

Project Information

- **Country:** Bangladesh
- **Projects:** Preparatory Survey for Dhaka-Chittagong National Highway No. 1 Bridge Construction and Rehabilitation Project (Preparatory Survey)
- **Project Duration:** 2011 - 2013
- **Executing Agency:** Roads and Highways Department, Ministry of Communication

1. Background and Project Summary

In Bangladesh, where the traffic capacity of major roads between Dhaka and other major cities has not kept up with the increase in transport demand due to economic development, one of the essential projects is the improvement of National Highway Route No. 1. Additionally, seismic retrofitting of existing bridges in accordance with current quake-resistance standards has not progressed.

JICA, with the loan request from the Government of Bangladesh, conducted the preparatory survey for construction of a new 2nd Kanchpur Bridge, 2nd Meghna Bridge, and 2nd Gumti Bridge as well as rehabilitation of the existing Kanchpur Bridge, Meghna Bridge, and Gumti Bridge. A survey found that the project would affect a total of 1,013 people, with involuntary relocation of 972 residents and 41 people without relocation.

2. National Highway Projects from the Gender Perspective

New and upgraded national highway projects can result in large social change, such as development of towns and commercial sectors along the highways, improvement of access to markets and social services, and expansion of employment opportunities by enabling easier and faster mobility of people and goods. It is necessary to develop a gender-responsive plan to prevent either creating or widening a gender gap with the projects. Furthermore, in projects that involve resettlement, it is important to make arrangements to listen to and to respect the opinions of women because women are usually more dependent on the surroundings of a residence, i.e. the distance for fetching water and gathering firewood.

In JICA's "Guidelines for Environmental and Social Considerations," gender is one of the items mentioned to be considered for an individual project, as well as others such as HIV/ AIDS. In addition, it is stated that appropriate consideration must be given to vulnerable social groups including women as they are susceptible to environmental and social impacts and they may have little access to the decision-making process within society.

3. Gender-responsive Activities

The following activities are conducted according to the Guidelines for Environmental and Social Consideration.

(1) Survey on Project Areas

a. Women's Situation in the Areas: A female Bangladeshi sociologist conducted research on women's situation in the areas given the sensitive nature of interaction with village women.

b. Public Consultation Exclusively for Women:

A public consultation is included in a preparatory survey. As there is a tradition in these areas that women should be modest, women's opinions might not be heard at the public consultation for both men and women. Thus, a consultation exclusively for women was implemented in addition to that for both men and women. Adequate financial compensation for relocation was the primary need identified for women, as well as for men, for the project. There is another project responding to women's specific needs in plans to install steps from a bridge to a river for utilization of river water as domestic water.

**(2) Impacts to Social Environment and Mitigation Measures**

a. Impacts to Poor Households including Female-headed: As the project involves resettlement, the impact to livelihoods of poor households might be severe. To mitigate the impact, special assistance of a one-time payment additional to the usual compensation to poor households is included in the plan.

b. Salary Gap between Genders: There is a survey that shows that female wages are around 80% of male wages in the construction sector in Bangladesh. As there is a possibility of a salary gap between genders in the project, contractors will monitor payment to workers to check the gap.

c. Spread of HIV/ AIDS: There is an issue of transmission of HIV/ AIDS by inflow of migrant workers. If migrant workers are infected by the disease, they could transmit it to their wives and partners when they go back to their home towns. To reduce the impact of this issue, an HIV/ AIDS awareness campaign to construction workers by NGOs or other organizations shall be implemented.

Planning of projects based on the different living conditions and needs of men and women as well as gender-responsive project implementation are conducted even for large-scale infrastructure projects.