and urban practices that reflect and perpetuate the world's cultural diversity. The point, according to UNESCO guidelines, is not to preserve and protect, which is to freeze something in time, but to safeguard. Traditions can change and evolve as they are passed down through a living heritage that is continually being recreated. During the period from 2009 to 2013, UNESCO has inscribed 192 elements from the all over the world on this list. By meeting all the five criteria, Bangladesh's Jamdani qualified for inscription on the Representative List. "M Shahidul Islam, Bangladesh's



Dr Firoz Mahmud, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Shahidul Islam and Shahida Khatun representing Bangladesh at UNESCO.



Azerbaijani youngsters and representatives of different countries posing to be seen with Shahida Khatun wearing a Jamdani sari.

ambassador to France and representative to UNESCO was really helpful in all matters dealing with this," says Shamsuzzaman Khan. "Dr Firoz Mahmud, Md Altaf Hossain and Shahida Khatun of Bangla Academy worked tirelessly for months leading up to this proud moment. But it would never have been possible without people like Ruby Ghuznavi, Perveen Ahmad, Bibi Russell, Monira Emdad and others who worked for years towards the preservation and promotion of this tradition both at the national and international level."

The intergovernmental committee said Jamdani satisfies all the criteria for inscription on the representative list. The art form is transmitted from generation to generation and the art of Jamdani weaving reinforces the social and spiritual cohesion among the people of Bangladesh. The committee also said inscription of Jamdani on the representative list could contribute to the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage, while encouraging intercultural dialogue and promoting respect for cultural diversity. It also proposed safeguarding measures like research projects, documentation, awareness-raising activities and education programmes with the involvement of the bearers of the art and national institutions.

Now that it is done, it may seem to be an easy job. Dr Firoz Mahmud who prepared the nomination file for submission at UNESCO will tell you why it was not. "The nomination file had to be



Bibi Russell



Ruby Ghuznavi

prepared by experts trained by UNESCO. When we filed the paper, there were no trained personnel in Bangladesh. I felt confident that I could do it. We had a lot of limitations. For example, it seemed difficult to meet criterion 5 that says: the element must be included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Article 11 and article 12 of the Convention. The problem was we had no such list in our country. We came up with an idea. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, in 2005, commissioned the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh to undertake a cultural survey with a view to preparing a national inventory of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Bangladesh. The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh conducted the survey for two years during 2005-2006 and published the results of the survey in 12 volumes in 2007. The 11th volume contained the inventory of some elements under the broad category of traditional craftsmanship. Jamdani was one of the elements included in the inventory of this volume. And we presented it as our inventory of the intangible cultural heritage of Bangladesh. Much to our