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Gardner, KJ, (2011) Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh  
ESRC End of Award Report, RES-167-25-0297. Swindon: ESRC

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL END OF AWARD REPORT



### For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. ESRC reserves the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

<b>Grant Reference</b>	<b>RES-167-25-0297</b>		
<b>Grant Title</b>	<b>Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh</b>		
<b>Grant Start Date</b>	<b>01/01/2008</b>	<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>£211,511.10</b>
<b>Grant End Date</b>	<b>31/03/2011</b>	<b>Expended:</b>	
<b>Grant holding Institution</b>	<b>University of Sussex</b>		
<b>Grant Holder</b>	<b>Professor Katy Gardner</b>		
<b>Grant Holder's Contact Details</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email</b>	
	<b>University of Sussex Falmer, Brighton East Sussex BN1 9QN</b>	<b>K.Gardner@Sussex.ac.uk</b>	
		<b>Telephone</b>	<b>01273 606755</b>
<b>Co-Investigators (as per project application):</b>	<b>Institution</b>		

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## 1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by ESRC to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project. *[Max 250 words]*

The project investigated the relationship between social networks, moralities and mining in Bangladesh via two case studies, one (carried out by a research student) in Phulbari, where a proposed coal mine has met substantial resistance, and the second (carried out by the PI) in Bibiyana, where a gas extraction plant is operated by Chevron. Bibiyana has close transnational links with Britain; many landowners live in the U.K. Local economic differentiation reflects this: those with transnational connections are relatively wealthy whilst those without are very poor. The research focussed upon the role of these local and transnational networks in providing economic support for vulnerable households, plus the gas field's impact upon their livelihoods. Divergent moralities and understandings of 'development' were key. Whilst Chevron funds Alternative Livelihood Programmes in the surrounding villages, these are underlain by global moralities of sustainability and 'helping the poor to help themselves'. Meanwhile local and transnational moralities of 'helping one's own' stress ongoing connections between people. From its inception, the gas field has been controversial, meeting with substantial local resistance and the focus of national level contestations over the role of multinationals in extracting Bangladesh's natural resources. Networks of resistance are transnational, both for national activists and for villagers living in Bibiyana and the UK. The need for transparency and rumours of corruption are central in local and national narratives. Rather than philanthropic projects, people desire economic development and modernity, with their corollaries of accountability, formalised systems of social care and employment.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### a) Objectives

Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to the ESRC. *[Max 200 words]*

The primary objective of the research was to analyse the relationship between social networks, rural livelihoods and mining through two case studies. In particular we sought to investigate:

1. The impact of mining on social networks and livelihoods in Bangladesh
2. The 'fault lines' around which the differential effects of mining are experienced, including gender, religion, class, generation and migration background.
3. The policies and practices of Corporate Social Responsibility in Extractive Industries.
4. The ways in which resistance to mining is mobilised and the formation of new social movements based on such resistance.

Specific questions in the Bibiyana case study included:

- What are the impacts of the gas field on the livelihoods, social networks and relative impoverishment of different groups?
- How have gender, generation and class affected peoples' experience of and engagement with the gas field?

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- How has transnational migration affected local responses to the gas field?
- What might we learn about policies of CSR and ‘community relations’ from the Unocal / Chevron experience in Bibiyana?
- What guidelines/ ‘best practice’ recommendations can be developed from this case study for use in social impact assessments and / or poverty reduction programmes in contexts of mining?

## b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with the ESRC. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder’s institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. *[Max 200 words]*

There were no substantive changes to the work plan, which was successfully completed. The Bibiyana case study did not, as anticipated, involve resettlement, only loss of agricultural land. Issues concerning displacement were therefore not relevant.

Other minor changes included:

1. Rather than a single Networking Forum, we held three events aiming at initiating networks of knowledge exchange, and systems of support for the poor. Specifically:

(i) Visit to the UK by Chevron’s External Affairs Director (March 10) in which networking meetings were held with transnational villagers in the UK, with a view to developing the ‘Bibiyana Foundation’ (see ‘Impact’)

(ii) Workshop held in Dhaka (January 11) to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and views concerning CSR in Bangladesh, attended by NGOs, Chevron officials and civil society.

(iii) A Networking Forum meeting in London (March 11) to facilitate the development of networks between transnational villagers, activists and members of the British Bengali community.

These changes were agreed by the ESRC.

2. Rather than a single RO, the research team involved two field researchers, managed by Professor Zahir Ahmed at Jahangirnagar University.

3. We had an informal, rather than a formal collaboration with the NGO (see ‘Ethics’)

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### c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. [Max. 500 words]

Case Study One: Bibiyana

The methodology was as set out in the research proposal.

In *Bibiyana* we focussed on two villages (Karimpur and Kakura) which are adjacent to the gas field. Karimpur is distinctive for its large Hindu population. Work in Bibiyana involved the following:

- A survey of local socio-economic conditions, including basic livelihood and land owning.
- Charting livelihood strategies in case study households over a 12 month period
- Charting coping strategies in case study households, with emphasis on access to credit and social protection in times of credit
- Focus group discussions
- Interviews with key informants
- Shadowing NGO workers, and interviews with users of Chevron funded NGO programmes
- Participant observation, over a 12 month period by fieldworkers, supplemented by visits from the PI
- Production of relatedness maps for Karimpur and Kakura

In *Dhaka* we interviewed key Chevron officials, national activists and NGO workers

In the *UK* we held focus group discussions with transnational villagers in London, Newcastle, Burnley and Ilford. We also interviewed Bangladeshi national level activists in London.

#### **Ethical Considerations:**

The research context was of extreme contestation over the role of multinationals and mining in Bangladesh. During the project there were violent demonstrations in Dhaka, whilst in Bibiyana rumours of violence were a continual undercurrent. The secret nature of government dealings with multinationals and peoples' everyday experiences of corruption contribute to an atmosphere of mistrust and fear. This has led to the finding that supporting governments to become more transparent and accountable should be central to programmes of corporate responsibility in extractive industries.

Ethically, the politically sensitive nature of the research and polarised political context led to various challenges. The first was that the research could never be seen as 'neutral'. Indeed, we were accused by both 'sides' of bias: of 'spying' for activists, or of having 'sold out' to corporate interests. Both sides have also been keen to use our findings for their own political ends. This has meant we have had to carefully plan our dissemination strategy. Within Bibiyana, trust was eventually established via our links with gatekeepers in the area and the sensitive work of the Bangladeshi research team. Anonymity has been another ethical challenge: both locally and nationally, key players are well known.

Because of the challenging politics surrounding NGOs funded by mining companies in Bangladesh, we did not work as formally with the participating NGO as planned. Though they

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gave practical support in Bibiyana and access to their projects, they did not eventually choose to have a formal relationship with us for fear of problematising their relationship with Chevron, their funder. We did, however, rent a room in their Bibiyana offices and paid them overhead costs. For our part, we were careful not to make recommendations to Chevron which might seem to be critical of their programmes, lest their funding be compromised.

Case Study Two : Phulbari

The methodology followed was as outlined in the proposal. Methodology and ethics form a chapter of the thesis.

#### **d) Project Findings**

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on the ESRC website. Any future research plans should also be identified. *[Max 500 words]*

Bibiyana case study:

- Bibiyana is economically differentiated, with high rates of landlessness (approx 80% in study villages) existing alongside wealth generated by transnational migration. The gas field has increased the struggles of the poorest, who depend on land for their livelihoods but who received no formal compensation for its loss. Other processes, such as the increasing monetarisation of the local economy, environmental changes (some associated with the gas field) and diminishing patron client relations have also increased their everyday struggles. Landless women and Hindus tend to be the most vulnerable.
- Social networks are a key coping strategy for the poor in Bibiyana. The closer the social link, the more one can claim the support of others. These networks are transnational: UK based villagers often regularly send charitable donations to support the poor in their villages. People without access to transnational networks of support (for example, Hindus) are the most vulnerable.
- Loss of land to the gas field has, in some cases, led to a loosening of transnational networks.
- Whilst claims to social protection rely upon claims of social connection, people in Bibiyana hoped the gas field would provide formal employment and economic development, plus schools and hospitals. This has not happened. Indeed, the few locals who are employed at the gas field are hired via labour contractors who rely upon social networks and patronage and do not offer formal contracts.
- The local elite have benefitted the most from the gas field by gaining contracts and presiding over the CSR programmes.
- Chevron's CSR programme in Bibiyana are aimed at sustainability, and 'helping people to help themselves'. This objective contradicts local moralities of long term support.
- There are analytically separable discourses of development at play in Bibiyana: that evoked by Chevron's CSR involves discourses of 'partnership with the community', 'sustainability' and 'empowerment', whilst that invoked by transnational and local villagers involves economic development, employment, accountability and formal 'rights'.
- Resistance against multinationals in general and Chevron in particular is organised

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around transnational networks, for both nationalist activists and transnational / local villagers. Rumours of corruption and injustice, counter-posed by ideals of transparency and accountability are central to the narratives of both, though expressed in different ways.

- Knowledge is highly contested in debates concerning the role of multinationals in Bangladesh. Because there is no government or corporate transparency, accusations of corruption abound.
- Chevron is not accountable within Bangladesh. It has no grievance procedures and its social impact assessments are not made public.
- Chevron's programmes utilise simplistic understanding of communities as homogenous and 'local leaders' as representing the needs of all groups. Neither is the case in Bibiyana.
- Programmes of CSR are unlikely to meet the needs of the poor if they do not involve initiatives aimed at supporting governmental transparency / anti-corruption drives, and if corporations are not accountable.
- Within Bangladesh, and its transnational communities, networks of civil society actors, activists, local stakeholders and CSR managers could lobby for greater transparency.

**e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (eg Research Programmes or Networks)**

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. *[Max. 200 words]*

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### 3. EARLY AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

#### a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on the ESRC website. This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual. *[Max. 400 words]*

#### 1. Impact on debates surrounding the role of multinationals in South Asia via:

- Book, written for non-specialist audience, to be published by Pluto Press, 2011
- Media contributions, including participation in panel discussion on multinational extractive industries on S.T.V (diasporic Bangladeshi TV station, with audience of several million in UK, Europe and South Asia; 2010), plus widespread newspaper coverage of project findings in Bangladeshi press (14 articles in total)
- Article published in Bengali newspapers 'Placing the Mining Agenda under Public Scrutiny' in Daily New Age Newspaper, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010
- Seminar / conference presentations at: LSE, Sussex, Jahangirnagar University; Dhaka; to come: Oxford, AAA at Montreal, Emory and Connecticut, USA, November 2011
- Papers submitted to academic journals (JRAI – under peer review; draft papers planned for Journal of Peasant Studies; Journal of South Asian Development)

#### 2. Impact on local and transnational knowledge of social impact of gas field and CSR on Bibiyana

- Dissemination of 'Basic Findings' report to transnational villagers and other members of British Bengali community.
- Networking event for transnational communities held in London, March 2011
- Media appearance on S.T.V, in which Chevron's CSR programmes in Bibiyana discussed.
- Interview / article in Chevron's Bangladeshi newsletter.

#### 3. Impact on debates surrounding CSR in Bangladesh

- 'Promises and Pitfalls of CSR' workshop, Dhaka, January 2011, involving presentation on Chevron's CSR policies and networking between NGOS, academics / activists and CSR managers
- Report on Chevron's impact on Bibiyana and CSR policies circulated to Bangladesh civil society, NGOs, donors and available on-line

#### 4. Impact on Chevron's CSR programmes in Bibiyana, with focus on poverty reduction

- Recommendations for greater community inclusion and means to reach the poorest, the Hindu minority and women, presented to Chevron, September 2010
- Subsequent discussions with Chevron CSR managers concerning findings / community relations

#### 5. Impact on development of Bibiyana Foundation.

The Bibiyana Foundation was being developed by Chevron during the course of our research, aiming to build upon charitable donations by the area's transnational communities, and use them for community development and poverty reduction programmes, within Bibiyana with donations matched by Chevron. Our project impacted on these plans by:

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- Providing knowledge to CSR managers on the nature of transitional networks and charitable donations
- Providing CSR managers with introductions to members of Bibiyana's transnational communities, in Dhaka and the UK.
- Setting up network meetings in the U.K for Chevron officers developing the Foundation.

### **b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts**

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

Project outputs to be completed by March 2012:

- Policy briefing
- Jointly authored papers
- Blog on transparency, CSR and extractive industries (planned for Guardian's Global Development website)

We would like to see the networking between CSR managers, local and transnational stakeholders and lobbyists initiated in our Networking Forum events taken further. This is in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Exchange of knowledge concerning international and national transparency initiatives, freedom of information legislation and so on
- Establish greater dialogue between NGOs in UK and Bangladesh working towards corporate and governmental transparency, transnational and local community leaders, donors and CSR managers
- The provision of a resource base on social impact assessments and the social impacts of mining initiatives in Bangladesh / South Asia.

To this end I will be applying for Follow-on Funding in order to set up a transnational network with hubs in the UK and Bangladesh, and a website, in order to gather and exchange information on local, national and international initiatives.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.



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#### 4. DECLARATIONS

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals.  
The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed.

Please note hard copies are NOT required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

##### A: To be completed by Grant Holder

*Please read the following statements. Tick ONE statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section (this should be a image of your actual signature).*

###### i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	X <input type="checkbox"/>
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###### ii) Submissions to the ESRC website (research catalogue)

Output and impact information has been submitted to the ESRC website. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available.	X <input type="checkbox"/>
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**OR**

This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to the ESRC website as soon as they become available.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**OR**

This grant is not listed on the ESRC website.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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###### iii) Submission of Datasets

Datasets arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the Economic and Social Data Service.	X <input type="checkbox"/>
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**OR**

Datasets that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the Economic and Social Data Service has been notified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**OR**

No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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