

Tehila Sasson Travel Grant Report Narrative

On 8 January 2016 I presented a paper, titled: “Expertise on the Move: British Aid to Pakistan and the Emergence of Disaster Relief” at the meeting American Historical Association in Atlanta, GA. The paper explored the British response to the 1970 East Pakistan cyclone and show that disaster relief in Pakistan emerged as “soft diplomacy” in response to growing political tensions in the region. Historians studying the international relief to East Pakistan have focused mainly on the crucial months after the election and the subsequent war of liberation but little attention has been paid to the disaster relief of the region. The cyclone and the relief effort in its aftermath, I show, played an important role in precipitating the political conflict which would lead to the creation of Bangladesh as well as in laying the foundations for an international mechanism of disaster relief.