

Section A		
Institution: Durham University		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 22, Anthropology and Development		
Title of case study: Introducing survivor-led guidelines for recording testimonies of sexual violence during conflict		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1998-2013		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Nayanika Mookherjee	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Anthropology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2011-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – November 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Since the 1990s, there has been a worldwide focus on recording testimonies of sexual violence during conflict. Our research on the conditions under which statements were recorded shows that many survivors consider the testimonial process to be retraumatising with negative consequences. Mookherjee co-developed survivor-led guidelines and a graphic novel which are being nationally and internationally used by governmental and non-governmental organisations, museums, writers, artists, and journalists to follow ethical practices when recording testimonies of sexual violence. Mookherjee's research has influenced, informed and changed policies and practices; improved the wellbeing of the survivors of sexual violence, enhanced awareness of the nature of their experiences; reduced and prevented harm, risk and other negative impact on survivors giving testimonies.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>In their pursuit of recording wartime rape, journalists, human rights activists, government officials, non-governmental organisation personnel, and researchers can flout ethical (relating to principles of informed consent, sensitivity, doing no harm, protection of survivors, anonymity and confidentiality, and risk assessment) practices when collecting experiences of survivors before, during, and after the testimonial process. Hence, survivors experience a double set of transgressions — first of sexual violence, and then being retraumatised through the recording of their testimonies by insensitive means. As a result, those who document testimonies of wartime rape require guidelines to undertake this process ethically. Silence, stigma, honour and shame among survivors also need to be understood through their historical, political and economic contexts.</p> <p>In Bangladesh, there exists a public memory of wartime rape as evidenced in the government declaration in 1971 of women raped as <i>birangonas</i> (meaning brave women). Mookherjee's research examines the public memories of sexual violence during the Bangladesh war of 1971 by examining the testimonies of survivors, state officials and human rights activists as well as archival, visual and literary sources between 1997-1998 and between 2003-2013. This research interrogated the possible assumptions of the experiences of wartime rape among those recording testimonies and argued that these preconceived ideas can lead to researchers defying ethical practices of documentation in their pursuit of recording a 'horrific' account of wartime rape and exacerbating the conditions of the survivors. Mookherjee's research suggests ethical ways to record testimonies. Key findings are as follows (i) In recording the survivors' testimonies, it is important to consider the racial and historical contexts of sexual violence [R1, R2, R3]. (ii) Identifying raped women only through their suffering creates a homogeneous understanding of victims and is often an incorrect assumption among those who record testimonies. The research instead highlights the varied contexts and everyday experiences of wartime rape among survivors and how they develop resilience based on their contexts, which needs to be remembered by researchers [R1, R4]. (iii) Instead of focussing on horrific testimonies of sexual violence, the research examined post-conflict experiences and revealed the continuum of violence among survivors, their families and communities highlighting that this needs to be recorded by those gathering testimonies [R5, R6, R2, R3]. (iv) The ideologies of stigma, honour, and shame are practised among survivors within various socio-economic and politico-historical contexts. The guidelines and research show that these concepts are not inherent to societies and cannot be</p>		

understood homogenously in all instances of wartime rape. Tracking these socio-economic contexts enables researchers to address the well-being of survivors [R1, R2, R5, R6]. (v) Concerns of survivors are primary and their experiences should not be sensationalised for the purpose of testimonies. Retraumatism can be avoided by focussing on bodily experiences; researchers need to address how the testimonies are recorded and written [R1].

3. References to the research

R1. Book: 2015. *The Spectral Wound: Sexual Violence, Public Memories and the Bangladesh War of 1971*. Duke University Press (97 International citations, 25/11/20). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375227>

R2 GRAPHIC NOVEL and guidelines in Bangla and English: Mookherjee, N. and Najmunnahar K. (2019) *Birangona: Towards Ethical Testimonies of Sexual Violence during Conflict*. Durham: University of Durham. [Online] Freely Available in Bangla and English from: <https://www.ethical-testimonies-svc.org.uk/how-to-cite/> (450 downloads from across the world) (Google Analytics). DOI: 10.15128/r1sb3978287

R3. Journal 2012 'The absent piece of skin: Sexual violence in the Bangladesh war and its gendered and racialised inscriptions' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge University Press. Volume 46 (6): 1572-1601. (22 International citations, 25/11/20). DOI: 10.1017/S0026749X11000783

R4. Journal 2008. 'Gendered Embodiments: Mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh' in *Feminist Review*, Special Issue on War. Volume 88: 1, April 2008: 36-53 (73 International citations, 25/11/20). DOI: 10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400388

R5. Journal Article: 2006. 'Remembering to Forget': Public Secrecy and Memory of Sexual Violence in Bangladesh' in *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI)*, 12 (2). June 2006: 433-450 (129 International citations, 25/11/20). DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2006.00299.x

R6. Book Chapter: 2004. 'My man (honour) is lost but I still have my iman (principle)': Sexual Violence and Articulations of Masculinity in R. Chopra, C. Osella and F. Osella eds. *South Asian Masculinities*. New Delhi: Kali for Women: 131-159 (36 International citations, 25/11/20).

Evidence of the quality of the research: The peer reviewed journal articles received 4* and 3* grades in the previous Research Excellence Framework (REF) cycles. All have been cited frequently in academic journals and the graphic novel is being cited in policy documents and practice recommendations. The book received excellent reviews in journal articles. Internationally renowned academics such as Gayatri Spivak, Veena Das, Dina Siddiqi, Jonathan Spencer, Michael Lambek and Afsan Chowdhury have written blurbs for the book. The book has received the following **academic honours**: 2017 - shortlisted finalist for the Michelle Z. Rosaldo award, Association of Feminist Anthropologists (AFA) at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meeting; 2017 - shortlisted for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio 4's Thinking Allowed Best Ethnography Award (**E10**).

4. Details of the impact

Mookherjee's research has co-developed a set of comprehensive survivor-led guidelines and graphic novel, which are being used by governmental and non-governmental organisations in the United Kingdom and Bangladesh when recording testimonies of sexual violence. Our partners are Research Initiatives Bangladesh, a participatory action research organisation, who gave us support to reach out to numerous stakeholders in Bangladesh. The overall impact of Mookherjee's work received recognition through the **2019 Praxis award, with a juror commenting**: "This is a really excellent example of how academic research can be useful for non-academics. A graphic novel is a brilliant idea and the applicant's engagement with institutions and media is impressive" (**E10**). **The impact of this research has been on: 1. policies, 2. practices, 3. understandings of the survivors' experiences, 4. the survivors' welfare.**

1. Changes to policy

Mookherjee's research on *birangonas* [R1-6] addresses an issue which is foundational for the history of the country and, as we demonstrate below, this research impacted on the women, peace and security narrative of the country. The guidelines and the graphic novel based on Mookherjee's research [R2] were launched between 2018 and 2019 by the Minister for Liberation War Affairs of the Bangladesh government A K M Moazzam Hoque and survivors

(E2). The research [R1] influenced the **Government of Bangladesh's** first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security (WPS) (2019-2022) **(E1)** as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remit of adopting the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security in 2000, which called on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

In the United Kingdom, the Prevent Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) team with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are using Mookherjee's guidelines and graphic novel, and hence directly linking to our research **(R2, E3A, E3B) in developing the Murad Code** (named after Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Nadia Murad): a global code of conduct for the documentation and investigation of conflict-related sexual violence. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for PSVI stated that in relation as to why they have consulted Mookherjee; *'We are consulting those stakeholders most engaged or influential in this work. Given your work on ethical testimonies, we'd love to get you involved in this early phase'* **(E3C).**

2. Changes to practice in ethically recording testimonies

Mookherjee's research [R1-6] has led to changes in ethical practice in non-governmental organisations and media through the use of the guidelines and graphic novel for training. The guidelines and graphic novel have assisted **media organisations** in the production of their guidance to ensure that journalists deal with the collection of information properly and ethically. Reaz Ahmad, the Executive Editor of Dhaka Tribune (DT) (287 employees), a leading English newspaper in Bangladesh with a circulation of 38,700, consisting of Bangladeshi and international readers stated **(E4A)** *'we at DT adhere to the rules that have been wonderfully pointed out in the graphic novel and the guidelines. ... the guidelines, which have been immensely useful for Dhaka Tribune'*. Mookherjee's research [R1-6] has impacted widely on the practices of reporters and photojournalists at DT who were all trained. The training *'helped us maintain sensitivity of the interviewee not only during record of testimonies, but also during publications too'* **(E4C)**. It also influenced the way journalists are dealing with *'survivors of sexual and domestic violence at present times'* **(E4B)**; and working in the context of Rohingya refugees and sexual violence **(E4D)**. In addition, the guidelines were also used in the production of an animation film depicting the plight of sex workers **(E4D)**. Mahfuz Sadique, a BBC News journalist stated **(E4E&F, E5 43:51)** *'going through these ethical guidelines and reading the graphic novel helped me to appreciate that there is a complex set of considerations that affect survivors. I do approach the content of my ... work ..., differently now... One major difference that these two interventions have helped me with: to think even more critically, and ethically, when covering or studying such testimonies and the guidelines. Going forward, it will be of help for exactly what they were meant for – guidance'*.

A number of **international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)** have also adopted the guidelines and changed their practice. A key NGO is EyeWitness to Atrocities, who are an international human rights organisation working with visual technologies. They have 6 staff and have 40 partnerships in different parts of the world, including those facing armed conflict. The countries with partnerships that have been made public so far by our partners are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Ukraine, and Gambia who have *'shared... guidelines and graphic novel with partners, which they found very helpful to receive'* **(E4L)**. Maria Mingo from EyeWitness to Atrocities stated that *'these guidelines are applicable globally'*, **(E5 34:43 and 42:23)**. Malini Laxminarayan, a representative of the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation [The Key international organisation on sexual violence crimes and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner (40 survivors, 20 organisations working across the world in 20 countries)], confirmed: *'We have incorporated the language of these guidelines into our own, and sent the text to those within the organisation who are collecting testimonies, primarily for the global network documentary.'* **(E4G)**; *'These guidelines are very very key to the work that we do as do any organisation working with survivors;'* *'not just in Bangladesh but elsewhere'* **(E4H)**. The need and impact of these guidelines is also reflected in the Foundation's comments: *'these guidelines are crucial, because what I've seen so far..., women are being retraumatized, men are being retraumatized, very often the message becomes distorted because of course the person trying to get information from a survivor has their own goal...have to think what is the message of the survivor and there are a lot of tips here (guideline and graphic novel) as to how do we create a*

space in order to do so. A risk assessment [R2] again is very key' (E4H, E5 28:41 and 40:50). In 2020 they said: 'The guidelines... are a key document that informs our own work, and provides insights into experience with the survivors; the graphic novel is a great tool for the survivors..., including those in the Global Network of Victims and Survivors to End Wartime Sexual Violence (SEMA), from 20 different countries'. Social media posts on the guidelines and graphic novel reached 1444 and 963 people and had 136 and 63 engagements (E4I). Other leading Bangladeshi NGOs use the guidelines and are using them in their work among Rohingyas and also survivors of sexual violence. Notable among them are *Nari Pokkho* which has 26 survivors in their network and used these guidelines to work with over 100 Rohingya women (E4N). *Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK)* a leading legal aid NGO notes that 'this graphic novel has not only raised consciousness about the ways in which birangonas are continuing their lives. It is also a fantastic medium of teaching us how to avoid retraumatizing the survivors and record their testimonies with caution' (E4M). *Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB)*, a leading Participatory Research Action organisation in Bangladesh is Mookherjee's partner. The Executive director is Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, who is a survivor, executive member of the National Human Rights Commission and part of the Bangladesh Government's National Action Plan. RIB have adopted the guidelines and graphic novel, have used them to train their personnel and collected testimonies among Rohingya refugees (E6). Dr. Guhathakurta has used the guidelines and graphic novel to train human rights defenders across Asia-Pacific: from Cambodia, Malaysia, Timor, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines (E6). Other organisations such as *Amnesty International* are also planning on using the graphic novel and guidelines to train their researchers once the COVID-19 related restrictions are lifted (E4O).

3. Changes in understandings of the survivors' experiences of sexual violence

Mookherjee's research, the guidelines and the graphic novel [R1-2] have changed the perception of the survivors and their families among the people who represent them. Pakistani author of *1971: A People's History from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India* (2019) and 2017 KLF German Peace Prize winner *Anam Zakaria* states: 'The graphic novel and guidelines were essential to my understanding of how rape testimonies have been collected in Bangladesh thus far and the politics around them... After reading the guidelines and novel, I looked at the texts with a far more critical lens and with a greater awareness of how the setting, the interviewer, the rapport with the interviewee and the time spent in collecting the testimony impacts the narrative' (E9). The research has also been instrumental in changing **two plays** which address the ways in which survivors of sexual violence should be represented. Between 2014 and 2015 it influenced the script of a play by Komola Collective performed in London and Bangladesh to an audience of over 1,000. Drawing on the research they stated, 'Dr. Nayanika Mookherjee's research on the public memory of sexual violence of the Bangladesh war of 1971 helped us to qualify the historical and social treatment of the Birangona women in post-war Bangladesh. Through Dr. Mookherjee's research we were able to reconceptualise ideas of trauma, stigma, historical and political context. We revisited the ending of the play 'Birangona: Women of War' by Komola Collective based on her research and our examination of how Birangona women were treated by a society where wartime rape is assumed to be a source of shame for the victim' (E8). The second play was developed by RIB in their new project of preventing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) among Rohingya women refugees through interactive theatre. As the Executive Director of RIB stated, 'It was used as a way to orient testimony collectors in their effort to co-script the play with refugees and the local community and also be used in the audio-visual documentation of the process from collecting testimonies to the final performance by local theatre team. This audio-visual material will be used as a learning tool nationally and internationally' (E6).

4. Impact on the survivors' welfare

The survivors who feature in the graphic novel and their families have been strongly appreciative of the graphic novel. One survivor from rural Bangladesh and her children wrote: 'We cried and laughed on reading this book. It should be read by all children and their parents. By reading this book children will not question the war again. No one will question who fought and no will ever give khota/scorn to birangonas. Along with children their parents, would read, their mothers would read and they would get to know about the war. All our

stories are here in this book and I want this book to be in every school in Bangladesh so that all children know about us' (E7). Other survivors expressed how moved they were: 'As a survivor, I cannot put this graphic novel down. I am carrying it in my bag and whenever I can I am taking it out and reading it. My eyes well up each time' [Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta (Director, RIB and survivor) (April 2019), 'This is such a homage to the battles in my mother's life. It is a most beautiful work' [Fuleshwary Priyonandini (Daughter of the Birangona Sculptor Ferdousy Priyobhashini) (May 2019)] (E7).

Mookherjee's research also made a positive impact on the survivors' welfare more broadly and has a strong potential for further impact soon. The Programme Officer, Malini Laxminarayan and Tammy Sheldon of the Nobel-Prize winning organisation Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation said the guidelines have been distributed among networks of 40 survivors. The survivors testified that, 'The format of this approach is so inspiring, educative with a pinch of compassion in the telling of the shared experiences of the Birangona'; 'The different roles and voices are so inclusive of so much details that most researchers/journalists and many others working with survivors rarely put into consideration'; 'I believe this approach has a high potential to be adapted by many other survivors and those working with them across the globe, I also think this approach is highly effective across age groups in highlighting and educating people about this part of war history which is always almost never been mentioned in most countries. This is a tool that strongly addresses and teaches about the impact and importance of addressing stigma and the understanding of the trauma of the victims. But most importantly, I think as much as this approach is a great inspiring and learning tool for Survivors across the globe, I really hope this could be used as an integration tool for RESEARCHERS, JOURNALISTS, ANALYSTS and so forth' (E7). Malini Laxminarayan from Mukwege Foundation said: 'This contributes to the social welfare of survivors by ensuring the testimonial processes don't harm them ... The survivors themselves are going to benefit and that is the reason we do this kind of work and try to understand what it is that survivors need when they're in contact with researchers, with other organisations, with the media, with legal professionals. The graphic novel is an excellent way for the women to break the silence, another way for them to get involved in their own story telling' (E4H; E5 40:50). Kolbassia Haoussou, MBE, PSVI Survivor Champion, of Freedom from Torture and the Co-Founder of The Survivor Speak out Network notes: 'As Nayanika says in her book, the government decided to elevate the survivor to heroine and give them status. That is something that stuck to my mind. Something that I will be using in terms of tackling stigma among survivors (E4P, E5 1:23). He also stated that 'The graphic novel will be very useful for the survivors to speak out..., because the graphic novel kind of highlights clearly why it is important for somebody to have a full informed consent before engaging, ... I think it's a very powerful tool that can be used by anyone to be honest' (E4P, E5 32:39).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1.** Government of Bangladesh's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security.
- E2.** Documents covering launch of the guidelines and graphic novel. *
- E3.** Foreign and Commonwealth Office: letter (A), Murad Code citations (B) and emails (C).
- E4.** Textual Testimonies of Media and International Organisations: (Forms, emails, transcription of videos): Dhaka Tribune (A-D), BBC (E-F), Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation (G-I), Eyewitness to Atrocities (J-L), Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (M), Nari Pokkho (N), Amnesty International (O), Survivors Speak Out Network (P)
- E5.** Video Testimonies of NGOs and Media Organisations: Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, Eyewitness to Atrocities, Survivors Speak Out Network and BBC.
- E6.** Letter by Research Initiative Bangladesh.
- E7.** Testimony of survivors and their children *
- E8.** Testimony of Komola Collective testimony.
- E9.** Testimony of a writer.
- E10.** 2019 Praxis Award and list of honours, awards, media coverage and interviews.

* E2 and E7 are in Bangla