

**Co-operatives and Contraceptives:  
Family Planning and Theories of Rural Development in Comilla, East Pakistan, c. 1960-1971**

In 1959 the Pakistan Academies for Rural Development were established in either wing of the country (Peshawar and Comilla). The academies focused on training civil servants to administer a developmental state, as opposed to the colonial focus on law and order. In just a few years the Academy at Comilla became well-known globally among development practitioners and social scientists, not for its training program, but for the “development laboratory” it had established in the district. Led by Akhter Hameed Khan, the Comilla approach was hailed as the new way forward in modernizing rural spaces. The Academy’s novelty lay in its insistence on training organizers from within villages to lead their development programs.

Higher levels of agricultural productivity was the main focus of the program; however family planning soon became an important aspect of the Comilla approach. This paper explores why family planning occupied an important place in narratives of rural development in Pakistan, and how various new methods were used to create model rural communities. Comilla was a place where ideas of Pakistani and American social scientists coalesced, and formed new notions of the family, the rural, and development. Through this paper I examine attempts to organize socio-economic relations through family planning schemes, and the responses Comilla’s residents to these new narratives. Based on previously untapped archival sources, this paper offers a granular reading of how the statist push for family planning under Ayub Khan was implemented and at times, questioned, in a rural community in East Pakistan.

**Short Bio:**

Amna Qayyum is a doctoral candidate in History at Princeton University. Specializing in Modern South Asia, her research interests include histories of international development and economic life, the political economy of knowledge, and Islamic thought. She is also interested in global and comparative approaches towards studying decolonization and the Cold War.

Amna's dissertation project focuses on population politics in Pakistan from the early 1950s-1971. She examines the ways through which South Asia became a crucial site for global population control, and how family planning schemes in Pakistan (including present-day Bangladesh) produced critical debates over statecraft, modernization, and the role of religion and women in the postcolonial state. This project also situates Pakistani and Bangladeshi social scientists and doctors within global narratives of population planning, tracing the ways through which their writings and work helped international organizations rethink the ideas undergirding population and development projects.

Prior to attending Princeton she received a M.A in History from Tufts University, and a B.A *summa cum laude* in Economics and History from Connecticut College. She also worked on governance and education projects in Pakistan.