



World Bank Supports Bangladesh in Strengthening Delivery of Urban Services and Quality of Higher Education

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DHAKA, February 10, 2014 - The government of Bangladesh today signed two financing agreements totaling \$535 million with the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessional arm: \$410 million for the Municipal Governance and Services Project and \$125 million in additional financing for the ongoing Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project. The Municipal Governance and Services Project aims to improve the municipal governance and basic urban services in the urban local bodies located along growth corridors from Dhaka towards Chittagong, Rangpur, Sylhet, and Mymensingh. The project aims to benefit some 3.4 million people in municipalities across the country, of whom 45% will be women. Through a demand-driven approach, the project will build roads, water and sanitation systems, markets, bus terminals, and municipal services centers in these communities. Further, the project will strengthen the urban local bodies to be able to undertake immediate response operations in times of major emergencies. The innovative design of the project includes a performance-based evaluation and allocation system that will reward well performing urban local bodies with additional investment funds. Performance of the local bodies will be measured by improvements in governance, participatory planning, capital investment planning, financial management, and revenue enhancement. "Bangladesh's vision for becoming a middle income country is ambitious, but not impossible. To achieve this goal, it will need to boost its competitiveness and grow at an even faster pace than the last decade, said Johannes Zutt, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh. "With nearly one-third of the population living in urban centers, they can become the engine of growth if local urban bodies are able to deliver essential services and make cities livable and if they have access to quality education that empowers them to lead productive lives. The additional financing to the ongoing Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project that started in 2009 will continue to support enhancement of quality and relevance of higher education. The project aims to introduce innovation, accountability and better research facilities in public and private universities. The additional financing will continue to promote academic innovation through a competitive funding mechanism, known as the Academic Innovation Fund. The project has already awarded 194 academic innovation funds to 27 public and two private universities. The Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-15) has emphasized addressing service delivery deficiency in local urban bodies as well as creating a knowledge society by producing skilled tertiary education graduates, said Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Government of Bangladesh. "Both the projects will ultimately boost economic growth of the country. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Secretary, Economic Relations Division and Johannes Zutt, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Nepal, signed on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank respectively at the External Relations Division. The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessional lending arm, has 40 years to maturity, including a 10-year grace period; and carries a service charge of 0.75%. In Dhaka Mehryn Ahmed Mahbub: +880-2 8159001; mmahbub@worldbank.org In Washington Gabriela Aguilar: +1-202 473-8955; gaguilar2@worldbank.org

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