



CSC Evaluation and Monitoring Programme

Impact in health

Sultana Khanum



Dr Sultana Khanum was a Commonwealth PhD Scholar at the University of Keele between 1990 and 1994, and she returned to the UK as a Commonwealth Academic Fellow at the University of Manchester for six months in 2003. She has been a Professor of Sociology at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, since 1999 and in this role has conducted extensive research on women and health, with a particular interest in health issues affecting the Bangladeshi and British Bangladeshi populations. Through the establishment of a link programme with the University of Manchester and involvement in government initiatives, she has contributed towards improving the teaching and research capabilities of the University of Rajshahi, as well as offering consultancy services to a number of ministries in Bangladesh and international organisations such as the World Food Programme, CARE, United Nations Development Programme, and European Union. She is a member of the Area Review Panel for the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) of the Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC) and the World Bank, the UGC's Research and Publication Evaluation Committee, and the editorial boards of *The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies* and *The Social Science Journal*.

Career progression

The University of Rajshahi was very supportive of Sultana's applications for the Commonwealth PhD Scholarship and the Academic Fellowship, and she was granted study leave with full salary. Sultana noted that the university was keen to encourage career development of staff, particularly when it involved opportunities abroad, in order to improve skills and expertise which could be transferred to students.

Upon returning to her position after the completion of her PhD, Sultana was given the added responsibility of teaching and supervising final-year, postgraduate and PhD students. She also became affiliated with The Institute of Bangladesh Studies, which is a centre of excellence at the university, and her duties involved teaching PhD students at the Institute and organising international conferences.

Within five years of completing her PhD, Sultana was awarded a Professorship and she attributes this progression in her career to a number of factors related to her scholarship, including a PhD from a reputable institution where she had access to research material and expertise which were not available in Bangladesh, as well as conducting research and publishing a number of

research papers in peer-reviewed journals at home and abroad.

I had been promoted to Professor within 12 years of my joining as a lecturer. If I had not done a PhD and sufficient number of publications, it would have taken at least 20 years to reach that position.

Research activities and links

Sultana has conducted extensive fieldwork with British Bangladeshi migrant populations and her research has focused on the constraints women encounter in receiving health care from the National Health Service in the UK. This has resulted in an ongoing longitudinal study of first, second, third and fourth generation Bangladeshi women in the UK. The research seeks to ascertain the strategies undertaken by the NHS to formulate culturally appropriate policies and Sultana hopes that these can be replicated in Bangladesh so that health services can be accessed by a

larger proportion of the female population. Identifying benefits for both the UK and Bangladesh has been a central aspect of Sultana's research and her fieldwork with Bangladeshi women living in the UK has enabled her to gather significant evidence related to complex gender-related issues such as fertility behaviour, forced marriage, trans-continent marriage, and migration among others.

As part of this continuing longitudinal study Sultana maintains close contact with the women involved in the study and their families, and regularly offers advice to their relatives living in Bangladesh as well as in the UK. The expansive nature of the research means there are implications for policy and legislation changes for both the UK and Bangladesh including health and population policy, forced marriage and modes of remittance.

As a member of the Bangladeshi Sylheti community, I was able to motivate a good number of parents to prevent forced/trans-continent marriage. I also got the opportunity to mentor and assist them to take up health services, income generating activities, legal action, higher education, fertility regulation, and so on.

After the completion of her PhD, a link programme themed 'Women and Health' was established between the Universities of Rajshahi and Manchester, and this work resulted in a number of conferences, research training sessions, joint research projects and publications, workshops and seminars in Bangladesh and Manchester. In addition to the exchange of knowledge and expertise, the University of Rajshahi received research materials, books and equipment. Sultana noted that it was as a result of the acquiring multimedia presentation equipment through the link programme that she was initially able to implement the full range of new teaching practices she had learnt whilst in the UK.

In addition to her role as the link coordinator, Sultana has also chaired the Department of Sociology for three years and conducted nine research projects. She has also been involved with two projects managed by the Department of Sociology, University of Rajshahi and the Bangladesh University Grants Commission, and funded by the World Bank.

The first, entitled 'Improving Research Capabilities in Sociology' is ongoing and funded by the World Bank. It is part of the Bangladesh Government initiative, the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project, which aims to improve research capability and teaching at tertiary education institutions. To date a number of training programmes, workshops, seminars and conferences on research methodology have been organised. There have also been research laboratories established in three districts of Bangladesh and fieldwork is being conducted with students and junior staff to provide them with practical

knowledge of research methods as well as gain an understanding of the issues facing rural populations in Bangladesh such as health, poverty, gender equity, environmental issues, sustainable development and migration. Sultana believes that this will result in increased research capacity for Bangladesh and improved job prospects for the students involved.

In the second project, she has been team leader of a collaborative research project entitled 'Social Capital and Changing Power Structure in Rural Bangladesh.'

Her independent project 'Constraints on Women's Access to Emergency Obstetric Care in Bangladesh' was completed in 2012, and it is expected that the findings of the research will assist policy makers in the UK and Bangladesh to formulate health policy which would enable women to access essential obstetric care and health services more effectively.

Knowledge and skills

For Sultana, one of the most important outcomes from her time in the UK has been the development of her teaching methods. After completing the PhD, she was able to introduce interactive modes of learning which she had observed and learnt from academic staff in the UK. These included courses on attaining new skills such as advanced computer skill, research methodologies and project management as well as subject specific courses such as theories on migration, fertility and health reform.

Additionally, the knowledge she acquired regarding curriculum development and course design has resulted in the introduction of two undergraduate courses at the University of Rajshahi, 'Women and Health' and 'Medical Sociology'. She has also redesigned post graduate level courses as a result of the Higher Education Link Programme between the Sociology departments of the University of Rajshahi and the University of Manchester.

Development impact

Sultana has contributed to the development of government policy in health care and forestry.

At the First International Sociological Conference of the Bangladesh Sociological Association in 1997 she presented a paper entitled 'Health Promotion Programmes in Developing World: Search for an Appropriate Strategy'. The paper proposed a health service system managed and co-ordinated at the local level in collaboration with the government and achieved through the establishment of 'Rural Health Teams' working alongside existing provision in order to increase accountability and transparency through close monitoring. Two years later the Bangladesh government created Community Clinics. They started functioning in 2000 and each clinic provides services for 6,000 rural people and is managed by local and government representatives.

In 2001 Sultana worked as a consultant on a project launched by the Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests entitled 'Biodiversity Management Plan for South Chittagong Forest Areas, National Conservation Strategy Implementation Project -1' which was funded by The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Royal Norwegian Embassy. The project

included conducting fieldwork in different parts of Chittagong, Bangladesh and preparing an action plan. Sultana proposed forest protection strategies involving local people to prevent extraction of forest resources and encroachment. In 2004 the Ministry of Environment and Forests and United States Agency of International Development (USAID) established collaborative management of forest resources between the government and the local people and in 2006 they also formed a 'Community Patrol Group' team, similar to the 'Forest Protection Team' proposed by Sultana.

Sultana also contributed to the Ministry of Environment's Barind Environmental Action Plan for Northern Bangladesh for water management, funded by the UNDP in 2003. She noted that her experiences of studying and working in the UK have expanded both her knowledge and world view.

The award opened up a new horizon of knowledge and insight that changed my world view... In my opinion, the Commonwealth award has a multi-dimensional, long lasting positive impact on Fellows.

More about Sultana's work

'Habitus and its Implication in Constructing Kinship Ties: Data from a Bangladeshi Settlement in Britain' in *Culture, Creation and Procreation: Concept of Kinship in South Asia Practice*, eds. Aparna Rao and Monika Bock (New York/ Oxford: Berghahn, 2000)

'Household Patterns of a Bangladeshi Village in England', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 (3): pp.489-504

'Expanding Access to Health Services for Rural Women in Bangladesh: Lessons from the National Health Services, UK', *Journal of Asiatic Society*, 47 (1): pp.127-148

'The Role of World Food Programme in People's Access to Food: Myth and Reality', *South Asian Anthropologists*, 2 (2): pp.113-122

'Anthropology at Home: Some Methodological Debates on Migration Research', *Social Science Review*, 19 (1): pp.225-234

The CSC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK
Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF
UK
evaluation@cscuk.org.uk
bit.ly/cscuk-evaluation