

Institution: University of Bath
Unit of Assessment: 22: Social work and social policy
Title of case study: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND WELLBEING
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>In Bangladesh, 50 million people live in poverty and around 28 million live in extreme poverty. To date, development agencies have focussed almost exclusively on the needs of the poor and ignored those of the extreme poor. Building on years of poverty research in Bangladesh, researchers at the University of Bath have played a key role designing and then developing a £65 million programme, which is the country's first national scale initiative focusing exclusively on extreme poverty. Impacts from the programme include improving the livelihoods of one million extreme poor people; helping NGOs design innovative programmes for the extreme poor; and embedding the discourse around extreme poverty in the polity.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research [<i>Numbers in square brackets refer to references in Section 3</i>].</p> <p>The University of Bath has a strong reputation for its research into poverty in Bangladesh, evidenced in research grants, publications and engagements with policy makers over many years. One of the innovative features of our research has been the focus on the social, political and cultural dimensions of poverty which cannot be separated from their more quantifiable and material aspects. Key contributions include work by Wood and Gough (until their retirement) on welfare regimes in developing countries [3.5]; and by McGregor, White and Devine (since 1987), incorporating subjective indicators into more conventional poverty analysis [3.4; 3.3], through an ESRC £3.5 million research programme. Devine and White subsequently won an ESRC/DFID grant of £240K to develop a wellbeing assessment tool, and advance an understanding of wellbeing and poverty in which religion, as an expression of culture, plays a key role [3.3]. Through our research, we have been able to make significant and unique contributions to the understanding of poverty dynamics in Bangladesh, help shape policy agendas around poverty, and support organisations implementing development projects.</p> <p>In 2007, DFID announced it would establish a national level programme in Bangladesh which would focus exclusively on the needs of the extreme poor. This was to be a flagship programme for DFID, in that it signalled a deliberate policy shift in favour of the extreme poor, who had been generally overlooked by conventional development programmes. In response to DFID's open call for proposals, Devine from the University of Bath co-authored and co-designed a £65 million challenge fund programme, which was selected after an international peer reviewed and competitive process. The programme, entitled the <i>Economic Empowerment of the Poorest</i> (EEP), runs from 2008 till 2015. It consists predominantly of direct livelihoods interventions carried out by NGOs in Bangladesh, but also supports research, lesson learning and advocacy activities. The overall aim of the programme is to help one million people lift themselves out of extreme poverty.</p> <p>Bath's engagement with the EEP programme has had two related phases. Between 2008 and 2009, Devine and Wood helped select partner NGOs, design projects appropriate for the extreme poor, and develop systems to monitor and evaluate lessons from the interventions. From 2010, Devine and Wood led on the development of the EEP programme's research, lesson learning and advocacy activities. The core of Bath's contribution to these activities consists of a) a socio-economic and anthropometric survey; b) an innovative life-history method which tracks households along six wellbeing categories; and c) participatory case studies. The EEP programme now has the largest single dataset, with national coverage, on extreme poverty in Bangladesh. This allows for comparative and longitudinal analysis, and also incorporates a highly innovative 'real-time' tool allowing self-assessment of change (http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/).</p> <p>The EEP programme significantly advances the poverty reduction agenda in Bangladesh, and makes a distinctive contribution to knowledge and policy development around extreme poverty. Here we highlight its headline lessons. First, the experience of extreme poverty is qualitatively distinct from other forms of poverty [3.2] and is characterised by chronic insecurity [3.5; 3.6], intergenerational transmissions of disadvantage [3.1], and hostile political economy conditions [3.1;</p>

3.4]. Second, given that extreme poverty is a qualitatively distinct experience, it requires distinct policy responses from Government as well as NGOs and donors [3.1]. Third, the programme demonstrates that it is possible to design and deliver programmes which can significantly improve the livelihoods of the extreme poor [3.1; 3.2]. However, sustaining these improvements in a hostile political economy is a formidable challenge. This is evidenced in research supported by Devine and Wood, and published as a series of working papers (<http://www.shiree.org/research/working-papers/#.UQsD121yV1g>). To address the needs of the extreme poor will require, over time, a fundamental shift and re-ordering of the wider political economy. [3.1; 3.6]

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Devine, J and Wood, GD. (2009) *Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh and the Need for a New Political Settlement*, Paper presented to Conference 'Extreme Poverty Eradication Day: Making the Invisible Visible', Bangabandhu International Convention Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 18 October 2009. Sponsors: DFID Bangladesh, Bangladesh All Party Parliamentary Group, National Parliament of Bangladesh, and Shiree (<http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-day-2009/>).
- 3.2 Goto,R., da Corta, L., Mascie-Taylor, N., and Devine, J. (2011). *Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis of the Changes in Extreme Poor Households*, available at <http://www.shiree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/7-shiree-Q%C2%B2-Report-March-2010-March-2011.pdf>.
- 3.3 Camfield, L., Choudhury, K., Devine, J. (2009) 'Well-being, Happiness and Why Relationships Matter: Evidence from Bangladesh', *Journal of Happiness Studies*. 10, 71-91 DOI: 10.1007/s10902-007-9062-5
- 3.4 Gough I. and J.A.McGregor (eds) (2007) *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: from Theory to Research*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (can be supplied by HEI on request)
- 3.5 Gough, I., Wood, G., with A.Barrientos, P.Bevan, P.Davis, G.Room (2004). *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America: Social Policy in Development Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (can be supplied by HEI on request)
- 3.6 Wood, G.D (2003). Staying Secure, Staying Poor: The "Faustian Bargain", *World Development*,31 (3), 455-471 DOI: 10.1016/S0305-750x(02)00213-9

The underpinning research was supported through several awards including:

- 2002-2007: *Wellbeing in Developing Countries*, funded by ESRC (£3.25 million) to a research group at Bath including McGregor (PI), Copestake, Devine, White, Wood ;
- 2007-2010: *Question of values and practices*, funded by DFID/ESRC (214,000), Devine and White as co- Principal Investigators
- 2009 (ongoing): *Economic Empowerment of the Poorest*, funded by DFID (£420,000), Devine as Principal Investigator

4. Details of the impact [Numbers in square brackets refer to evidence in Section 5]

We have achieved impact through research dissemination and engagement with policy makers at governmental and non-governmental levels. Here we focus on the impacts attributable to our work within EEP.

The first impact is the EEP programme itself. The EEP programme is a flagship programme for the Governments of Bangladesh and the UK (represented via DFID, Bangladesh), and represents a major policy shift in the international development landscape of Bangladesh. Bath's research expertise was central to the successful proposal which guided the design of the flagship programme, and has thereby impacted key governmental policy decisions [5.1].

Second, our research has embedded the discourse of extreme poverty within the Bangladesh polity and directly influenced the establishment of a new institutional focus for extreme poverty. In 2009, Devine and Wood authored an EEP paper which was used as a keynote presentation at an international conference in Dhaka (see reference 3.1). The conference was widely reported in the national press and attended by leading academics, politicians including Ministers and the Speaker

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of the House of Parliament. On the basis of this, Devine and Wood were invited to deliver 'expert workshops' on extreme poverty to the country's parliamentarians. Five workshops were organised and over 150 parliamentarians, again including Ministers, attended. This led directly to the establishment in 2010 of the country's first All Parliamentary Group on Extreme Poverty. The formation of the group represents a major institutional change at the highest levels of government in Bangladesh. According to the Speaker of the House *"the formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Extreme Poverty[...]is a major political development in Bangladesh. Not only will it foster cross-party support for extreme poverty programmes but will also promote a wider discussion in society about the need to care more for those in greatest need. Colleagues at the University of Bath have played a central role in supporting the formation of the Group and building the capacity of its members"* [5.2]

Third, Bath's research has had a direct impact on the capacity development of the 35 partner NGOs working in the EEP programme. During EEP's inception phase (2008-2009), Devine and Wood supported partner NGOs in devising new projects for extreme poor households, as well as tools for targeting, monitoring and evaluation. They also influenced the overall design of projects supported by EEP's innovation fund. For EEP NGO partners, to work with the extreme poor was a new challenge and required them to develop more suitable approaches. Commenting on the role of Devine in this, one NGO leader states: *"with the EEP programme, I believe we have the strongest lesson learning team we have ever had, and the support and direct supervision you have given to staff has been central in building up that team. Having greater capacity in lesson learning has already brought benefits – we carry out our programme better, we have improved the effectiveness of the organisation and we have attracted the interest of new potential donors"*. [5.3]

The fourth impact refers to livelihood improvements among the extreme poor. The EEP programme has far exceeded its targets in terms of numbers of direct beneficiary households, with the number recruited exceeding 248,000 against a target of 150,000 [5.4]. Independent baseline survey analysis [5.5.] verifies that beneficiary households belong to the bottom 2-3% of the country's poor. Given that beneficiaries had no prior experience of NGO involvement and that NGOs had no experience of working with the extreme poor, this represents a major and radical achievement in policy terms. In 2010, Andrew Mitchell, then UK Secretary of State for International Development, visited the programme and is quoted as saying: *"I've seen credible data that 74% of beneficiaries on one of the Shiree projects has managed to lift themselves off the bottom, and now have a chance of a better life ...It's wonderful that British aid is lifting the poorest of the poor on to the ladder of economic opportunity"*. The data he refers to comes from the lesson learning/monitoring and evaluation activities of the programme overseen by Devine and Wood [5.1].

Fifth, EEP research has influenced policy decisions at local levels in Bangladesh. One of the EEP partners, an NGO called NETZ, carried out research supervised by Devine and Wood into indigenous community access to government safety nets. The findings of the research were used to develop an integrated advocacy campaign which consisted of a) lobbying policy officers in local areas where indigenous communities resided; b) organising a national workshop (in which Devine participated as a keynote speaker) to stimulate a wider debate in society and put pressure on national policy makers; and c) hosting an international conference in Berlin and Brussels (in which representatives from the EU parliament, the UN as well as the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development participated) to secure high-level external support.

The advocacy campaign resulted in notable and tangible benefits for indigenous communities. Before the research and advocacy, only 2.65% of NETZ's beneficiaries had access to government safety nets. At the end of the campaign, this figure had risen to 10%. The NETZ Executive Director concluded: *"Our research was important to help us plot out an advocacy strategy with local communities and government officials at national and international levels. Joe's supervision of the original research and his support in the analysis of the data ensured we had strong and convincing evidence to lobby policy makers. His participation at the national workshop was also very important"* [5.6]

Sixth, our engagement with the EEP programme has further enhanced our expertise on poverty dynamics in Bangladesh. Save the Children is one of the NGO partners in the EEP programme and in 2012, asked Devine and Wood to help develop a global 'signature programme' in

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Bangladesh. Devine and Wood prepared concepts notes and facilitated two international workshops in May 20-12 and December 2012. According to the Regional Food Security & Livelihoods Advisor for Save the Children, *“Both Geof and Joe had supported our successful EEP programme and we asked them to help us build on this to develop the signature programme. Joe and Geof brought invaluable insights, expertise and knowledge of poverty in Bangladesh to the workshops, and this directly influenced the strategy Save the Children adopted to achieve the ambitious scale of the signature programme”* [5.7]. Further evidence of enhanced reputation is given in Devine and Wood’s work (2012-2014) for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following a peer reviewed international competition. Bath (Devine as PI) was awarded a 659,000 euros research grant to assess the effectiveness of the government’s framework for development cooperation in Bangladesh. The successful proposal, authored by Devine, was written substantially around the expertise gained through our EEP work (5.8).

Finally, the EEP has directly benefited the reputation of the University of Bath as a centre of excellence in poverty studies. Devine’s research in Bangladesh was selected, following a peer review process, as a showcase for a Set-Squared Partnership event which sought to highlight *“research programmes that have genuinely changed the world for the better”*. Devine’s work was one of the 25 highlighted cases from across the sciences, one of the very few from the social sciences, and is used to illustrate the contribution university research can make to society [5.9]. Furthermore our research and policy engagement was recognised in the 2011 Diamond Jubilee round of the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Further and Higher Education [5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Chairman, Harewelle International Ltd, UK
- 5.2 Honourable Speaker of the House of Parliament, Government of Bangladesh (now President of the Republic of Bangladesh)
- 5.3 Executive Director, Uttaran, Bangladesh
- 5.4 Shiree Quarterly Report, January-March 2013, available at <http://www.shiree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/10-SQR-Jan-Mar-2013.pdf>
- 5.5 Ali, Z. (2012). ‘Poverty Thresholds Analysis: Reassessing and Revalidating Quantitative Indicators’. *Shiree Working Paper 10*, available at <http://www.shiree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Poverty-Thresholds-Analysis-Zulfiqar-Ali.pdf>
- 5.6 Executive Director, NETZ Bangladesh
- 5.7 Regional Food Security & Livelihoods Advisor, Save the Children
- 5.8 <http://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/research-projects/08/2300175508.html>
- 5.9 <http://www.setsquared.co.uk/impact/society-case-studies>
- 5.10 Queen’s Anniversary Prize (2011) for Higher and Further Education: the University of Bath for *“Influential Research into Child Poverty and Support for Vulnerable People”*, www.royalanniversarytrust.org.uk & www.bath.ac.uk/sps/about/queens-award/