

SUMMARY POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL STRATEGY

Country/Project Title: India: Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Program

Lending/Financing Modality:	Multitranche Financing Facility	Department/ Division:	South Asia Department/ Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Social Services Division
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I. POVERTY ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

A. Link to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Country Partnership Strategy

India's Eleventh Five-Year Plan, 2007–2012 prioritizes reducing regional and rural–urban imbalances and chronic poverty through inclusive growth.^a Assam is one of the least-developed states in India, with a per capita income level 43% below the national average in 2003. This is the result of several factors, including poor infrastructure, remoteness, and inability to minimize the impacts of damage from frequent flooding. Among these, effective flood and riverbank erosion risk management (FRERM) are high on the development agenda, since 90% of Assam's agriculture land and urban areas are located in flood-prone areas that are mostly inundated during extreme flooding, which has a devastating impact. About 7% of the land in the state's 17 riverine districts has been lost as a result of river erosion in the last 50 years.

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) assistance strategy is aligned with the government's plan, and envisages its enhanced role in rural infrastructure development for irrigation, water resources including disaster risk management, and agriculture marketing infrastructure. Support for putting into operation comprehensive FRERM in a flood-prone low-income state is in line with the strategy. Primarily focused on infrastructure and its management systems in a state willing to pursue sector reforms in partnership with ADB, the investment program is consistent with ADB's Strategy 2020^b and Water for All Policy.^c It will also contribute to enhancing resilience against the possible impact of climate change, which may increase the frequency and magnitude of water disasters.

B. Poverty Analysis

Targeting Classification: General intervention

Key issues. The proportion of Assam's population living below the poverty line is high at about 36% in 2000. Over two-thirds of Assam's population is rural. Poverty is largely a rural issue. Recurrence of floods and loss of land because of river erosion constrains the state's economic activities in its vast flood-prone areas. Agriculture remains the primary economic sector, but its productivity is well below the national average and only about half of the state's farmers cultivate their fields more than once a year. Likewise, service and industrial sectors are affected by frequent flooding and the associated low level of investments and lack of employment opportunities.

Flooding and river erosion affects the poorest segments of the society most severely. Damage in a single year can wipe out limited assets such as houses, livestock, and small farm plots—their only source of livelihood. People affected by riverbank erosion are most severely hit, being displaced as landless to the riverine fringe land, nearby embankments, char lands, or urban slums. Accordingly, the poverty level along the major rivers is much higher than non-riverine rural areas.

Design features. More than 50% of the people in the project area are poor and rely on daily wage labor and share-cropping. People in the project area are vulnerable to river erosion and seasonal high floods that take away or inundate farmlands, and damage their houses and assets. The proposed investment program will enhance the performance of existing flood embankment systems through embankment upgrading, riverbank protection works, and associated infrastructure such as flood-proofing platforms, along with a range of nonstructural measures. Through the improved reliability of the FRERM systems, the poorer segment of the population in the project area will be benefited in terms of higher security of their assets and stability of livelihood.

As an important part of the investment program component, participatory disaster management committees (DMCs) will be established at the block village union and village levels to plan and implement local FRERM and livelihood activities. Participation of the poor and vulnerable groups will be pursued through nongovernment organizations. The investment program will seek poverty reduction by prioritizing the provision of FRERM and livelihoods activities such as awareness raising, construction of flood-proofing platforms, and cropping pattern diversification. The concept of "living with the floods," its validity, and lessons learned from previous projects will be taken into account for formulating options. The DMCs will also actively participate in the construction, operation, and maintenance of some of the structural interventions. A separate project using the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) is being prepared to provide livelihood enhancement to supplement the investment program.^d

II. SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

A. Findings of Social Analysis

Key issues. The majority of the population in the three subproject areas (Dibrugarh, Kaziranga, and Palasbari) works in agriculture. The incidence of landlessness is high in all areas, and the landless often work as daily wage laborers or sharecroppers. The ethnic composition is heterogeneous, with a relatively high proportion of indigenous people—42% in Kaziranga, and 15% in both Dibrugarh and Palasbari. According to the assessment during the project preparatory technical assistance (TA), the socioeconomic characteristics of indigenous people do not differ much from other groups.

Local stakeholders' perceived problems are related to high levels of insecurity and stress caused by chronic flooding and river erosion, which prohibit them from enhancing their livelihoods in the long-term. Specific issues include (i) lack of early warning; (ii) problems at the time of flood evacuation such as unhygienic conditions and no privacy (especially affects women); lack of drinking water, food and fuel for cooking, and fodder for cattle; and (iii) inadequate health and education facilities during floods. Development needs are clustered into three groups: (i) addressing immediate needs related to safer, hygienic shelter facilities providing food security; (ii) providing facilities to mitigate flood and river erosion risks; and (iii) developing economic self-sufficiency through sustainable livelihoods.

B. Consultation and Participation

1. Consultations were held with a particular focus on women, the landless, indigenous people, and other vulnerable groups in the subproject area regarding (i) water resources and disaster management, including flooding and river erosion, agriculture, fisheries, environment, and other uses; (ii) possible solutions to resolve the constraints identified; and (iii) institutional mechanisms to address those constraints. State level workshops were also held to discuss the prospective scope and issues of the proposed investment program with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., civil society organizations active in environmental issues and tribal issues).

2. What level of consultation and participation is envisaged during the project implementation and monitoring?

Information sharing Consultation Collaborative decision making Empowerment

3. Was a consultation and participation plan prepared? Yes No

The investment program has adopted the social development strategy to involve DMCs in all stages of project implementation. The strategy encompasses the following four levels of interventions: (i) ensuring implementation guidelines, staff awareness raising, and capacities to mainstream stakeholder participation in FRERM program delivery; (ii) pursuing organization and capacity development of DMCs with the representation of vulnerable groups and utilizing DMCs as a sound platform of participatory decision making; (iii) facilitating DMCs to take increasing responsibility for routine FRERM structure maintenance and to pursue specific actions and programs with effective linkage to the existing development programs; and (iv) ensuring compliance with social safeguards measures.

C. Gender and Development

Key issues. Women bear a disproportionately higher burden of poverty because of lack of access to productive resources, lack of autonomy within the household, and social restrictions on mobility that prevent women and children from access to education, skills training, and health facilities as well as labor markets. In Assam, river erosion and regular flooding place an additional burden on women who traditionally, in times of crisis and disaster, are responsible for delivering relief and preparing food, reconstructing households, and taking care of household chores and the sick and elderly under difficult circumstances. During high floods, the incidence of sickness and malnutrition among vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly multiplies.

Key actions. Measures included in the design to promote gender equality and women's empowerment—access to and use of relevant services, resources, assets, or opportunities and participation in decision making process.

Gender plan Other actions/measures No action/measure

The gender action plan proposes (i) promotion of women's participation in flood risk management committees with numerical targets on training for their active involvement; (ii) provision of income-generation opportunities for women through investment and maintenance works; (iii) placement of qualified female professionals in key project implementation units to identify and respond to women's needs; and (iv) preparation of a separate JFPR project with focus on women's participation and livelihood enhancement in the context of community-based flood risk management. Detailed actions laid out in the gender action plan were consulted with and agreed to by the project's main counterpart, the Water Resources Department, and included in the Facility Administration Manual.

III. SOCIAL SAFEGUARD ISSUES AND OTHER SOCIAL RISKS			
Issue	Significant/ Limited/ No Impact	Strategy to Address Issue	Plan or Other Measures Included in Design
Involuntary resettlement	Significant	While the investment program focus is on rehabilitation and upgrading of existing embankment systems, this often requires strip land acquisition to retire the embankments and/or enhance their cross sections. For some subprojects, squatters are on embankments—having been displaced and evacuated there by river erosion. Impacts are significant for all three subproject sites. A resettlement framework was prepared for the investment program, along with full resettlement plans for three subproject areas have been prepared for project-1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full plan in preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Short plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resettlement framework <input type="checkbox"/> No action
Indigenous peoples	Not significant	The investment program will benefit the entire local population, and no specific group, including indigenous peoples, will be disproportionately affected. The three subprojects are supported by all groups. The TA has prepared a draft indigenous peoples development framework.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Other Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indigenous Peoples Framework <input type="checkbox"/> No Action
Labor <input type="checkbox"/> Employment opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Labor retrenchment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Core labor standards	No adverse impact	Reliability of flood management infrastructure will create increased employment opportunities for all industries. Core labor standards will be included in contractors' contract clauses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action <input type="checkbox"/> No action
Affordability	Not significant	The investment program does not envisage cash contributions by beneficiaries (given the public goods nature of the benefits) except for minor structures that beneficiaries are expected to operate and maintain through labor contribution.	<input type="checkbox"/> Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No action
Other risks and/or vulnerabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Human trafficking <input type="checkbox"/> Others (conflict, political instability, etc.), please specify	Not significant	Social assessments undertaken have not identified any significant risks regarding these aspects. However, the state government of Assam will ensure that all civil works contractors disseminate information at worksites on the risks of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS for those employed during construction. Contracts for all civil works will include specific clauses on these undertakings, and the state government will strictly monitor compliance during project implementation. In addition, the executing agency will undertake awareness programs for HIV/AIDS, and child labor for the agencies, nongovernment organizations, and other providers to be engaged in the investment program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action <input type="checkbox"/> No action
IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION			
Are social indicators included in the design and monitoring framework to facilitate monitoring of social development activities and/or social impacts during project implementation? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

^a Planning Commission, Government of India. 2008. Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-12. New Delhi.

^b ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank, 2008–2020*. Manila.

^c ADB. 2003. *Water for All: The Water Policy of the Asian Development Bank*. Manila (adopted in 2001).

^d The JFPR will include (i) training for women's groups in adaptive cropping practices, fishing pond, and cottage industry (e.g., weaving, vocational skills, and other income-generation activities); (ii) establishing linkage with agricultural extension services (farmer schools, veterinary services, etc.); (iii) establishing linkage between the agricultural product market or handicraft market and women's groups to ensure that the supply meets the demand; and (iv) facilitating the placement of women trained in off-farm skills (e.g., weaving, handicraft, services, etc).

Source: Asian Development Bank.