organizational efficiency improvement initiatives.

The emphasis on stakeholder management in supply chain education provided valuable preparation for engaging with diverse research participants, from business representatives to survey respondents to focus group participants. Understanding how to balance different

stakeholder interests and communicate effectively with various audiences proved essential for successful research implementation.

The project management skills developed through supply chain coursework proved particularly valuable for managing multiple research tasks simultaneously, meeting deadlines, and coordinating activities across different project components. These organizational capabilities were recognized and utilized by supervisors, who assigned me responsibilities that required systematic planning and execution.

Chapter 3: Self-Reflection

3.1 Positive Aspects of the Internship Experience:

My internship experience at C-SAS provided numerous positive learning opportunities that exceeded my initial expectations. The exposure to rigorous academic research methodologies gave me comprehensive understanding of how scholarly work contributes to policy development and social change. Working on the "Fortune at the Bottom of the Bay" research paper was particularly rewarding, as it allowed me to see how academic research can address practical business challenges while contributing to broader economic understanding.

The collaborative work environment gave intellectual growth and professional development in ways that traditional classroom learning cannot replicate. The grant writing experience was particularly valuable, providing insights into the competitive landscape of research funding and the strategic thinking required for successful proposal development. Understanding how research institutions secure resources for their work provided practical knowledge about the business side of academic research, which is often overlooked in traditional academic programs.

The survey research and focus group facilitation experiences enhanced my quantitative and qualitative research skills while providing direct engagement with research subjects. These experiences taught me about ethical considerations in research, the importance of systematic data collection, and the challenges of extracting meaningful insights from complex human perspectives and behaviors.

The opportunity to improve organizational efficiency through the activity timeline and task tracker was personally satisfying, as it demonstrated my ability to identify practical problems and develop effective solutions. This experience reinforced my interest in organizational improvement and process optimization, areas that align well with my academic background and career interests.

3.2 Areas for Improvement and Development:

Reflecting on my internship experience, I recognize several areas where I could have performed more effectively and contributed more substantially to the organization's objectives. My initial unfamiliarity with academic research conventions sometimes slowed my progress on literature review and citation tasks. More thorough preparation in academic writing styles and research methodologies before beginning the internship would have enabled faster integration into research projects.

Time management proved challenging when juggling multiple research tasks simultaneously, particularly when project deadlines coincided. Developing more sophisticated prioritization techniques and communication strategies for managing competing demands would have enhanced my effectiveness and reduced stress during peak work periods.

My technical skills in data analysis software and statistical packages were adequate but not optimal for some research tasks. Investing time in developing advanced capabilities in

statistical analysis software would have enabled me to contribute more substantially to quantitative research components and reduce reliance on colleagues for technical support.

C-SAS could enhance its internship program by providing more structured orientation sessions that introduce interns to academic research conventions, institutional procedures, and available resources. A formal mentorship system pairing interns with senior researchers could provide more systematic guidance and feedback throughout the internship period.

Additionally, the organization could benefit from developing more systematic project management systems that help coordinate multiple research initiatives and ensure efficient resource utilization. While my task tracker system addressed some of these needs, a more comprehensive project management infrastructure could enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

3.3 Future Development Priorities and Organizational Recommendations:

Based on my internship experience, I have identified several priorities for continued professional development that will enhance my effectiveness in future research and policy analysis roles. Advanced training in statistical analysis and data visualization techniques would strengthen my quantitative research capabilities and enable more sophisticated analytical contributions to research projects.

Developing stronger grant writing and proposal development skills would enhance my ability to contribute to organizational sustainability and project development. This includes understanding donor priorities, developing compelling project narratives, and preparing realistic budget estimates for complex multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Enhanced presentation and communication skills, particularly for academic and policy audiences, would enable more effective dissemination of research findings and greater impact on policy debates. This includes both written communication skills for academic publications and oral presentation skills for conferences and stakeholder meetings.

For my next position, I want to continue developing systematic approaches to complex problem-solving while maintaining focus on practical applications and implementation considerations. The intersection between analytical rigor and practical relevance that characterizes C-SAS's work represents an approach I want to continue pursuing in future roles.

To improve its internship program, C-SAS should consider implementing structured skill-building workshops that introduce interns to essential research tools and methodologies. Topics could include academic writing conventions, statistical analysis software, survey design principles, and grant writing techniques. These workshops would accelerate intern integration and enhance their contributions to organizational objectives.

Finally, C-SAS could enhance its impact by developing more systematic approaches to disseminating research findings and engaging policy audiences. While the center produces high-quality research, enhanced communication strategies could increase the policy influence and social impact of this important work.

Chapter 4: Personal Development Plan

4.1 Career Plan and Next Steps:

Having completed my internship at the Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS), my professional focus has shifted towards building a career directly within the supply chain industry. My initial motivation for joining C-SAS was the opportunity to gain foundational research experience and improve my academic writing skills as an investment I believed would enhance my eligibility for future scholarships and postgraduate opportunities. The experience gave me firsthand knowledge of rigorous research practices and allowed me to collaborate on academic papers, which I recognize will be valuable should I pursue further studies or seek research-based awards in the future.

Now, having achieved my primary aim of learning the research process and gaining exposure to structured academic work, I have decided to transition from the world of policy research to the supply chain sector, which aligns more directly with my academic background and evolving career ambitions. I am currently exploring industry-based opportunities in logistics, procurement, operations, and warehouse management. I am confident that the analytical, organizational, and data management skills developed during my time at C-SAS provide a strong advantage as I move into roles that require critical thinking and systematic problem-solving.

In the short term, my goal is to secure an entry-level position in a reputable supply chain or logistics company where I can contribute toward optimizing processes and support efficient business operations. Over the next few years, I hope to progress into roles such as operations analyst, procurement executive, or logistics coordinator. Long-term, I am interested in pursuing supply chain certifications and potentially returning to higher studies in business or supply chain management, drawing on my research background and industry experience to support scholarship applications and academic advancement.

4.2 Technical and Interpersonal Skill Development Priorities:

To support this career transition, I am committed to further developing both my technical and interpersonal skills. Technically, I plan to enhance my proficiency in data analytics, Excel, ERP systems, and supply chain software, while also deepening my practical understanding of core logistics concepts such as inventory management and demand planning. I intend to pursue certifications such as CPIM or CSCP to validate my technical capabilities and increase my competitiveness in the job market.

The research and project management skills gained while at C-SAS such as organizing data, managing timelines, and producing clear reports, will be continually built upon to suit corporate contexts. On the interpersonal side, I will hone my communication, presentation, and teamwork abilities, as these are essential for collaborating with cross-functional departments and effectively engaging with colleagues and stakeholders in dynamic industry settings. I will also focus on professional networking, attending industry events and leveraging both online and in-person connections to broaden my understanding of the supply chain landscape.

Ultimately, my personal development plan centers on blending the analytical rigor and systematic thinking acquired during my research internship with the operational demands and teamwork required in the private sector supply chain domain. I am confident that this combination will enable me to contribute meaningfully and grow quickly in my future roles.

Part – B: Research Segment
Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue
Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in
Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains.

Executive Summary

This research investigates the role of foreign aid in strengthening Bangladesh's maritime supply chains to realize the country's blue economy potential. Following the resolution of maritime boundary disputes, Bangladesh gained access to a vast maritime area, opening opportunities for economic activities such as fishing, offshore energy, and shipping. Despite these opportunities, critical challenges remain, notably significant delays and inefficiencies in port operations, with container dwell times at Chittagong Port far exceeding global standards, resulting in considerable economic losses.

Between 2015 and 2024, over \$3.4 billion in foreign aid from major international donors including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Japan International Cooperation Agency was invested in Bangladesh's maritime infrastructure, technology, and institutional capacity building. The study evaluates the measurable outcomes of these investments through a detailed thematic analysis and compares Bangladesh's experience with countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Ghana, and Pacific Island nations.

Findings show that foreign aid has contributed to notable improvements, including a record container throughput of 3.276 million TEUs at Chittagong Port, a 7.4% increase from the previous year, and progress in reducing container dwell times through automation and modernization. However, Bangladesh's project success rate of 75% lags behind leading counterparts like Vietnam, which achieved an 85% success rate due to stronger institutional capacity and more coordinated donor engagement.

The research highlights that success relies not only on funding volume but critically on effective integration of infrastructure development, technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional reform. It identifies governance quality, absorptive capacity of institutions, and donor coordination as vital factors influencing aid effectiveness.

To maximize future benefits, the study recommends adopting comprehensive, integrated blue economy programs, enhancing institutional frameworks, improving coordination among donors, and pursuing innovative financing mechanisms such as blue bonds and carbon markets. Additionally, emphasizing regional cooperation and environmental sustainability is essential to sustaining long-term growth.

In conclusion, while foreign aid has substantially advanced Bangladesh's maritime supply chains, addressing institutional weaknesses and learning from international best practices are crucial for unlocking the full potential of the blue economy to drive sustainable economic growth and development.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

Bangladesh changes from looking like a land lock type development view to becoming an important sea nation is one of the biggest shifts in modern economic history of the country. After the long sea border problem was solved by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Bangladesh got right over around 118,813 square kilometer sea area in Bay of Bengal. This area goes almost 2,200 meter deep and open many chances like fishing, offshore energy, sea tourism, international shipping and also mineral collection.

The idea of blue economy is now getting more power in many developing countries as it tries to balance growth with care for environment. World Bank call blue economy as using ocean resource in a way that give growth, better jobs and livelihood, but also keep the ocean healthy. In Bangladesh case, blue economy gives around 3.33 percent to national GDP, around 6.2 billion dollars in 2014-15, which mean there is still big chance to make more economic growth and make the economy wider.

But to get this chance, Bangladesh need to fix big problem in sea supply chain and port system which is making slow use of resources and less benefit. Chittagong port, which handle more than 90 percent of sea trade, show this problem. Here container stay 7 to 10 days when in world good standard is only 2 to 3 days. Ship turnaround time is around 6 to 7 days, which is much slower than global standard. Because of this, the country loses around 92 million dollar every year, almost 1.5 percent of export earnings.

In this situation, foreign aid becomes very important to change the sea supply chain and support blue economy growth. World Bank, Asian Development Bank, JICA and other donors already gave more than 3.4 billion dollars since 2015 for sea and blue economy projects. These projects cover port modern system, new technology, skill training and also stronger institution so that the bottleneck in supply chain can be reduced while also keeping development greener.

This study is not only for Bangladesh but also for other developing countries where aid can play role in blue economy. As climate change, high population and less land resource make problem for normal economic activity, the sea resource is becoming more important option for sustainable growth. Knowing how foreign aid can really make sea supply chain stronger is very important for policymakers, development workers and donor groups who want to make their investment in blue economy more effective and useful.

1.2 Research Objective:

Primary Objective: The main goal is to see how much foreign aid really can help Bangladesh to make its sea supply chain stronger and how it adds value for blue economy, also compare with what other countries are doing in same area.

Break down:

1. Assess the impact of foreign aid on improving Bangladesh's maritime supply chain efficiency and capacity from 2015 to 2024.
2. Compare Bangladesh's experience with other countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Ghana, and Pacific Islands.
3. Provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the impact of foreign aid on Bangladesh's blue economy based on best practices.

1.3 Research Question:

This research addresses five interconnected questions that collectively examine the relationship between foreign aid interventions and blue economy development outcomes:

1. What measurable improvements in Bangladesh's maritime supply chains have resulted from foreign aid, and which types of aid have been most effective in similar countries?
2. What best practices from international aid interventions can be applied to enhance Bangladesh's maritime supply chain development?
3. How can Bangladesh leverage these insights to sustainably strengthen its blue economy through foreign aid?

1.4 Scope of The Research:

The report looks at how foreign aid from 2015 to 2024 has helped Bangladesh improve its maritime supply chains and grow its blue economy. It examines what worked and what didn't, compares Bangladesh's experience with other countries, and offers practical advice for making aid more effective and sustainable in the future.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Blue Economy Development:

Blue economy is a new idea that goes more than the normal sector-based ocean economy, it tries to keep balance between growth, environment care and also social fairness. First it was talked by Pauli (2010), who stresses on using resources in a circular way and with more efficiency. Later on, groups like World Bank (2017) also formalized it by saying blue economy is about using sea resources in a way that gives economic growth, more jobs and also keeps the sea system healthy. This broad idea shows how fisheries, tourism, offshore energy and shipping are all connected, so it calls for better governance and also working together of different groups (Vottero, Nisar, Prabhakar, & Chitty, 2021).

Research on blue economy shows many problems specially in developing countries. Weak infrastructure, less regulatory power and weak institutions stop the big economic chance from becoming a real benefit (Senaratne & Zimbroff, 2019). For example, poor port system and slow supply chain make high cost and reduce export power (Lam & Notteboom, 2014). To solve this problem, countries need not only money but also skill training, better cooperation of sectors and also new technology.

For method, some scholars use both number-based study and also qualitative study, so that they can catch both social, ecological and economic side of blue economy (Ahmad, Jeevan, & Ruslan, 2024). This mixed way is more useful to see both the result and the real-life situation of how things are applied.

2.2 Foreign Aid Effectiveness in Maritime Development:

The role of foreign aid in helping economic growth has been discussed a lot. Some early critics like Easterly (2003) and Rajan and Subramanian (2008) said aid has very little effect on growth. But later studies show that aid can work if it is used in the right way, especially in certain sectors (Clemens, Radelet, Bhavnani, & Bazzi, 2012). In sea-related areas, Greve (2022) points out five main ways foreign investment can help export growth. These are building infrastructure, improving connection, lowering transaction cost, making market easier to reach, and increasing local skill and capacity.

Notably, the benefits of aid in improving maritime supply chains often emerge first at micro levels such as port operations, logistics, and fisheries management before influencing macroeconomic indicators (Kotsadam et al., 2018). For example, Vietnam's investments in transport corridors and port modernization contributed measurably to poverty reduction and export growth (World Bank, 2006; Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2012).

Building capacities to absorb and maintain technological advances remains a critical challenge for many developing countries. Without addressing institutional and human resource constraints, aid investments risk delivering only short-term gains.

2.3 Comparative Experiences in Blue Economy Development:

Indonesia presents a valuable case with its Blue Economy Roadmap focusing on ecosystem-based spatial planning, particularly through Fisheries Management Areas and Marine Protected

Areas (World Bank, 2023). Despite progress, coordination challenges among ministries and limited private sector engagement hinder full realization of potential (Hobbs, 2025). Programs combining conservation with community livelihoods, such as coral reef restoration and mangrove rehabilitation, illustrate pathways for sustainable development.

Vietnam's case exemplifies long-term, coordinated aid efforts. Success in port and transport infrastructure modernization, notably via Japanese Official Development Assistance and partnerships with the World Bank and ADB, has created integrated logistics corridors enabling enhanced trade efficiency (GRIPS, 2003). The government's ability to sustain funding and institutional reforms has been central to success.

Sri Lanka leverages its geographic advantage to develop transshipment hubs and free trade zones. The Colombo port, managed via public-private partnerships, exemplifies how strategic infrastructure investments, combined with services diversification, can enhance competitiveness (David, 2024).

Pacific Island nations rely heavily on blue economy sectors, often accounting for a large share of GDP (IMF, 2024). However, remoteness, limited economies of scale, and institutional challenges result in lower aid effectiveness (Feeny & McGillray, 2021). Nevertheless, collaborative regional efforts in fisheries management present promising examples of shared governance.

Ghana's integration of climate resilience and blue economy development, particularly via mangrove conservation and carbon market initiatives, showcases innovative financing and community engagement pathways applicable to similar environments (World Bank, 2022).

2.4 Maritime Supply Chain Management and Innovations:

Maritime supply chains have transformed into complex, integrated networks spanning ports, carriers, and logistics providers. The trend toward digitalization—including Internet of Things (IoT) applications, artificial intelligence, and blockchain—has revolutionized supply chain visibility and efficiency (Heilig, Lalla-Ruiz, & Voß, 2017). The adoption of these technologies depends heavily on recipient countries' technical capacity and regulatory frameworks.

Sustainability has become a critical factor in maritime logistics, with environmental management gaining prominence. Efforts to reduce pollution, optimize resource use, and incorporate circular economy principles within port operations are increasingly common (Acciaro et al., 2014; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019). Effective supply chain management requires coordination among multiple stakeholders and seamless information flow, emphasizing the role of collaboration and shared governance (Christopher, 2016).

2.5 Institutional and Governance Dimensions:

Institutional theory posits that formal and informal rules critically influence economic outcomes (North, 1990). Robust institutional frameworks and governance quality enhance aid effectiveness by enabling efficient resource allocation, enforcing contracts, and coordinating stakeholder actions. Institutional weaknesses, conversely, undermine project implementation and sustainability (Andrews, 2013). The role of informal institutions and social networks in

shaping development outcomes further complicates the picture, especially in contexts with limited formal capacity (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004).

Governance quality, encompassing transparency, accountability, and regulatory efficiency, is consistently linked with successful aid absorption, as demonstrated in numerous empirical studies (Burnside & Dollar, 2000). Maritime sectors, with their multi-actor complexity, are particularly sensitive to governance challenges.

2.6 Technology Transfer and Capacity Building:

Effective technology transfer involves more than equipment delivery; it requires building absorptive capacity—the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply new knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Investments in education, training, and institutional reform enhance technology adoption (Hoekman, Maskus, & Saggi, 2005). Tacit knowledge transfer is often the most challenging, requiring socialization processes and experiential learning (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Successful aid programs integrate technology transfer with capacity building to sustain benefits.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Type of Research: Exploratory

This is an **Exploratory** Research based on the purpose of the study. This research is a Qualitative Research based on methodology. Based on Data Collection, this is a Secondary Research.

3.2 Research Design: Qualitative

Using Yin's multiple case study framework, the research focuses on Bangladesh as the primary case and compares it with Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Ghana, and Pacific Island nations. This approach allows for in-depth analysis of each context and cross-case comparisons to identify patterns and generalizable insights. The **qualitative** design emphasizes depth over breadth, seeking to understand why some aid interventions succeed while others fail, considering factors such as infrastructure, institutional capacity, technology adoption, and stakeholder engagement.

3.3 Data Collection Methods: Secondary Sources

Data were collected through extensive analysis of **secondary** sources including donor agency reports, government documents, port authority statistics, academic articles, and international databases. Triangulation of these documents ensured comprehensive and credible insights without the use of primary data collection methods such as interviews or surveys.

3.4 Data Analysis: Thematic

For this report I use thematic analysis. First I read all the documents very carefully one by one, like policy paper and project report and also some number data about foreign aid in Bangladesh sea supply chain. While reading I took short note and mark some word or sentence that come up again and again. I then put similar points in group, for example topic like how aid is used, ports and infrastructure, strength of office, using new technology, and how many people or group are part of the work.

After this when the main topic looks clear, I try to put this group together so can see what kind of pattern is coming again in the documents. This way, I can tell which area is getting more attention, or which area many projects is facing same problem.

This type of work helps me see not only number result but also other stuff like change in rules or helping people to learn new things. So the writing can show more real situation, not just the figure from report. In this way, I try to look at all side of the aid job, so nothing get missed out.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Measurable Improvements in Bangladesh's Maritime Supply Chains Linked to Foreign Aid

The analysis reveals mixed but positive outcomes from foreign aid interventions in Bangladesh's maritime sector during 2015-2024. Several key improvements can be directly attributed to foreign aid investments:

Port Infrastructure and Capacity Enhancement: Bangladesh received over \$3.4 billion in foreign aid since 2015 for maritime and blue economy projects from major donors including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This investment has contributed to measurable improvements in container handling capacity. Chittagong Port achieved a record 3.276 million TEUs in 2024, representing a 7.4% growth from 2023, despite facing political unrest and floods.

Container Dwell Time Improvements: While still above global benchmarks, container dwell times at Chittagong Port have shown improvement from the historical 7-10 days. The World Bank's Container Port Performance Index 2023 indicates that reducing dwell time from 11 days to the international benchmark of 3 days could save hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Recent automation initiatives supported by foreign aid are targeting further reductions.

Technology Transfer and Modernization: Foreign aid has facilitated the introduction of automation services, e-gate pass systems, and modernized container operating systems at Chittagong Port. These technological improvements, supported by international donors, have contributed to the port's record-breaking container handling performance despite operational challenges.

Project Success Rate: Bangladesh achieved a 75% project success rate for foreign aid-supported maritime projects, indicating moderate effectiveness in aid absorption and implementation, though falling short of best-performing countries like Vietnam (85%).

4.2 Comparative Analysis: Bangladesh vs. Similar Developing Countries

The comparative analysis reveals significant variations in aid effectiveness across countries, highlighting both Bangladesh's achievements and areas for improvement:

Vietnam - Best Practice Model: Vietnam demonstrated exceptional performance with an 85% project success rate and 45% container throughput growth through coordinated multi-donor engagement spanning 20 years. Japanese Official Development Assistance, combined with World Bank and ADB partnerships, created integrated logistics corridors that significantly enhanced trade efficiency. Vietnam's success stemmed from strong government commitment, coordinated donor engagement, and systematic capacity building.

Sri Lanka - Regional Leader: Sri Lanka achieved notable success with vessel turnaround times of 3.5 days (compared to Bangladesh's longer times) through strategic infrastructure investments and public-private partnerships. The Colombo Port expansion project, supported by ADB and later DFC financing of \$553 million, demonstrates effective aid utilization for port modernization and automation.

Indonesia - Ecosystem Approach: Indonesia's Blue Economy Roadmap focuses on ecosystem-based spatial planning through Fisheries Management Areas and Marine Protected Areas, though coordination challenges among ministries limit effectiveness. Indonesia leads in blue carbon market preparation, showing innovative financing approaches.

Pacific Island Nations - Challenges: Pacific Island countries achieved only 65% project success rates due to remoteness, small populations, and institutional challenges. The analysis shows that geographical constraints, rather than aid quality or quantity, primarily limit effectiveness in these contexts.

Ghana - Environmental Integration: Ghana successfully integrates climate resilience with blue economy development through mangrove conservation and carbon market initiatives, providing models for sustainable development approaches.

4.3 Best Practices and Success Factors for Aid Effectiveness

The analysis identifies several critical success factors that determine aid effectiveness in maritime supply chain development:

Integrated Approaches: The most effective interventions simultaneously address infrastructure, technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional strengthening. Vietnam's 20-year coordinated approach demonstrates how sustained, integrated programs achieve transformative results compared to fragmented project-based interventions.

Government Commitment: Countries with strong government commitment (scoring 9.2 overall importance) show significantly better outcomes. Bangladesh's moderate score of 7.5 indicates room for improvement in policy prioritization, resource allocation, and political support for blue economy projects.

Institutional Capacity: This emerges as a critical constraint for Bangladesh, scoring 6.8 compared to importance score of 8.8. Strong institutions require effective regulations, organizational capabilities, and skilled personnel to manage complex blue economy initiatives effectively.

Donor Coordination: Successful countries like Vietnam and Sri Lanka demonstrate the importance of coordinated multi-donor engagement rather than competing or duplicative interventions. Vietnam's strategic partnerships with Japan, World Bank, and ADB created synergistic effects that maximized impact.

Technology Readiness: Bangladesh's limited score of 6.5 (against overall importance of 8.1) highlights the need for improved technology adoption capabilities before large-scale technology transfer initiatives.

Chapter 5: Recommendation & Conclusion

5.1: Recommendation

Strategic Framework Enhancement

Adopt Integrated Blue Economy Programs

- Move from fragmented project-based interventions to comprehensive programs that simultaneously address infrastructure development, technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional strengthening
- Follow Vietnam's 20-year coordinated approach model where Japanese ODA, World Bank, and ADB worked together to create integrated logistics corridors
- Ensure all maritime sector investments are aligned under a unified blue economy strategy rather than operating in isolation

Establish Enhanced Coordination Mechanisms

- Create formal donor coordination platforms similar to Vietnam's strategic partnerships with major donors
- Implement regular multi-donor review meetings to eliminate duplication and ensure strategic alignment across all maritime investments

Prioritize Institutional Capacity Building

- Address Bangladesh's institutional capacity gap (scoring 6.8 vs. importance rating of 8.8) through systematic regulatory framework development
- Invest in organizational capacity building and human resource development before launching large-scale infrastructure projects
- Learn from Sri Lanka's institutional modernization approach to enhance regulatory effectiveness and aid absorption capacity

Implement Transport Corridor Development

- Shift from port-only focus to comprehensive transport corridor approach following Vietnam's National Highway No. 5 and Hai-Phong Port integration model
- Connect Chittagong Port with inland transportation networks to address supply chain bottlenecks beyond port boundaries
- Develop integrated logistics corridors that enhance overall trade efficiency rather than isolated port improvements

Enhance Technology Readiness Before Transfer

- Address Bangladesh's technology readiness limitation (scoring 6.5 vs. importance of 8.1) through systematic capability building
- Follow Vietnam's gradual technology adoption model by developing local technical capabilities before implementing advanced maritime technologies
- Establish training programs and technical education initiatives to build absorptive capacity for technology transfer

Financial Sustainability and Innovation

Explore Innovative Financing Mechanisms

- Pilot blue bonds following Ghana's successful mangrove project model to diversify funding sources beyond traditional aid

- Develop carbon market initiatives like Indonesia's blue carbon market preparation to create sustainable revenue streams
- Integrate environmental financing with maritime development to access climate-focused funding opportunities

Establish Revenue-Generating Systems

- Create dedicated revenue streams from ports and fisheries following Sri Lanka's commercial hub strategy
- Implement user fees and revenue recycling systems to reduce long-term aid dependence
- Develop sustainable financing mechanisms that continue generating funds after donor support concludes

Regional Integration and Environmental Sustainability

Leverage Strategic Geographic Position

- Develop transit trade services for landlocked neighbors like Nepal and Bhutan following Sri Lanka's transshipment hub model
- Create regional connectivity initiatives that generate revenue while enhancing South Asian economic integration

Participate in Regional Cooperation Frameworks

- Actively engage in South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programs to share infrastructure development costs
- Create economies of scale through regional collaboration that reduces individual country investment burdens
- Develop shared regional standards and practices for blue economy development

5.2: Conclusion

Foreign aid has demonstrably strengthened Bangladesh's maritime supply chains and advanced its blue economy potential when delivered through long-term, coordinated programs that integrate infrastructure development, technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional reform. Between 2015 and 2024, \$3.4 billion in aid helped Chittagong Port achieve a record 3.276 million TEUs (7.4% growth) and initiated automation and e-gate systems that began reducing container dwell times. However, institutional capacity constraints (6.8/10) and moderate donor coordination limited Bangladesh's 75% project success rate compared to Vietnam's 85% and Sri Lanka's 3.5-day vessel turnaround. The findings underscore that governance quality, absorptive capacity, and stakeholder engagement matter more than aid volume alone and that fisheries management, transport corridors, and innovative financing (blue bonds, carbon markets) offer high-impact, sustainable pathways. For Bangladesh to fully realize its blue economy ambitions, it must prioritize regulatory strengthening, centralized donor coordination, and integrated sectoral strategies that build on proven international best practices.

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Appendix I

Internship Proposal Form

CS003



INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL FORM

Name:	Mirza Didarul Islam
ID:	221011212
Department:	ULAB School of Business (USB)
Supervisor's Name (Faculty):	Shawkat Tanveer Rahman
Organization Name:	ULAB Center for South Asian Studies (ULAB C-SAS)
Internship Title:	Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains

Student's signature & date
(15/06/2025)

Supervisor's signature & date
(15/06/2025)

(Submit your Research Proposal to your Supervisor for approval)

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

August 15, 2025.

Mirza Didarul Islam,
Cell: +8801575155917,
Email: didarul.islam.bba@ulab.edu.bd

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman
Senior Lecturer
School of Business
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) 688, Beribadh Road
Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207.

Dear Sir,

Subject: Submission of Internship Proposal.

Please find attached herewith the proposal for an internship in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Bachelor's of Business Administration (BBA) at ULAB Center for South Asian Studies (ULAB C-SAS) House No. 84, Road 7/A, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka. from 15 January, 2025.

Sincerely yours,



Mirza Didarul Islam

ID: 221011212
BBA Program
School of Business
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh's Blue Economy: The Role of Foreign Aid in Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains

Supervisor:

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman

Senior Lecturer

ULAB School of Business (USB)

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

**An Internship Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelors of Business Administration**

By

Mirza Didarul Islam

ID: 221011212

Summer 2025

September 1, 2025

Internship Organization: ULAB Center for South Asian Studies (ULAB C-SAS)

Address: House No. 84, Road 7/A, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka.

Duration: 15 January, 2025 to 15 August, 2025.

Organizational Supervisor:

Mushfiquur Rahman

Senior Manager, Projects and Research

Cell: +880 1767-734258; Email: mushfiquur.rahman@ulab.edu.bd

Description of Internship organization:

The Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) is a prestigious research institution focused on analyzing political, economic, and regional cooperation issues related to South Asia. As a think tank, C-SAS produces policy-relevant research that aims to inform government strategies and contribute to sustainable regional development.

C-SAS operates with a compact but highly skilled team, including senior researchers and junior associates, fostering a collaborative and intellectually stimulating environment. The center emphasizes high-quality research outputs that address critical socio-economic challenges in South Asia, including Bangladesh's blue economy and maritime sector.

During the internship, C-SAS engages in interdisciplinary research initiatives involving data collection, analysis, grant writing, and project management, supporting sustainable development efforts and policy formulation in the region.

Timeline:

Serial	Activity	Weeks											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Consultation with Supervisors	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	Secondary Data Collection		√	√	√								
3	Services Record Collection					√	√	√	√	√	√		
4	Primary Data Collection						√	√					
5	Data Analysis								√	√			
6	Draft Report Writing										√		
7	Final Report Writing											√	
8	Report Submission												√



Mirza Didarul Islam

ID: 221011212

Appendix II

Internship Appointment Letter



ULAB
UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS
BANGLADESH

ULAB/FHR/7279/2025

January 15, 2025

Mr. Mirza Didarul Islam
Chandrima Model Town
Mohammadpur, Dhaka-

APPOINTMENT AS INTERN

Dear Mr. Islam:

The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), hereinafter called the University, is pleased to appoint you as Intern at the Center for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) from January 15, 2025 to January 14, 2026 with the following terms and conditions:

1. You will report to the Director, C-SAS for your overall and day to day work.
2. You will do research related tasks associated with the center.
3. You will be entitled to a monthly salary of **Tk. 10,000 (Ten Thousand)** only.
4. No other benefits will be applicable for you.
5. Either party can terminate the employment at any time by giving 1 (one) month's prior notice or one month's pay in lieu of the notice period.
6. General office rules and regulations of ULAB will be applicable for you.

Please note that all employees of the University operate under individual contracts and are expected to maintain confidentiality about the terms of employment at all times.

If these terms are acceptable to you, please sign and return the duplicate copy (enclosed) of this letter to the HR Office.

The University greatly appreciates your cooperation in every respect.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Imran Rahman
Vice Chancellor

Accepted

Signature

Date

Appendix IV

Similarity Report

Part B.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

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