

Introduction

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted a technical assistance (TA) project that promoted legal empowerment in three developing Asian countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan. The project explored the potential for legal empowerment to reduce poverty, improve governance, and promote more inclusive development—particularly for women. The project included preliminary country situation analysis, pilot legal empowerment projects that were integrated into host ADB loans, and a rigorous evaluation methodology. It aimed to (i) identify and test legal empowerment strategies that increase access to basic social services, productive resources, and opportunities by women and other disadvantaged groups; and (ii) promote increased incorporation of legal empowerment initiatives within mainstream development projects. The project was funded under ADB TA 6248-REG—Legal Empowerment for Women and Disadvantaged Groups. ADB engaged TAF to undertake activities under the project.

This report presents the findings of the project and incorporates feedback provided by participants in the Regional Conference on Legal Empowerment for Women and Disadvantaged Groups held at ADB in Manila on 13–14 December 2007. The conference marked the project’s completion and presented project findings and recommendations.

There are six chapters in this report. Chapter 2 (Overview of ADB’s Technical Assistance for Legal Empowerment) summarizes the evolution of ADB’s perspective on the nexus between legal empowerment and development, describes ADB’s previous support for legal empowerment initiatives, and provides an overview of the project. Chapter 3 (Defining the Framework of Legal Empowerment Initiatives and Measuring Their Impact) discusses the challenges involved in



defining and measuring legal empowerment and presents the definition of legal empowerment and evaluation tools developed under this project. Chapter 4 (Pilot Projects) provides a detailed description of the legal empowerment pilot projects developed and implemented in each of the three project countries. Chapter 5 (Conclusions and Recommendations) presents the overall results of the project and its ensuing recommendations.

Additionally, the report contains a series of supplementary appendixes that provide more detailed information on specific elements of the project. Appendix 1 (Overview of Legal Empowerment) presents the conceptual framework of legal empowerment that influenced the project design and implementation. Appendix 2 (Summary of the Country Situation Analysis [CSA] Reports) provides an overview of the key findings of the CSAs undertaken in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan during the first 6 months

of the project, set out in tabular format. The CSAs reviewed the legal empowerment developments that had occurred in the three focal countries in the 6 years since ADB completed a seven-country study on “Legal Empowerment for Advancing Governance and Poverty Reduction” (hereinafter referred to as the 2001 ADB legal empowerment study)—that study included the three project countries.¹ Appendix 3 (Monitoring and

Evaluation Report) provides details on the design, application, analysis, and findings of the specialized monitoring and evaluation framework that was developed for the project. Appendix 4 (Survey Instrument) contains the standard survey instrument used in the three focal countries to monitor and evaluate the framework presented in Appendix 3.

¹ ADB. 2001a. *Legal Empowerment: Advancing Good Governance and Poverty Reduction in Law and Policy Reform at ADB*, pp. 7–164.