



Public Lecture Series



**FROM MALTHUSIA TO THE AID
LAB: A SHORT HISTORY OF
BANGLADESH'S SURPRISING
SUCCESS**

a talk by

NAOMI HOSSAIN

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From an unpromising start as 'the basket-case' to present day plaudits for its human development achievements, Bangladesh plays an ideological role in the contemporary world order, offering proof that the neo-liberal development model works under the most testing conditions. How were such rapid gains possible in a context of chronically weak governance? The Aid Lab subjects this so-called 'Bangladesh paradox' to close scrutiny, evaluating public policies and their outcomes for poverty and development since Bangladesh's independence in 1971. Countering received wisdom that its gains owe to an early shift to market-oriented economic reform, this book argues that a binding political settlement, a social contract to protect against the crises of subsistence and survival, united the elite, the masses, and their aid donors in the wake of the devastating famine of 1974. This laid resilient foundations for human development, fostering a focus on the poorest and most precarious, and in particular on the concerns of women. The lessons of the famine led to a robustly pro-poor growth and social policy agenda, empowering the Bangladeshi state and its non-governmental organizations to protect and enable its population to thrive in its engagements in the global economy. Now a middle-income country, Bangladesh's role as the world's laboratory for aided development has generated lessons well beyond its borders. Bangladesh continues to carve a pioneering pathway through the risks of global economic integration and climate change.

Naomi Hossain is a political sociologist with 20 years of development research and advisory experience. Her work focuses on the politics of poverty and public services, and increasingly on the political effects of subsistence crises. She has researched elite perceptions of poverty, accountability in education and social protection, and women's empowerment in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the UK, and led cross-country research in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Most recently she was the Principal Investigator on the DFID-ESRC funded research project Food Riots and Food Rights: the moral and political economy of accountability for hunger Project (2012-14) and a research lead on the IDS/Oxfam GB Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility project. Her book on the political effects of the 1974 famine in Bangladesh, *The Aid Lab*, was published by Oxford University Press in February 2017. Naomi is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex.

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5-7 pm

10 Stephens Hall (ISAS Conf. Room)

Event is free & open to public. Information at 510-642-3608 or southasia.berkeley.edu