

CASE STUDY

# Women in Charge of Urban Growth



Women in a number of pourashavas in Bangladesh participate in the improvement efforts in their communities. Photo credit: ADB. *Empowered women in Bangladesh are taking the lead in bringing much needed urban improvements.*

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## Overview

Unplanned and rapid urbanization creates large unmet demand for urban infrastructure and services. A number of pourashavas or secondary towns in Bangladesh have not managed to meet this challenge because of weak governance, limited financial and human resources, and lack of proper planning.

In 2008, Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported urban development in Bangladesh with a series of projects targeting pourashavas. The results showed that urban infrastructure and service delivery can be improved more effectively through governance reforms.

## Project snapshot

### Dates

- **28 October 2008:** Approval Date
- **29 October 2016:** Close Date

<b>Cost</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>US\$ 87.00 million:</b> Amount of Loan from ADB</li> <li>• <b>US\$ 4.70 million:</b> Grant (w/ LoA) from Germany</li> <li>• <b>US\$ 36.10 million:</b> Grant from KfW Bankengruppe</li> </ul>
<b>Institutions and Stakeholders</b>	<p><b>Financing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Asian Development Bank</u></li> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• KfW Bankengruppe</li> </ul> <p><b>Executing agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government Engineering Department, People's Republic of Bangladesh</li> </ul>

## Development Challenges

A number of Bangladesh's pourashavas suffer from poor sanitation, inadequate drinking water, unsafe streets and alleys, and the misuse of already limited resources. Likewise, several have no capacity to generate sufficient revenues.

## Context

These towns are home to about 40% of the country's urban population and are an alternative destination to Dhaka, Chittagong, and Khulna. They have the potential to ease the pressure on resources and infrastructure in these bigger cities. This is why the development of pourashavas is very important for Bangladesh, especially with the predicted influx of people to urban areas over the next five decades.

## Solution

ADB's Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-2) is working with these pourashavas to produce sound and balanced urban development and addressing infrastructure improvements while ensuring better, participatory urban governance.

### Performance-based fund allocation strategy

This project followed a performance-based fund allocation strategy under the Urban Governance Improvement Action Program (UGIAP), which considers women's active participation in the development process as a vital requirement to establishing good governance. It aimed for six key results:

- citizen awareness and participation;
- women's participation;

- integration of the urban poor;
- urban planning;
- financial accountability and sustainability; and
- administrative urban transparency.

## Phased approach

UGIIP-2 was implemented in phases, each phase with more stringent performance requirements than the previous one.

At the initial phase, pourashavas were required to form community-based organizations, encourage women's active participation, and produce gender action plans to be integrated into the pourashava's development plan, among other requirements.

In the subsequent phases, they were required to allocate up to 2%–3% of their total revenue budget to implement gender action plans.

This approach fostered a culture of responsiveness and accountability towards good governance while creating tangible development impacts.

## Actual Outcomes

### Women's active participation

UGIIP-2 emphasized the qualitative aspects of women's participation and ensured that women were given increased opportunities to discuss their needs. Women's opinions were noted in meeting resolutions and considered in decision making. As a result, women became more vocal about their concerns and roles, and effectively participated in the formation of community-based organizations, town- and ward-level coordination committees, gender committees, and slum improvement committees. Some of them even chair these committees.

Now, more than ever, they are taking part in decision-making processes in the community.

### More in the pipeline

Drawing from the lessons from the first UGIIP, implemented from 2003 to 2010 that supported 33 pourashavas, UGIIP-2 was implemented from 2009 to 2015 and supported 51. UGIIP-3, approved in 2014 is now being implemented in 30 pourashavas until 2020. Plans for additional financing to further scale-up UGIIP-3 are expected.

## Lessons

Using governance performance as basis

Allocation of investment funds on the basis of governance performance is an effective approach to introduce good policies and practices at local levels without much controversy and motivate local governments to improve public services.

Pourashavas that met the requirements under the UGIAP now had the workings of good governance that made them prime examples for other municipalities. Those that did not meet the requirements within the given timeframe were excluded.

## Citizen involvement

Complete representation of citizens (both men and women) in pourashava planning and development helps establish transparent decision making and improve the quality of works.

## Design and monitoring

Good design and robust monitoring framework are keys to successful implementation of a complex, multi-component project.

# Resources

Asian Development Bank. *Bangladesh: Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement (Sector) Project.*

ADB. *Transforming Poor Communities, Changing Lives in Bangladesh.*



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Md. Shahidul Alam administers several ADB-assisted loans/projects for the urban and agriculture sectors. Prior to his role at ADB Bangladesh Resident Mission, he served for 10 years in various capacities at the Public Works Department of the Bangladesh Civil Service Cadre. He also worked as contract management and monitoring engineer at Sir William Halcrow and Partners. He holds a master's degree in Software & Information Systems Engineering from the University of Technology Sydney and an MBA from the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University.

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