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**Executive Board
First Regular Session**

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PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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PROJECT BANGLADESH 2197 (Exp.10)

Rural development project

Duration of project	Two years
Total cost to WFP	59 769 804 dollars
Total cost to Government	50 972 200 dollars
External funding	62 605 000 dollars
Number of beneficiaries	2 250 000 (workers plus dependants)

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 42.20 taka in December 1996. For relevant statistical data, please consult the WFP country profile for Bangladesh, which is available on request.

ABSTRACT

The Country Programme (CP) for Bangladesh was approved by the Executive Board in October 1996. Included in that CP is a rural development programme, to run for four years. The first two years of operation, from January 1997 to December 1998, are covered by project 2197 (Exp.10). An operational contract was signed between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and WFP in December 1996.

With a population of 120 million, half of whom live below the poverty line, declining per capita foodgrain availability, over 30 percent of the national work force in rural areas unemployed and a per capita GDP of 224 dollars, Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest least developed countries. Most of the hard-core poor are functionally landless women and men of rural areas who are usually unskilled, untrained and illiterate, with a limited scope to obtain employment other than occasional work in agriculture. Bangladesh is prone to floods and cyclones; its tree cover has steeply declined because of a drastic increase in population. There are over 100,000 hectares of derelict ponds, dried up river beds and other unused water bodies awaiting rehabilitation.

The rural development project has been effective in providing employment opportunities for some of the rural poor. The public assets created have in turn provided building blocks for growth, diversification and development. However, infrastructures created under the rural development programme over the last 20 years have not led to a sustainable beneficiary impact. Expansion 10 will be implemented under a strategy which provides for the incorporation of food aid in the annual development plan of the country and shifts the overall role of food aid coordination from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief to the Planning Commission. Poor workers will be organized into groups through project associations and given skills training, and savings and credit services to help them develop their capacities to be more productive and self-reliant. Approximately 450,000 workers will work for a period of 100 days during the months January to April. By the end of the fourth year of the project women will receive about 50 percent of its resources.

A total of 565,000 tons of wheat (250,000 from bilateral donors, 183,000 from WFP and the cash equivalent of 132,000 tons from the Government) will be issued to the workers over a period of two years. Annual physical outputs will comprise a wide range of rural infrastructure: 2,300 kilometres of embankments/canals in the water sector; 400 kilometres of roads in the road sector; and 1,100 hectares of derelict or unused water bodies in the fisheries sector. Furthermore, four million seedlings will be planted annually, while nine million trees planted earlier will be cared for until they are able to survive on their own (two to three years). The Government's contribution will help pay 30 percent of the workers' wages in cash.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Regional Director: J. Schulthes tel.: 5228-2209

Senior Desk Officer: R. Huss tel.: 5228-2358

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).



