Global Smart City Partnership Program | WORLD BANK GROUP

# Strengthening Bangladesh's Digital Infrastructure and Capacity to Build Back Better after the Pandemic

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT NAME	Local Government COVID-19 Response and Recovery Project (P174937) and Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (P165477)
GLOBAL PRACTICE	Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land
REGION	South Asia
COUNTRY	Dhaka
GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE	National
COUNTERPART	Dhaka North City Corporation

GLOBAL SMART CITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM SUPPORT OVERVIEW

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVE	To help Bangladeshi cities improve their understanding of COVID-19 impacts, integrate COVID-19 response systems into the Smart City platform, and better track the economic and social recovery
OUTPUT	• Needs assessment for an e-platform • Proposal for a remote monitoring system to track the use of grants • Technical studies to develop and strengthen the use of digital technology in municipal governments
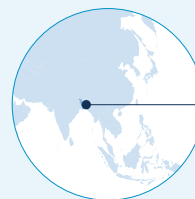
DHAKA, BANGLADESH

CHALLENGES

Bangladesh has more than 300 urban areas, which play a critical role in the country's economic growth and its efforts to alleviate poverty. In 2016, the Global Smart City Partnership Program (GSCP) worked with the Dhaka North City Corporation to enhance its service delivery and improve revenue and key business functions, via a Smart City component that identified key gaps and proposed capacity-building initiatives, data platforms, and tools.

The COVID-19 outbreak severely hindered Bangladeshi cities' abilities to deliver important services, and jeopardized the livelihoods of many residents. Via block grants and technical and project management assistance, the World Bank's

Local Government COVID-19 Response and Recovery Project is helping city governments across the country to recover from COVID-19 challenges and to improve their emergency response capacities, promote local economic recovery and job creation, and reinforce urban resilience. The task team requested assistance from the GSCP to help the cities improve their understanding of COVID-19 impacts, integrate COVID-19 response systems into the Smart City platform, and better track the economic and social recovery. More specifically, the support sought to: (i) develop a detailed strategy for planning the required IT infrastructure and capacity building, and (ii) improve the capacity of cities to conduct outreach, coordinate with stakeholders and implementing entities, and carry out monitoring and evaluation.

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APPROACH

GSCP experts conducted a needs assessment for an e-platform that would allow municipal staff to work from home, coordinate a COVID-19 response, and aid in revenue collection. They also drafted a proposal for a remote monitoring system to track the use of grants. And they carried out technical studies and investments to modernize IT infrastructure and services, focusing on: platforms that could rapidly notify citizens of emergency information; a GIS mapping platform to help decision-makers identify and track infection hotspots; integration of city data and management into a common platform with other urban service providers, to ensure delivery of critical services; finance and revenue collection.

RESULTS

The information and communication technology (ICT) baseline survey of all Bangladeshi urban governments (which yielded a nearly 100-percent response rate) showed that about one third of municipalities require capacity enhancement for operating IT platforms, and that most consider remote access to local government platforms either difficult or impossible, for both citizens and municipal staff. These results informed recommendations for the design and implementation of a management information system (MIS) as well as a disaster response coordination platform.

As a result, Bangladeshi cities have a higher capability to develop their COVID-19 response and recovery information systems and are better equipped to mobilize and manage public facilities for planning and response efforts.

LESSONS LEARNED

- A digital approach to crisis, finance and information management is a new growth area for Bangladeshi cities, therefore technical expertise was critical for the project design.

- A robust needs assessment (i.e., ICT baseline survey)—illuminating actual needs and technological challenges—facilitated collaboration with city governments. It revealed common needs, as well as some challenges that were unique to individual governments.

- Hands-on support to city governments at each step is crucial for building capacity. About a third of municipal governments surveyed required direct assistance to complete the questionnaire; similar arrangements will likely be required for designing and setting up the MIS and other platforms.

MOVING FORWARD

The project became effective in August 2022 and is under implementation.

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