



Australia Awards

# Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Bangladesh Case Study:  
Economic Development

December 2019



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Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>7th FYP</b>	Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016–FY2020 (Bangladesh Government)
<b>AAAB</b>	Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh
<b>AASAB</b>	Adivasi Australian Scholars' Association of Bangladesh
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ANU</b>	Australian National University
<b>BCS</b>	Bangladesh Civil Service
<b>BPATC</b>	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
<b>CSSS</b>	Crawford School Students' Society (ANU)
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australian Government)
<b>ERD</b>	Economic Relations Division (Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh)
<b>FABA</b>	Foreign Aid Budget and Accounts Wing (Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh)
<b>F&amp;F</b>	Fellowship and Foundation

<b>ICT</b>	Information Communications Technology
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IELTS</b>	International English Language Testing System
<b>INCU</b>	International Network of Customs Universities
<b>JEC</b>	Joint Economic Commission
<b>LDCs</b>	Least developed countries
<b>MoPA</b>	Ministry of Public Administration (Government of Bangladesh)
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of understanding
<b>PARSA</b>	Postgraduate and Research Students' Association (PARSA)
<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnerships
<b>SCB</b>	Scholarships and Alumni Branch (DFAT)
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax

# Executive Summary

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This report has been developed based on interviews with seven alumni and various stakeholders to examine the long-term outcomes of Australia Awards alumni working within the Bangladesh Civil Service, with a focus on the Ministry of Finance. The alumni featured in this Case Study undertook scholarships and fellowships in Australia in studies relating to economic development, and graduated between 2011 and 2016. This research was conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility) in December 2019.

The overall aim of the Australia Awards is to help 'partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests'. This aim is extrapolated in four long-term outcomes for the Australia Awards, which form the basis of the findings for the alumni from this Case Study.

## Outcome 1: 'Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development'

Alumni in this Case Study have implemented the skills and knowledge developed in Australia to make contributions to Bangladesh's development through their work in the areas:

- **developing and implementing policies supporting economic growth** and Bangladesh's progress to graduate from least developed countries (LDCs) status, and included the preparation of a roadmap to implement the UN Sustainable Development goals
- **contributing to and improving practices for sustainable and inclusive development** through supporting innovation within the Bangladesh Civil Service, applying principles of sustainable development in policy recommendations, contribution to the humanitarian response for the displaced Rohingya people living in Bangladesh, and building knowledge in the use of social safety nets for older persons in Bangladesh
- **mentoring and capacity building**, including the introduction of the first Bangladesh Civil Service internship program and the development of overseas training opportunities for Bangladesh Civil Service officials.

For this group of alumni, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1—development contributions—is being **achieved**.

## Outcome 2: ‘Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries’

Alumni in this Case Study, to varying degrees, have ongoing relationships with Australia through connections that were developed as a result of their scholarship or fellowship opportunity. Cooperation with contacts made in Australia and as an Australia Awards alum include:

- **friendships** with Australian and international students, and other fellowship awardees
- **connection** with the Australian High Commission and Australia Awards Bangladesh through alumni engagement activities, and other alumni through the local alumni associations
- **professional engagement** with the Australian High Commissioner and visiting Australian ministers.

For alumni in this Case Study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 2—cooperation with Australia—is being **achieved**.

## Outcome 3: ‘Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries’

One alum in this Case Study has successfully developed multiple **memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with Australian universities** as part their work contributing to broader capacity development programs for Bangladesh Civil Service officials.

For alumni in this Case Study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 3—partnerships with Australia—is being **partially achieved**.

## Outcome 4: ‘Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively’

Alumni in this Case Study hold strong, positive views of Australia. Key elements in the building of these positive views are:

- **a high regard for Australian education and cultural values** such as multiculturalism and social inclusion
- **the prestige of Australia Awards** within the Bangladesh Civil Service

For alumni in this Case Study, Australia Awards long-term Outcome 4—positive views of Australia—is being **achieved**.

## Factors contributing to achieving these outcomes

Based on the evidence collected in this Case Study, the success in achieving the long-term outcomes of Australia Awards for these alumni has been due to a number of important factors, including:

- **broadening of mindset and improved confidence**
- development of **technical knowledge and transferrable soft skills** while on award
- **strong personal motivation and commitment** among alumni to continually improve their capabilities and contribution to their workplaces
- **workplace opportunity** to develop formal institutional-level partnerships.

## Challenges to achieving these outcomes

Alumni in this Case Study experienced few challenges to using their skills and knowledge gained from their award. For those who did, the key barrier these alumni cited to using technical skills and expertise was the rotational requirement for officials in the Bangladesh Civil Service to undertake postings across different ministries in order to gain broad experience of the functioning of government.

Access to and relevance of networking and engagement opportunities were identified as gaps in forming professional networks and partnerships by this group of alumni. Alumni expressed keen interest to share knowledge with fellow Australia Awards alumni in their sectors of expertise, and to engage professionally with Australia, including with the Australian High Commission and also bilateral business councils to share knowledge supporting trade and investment.



Australia Awards

## Global Tracer Facility



### Australia Awards alumni in Bangladesh – supporting economic development, growth and investment through the public sector

#### Australia Awards alumni are contributing to:



Policy development and implementation to support economic growth



Improving practices for sustainable and inclusive development



Mentoring and capacity building within the Bangladesh Civil Service

### Australia Awards results

**1** Alumni provided strong examples of development contributions

**Achieved** ✓

“In our previous office work, we rarely considered sustainability issues for policy recommendations. But after the fellowship program, I have learnt how to use them in different policy formulations for which I feel proud. In addition, I shared my experiences with my fellow colleagues which is very useful indeed.”



**2** Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and Bangladesh

**Achieved** ✓

Alumni to varying degrees have ongoing connections to Australia. Examples of cooperation included engagements and discussions with the Australian High Commissioner and Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls – “This [alumni] network is helping us to meet some important people from Australia, along with the Bangladesh people.”



**3** Alumni support effective institutional partnerships between Australia and Bangladesh

**Partly Achieved**

One alum has developed memorandum of understandings with Australian universities for capacity development programs within the Bangladesh Civil Service - “To me, it’s a very good opportunity that we could create for our officials, because we wanted to give them ideas about how the other parts of the world, especially the developed countries are working.”



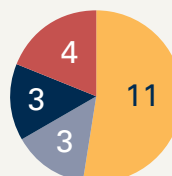
**4** Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively

**Achieved** ✓

“...there were a lot of things to learn from Australia...In the CBD, you can ride on buses and trains free. Their communications system or network, that was really surprising to me. The learning point for me was that if we could introduce such a system of communication in Dhaka, it could solve many problems in Bangladesh.”



**Participants:** Alumni who completed scholarships and fellowships between **2011-2016**



#### Case study participants:

- Female alumni
- Male alumni
- Employers/colleagues
- Stakeholders

# 1. Introduction

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The Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility) is a project which commenced in 2016 and is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Through this project, DFAT assesses the development contributions and public and economic diplomacy outcomes of Australia's investment in the Australia Awards. The key research and reporting activities being undertaken annually by the Facility are a quantitative Global Tracer Survey and qualitative Case Studies, which are prepared concurrently throughout the project.

This report provides the key findings of the Bangladesh Case Study, which focussed on Bangladesh alumni who completed their scholarship or fellowship in Australia between 2011 and 2016 in studies relating to economic development. The majority of the data collection for this Case Study was undertaken by Facility researchers in Bangladesh in December 2019.

## 1.1 Objectives

The Facility seeks to generate high-quality information on former scholarship holders, with a focus on less recent alumni. This information provides a strong evidence base for country programs and the Scholarships and Alumni Branch (SCB) of DFAT to evaluate the impact of Australia Awards on alumni and, on their home institutions and countries.

All research by the Facility is undertaken with close reference to the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. These outcomes underpin the interviews, surveys and the reporting of the Facility. The long-term outcomes are detailed in the *Australia Awards Global Strategy: Investing in the next generation of global leaders for development 2016-2018* (the Global Strategy) and the *Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* (the Framework). They are:

- **Outcome 1:** Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development.
- **Outcome 2:** Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries.
- **Outcome 3:** Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries.
- **Outcome 4:** Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively.

In addition to these long-term outcomes, gender and disability inclusion are overarching cross-cutting priorities of Australia's aid priorities outlined in the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* (Australian Government, 2017). These themes are incorporated in the analysis of this report, where relevant.



## 1.2 Scope

The Facility's specific focus is on alumni of DFAT's Australia Awards and previous Australian Government-funded scholarship programs, awards and fellowships. For each Case Study undertaken by the Facility, this focus is further refined to a specific cohort of alumni based on the years they completed their scholarship or fellowship and particular field of education or sector.

For this Bangladesh Case Study, the research focus is on alumni who completed their scholarship or fellowship award between 2011 and 2016 and studied in an economic development-related field<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.3 Country context

Bangladesh, gained independence in 1971 after a 'war of liberation' (CIA, 2020; DFAT, n.d.a). A unicameral democratic parliamentary system of government was instituted in 1991. Of the 350 seats in parliament, 50 are reserved for women nominated by the other directly-elected members (DFAT, n.d.a). With a population of nearly 165 million people within a landmass of 147,000 square kilometres, Bangladesh is one of the most populated countries in the world (DFAT, 2020a; DFAT, n.d.a).

With the goal to achieve middle-income country status by 2021 (it's 50th birthday), Bangladesh reached lower middle-income country status in 2015 following sustained economic growth and declining poverty. The country is on also on track to graduate from the UN's least developed countries (LDCs) list in 2024 after fulfilling the eligibility criteria in 2018 (DFAT, n.d.a; The World Bank, 2020). Between 2016 and 2018, the population living below the national poverty line reduced from 24.3 per cent to 21.8 per cent, though 12.9 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty (ADB, 2020; BRAC 2018, p.20). With 38 consecutive years of real economic growth, the Bangladesh economy grew by 6.8 per cent in 2016 but will need a growth rate of 7.5 to 8 per cent and tripled foreign direct investment to achieve its goal as an upper middle-income country (DFAT, n.d.a).

Diversification of national income sources is a key challenge, with the garment industry in Bangladesh contributing to an estimated 80 per cent of total exports. To attract diversification, the country has a liberal foreign investment regime with opportunities in energy, power, telecommunication and infrastructure (BIDA, n.d.; DFAT, n.d.a.). The World Bank (2020) forecasts that to achieve upper-middle-income status, the Bangladesh government will need to increase investments in human capital, female labour force participation and productivity, continue sound macroeconomic management, and implement structural reforms.

The impact of COVID-19 on Bangladesh's economy has been severe, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects a drop to 2 per cent in growth for 2020. Bangladesh 'exemplifies' the triple blow experienced by emerging market countries faced with a domestic slowdown, and a decline in exports and remittances. The economy is expected to return to 6 per cent growth if supported by favourable domestic economic recovery and global economic conditions (IMF, 2020).

## 1.4 Australia Awards in Bangladesh

The Australia Awards in Bangladesh complements the objectives of Australia's aid investment priorities in the country 'by helping to build capacity in individuals, institutions and communities' in alignment with the 'broader development and national interest priorities in sectors of mutual interest' (DFAT, n.d.b). Since the 1950s, Australia has been providing tertiary-level education scholarships for human resource capacity development in the South Asia region (Australian High Commission Bangladesh, n.d.).

Through the awards, DFAT aims to support Bangladesh to build human capital in key institutions, strengthen government systems, enhance policy-making in priority sectors, improve economic governance, and build trade and business capabilities (DFAT, 2015; DFAT, n.d.c). Current sectors of interest and collaboration include regional energy security, international trade and countering terrorism financing (Bangladesh High Commission, Canberra, n.d.).

<sup>1</sup> The Australia Awards in Bangladesh were paused in 2015 and resumed in 2016/17 (Bangladesh High Commission in Canberra, n.d.).

## 1.5 Alumni and other interview participants

Australia has provided over 3,000 scholarships and fellowships in Bangladesh since the 1970s, of which around 70 per cent have been government officials. Since 2004, 743 Bangladeshis completed an Australia Awards scholarship at the Bachelor, Masters or PhD level, 76 of whom completed business and economics-related degrees<sup>2</sup>.

Seven alumni (3 men and 4 women) were interviewed for this Case Study. Each had studied in Australia and completed either their scholarship or fellowship between 2011 and 2016. All had undertaken studies relating to economic development. The seven alumni of focus are introduced below, with their award details and current occupation. Detailed profiles are provided in Chapter 7.



**Mrs Nahid Sultana Mallik**

Master of Arts (by research),  
Flinders University

Deputy Secretary, Foreign  
Aid Budget and Accounts  
(FABA-IV (Supernumerary))  
Branch, FABA & ICT Wing,  
Economic Relations Division,  
Ministry of Finance



**Mr Md. Tariq Hassan**

Master of International And  
Development Economics,  
Australian National University  
Second Secretary (VAT Act  
and Rule, VAT Policy, VAT  
International Relations and  
Diplomatic Exemption),  
National Board of Revenue,  
Ministry of Finance



**Mrs Zannatul Ferdous**

Master of International and  
Development Economics,  
Australian National University

Deputy Director (Deputy  
Secretary), Prime Minister's  
Education Assistance Trust,  
Ministry of Education



**Mr Mafiz Uddin Ahmed**

Fellowship: Capacity  
Development of Bangladesh  
Public Servants for  
Infrastructure Management,  
Monash University

Joint Secretary, Public Private  
Partnerships (PPP), Finance  
Division, Ministry of Finance

<sup>2</sup> Note: This figure exclude Australia Awards recipients who are currently studying in Australia



**Mr Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky**

Fellowship: Sector Wide Approach: Public Policy, Financial Management And Donor Relations, Queensland University of Technology

Joint Secretary, Wing Chief, Asia, Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Fellowship and Foundation (F&F), Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance



**Ms Sultana Afroz**

Fellowship: Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh, Macquarie University

Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, Public Private Partnership Authority, Prime Minister's Office



**Ms Rama Dewan**

Fellowship: Capacity Building for Trade, Environment and Development in Bangladesh, Macquarie University

Joint Chief, Bangladesh Tariff Commission

An additional 11 stakeholders participated in interviews for this Case Study to provide a contextual understanding of Bangladesh and the Australia Awards, and further explore the contributions of alumni. These stakeholders included three employers/colleagues of alumni, three staff from the managing contractor of the Australia Awards in Bangladesh, two staff from the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh, one government stakeholder, and two alumni association representatives. Further details on interview participants are available in the Methodology section (Annex 1).

## 2. Development Outcomes

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This Case Study demonstrates the impact that alumni working in the public sector can make following an Australia Awards scholarship or fellowship. For the alumni in this Case Study, who are all employed in the Bangladesh Civil Service, the most significant enabling factor in contributing to their workplaces is their increased confidence and broadened mindset. This factor, in particular, assists their ability to transfer their acquired skills and knowledge to different roles as they rotate within the public sector. Where alumni can directly apply their skills and knowledge gained from Australia, they have made significant contributions to their areas of expertise and practice.

Through their work, the alumni are contributing to the development of Bangladesh with societal-level impact in areas such as fiscal and international trade policy, and with organisational-level impact through capacity building and internship programs. These alumni are committed to learning new ways of working and understanding how these approaches can improve the future for Bangladesh and its people, including for vulnerable groups such as refugees and older persons.

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter details the development impact of alumni and explores the Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1: 'Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development'. The analysis and discussion explore the following Case Study propositions:

- alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to partner-country development goals
- alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on-award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals
- alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.

The alumni who are the focus of this Case Study are each making contributions to development. The examples in this chapter highlight these contributions across a variety of activities spanning policy and sustainable development as well as mentoring and capacity building. The examples discussed in this chapter help to show that for the alumni in this Case Study, long-term Outcome 1 of the Australia Awards is being achieved.

## 2.2 Background

The focus of this Case Study is on alumni who undertook their award in an area related to **economic development**. This area of focus is a key sectoral priority in Australia's development partnership with Bangladesh, aligning with the Government of Bangladesh's commitment to boost economic growth and empower citizens as part of its long-term vision for eliminating poverty (DFAT, n.d.b).

Since 2018, Bangladesh has continued its trajectory towards graduation from least developed countries (LDCs) status. The Bangladesh Government's *Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016–FY2020* (7th FYP)<sup>3</sup> is a continuation of its long-term development planning to achieve *Vision 2021*, to become a middle-income country by the year, 2021. The 7th FYP is centred on economic growth and outlines the roadmap to achieve 'accelerated but inclusive growth, and eradication of poverty, inequality, and human deprivation'.

The 7th FYP also highlights the need for high-level capability in the Bangladesh Civil Service and follows from the *Sixth Five Year Plan FY2011–FY2015*, the period in which the alumni in this Case Study undertook their awards. Both the 6th and 7th Five Year Plans outlined challenges and steps which included continuous training to improving the capacity of the public administration as 'A strong civil service will be of utmost importance to strengthening implementation capacity of the government (GED Planning Commission, 2010, p. 221).'

The Australian Government's investment in Bangladesh also focuses on economic development, with objectives to build economic resilience by reducing vulnerability and improving inclusion in the growing economy. Australia Awards in Bangladesh complements these objectives by supporting capacity building of individuals, institutions and communities (DFAT, n.d.b.). In particular, 'Australia's development cooperation investments will prioritise improving the effectiveness of Government expenditure while focusing on building a skilled workforce for economic growth and economic governance' (DFAT, 2020b). These aspects promoting the development of Bangladesh are reflected in the contributions by the alumni featured in this Case Study.

## 2.3 Skills developed on award

This section highlights examples of a range of skills that alumni have developed and utilised on their return from Australia. While these skills are implicit through the analysis that follows, the below list of skills identified by the alumni highlights the breadth in knowledge gained by alumni on award.

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### 'Soft'/interpersonal skills include:

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- mentoring
- critical thinking
- problem-solving
- stakeholder management and engagement with international development partners
- adaptation of knowledge and skills to local contexts
- innovation and internal collaboration
- communication

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### 'Hard'/ technical skills include:

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- fiscal and taxation policy
  - development financing
  - applied research skills, in particular, social science research
  - english language
- 

3 For further information: <http://nda.erd.gov.bd/en/c/publication/seventh-five-year-plan-fy2016-fy2020>

## 2.4 Alumni contributions

The alumni in this Case Study are between three and six years post-graduation. All are making significant contributions to economic development in Bangladesh. Since their Australia Award, the seven alumni of focus have worked within the Ministry of Finance, contributing in various ways to economic growth, sustainable development and fiscal reform. The impact of the contributions made by these alumni occurs at both the organisational and societal level in Bangladesh.

The strong, positive contributions of this group of alumni tend to align with the larger-scale research on Australia Awards alumni undertaken by the Facility. Data from the Facility's Global Tracer Survey show that among all alumni from Bangladesh in the 2011 to 2016 completion cohort, the vast majority (97 per cent) indicate they have introduced improved practices in their work based on the skills and knowledge they gained from Australia.

Working in positions demonstrating technical and thematic expertise, key contributions to development among the alumni in this Case Study highlighted in this section are organised into three key themes, summarised in the following table:

**Table 2: Key contributions in development among the alumni of focus in this Case Study**

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### Developing and implementing policies for economic growth

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- formulation and implementation of fiscal and taxation policy
- coordination of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDC countries
- focal point for Bangladesh's graduation from LDC status
- development of a road map to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh.

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### Contributing to and improving practice for sustainable and inclusive development

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- applying principles of sustainable development to developing policies
- supporting cultures of innovation
- improving conditions for the Rohingya people currently living in Bangladesh
- grassroots-level research of social safety nets for older persons in Bangladesh.

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### Mentoring and capacity building

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- introducing the first internship program in the Bangladesh Civil Service
  - developing overseas training opportunities.
-



### 2.4.1 Developing and implementing policies for economic growth

Two alumni in this Case Study provided strong examples of the use of the technical knowledge and skills gained from their award in Australia to shape some of the economic development policies that have contributed to Bangladesh's development goals outlined in the 7th FYP and Vision 2021. Their contributions demonstrate the various ways in which the Australia Awards scholarships and fellowships have contributed to the trajectory of economic change in Bangladesh.

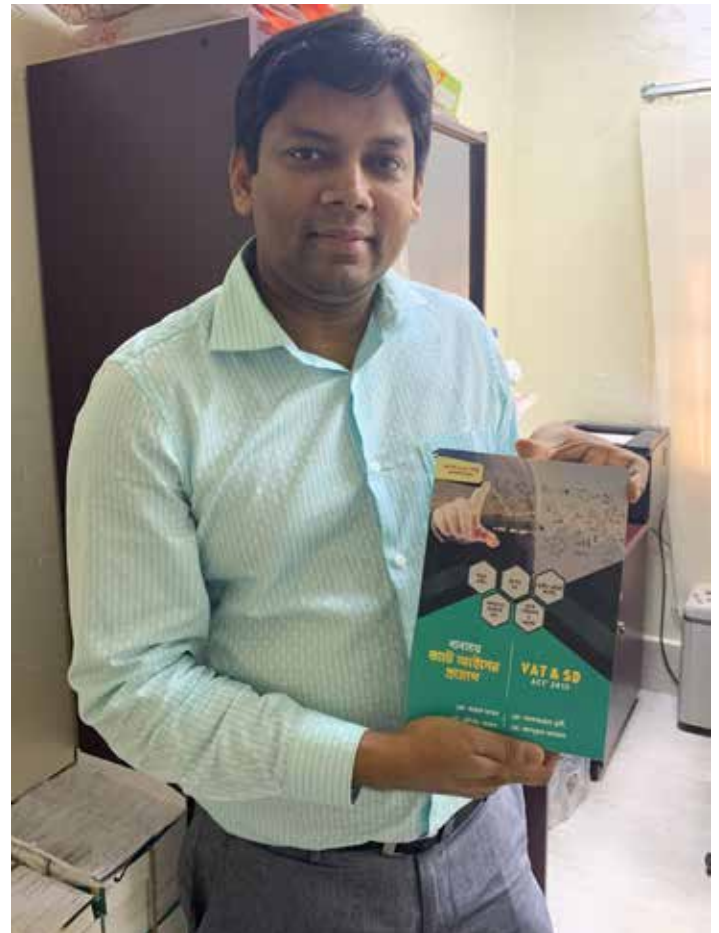
**Mr Md. Tariq Hassan** identified early in his career that he wanted to contribute to policy development in Bangladesh, and subsequently applied for an Australia Awards scholarship and completed a Master of International and Development Economics from the Australian National University (ANU). His studies then led to an appointment as Second Secretary at the National Board of Revenue, within the Ministry of Finance, as a policy strategist in the areas of value-added tax (VAT) policy and law, VAT international relations and diplomatic exemptions. As Second Secretary, Mr Hassan is a core member of a team of nine policy experts that formulate fiscal policy for the Government of Bangladesh.

*I am a member of the core team that formulates the fiscal policy of this country, basically there are nine members who actually formulate this, and I'm one of them, and I think it's a matter of real pride at my age.*

Amongst his most recent achievements, Mr Hassan was an integral part of the implementation of the new Value Added Tax Act 2012. In Bangladesh, the VAT is the main source of revenue for the Government of Bangladesh. According to Mr Hassan, VAT represents 37 per cent of total domestic revenue. The passing of this fiscal law is a major contribution to policy change in Bangladesh and supports the needed 'crux of growth' in GDP derived from domestic sources, 'mainly income tax and VAT' to support Bangladesh's national development plans (GED Planning Commission, 2015, pp. 121–123).

*The new Value Added Tax Act 2012 was passed in 2012 in parliament but it was not implemented due to some reasons. With some amendments and some changes in the Act, this has been implemented this year from July 2019. This is a landmark for my career, and I'm very proud of it. So I could actually translate implementing fiscal policies and fiscal laws in Bangladesh. I'm really proud that I'm a member of this core team.*

Following this policy implementation, Mr Hassan co-authored and published a comprehensive book detailing the new VAT Law for stakeholder practitioners.



Mr Hassan with his newly published co-authored practitioners' guide: *Application of VAT Law in Business: VAT and SD Act 2012*. Credit: Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Similarly, **Mrs Zannatul Ferdous** completed a Master of International and Development Economics at the Australian National University in 2014 and is currently a Deputy Director (Deputy Secretary) within the Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust and the Ministry of Education. In the period following her award, Mrs Ferdous was Senior Assistant Secretary with the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and then Deputy Secretary in the Economic Relations Division (ERD) within the Ministry of Finance.

In her role with ERD, Mrs Ferdous utilised her expertise in international finance and economic relations to work with international development partners in determining the resourcing requirements to implement Bangladesh's development plans. Examples of key international commitments that Mrs Ferdous has contributed to as the focal point include coordination of the Istanbul Programme of Action<sup>4</sup> across 57 ministries, Bangladesh's graduation process from least developed countries (LDCs) status, and the development of a road map for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through her work, Mrs Ferdous' ensures that other Ministries have access to the resources they need to implement their development projects.

Both Mr Hassan and Mrs Ferdous highlighted the link between their contributions and the knowledge they gained from completing a Master of International and Development Economics at the Australian National University. In particular, Mr Hassan provided a recent example which outlines the link between his award and his work:

*I just came from the WHO [World Health Organisation] headquarters. We had a meeting on the tobacco taxation issue of Bangladesh. What I do particularly is, I gather data, I gather the market dynamics, how it's going, then I do simulations and modelling which I present before my Chairman and my Minister. They then make the decision based on this. So this is what actually we have learnt in Australia... We had a course in microeconomics where we were taught to write policy papers, which I regularly do.*

Likewise, Mrs Ferdous highlighted,

*After I came to the Economic Relations Division, I could apply my knowledge that I gained from Australia. Since I have a Master of International and Development Economics, I could apply my development economics knowledge and international economics knowledge. As you know, international finance is a part of international economics.*

## 2.4.2 Contributing to and improving practice for sustainable and inclusive development

Four of the alumni in this Case Study are closely involved in sustainable development—an area focused on promoting not only growth in the economy but also in ensuring that this growth is sustainable from an environmental and social equity perspective. This second aspect is particularly important in the context of the Bangladesh 7th Five Year Plan, which emphasises the need for alleviating poverty as the country's economy grows. The examples below demonstrate how alumni are promoting sustainable development practices and sharing these skills and knowledge with their colleagues.

**Ms Rama Dewan** completed an Australia Leadership Award in *Capacity Building for Trade, Environment and Development in Bangladesh* at Macquarie University in 2013. Ms Dewan is currently Joint Chief at the Bangladesh Tariff Commission, an organisation that provides policy recommendations within various areas including industry, import/export and small-medium enterprises. For Ms Dewan, the fellowship award 'enriched' her capacity to formulate policy and recommendations, particularly within the context of sustainable development and in her contributions to negotiations in trade and environmental issues.

After returning from Australia, Ms Dewan was able to directly apply what she had learnt to prepare trade policy recommendations, supporting papers and inputs to the Government of Bangladesh on issues related to economic, social and environmental regulations, standards and needs. Further, she was able to use the knowledge and skills gained on award to examine the impacts of policy across the three pillars of sustainable development: social; economic; and environmental factors, and apply her knowledge in the World Trade Organisation dispute settlement mechanism. Ms Dewan articulates the impact of the Australia Awards on sustainable development in Bangladesh, her professional career and those around her when she says,

*In our previous office work, we rarely considered sustainability issues for policy recommendations. But after the fellowship program, I have learnt how to use them in different policy formulations for which I feel proud. In addition, I shared my experiences with my fellow colleagues which is very useful indeed.*

4 The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) charts out the international community's vision and strategy for the sustainable development of LDCs for the next decade with a strong focus on developing their productive capacities. For further information: <http://unohrls.org/about/ldcs/istanbul-programme-of-action/>



Driving change at an organisational level, at the time of the interview for this Case Study, **Ms Sultana Afroz** was the Additional Secretary, Wing Chief, for the United Nations section, and Chief Innovation Officer in the Economic Relations Division within the Ministry of Finance. Ms Afroz was appointed Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Public Private Partnership Authority under the Prime Minister's Office in April, 2020. Undertaking an Australia Awards Fellowship in 2014 on *Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh*, Ms Afroz stated that this experience was 'eye-opening', seeing another professional setting and different leadership styles which encouraged closer collaboration amongst colleagues.

Ms Afroz believes in the power of 'global villages' and saw that her observations in Australia could be applied to change the status quo, encouraging innovation and 'thinking out of the box' amongst her colleagues and team. To build a culture of innovation, Ms Afroz based her collaborative approach on the group discussions to dissect and identify best practices that she experienced in Australia. Through this method, Ms Afroz encouraged her colleagues across the ministry to submit new ideas for discussion at the committee meetings.

*When I became Chief Innovation Officer, I wanted to have more ideas from [my team], so I circulated some letters... Then we discussed among the committee members and then we selected two or three things which would work better for the division.*

**Mr Md. Shariar Kader Siddiky**, Joint Secretary, Wing Chief, Asia, Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Fellowship and Foundation (F&F) in the Economic Relations Division (ERD) within the Ministry of Finance, has also contributed to a range of projects across various ministries. In his current role, Mr Siddiky in ERD liaises with economic aid partner-countries and multilateral and bilateral agencies from the Asian region. In 2013 undertook an Australia Awards fellowship *Sector Wide Approach: Public Policy, Financial Management and Donor Relations* at the Queensland University of Technology. From this course, Mr Siddiky stated key outcomes were learning from Australian examples of best practices in program management and development, systems integration and service delivery to populations. An example of how he has utilised these skills and knowledge is Mr Siddiky's work with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Bangladesh as part of the humanitarian response to improve the living conditions of the displaced Rohingya people living in the Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Through the improvement of road conditions and quality of electricity, Mr Siddiky and his colleagues worked together to increase mobility and access of essential services as well as reduce the rate of crime that had been attributed to low levels of lighting.

Another alum **Mrs Nahid Sultana Mallik**, utilised her Master of Arts at Flinders University to research the effectiveness of two social protection programs for older persons in Bangladesh. Involving qualitative research including interviews, focus groups and field visits in local villages, Mrs Mallik developed experience in 'grassroots level' research and evaluation. Since completing her Masters, this experience has led to her contributing to the National Strategy for the Health Workforce, project evaluations within the Ministry of Finance and publication of an article in the ministry's public administration journal about enabling a social safety net in Bangladesh.

Mrs Mallik is now working as Deputy Secretary in the Foreign Aid Budgets and Accounts (FABA) & Information Communications Technology (ICT) Wing, within the Economic Relations Division. In this role, she is responsible for monitoring project finances and progress of various development projects operating across Bangladesh.

### 2.4.3 Mentoring and capacity building

All of the alumni in this Case Study recognised the importance of sharing the knowledge and skills they gained from their award to mentor and build capacity amongst their colleagues. This finding mirrors the large-scale outcomes from the Facility's Global Tracer Survey, which shows that for alumni within this broad cohort (i.e. those completing an award between 2011 and 2016), 98 per cent of those from Bangladesh indicated they had been able to pass on their knowledge and skills to others since returning from Australia. The work of two alumni in this particular Case Study exemplifies the efforts being made by Australia Awards alumni to contribute to the capacity of those around them.

While studying abroad and in Australia, Ms Afroz noticed the positive impact of internships in providing more opportunities and transferring knowledge and skills to future generations in Bangladesh.

*When I came back, I thought, 'How can I take a young student who can work in the government and can learn our system?' ... Then it clicked in my mind that I am the project director of a UNDP project here, and then I requested my project manager, 'Can I hire young students to work with me?' And she said, 'Yes, we can take some junior consultants, but before that, they have to work as an intern.' And through that, I hired two or three young officers, students to work with me.*

Her encounters with students gaining professional experience in Australia inspired Ms Afroz to introduce an internship program, for both female and male students, designed to facilitate authentic learning and skill development through real experiences working on projects within her division. Ms Afroz explained this program was the first of its kind within the Government of Bangladesh.

*So you see, this is an example in the Government of Bangladesh: [by] working abroad and studying abroad; these are the things I learnt. So these are our assets. They are our future generation.*

Mr Siddiky was motivated by the positive impacts of his international training opportunity and saw the opportunity to develop similar capacity development programs for officials in the Bangladesh Civil Service. Utilising his links and networks within Australia (Detailed in 3.3.1), he helped to develop several Memorandum of Understandings with Macquarie, Monash and Central Queensland universities to secure training and professional development opportunities for Bangladeshi public servants. Using the knowledge acquired while on award in delivering better and higher-quality programs, Mr Siddiky played a central role in creating opportunities for officials to learn new ways of working. He also worked towards reducing barriers to access, such as financial or English language requirements, often associated with studying abroad. Through these partnerships with Australian universities, Mr Siddiky has contributed to the capacity development of over 60 government officials.

## 2.5 Factors influencing these outcomes

In exploring their post-award experiences, the common factors raised by alumni which have demonstrably impacted their ability to contribute to development are summarised in the table below and further discussed in this section.

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### Enabling contribution to development

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- broadening of mindset studying and living in Australia
- building new knowledge and skills
- motivation of alumni

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### Challenges in contributing to development

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- alignment of skills to work
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### 2.5.1 Enabling factors

Alumni in this Case Study all identified as having a strong desire or motivation to improve economic development in Bangladesh on their return from award. This motivation, combined with new skills and knowledge, and a broadened mindset, enabled them to make significant contributions post-award.

#### **Broadening of mindset studying and living in Australia:**

The opportunity to live and study in Australia was a transformative learning experience that was explicitly articulated by most of the alumni. This experience is a common theme across most of the case studies of the Facility and an inherent trait among Australia Awards alumni. For the alumni in this Case Study, the on-award experience broadened their world view and built their confidence to undertake complex and challenging assignments. In particular, alumni valued the opportunity to learn from other cultures and inspired them to ‘think in a different way’ (Mr Siddiky). Mr Hassan stated that through his degree, he developed the ability to critically analyse from ‘a broader perspective’ and appreciate the importance of thinking openly when approaching different situations.

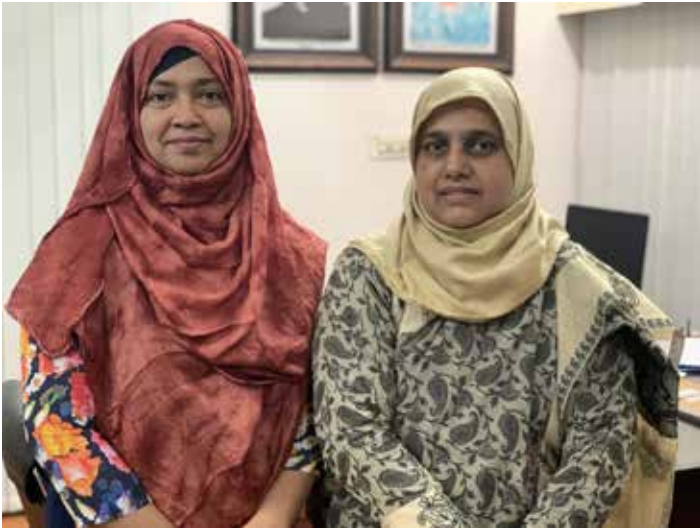
**Mr Mafiz Uddin Ahmed**, Joint Secretary of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) within the Finance Division, highlighted the importance of both the direct and indirect learning opportunities he gained from exposure to living and studying in an environment such as Australia. Presentations during his fellowship from experienced professionals about the Australian communications sector and public-private partnerships, as well as a formal visit to a railway transportation office, were viewed by Mr Ahmed as the most effective way of sharing knowledge and experiences. Exposure to practical examples enabled him to relate and contextualise his learning to problems he observed through his work in Bangladesh.

**Building new knowledge and skills:** Most of the alumni emphasised how their Australian scholarship or fellowship has enabled them to build upon both their technical expertise and transferable soft skills to make contributions through their work. The impact of these new skills and knowledge has been particularly significant when alumni were placed in posts directly relevant to their technical skillset.

Ms Ferdous summed up the benefit of her on-award experience when she said, ‘I can relate the knowledge, and particularly... the confidence I get, that is tremendous. I should say that after coming back from Australia, if I compared the person I was before going to Australia and after coming back, the person is different’.

Two employers of alumni also emphasised their opinion that the courses studied in Australia provided important preparation for the work these alumni are now undertaking. Ms Ferdous' manager, Ms Nasreen Afroz (also an Australian scholarship alum), stated:

*When I heard that she's also an Australia alumna, just I knew [it]! Because I feel that she [is] very good [at] English and also she can organise some things better than other colleagues. It's a great opportunity for me [to have her in my team].*



Mrs Zannatul Ferdous (L) and Ms Nasreen Afroz (R), work together at the Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust. Ms Afroz was delighted when she learned she would be working with a fellow Australian alumni. Credit: Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

**Motivation of alumni:** Alumni were asked as part of the Case Study interview, what motivated them to apply for an Australian scholarship. The responses of this group demonstrated characteristics of highly motivated and high performing individuals and a passion for contributing to the development of Bangladesh and its people, both of which have been significant in their contributions post award to development in Bangladesh.

The example below from Mr Hassan illustrates how alumni articulated clear objectives for their purpose in undertaking post-graduate studies:

*First, the university was obviously a world-class university. I had a focus that I have to have some sort of better theoretical knowledge to work in this area, and I really wanted to pursue my career as a policy guy, which I'm happy that I am now; I'm working in that area. So I thought this would definitely help me, as I had a background in computer science and I also did an MBA, but I thought this solid knowledge of economics will help me to understand the broader perspectives and definitely will equip me with more knowledge.*

Mr Siddiky described his motivation to utilise his skills gained on award to maintain partnerships with Australian universities as follows:

*I had the chance to think about how I can give better chances to my colleagues, especially my junior colleagues. Because my thinking was like this—that the future generations should get good opportunities as they are going through different processes and Bangladesh is transforming. So they need a better education, they need better chances to run the country.*

Finally, Ms Mallik articulated her motivation when she said:

*It was my dream from my childhood that one day, of course, I will achieve some degree from a developed country.*

### 2.5.2 Challenging factors

The challenges some of the alumni in this Case Study have navigated to fully utilise their skills and knowledge reflect the short time since graduation (three to six years) and the structure of the civil service in Bangladesh. The most prominent challenge experienced by these alumni related to the alignment of skills learnt on award with their ministry post.

**Alignment of skills to work:** For the alumni in this Case Study who stated their roles were directly relevant to their award, they could immediately apply their skills and knowledge. In contrast, two of the seven alumni stated they have been unable to directly apply the knowledge and skills gained from their due when transferred to a posting in the civil service that was not related.

These alumni described the impact of this in limiting their ability to utilise what they had learnt fully:

*Today I'm working here, and then I may be transferred to the Health Ministry or something like that. So directly we cannot apply that knowledge...But indirectly, whenever we get to work in the relevant field, it helps us to perform our duties directly from that experience.*

*We need to implement a policy so that those officers, especially those who studied those issues, will be posted in those ministries. Suppose still I have scope to work in the Ministry of Finance, I can contribute there because we are preparing the budget. However, maybe I could contribute to more if I could work in other development ministries, those that are involved with development activities.*

The Australia Awards Bangladesh acknowledge this is a key challenge for alumni returning to the civil service following their award, stating:

*That is a really big challenge now. So the government, the people who work in different sectors, they are changed often. So the person working in the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, after five years, probably he might change to the Ministry of Religion. So when he gets a scholarship, probably he wanted to study a Master of Agriculture or something, so after studying a Master of Agriculture, he comes back, or she comes back. After one or two years, probably he is shifted to the Ministry of Religion or the Ministry of Culture, where he has much less opportunity to contribute what he or she has learnt. So that is a really big challenge.*

To better match speciality, expertise and experience, including from international study, with the respective needs that arise in the Bangladesh Civil Service, the Ministry of Public Administration has developed an online database tracking these details to provide recommendations of suitable officers. A stakeholder participant from the BCS stated that while this has improved filling the gap in capacity needs, this must also be balanced with the service conditions for officials requiring rotation amongst the ministries and postings to gain a broad experience of the government functions.

#### Civil Service in Bangladesh

In the Bangladesh Civil Service sector, career progression and movement within and between ministerial divisions is determined based on a fixed policy uniformly applied to all civil servants. As a result, civil servants have limited control over career advancement opportunities and transferring of knowledge and skills to other areas of interest. The purpose of this structure is to ensure civil servants have a comprehensive understanding of the all the functions of public administration and governance across the Government of Bangladesh.

However, it does have an impact on direct application of content knowledge or skills. Two alumni explicitly commented on the rotational nature of the Civil Service, one noting:

*Generally, after every three years, we are transferred. Exceptional things happen, sometimes maybe four years, five years, I can work here. But generally, after every three years, one official will be transferred from one place to another. Now I am working in the Ministry of Finance, here in the division. Maybe one day I can be posted in the Ministry of Railways.*

*Our promotion does not depend on a degree or anything, because we join after passing a competitive exam and we just start the job. And after a certain period, we just get a promotion.*



## 3. Public Diplomacy Outcomes

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To varying degrees, alumni in this Case Study have maintained relationships developed during their time in Australia. The most common ongoing connections are informal friendships with fellow international and Australian students and Australia Awards alumni. The strongest examples of professional cooperation and partnerships are through relationships with the Australian High Commission and the Bangladesh diaspora in Australia. Alumni interest, workplace opportunity, and alumni engagement activities are key factors facilitating these outcomes.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the extent to which alumni are contributing to two of the Australia Awards long-term outcomes:

- Outcome 2: 'Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries', and;
- Outcome 3: 'Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries.'

The *Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* (the Framework) describes Outcome 2, cooperation, as being the connections and networks between alumni and Australia which represent the people-to-people links such as alumni associations, friendships, or professional connections with former lecturers. Whereas Outcome 3, partnerships, 'looks beyond the individual links' and 'articulates Australia's intention to see organisational links' occur as formal partnerships.

The 'seeds' for these outcomes are intended to have been developed on award. The Framework suggests that during their time on award, scholars 'build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses' and act to catalyse or enhance links between organisations. Further to this, it is anticipated that alumni engagement and support then assist as a post-award mechanism to maintain alumni's relationships with Australia.

This chapter explores the extent to which alumni in this Case Study have been able to develop and maintain connections and professional networks with people and organisations based on their time on award in Australia. The findings from this group of alumni suggest achievement of Outcome 2—cooperation, and partial achievement of Outcome 3—partnerships.

The alumni in this case study are a mix of scholarships (long-term) and fellowship (short-term) awards, and the types of ongoing connections made reflect this. Scholarship alumni described ongoing connections with university staff and friends met on and off campus, while fellowship awardees stated ongoing friendships and communication with peers from their course. All alumni indicated varying degrees of engagement with the local alumni associations, Australia Awards Bangladesh and the Australian High Commission. One alum has successfully developed partnerships as a result of their exposure to Australian universities through their fellowship, and utilised their links with Bangladeshi friends working with the institutions.

## 3.2 Background

Australia's 'warm and constructive relationship'<sup>5</sup> with Bangladesh dates back to independence in 1971, with 45 years of diplomatic relations celebrated in 2017 (DFAT, n.d.). Regular senior talks are held (DFAT, n.d.), with the Honourable Marise Payne as the Australian Foreign Minister visiting in 2019, marking the first visit by an Australian Foreign Minister in 21 years and the first visit by a Cabinet Minister since 2006<sup>6</sup>. Bilateral engagements in recent years have emphasised collaboration in areas of counter-terrorism and police-to-police cooperation. Additional areas of engagement include a focus on supporting economic development, regional Indian Ocean issues, humanitarian support to the Rohingya Crisis, and education (DFAT, n.d.a)<sup>7</sup>.

A Bangladesh Civil Service stakeholder representative interviewed for this Case Study noted Australia is one of the main donors for scholarships by the number of awards and is a preferred destination by officials as it is an English-speaking country, with high education quality and liveability. The priority fields of study for the Australia Awards in Bangladesh are linked to the national development strategies of Bangladesh and Australia's investment priorities for supporting development. The Australian High Commission in Dhaka states that through this approach 'in many areas there is a community of practice forming...there are quite a lot of graduates working in our various priority areas'.

The contribution of the Australia Awards program to the bilateral relationship as Bangladesh develops towards middle-income country status can be evident in the alumni who, on return, have advocated for training and study at Australian institutions. The Bangladesh government is now also sending officials to study in Australia under their internal scholarship and capacity development programs. This is highlighted below in the examples of contribution to partnerships by an alum in this Case Study.

## 3.3 Networks and links developed on award

All alumni in this Case Study described ongoing connections with Australia—from friendships to professional partnerships—developed as a result of their award. Since their return to Bangladesh, the alumni in this group have remained connected to Australia through varying levels of engagement with the Australian High Commission, Australia Awards Bangladesh, and the growing alumni associations—Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB) and the Adivasi Australian Scholars' Association of Bangladesh (AASAB). The Bangladesh diaspora are a network through which alumni are also connected to in Australia.

Overall, the findings in this Case Study relating to the types of connections maintained by these alumni are similar to those seen in other case studies and the global surveys undertaken by the Facility. That is, relationships developed as a result of their award align with the cooperation and people-to-people links (Outcome 2).

The examples from the alumni in this Case Study provide insight to the broader cohort of Bangladeshi alumni response from the similar period (2011 to 2016) in the Year 3 Global Tracer Survey (Edwards & Taylor, 2019). In the Global Tracer Survey, the Bangladesh fellowship alumni were more likely to develop professional links with Australian organisations (54% compared with 41% of scholarship alumni). For both fellowship and scholarship alumni, these links with Australian organisations were most frequently with universities, and reflect the examples of successful partnerships observed by the Australian High Commission and Australia Awards Bangladesh.

With regard to cooperation, figures from the Global Tracer Survey showed more Bangladesh scholarship alumni reported they were often in contact with fellow Australian students, awardees and friends in Australia (44%, 63% and 55%) than fellowship alumni (38%, 35% and 38%), supporting the common assumption that the longer-term award enables stronger ongoing links to be formed. However, another 42 per cent of fellowship alumni reported they were sometimes in contact with other awardees which is reflected in the responses shared by this Case Study's group of fellowship alumni.

5 Media release, December 2019: <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/high-commissioner-bangladesh>

6 Media release, September 2019: <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/visit-bangladesh>

7 *Ibid*

In the survey, over half of all Bangladesh alumni surveyed sometimes or rarely had contact with the Australian High Commission, and nearly one in five alumni have never had contact since their return. While this reflects the targeted approach to alumni engagement by the Australia Awards in Bangladesh, it also indicates an opportunity for broader opportunities to re-engage alumni and supports the interest and values shared by this group of alumni outlined below.

The following list summarises the types of networks and links alumni of focus in this Case Study developed on award, with examples from the alumni interviewed in the sections below.

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### Outcome 2—Cooperation

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- ongoing friendships with fellow awardees, students, university staff, bangladesh diaspora community in australia, and with australians
- professional connections with australian organisations
- formal engagement with the australian high commission
- alumni engagement—associations, australian high commission and australia Awards Bangladesh

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### Outcome 3—Partnerships

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- MoUs with multiple Australian universities to support postgraduate training and professional development of Bangladesh Civil Service
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### 3.3.1 Partnerships with Australian universities

As part of his role with the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), one alum, Mr Siddiky, has successfully organised partnerships which evolved into Memorandum of Understandings with Macquarie, Monash and Central Queensland Universities. Inspired by his Australia Awards fellowship experience at the Queensland University of Technology, Mr Siddiky stated that:

*For me, after coming from Australia, especially that training program, I started thinking how I can engage other officials [Bangladesh public servants] to go to different institutes, not only in Australia but in other countries, so that they can get at least some of the best practices. So I organised a training program with Macquarie University, and also I organised a training program in Monash University, and, after transferring from [ERD] to MoPA, I tried to organise some of the programs in Australia.*

Mr Siddiky developed the initial partnership with Macquarie University for the Economic Relation Division (ERD) in the Ministry of Finance through Dr Pradip Royhan, a personal connection working at the institution whom he had spoken with about organising a program. This partnership continued to evolve when Mr Siddiky was transferred to MoPA, where he was tasked with developing trainings for the BCS. This involved organising a program for newly joined high-performing officials to undertake as part of their foundation training with the Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC).

Alongside this program, Mr Siddiky also facilitated discussions with the university to support access to the Masters and PhD programs as part of the capacity development program through which BCS officials are supported to attend international universities for postgraduate qualifications. Through these discussions, MoPA successfully requested the reduction of the minimum IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score from 6.5 to 6.0 to support officials who do not use English as predominantly in their work, as well as the reduction of costs by 50 per cent. Mr Siddiky highlighted the additional offer by the Vice-Chancellor of a PhD scholarship for one Bangladeshi official each year, for five years—‘it was a very good opportunity for us’.



The MoUs formed with Monash and Central Queensland University with another connection working in Australia, Professor Quamrul Alam, also targeted supporting the capacity development of BCS officials. In his role with MoPA, Mr Siddiky advocated and promoted Australian universities as being the first choice for the capacity development program. He spoke about having to provide a justification for this preference to his senior officials, noting the three reasons he highlighted were: 1) that he was developing good relationships and opportunities with cost reductions for BCS officials through his connections with an Australian university; 2) his experience on award had shown him the high quality education offered at Australian universities; and 3) on the basis of international rankings, cost of tuition and cost of living, Australia was the best proposition.

### 3.3.2 Friendships established in Australia

Six alumni in this Case Study stated they had ongoing communication and friendships from their time in Australia with fellow awardees and international and Australian students, their professors and lecturers, and with Bangladeshi diaspora and Australians.

Ms Dewan, Mr Ahmed, Ms Afroz and Mr Siddiky have ongoing friendships and contact with their fellow awardees they met during their respective Australia Awards fellowships. Mrs Dewan stated that from her Australian Leadership Award program—*Capacity Building for Trade, Environment and Development in Bangladesh*, she has ‘friendships or professional connections with two officials of the host organisations and some participants’, her fellow Bangladeshi officials. Similarly, Mr Ahmed stated that he meets up with his friends on occasion ‘informally’.

For Mr Hassan, a key motivation for applying for the Australia Awards scholarship was also ‘to network with people from Australia and obviously my friends from ANU [Australian National University]’ and is reflected in the wide engagement Mr Hassan had with the university’s student body. Mr Hassan was an active member of the ANU Postgraduate and Research Students’ Association (PARSA), and Crawford School Students’ Society (CSSS) and participated in business case competitions representing ANU and the Crawford School. Mr Hassan states that the network he developed during his time in Australia ‘is also helping me a lot. Nowadays, whenever we travel, I find somebody from my alumni and that’s a great feeling’. Mr Hassan describes his relationships with fellow students from Australia and internationally have been both personal and professional.

Mrs Mallik has a wide network of friendships that she developed with university staff, her supervisors, and Bangladeshi-Australian family members that she is actively ‘maintaining the connections’. A unique story of a close friendship formed with an Australian couple was also shared by Mrs Mallik, recounting that she and her family met the couple who owned a petrol station they came across while lost driving in the countryside of Adelaide:

*In this way, we have a very good relationship. The next week they invited us. Next week I invited them, and still, we have a very good relationship. Last time she organised a cardigan for me. She made one for me, and she gave it to me, and she told me, “You deserve it. The wool is from my mum’s cardigan and my cardigan. I pulled out the wool and made the new cardigan for you.” I really feel honoured. I really feel loved that they love me as a daughter.*

### 3.3.3 Professional connections with Australian organisations

Reflecting his proactive approach to a broad scholarship experience in Australia, in addition to his studies, Mr Hassan also worked for the Canberra-based International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) which has an affiliation with Charles Sturt University. He stated that from his time working there, he ‘still maintains that relationship’.



Ms Sultana Afroz (C) with fellow participants and organisers of the Australia Awards fellowship *Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh* at Macquarie University. Ms Afroz valued the networking opportunities from the award experience. Credit: Macquarie University: The Globe<sup>8</sup>

### 3.3.4 Formal engagement with the Australian High Commission

One alumna, Ms Afroz is highly engaged with the Australia High Commission in Dhaka. She describes a ‘very good’ friendship with the former Australian High Commissioner, Ms Julia Niblett resulting from sharing her Australia Awards fellowship experience during an alumni engagement event. This has led to engagements including discussions with the High Commissioner and Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls at Ms Afroz’s office to discuss gender in Bangladesh. Ms Afroz emphasised that being an Australia Awards alumni ‘has really helped us to have some dialogue with the important people coming from Australia’. This engagement also reflects Ms Afroz’s role as a senior official in the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance.

### 3.3.5 Alumni engagement—associations, Australian High Commission and Australia Awards Bangladesh

All seven alumni in this case study stated they have participated in alumni engagement activities with either the Australian High Commission, Australia Awards Bangladesh or related alumni associations in Bangladesh and Australia. They identify this engagement as a way they have remained linked with Australia. The nature of these engagements has largely been informal social events.

Five of the alumni are members of the Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB) and the Adivasi Australian Scholars’ Association of Bangladesh (AASAB) with varying levels of participation from viewing social media updates to attendance to social gatherings and Annual General Meetings. Alumni expressed an interest in participating in professional workshops and networking events, which are described further in the box below. One alum, Mr Hassan, is also a member of his alma mater alumni association and noted that the benefits of this are the updates of fellow alumni and access to libraries and journals.

<sup>8</sup> For further details: <http://globe.international.mq.edu.au/r/2014/06/macquariebangladesh/#.Xsc0k2j7Q2x>



Mrs Nahid Sultana Mallik (centre-left) next to the Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Her Excellency Julia Niblett (centre) at a networking event for alumni in international trade, held at the Australian High Commission in Dhaka. Credit: Australia Awards Bangladesh<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Mallik who is an active member of AAAB and regularly attends Australian High Commission alumni events stated she finds most valuable the maintaining of connections, as well as offering opportunities to meet new alumni and Australian High Commission representatives:

*When we attend the programs at the Australian Embassy, we have a good connection with the Australian High Commissioner and other government officials, so it's a nice thing for me. Whenever the High Commissioner asks us as an alumni member: 'What do you think? What do you need more? What should we do?' then we can express our opinions. So it's a nice thing, I think. And the High Commissioner is a nice lady; always she wears Bangladeshi dress, always tries to mix with our students, mix with us. So really, we enjoyed it.*

### 3.4 Facilitating factors

While the factors that enable partnerships and cooperation are similar across the case studies undertaken by the Facility, the challenging factors in each are nuanced by the context of the individual, sector of work and country. These factors—both enabling and challenging, are summarised in the table here and discussed in more detail below.

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#### Enabling cooperation/partnerships

- motivation and interest of the alumni to build networks and partnerships
- alumni engagement opportunities
- Bangladesh diaspora in Australia

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#### Challenging cooperation/partnerships

- time constraints on-award
  - on-award course format
  - alumni interests and values in networking and engagement
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9 For further information: <https://australiaawardsbangladesh.org/highlighting-the-importance-of-international-trade-linkages-between-australia-and-bangladesh/>



### 3.4.1 Factors enabling cooperation and partnerships

Three key factors that have helped to enable ongoing connections with Australia were identified in the examples provided by the alumni in this Case Study and are discussed in more detail here. Some other factors that are specifically relevant to facilitating the professional partnerships built by one of the alumni in this Case Study are detailed in the breakout box text in this section.

**Motivation and interest:** Of the two alumni (Mr Hassan and Mr Siddiky) who have developed ongoing professional networks and partnerships, their motivation and interest to pursue these during and following their award is identified as an enabling factor leading to these outcomes. In a similar vein, motivation to build friendships and meet Australians also contributed to the ongoing friendships described above by Mrs Mallik.

The approaches undertaken by Mr Hassan and Mr Siddiky are informative and outline how they harnessed their motivations which led to their outcomes which were beneficial as well as meaningful. A reason for Mr Hassan applying for the Australia Awards was to 'network with people from Australia', which he applied on award and made an international network of ongoing friendships. His approach to gaining exposure while on award is also demonstrated in his active involvement with student associations and extra-curricular opportunities to represent the university at business case competitions. Mr Siddiky stated his award experience gave him 'the chance to think how I can give better chances to my colleagues, especially my junior colleagues' through international study experiences so that they can continue to meet the future needs of Bangladesh. This motivation led Mr Siddiky to start 'trying to maintain good relations with some of my friends in Australia' to build links with institutions where his colleagues get both a 'good education, but also the best practices from Australia' to try to replicate in Bangladesh.

**Alumni engagement opportunities:** Two alumni valued the engagement by the Australian High Commission in Dhaka and the Australia Awards Bangladesh team. The opportunities and events they have participated in are a source of their ongoing links with Australia. For Mrs Mallik, alumni-invited events and programs enabled three types of connections: 1) with alumni she knew, 2) with new alumni and awardees, and 3) with the Australian High Commissioner and other government officials. Similarly, Ms Afroz valued the networking opportunities as an Australia Awards alumni stating that the value and opportunity to meet with and have a dialogue with Australian representatives extended to post-award engagements:

*So this network is helping to meet some important people from Australia, along with the Bangladesh people. And I think the network is helping in that way. We still have some connection.*

**Bangladeshis and Bangladesh Australians living in Australia:** Connections with Bangladesh diaspora in Australia was referred to by three alumni. For example, Mrs Mallik has 'some Australian family members, Bangladeshi immigrants also, they are citizens,' that she has maintained links with amongst her other Australian connections.

The Bangladesh diaspora network in Australia was also a valuable link in the partnerships developed by Mr Siddiky. In formulating links and MoUs with Australian universities, Mr Siddiky was able to connect with Dr Pradip Royhan and Professor Quamrul Alam, personal connections from Bangladesh who at the time were working at Australian universities, and they 'had a lot of talks about how we can organise a program'. These personal connections are just one aspect of the many bilateral links with Australian universities. Mr Siddiky stated that many Bangladeshi colleagues are alumni of Australian universities with ongoing links with staff members. Similarly, Ms Asfia Sultana from the Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB) stated some alumni are also back in Australia undertaking their PhD and share with the community information about their university.

### Additional enabling factors in the development of partnerships

In addition to the factors identified above, the following factors also played a role in the way Mr Siddiky was able to successfully contribute to the institutional partnerships between the Bangladesh Civil Service and Australian universities.

**Workplace opportunity to develop partnerships:** Shortly following his fellowship award, Mr Siddiky was transferred to the Ministry of Public Administration as the Private Secretary to the Honourable Minister of State. In this role he worked on capacity development programs for the Bangladesh Civil Service to support the achievement of national development plans *Vision 2021*, *Vision 2041*, and the *Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100*. With his transfer, Mr Siddiky stated he had 'better chances to organise many programs in Australia for our officials, for capacity building especially'.

**Exposure to Australian organisations:** Mr Siddiky stated that one of the factors in his advocacy to his colleagues for partnering with Australian universities was his fellowship experience at QUT: 'I had a very good experience at Queensland University of Technology, and we also had a better understanding that they [Bangladeshi officials] can get good chances of a good education there in Australia.' The Australian High Commission similarly identified the partnerships and connections built from the exposure opportunities from the awards, citing an example of fellowship awardees from the Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture building connections in Australia as a result of a study tour on water usage.

### 3.4.2 Factors challenging cooperation and partnership outcomes

Alumni in this Case Study identified particular hurdles which limited their opportunity to forge professional links and build their networks on and post award. Each hurdle was unique to the alum and are outlined below. However, collectively the challenges related to access to and relevance of networking and engagement opportunities.

**Time constraints on-award:** Balancing professional development and networking opportunities outside of coursework hours with responsibilities as a sole carer of an infant and young child while on award limited the participation of one alum. Although selected for a concurrent Australian Leadership Award, this alum was unable to attend events which occurred in the evening, stating: 'I got the opportunities, but I couldn't avail myself of them'.

**On-award course format:** Another alum found that their Masters by research involving an independent project reduced the opportunities to meet other students. Although this alum developed ongoing links with her research supervisors and other local Australians in the community, she felt the opportunity to connect with other students was missing. They stated—'It is unfortunate for me, I was a research student, so I didn't attend any classes, that's why I couldn't [make links] because I wasn't in contact with any young students'.

**Alumni interests and values in networking and engagement:** Alumni interests are dynamic in breadth. For one alum who stated that the opportunity to build a strong link with his professors on award was limited as their areas of academic interests were not directly related, reciprocated interests were an aspect for forging ongoing links.

In this regard, alumni indicated that they would benefit from and engage with tailored opportunities for developing professional networks and links. One alum stated it would be helpful for them to participate in knowledge-sharing type sessions. Another alum suggested that, like their university in Australia, the alumni association could organise events where alumni 'can host a program' to share expertise. The suggestion here was that this type of engagement would provide 'more scope to meet each other and also get something out of this'.

Two alumni expressed a common sentiment found in other case studies by the Facility for opportunities to collaborate with the Australian High Commission, with one recommending a strategy to engage senior-level alumni to 'be involved with the Australian High Commission-kind of functions or some program to have a strong network'. The second alum indicated there was a 'gap' to be filled in alumni engagement, stating:

*You can do a lot of good things for society with alumni, and you could be connected with not only the [alumni] association in between but also with the universities and with the Australian High Commission, and you can try to give benefits to others.*

## Helping alumni engage—insights from the Australia Awards Bangladesh program

An in-depth interview with the Australia Awards Bangladesh team identified additional challenges to actively engaging with alumni and achieving long-term Outcomes 2 (cooperation) and 3 (participation) of the Australia Awards. These insights are indicative of constraints facing many Australia Awards programs and Australian High Commissions/Embassies in alumni engagement and helping facilitate networks with Australia.

**Alumni interests and Australian priorities:** A challenge in alumni engagement was in ‘trying to find a way to make the alumni associations their community of choice’. In addition, matching Australian ‘strategic focus [with the expertise of] our alumni cohort’ can limit alumni engagement in events that are of a specific focus (i.e. economic governance). Subsequently, it can be difficult to balance engagement opportunities with the breadth of reach.

**Work-experience and internships on-award:** Limited uptake and access to professional placements while on award were stated as a challenge to creating ongoing connections. ‘Without that, it’s challenging to create a link that is long-term that ticks off other “aid for trade” and ongoing research opportunities’.

### **Developing skills in networking and partnership building:**

To support on and post-award opportunities turn into substantial cooperation and partnerships outcomes, it was observed there is a gap in ‘understanding how these linkages and leveraging of opportunities works’.

### **Limited Australian university presence in Bangladesh:**

Engagement levels in Bangladesh by Australian universities was observed to be low in comparison to other countries with Australian alumni. ‘In other locations where the awards are delivered, the Australian universities have a presence, they actively have campuses in-country, or they’re regularly sending academic staff and providing professional development workshops for their alumni. That doesn’t happen in Bangladesh...so that creates some difference in maintaining the longer-term links’.

**Post-reintegration engagement:** The reintegration experience was referred to by some scholarship alumni in this Case Study as a busy period, particularly for those resettling children back into the local education system. The Australia Awards Bangladesh stated that this was common amongst the alumni in addition to resettling into the workplace or finding employment, and creates a gap in the connection with Australia: ‘So finding space to interact with alumni activities, it’s very hard for people to carve that time out, that transition’.

## The role of Australian alumni associations in Bangladesh

The two key Australia Awards alumni associations in Bangladesh are the Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB) and the Adivasi Australian Scholars' Association of Bangladesh (AASAB). These groups offer new awardees and alumni the opportunity to engage and reconnect with their peers and with Australia Awards Bangladesh and the Australian High Commission.

While the focus of this Case Study is on a small specific group of Bangladesh alumni, the information collected from the participants provided insights into alumni associations and engagement relevant to the success of Outcome 2, cooperation, and Outcome 3, partnerships, which are worth documenting for the broader alumni group.

**Overview of the associations:** Executive Board representatives Ms Bipasha Chama (Vice President of AAAB and Executive Member of AASAB), and Ms Asfia Sultana (General Secretary of AAAB) state the purpose of the associations are to provide their communities a platform for alumni to remain connected, share information, build links, and showcase alumni achievements. The associations also assist awardees pre-departure with advice on study and life in Australia, and on reintegration to Bangladesh. AASAB also advocate for the increase in indigenous participation in the Australia Awards, and is described by Ms Chama as a key source on Australia Awards for indigenous Bangladeshis and 'should continue its social activities to ensure justice for marginalised people'.

Both AAAB and AASAB are led by volunteers, with respective membership sizes of 400 alumni, and 160 alumni from indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Some financial and engagement support is provided by Australia Awards Bangladesh and the Australian High Commission, and in-kind support is also sourced by AAAB members, offering access to venue space for meetings and events. Funding and time availability of its volunteers are key challenges experienced by the associations, and both AAAB and AASAB are exploring opportunities for external funding to support its future growth and ability to deliver a variety of events for its members.

**Future opportunities and interest:** Alumni in this Case Study were diverse in their preferences for the types of activities to support engagement. Alumni and AAAB suggested connection and knowledge-sharing based around fields of interests or 'communities of practice', and professional development workshops. One alum observed that professional engagement with alumni would be a unique offering to other country alumni associations in Bangladesh.

Alumni in this Case Study also suggested unique proposals. Mrs Ferdous stated that linking with the Australian Bangladesh Business Council could be mutually beneficial, with seminars to identify and help on problems organisations face in investment in Bangladesh and Australia. Ms Sultana echoed this, stating engagement with Australian companies operating in Bangladesh could help increase alumni interest in the association and is important because with 'globalisation, if we need to have established partnership links for inclusive growth or anything like that, partnerships and links connection can help each other'.

## 4. Alumni Views of Australia

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Alumni in this Case Study have developed enduring, positive views of Australia. These views have been formed through their positive social interactions and academic experience on award. Factors that have contributed to these views include the high quality of education alumni received, exposure to Australian society and culture and on-award support through Australia Awards.

### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards is that ‘alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively’. To achieve Outcome 4, the Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation program logic (DFAT, 2017) identifies three key components for building a positive view of Australia:

- alumni were able to establish links within Australia
- alumni had positive experiences on award in Australia, through both living and studying in Australia
- alumni continue to have positive experiences in their interactions with Australia and Australians post award.

Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards recognises that long-lasting positive personal and professional attitudes to Australia are ‘fundamental to alumni contributing to cooperation between Australia and their home countries, and more broadly to the bilateral relationship’ (DFAT, 2016). As is apparent through this quote from the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, this outcome is also a significant basis for the achievement of Outcome 2—cooperation, discussed in the previous chapter.

The alumni in this Case Study maintain strong, positive views of Australia, Australians and Australian expertise as a result of their time studying and living in Australia, demonstrating achievement of Outcome 4.

### 4.2 Examples of positive views of Australia, Australians and Australian expertise

The views of alumni in this Case Study reflect the overall positive experiences they gained while in Australia, as a result of their cultural and social encounters, academic experience and on-award support. Many alumni returned to Bangladesh inspired by their time in Australia and have become strong advocates for Australian education within their professional and social networks. These themes contribute to the achievement of Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards and are consistent with findings from other Case Studies conducted by the Facility. Examples specific to this Case Study are detailed below.



#### 4.2.1 Australian society and culture

Many of the alumni in this Case Study had formed a positive impression of Australia prior to commencing their studies through the positive experiences of their families and colleagues, who encouraged them to apply for an Australia Award. These positive views were reinforced during their time on award, through various interactions with Australian society and culture.

Having arrived from a crowded city in their home country, alumni were impressed with the cleanliness of Australian cities and the efficiency of its transport and communication systems. These observations inspired some alumni to change their thinking and practices when they returned to Bangladesh. Mr Ahmed noted:

*...there were a lot of things to learn from Australia...In the CBD, you can ride on buses and trains free. Their communications system or network, that was really surprising to me. The learning point for me was that if we could introduce such a system of communication in Dhaka City, it could solve many problems in Bangladesh.*

Similarly, having observed many positive aspects of Australian society, including good customer service and the efficiency of the road maintenance system, Mr Siddiky refers to a set of 'Australian standards' which he uses to encourage his friends and colleagues to improve public services in Bangladesh.

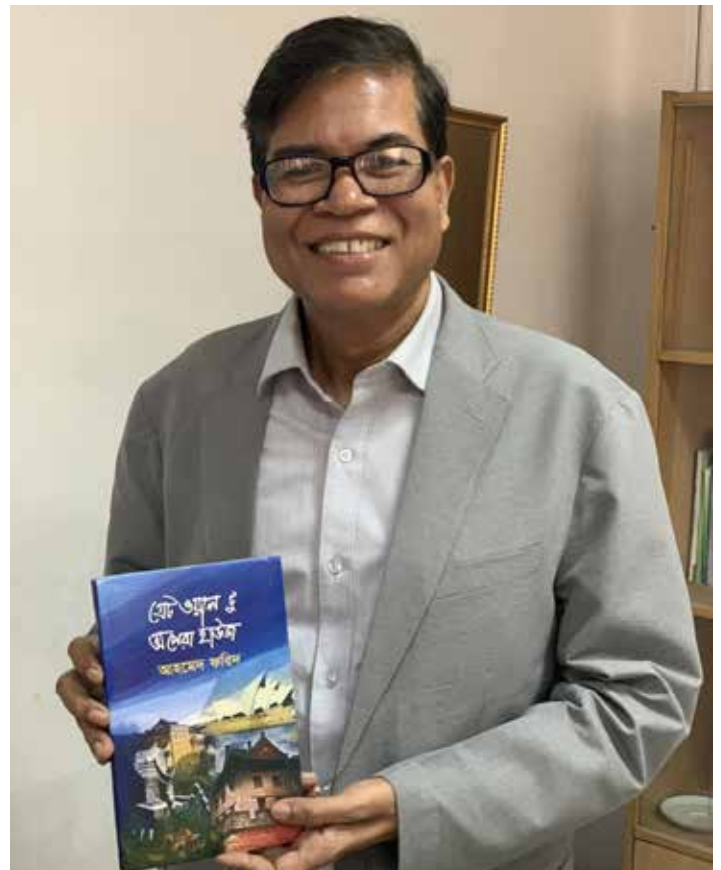
One key aspect of Australian culture that resonated with all alumni was Australian values around multiculturalism and social equality. Alumni were able to experience multiculturalism firsthand through their social interactions and friendships with Australians from different cultural backgrounds. Mr Hassan reflected on the difference between Bangladesh and Australia:

*[In Bangladesh] I did not have enough opportunity to mix with people from very diverse backgrounds and from very diverse cultures, because in Bangladesh, mostly we are Muslims and culturally, no matter what religion we have, we have very similar things; culturally we are sort of one nation. But in Australia, I found I met people from different countries, different cultures, and that to know about them and to taste their food...it was quite interesting and good.*

Mr Ahmed was fascinated by the cultural diversity and the social 'bond' that appeared to exist among different ethnic groups in Australia. Mrs Ferdous, recalled the generosity and acceptance she experienced by the Australian community.

*I thought the people of Australia were very nice. They were very nice to me, otherwise I couldn't sustain the two years... And though my skin colour is not white...I am from a poor country, I never faced any kind of racial behaviour...*

On return to Bangladesh, Mr Siddiky has been applying some of the knowledge and social experiences he gained in Australia to promote social inclusion to his friends and colleagues. Mr Ahmed, who is a writer, has published a book based on his experiences in Australia titled *Great Wall to Opera House* with the aim to 'create some amusement in the minds of people, those who didn't go to Australia'.



Mr Ahmed with his published book *Great Wall to Opera House* describing his experiences in Australia during his fellowship award. Credit: Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

### 4.2.2 Quality of Australian education

Alumni had an overwhelmingly positive academic experience in Australia, which was reflected by the prestige of Australian universities, world-class facilities and highly respected academic staff. As discussed in the previous chapters, these factors enhanced alumni's learning experience in Australia and helped build new skills and knowledge which they were able to implement in their workplaces in Bangladesh.

Mr Siddiky was so impressed with the quality of the education he received during his fellowship in Australia that on return to Bangladesh, he was instrumental in establishing numerous MOUs between the Government of Bangladesh and Australian universities to offer training and professional development for the Bangladesh Civil Service. He used his networks established in Australia to develop fellowship programs with different Australian universities and was successful in negotiating reduced fees and lowered the IELTS for entry. In his view, an Australian education offered broad benefits for the Bangladeshi public service.

*I had a very good experience at the Queensland University of Technology and we had also a better understanding that they can get good chances of good education there in Australia...we started to compare the rankings of the universities around the world and how much they charged for education costs and other costs. So, compared to some of the good universities, actually we decided that Australia could be a better place for that in terms of costing and living conditions. At the same time, they will get a better education from the Australian universities, if you compare. So that was my argument with my bosses, that Australia could be a better place for our officials.*

Mrs Ferdous, who completed a Master of International and Development Economics at the ANU also emphasised the value of an Australian education in her career progression.

*...it's kind of world-class learning, and the teacher I met there [was] tremendously good...the quality of the ANU study, that must be the best one...After coming home, I also could implement all this knowledge in my workplace. So there is no doubt about the quality of the education...*

Mrs Mallik spoke highly of the facilities and resources at Flinders University, which provided the necessary environment to support her research. She also described the collaborative and collegiate teaching style of Australian lecturers, who were readily available to meet the needs of all students.

*The teachers are highly qualified, highly corporate... Sometimes I needed to meet other teachers, other professors...Every teacher was ready to help their students... In Australia, I have seen every teacher ready for every student, whether they're their students or not, whether they're from their department, their school or not; it doesn't matter. If I seek any support from a teacher from another department, they are always ready to provide help.*

At times, the support of lecturers and university staff extended beyond the academic sphere. For example, Mrs Mallik reflected on the time when she suffered a major health issue and her course supervisor petitioned for her to get a six-month extension while she was undergoing treatment. As a result, Mrs Mallik was able to complete her degree with high honours.

These alumni have become strong advocates for Australian education on their return to Bangladesh and have actively encouraged their colleagues and friends to study in Australia.

### 4.2.3 Prestige of Australia Awards

Australia Awards supports the human resource development priorities of Bangladesh. In 2018-19, Australia Awards provided 70 scholarships and 105 short courses awards for government officials in the areas of public policy, trade, economy and entrepreneurship, development, security, engineering and environment (DFAT, 2019). According to Ms Louise Jennion, Country Program Manager of Australia Awards Bangladesh, Australia Awards is widely considered a prestigious scholarship due to its rigorous selection process, transparency, pre-departure preparation and generous on-award support. All these factors contribute to a strong reputation for the Australia Awards as one of the most prestigious foreign scholarship programs in Bangladesh.

Alumni also endorse this view, citing the quality of Australian universities, experiences of others who have received an Award and the generous on-award benefits as the primary reasons for applying. As Mrs Ferdous recalled, 'At that time, the AusAID scholarship was the most prestigious scholarship from among the government officials, in terms of money value and also in terms of the quality of study.' Mrs Mallik also attested to the prestige of the Awards and its competitiveness among Bangladeshi applicants, where she was only one of 70 awardees selected out of 1,000 applicants.

While there were other international scholarship opportunities available to alumni at the time of their application (such as Fullbright, Chevening and the Prime Minister's Fellowship), alumni valued the generous financial and on-award support provided by Australia Awards. In particular, alumni who were accompanied by their family were grateful for the benefits afforded to their family members, such as childcare support. Mr Hassan shared:

*And the other benefit that I got from the Australia Awards is the childcare benefit for my child. So while my wife was working, we sent our son to childcare. And that was quite amazing. Without that help, it would not have been possible for me to take my family to Australia.*

### 4.3 Issues that challenged the development of positive views

In general, all alumni in this Case Study had a positive experience in Australia and were grateful for the opportunity to undertake their studies there. However, consistent with other Case Studies conducted by the Facility, some factors were identified by alumni as challenging. For one alumnus, the difficulty of finding long term accommodation when he first arrived in Australia was an issue. Since the Introductory Academic Program was a fulltime course, he was unable to take time out during the day to contact real estate agents to secure housing.

For alumni who were accompanied by their families, it was perceived as both a challenge and a benefit. As family is an important aspect of Bangladeshi culture, some alumni felt it was necessary to bring their families with them for support. However, it was also difficult for some to find a balance between family life and study, particularly for women with young children. For one alum, although they were successful in gaining new skills and knowledge and implementing these in the workplace, they describe their time in Australia balancing studies as the sole-carer for an infant and toddler as a 'struggle'. Balancing family with study is a challenge that the Australia Awards Bangladesh team has also identified in the Bangladesh cohort of awardees, which has often lead to course deferrals or the need for extra support from Australia Awards. However, Australia Awards Bangladesh has introduced some changes based on the feedback of alumni to help prepare awardees for taking their families to Australia. This includes connecting awardees with recent alumni who have had similar experiences and strengthening the pre-departure briefings with information about childcare, visas and deferrals.

## 5. Conclusion

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**This Case Study demonstrates the ways in which Australia Awards alumni from Bangladesh working in the Bangladesh Civil Service are contributing to the development of their country. With aspirations to graduate from least developed countries status (LDCs) and achieve middle-income country status by 2021, alumni in this Case Study are using their skills and knowledge gained in Australia to contribute to numerous development and economic growth activities in Bangladesh.**

Having completed their scholarship and fellowship awards over the past decade (between 2011 and 2016), this cohort of alumni are currently working at mid to senior-levels in the Bangladesh Tariff Commission and the Ministry of Finance across the Economic Relations and Finance Divisions. The building of new skills and knowledge, broadening of mindset from life and study in Australia, and the motivation of alumni are all significant to the way they have utilised their award experience to enhance their work contributions post award.

Alumni largely reported little difficulty in transitioning back into the workplace following their award, reflecting the relevance of their award to their work. However, two alumni stated that the rotational nature of the Bangladesh Civil Service requiring officials to have broad experience across the ministries has meant that not all of their postings have enabled them to apply their technical skills and expertise directly. Both were reflective that there was transferability in their soft skills and some applicability at times for their expertise. Overall, all alumni in this group felt that their award benefited them in their capacity in the workplace.

Alumni have also been active in sharing their skills, knowledge and new practices, and utilising their networks to support their colleagues, demonstrating the watershed affect the Australia Awards can have on a workplace. Examples from this Case Study show how alumni have adopted Australian practices to cultivate a culture of collaboration and innovation and applying learnings of best practices in services and program design to develop new training opportunities with Australian universities for Bangladesh Civil Service officials.

In the time since their return to Bangladesh, these alumni have also maintained a range of connections to Australia, including friendships with fellow alumni, international and Australian students, and Australians. Some have developed links which have resulted in professional engagements such as dialogue with the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, and memorandum of understandings with Australian universities. However, alumni indicated a gap that could be met through more engagement opportunities with the Australia Awards in Bangladesh. Suggested activities included sector-based forums to share knowledge with other alumni, opportunities to work with the Australian High Commission, and utilisation of alumni expertise to support the relevant business councils navigate bilateral trade and investment.

Overall, this Case Study has shown that Australia Awards alumni are making remarkable contributions in their fields of expertise utilising the skills and knowledge they gained in Australia. For Bangladesh, financial stability and continued growth are critical to its development goals and to the well-being of Bangladeshi people broadly. Furthermore, the connections and networks being maintained by alumni enable strong bilateral relationships with Australia, especially in terms of links within the Bangladesh Civil Service. As Bangladesh moves towards middle-income status, the importance of Australia Awards alumni in supporting sustainable development will continue to grow.

## 6. Alumni Profiles

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Mrs Nahid Sultana Mallik

I have a degree from Australia, which is a dignity for me because not all civil servants have foreign degrees...At the same time, I can contribute in many international seminar workshops or foreign conferences. Whenever I go to attend any programs, I can more easily translate into English the Bangladesh comments, policies and so on.

### Scholarship

Australia Awards Scholarship

### Years

2014–2016

### Degree

Master of Arts (by research)

### University

Flinders University

### Current position

Deputy Secretary, Foreign Aid Budgets and Accounts (FABA-IV (Supernumerary)) Branch, FABA & ICT Wing, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance

### Biography

Mrs Nahid Sultana Mallik has had a long career in the public service, spanning nearly 20 years working across various line ministries, at both the national and district levels.

In 2014 Mrs Mallik was awarded an Australia Awards scholarship to undertake a Master of Arts at Flinders University. With a background in anthropology and a commitment to social protection issues, Mrs Mallik undertook a Masters by research on social safety nets relating to pensions for older persons and widows in Bangladesh. This allowed her to conduct qualitative research in several districts of Bangladesh to study the effects of government policies on these groups of people. She received commendations from her thesis reviewers for her research.

Since returning to Bangladesh, Mrs Mallik has been able to use her research skills and knowledge from her degree to help train and mentor colleagues. She also participates in many international conferences and workshops where she can share her experiences from the Bangladeshi context. Mrs Mallik hopes that one day, she will be able to contribute her skills in the area of social protection as Secretary for one of the ministries dealing with vulnerable populations.

She is currently the Deputy Secretary of the Economic Relations Division at the Ministry of Finance, a role she has occupied since 2017. Mrs Mallik is responsible for coordinating large-scale development projects working closely with different implementing ministries and international development partners. This includes financial oversight, monitoring, progress reporting and regular consultation with stakeholders.





Mr Md. Tariq Hassan

The learning, the thought processes [from Australia], it completely changed my thought process of critically analysing things from a broader perspective and from as many perspectives as I can. So I think that was a lasting impact...the way of my thinking thought process has completely changed, and it is helping me a lot.

#### Scholarship

Australia Awards Scholarship

#### Year

2015–2016

#### Degree

Master of International and Development Economics

#### University

Australian National University

#### Current position

Second Secretary (VAT Act and Rule, VAT Policy, VAT International Relations and Diplomatic Exemption), National Board of Revenue, Ministry of Finance

#### Biography

Mr Hassan joined the civil service in 2011 as Assistant Commissioner with the National Board of Revenue (NBR). He holds a Bachelor degree in Computer Science and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Dhaka. His Masters degree through the Australia Awards led to his current appointment as Second Secretary at the NBR headquarter in 2016.

As Second Secretary, Mr Hassan conducts economic cost-benefit analyses, and simulations and modelling studying the impact of changes in fiscal laws related to imposition or exemption of duty and taxes on the market dynamics and trade as a whole. These analyses contribute to preparing policy briefs to adopt evidence-based tax policy and enforcement strategies. A core member of the NBR's policy and budget team, Mr Hassan also prepares sectorial reports supporting making policy changes related to the tariff and duty structure during the annual budget declaration. He is currently working closely with the World Bank and other development partners in preparing a Medium Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS) for efficient domestic resource mobilisation under the *Public Financial Management Action Plan 2018–2023* adopted by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Hassan has published articles in the *World Customs Journal* and the *Customs Scientific Journal*, and socioeconomic commentary for national daily newspapers. He recently co-published a book outlining the new VAT laws for stakeholder practitioners, and co-authored research reports for the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development and NBR.



Mrs Zannatul Ferdous

...if I hadn't got to go to Australia, I would have missed a lot of things. I would not be the person that I am now, because I really think that it has given me great confidence...

#### Scholarship

Australian Development Scholarship

#### Year

2011–2013

#### Degree

Master of International and Development Economics

#### University

Australian National University

#### Current position

Deputy Director (Deputy Secretary), Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust, Ministry of Education

#### Biography

Mrs Zannatul Ferdous has over 15 years' experience in the public service, working across different ministries at both the national and district levels. She is currently Deputy Secretary of the Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust within the Ministry of Education.

Awarded an Australian Development Scholarship, Mrs Ferdous was able to immediately apply the skills and knowledge from her Master of International Development Economics on her return to Bangladesh as Deputy Secretary in the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance.

In this role, Mrs Ferdous coordinated and was responsible for leading a number of international economic and development initiatives. These included appointment as focal point for the UN Sustainable Development Goals where she was responsible for coordinating with line ministries, donors and international financial institutions to implement the goals.

Mrs Ferdous was also responsible for coordinating Bangladesh's preparation to graduate from the least developed countries (LDCs) category, which involved preparing impact assessments and supporting documents and presenting them to the Committee for Development Policy at the United Nations. As part of this role, one of her core responsibilities was to coordinate activities across 57 ministries to implement the Istanbul Program of Action to help Bangladesh graduate from LDC status.



Mr Mafiz Uddin Ahmed

Actually, this program has given us some source of confidence, because I studied in Monash University...it gave me that confidence that I can solve problems...It helped me to perform other jobs.

#### Fellowship

Australia Awards Fellowship

#### Year

2015

#### Degree

Capacity Development of Bangladesh Public Servants for Infrastructure Management

#### University

Monash University

#### Current position

Joint Secretary, Public Private Partnerships, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance

#### Biography

Mr Mafiz Uddin Ahmed has a long-established career in the public service, spanning over 25 years in public administration and management. He began his career as Assistant Commissioner and Magistrate in Nilphamari district in 1994 and is currently the Joint Secretary for Public-Private Partnerships in the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance.

In 2015, Mr Ahmed participated in an Australia Awards fellowship *Capacity Development of Bangladesh Public Servants for Infrastructure Management* at Monash University. During the eight-week course, Mr Ahmed had the opportunity to meet Australian experts and politicians who shared their insights in the area of public-private partnerships and the Australian transport and communications systems. As part of the course, Mr Ahmed worked with colleagues from other ministries to develop a roads project, which gave him the skills and knowledge that he can apply in his current role.

Mr Ahmed is a writer and has published a book detailing his time in Australia titled *Great Wall to Opera House*. He has also published a series of short stories for children.





Mr Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky

...we learnt about how to manage in a different way, we learnt how to organise good programs, we learnt how to integrate some of the systems, we learnt how to give better service and quality services to the people, and also we learnt some of the best practices in Australia...

### Scholarship

Australia Awards Fellowship

### Years

2013

### Degree

Capacity Development of Bangladesh Public Servants for Infrastructure Management

### University

Queensland University of Technology

### Current position

Joint Secretary, Wing Chief, Asia, Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Fellowship and Foundation (F&F), Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance

### Biography

Mr Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky joined the Civil Service in 1993 and since 2018, is the Joint Secretary in the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance with responsibilities for economic relations with Asian countries. This involves working with multilateral and bilateral partners in the Asia region on assessment, mobilisation, negotiation and allocation of economic aid for Bangladesh on various aid projects and technical assistance programs.

In 2013, Mr Siddiky participated in the Australia Awards fellowship *Capacity Development of Bangladesh Public Servants for Infrastructure Management*. On return to Bangladesh, Mr Siddiky was motivated by his positive experience in Australia and engaged with Australian universities to develop similar training courses for the Bangladesh Civil Service. While working as the Private Secretary to the Minister for Public Administration (MOPA), Mr Siddiky led the negotiations with Macquarie University to develop a training program for public service officials. He was instrumental in establishing several other formal partnerships between the Government of Bangladesh and Australian universities through existing MOUs with Monash University and Central Queensland University.

Mr Siddiky has undertaken extensive training in public sector management and has participated in numerous international workshops in Australia and other countries. His goal is to continue to influence change in the public sector by promoting better services for the people of Bangladesh.



Ms Sultana Afroz

...this scholarship, to bring the students from different parts of the world and give a good training on negotiation and leadership, and when they come back to the country, they can really contribute in their national development.

#### Scholarship

Australia Awards Fellowship

#### Years

2014

#### Degree

Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh

#### University

Macquarie University

#### Current position

Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, Public Private Partnership Authority, Prime Minister's Office

#### Biography

Ms Sultana Afroz joined the Bangladesh Civil Service in 1989. At the time of this Case Study in December 2019, Ms Afroz was the Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the United Nations, and Chief Innovation Officer at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) in the Ministry of Finance. In April 2020, Ms Afroz was appointed to Secretary, Chief Executive Officer of the Public Private Partnership Authority under the Prime Minister's Office.

Ms Afroz has previously undertaken postings to the Bangladesh Embassy in Rome as Economic Counsellor and later promoted to Charge d'affaires. She was also appointed the Alternate Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN Agencies in Rome and was elected as a member in the FAO Program Committee for two terms, becoming Vice-Chair of the Committee in 2011.

Ms Afroz has a Master of Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and a Masters in Sociology from Dhaka University. In 2014, Ms Afroz undertook an Australia Awards fellowship *Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh* at Macquarie University. The course introduced new skills, knowledge and ways of thinking which she has been able to implement in her work, including, developing a culture of innovation in her division. Ms Afroz also implemented the first internship program in government, with the aim of providing more opportunities and transferring skills and knowledge to future generations in Bangladesh.



Ms Rama Dewan

The quality of the fellowship program is extremely high. It was an effective program for countries like ours to address the core sustainability issues...

The acquisition of key skills and knowledge enriched my capacity to carry out my responsibilities in policy formulation. It enables me to give more contribution to the government in successful ongoing negotiations in trade and environment issues and I am able to negotiate more effectively and successfully in these areas.

#### Fellowship

Australian Leadership Award

#### Year

2013

#### Degree

Capacity Building for Trade, Environment and Development in Bangladesh

#### University

Macquarie University

#### Current position

Joint Chief, Bangladesh Tariff Commission

#### Biography

Ms Rama Dewan was selected for the Australian Leadership Award to undertake a short course focusing on trade, environment and development as a member from the Bangladesh Tariff Commission.

The Commission is a national statutory body overseeing import and export trade in Bangladesh and provides recommendations on industry policies. Ms Dewan utilises the learnings from her award when providing recommendations for policies considering the social, environmental and economic issues of sustainability.

Ms Dewan is a member of the Adivasi Australian Scholars' Association of Bangladesh (AASAB), and graduated with the Master of Public and Business Administration from the University of Canberra.

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# Annex 1: Methodology

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This chapter includes an overview of the Case Study design, development and implementation. This is the 18th Case Study of the Facility. Bangladesh was one of five Case Study countries proposed in the Year 4 Facility Annual Plan. Bangladesh was originally selected as a Case Study country on the basis there were a core group of alumni identified who had studied **health research**. In collaboration, with the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh this was re-scoped and adapted to build evidence of capacity building of staff who studied in **economic development-related fields** within the Bangladesh Civil Service, with a particular focus on the Ministry of Finance. Overall Case Study design

## Overall Case Study design

The purpose of the Facility Case Studies is to collect detailed qualitative data on the impact and benefits of the Australia Awards. The Case Study methodology is based on the Facility Case Study Approach, which was developed in the inception phase of the Facility and reported in the Annual Plan for Year 1.

The Global Strategy and Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (the Framework) form the basis for the Case Study design. The research questions, propositions, data collection instruments, and report template are built around these frameworks. Findings reported by alumni are triangulated with relevant stakeholders such as employers and colleagues, and industry bodies thereby strengthening findings by providing further evidence to support or refute propositions. This methodology was developed by the Facility and SCB.

The overarching theory that has guided the design of this Case Study methodology is based upon the goal of the Australia Awards that ‘... partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests’.

The Case Study research questions are framed by the intended long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards as guided by the Framework:

1. How do alumni use the skills, knowledge and networks gained on award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals?
2. How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia’s economic and public diplomacy outcomes?
3. How has being an Australia Award alumni impacted alumni?
4. Are the benefits of receiving a scholarship experienced equally by all groups who have received them?

The primary unit of analysis for this Case Study is the alumnus or alumna. Case studies seek to explore how alumni of Australia Awards have acted to contribute to the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Australia Awards.

The case studies are being conducted via an iterative approach whereby the qualitative phase can be designed based on what is learnt from the initial quantitative phase. In essence, the Facility implements this by drawing on data collected through a Global Tracer Survey and using this data as one of the means of developing the focus and scope of a number of case studies carried out in the following year.

As such, the planning and initial scoping of this Case Study was undertaken on the basis of the Facility’s Year 3 Global Tracer Survey, which surveyed alumni who completed their scholarships between 2011 and 2016.



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## Methods

The data collection method used for this Case Study was through interviews. A set of questions were developed for each key participant group, namely alumni, colleagues and employers of alumni, alumni associations, partner-government stakeholders; and the DFAT staff, and managing contractors working on the Australia Awards in partner countries<sup>10</sup>. Questions for each key participant group align with the research propositions (located at Annex 2) and long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This ensures that data collected directly relate to the key questions the case studies are seeking to answer and that there is consistency across each case study.

## Sample

The initial planned focus for the Bangladesh Case Study was **health research**, with an organisational focus on the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B). Following detailed correspondence with the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh, the case study was refocused to reflect the current aid investment priorities with the final selection of alumni was based on those who studied in an **economic development-related field**.

Within the field of economic development, the Facility identified 57 alumni (34 men and 23 women), with a large group of alumni from the Bangladesh Bank and Ministry of Finance. Working closely with Post, it was decided to investigate the organisational-level impact of the critical mass of Australia Awards alumni within the **Bangladesh Civil Service**, with a particular lens on the **Ministry of Finance**.

This aligns with DFAT's development priorities for Bangladesh—Objective 2: Building economic resilience by reducing vulnerability and improving inclusion in the growing economy.

As per the table below, the sample included four women and three men. Invitation to participate in the Case Study was sent to 12 alumni (6 men, 6 women) with a balance by gender, position level and division or agency within the Ministry of Finance. Of the 12 alumni, four had participated in the preceding Year 3 Global Tracer Survey, and the remaining 8 alumni were selected from the Global Alumni database.

From the 12 email invitations sent, 8 alumni responded with 6 alumni agreeing to participate. The seventh alum, a high profile alumna, was initially emailed but their participation was secured through the liaison support provided by the Australian High Commission. The two alumni who responded but did not proceed with participation coincidentally were located outside of Bangladesh for study and an international posting. They did not respond to further correspondence to confirm a time to participate in an interview online.

**Table 1 BangladeshCase Study alumni participants**

<b>Interview Date (2019)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Award years</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Course &amp; University</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
02/12	F	Mrs Nahid Sultana MALLIK	2014-2016	Australia Awards Scholarship	Master of Arts (by research), Flinders University	Deputy Secretary, Foreign Aid Budget and Accounts (FABA-IV (Supernumerary)) Branch, FABA & ICT Wing, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance
03/12	M	Mr Md. Tariq HASSAN	2015-2016	Australia Awards Scholarship	Master Of International and Development Economics, Australian National University	Second Secretary (VAT Act and Rule, VAT Policy, VAT International Relations and Diplomatic Exemption), National Board of Revenue, Ministry of Finance
03/12	F	Mrs Zannatul FERDOUS	2011-2013	Australian Development Scholarships	Master of International and Development Economics, Australian National University	Deputy Director (Deputy Secretary), Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust, Ministry of Education
04/12	M	Mr Mafiz Uddin AHMED	2015	Australia Awards Fellowship	Capacity Development of Bangladesh Public Servants for Infrastructure Management, Monash University	Joint Secretary, Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Finance Division, Ministry of Finance
05/12	M	Md. Shahriar Kader SIDDIKY	2013	Australia Awards Fellowship	Sector Wide Approach: Public Policy, Financial Management And Donor Relations, Queensland University Of Technology	Joint Secretary, Wing Chief, Asia, Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Fellowship and Foundation (F&F), Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance
05/12	F	Ms Sultana AFROZ	2014	Australia Awards Fellowship	Building Capacity for Effective Negotiation and Participation in International Treaties for Bangladesh, Macquarie University	Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, Public Private Partnership Authority, Prime Minister's Office
15/12	F	Ms Rama Dewan	2013	Australia Awards Fellowship	Capacity Building for Trade, Environment and Development in Bangladesh, Macquarie University	Joint Chief, Bangladesh Tariff Commission

In addition to the seven alumni (4 women, 3 men) who participated in the Case Study, 11 other people were interviewed in order to provide context, triangulate alumni perspectives and better understand the impact of the Australian scholarships and fellowships on the outcomes for Bangladesh and Australia. These additional interviews included stakeholders such as the colleagues of alumni.

The table below lists these participants. In total, 17 people were interviewed for the Bangladesh Case Study.

**Table 2 Key stakeholder and employer/colleague interviews**

	<b>Date (2019)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Alumni employers or colleagues</b>	02/12	Dr Pear Mohammad	National Director, Division for the Protection and Promotion for the Rights of People with Disability, Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion
	03/12	Ms Nasreen Afroz	Vice Minister, Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion
	05/12	Dr AKM Matiur Rahman	Director, Klibur Domin Rehabilitation Centre
<b>Australian High Commission, Bangladesh</b>	05/12	Mr Duncan McCullough	Second Secretary (Economic and Commercial Diplomacy) Australian High Commission, Dhaka, DFAT
	05/12	Mr M Imam Nahil	Program Manager—Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission, Dhaka, DFAT
<b>Other stakeholders</b>	02/12	Ms Asfia Sultana	General Secretary—Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB)
	04/12	Ms Louise Jennion	Country Program Manager—Bangladesh, Australia Awards South and West Asia, Scope Global
	04/12	Mr Mobarak Hossain Sajid	Program Officer—Bangladesh, Australia Awards South and West Asia, Scope Global
	04/12	Ms Israt Ara Islam	Scholarships Coordinator - Bangladesh, Australia Awards South and West Asia, Scope Global
	13/12	Ms Bipasha Chama	Vice President—Australia Alumni Association Bangladesh (AAAB)
		Bangladesh Civil Service stakeholder	Bangladesh Civil Service

## Exclusions

As noted in the section above, all Case Study alumni were selected from the Year 3 Global Tracer Survey and the Global Alumni database. These sources only include those who have successfully completed their degree. Accordingly, this study excludes anyone who did not complete their scholarship.

## Data collection

As part of the development of the interview questions for case studies, the Facility piloted all instruments with Australia Awards alumni who resided in Australia. Subsequently, questions have been reviewed annually and refined over the four years of the project. All interview guides can be downloaded from the Facility website: [www.australiaawardstracerfacility.org](http://www.australiaawardstracerfacility.org).

This Case Study was conducted by Ms Amanda Haddow, Ms Bethany Davies and Ms Yung Nietschke, Facility staff who bring relevant expertise in qualitative research and international development. These researchers worked together to undertake data collection and report writing: two conducted fieldwork interviews, while the third supported the team with analysis and report writing. This enabled high-quality reliable data to be gathered. At the conclusion of interviews, the researchers discussed and verified the data to ensure completeness and accuracy.

## Process

The Case Study field research was undertaken in Bangladesh from 1 to 5 December, 2019. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face during this period. One was conducted via email to adapt to the alum's work schedule. Alumni were requested to provide their resume to researchers where available for further background information. Participants were provided with background information relating to the research and the Facility, and all provided written informed consent to their participation and identification preference in reporting.

## Data management and reporting

Interviews were voice recorded (with approval granted to do so). In addition, the Case Study researchers annotated responses during the interview. A transcription specialist transcribed all interview recordings. After the completion of the interview and transcription process, the Case Study researchers consolidated the written and oral recordings into a single near-verbatim transcript (with restarting of sentences and fillers excluded).

## Coding and review

Interview scripts were subsequently coded using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. This enabled emerging themes to be identified and links to be made between participants that supported or refuted the research propositions, as aligned with the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.

Analysis of the Case Study data involved a strategy that was guided by the theoretical proposition developed under the conceptual framework for the Case Study and by the techniques identified in the Facility's Case Study Approach document.

Case Study participants were sent segments of the report where clarification or review and approval were necessary—for this Case Study, this primarily involved cross checking with the Australian High Commission interview participants. Review by participants is not consistently used in qualitative research but was done so here to ensure the validity of the data and avoid errors.

## Limitations

There were a number of limitations of this research that were inherent to both the nature of the research and the research process, as discussed below.

### Positive response bias

It is probable that alumni who felt that they had a positive experience as an Australian Government scholarship recipient and/or had success in their career following their award are more likely to agree to participate in Case Studies. In a study by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (Mawer, 2014), recognition of positive response bias is highlighted:

*...there is widespread recognition that a more pressing problem is nonresponse bias in which those who reply to sample surveys are likely to be engaged with alumni associations or tracing (e.g. Day, Stackhouse and Geddes, 2009) and disproportionately represent the 'successful' outcomes of scholarship programmes (p.9).*

Accordingly, it is likely that the alumni in the Bangladesh Case Study had a positive bias towards their experience, outcomes and views of Australia. The Facility has developed interview questions and analyses approaches to reduce the impact of this bias—these are applied consistently across all case studies. Through this approach, leading questions are avoided and alumni are offered opportunities to reflect on their outcomes at the beginning and at the end of the interview without specific questions to guide their answers.

### Nature of the research

Outcome 1 of the Global Strategy is: 'alumni are using the skills, knowledge and networks gained on award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals'. However, some alumni have *shaped* development goals rather than *contributed* to them, and while it may be outside the purview of partner-country development goals that this research is being evaluated against, such contributions are still significant.

Throughout the research it has conducted, the Facility has consistently experienced difficulty in evaluating Outcome 2 'alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries', and Outcome 3 'effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries'. These two outcomes are aligned with the second research question for the Case Study 'How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?' There is an overlap and difficulty in differentiating 'cooperation' and 'partnerships'. The research team delineated them by determining that Outcome 2 relates to people-to-people links including informal relationships; whereas Outcome 3 specifically relates to institutional links between the partner country and Australia, which alumni have contributed to establishing.

No issues were encountered by the research team in collecting, collating, coding or analysing data related to Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards—'Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively'.

### Research process

The ability to code the interview transcripts effectively is dependent on understanding the partner-country development goals, at the time these alumni were awarded their scholarships. Researchers involved in the Case Study made concerted attempts to identify relevant secondary data such as policy documents, papers, books and digital resources to provide background and insight into development plans, policies and changes over the time span of 2011 to 2016, the years of focus for when these alumni completed their scholarship.

## Annex 2: Case Study Propositions

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Explanatory case studies require the development of propositions that are intricately linked to the original research questions. A proposition is a statement that helps direct attention to something that should be examined in a Case Study. The researcher has to make a speculation, on the basis of the literature and any other earlier evidence, as to what they expect the findings of the research to be. When a Case Study proposal includes specific propositions, it increases the likelihood that the researcher can limit the scope of study and complete the project. The researcher can have several propositions to guide the study, but each must have a distinct focus and purpose. The data collection and analysis can then be structured in order to support or refute the research propositions.

For the Facility, propositions were formed using the Global Strategy outcomes as the basis. Sub-propositions were formulated by speculating on the underlying assumption or enabling factors that realise the proposition. In alignment with the methodology, instruments will be designed to collect data that both support and refute the propositions.

1. Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals .
  - a alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals<sup>11</sup>.
  - b alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.
2. Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries
  - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships.
3. Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries
  - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships
  - b partnerships that are developed are effective and mutually advantageous to participating countries.
4. Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively
  - a alumni's views are underpinned by their experiences in Australia.
5. The benefits of receiving an Australia Award or scholarship are experienced equally by all recipients.
  - a receiving an Australia Award or scholarship positively addresses, rather than reinforces, imbalances that are associated with gender and disability.

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<sup>11</sup> This proposition differs from the Australia Awards Program Logic long-term outcome number 1 in order to link this proposition to the Goal of the Australia Awards Program. The use of the term 'partner-country development goals instead of 'sustainable development' makes the proposition and ensuing questions more relevant and relatable to alumni.



