



Astha – Election Cycle Support Project

Swiss Portfolio Outcome:	Improved social well-being for all, including in emergencies
Implementation Period:	01.05.2023 – 31.01.2026
Implementing Partners:	UNDP, UN Women, Intl. IDEA Smartvote, Democracy Watch, Rupantar
Swiss Contribution:	CHF 5 million
Modality:	Contribution

General Description

The project targets the electoral timeline of Bangladesh for 2023-24, aiming to support a fair, inclusive and non-violent election cycle. To foster good governance, at all levels, within the electoral process, this programme will be implemented by different partners to build the capacity of the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC), Civil Society Organisations (CSO), media and the marginalised communities. In addition, the project supports Bangladesh's advancement in reaching the targets of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Objectives

By supporting the BEC, CSOs, press and media, women, youth and marginalised communities, the project aims to strengthen democratic practices of Bangladesh through inclusive and non-violent elections, institutional capacity building, media engagement and voter education.

Lines of Action / Components

- Through technical support, the BEC will be supported to ensure the effective implementation of its policies, capacity development, and complaint mechanisms.
- Better-informed youth will demonstrate increased political participation and engagement to civic education, voter mobilisation and policy dialogues.
- Citizens will be sensitised and capacitated to prevent communal and electoral violence at the grassroots level with the participation of people and community-based organisations.

Intended Impact in terms of Systemic Change

The programme is designed to work with multiple stakeholders to enhance trust in the electoral process. Through Switzerland's contribution, the BEC's capacity is strengthened and create the enabling environment to kick-start reforms where needed. Media actors are empowered to better fulfil their role as watchdogs, information and opinion providers. Citizens can make better-informed choices when presented with candidates.

Intervention Targets

- 500 representatives of the Bangladesh Election Commission will receive training and capacity-building support.
- 1 million citizens, with a particular emphasis of participation by women, youth and minority groups, are reached through the supported CSOs.
- In the long run, Bangladeshi voters will be able benefitting from a more peaceful, just and inclusive governance system.