

Capitalisation of Experiences
Strengthening Democratic Governance in Bangladesh: Evidence and Lessons from
the Swiss Programme

Terms of Reference (ToRs)

1. Context and Background

Over the past fifteen years, successive governments in Bangladesh have taken several steps to promote democracy, uphold human rights, strengthen local governance, and improve governance at all levels. These efforts were part of a broader commitment to “deliver public services to people’s doorsteps”, including initiatives such as the targeted delivery of social protection programs, the political empowerment of women, and measures to prevent corruption. Collectively, these actions reflect a sustained drive toward more inclusive, accountable, and responsive governance.

Policy and Institutional Reforms: Through the Swiss-supported governance project 'Strengthening Institutions, Policies and Services (2023-27)', the interim government of Bangladesh implemented **significant policy and institutional reforms in various governance fields by setting up 11 reform commissions**, which ultimately produced 133 new policies, rules and ordinances. Later, 117 ordinances were endorsed by the newly elected parliament. Specifically, with the support of SIPS, the government successfully managed the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), the Bangladesh Parliament and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Conversely, in terms of demand for reforms, Switzerland is currently providing **technical, financial and advocacy support to over thirty national and local NGOs**, as well as their consortium field partners, through its flagship project, the Civic Engagement Fund (CEF). Some of these policy and institutional reforms relate to local governance.

Local Governance and Decentralisation: During the time frame 2006-2021 and through various local governance and decentralisation projects, particularly the national programme known as the 'Local Governance Support Programme' (LGSP 1-3), the central government provided grants to Union Parishads (UPs) - the oldest and most local government system - so the community can determine which public projects serve them best. LGSP was a **national decentralization plan** that aims to strengthen local governance. This support included continued efforts to **empower citizens to demand quality public services in transparent, accountable and inclusive ways, as well as efforts to build the capacity of local governments** to deliver such services. In 2008, the caretaker government set up a high-level Local Government Reform Committee and took several steps to reform Bangladesh's local government system. This was a significant milestone. During this period, the government reformed all policies and legislation relating to local government institutions (e.g. Union Parishad Act, Municipality Act, Upazila Parishad Act), such as the Union Parishad, the Upazila Parishad, municipalities and city corporations to empower local government institutions.

Local Inclusive Service Delivery: Drawing on its global expertise and credibility in local governance, state building and decentralisation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) launched its first local governance programme, called 'Sharique', in collaboration with the Swiss NGO 'Swiss Inter-cooperation', in Bangladesh in 2008. The programme aimed to contribute **innovative solutions to improve local service delivery** (e.g. social safety nets, birth date registration, local infrastructure, etc.) and resource mobilisation, as well as promoting **targeted, pro-poor interventions** at the local level. The Sharique programme is still considered a pioneering initiative in establishing the basic framework conditions for local governance in Bangladesh. During the caretaker government from 2008 to 2009, the SDC provided the central government with technical support for policy reforms. Subsequently, the SDC expanded its projects to encompass other areas, including the **political empowerment of women, anti-corruption, and rural infrastructure**. Through its support for the LGSP with the Bangladesh government and the World Bank, the SDC helped to develop the institutional capacity of Union Parishads (lowest tier of local government) and municipalities through peer learning and exchange among Local Government Institutions (LGIs), influencing and supporting policy dialogues and reforms.

Accountable and Inclusive Local Governments: An important feature of sustainable, cost-effective, people-centred local service delivery is effective accountability of local governments. Therefore, SDC has placed a specific focus on this issue. The project 'Aparajita: Political Empowerment of Women', implemented by four national NGOs over a period of more than twelve years (2012-24), has made a significant contribution to **building women's leadership in the country's local governance processes**. SDC also developed, piloted and implemented urban governance models through projects such as the 'Urban Governance Improvement Project' with GiZ. Furthermore, SDC provided support to the Bangladeshi government through its 'Upazila Parishad Project' implemented by UNDP to establish sub-district councils in Bangladesh. SDC has also implemented a project with the UNDP and the Bangladesh government called 'Efficient, Accountable Local Government' (EALG), which aims to develop models and **make local government institutions (LGIs) climate smart**. With continued support from Switzerland for more than seventeen years (2009-2026), Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has successfully contributed to **creating a social movement against corruption at all levels** in the country. This movement acts as a **watchdog for local government institutions, reducing corruption** in public service delivery.

Elections: Elections represent one form of accountability and play a crucial role in the democratisation process in Bangladesh. Switzerland began its first election support programme with the UNDP and other development partners in Bangladesh in 2008. The programme had two objectives: (i) providing the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) with **technical support to introduce a photographic voter registration process and photographic voter identity cards and building the BEC's capacity to conduct free and fair elections**, and (ii) supporting The Asia Foundation in forming the 'Election Working Group' (EWG) network of local NGOs and conducting local election observations. Switzerland has also implemented election support programmes with the UNDP for two subsequent elections in 2018. These programmes focused particularly on gender, electoral conflict management, civic engagement and digitalisation.

Inclusive Elections: Currently, Switzerland is implementing an election support programme with the UNDP, UN Women, UNESCO and a network of local NGOs. This programme provides the BEC with technical support in areas such as **capacity building, updating voter registration and electoral rules and regulations, electoral security and conflict management**, and piloting different approaches to enable persons with disabilities and diaspora communities to access the voting process. Conversely, in terms of demand, Switzerland is working with a consortium of NGOs led by the NGO Rupantar to mobilise young people from marginalised communities and hard-to-reach areas, **raising awareness of electoral processes and ensuring free and fair access** to them.

2. Objectives of the Capitalisation of Experiences (CapEx) study

The Capitalisation of Experiences (CapEx) study aims to capitalise on experiences, results and lessons learned acquired during the period of Switzerland assistance in the fields of democratic governance from 2011 to 2026, with a particular focus on **four priority themes: (a) State building and institutional reform, (b) Local governance, decentralisation and service delivery, (c) Citizen accountability, social accountability and civic space, and (d) Inclusive political participation**. The CapEx study has two objectives: capturing the dimensions of documentation, capitalisation and institutional learning, and facilitating internal and public communication.

The **two objectives** are:

- To **identify valuable lessons, results, effective practices, and locally led cooperation models** that foster synergies, ownership, sustainability, inclusivity, and the nexus between gender and governance. These insights should be pertinent to the Swiss government as well as to national and international partners, relevant both in the present and in future contexts.
- To **provide material to communicate** and appreciate Swiss contributions, innovations, lessons learned and added value in the respective development field, aimed at the public, decision-makers and relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh, Switzerland, and other countries. The communication material should transparently include achievements and products from which lessons can be learned, and which should not be repeated, instead of only emphasising the positive aspects.

Objective 1 aims to identify valuable lessons learned, best practices, and effective approaches based on a **comprehensive assessment** of past and current democratic governance projects, **highlighting selected knowledge**, as the impact of the peer learning **approach**, the influence of **women's leadership** on local governance and the way to **inclusive elections**. These insights will be shared with central government in Bangladesh and national and international development partners interested in learning from and/or adopting or continuing Switzerland's initiatives in Bangladesh. Additionally, lessons relevant to Switzerland's current and future endeavours across various sectors and regions will be highlighted. The produced material will also enable SDC teams working on good governance and democracy in other partner countries to learn from both successes and shortcomings, identifying what has worked well and where approaches have proven less effective.

Objective 2 focuses on **developing communication material** that showcases Switzerland's contributions to bilateral development cooperation in Bangladesh from a non-evaluative, learning-oriented perspective. This capitalisation exercise will draw on a review of essential project documents, including reports and evaluations, alongside critical analyses of self-assessments from key stakeholders. Another objective of this study is to identify Switzerland's unique contributions, utilizing its strengths to enhance the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of systemic change efforts in Bangladesh.

3. Guiding questions

During the inception phase, the chosen study team will be required to draft a capitalisation and communication design matrix, or an alternative analytical framework, to guide the entire CapEx study. The guiding questions are set out below:

Objective 1:

- What specific lessons and good practices from Swiss bilateral cooperation in Bangladesh can inform national and international partners on sustaining projects and programs post-Swiss involvement?
- What concrete strategies from Swiss bilateral cooperation in Bangladesh can enhance development effectiveness in the country and in similar contexts worldwide?
- What institution-specific or sector-specific lessons can SDC draw from Swiss cooperation in Bangladesh to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now and in the future in SDC's other partner countries?

Objective 2:

- Which lessons and good practices from Swiss cooperation would be most valuable to the public, academia, and governments in Bangladesh, as well as to stakeholders in Switzerland?
- Which key lessons and good practices should be prioritized for communication to the public and decision-makers in both Bangladesh and Switzerland?
- What innovative communication tools can effectively engage the public, decision-makers, and relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh and Switzerland?

4. Methodology and process

The selected capitalization team will create specific criteria for identifying good practices and will develop a communication method that incorporates assessments to analyse various types of evidence on lessons learned, effective models, and successful practices from Swiss bilateral development cooperation in Bangladesh. Adopting different types of enquiries that complement each other should lead to robust and credible findings.

4.1 Inception phase (1 month)

The selected capitalisation team will develop an appropriate capitalisation and communication method, including selection criteria for good practices and guiding principles for lessons learnt, with detailed sub-questions to set the framework for the assignment. It is important that the methodology captures the operational, methodological and institutional practices of Swiss bilateral cooperation in Bangladesh appropriately. **The inception phase will conclude with an inception report to be approved by the Swiss Embassy in Bangladesh.**

4.2 Implementation Phase 1: Meta-Analysis of Lessons Learned (2 months)

Implementation Phase 1 will capture lessons learned that may still be relevant to the Bangladeshi government, other national actors and international partners, as well as to the SDC in other contexts. This will consist of a meta-analysis of existing programme documents and reviews. This part is expected to be descriptive and summarising rather than detailed and analytical. Where necessary and possible, the meta-analysis will be complemented by key informant interviews (suggestions will be provided by the Swiss Embassy). Importantly, this phase of the capitalisation exercise must also confirm the sectoral/thematic 'deep dives' for Bangladesh that will be conducted in Phase 2. These deep dives should be chosen through a consultative process with the Swiss Embassy, considering the sectors with the most relevant results and lessons learned for Swiss development cooperation elsewhere. **This phase will conclude with the production of a 'lessons learned' document.**

4.3 Implementation Phase 2: Sectoral/Thematic Deep Dives on Good Practices (3 months)

This implementation phase will capture good practices, approaches, models and toolkits in the specific sectors/themes identified in Bangladesh through deep dives applying a capitalisation and communication framework, SDC guidance on governance and other global standards (e.g. OECD). The focus will be on identifying good practices, both sectoral and institutional, that can provide guidance to governments and national and international partners who may potentially take over some Swiss projects, programmes or approaches in Bangladesh. Building on the **meta-analysis** of the previous phase, this phase of the project will involve desk study, structured, semi-structured or open interviews with key informants and beneficiaries, as well as focus group discussions, workshops and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including SDC staff in Bern and at the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. Importantly, field visits should be conducted where relevant during this phase. In consultation with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, interviews will be arranged with government representatives, development partners, the private sector, civil society organisations, and beneficiary groups. **This phase will conclude with the identification of at least eight good practices (two from each theme) and the production of four short videos (one from each theme).**

4.4 Dissemination Phase (4 months)

During this phase, the Capitalisation Team will prepare presentations to share the findings with the following: (1) the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh; and (2) SDC HQ staff (including the Peace, Governance and Equality Section) and relevant networks, including Swiss Parliament Services, and the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics. Besides, one dissemination event will take place in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

5. Deliverables

The following deliverables, in order of their completion, are required:

5.1 Inception Report

An inception report shall be prepared within **one month** of the official start of the assignment, following an initial review of relevant documentation and some initial interviews. It shall further elaborate on the scope of the assignment and its methodology, processes, and contain:

- A summary of the insights from the initial desk review and interviews.
- A timeline showing the projects/programmes and themes in which the Swiss Embassy has been engaged.
- A detailed capitalisation methodology and communication framework that produces reliable answers to the guiding questions.
- A capitalisation and communication design matrix (or alternative analytical framework) with refined guiding questions and sub-questions.
- A first, refined list of interviewees.
- An initial communication concept, including for the dissemination phase.
- A refined division of labour among team members and a detailed work plan.

The Inception Report should be written in English, not exceed 15 pages (excluding annexes), and be presented to the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. Approval by the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh is required before moving into the implementation phase.

5.2 Sectoral/Thematic Deep-Dives Documents

At least **four** CapEx documents on sectoral/thematic deep dives (e.g. lesson learned papers, policy briefs, how-to notes or guidance notes, etc.) will be produced **for each of the four priority themes**, (a) State building and institutional reform, (b) Local governance, decentralisation and service delivery, (c) Citizen accountability, social accountability and civic space, and (d) Inclusive political participation, within a timeframe of five months. These papers should also demonstrate the relationships between these four priority themes. These documents will then be presented to and discussed with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, either in person or virtually, either individually or in groups. The Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh will have to formally approve them.

5.3 Summary Thematic Capitalisation Report

A fit-to-print Summary Thematic Capitalisation Report is the main deliverable of the CapEx assignment. While the CapEx team will propose a draft table of contents during the inception phase, the report should consist of these two distinctive parts:

Part I: A synthesis of the **four** thematic 'deep dives' for each priority theme, including overall observations and lessons learned.

Part II: Overarching conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned for partner governments (e.g. central government, local government and line agencies), other national and international partners, and particularly the SDC.

Additionally, the report should explain the scope of the assignment and the methodology used. The entire report must cover all four priority themes, be written in English and not exceed 25 pages, excluding an executive summary and annexes. It must be presented to and discussed with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, which must also approve it. After that, the dissemination phase will commence.

5.4 Short videos and presentations for dissemination

Four short videos (no longer than three minutes) must be produced to capture good practices and lessons learnt from the four priority themes. Three specific presentations must be prepared to disseminate the main findings to: (1) the Swiss Embassy in Bangladesh and the SDC HQ. (2) Swiss project partners, including the government and other stakeholders; and (3) potential like-minded development partners.

Additionally, the CapEx Team is expected to draft a short note that: (a) recommends the main messages for communicating with the public and political leaders in Switzerland and Bangladesh about Switzerland's bilateral development cooperation in Bangladesh from a non-evaluative perspective; and (b) proposes possible innovative communication products for storytelling. The short note will thus provide the basis for a possible separate follow-up task to develop storytelling products. All presentations and the short note must be reviewed by the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh beforehand.

6. Capitalisation of Experiences (CapEx) Team (Consultant)

Following an invitation procedure, the Embassy of Switzerland will appoint an independent CapEx Team. The team will consist of **a team leader and at least two other experts** with complementary expertise and experience, including in communication. Furthermore, it is advisable for the consultant to collaborate with local experts in each of the four thematic areas. The team is expected to possess the following expertise and experience in capitalisation, communication and the subject matter:

- Experience and knowledge of Switzerland's international cooperation system and the context in Bangladesh.
- Experience and knowledge on democratic governance-related issues such as local governance/state building, elections, political empowerment of women and anti-corruption.
- Professional experience and skills in robust capitalisation and communication methodologies and approaches.
- Ability to guide complex processes involving multiple stakeholders through participatory methods.
- Ability to work and communicate proficiently in English and Bangla.
- Experience in developing communication content and products for different audiences.

The Team Leader is responsible for the team's reporting and quality assurance, as well as the division of labour and organisation of the work. The Team Leader and the CapEx team will

participate in meetings (virtual and physical) with the Embassy of Switzerland as required. Additionally, it is expected that all international consultants will visit Bangladesh at least once during the assignment.

7. Duration and resources

This assignment will run for **10 months from 1 August 2026 to 31 May 2027**. The mandate, including preparation and report writing, will last a maximum of **55 days for entire team of international consultants and 40 days for entire team of local consultants**. This includes preparation, report writing, and the production of capitalisation products. The offer must contain detailed planning of the mission, clearly showing how the work will be divided between team members, taking the following agenda into consideration. *This timeline is indicative only and can be adjusted as necessary.*

No.	Milestones	Deadlines	Responsible
1.	Call for Proposal	30.04.2026	Embassy of Switzerland
2.	Offer Submission	30.05.2026	Selected Consultancy firms
3.	Provisory Adjudication	10.06.2026	Embassy of Switzerland
4.	Revised Offer	15.06.2026	Selected Consultancy firms
5.	Bids Assessment	30.06.2026	Embassy of Switzerland
6.	Final adjudication and Contract signature (preparation)	15.07.2026	Embassy of Switzerland

8. Offers

Based on these Terms of References, an offer is expected by **30th of May 2026**. Only offers composed of a full team with the required profiles will be considered.

The offer must comprise:

- 1) Cover letter
- 2) Narrative offer of maximum 10 pages (without annexes) including:
 - Understanding of the mandate.
 - Methodological approach.
 - Detailed schedule (chronogram).
 - Consultants' profiles (with Curriculum Vitae in annexes) and their availability during the period.
 - List of similar missions conducted (highlighted in colour in the CVs), with references in annexes.
- 3) Financial offer in a requested form, comprising of: Submission letter with date, signature, showing the offer's total amount. In addition to the consultants' fees and per diem, the offer must contain all the necessary costs for conducting the mission under the team leader's responsibility. The financial offer should propose two scenarios, considering potential implications on international travels and/or in-country mission. **The financial offer shall be submitted in CHF using the standard form that is sent together with these Terms of References.**

The funding of this mandate as well as the administrative-financial follow-up is of the exclusive responsibility of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. The consultants are accountable only to the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh.
- 4) Completed Data on Creditor/Contractor form
- 5) Annexes:
 - Curricula vitae of the proposed international and national consultants.
 - Relevant experience of the consultants with similar assignments.

Offers are to be sent per E-mail to:

Sohel Ibn Ali
Senior Programme Manager
E-mail: sohel.ibn.ali@eda.admin.ch

With Copy to:

Corinne Thévoz
Deputy Head of Cooperation
E-mail: corinne.thevoz@eda.admin.ch

9. Award criteria

The following table provides an overview of the evaluated award criteria (AC) and the corresponding weightings

AC	Award Criteria	Weighting
Technical Proposal		
AC1	Qualification and experience of nominated team	30%
AC2	Methodology, Procedure and assignment organization	30%
AC3	Experiences on similar types of assignments	15%
AC4	Financial Proposal Clarity of the proposition, full character of the cost structure, realistic estimation of the costs	25%

Each award criterion will be evaluated according to the following score table:

Score	Fulfillment	Quality of Criteria
0	Cannot be established	Information has no significance.
1	Very poor fulfilment	Information is incomplete.
2	Poor fulfilment	Information relates requirements, but data quality is very poor.
3	Average fulfilment	Information globally respects requirements and data quality is adequate.
4	Good fulfilment	Information focused well and data quality is good.
5	Very good fulfilment	Information clearly relate outputs and data quality is excellent.

Annex 1: List of Swiss supported projects in Bangladesh

No.	Name of the Project	Name of the Implementing Agency
01.	Sharique: Local Governance Project	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
02.	Municipal Governance Project	GIZ Bangladesh
03.	Upazila Governance Project	UNDP Bangladesh
04.	Efficient and Accountable Local Government (EALG)	UNDP Bangladesh
05.	Aparajita: Political Empowerment of Women project	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Rupantar, Democracy Watch, Prip Trust and Khan Foundation
06.	Civic Engagement Fund (CEF)	GFA Germany
07.	Anti- Corruption Projects (PACTA, BIBEK)	Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)
08.	Election Supports Project	UNDP Bangladesh and The Asia Foundation
09.	Astha (Outcome 3)	Rupantar
10.	Grassroots Women Leaderships	Rupantar
11.	Democratic Reforms through Inclusive Participation in Bangladesh (DRIP)	UNDP Bangladesh
12.	Strengthening Institutions, Policies and Services (SIPS)	UNDP Bangladesh