

SUMMARY POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL STRATEGY

Country:	People's Republic of Bangladesh	Project Title:	Rural Connectivity Improvement Project – Additional Financing
Lending/Financing Modality:	Project Loan	Department/ Division:	South Asia Department Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Division

I. POVERTY AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

Poverty targeting: General intervention

A. Links to the National Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth Strategy and Country Partnership Strategy

Bangladesh is in crucial need of improved rural road infrastructure to reduce socioeconomic disparities between urban and rural communities and enhance access by the poor to social and financial facilities. During the rainy season, community members are often unable to reach markets and sell their agricultural produce and other goods. Market incentives for farmers are hindered by physical barriers and the economic cost of transporting goods to and from local markets. Impassable rural roads also hamper the provision of basic health, education, information and other social services. Improved rural road networks offset poverty by creating jobs for women as well as men, enhancing population mobility, facilitating rapid marketing of perishable commodities through cost-effective transportation, and facilitating access to government services. The country partnership strategy for Bangladesh, 2016–2020 of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports the government's poverty reduction initiatives in line with its Vision 2021.^a ADB intends to assist the country to ease infrastructure constraints in key sectors, including transport, agribusiness, workforce skills, off-farm rural employment, environment and climate change, governance, and institutional capacity. ADB intervenes in these areas by carefully assessing its own core strengths and gauging the role of other development partners. Rural road improvement is crucial to ADB's involvement because affordable, accessible, reliable, and safe transport systems are essential for overall economic and social development. Aligned with the government's Seventh Five Year Plan, fiscal year (FY) 2016–FY2020,^b the current Rural Connectivity Improvement Project will improve about 1,700 kilometers (km) of rural roads to all-weather standards, serving the agriculture sector and 51.5 million rural people living in 34 districts in five divisions. The additional financing will increase the project's scope by upgrading an additional approximately 930 km of rural roads, using the same implementation arrangements as the current project. The overall project scope is aligned with the government's priorities under the Seventh Five Year Plan and ADB's country partnership strategy for Bangladesh, FY2016–FY2020. The overall project will expand rural road capacity to increase connectivity, provide greater access to social services and markets, increase employment opportunities for rural poor people, and promote the agriculture sector.

B. Results from the Poverty and Social Analysis during PPTA or Due Diligence

1. Key poverty and social issues. Poverty remains a significant challenge in Bangladesh. The country is one of world's most densely populated; in 2018, Bangladesh had a population of about 165 million, with an estimated 12.9% living below the extreme poverty line, earning less than \$2 per day.^c Poverty was reduced substantially from 2010 to 2016: in 2010, 31.5% of people were living on or slightly below the poverty line, which dropped to 24.3% by 2016. Extreme poverty was reduced during the same period, from 17.6% to 12.9%. Nonetheless, the distribution of income to rural communities is increasingly uneven,^d with monthly household income of Tk13,353 in rural areas and Tk22,565 in urban areas. More than 80% of the population relies on subsistence or semi-subsistence agriculture and/or fishing for survival. A key factor influencing the high levels of rural poverty in Bangladesh is the extreme weather events that disrupt rural livelihood patterns. Frequent flooding, river erosion, poor drainage, and damaged and limited road infrastructure reduce the availability of land for crops and create barriers to market access. A broader lack of rural income-generating opportunities exacerbates high levels of joblessness and seasonal unemployment. Women's participation in income-generating activities is particularly limited. Increasingly, men are forced to migrate temporarily from rural to urban centers in search of jobs, leaving women with children and the elderly at home to survive on remittances and small-scale income-generating activities or subsistence farming. Poor rural connectivity is a significant barrier to improving rural livelihoods. Upgraded, improved, and well-maintained road networks are essential to improving the social and financial status of rural communities by assisting access to markets, schools, health centers, and other facilities. The lack of connectivity between urban and rural areas hampers agricultural growth, affects the availability of inputs and extension services, and stagnates the development of markets. The project aims to reduce poverty by improving rural connectivity and accessibility, which will increase access to goods, services, facilities, and employment opportunities, leading to (i) increased household income and access to development opportunities; and (ii) reduced vulnerability, social exclusion, and ultimately poverty. The project supports achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 8, 11, and 13.

2. Beneficiaries. The primary beneficiaries of the overall project will be (i) road users, who will benefit from reduced travel costs and travel times in addition to more reliable and better transport; (ii) roadside communities, which will receive improved access to basic services and markets; (iii) coastal communities, which will benefit from safer, climate-resilient roads; and (iv) community groups (including women) that will be engaged in construction works. Farmers producing cash crops, contractors, traders, fishers, seniors, and students will benefit from improved access to social and economic facilities.

3. Impact channels. The overall project will have an impact on poverty reduction. It will directly benefit poor and vulnerable members of the community who are engaged in road construction activities. Indirect benefits to the rural population will (i) accrue from increased agricultural productivity and access to markets and growth centers; (ii) improve human mobility and access to government services, including higher education and health care facilities; and (iii) provide time and fuel savings. The project will largely benefit the poor by creating employment and income-generation opportunities.

4. Other social and poverty issues. In Bangladesh, several large development partners are involved in various aspects of rural infrastructure, including rural roads, rural markets, construction of bridges and culverts, maintenance of infrastructure, flood rehabilitation, cyclone and flood shelters, area development, and capacity building of local governments. The overall project will improve road connectivity in 34 districts in northwest, southwest, and southeast Bangladesh, where the Japan International Cooperation Agency is financing bridge construction under the Western Bangladesh Small and Medium Bridge Improvement Project. Development coordination is achieved through regular meetings.

5. Design features. The overall project will ensure balanced inter- and intra-regional development through enhanced gender-responsive connectivity, trade links, and marketing facilities. The government will implement its subprojects, which will have nationwide impacts. The roads will be developed using a community-based model to stimulate local employment. Vehicle operating costs will decline because of improved road surfaces.

II. PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERING THE POOR

1. Participatory approaches and project activities. The current project is based on a participatory approach involving the local community throughout the planning, design, and implementation process, including the preparation of community participation plans (CPPs). These include initial stakeholder consultations, household surveys for baseline studies, and the establishment and training of community-based committees. Consultations for the overall project were made with all relevant ministries. The overall project features community engagement in project design, and improvement and maintenance of rural roads. It was designed through extensive consultations with all stakeholders, including relevant ministries. Stakeholder analysis was undertaken through a series of participatory rapid rural appraisals and focus group discussions in sample project areas with different groups to identify the service providers and beneficiaries. Parameters for involving these groups in project implementation were identified. Guidelines to implement the CPPs have been enclosed in contractor bidding documents. Three social and gender experts to be hired by the current project will support the implementation and monitoring of the CPPs (mobilization is expected in June 2020).

2. Civil society organizations. For both the current and additional financing projects, the project design advance consultants held extensive consultations with affected people living alongside the project's corridor of impact. Civil society organizations also participated in these consultations, and their involvement is documented within the individual CPPs.

3. The following forms of civil society organization participation are envisaged during project implementation, rated as high (H), medium (M), low (L): (M) Information gathering and sharing; (M) Consultation; (L) Collaboration; (L) Partnership.

4. Participation plan. ☒ Yes. ☐ No.

A strategy has been prepared to ensure participation by beneficiaries in infrastructure planning, construction, and management; this includes extensive consultation with community members, including women, about the project components and benefits, and their roles and responsibilities. Local government bodies and community members, including women, have defined roles in the planning, design, and implementation process of the road improvement works under the project. The safeguards assessment and planning processes will also require consultations with affected stakeholders, and these are identified in the CPPs. NGOs play a role in the grievance redress mechanism and act as intermediaries to assist vulnerable affected people with grievance consultations and deliberations.

III. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Gender mainstreaming category: Effective gender mainstreaming

A. Key issues. Road infrastructure is broadly perceived as the domain of men in Bangladesh. Women generally participate in road construction and maintenance as low-paid, unskilled laborers. Women's participation in infrastructure management and decision making is limited, because women are not often recognized as primary road infrastructure users. Undeveloped road infrastructure and high travel costs limit women's mobility, resulting in low access to education, health, and other services. Furthermore, social norms and lack of capital largely constrain access by women to markets that are the heart of the rural economy, and women receive little benefit from the sale of their own produce (e.g., cattle and/or goat rearing, milk, ducks, chickens, and eggs). Households headed by women and women from landless families are particularly vulnerable.

B. Key actions. ☒ Gender action plan ☐ Other actions or measures ☐ No action or measure

The poverty and social analysis included a gender assessment, with 753 women consulted in the additional financing project area. Overall, women were supportive of the project as it will give them potential access to economic opportunities and services. The project is categorized *effective gender mainstreaming*. A gender action plan (GAP) was prepared with the following targets, among others: (i) provide on-the-job training to all women workers on basic construction, improvement, reconstruction works, and maintenance skills; (ii) target an average of 20% of labor days created for project road improvement works are for women; and (iii) conduct orientation and awareness-raising sessions on road safety, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and sexually transmitted infections for at least 40% of students, teachers, and parents along the project roads. National gender experts to be engaged part of the current project will ensure effective implementation of the GAP (mobilization is expected in June 2020).

IV. ADDRESSING SOCIAL SAFEGUARD ISSUES

A. Involuntary Resettlement

Safeguard Category: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ FI

1. Key impacts. The project will comprise improvement works. It will not require people's displacement.

2. Strategy to address the impacts. No land acquisition and resettlement impacts are anticipated. The subprojects will be primarily on government land; the existing rights-of-way or lands are owned by the local governments. The Local Government Engineering Department will use a due diligence approach to ensure the project design is community-driven and will not require land acquisition. In a minority of cases, road upgrading may potentially impact private land, such as on road bends for improved safety. In such cases, landowners can decide if they would like to donate land voluntarily (less than a total of 5% of private land titles) or identify an alternate road design. If an alternate land design cannot be developed, the road section will not be impacted,

and the project team will instead use design solutions to improve the safety of the road without impacting the private land. If any land donation occurs during project implementation, the community participation framework (CPF) of the current project provides specific procedural requirements for comprehensive consultations with the communities. The CPF disclosed on the ADB's website on 29 June 2018 will be used under the additional financing project. The CPF also includes a mitigation measures matrix, which details the types of support provided for all types of losses, including special assistance for vulnerable households.

3. Plan or other Actions.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resettlement plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement and indigenous peoples plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resettlement framework | <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social management system arrangement | <input type="checkbox"/> Social impact matrix |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No action | |

B. Indigenous Peoples

Safeguard Category: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ FI

1. Key impacts. The project will not affect any distinct and vulnerable indigenous people.

Is broad community support triggered? ☐ Yes ☒ No

2. Strategy to address the impacts. No impact on indigenous peoples is anticipated.

3. Plan or other actions.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement plan and indigenous peoples plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples planning framework | <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social management system arrangement | <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples plan elements integrated in project with a summary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social impact matrix | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No action | |

V. ADDRESSING OTHER SOCIAL RISKS

A. Risks in the Labor Market

1. Relevance of the project for the country's or region's or sector's labor market, indicated as high (H), medium (M), and low or not significant (L): (M) unemployment (M) underemployment (L) retrenchment (M) core labor standards

2. Labor market impact. Significant positive impact. Additional jobs in off-farm activities will be created in construction and project maintenance. Contractors will undergo orientations on following core labor standards in construction activities. For employment under any of the contracts (labor-based or machine-based maintenance or rehabilitation), core labor standards will be targeted in the GAP, including equal pay for equal work between men and women, and prohibition of employment of children according to the Labor Act of Bangladesh, 2006, which is in line with international core labor standards: (i) freedom of association, and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (ii) elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; (iii) effective abolition of child labor; and (iv) elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

B. Affordability. Not applicable

C. Communicable Diseases and Other Social Risks

1. The impact of the following risks are rated as high (H), medium (M), low (L), or not applicable (NA):

(L) Communicable diseases (L) Human trafficking

2. Risks to people in project area. The proportion of projects requiring a large, non-local construction workforce is low. The social assessment revealed the risk of spreading of communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted infections, is low.

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Targets and indicators. In addition to the indicators described in the revised design and monitoring framework, relevant performance targets and indicators and data sources to monitor the social aspects of the overall project will be developed by the social development experts to be hired under the current project (mobilization is expected in June 2020).

2. Required human resources. The project management unit has a social development and safeguards focal point. The social development and safeguards and gender experts under the project implementation support consultant teams to be hired under the current project will support implementation of the GAP and CPPs. A social development specialist from ADB's South Asia Department will oversee implementation.

3. Information in the project administration manual. The frequency of project reviews, monitoring, and timing of completion report is included in the project administration manual.

4. Monitoring tools. The project implementation support consultant will undertake day-to-day monitoring. The project management unit's social development and safeguards and environment specialists will undertake monitoring (at least quarterly).

^a ADB. 2016. *Country Partnership Strategy: Bangladesh, 2016–2020*. Manila; Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission. 2012. *Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021: Making vision 2021 a reality*. Dhaka.

^b Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission. 2015. *Seventh Five Year Plan, FY2016–FY2020*. Dhaka. The fiscal year (FY) of the Government of Bangladesh ends on 30 June. "FY" before a calendar year denotes the year the fiscal year ends.

^c World Bank. 2018. *Global Economic Prospects*. Washington, DC.

^d Government of Bangladesh, Bureau of Statistics. 2017. *Preliminary Report on Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016*. Dhaka.