



# INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER EQUALITY

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

### OF THE BANGLADESH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

# **INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER EQUALITY**

## **URBAN DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE OF THE BANGLADESH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

August 2017



Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license (CC BY 3.0 IGO)

© 2017 Asian Development Bank  
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, 1550 Metro Manila, Philippines  
Tel +63 2 632 4444; Fax +63 2 636 2444  
[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)

Some rights reserved. Published in 2017.  
Printed in the Philippines.

ISBN 978-92-9257-893-0 (Print), 978-92-9257-894-7 (e-ISBN)  
Publication Stock No. TCS178926-2  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/TCS178926-2>

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent.

ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by ADB in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

By making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area, or by using the term “country” in this document, ADB does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license (CC BY 3.0 IGO) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/igo/>. By using the content of this publication, you agree to be bound by the terms of this license. For attribution, translations, adaptations, and permissions, please read the provisions and terms of use at <https://www.adb.org/terms-use#openaccess>

This CC license does not apply to non-ADB copyright materials in this publication. If the material is attributed to another source, please contact the copyright owner or publisher of that source for permission to reproduce it. ADB cannot be held liable for any claims that arise as a result of your use of the material.

Please contact [pubsmarketing@adb.org](mailto:pubsmarketing@adb.org) if you have questions or comments with respect to content, or if you wish to obtain copyright permission for your intended use that does not fall within these terms, or for permission to use the ADB logo.

Notes:

In this publication, “\$” refers to US dollars.

Corrigenda to ADB publications may be found at <http://www.adb.org/publications/corrigenda>

# Contents

<b>Table, Figure, and Boxes</b>	iv
<b>Message</b> — <i>Shyama Prosad Adhikari</i>	v
<b>Preface</b>	vi
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	vii
<b>Abbreviations</b>	viii
<b>Executive Summary</b>	ix
<b>Introduction</b>	1
Situational Context of the Study and Its Rationale	1
Objectives of the Study	2
Conceptual Framework	2
Methodology	2
<b>Policies Supporting Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development</b>	3
National and Local Gender Policies	3
ADB’s Gender Policies	3
<b>Institutions Responsible for Gender Mainstreaming</b>	5
Local Government Engineering Department	5
Gender and Development Forum	5
<b>Gender Features of Selected ADB-Assisted Urban Projects</b>	7
Women’s Participation and Leadership	7
Women’s Economic Empowerment	11
Women-Friendly Infrastructure and Public Spaces	13
Overall Analysis of the Gender Responsiveness of the Five Projects Studied	15
<b>Enabling Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming</b>	16
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>	18
Policies Supporting Gender Mainstreaming	18
Local Government Engineering Department Institutions and Human Resources for Gender Mainstreaming	19
Programs and Projects for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment	19
Enabling Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming into Local Government Engineering Department Projects	19
<b>Appendixes</b>	
1 Gender Features of Five Urban Development Projects Studied	21
2 Local Government Engineering Department Organization Chart	23

# Table, Figure, and Boxes

## Table

A1	Gender Features of Five Urban Development Projects Studied	21
----	--	----

## Figure

A2	Local Government Engineering Department Organization Chart	23
----	--	----

## Boxes

1	Gender Information Management System	6
2	The Urban Governance Improvement Action Program	8
3	Urban Governance Improvement Action Program Criteria for Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Program	9
4	Microfinance for Women	12
5	Community-Based Organizations and Women-Friendly Public Spaces	14

# Message



**B**angladesh has a strong legal framework, beginning with a constitution that recognizes equality of women and men. Article 28.1 announces “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.” The Constitution, in Article 28.2, also sets out “Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.”

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is a major public sector agency under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives of Bangladesh. LGED is mandated to develop and manage local infrastructure (rural and urban), generating employment, improving socioeconomic condition, promoting local governance, reducing poverty, and acting as agent of change at the local level.

Our approach toward gender equality has been shifted from welfare approach to a women’s rights-based approach. LGED has developed its own Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan with a focus on reducing women’s disadvantage, increasing women’s voice, and promoting gender equality.

It is my great pleasure that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has documented the results of a stocktaking of the gender mainstreaming practices in LGED, particularly in its ADB-supported urban development projects. I strongly believe the report “*Institutionalizing Gender Equality: The Experience of the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department in Urban Development*” will guide and give a boost to our ongoing initiatives to mainstream gender and women’s empowerment in the overall development process of LGED.

Again, I thank ADB for its interest and support.

**Shyama Prosad Adhikari**

Chief Engineer

Local Government Engineering Department

Ministry of Local Government,

Rural Development and Cooperatives

# Preface

**G**ender equality is an important pillar for development. Asian Development Bank (ADB) endeavors to promote the sharing of knowledge on gender aspects of our work, and develop concrete actions based on the knowledge shared.

In Bangladesh, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has been on the forefront in women's participation and leadership in decision making; women's economic empowerment; and the provision of women-friendly infrastructure and public spaces. ADB has been partnering with LGED in working in these areas.

This case study, *Institutionalizing Gender Equality: Urban Development Experience of the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department* assesses achievements, best practices, and lessons learned from five urban development projects that ADB and LGED collaborated.

This case study looked at the gender and development aspects in LGED's policies, regulations and organizational structures and the design of selected urban development projects, with focus on mechanisms put in place to foster gender equality and women's empowerment measures. Recommendations provide a range of practical actions and ways forward.

We hope that this case study would serve as a reference in further advancing LGED's efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in its organization, project design, and implementation.

  
**Kazuhiko Higuchi**  
Country Director  
Bangladesh Resident Mission  
Asian Development Bank

# Acknowledgments

**T**his report was produced by Ines Smyth, ADB Consultant, under the overall guidance of Nasheeba Selim, Social Development Officer on Gender of the Bangladesh Resident Mission and Francesco Tornieri, Principal Social Development Specialist on Gender and Development of ADB's South Asia Department. It is the result of joint efforts, with information and inputs provided by the staff of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) of Bangladesh and ADB through interviews and focus group discussions. LGED Chief Engineer, Shyama Prosad Adhikari; Abul Kalam Azad, Chair of the LGED Gender and Development (GAD) Forum; and Syeda Asma, the Secretary of the LGED GAD Forum facilitated the consultative process within LGED and reviewed the drafts of the report.



# Abbreviations

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
CBO	-	community-based organization
CRDP	-	City Region Development Project
EGM	-	effective gender mainstreaming
GAP	-	gender action plan
GEN	-	gender equity theme
GIMS	-	Gender Information Management System
GRB	-	gender-responsive budgeting
IGA	-	income-generating activity
LCS	-	labor contracting society
LGED	-	Local Government Engineering Department
PCR	-	project completion report
STIFPP	-	Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project
Tk	-	taka (currency unit of Bangladesh)
TLCC	-	town-level coordination committee
UGIAP	-	Urban Governance Improvement Action Program
UGIIP	-	Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project
UMSU	-	Urban Management Support Unit
WLCC	-	ward-level coordination committee
WWC	-	women ward councilor

# Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a stocktaking of the gender mainstreaming practices of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) of Bangladesh, particularly in its urban development projects financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Lessons are identified and recommendations offered to assist LGED to enhance its approaches in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment results in its operations. Specifically, the LGED urban development projects included in the stocktaking are the

- Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase 2 (STIFPP-II);
- City Region Development Project (CRDP);
- Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP);
- Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-II); and
- Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-III).

The stocktaking concluded that much has been achieved in women's participation and leadership, women's economic empowerment, and availability of women-friendly infrastructure in the selected projects. Such results are in large part due to the mandatory use of gender action plans in the projects and the systematic deployment of technically sound gender specialists. The most effective institutional mechanisms are LGED's Gender and Development Forum and its Gender Strategy and Action Plan, which count on the commitment and leadership of LGED senior managers and gender specialists. The strong partnership between LGED and ADB is also significant.

The main lessons derived from the study are that gender mainstreaming in this context would be more effective if projects were to rely on budget support rather than on funding; if dedicated gender staff with suitable credentials were to participate in the Gender and Development Forum; and if well-established gender mainstreaming procedures and standards were to be practiced in all government-funded urban (and other) projects, and not only in those supported by ADB and development partners.



# Introduction

## Situational Context of the Study and Its Rationale

Bangladesh has a total population of 160,995,642.<sup>1</sup> Its level of urbanization is 41.6%, compared with 39.5% for the region.<sup>2</sup> Most of its cities grapple with overcrowding, traffic congestion, inadequate infrastructure, lack of basic services, and environmental degradation. About 40% of the urban population lives in secondary towns with most of the problems of the major cities. Informal settlements, or slums, where scant access to basic amenities creates inhumane conditions and acute welfare outcomes, are a visible feature of cities in the country.<sup>3</sup> The urban centers are also extremely vulnerable to natural hazards such as cyclones, storm surges, coastal erosion, and earthquakes.

To deal with these problems, the Government of Bangladesh has long implemented urban development projects, several with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The projects are mainly a response to the challenges presented by the significant growth in urban population over the last decades, and are intended to help realize the positive potential of this growth.

Besides urban issues in general, the government also concerns itself with gender issues in the urban sector. For women in the urban centers of Bangladesh, as in other cities of South Asia and the rest of the world, access to adequate water, energy, sanitation, and transportation services, as well as to suitable and affordable housing, is a constant struggle. They must likewise contend with various forms of insecurity and violence specific to urban areas, including abuse and sexual harassment in public places.<sup>4</sup>

Women's migration for work, especially in garment manufacturing, is perhaps the most visible sign of the rapid urbanization of Bangladesh. In the urban areas, manufacturing accounts for 25% of women's employment, compared with 13% of male employment.<sup>5</sup> Many reports document the positive contribution of this labor mobility to reducing rural poverty through remittances, and to changing gender norms that profoundly disadvantage women and girls. Evidence of the problems and risks of urban life for women and girls, from widespread sexual harassment and violence in public places, to exploitation and discrimination as workers, is equally abundant.<sup>6</sup>

Urban development projects in Bangladesh are the responsibility of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), under the Local Government

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. Total Population: Bangladesh. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=BD> (last accessed 30 September 2016).

<sup>2</sup> UN-Habitat. 2016. *World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development—Emerging Futures*. Nairobi.

<sup>3</sup> N. Selim. 2015. Enhancing Human Development for Urban Poor: Lessons Learnt from Bangladesh. Paper presented at the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA) 2015 Conference Capability on the Move: Mobility and Aspirations. Washington, DC. 10–13 September.

<sup>4</sup> ActionAid. 2014. *Safe Cities for Women: From Reality to Rights*. Johannesburg. [www.actionaid.ie/sites/files/actionaid/safe\\_cities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.actionaid.ie/sites/files/actionaid/safe_cities_final_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> N. Kabeer et al (with statistical support from M. Sulaiman). 2013. *Paid Work, Women's Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Transforming the Structures of Constraint*. New York: UN Women.

<sup>6</sup> A. Kelly. 2012. Urbanisation in Bangladesh Proves a Double-Edged Sword for Women. *The Guardian*, 5 November.

Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. The LGED is mandated to plan, develop, and maintain rural, urban, and small-scale water resource infrastructure at the local level throughout the country. It is also responsible for the gender and social inclusion aspects of these projects, and has built a strong reputation and record in developing and using gender mainstreaming approaches that are both effective and innovative. The LGED is now implementing 95 projects—18 urban,<sup>7</sup> 5 in small-scale water infrastructure, 5 in education, 1 urban–rural, and the rest rural. Urban development is one of the three priority sectors of the LGED.

## Objectives of the Study

This report documents the results of a stocktaking of the gender mainstreaming practices of the LGED, particularly in its ADB-supported urban development projects.<sup>8</sup> The main purpose is to present a picture of the extent of gender mainstreaming in LGED’s urban development work and derive lessons on the gender mainstreaming approaches. The results are meant to guide LGED’s next gender mainstreaming initiatives in urban development.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual approach to the study reflects the consensus that gender mainstreaming is a strategy for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, and that to be effective it must address the **legislation and policies**, the **structures**, and the **programs and projects** of given institutions.<sup>9</sup> This report is therefore structured around the descriptions and analyses of policies in support

of gender mainstreaming, gender considerations in institutional structures, and gender elements of selected ADB-supported urban development projects. The study also looked into the factors or **enabling mechanisms** that have facilitated the mainstreaming of gender into policies, institutional structures, programs, and projects. While the stocktaking examined relevant policies of the Government of Bangladesh, ADB, and the LGED, it concentrated on the structures and programs of the LGED (namely, its Gender and Development Forum) and selected programs supported by ADB and implemented by the LGED.

## Methodology

The analysis in this report uses data from three sources: (i) desk reviews of national and local policies that have influenced the gender mainstreaming efforts of the LGED; (ii) interviews and discussions with staff and consultants of the LGED, ADB, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) based on a set of indicative questions, which were continuously updated following the acquisition of new information and insights; and (iii) desk reviews of documents on five selected projects (see Appendix 1 for key gender features of the projects), namely:

- Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase 2 (STIFPP-II);
- City Region Development Project (CRDP);
- Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP);
- Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-II); and
- Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIP-III).

<sup>7</sup> Of these 18 projects, 10 are funded by the government, and 4 have ADB financial support.

<sup>8</sup> Depending on feedback from the LGED and at its request, a similar stocktaking exercise could be performed in the rural infrastructure and small water resources sectors.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels.”

# Policies Supporting Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development

## National and Local Gender Policies

The Government of Bangladesh has consistently provided a policy environment favorable to women's rights. Its policies include especially, but not exclusively, the 2011 National Women Development Policy, which explicitly refers to certain privileges for poor women in urbanization and housing plans. Considerable efforts have also been made toward the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB),<sup>10</sup> although the opportunities GRB offers to use revenues to promote gender equality do not seem to have been fully realized.<sup>11</sup> The government's 2011 Urban Policy recognizes that the country still lacks gender-sensitive planning and management of human settlements, and includes several provisions for what it terms "gender concerns." However, the policy remains in draft form.<sup>12</sup>

A gender perspective is not unique to the national policies of Bangladesh; there have been many related efforts at the local level, both urban and rural. The 2010 Act to Amend the Pourashava Ordinance

of 2009<sup>13</sup> calls for the increased participation of citizens in decision making, through the town-level coordination committees (TLCCs) and ward-level coordination committees (WLCCs). It requires setting aside 40% of the membership of WLCCs and one-third of the membership of municipal standing committees for women, to strengthen women's voice at the local level.<sup>14</sup> Many of the women-friendly features of the 2010 law were introduced as a direct outcome of practices implemented in Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) projects supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), through the gender-specific provisions of the Urban Governance Improvement Action Program (UGIAP) of the Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP), highlighting the influence such initiatives have had in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming into the LGED, and beyond.

## ADB's Gender Policies

The extent of gender mainstreaming in ADB-supported urban development projects of the

<sup>10</sup> Through the inclusion of gender issues in the medium-term budget framework (MTBF); the use of a recurrent, capital, gender, and poverty (RCGP) database to show the percentage of funds benefiting women; and the preparation of gender budget reports.

<sup>11</sup> Suggested improvements include strengthening the strategic phase of the MTBF process from a gender perspective, building up the gender mainstreaming capacity of government officials, improving the RCGP database, and strengthening gender-responsive budgeting at the project level. (ADB. 2014. *Completion Report: Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment—Strengthening Gender-Responsive Budgeting in South Asia*. Regional technical assistance (RETA) 6143. Manila.

<sup>12</sup> Media sources report that the Government of Bangladesh has been working on a new urban policy, which will have targets for reducing urban poverty, developing city slums, and maintaining law and order. (A. S. Kallol. 2015. New Urban Policy on the Cards. *Dhaka Tribune*. 29 March. archive.dhakatribune.com [last accessed on 7 August 2016]).

<sup>13</sup> The ordinance was informed by earlier ADB technical assistance (TA) related to urban sector policy.

<sup>14</sup> ADB. 2010. *Country Gender Assessment: Bangladesh*. Manila.

## 4 Institutionalizing Gender Equality

LGED has been largely influenced by ADB's gender policies. ADB regards gender equality as critical in its own right and essential for better development outcomes. Its gender policies include the Policy on the Role of Women in Development (1985) and the Gender and Development (GAD) Policy (1998), which adopts gender mainstreaming as an essential strategy for promoting gender equity.<sup>15</sup> The Operations Manual, in its bank policies issued on 6 December 2010, echoes the fundamental principles stated in the 1998 GAD Policy.<sup>16</sup> Gender equity is also one of the five drivers of change in ADB's Strategy 2020.<sup>17</sup>

ADB has systematically developed and used various mechanisms for effective gender mainstreaming. Central to those mechanisms is its gender classification of projects. The ADB gender categorization system is a four-tier system for determining the potential contribution of a project to gender equality and women's empowerment right from the start or during project design. A project belongs to the **gender equity theme** (GEN) category if it directly addresses key gender issues; the **effective gender mainstreaming** (EGM) category if it does not directly address gender issues but can contribute significantly to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment; the category of **some gender elements** (SGE) if it is not relevant to the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment but can adopt some

gender-related measures; or the **no gender element** (NGE) category if the project is not at all related to gender.

These gender categories have certain requirements, most notably a gender action plan (GAP) and the presence of gender experts in the case of a GEN or EGM project. A project in the SGE category, on the other hand, must integrate at least two gender features into the project design.

Under the equity (inclusiveness) pillar of its Urban Operational Plan 2012–2020, ADB undertakes to support investments that respond to the needs of women, as well as the urban poor and vulnerable communities. Its South Asia Department (SARD) is also committed to addressing country-specific gender disparities through detailed social and gender analyses to determine the appropriate gender categorization of projects.

In the past 10 years, opportunities to maximize the incorporation of gender features and approaches in the ADB Bangladesh portfolio have led to very good results. A total of 16 of the 27 ADB-funded projects implemented since 2005 were GEN projects, 10 were in the EGM category, and only 1 was an NGE project. Of the 95 new projects processed by SARD in 2009–2011, 39 (41%) were GEN projects, and 17 of those 39 (44%) were in the urban sector.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The other drivers are private sector development and operations, good governance and capacity development, knowledge solutions, and partnerships. (ADB. 2003. *Gender and Development: Our Framework Policies and Strategies*. Manila)

<sup>16</sup> ADB. 2010. *Gender and Development in ADB Operations. Operations Manual*. OM Section C2/BP. Manila.

<sup>17</sup> ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank 2008–2020*. Manila.

<sup>18</sup> ADB. 2013. *Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia*. Proceedings Report of the 2012 Subregional Workshop on Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26–28 March 2012. Manila.

# Institutions Responsible for Gender Mainstreaming

## Local Government Engineering Department

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is responsible for designing and implementing rural, urban, and small-scale water resources infrastructure across the country (see Appendix 2 for a chart showing the organization of the LGED).<sup>19</sup> Its long history of integrating gender concerns into its areas of operation is perhaps unparalleled among Bangladesh government institutions of similar size and importance.<sup>20</sup> A case study included in a 2013 Asian Development Bank (ADB) publication, tracing the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in ADB's executing and implementing agencies and in sector and line agencies of the government, encapsulates the LGED's experience.<sup>21</sup>

Women's empowerment as an LGED concern was first reflected in its Gender Equity Strategy and the related action plan for 2002–2007 (phase 1), updated in 2008 to cover the period 2008–2015 (phase 2) and in 2016 for the 2016–2021 period (phase 3). The strategy is aligned with the National Women Development Policy (2011) and its main goal is to ensure gender equity in all LGED operations, including project activities, where it can be achieved through the sustainable participation of an empowered workforce and enabled communities.<sup>22</sup>

## Gender and Development Forum

The Gender and Development Forum is the executive body for the LGED's Gender Equity Strategy and action plans. It has 25 members, most of whom are project directors, but no dedicated staff. All members, including the chair, the co-chair, and the secretary, are appointed as necessary during regular meetings. Their tasks are not individually or formally set. Forum members meet quarterly to share information and update one another regarding gender mainstreaming in different projects, to discuss progress, and to plan ahead.

The Gender Equity Strategy of the LGED lists in detail all the tasks of the Gender and Development (GAD) Forum, which include organizing periodic gender training for staff and the yearly celebrations for International Women's Day, and supervising the LGED's day-care center for children of staff at the LGED headquarters.<sup>23</sup> One of the most important tasks is aggregating and analyzing the data sent by district LGED staff twice a year. A Gender Information Management System (GIMS) has been installed to ensure the systematic collection and use of gender-specific information and data (Box 1).

<sup>19</sup> Urban sector responsibilities are shared by other government agencies, such as the Capital Development Authority (Rajdhani Unnayon Kartripakhya, or RAJUK) and the Housing and Settlement Directorate, both under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

<sup>20</sup> In 2013, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) bestowed its first Gender Award on one of the LGED's rural projects, for outstanding achievement in gender equality and women's empowerment.

<sup>21</sup> ADB. 2013. *Gender Tool Kit: Transport—Maximizing the Benefits of Improved Mobility for All*. Manila.

<sup>22</sup> LGED. 2004. *Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan 2004*. Dhaka. p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> The center can accommodate 22 children, and has a staff composed of one supervisor, two assistant supervisors, and five caregivers. It is supervised by a governance committee, which meets every 3 months.



### Box 1: Gender Information Management System

The system is intended to monitor progress in the efforts of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) to mainstream gender, both in its structures and in its operations. Gender focal points collect sector-wide sex-disaggregated data from the field. They compile and submit reports to the LGED Gender and Development Forum, where the field data are analyzed with the help of the specially developed gender information management software package. Gender-related operational data are then shared periodically with LGED senior management through the Gender and Development Forum.

Source: Local Government Engineering Department.

In addition to the forum, the LGED established gender focal point positions at different levels. A sociologist is assigned to the position at the district level, and a community organizer, at the *upazila* (subdistrict) level. At the district level, LGED sector-wide gender activities related to projects are coordinated by gender committees to ensure (i) the participation of women staff and stakeholders in all stages of the project cycle; (ii) the collection of sex-disaggregated data; and (iii) the preparation of progress reports on gender activities, for submission to the LGED head office in Dhaka. Each gender committee has six members and is headed by an executive engineer.

# Gender Features of Selected ADB-Assisted Urban Projects

Critical to urban development are programs and projects that support gender equality and women's empowerment. This section describes the salient gender elements of the five selected urban development projects of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a complete list of which is found on page 2. The study looked at their gender mainstreaming approaches, achievements, and challenges, particularly the LGED's main areas of concern, namely: (i) women's participation and leadership in different institutions; (ii) women's economic empowerment; and (iii) the provision of women-friendly infrastructure and public spaces.

## Women's Participation and Leadership

A notable feature of LGED-implemented and ADB-funded projects is the resolve to promote women's presence in structures created specifically for project implementation, and, increasingly, their participation in and influence on permanent local government structures, such as the town-level and ward-level coordination committees (TLCCs and WLCCs), and later the standing committees. This practice is established and monitored mainly through the gender action plans (GAPs).<sup>24</sup>

**Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase 2.** This project, categorized under the gender equity theme (GEN) was implemented from

July 2005 to June 2012. It pilot-tested the inclusion of women in project implementation structures and promoted women's increasing participation in and influence on permanent local structures, such as the TLCC, WLCC, and standing committees. The GAP for Phase 2 of the Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project (STIFPP-II) was the main mechanism through which this practice was established and monitored.

**City Region Development Project.** STIFPP-II's practice of promoting women's participation in project implementation structures and representation in the TLCCs and WLCCs was adopted by the City Region Development Project (CRDP), which was categorized as effective gender mainstreaming and implemented from October 2010 to June 2017. This project was cofinanced by German development cooperation through GTZ and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The CRDP aimed to improve urban and infrastructure services. By December 2015, women made up 62% of the members of TLCCs and 40% of WLCC members—well above the 30% stipulated in the GAP.<sup>25</sup> The GAP also requires 30% participation of women in community water user groups, water and sanitation (WATSAN) committees, solid waste management committees, and all other community bodies. Women's presence in such committees means, for example, that under the energy efficiency component of the project, the design of solar street lighting reflects considerations for the safe and easy movement of women, especially workers in the garment and other industries.

<sup>24</sup> According to LGED staff and consultants who were interviewed, despite the achievements, the financial allocation for gender components set down in the GAP is not always clearly defined in project documents.

<sup>25</sup> The information is taken from the updated GAP included in the July 2015 Quarterly Progress Report (April–June 2015).

### Box 2: The Urban Governance Improvement Action Program

This performance-based strategy for fund allocation emerged from the realization that poor governance and lack of community participation are the two major reasons for the inadequate services and infrastructure in the *pourashavas* (municipality), including their slum areas.

The Urban Governance Improvement Action Program (UGIAP) covers six key result areas: (i) citizen awareness and participation; (ii) women's participation; (iii) integration of the urban poor; (iv) urban planning;

(v) financial accountability and sustainability; and (vi) administrative transparency.

Because of their proven effectiveness, the scope and mechanisms of the UGIAP were adopted by other departments, such as Public Health Engineering, and by development partners such as the World Bank, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Source: ADB. 2012. *The Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project in Bangladesh Sharing Knowledge on Community-Driven Development*. Manila.

**Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** As a framework for promoting and facilitating women's participation and leadership, the Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP), implemented from August 2003 to December 2010, was aimed at contributing to human development and good urban governance in secondary towns through assistance in increasing accountability and expanding urban physical infrastructure and services. The project made use of the Urban Governance Improvement Action Program (UGIAP), under which *pourashavas* (municipality) could qualify for successive phases of financing on the basis of the successful performance of activities set down in the GAP (Box 2). Like the CRDP, the UGIIP required the creation of gender and environment committees, chaired by women ward councilors (WWCs), and at least 30% women's representation in TLCCs and WLCCs in the project area. The quota was exceeded: 34% of TLCC and 41% of WLCC members were women, who were consulted in the process of approving *pourashava* development plans (PDPs) and associated budgets.<sup>26</sup> The role played by women councilors and members ensured that money from the revenue budget within the annual PDP was earmarked for activities to benefit women, and that

women had greater involvement in decision making and control over resources within the *pourashava* administration. Instituting mechanisms that give women a voice in public budget decisions is a central part of the intent of the GRB policies. It is recognized as a most effective and sustainable route to gender equality in public life, and one that also enhances effective governance.<sup>27</sup>

The successful implementation of this approach in UGIIP was hampered by the fact that the WWCs were often poorly informed about local governance systems, budgets and resources, and women's rights. To remedy this situation, the project worked with 305 WWCs in the 30 *pourashavas*, clearly defined their responsibilities, developed their skills, and provided them with suitable workspace (e.g., seating arrangements, toilets, and water facilities), so that they could perform their duties properly. As a result, the WWCs became much more influential. They started chairing committees, regularly visiting households, and conducting courtyard meetings and rallies. By the end of the project, 1,229 courtyard meetings and 489 rallies (one in each ward) had been held. These were important occasions for women to discuss social issues, such as domestic violence, early marriage and dowry, eve teasing,<sup>28</sup> and childcare, in a convenient

<sup>26</sup> ADB. 2014. *Giving Women Voice in Local Governance Structures*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/42630/adb-experiences-giving-women-voice.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> D. Budlender and G. Hewitt. 2003. *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioners' Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender-Responsive Budgets*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

<sup>28</sup> Eve teasing is a term widely used in countries of South Asia to refer to different forms of sexual harassment of women.

### Box 3: Urban Governance Improvement Action Program Criteria for Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Program

#### Phase 1

- A gender committee chaired by a women ward councilor is formed at the *pourashava* level.
- A gender action plan (GAP) is prepared and integrated into the *pourashava* development plan.

#### Phase 2

- The GAP is finalized.
- A *pourashava* budget for implementing the GAP, with funding allocation of up to 2%–3% of the total revenue budget, is drafted and approved.

#### Phase 3

- The Gender Committee becomes fully functional and effective.
- The GAP budget is allocated (funds—10% more than in the previous year—are earmarked from *pourashava* resources) and GAP implementation is ensured.
- The Gender Committee holds monthly meetings, and sends quarterly reports to the Project Management Office.
- GAP activities are implemented, with at least 10% more in funding compared with the previous year's budget.

Source: Local Government Engineering Department.

and congenial, women-only environment, as well as to raise awareness among the population at large. Under Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-II), modest budgets were allocated to childcare and snacks for women attending courtyard meetings and training, thus contributing to increased participation.

These activities gave women in the communities more awareness of their rights, as well as the confidence to voice their concerns in public platforms and—most importantly—to have their needs reflected in urban development interventions. In many cases, the household burden and care responsibilities of women, especially those from poor households and slums, were reduced as a result, through improved access to water, latrines or better sanitation, proper drainage, and solid waste management systems.

Another element that facilitated women's participation and leadership was the allocation of human resources under the project for the implementation of the GAP. For example, the Urban Management Support Unit (UMSU) formed for the project included a full-time gender specialist to conduct an orientation program in gender and development for all *pourashavas*. The field-level facilitator team, on the other hand, included a social

and gender development expert assigned for 3 years to support GAP implementation.

Despite the progress brought by the UGIIP, however, women members of many local committees were found to be excluded and demotivated.

**Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** This project—supported by ADB, KfW, and GTZ and implemented between January 2009 and June 2015—shared with the UGIIP the overall aim of strengthening good governance in the municipalities and making them better able to deliver good services to communities. It improved UGIIP practices (related to women's participation and leadership) and addressed the exclusion and demotivation of women members of local committees through a phased approach to the implementation of the *pourashava* GAP (Box 3). Like the UGIIP, the second project used a performance-based system, the UGIAP, but in the case of UGIIP-II all participating *pourashavas* had to meet all minimum criteria even for the first allocation of funds.

Women's participation under UGIIP-II extended to their presence in slum improvement committees. Women often chaired such committees and composed the great majority of members (up to 79%). In this capacity, they prepared community

action plans, and managed activities to improve facilities such as tube wells, toilets, drains, footpaths, and streetlights—thus improving the mobility, safety, and security of the most marginalized women.

The effectiveness of the phased approach taken by UGIIP-II in facilitating women's participation and leadership was evident at the time of completion. The project resulted in the formation of the following:<sup>29</sup>

- 47 gender committees with at least 33% women members, headed by WWCs and comprising all WWCs, two men ward councilors, and one *pourashava* staff member;
- municipal standing committees, with 40% women's participation;
- 202 slum improvement committees headed by women (as committee chair in the majority of cases or as co-chair) and with 79% women members (1,989 women);
- 1,574 primary groups with only poor slum women members;
- TLCCs, with more than 33% women's participation (785 out of 2,350 members);
- WLCCs headed by men and women councilors, with about 40.75% women's participation (1,928 out of 4,731 members); and
- community-based organizations (CBOs) led by men and women ward councilors, with 34% women's participation (7,140 of 21,000 members).

A recent LGED publication reports the following comment from a woman:

In earlier days, I never thought of getting [an] audience [with] the mayor and councilors, let alone [speaking] before them. But TLCC opened [doors] for me by giving me the opportunity to openly speak upon different issues, especially affecting women, and . . . due importance [is] given to my words.<sup>30</sup>

**Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** This GEN project, implemented from July 2014 to June 2020, is building on the gains and lessons from the two previous projects. It has the explicit aim of enhancing the decision-making capacity of women in the *pourashavas*. Amplifying the UGIIP-II experience, the project has switched from the establishment of project-specific gender committees to the creation of more sustainable standing committees on women's and children's affairs (as specified in the Pourashava Ordinance of 2009). At the same time, the project is working to improve the capacity of *pourashava* standing committees to prepare and implement GAPs with *pourashava* budget allocation.<sup>31</sup> By the end of 2015, according to the GAP progress report, the target women's participation had been exceeded in various areas including women's participation in consultations regarding the location of local infrastructure. Similar positive results in women's equitable representation in *pourashava* structures (WLCCs and TLCCs) have been reported.

**Overall analysis.** As these projects demonstrate, establishing quota for women's representation in project-specific or local structures is an element of gender mainstreaming of proven effectiveness, especially when linked to a performance-based system such as the UGIAP. The long-term benefits of this approach to strengthening the structures as well as women's participation are clear. Local structures become more responsive to citizens' needs and demands, and thus more inclusive and efficient. For individual women, participation in decision making, whether as officials or as community members, allows them to exercise their rights as citizens and to influence the decisions of local bodies responsible for services and facilities that directly affect their well-being and that of their family members. The experience gained also has larger effects. For example, the project completion report (PCR) for STIFPP-II concluded that many women beneficiaries were later elected as councilors in the city corporations and *pourashavas*; some also

<sup>29</sup> ADB. 2013. Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia. Proceedings Report from the 2012 Subregional Workshop. Manila. p. xiv.

<sup>30</sup> LGED. 2016. *A Chronicle of Women's Participation and Concomitant Gender Development Activities under UGIIP-II*. Dhaka.

<sup>31</sup> ADB. 2015. *Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project Gender Action Plan Quarterly Progress Report: September–October, 2015*. Dhaka.

became members of local market management committees and intercity trade associations.

The changes the projects have been trying to bring about in increasing women's participation and leadership are substantial, and not obtained or sustained easily, even with the adoption of the GAP and UGIAP requirements. In most projects, gender specialists—at times in collaboration with project staff and mayors—developed different strategies when they perceived women's involvement to be limited or only nominal. These efforts vary from insisting that specific time be allocated for women to speak during TLCC and WLLC meetings and regularly reviewing room arrangements so that women can sit at the front of the room and are not marginalized or ignored, to introducing a format for minutes of meetings so that interventions by women cannot be silenced or brushed aside. Efforts to increase mayors' gender sensitivity also resulted in their proactive promotion of women's roles in local government processes and structures.

## Women's Economic Empowerment

LGED projects implemented with ADB support achieved considerable results in promoting women's economic empowerment, especially for the poorest women, often living in slums. Unfortunately, this area of intervention is not as well documented as that of women's participation and leadership. At the most immediate level, the projects create job opportunities for women within the projects themselves. Most of the projects examined have significant components aimed at reducing women's income poverty.

**Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase 2.** STIFPP-II presents a robust example of a project that promotes women's economic empowerment. This GEN-categorized

project, building on the lessons of STIFPP, was carried out to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty in nine secondary towns by providing a flood-free and secure living environment. Poverty analysis and consultations with women revealed that women headed 7%–30% of the households living in poverty, and that these saw income generation as a priority, alongside flood-proof houses and normal movement year-round.

STIFPP-II had an overall GAP, within the UGIAP framework, and municipality GAPs with strong emphasis on creating employment for women during and after infrastructure construction. Specific assurances included employment targets for women in infrastructure construction and maintenance, and wages equal to those of their male counterparts for work of equal value. STIFPP-II also required contractors to provide day-care facilities for children of women laborers (thus easing the work burden associated with unpaid care), separate toilet and drinking water facilities, and separate shaded areas for men and women workers.<sup>32</sup>

Women's labor contracting societies (LCSs) were set up to employ poor unskilled women for the construction and the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, and for tree planting along riverbanks. Much was achieved in women's employment, beyond their inclusion within project administration staff (of the 91 staff members recruited, 35 were women). By the end of STIFPP-II, 2.3 million labor-days—28% for community women—had been created. However, the PCR warned that, despite the financial benefits of this work, women's employment could increase women's time poverty. This possibility echoes the findings of a 2015 ADB study, which concluded that infrastructure projects rarely have a positive outcome on women's time poverty, despite their potential to do so.<sup>33</sup>

**City Region Development Project.** Unlike, STIFPP-II, the CRDP does not have explicit objectives

<sup>32</sup> S. Rahman. 2013. Improving Economic Opportunities for Poor Urban Women in Secondary Towns of Bangladesh. In ADB. 2013. *Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia*. Proceedings report of the 2012 Subregional Workshop on Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26–28 March 2012. Manila.

<sup>33</sup> ADB. 2015. *Balancing the Burden: Desk Review of Women's Time Poverty and Infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila.

for women’s economic empowerment, but the GAP includes plans to reduce wage inequality between men and women, and to ensure that core labor standards are in place. By June 2015, 25 contractors had received orientation in gender aspects of core labor standards and other gender-related issues in various city corporations and *pourashavas*.

**Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** The UGIIP provided a considerable number of women with employment opportunities. Women filled 11 of 30 staff positions in the Project Management Office, 14 of 111 in the Urban Management Support Unit (UMSU), and 29 of 187 in the Project Implementation Unit, and 15 of the 95 project consultants were women.<sup>34</sup> Microfinance and income-generating activities also benefited women (Box 4). A community-level poverty reduction action plan was developed for each municipality, leading to the formation of 195 community development committees. Within the community development committees, primary groups and savings and credit groups were formed, with about 95% (1,175) women membership. Through weekly savings, the savings and credit group members could set up income-generating activities in tailoring, block batik making, and poultry raising. The PCR estimated that the monthly income of

participating women in the slums rose by 50% as a result of increased employment opportunities.

**Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** This three-phase project was implemented in January 2009–June 2015. In phases 2 and 3, income-generating activities (IGAs) were organized by the gender committees as part of the GAP implementation. The activities included skills development, direct financial support, and provision of material goods. A total of 18,903 women were provided with IGA support and 9,692 of them earned cash income. The PCR concluded that, thanks to these activities, many women were able to contribute to the well-being of their families, including their children’s education.<sup>35</sup> As emphasized in the analysis of gender results in the PCR, women derived benefits in all three areas mentioned in the report: in their earnings and livelihood (from the IGAs and work in slum improvement activities and project-generated construction), in enhanced participation in local decision-making bodies, and in access to women-friendly infrastructure.

**Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** This project includes a GAP with provisions for the hiring of

**Box 4: Microfinance for Women**

**T**he Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project interventions have increased the income of many poor households, including those living in slum areas whose need can be extreme. Mala Rani Dasi is a member of a women-only credit group that helps its members obtain small loans from the *pourashava* of Bhairab under this project. The amount a person receives varies from Tk5,000 (\$60) to Tk50,000 (\$602), depending on the person’s credit record. With the help of the loan and associated training, Mala Rani Dasi has been able to increase her

income from making cleaning stands from thin sticks gathered from coconut leaves. Working with the help of her husband, she now earns about Tk6,000 (\$68) monthly from the sale of the stands, more than the earnings of the average factory worker. She recently took out a larger loan to expand her business and to continue contributing to her household’s livelihood.

Source: ADB. 2012. *The Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project in Bangladesh: Sharing Knowledge on Community-Driven Development*. Manila.

<sup>34</sup> ADB. 2012. *Completion Report: Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project*. Manila.

<sup>35</sup> Project Management Unit. 2015. *Completion Report: Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP II) in Bangladesh*. Draft. 31 July.

women laborers for project-generated construction works, slum improvement activities, training in IGAs, and support, under the *pourashava*-specific GAPs, in channeling funds from *pourashava* revenue to GAP implementation. By January 2016, construction work was already taking place in 10 project municipalities, and women's labor days amounted to 5,088 (28.48%) out of a total of 17,864. Women's rights as workers are safeguarded through the inclusion of clauses bearing on gender-relevant national core labor standards in all bidding documents. Workers' attendance sheets, with details such as name, sex, age, and wage of workers, have also been put in place and made available for inspection as a way of fulfilling the commitment to treat women workers fairly and transparently.

**Overall analysis.** In summary, most of the projects presented here have had a positive impact on women's income poverty. Some of that impact is directly attributable to employment opportunities in project structures and in operation and maintenance; some to microcredit. A decrease in medical expenses due to the declining incidence of diseases also contributes to the financial progress of individual women and their families. Other economic benefits take longer to materialize, as they derive from improvements in urban infrastructure and services that make it easier and safer for women and other community members to reach markets and places of work, and cut the time spent on household tasks. This latter benefit cannot be underestimated, as it helps reduce women's time poverty that is directly due to their care responsibilities within the home. In recognition of this, ADB-financed projects are introducing flexible time for women's involvement in LCSs and infrastructure-related work, and informal arrangements for children of women's workers. However, there is evidence that women's responsibility for housework and other chores are impervious to change, even when they embark on full-time employment, and that much broader and more innovative interventions are therefore required.

Finally, a characteristic common to these projects is their incidental approach to dealing with women's economic security, which tends to be a by-product

of overall project activities rather than being directly intended. In other words, more determined efforts and impact seem to be aimed at getting more women to participate in decision making than at ensuring their economic empowerment. More information about the efforts and their results would contribute greatly to creating a body of knowledge applicable to other projects and other contexts.

## Women-Friendly Infrastructure and Public Spaces

The LGED has a tradition of implementing projects that create the conditions for women to be present and active in public spaces in freedom, dignity, and safety.

**Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase 2.** Most of the investments of STIFPP-II went into the construction of urban infrastructure for flood protection. There was an accompanying clear commitment that improvements made in basic amenities (footpaths, latrines, and community water supplies) would meet women's requirements. This is because damage and disruption caused by floods in water, sanitation, solid waste disposal, and drainage systems and services mostly affect women, both in their role as preservers of the family immediate health and well-being, and in their attempts to satisfy their need for privacy. As part of the project, all urban environmental work—related to solid waste management, provision of sanitary latrines, and slum improvement—involved raising awareness among women and other stakeholders regarding their roles in solid waste management; organizing ward-based rallies to increase awareness of the environment and of the need for improved sanitation and hygiene; promoting women's participation in sanitation programs as motivators; and incorporating a suitable clause in lease deeds for public facilities requiring the inclusion of women in management.



**City Region Development Project.** The CRDP GAP provides for the establishment of 21 public toilet facilities at suitable locations, with separate provisions for women. The works started in 2014 and by June 2015, there was progress in the water supply, sanitation, and drainage subproject in Gazipur, which entailed the construction of two new public toilet buildings consisting of six toilets and one shower in the men’s portion and three toilets and one shower in the women’s portion, as well as the renovation of existing buildings including 27 toilets for men and five toilets for women.

**Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** The establishment and improvement of services, such as separate public toilets, street lighting in slums, spaces allocated for women’s businesses in markets, and toilets and ticket counters at stations, were all part of the implementation of the GAP, and are believed to have increased the well-being and safety of women and their families.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that the PCR devoted more attention to the results related to women’s participation as a key output of the project.

**Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** The results of UGIIP-II show the range of initiatives that have enabled the government to provide safe and dignified spaces for women in usually crowded public environments. The draft PCR by the project management unit<sup>37</sup> summarized some of the results so far: 42 *pourashavas* have created “women’s sections” with dedicated women staff as a one-stop service center for clients who seek municipal services, and 42 *pourashavas* have established a corner room to serve as places where women can rest and breast-feed their infants. These women-friendly facilities were included in the *pourashava*-specific GAPs and used funds generated through *pourashava* “revenue generation,” with funds estimated at Tk151.7 million (\$1.9 million).

Individual *pourashavas* also worked hard to make public areas safe and comfortable for women. In Sreepur, where the rail agency lacked the authority to build a separate waiting area for women inside the station, the project built a space for women outside the building. In Khagrachhari, a road was constructed to ease the movement and safety of college girls. In Bandarban, a women’s toilet was built in the police station; in Jhalokati, the municipality built a *ghatla* (bath steps) for poor women. These achievements were, in some cases, due to the initiative of local CBOs. A CBO intervention is discussed briefly in Box 5.

**Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.** The UGIIP-III is building on the experience of UGIIP-II. Its GAP

#### Box 5: Community-Based Organizations and Women-Friendly Public Spaces

In Mirzapur *pourashava*, a community problem identified by the community-based organization (CBO) Baimhati was the absence of streetlights, which made road travel after dusk difficult and even dangerous for the local inhabitants, especially for women and for students going to and returning home from schools and coaching centers. The CBO members discussed the issue first among themselves, then raised the matter before their ward-level coordination committee and ultimately the mayor. In response, the municipality installed three street lights in the community without undue delay. Thanks to the energetic intervention of the CBO, the streets have become much safer and more comfortable for women and students, as well as for the rest of the local population.

Source: Project Management Unit. 2015. *Completion Report: Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-II) Project in Bangladesh*. Draft. 31 July.

<sup>36</sup> ADB. 2012. *Completion Report: Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project in Bangladesh*. Draft. Manila (Loan 1947-BAN).

<sup>37</sup> Project Management Unit. 2015. *Completion Report: Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project (UGIIP-II) in Bangladesh*. Draft. 31 July.

requires the establishment of a broad range of women-friendly facilities. The quarterly progress report of December 2015 highlighted the creation of separate office space and toilets for WWCs in five municipal buildings, allowing women to work in more pleasant and productive conditions. Eighty percent of the municipalities involved have established well-lit and safe sitting areas and separate toilets for women in public parks. Of the 28 municipalities with bus terminals or stands, 22 now have separate toilets for women, 16 have separate waiting areas, and 15 have separate ticket counters.

## Overall Analysis of the Gender Responsiveness of the Five Projects

In summary, the gender-specific elements adopted in selected LGED urban projects in Bangladesh include the systematic promotion of women's participation in and leadership of both permanent and project specific structures; the creation of work opportunities for women members of LCSs, and their safeguarding as workers; and the use of women-friendly spaces and facilities, including

market corners. Despite the many achievements, however, some weaknesses in design and implementation, and gaps in results, exist, including in some cases an increase in women's time poverty. LGED staff and others interviewed for this study attributed many of these limitations to factors such as the absence or intermittent presence of gender specialists supporting projects, inadequate budget allocation for GAP implementation, or the slow release of funds. These key areas for improvement were also identified in the analysis of gender and social inclusion presented at the ADB subregional workshop in Sri Lanka in 2012.<sup>38</sup>

The importance of the UGIAP to the implementation of GAPs and to the gender results of projects reviewed here cannot be overstated. Furthermore, the introduction of the program helped embed gender provisions in national policy. The 2002 ADB technical assistance for urban governance reform attached to the UGIIP supported the LGED during the period when the Pourashava Ordinance of 2009 was drafted, and identified the provisions for women's participation to be included in the ordinance. The government later passed the Pourashava Act of 2009 and the Executive Order of 2011 incorporating such provisions, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>38</sup> ADB. 2013. *Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia*. Proceedings report of the 2012 Subregional Workshop on Gender and Urban Poverty in South Asia, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26–28 March 2012. Manila.

# Enabling Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming

Enabling mechanisms refer to factors that facilitate gender mainstreaming and contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for gender equality and women’s empowerment. For the urban development projects of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), these refer to different types of resources (human and financial), as well as technical and institutional mechanisms.

A mechanism adopted by the LGED that has been central to its gender results is the creation of a dedicated structure for gender mainstreaming in the LGED—the **Gender and Development (GAD) Forum**. Equally important to gender mainstreaming in the LGED is the existence of an overall **Gender Strategy and Action Plan**. However, interviewees felt that this plan is not sufficiently well known and understood across the LGED, especially at the district level. Interviews also reported that its requirements are applied only to externally supported projects. The government’s development project proposal (DPP) and technical project proposal (TPP)<sup>39</sup> formats still do not cover gender requirements despite the distribution of copies of the Gender Responsive Guidelines for Design and Review of Development Projects (prepared by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs) to all ministries, divisions, and departments. The Asian Development Bank Bangladesh Resident Mission gender team also built the capacity of the project directors, deputy project directors, and gender specialists of different LGED project on the content and use of these guidelines.

Another factor essential to the effective institutionalization of gender mainstreaming and its

positive results is the **adoption of a project-specific gender action plan (GAP)** for each project. However, during the consultations for this stocktaking, GAPs were found only in projects supported by development partners and not in those developed and implemented by the government, which make up 50% of all projects now being implemented in the country.

Another enabling mechanism is the **availability of a sufficient and independent budget**. Funds for activities of the GAD Forum are drawn from the financial and human resources of externally funded projects rather than from the revenue budget, indicating the inadequacy of the gender-responsive budget or its nonexistence. Several interviewees felt that this funding arrangement causes delays, and makes members of the GAD Forum less willing to put forward innovative ideas because they fear being given sole responsibility for their realization.

Gender support for the urban projects covered comes from different sources, such as Asian Development Bank staff, LGED focal points (with funding from revenue budgets), and gender consultants recruited for the projects. More importantly, the **technical gender expertise** of the 25 members of the GAD Forum is limited, and so is the time they can devote to gender-specific tasks, despite their evident commitment.

**Project gender specialists** have different and important roles, such as influencing project design and implementation; changing attitudes within the LGED, among municipal staff, and communities;

<sup>39</sup> The Planning Unit is responsible for preparing and revising the proposal formats and for submitting the recommended formats to its administrative ministry (the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, through its Local Government Division) for further processing and approval.

encouraging women in the communities to be involved in the projects and to benefit from them; and contributing to the institutionalization of women-friendly practices. Certain conditions are essential for gender expertise to yield positive results for women. One is the alertness and perseverance of gender specialists and their personal relationships with project and *pourashava* staff. Another is the solid technical expertise of gender specialists, to be deployed consistently and punctually. In practice, some LGED gender focal points may be hampered by inadequate technical preparation and by other demanding project responsibilities. The project completion report for the Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project, for example, attributes the positive outcomes of the project to the fact that the Urban Management Support Unit (UMSU) for the project had the services of a full-time gender specialist, and the field-level facilitator team had a social and gender development expert for 3 years. Unfortunately, not all projects had the same resource. During the two extensions of the Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, the gender specialist was there only in the first 3 years. In the City Region Development Project, the project social

development and gender specialist joined in 2014 for a fixed period of 18 months and only on an intermittent basis.

The organizational characteristics of successful gender mainstreaming include, among others, “good and timely flow of information regarding progress on gender to encourage innovative thinking”<sup>40</sup> through the **establishment of a sex-disaggregated database or management information system**. The LGED has yet to ensure regular reporting by all projects through existing mechanisms, including timely reporting on the GAPs and submission of GAP implementation updates. But even when reporting is regular and timely, the information often remains unprocessed and unused, for lack of resources to make appropriate use of the Gender Information Management System, impeding the analysis of important gender lessons, and their dissemination across LGED, to other departments and ministries, and beyond. Results and lessons from some of the projects studied—especially for the LGED’s work in building women’s leadership and participation—are being documented, but mostly for externally-supported interventions, and not for government-funded work.

<sup>40</sup> ADB. 2009. *Institutionalizing Gender Mainstreaming: The Experience of the Bangladesh Resident Mission*. p. 9. Manila.

# Summary and Recommendations

The previous section describes the extent to which the key requirements of gender mainstreaming can be found in selected urban projects implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), and summarizes some of the positive results of such mainstreaming and the gaps that persist.<sup>41</sup> The positive results are attributed to supportive policies, a number of project-level practices, and technical and institutional enabling mechanisms adopted. While the most effective practices at the project level are the mandatory use of project gender action plans (GAPs), and the systematic deployment of technically sound gender specialists, the significant impact has stemmed from the LGED's own understanding of gender mainstreaming and commitment of LGED senior management. At its best, this partnership has led to the institutionalization of key practices as formal policies or instruments. The most effective technical and institutional mechanisms, besides the personal commitment and sustained leadership of LGED senior managers and gender specialists from both the LGED and ADB, are the LGED's Gender Forum and its Gender Strategy and Action Plan.

Despite its considerable achievements, for effective gender mainstreaming, the following gaps have been identified by the stocktaking:

- Insufficient use of reliable revenue budgets for project-specific activities and for the Gender and Development (GAD) Forum. Current reliance on external budgets lead to delays and stymied innovation in gender mainstreaming;

- Need for dedicated gender staff with suitable credentials in the GAD Forum, to guide the implementation of the Gender Strategy, including reporting and the extraction and dissemination of lessons using GIMS; and
- Need to prioritize gender mainstreaming in government-funded urban (or other) projects not supported by ADB and other development partners. While it is recognized that “the availability of donor funding for gender-related projects has created an incentive for the Bangladeshi state to promote the gender and development agenda,”<sup>42</sup> there are implications for both the immediate benefits to women's status and well-being, and for the sustainability of all its gender efforts.

Given these findings and to bolster the considerable investments and results the LGED has made so far, the following recommendations are offered to the LGED:

## Policies Supporting Gender Mainstreaming

- Strengthen the gender aspects of urban development policies or their implementation guidelines to ensure that (i) dedicated gender focal persons are designated in the LGED and in every

<sup>41</sup> It was beyond the scope of this stocktaking exercise to analyze gender practices within the LGED as an institution—gender differences in recruitment, career opportunities, working conditions, and culture—although some of these elements (for example, women-friendly facilities) are included in the analysis.

<sup>42</sup> S. Nazneen and M. Sultan. 2011. *Mobilising for Women's Rights and the Role of Resources: Synthesis Report Bangladesh*. pp. 14–15. BDI and Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute. [http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pathwaysofempowerment-org-production/downloads/mobilising\\_for\\_women\\_s\\_rights\\_and\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_resources\\_originalf04d79c1bfb520aaa2991e64d7a3414.pdf](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pathwaysofempowerment-org-production/downloads/mobilising_for_women_s_rights_and_the_role_of_resources_originalf04d79c1bfb520aaa2991e64d7a3414.pdf)

relevant urban development project, (ii) a GAP is formulated for every project, and (iii) a gender-specific budget is allocated from the revenue budget to contribute to the sustained implementation of the LGED Gender Strategy and Action Plan.

- Integrate gender into the DPP and TPP formats using the Gender Responsive Guidelines for Design and Review of Development Projects prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and pilot-test and monitor their use in government-funded projects.
- Create an enabling environment for the full implementation of gender-responsive urban development policies.
- Develop the steps necessary for the LGED to introduce a gender categorization system for projects at the entry, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages, similar to the project gender categorization system of ADB.

## Local Government Engineering Department Institutions and Human Resources for Gender Mainstreaming

- Designate permanent and dedicated staff in the LGED for gender mainstreaming work funded from the revenue budget in the context of the improvements already recommended in the functioning of the gender-responsive budgeting mechanism.
- Create an additional pool of gender experts to provide specialized input to other sectors and projects of the LGED, as needed.
- Develop the capacity of LGED officials and staff at the central and district levels to mainstream gender in development projects.

- Complement the current effort with an organizational gender audit of the LGED, looking at practices and systems (recruitment, career path, gender capacities, organizational culture and work environment), including funding mechanisms for the GAD Forum.

## Programs and Projects for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

- Design and implement projects to promote the employment of skilled women workers and labor contracting societies, without worsening women's time poverty and adding to their care responsibilities.
- Complement the current effort with similar analyses of government-funded projects.
- Complement this effort with an analysis across projects in the remaining LGED sectors (rural and small-scale water infrastructure), to obtain a more comprehensive view of the status of gender mainstreaming and to identify ways forward in gender mainstreaming practices tailored to the sector characteristics and needs.

## Enabling Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming in Local Government Engineering Department Projects

- Maximize the opportunities offered by the Gender Information Management System to process and analyze project gender data.
- Carry out a periodic (every 3 years) review of gender mainstreaming in all projects, to monitor progress.

- Allocate a budget for the implementation of the LGED Gender Strategy and Action Plan and for the implementation of the GAP for each project.
  - Mobilize financial and human resources to document gender mainstreaming efforts and results in the areas of women's economic empowerment (including the role of labor contracting societies) and women-friendly public facilities and services (including their sustainable management) of LGED projects.
  - Generate funds to support the GAD Forum.
- Develop and implement a communication plan for better dissemination of best gender mainstreaming practices within and across sectors.
  - Complement the current effort with an assessment of the gender mainstreaming approaches, initiatives, and results of LGED projects supported by other development partners, e.g., the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

# APPENDIX 1

# Gender Features of Five Urban Development Projects Studied

Project	GAP Prepared	ADB Gender Specialist Assigned	LGED Gender Specialist Assigned	Women's Leadership and Participation	Women's Employment (and LCS)	Microfinance	Women-Friendly Infrastructure
Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project, July 2005–June 2012	Yes	Yes, with support from BRM Gender Team	Yes, intermittent assignment for initial 3 years	All <i>pourashavas</i> had WWCs in the TLCC and in standing committees  Many women beneficiaries became local leaders, and were elected as councilors in the <i>pourashavas/city corporations</i>	38% of project staff members were women  25% of job opportunities were for women  Women and men were paid equal wages for the same type of work and safety standards were adhered to	Microfinance arrangements were established with primary group members  A total of 1,888 women and 10 men had access to microfinancing from own savings	16 public toilets designed according to women's needs and concerns
City Region Development Project, July 2011–December 2016	Yes	Yes, with support from BRM Gender Team	Yes, Social Development and Gender Specialist assigned for 18 months on intermittent basis	By December 2015, women were 62% of the members of TLCCs and 40% of WLCC members	Inclusion of relevant clauses in the bid document to ensure compliance with core labor standards and payment of equal wage for equal work for women and men	GAP had provisions for public toilets to be created at suitable locations, with separate facilities for women	
Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project, August 2003–December 2010	Yes	Yes, with support from BRM Gender Team	Yes, in the Urban Management Support Unit Field-level facilitator team included a Social and Gender Development expert for 3 years to support GAP Implementation.	Women made up 34% of TLCC, 41% of WLCC members, and 40% of standing committee representatives participation in maintenance for tube wells, 50% for public toilets	268 women recruited in 28 project <i>pourashavas</i>  100% women's maintenance for tube wells, 50% for public toilets	Tk211.54 million distributed as microcredit to 24,900 urban poor women  52.5% of recipients ran small businesses, 24.7% were in poultry and cattle rearing, and 17.5% in small-scale enterprises	PMU issued guidelines and instructions for addressing women's needs in infrastructure

continued on next page



Appendix 1 table continued

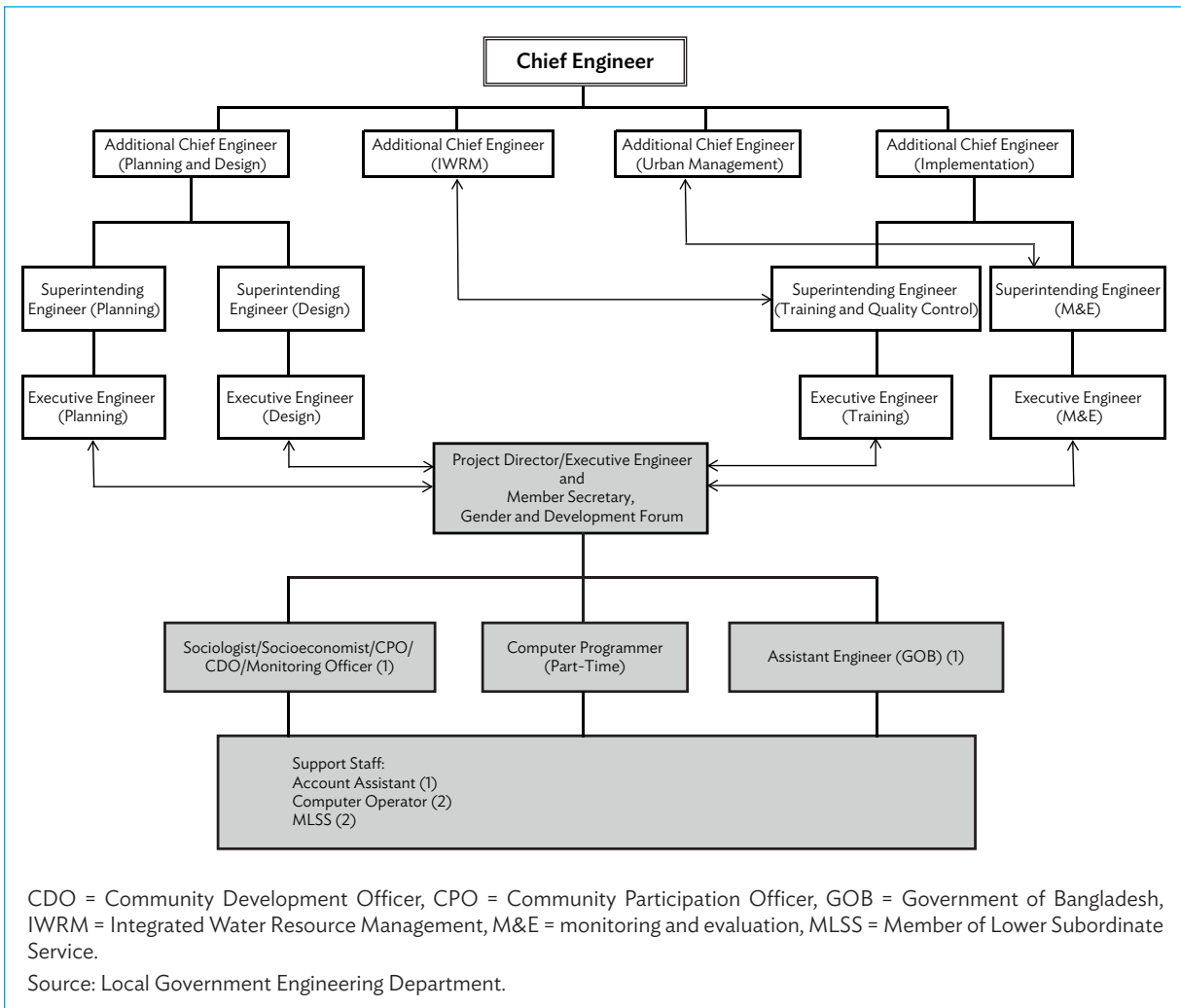
Project	GAP Prepared	ADB Gender Specialist Assigned	LGED Gender Specialist Assigned	Women's Leadership and Participation	Women's Employment (and LCS)	Microfinance	Women-Friendly Infrastructure
Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project, January 2009–June 2015	Yes	Yes, with support from BRM Gender Team	Yes, during the entire project period, to support PMU	<p>Pourashava development plans prepared with 35% women's participation</p> <p>Women participated in rallies and courtyard meetings headed by WWC</p> <p>Mayors and men councilors worked effectively with WWCs and women members of different committees</p>	Employment opportunities for women in construction work (29%) and as staff or consultant (17%)	In slum areas, women's savings groups received loans with no or very low interest rates	<p>Separate toilets and rest areas for women in markets and train stations</p> <p>Separate counters and waiting areas at bus terminals</p>
Third Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project, July 2014–June 2020	Yes	Yes, with support from BRM Gender Team	Two Gender Specialists and a Gender Focal Point supporting the PMU in GAP implementation throughout the project period	<p>40% women's representation in WLCCs, and 33% in TLCCs</p> <p>40% women's representation in Women and Children Affairs (WCA) Standing Committee and in Poverty Reduction and Slum Improvement (PRSI) standing committees</p>	<p>Bidding documents include hiring of women in construction and O&amp;M</p> <p>Core labor standards, including equal wage for women and men for work of equal value, to be ensured</p>		<p>Separate toilets and office space for women councilors in municipalities, and separate waiting areas and toilets for women in bus terminals, etc.</p>

ADB = Asian Development Bank, BRM = (ADB's) Bangladesh Resident Mission, GAP = gender action plan, LCS = labor contracting society, LGED = Local Government Engineering Department, O&M = operation and maintenance, PMU = project management unit, TLCC = town-level coordination committee, WLCC = ward-level coordination committee.

Source: ADB consultant.

## APPENDIX 2

# Local Government Engineering Department Organization Chart



## **Institutionalizing Gender Equality**

### *Urban Development Experience of the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department*

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports the institutionalization of gender equality in government agencies to enhance their gender-responsiveness and sustainability of gender equality results. The Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is a trailblazer in mainstreaming gender equality in its policies, systems, and programs. This has resulted in women's greater benefit from ADB-assisted projects and in their increased participation in decision making for inclusive urban development. This report presents the results of a stocktaking of LGED's gender mainstreaming practices particularly in ADB-financed urban development projects. Find out more about the lessons identified and recommendations offered to enhance LGED's approaches to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

### **About the Asian Development Bank**

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to a large share of the world's poor. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.



**ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City

1550 Metro Manila, Philippines

[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)