

Syeda Mahsina Ater, PhD




CONTACT DETAILS

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Professional on Food Systems, Nutrition and Public Health

Committed to leveraging food systems thinking to promote healthy diets and inform evidence-based policies. My work has emphasized optimal food consumption and nutrition outcomes of diverse populations, including adolescents, mothers, infants, and young children of Bangladesh. With a decade of experience in research and program development, I am now eager to expand my expertise in the education sector, where I can contribute through research, mentorship, scientific publication, while continuing to learn and grow academically. I thrive in collaborative environments, enjoy networking, and am open to collaboration in education and research in the field of food systems, nutrition and public health sectors in Bangladesh and beyond.

CURRENT POSITION: 19 Aug, 2025 to till date

Assistant Scientist, Centre for Non-Communicable Disease and Nutrition, BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

KEY SKILLS

- Grant Writing
- Research Management and Analytical skills
- Project planning and management
- Problem solving
- Networking & collaboration
- Adaptability
- Leadership and teamwork
- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Attention to details
- Fundraising & grant management
- Administrative Support & Management.

WORK EXPERIENCES

Mar, 2019 – Sep, 2024 | PhD Researcher (Hybrid, 4-years on-site), Global Nutrition, Division of Human Nutrition and Health, Wageningen University and Research, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Key accomplishments: Completed the PhD thesis consisted of six chapters using the food system framework, Compiled food composition database for urban context, analyzed large dietary intake datasets from 24-hour recalls, explored diets, and developed food-based dietary guidelines for adolescents, applied advanced statistical analyses using different techniques and software, authored multiple articles, assisted course work for multiple years and co-supervised a MSc thesis student (6 months). Collaborated with international and national teams for data collection and analysis. Published two articles in reputed international peer-reviewed journals, and presented findings at international conferences and national stakeholders meetings.

Nov, 2017–May, 2019 | Research Investigator (Manager), icddr,b, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Completed the following projects:

Co-Principal Investigator: (Nov'18 – May'19): Understanding opportunities and challenges of delivering maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) services in urban maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) facilities in Dhaka (Alive and Thrive)

Co-Principal Investigator: (Oct'18 – May'19): Assessment of the BMS code in health facilities and among mothers with children less than 24 months of age attending health facilities (Alive and Thrive)

Co-Principal Investigator: (Sep'18 – Dec'18): Analysis of Press clippings from Media Scan on Breast-milk Substitute Products in Bangladesh (Alive and Thrive)

Co-Investigator: (Mar'18 – Nov'18): Household Water Insecurity Experiences Scale Survey

Co-Principal Investigator: (Jan'18 – Oct'18): Rapid assessment of commercial violation of Breast Milk Substitute (BMS) act in three urban areas of Bangladesh (Alive and Thrive)

Feb, 2014–Oct, 2017 | Assistant Director, Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF)

Key accomplishments: Actively contributed to policy dialogues and national advocacy events, Coordinated nation-wide training and advocacy programs, managed over 500 trainings, 144 orientations and 70 school programs under Operational Plan of National Nutrition Services, DGHS during 2013-2016; Coordinated a national survey on Exclusive Breastfeeding in Bangladesh and IYCF Net-Map analysis as part of multi-country research initiative; Written working papers for policy dialogues and project reports; facilitated (sub)national and international engagement and collaborations; Supervised MSc thesis students, Prepared and managed budgets and BCC/IEC materials; Coordinated multiple events for National World Breastfeeding Week across the country.

Dec, 2013-Jan, 2013 | Nutrition Consultant, Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF)

May, 2011-Jul, 2011 | Research Officer, Clinical Science Divisions (CSD), icddr,b, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mar, 2008 –May, 2011| Program Manager, Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation

Feb, 2007- Aug, 2007| Field Research Assistant, icddr,b, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Feb, 2005-Sep, 2006| Elective Research Fellow, icddr,b, Dhaka, Bangladesh

EDUCATION

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|-------------------|--|
| Mar 2019–Sep 2024 | <p>PhD from Division of Human Nutrition and Health, Wageningen University and Research</p> <p>Akter, M. S., Talsma, E. F., Rasheed, S. & Feskens, E. J. M. (2024). Do adolescents eat healthy: diet quality dimensions and fish consumption in low-income urban Bangladesh [Dissertation]. Wageningen University. https://doi.org/10.18174/670948</p> |
| Sep 2011–Oct 2013 | <p>MSc in Nutrition and Health, Epidemiology and Public Health Specialization from Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands.</p> <p>MSc Thesis title: Development of food based dietary guidelines for Kanyan rural women using linear programming (Supervisor: Dr. Ir. Inge Brouwer)</p> <p>MSc Thesis (Minor) title: Is Dietary Diversity associated with vitamin A, iron and zinc intake and status of 24-59 months old children, Bangladesh? (Supervisor: Dr. Alida Melse)</p> |
| 2006 | <p>MSc in Food and Nutrition (Thesis group) from College of Home Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.</p> <p>MSc Thesis title: The Effect of counselling on pregnancy weight gain, birth weight and breast-feeding in urban poor women (Supervisor: Prof. Dr. S K Roy)</p> |

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS: MANUSCRIPTS PUBLISHED AS FIRST AUTHOR

- Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Harriette M Snoek, Sabrina Rasheed, Kim Maasen, Shakuntala H Thilsted, Edith JM Feskens, and Elise F Talsma (2024). Diet quality and associations with motivation and ability to consume a healthy diet among adolescents from urban low-income households in Bangladesh. *Appetite*, 200, 107563. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2024.107563>
- Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Elise F Talsma, Edith JM Feskens, Shakuntala H Thilsted and Sabrina Rasheed (2022). How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect fish consumption among low-income urban households in Bangladesh - a path analysis. *Frontiers in Public Health*. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.994236
- S. M. Akter**, S. K. Roy, S. K. Thakur, M. Sultana, W. Khatun, R. Rahman, S.S. Saliheen and N. Alam "Effects of third trimester counselling on pregnancy weight gain, birthweight, and breastfeeding among urban poor women in Bangladesh" *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2012:194-201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/156482651203300304>

AS CO-AUTHOR

- Islam Anne, F., **Akter, S. M.**, Sheikh, S. P., Ireen, S., Escobar-DeMarco, J., Kappos, K., Ash, D., & Rasheed, S. (2022). Quality of nutrition services in primary health care facilities of Dhaka city: State of nutrition mainstreaming in urban Bangladesh. *PLOS ONE*, 17(12), e0278621. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278621>
- Sheikh SP, **Akter SM**, Anne FI, Ireen S, Escobar-Alegria J, Kappos K, et al. Violations of International Code of Breast-milk Substitutes (BMS) in commercial settings and media in Bangladesh. *Matern Child Nutr* [Internet]. 2022 May 21;18(S3). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mcn.13351>

6. Sabrina Rasheed, Swapan Kumar Roy, Susmita Das, Syeda Nafisa Chowdhury, Mohammad Iqbal, **Syeda Mahsina Akter**, Khurshid Jahan, Shahadat Uddin and Anne Marie Thow. Policy content and stakeholder network analysis for infant and young child feeding in Bangladesh. BMC Public Health BMC series 201717(Suppl 2): 402, 13 June 2017. DOI: [10.1186/s12889-017-4338-0](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4338-0)

SCIENTIFIC REPORT PUBLISHED

Snoek, H. M., Pamuk, H., Raaijmakers, I., Janssen, V. C. J., Begum Chowdhury, K., Akter, S. M., & Sijtsema, S. J. (2021). Consumers' health and food safety perceptions in the Dhaka metropolitan area. Research Report. Wageningen University & Research. Weblink: <https://doi.org/10.18174/550216>

ABSTRACTS PUBLISHED (RELEVANT TO PhD RESEARCH)

1. **Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Kim Maasen, Jillian L Waid, Sabrina Rasheed, Shakuntala H Thilsted, Zsuzsa Bakk, Edith JM Feskens, Elise F Talsma. *Seasonality in dietary patterns and diet quality in Bangladesh: A Latent Class Analysis of urban adolescents*. Abstract reference no ICNAB-01523. Accepted as E Poster at the International Congress of Nutrition IUNS-ICN 2025, which will take place from 24 to 29 August 2025.
2. **Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Harriette Snoek, Sabrina Rasheed, Kim Maasen, Shakuntala H. Thilsted, Edith J.M. Feskens, Elise F. Talsma. *Diet quality and associations with motivation and ability to consume a healthy diet among adolescents from urban low-income households in Bangladesh*. Rapid-fire presentation to the conference, "Delivering for Nutrition in South Asia: Connecting the Dots Across Systems," taking place in Colombo, Sri Lanka and virtually on December 3-5, 2024.
3. **Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Ati Van der Honing, Jillian L Waid, Karin Borgonjen, Sabrina Rasheed, Shakuntala H Thilsted, Edith JM Feskens, Elise F Talsma (2023). *Food-based recommendations combined with local nutrient-dense foods, especially fish, would ensure dietary nutrient adequacy in adolescents from urban Bangladesh: Linear programming*. Abstract Reference no 025. Poster (563) at the Micronutrient Forum, 6th Global Conference, held in the Hague, The Netherlands 16-20 October 2023.
4. **Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Harriette M Snoek, Sabrina Rasheed, Edith JM Feskens, Elise F Talsma (2022). *Diet quality, drivers of food choices and self-efficacy among 15-19 years old adolescent girls and boys from low-income households in Dhaka city of Bangladesh: a cross-sectional survey*. Abstract Reference No. C000777. Poster at the 22nd International Congress of Nutrition (22nd IUNS-ICN) held in Tokyo, Japan, in December of 2022.
5. **Mahsina Syeda Akter**, Hummel, M., & Talsma, E. F. (2021). *Diet quality of urban poor Bangladeshi adolescents and the role of fish*. Poster session presented at Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy Week Research Conference (Virtual). <https://edepot.wur.nl/556487>

HONOURS AND AWARDS

- PhD Scholarship from Wageningen University, The Netherlands
- MSc scholarship from Netherland Fellowship Scholarship (NFP), The Netherlands
- Student Research Grant from Bangladesh Breast-feeding Foundation (BBF) Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Graduate and undergraduate scholarships from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

REFERENCES

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