



Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA)

Background of the Project

The Government of Bangladesh and the European Commission (EC) has a long experience in employment generation through creation and maintenance of public assets as a means to increase access to food for vulnerable groups. The EC Food Security Programme joined the cash-for-work Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP), co-financed by GoB and CIDA. In 2005, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) issued a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), demonstrating its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Programmes co-financed by GoB and EC, such as the Vulnerable Group Development Programme and RMP, are mentioned in the PRSP as types of interventions to be continued.

The Government of Bangladesh decided to start a new project called Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA), drawing on the lessons learned from RMP. The project was approved in ECNEC on 19 May 2007. REOPA is implemented in six districts, Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna, covering 41 Upazilas and 388 Unions. REOPA Project is implemented from 2007, with activities to end in April 2011.

EC has requested UNDP to provide capacity building support to the Government of Bangladesh for management of REOPA through a Capacity Strengthening Component (CSC). A Capacity Strengthening Team (CST) has been set up to assist the Project Task Force (PTF) of REOPA. The REOPA-CST aims to strengthen the capacity of central and local level government bodies and NGOs in designing, implementing and monitoring pro-poor and participatory projects, so that efforts made by REOPA are sustained.

The objective of REOPA

The overall objective of REOPA is to contribute to the long term sustainable socioeconomic development of rural Bangladesh. Therefore REOPA will contribute to poverty alleviation in rural areas and mainstreaming women into development programmes as indicated in the GoB PRSP and GoB commitment to the MDGs.

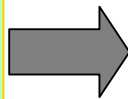
REOPA finally focuses on the following three specific goals:

1. Increase income of destitute women and landless poor by providing employment;
2. Improving public assets for the benefit of rural communities;
3. Strengthening Local Government Institutions for better response to pro-poor growth.

Purposes & outcomes of the Project

Purpose 1:

Socioeconomic conditions and food security of REOPA individual beneficiaries are improved and sustained.

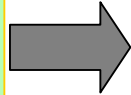


Expected Results

- Individual beneficiaries, destitute women, will be able to improve financial conditions through regular income, savings and income generating activities;
- Individual beneficiaries and their dependents will have improved human capital in terms of nutrition, health, education, social recognition and voice.

Purpose 2:

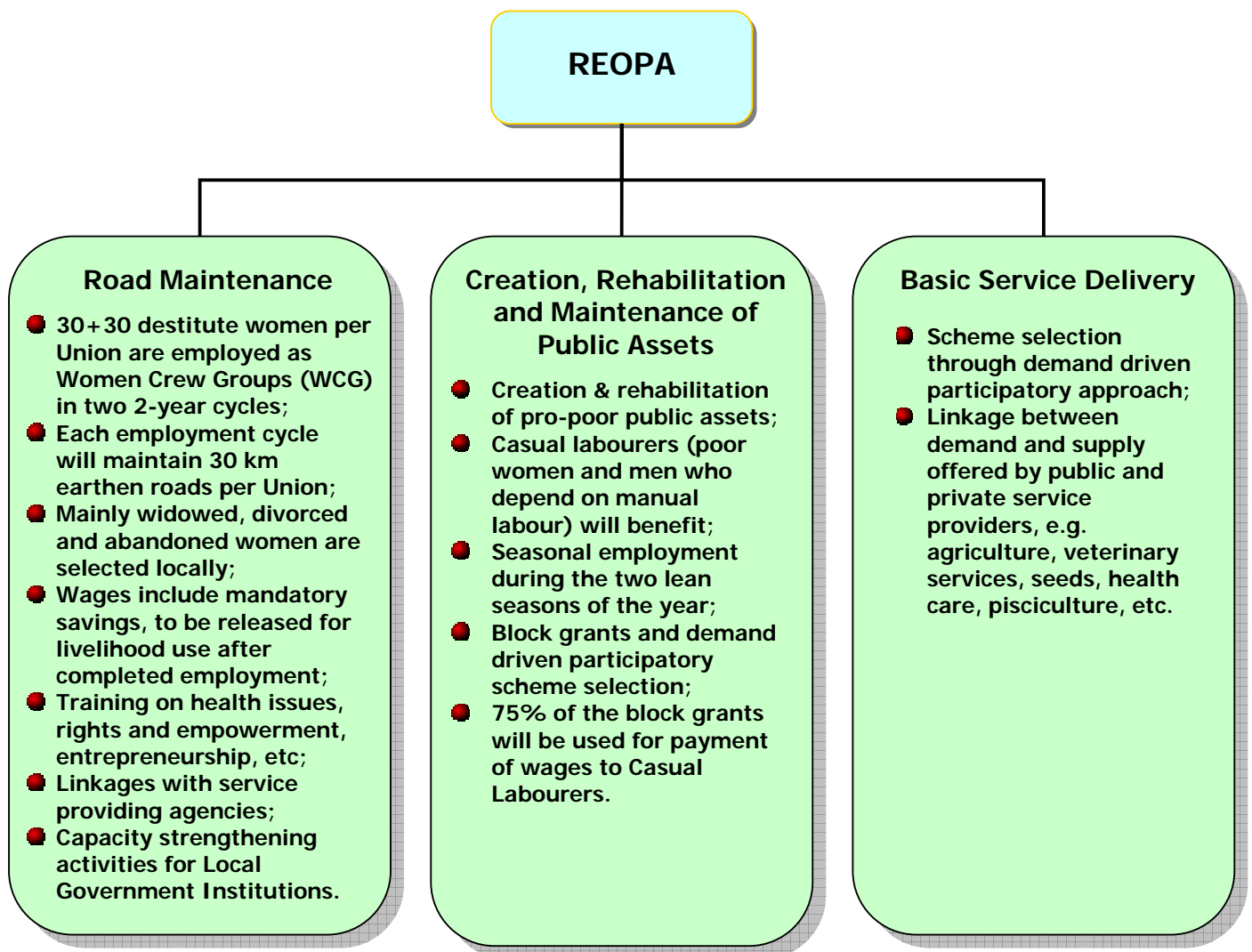
Social, economic and environmental conditions of rural communities, especially of the poor, are improved through pro-poor investment.



Expected Results

- Public assets improving social conditions, such as village schools, dispensaries/ health centres, latrines, maintained and developed for the benefit of the poor;
- Public assets promoting economic growth, such as rural earthen roads, village markets, irrigation systems, maintained and developed for the benefit of the poor;
- Public assets enhancing environment conditions, such as waste and sanitary management systems, drainage systems, tree plantations, maintained and developed for the benefit of the poor;
- More basic services (such as veterinary and agriculture services) are effectively and efficiently delivered to the poor of the participating rural communities.

REOPA Project Components



Project Management Arrangement

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MLGRD&C) is the Executing Authority of the project and Local Government Division (LGD) is the Implementing Agency. The Government has established a Project Steering Committee (PSC) chaired by Secretary, MLGRD&C to guide the project and a Project Task Force (PTF) for project implementation. The PTF has operational autonomy over all aspects of the coordination, implementation and management of the main REOPA project.

UNDP implements the Capacity Strengthening Component of REOPA (REOPA-CSC), providing technical assistance to REOPA-PTF through a Capacity Strengthening Team (REOPA-CST), and provides fund transfer to participating Unions for road maintenance and block grant schemes.

The REOPA Project is implemented under the supervision of Deputy Commissioners at district level. REOPA Committees have been formed at Upazila level, to coordinate and oversee all project activities in the field. Project Management Committees (PMC) for the road maintenance component and Scheme Implementation Committees (SIC) for block grant schemes have been formed at Union Parishad (UP) level. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer is responsible for assisting and coordinating support to the UP throughout the implementation process of REOPA.

Partner NGOs have been selected to monitor implementation of the three components of the project and provide training on business and life skills to enable women beneficiaries to develop their own income generation activities.

Roles and Responsibilities of the REOPA Upazila Committee:

- a) Coordinate Upazila wide implementation of the three components of the project,
- b) Oversee the Project Management Committee (PMC), schemes and crew selection,
- c) Assist REOPA District Office and the UPs in implementation of the project in accordance with the implementation plan developed by each UP for individual schemes,
- d) Assist and support the district office, bank and UPs in resolving any project related problems,
- e) Organise issuance of warning or termination letter to the Women Crew Group (WCG) in case of any irregularities and violation of norms,
- f) Assist the project in organizing and conducting capacity building training programs for the UP officials, representatives and the PMC members at the Upazila level,
- g) Participate in quarterly progress review meeting with the PMC and provide necessary feed back for further improvement quality of the schemes.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Project Management Committee:

- a) Assist the UP in road maintenance women crew selection,
- b) Based on the available days, allocate round-the-year road maintenance work to the women crew members with payment on a fortnightly basis,
- c) Supervise and monitor the activities of the crew members for quality assurance,
- d) Act promptly to resolve if any problem related to scheme implementation occurs,
- e) Make people aware to participate in the local level resource generation, management and to participate in the project implementation,
- f) Ensure safe and hassle-free working environment for the women crew members so that they can work without any prejudice and fear,
- g) Ensure the regular and timely presence of WCG,
- h) Assign fortnightly road work task to WCG and acknowledge the task accordingly from WCG,
- i) Keep records of road maintenance activities on file for review and consolidated reporting on a quarterly basis; undertake similar activities for the block grants and basic services delivery components.

Role and Responsibilities of Union Parishad (UP):

The Union Parishad is overall responsible and accountable for planning, implementing and managing the roadwork component and block grant schemes including basic service delivery. Specific responsibilities of the UP are as follows:

- a) Organise a UP meeting to discuss the structure and role of the Project Management Committee,
- b) Maintain a consultative and participatory approach in selecting potential PMC members from within the UP and communities,
- c) Under the leadership of the women members of greater wards and with assistance from the male members, organize ward level meetings to select 3-4 members from each ward, who are well accepted by the community, to constitute PMC,
- d) After receiving names of the would-be selected PMC members from the greater wards, organize another UP meeting to finalize the nomination of the 5-member committee and send this to the Upazila REOPA Committee for approval,
- e) Assess and select widely used 30 km earthen public roads for year-round maintenance for each WCG cycle and submit to the Upazila REOPA committee for approval,
- f) Select the women crew members,
- g) Issue cheques for withdrawal of money for the three components of REOPA,
- h) Monitor the PMC's performance in implementing the schemes and organize quarterly project performance review to assess the progress and problems and to take necessary measures for improvement,
- i) Take necessary action, such as warning, suspension or termination of contracts, against irregularities or poor performance of any particular scheme or women crew groups,
- j) Supply road maintenance register, attendance register and inspection register to each group or sub-group,
- k) Ensure that the PMC prepares quarterly progress report on a regular basis and submit copies to the Upazila REOPA Committee for passing them to LGD-REOPA PTF and REOPA-CST,
- l) Maintain proper accounting that enables cost reporting for the various components of REOPA.

Roles and Responsibilities of Partner NGOs:

- a) Organize rapid participatory appraisals for assessing the training needs of the women beneficiaries of WCGs and casual labourers of the block grants schemes,
- b) Provide ongoing training to the women's groups on techniques of quality road maintenance and to casual labourers of the block grants component on relevant issues pertaining to the maintenance of public assets,
- c) Monitor adequate supply of road maintenance equipment and ensure that the tools are well maintained by the WCGs; for the implementation of schemes under the block grants component facilitate that casual labourers are provided with the necessary tools,
- d) Provide leadership skills to WCGs and casual labourers of the block grants schemes,
- e) Develop mechanisms for ensuring the regular presence of women at the work sites during working hours, and for the casual labourers under the block grants component undertake similar supervision activities,
- f) Provide training to those selected on different aspects of group dynamics, life skills management, gender mainstreaming, human rights, social issues, health related issues, income-generating activities such as cow-rearing, etc,
- g) Establish close liaison with Union Parishad officials for an effective co-operation during the road maintenance phase as well as during the implementation of the public assets maintenance/ rehabilitation schemes under the block grants component,
- h) Monitor road works of WCG on sample basis; for the schemes being undertaken as part of the block grants component undertake relevant monitoring activities and ensure that these are recorded for reporting purposes,
- i) Monitor that women beneficiaries receive their wages on fortnightly basis and that casual labourers of the schemes under the block grants component also receive their dues at the determined intervals, and for the basic services delivery component that the necessary payments are made for the services rendered,
- j) Monitor women beneficiaries' deposit of the defined amount of their wages in the mandatory account with a local bank on a quarterly basis,
- k) Work under supervision of District Officers of REOPA-CST, UNDP and report on a monthly basis to REOPA-CST on the progress and achievements, also report on weak points and suggested remedies,
- l) Assist the capacity strengthening of Local Government Institutions undertaken by REOPA-CST,
- m) Facilitate linkages of WCGs with other service providers, microfinance institutions, including other initiatives of the Government at the district and UP levels.