

50
YEARS

Bangladesh and The World Bank

A Journey
Together





50 YEARS



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Photo ©: Suman Paul/Drik/World Bank









FOREWORD

Bangladesh has shown the world that with sheer determination, innovative programs, and visionary leadership, it is possible to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Today, the country is an example of successful development and sustained growth.

At Independence in 1971, Bangladesh was one of the world's poorest countries. Just five decades later, it is among the fastest-growing economies in the world. It has reduced poverty in record time, and its people are living longer and healthier lives. Almost all children—girls and boys—go to school. Its story of women's empowerment is an inspiration for other countries.

A recognized 'climate pioneer', Bangladesh has been at the forefront of adaptation and disaster preparedness, even as it faces challenges from its extreme vulnerability to climate change. With roads connecting the most remote corners, electricity reaching almost all homes, and more jobs created by a vibrant private sector, Bangladesh is a development success story that offers lessons for many others.

The World Bank was one of the country's first development partners. This partnership began with a \$50 million credit to the young nation in 1972 and in the ensuing years, the World Bank has committed more than \$37 billion in financing to help Bangladesh overcome barriers to growth and development.

Our partnership is strong and dynamic, and we have learned from each other. Today, Bangladesh has the largest ongoing program of the International Development Association (IDA)—the World Bank Group's concessional financing arm—and the World Bank is the country's largest external funder.

We are proud to have been part of the country's extraordinary journey over the past 50 years. This book gives a glimpse of that journey, through inspiring photographs that show the indomitable energy and resilience of the people of Bangladesh. Bangladesh's development journey is not complete. The country's citizens are working hard to ensure a better, brighter future for their children. I look forward to our continued collaboration towards the goal of green, resilient, and inclusive growth that will benefit future generations.

Martin Raiser
Vice President
South Asia Region
The World Bank





DOWN MEMORY LANE

The World Bank in Bangladesh

1972-2022

1971



1971

Bangladesh gains Independence.

1972 - 1980



**1972
(January)**

First meeting between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

1975

First health and population project approved.

1979

First energy project approved.

1980

First afforestation project approved.

**1972
(August)**

Bangladesh becomes a member of IMF and the World Bank (IBRD and IDA).

1980

First primary education project approved.

**1972
(October)**

4 projects totaling \$59 million that were approved before Independence were reactivated.

1980

First water sector project approved.

**1972
(November)**

The World Bank approved the first credit, a \$50 million project to Bangladesh.

1981 - 1990



1988

First project for the development of rural roads approved.

1989

Export Development Project approved.

1990

World Bank President Conable visited Bangladesh.

1991 - 2000



1993

Flagship stipend program to increase female enrollment in secondary school approved.

1994

Project for Bangabandhu Bridge over Jamuna River approved.

1997

World Bank President Wolfensohn visited Bangladesh.



2001 - 2010



2002

First renewable energy project approved.

2002

First public procurement reform project approved.

2005

World Bank President Wolfowitz visited Bangladesh.

2006

First project for local governance approved.

2007

World Bank President Zoellick visited Bangladesh.

2009

World Bank yearly commitment for the first time crossed \$1 billion.

2011 - 2022



2011

Project to develop reliable National ID system approved.

2013

Safety Nets System for the Poorest project approved.

2015

Bangladesh achieves Lower-Middle Income Country status.

2016

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim visited Bangladesh for End Poverty Day.

2018

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim visited & pledged about half a billion grant support for the displaced Rohingya & local communities.

2020

Emergency support for COVID-19 response and vaccination approved.

2022

Regional Trade and Connectivity in South Asia.

2013

First project to reinforce coastal embankment approved.

2015

World Bank yearly commitment reaches about \$2 billion.

2018

World Bank yearly commitment reaches \$2.99 billion.



The first meeting between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the visiting World Bank President Robert McNamara at the Prime Minister's official residence in Dhaka. The meeting was also attended by IPM Cargil, director of Asia department of IBRD, Tajuddin Ahmed, Minister of Finance and Planning, Government of Bangladesh. A spokesperson of the Prime Minister's secretariat described the meeting as 'very satisfactory,' as reported in newspapers. January 31, 1972.

Photo ©: The Bangladesh Observer, February 1, 1972/ Bangladesh on Record



On August 17, 1972, Bangladesh became a member of The World Bank Group. Present at the signing of the Articles of Agreement of IDA held at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C. were, from left to right: Mr. A.M.A. Muhith, Economic Minister, Embassy of Bangladesh; Mr. Aron Broches, General Counsel, The World Bank and IDA; Mr. U.K. Ghoshal (Standing), Assistant to the Secretary, World Bank and IDA; Mr. S.A. Karim, Charge d’Affaires, Embassy of Bangladesh; Mr. I.P.M. Cargill, Director, South Asia Department, World Bank and IDA. Photo ©: World Bank Group/Giuseppe Franchini



On November 30, 1972, Bangladesh and the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank, signed the first credit to the country, a \$50 million reconstruction program credit. The funds, used primarily in the agricultural, industrial, transport and telecommunications sectors, worked to finance imports vitally needed to restore productive capacity and increase output. The World Bank also reactivated four projects undertaken before Bangladesh's Independence. Among those present at the signing of the credit documents were, from left to right: Mr. A.R. Choudhury, First Secretary, Embassy of Bangladesh; Mr. William Diamond, Director, Country Programs Department II - Asia Region - of IDA; Mr. S.R. Sen, Executive Director of IDA for Bangladesh; and Mr. A.M.A. Muhith, Alternate Executive Director of IDA for Bangladesh. Photo ©: World Bank Group/Edwin G. Huffman



(Top) World Bank President Robert McNamara meets with Minister of Finance and Planning and Governor for Bangladesh, Tajuddin Ahmed, and the Alternate Executive Director of IDA for Bangladesh, AMA Muhith, during the Annual Meetings in Washington, D.C. September 29, 1974. Photo ©: World Bank Archives



(Left) World Bank President Robert McNamara and his wife Margaret McNamara visited a silo in Narayanganj built with the World Bank support to help improve food security. November 1976. Photo ©: World Bank Archives



Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets with visiting World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn. October 15, 1997.
Photo ©: World Bank Archives

EDUCATING
for **A BETTER**
future



The schoolgirls are standing in front of their primary school in a remote island. Today, over 97 percent children in Bangladesh enroll in primary schools. Char Fasson, Bhola. Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank



Bangladesh is one of the first and the few developing countries to achieve gender parity in school enrollments and has more girls than boys in secondary schools. An innovative school stipend program, now replicated in other countries, helped Bangladesh bring poor rural girls to secondary schools. Photo ©: Scott Wallace/World Bank



Ananda Schools (School of Joy) in the poorest Upazilas and in slums brought back about 735,000 disadvantaged children to primary education who missed schooling or dropped out due to poverty. Ruma and her friends had a second chance for education and could continue to secondary school. Sujat Nagar slum, Dhaka. Photo ©: Dominic Chavez/World Bank



By enhancing coverage and quality, and boosting opportunities for research and collaboration, Bangladesh is improving tertiary education and creating globally competitive professionals. Photo ©: Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan/World Bank



Mahmuda Akther Maya surprised many when she enrolled in a technical and vocational course on driving and auto mechanics. Now she works as a driver. The government provided stipends to over 40,000 female students like Maya to acquire different industry-relevant skills. Panchagarh. Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank

ACHIEVING
food **SECURITY**



More than half the population in Bangladesh is employed in the agriculture sector. Photo ©: Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan/World Bank





Even with a large population and limited arable land, Bangladesh achieved food security in the past few decades. Food grain production has tripled between 1972 and 2014, from 9.8 to 34.4 million tons. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



More than half of agricultural labor in Bangladesh are made up of women. Photo ©: Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan/World Bank



By promoting sustainability of farmer groups and providing linkages for smallholder farmers' access to markets, Bangladesh has increased farm productivity and reduced post-harvest losses. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



Modern food storage system helps ensure food security immediately after a natural disaster. Bangladesh is constructing state-of-the-art steel silo complexes in eight strategic locations that will have a combined storage of 535,500 metric tons of rice and wheat. Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria District. Photo ©: Mehrin Ahmed Mahbub/World Bank



Reviving a 200-year-old farming practice known as floating bed agriculture helps smallholder farmers adapt to climate change. Barishal. Photo ©: K M Asad/World Bank



Around 2 million household farmers, small and medium-scale agro-entrepreneurs received support to improve poultry and livestock production sustainably, with higher productivity and better market access. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



Bangladesh ranks as the third largest producer of fish from inland open waters in the world, and with one-fifth of the world's aquaculture production centered in the country. More than 1.4 million women work in this sector. Photo ©: Shutterstock

BUILDING
a **HEALTHY**
nation







(Previous Page) The core to Bangladesh's success in maternal and child health is its commitment to deliver health care services across the country, such as this hospital in Kurigram where the neonatal unit is equipped with incubators and uninterrupted oxygen supply lines. Birth expectancy has increased from 46 years in 1972 to more than 72 years in 2019. Assisted deliveries by skilled birth attendance, increased from 5 percent in 1991 to 32 percent in 2011, which helped to significantly reduce maternal and child mortality. Kurigram. Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank

(Top) Maternal mortality rate has reduced from 574 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 173 per 100,000 live births in 2017. Photo ©: Asiatic



Ensuring nutrition prenatally and in the early years of life helps maximize a child's brain development and health. About 600,000 poorest mothers receive payment using electronic cash cards in exchange for participating in activities aimed to improve their children's nutrition and cognitive development, including visits to community clinics to measure height and weight of their children and regular health checkup for expectant mothers. Kanthali Union, Jaldhaka, Nilphamari, Rangpur.

Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank



Today, over 85 percent of children are fully immunized and 80 percent receive Vitamin A supplements.
Photo ©: Asiatic



The Bangladesh government responded fast to the COVID-19 crisis. The World Bank was the first development partner to support the national vaccination program and helped to administer 68 million doses of vaccines. Photo ©: Shutterstock

REDUCING
climate VULNERABILITIES
& **CONSERVING**
nature



Once a country with catastrophic death tolls from cyclones, Bangladesh has become a world leader in coastal resilience. Since 1972, it has reduced cyclone related deaths by 100-fold. The World Bank helped rehabilitate over 700 km of embankments to safeguard against storm and tidal surges, saline intrusion, and coastal erosion. Here, in Shoronkhola, an embankment also provides a scenic retreat for the local community. Shoronkhola, Khulna. Photo ©: Habibul Haque/Drik/World Bank



An extensive network of multipurpose cyclone shelters that operate as primary schools in normal weather play an instrumental role in saving lives, livestock, and assets during cyclones. For people living on the frontline of climate change, like this multipurpose cyclone shelter in Bhorsakathi, it has given them the hope for a better education for their children and become a safe haven during cyclones. Wazirpur, Barisal. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



Healthy forests are critical for reducing poverty, and for shielding communities from storms and cyclones. Here, Shipa Rani Das from Cox's Bazar is working in an afforestation program. With alternative income generating activities, Shipa and her neighbors have reduced their dependencies on forest resources, and increased earning have helped them turn around their lives.

Photo ©: Forest Department



Bangladesh is among the 13 tiger-range countries where tigers still roam in the wild. The country has taken steps to conserve its forests and wildlife including the tigers. The World Bank supported the Forest Department to carry out census of the Royal Bengal tiger population in Sundarbans, using digital infrared cameras for the first time in Bangladesh during November 2013–early 2015. This image was captured by an infrared camera during the census. According to 2015 Tiger Census, the total tiger population was 106, which increased to 114 by 2018. Photo ©: Forest Department

COMPETING
in **A GLOBAL**
economy



Bangladesh is the world's second largest exporter of readymade garments after China. The industry also tells an excellent story of women empowerment; 80 percent of its workers are female. Here, rural women from northern districts are being trained at the Export Processing Zone training center in Savar, Dhaka. Photo ©: Dominic Chavez/World Bank





Agent banking has been gaining momentum in recent years to provide banking and financial services to unbanked and underserved people, especially in rural areas. Local agents like Sanda Saha represent thousands of women who have entered the workforce and are helping rural women gain access to finance. Photo ©: Habibul Haque/Drik/World Bank



Export diversification will help Bangladesh boost growth and job creation. Bangladesh is currently the third largest exporter of bicycles to the European Union. Here, in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone, an employee works at the first export-oriented bicycle producing factory in the country. Photo ©: Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan/World Bank



Female labor force participation has gone up from 26.6 percentage to more than 36 percentage in less than two decades.
Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



Economic Zones are creating thousands of jobs and are attracting private investments. Photo ©: K M Asad/World Bank



Bangladesh is among the top 10 countries in terms of income from freelancing. Thousands of men and women receive training, and many of them benefit from free courses offered by the government. Photo ©: K M Asad/World Bank



In Chittagong Port, the World Bank has helped to construct two multipurpose berths suitable for servicing general cargo and container vessels. Chittagong Port. Photo ©: The World Bank

PROTECTING
VULNERABILITIES for a **BETTER**
tomorrow



As part of a conditional cash transfer program that reaches 600,000 of the country's poorest mothers, each enrolled beneficiary draws a cash payment from a 'Jawtno card' which is biometrically enabled to serve as her beneficiary ID. Photo ©: K M Asad/World Bank



Mothers like Sufia Khatoon, living in 43 of the poorest upazilas with high child malnutrition rates, receive BDT 5,000 every three months for participating in special sessions. They learn how to improve the nutrition and brain development of their young children and have additional income to act on that learning. Sufia also spent a portion of the money to buy and raise chickens. She can now regularly provide eggs to her child, besides increasing her earning potential, too. Photo ©: K M Asad/Drik/World Bank



Bangladesh's first social registry - the National Household Database - has supported the full-scale adoption of digital payments for over 10 million poor and vulnerable elderly, widows, and persons-with-disabilities. Photo ©: Arne Hoel/World Bank

ENSURING
ACCOUNTABILITY for
EFFECTIVE SERVICE
delivery



Here, Saleha Begum, a Union Parishad Member is making sure that a wall will be constructed around the local school adjacent to the highway to keep children safe from speeding vehicles. Since 2011, all Union Parishads have been receiving annual block grants with full discretion to deliver local services. The Union Parishad women members decide and manage 30 percent of funds and schemes. Dhamrai. Photo ©: Shehab Uddin/World Bank



Community-driven approaches are empowering the poorest villagers, especially the rural women to prioritize and implement solutions to their local needs. This has led to construction of roads; culverts, drainage, and embankment systems; water and sanitation facilities and others. Photo ©: Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan/World Bank



Satellite townships like Narayanganj are better connected through the restored Baburail canal, roads and solar-powered streetlights as part of improving basic urban services and municipal governance. Narayanganj. Photo ©: Suman Paul/Drik/World Bank



The roll out of electronic government procurement (e-GP) reduced average tender processing time by 43 days and saved about \$1 Billion annually, enough money to build over 10,000 km of rural roads or 8,000 primary schools. Moreover, community members in 48 upazilas monitor the quality of the contract implementation. Here, members of the community are overseeing if the road is being built as per specification. Photo ©: BRAC Institute of Governance and Development



The City Corporations and Pourashavas are responsible for providing basic urban services, such as roads, drains, streetlights, municipal markets, transport terminals and others. A new paved road with signs and demarcations was built using e-gp system in response to local need. With improved connectivity and climate resilient roads, the local people can easily access schools, hospitals, and markets. Gazipur. Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank

POWERING UP
for **GROWTH**



Indoor air pollution is one of the leading causes of morbidity. More than 1.6 million improved cookstoves are reducing indoor pollution and carbon emission. Moreover, a vast network of entrepreneurs emerged, and hundreds of jobs were created.

Photo ©: IDCOL



Bangladesh has one of the largest off-grid domestic solar program in the world which has enabled 20 million Bangladeshis to access electricity. In addition, 867 solar irrigation pumps are benefiting 300,000 farmers who water their fields and now their expenditures are cut down by half. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank



In the remote island of Char Dorta, access to renewable electricity means markets can remain open and more jobs are available. Char Dorta, Sirajganj district. Photo ©: Suman Paul/Drik/World Bank



State-of-the-art power plants such as Ghorasal Power Plant Unit 4 and others are helping Bangladesh produce sustainable and cleaner electricity. Photo ©: Habibur Haque/Drik/World Bank





Almost all households now have access to electricity. With \$1.8 billion ongoing program in energy, the World Bank is helping Bangladesh enhance generation, transmission, distribution, and renewable energy options. Photo ©: Shehab Uddin/World Bank



To meet the demand of its fast-growing economy, Bangladesh has significantly increased electricity generation capacity in the last decade. Photo ©: Ismail Ferdous/World Bank

SHORTENING DISTANCES



Climate resilient roads are connecting the remotest areas and helping rural people easily reach schools, health facilities and markets.
Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank



Women like Morjina Khatun and her fellow workers got employment opportunities for rural road maintenance work in their neighborhood.
Photo ©: Shehab Uddin/World Bank



(Top) The World Bank helped Bangladesh rehabilitate and maintain 4,383 km of Upazila and Union roads. Better connectivity has been central to Bangladesh's remarkable development journey. Photo ©: K M Asad/World Bank

(Next Page) The 5 km-long **Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge on the Jamuna** river connected east to west, reduced travel time to Dhaka by half, and promoted inter-regional trade and development. Photo ©: Tanvir Murad Topu/World Bank





ENSURING
safe **WATER**



For the first time, Imu Akter has a piped water supply in her home for washing the dishes. Rapid urbanization requires improved infrastructure and water and sanitation systems. The World Bank is helping Bangladesh provide 600,000 people across 30 municipalities access to safe water. Nawabganj upazila, Dhaka. Photo ©: Tapash Paul/Drik/World Bank



The Chittagong Water Supply and Sewage Authority constructed a water treatment plant in Modunaghat to serve the residents across the country's second-largest city, including the slum areas. Water supply rose by 20 times to 3.60 million litres a day in the last decade in Chattogram. Photo ©: World Bank





Not only does everyone in Bangladesh have access to safe water, but the country has also been expanding piped water supply to city slums and low-income areas, as well as rural areas. Here, in Araihasar, Narayanganj, children wash up at the local community piped water supply point. Photo ©: Shilpa Banerji/World Bank

**SUPPORTING
HOST COMMUNITIES
& FORCIBLY
DISPLACED
MYANMAR NATIONALS**



(Top) The World Bank is helping Bangladesh cater to the health, nutrition, and family planning needs of the host communities and displaced Rohingya people until their safe and voluntary return to Myanmar.

The World Bank is helping the Government Bangladesh through a grant financing of \$590 million to address the needs of Rohingya and host communities, including health, learning, social safety nets, and basic service delivery.

24/7 healthcare facilities inside the camps are providing health, nutrition, and family planning services to the displaced Rohingya people. The grant financing is utilized to strengthen the health care system in Cox's Bazar. Photo ©: Tanvir Murad Topu/World Bank



(Top) Fresh food corners around the camps are providing healthy foods to the Rohingya, while also supporting the local farming communities. Kutupalong Camp, Cox’s Bazar. Photo ©: Mehrin Ahmed Mahbub/World Bank

(Bottom) Around 350,000 Rohingya children are learning mathematics, science, and language in more than 1,300 learning centers within the camps. Further, the grant financing helped the local youth in Cox’s Bazar with skills training. Photo ©: UNICEF

(Previous page bottom) Solar-powered mini piped water schemes throughout the camps are helping the displaced Rohingya population get access to safe water. Kutupalong Camp, Cox’s Bazar. Photo ©: World Bank

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**50 years of the World Bank in Bangladesh
1972-2022**

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