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Subregional Conference

**Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in South Asia:
Reflections and Way Forward for ADB**

ADB

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Session 4

Geographical Exclusion—Issues and Responses

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Overall Message & Presentation Outline

***Geographical exclusion
constrains people, especially
women and the disadvantaged
from accessing resources and
opportunities. High spatial
inequalities require systematic
investment for improvement***

1. Definition of geographical exclusion
2. Issues of people in geographically-excluded areas
3. Policy and institutional frameworks
4. What works?
5. Way forward



Overall Message & Presentation Outline

Geographic exclusion occurs when accessibility to certain areas is difficult due to *-distance –terrain- seasonal hazards.*

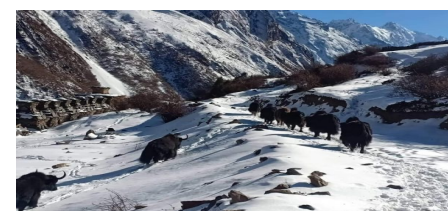
- *Usually culturally and economically marginalized groups are in physically deprived spaces.*
 - *Political and economic decisions can also effectively exclude certain areas, e.g., Madhes in Nepal till 2007, Karnali region.*
 - *Disparities are particularly worrying where they overlap with political or ethnic divisions.*
- Urban centres have inflow of new material, financial and human resources. Government policies are usually biased towards these areas.*
- Geographical exclusion often results in limited self-sustaining economic development of those areas.*



Facts and Figures

Exclusionary Geographical Locations in SARD DMCs

DMCs	Exclusionary Geographical Areas
Bangladesh	Rural and remote areas, hilly terrain, and wetlands
Bhutan	Rural, remote and areas with difficult geographical terrain
India	Rural, remote, difficult terrain, poor access to services, low agriculture, or resource potential
Maldives	Residents of Islands other than those in the capital city of Malé or Addu
Nepal	Mountain and hill terrain with poor transport links. The government identified districts and municipalities/rural municipalities as “backward areas.”
Sri Lanka	Eastern and Northern provinces, estate sector, and rural areas



Facts and Figures

Social Indicators

- Multiple levels of exclusion exist resulting in lower literacy, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene indicators.
- Social infrastructure like schools and health care centers are limited.

Bangladesh: the Chittagong Hill Tracts' remoteness, poor communication, and unique socioeconomic characteristics have made it difficult to provide basic social services to inhabitants.

Maldives: transport costs are high. Almost half of the inhabited islands do not have proper harbor and access facilities, and 25 islands have no harbors at all.

Sri Lanka: health outcomes are worse in war-affected northern and eastern provinces, in estate sector.



Economic Indicators

- Highly dependent on traditional agriculture
- Lack of market linkages, proper irrigation systems, microcredit, low land fertility, and increasing incidence of natural disasters

Bhutan: Low productivity in rural households due to difficult mountain terrain, limited arable land, low technology, poor irrigation

India: 70% of rural Indian households dependent on agriculture, inadequate non-farm livelihood options in rural areas

Facts and Figures

Participation

- Limited participation and engagement of the rural community:
 - *time poverty, low interest in agenda, reluctance to voice concerns*
- Inadequate consultations with the rural community



All six DMCs have dedicated policies and acts and institutions to protect the welfare of people in difficult geographic location or underdeveloped regions and for poverty alleviation.



- National Rural Development Policy (2001)
- Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission



- Bhutan National Urbanization Strategy (2008)



- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2015, NRLM, Housing for all Grammin



- Strategic Action Plan 2019–2023 (public transport network, regional hubs)



- Constitution, Various policies/ schemes, Local Government Operation Act, 2074 (2017)



- Regional Rural Development Banks Act (1985)

Facts and Figures

Good Practices

Surveys, including disaggregated data collection, e.g., as part of ADB's Skills Training and Education Pathway Upgradation Project in Bhutan.



Bangladesh: women's weaving centers established in remotest parts of the chars and awareness campaigns held on how 'char dwellers' can access government services.

Bhutan: work in underserved communities in remote areas of the country.

The **Maldives:** regional business centers are in remote islands or atolls to provide business development services to MSMEs

Lessons: Deep reflections required...

Way Forward

- Deeper and more detailed understanding of issues of women, other disadvantaged groups in geographically excluded areas
- Policy interventions for spatially equitable allocation of infrastructure and public services
- Investment in infrastructure in remote, rural and geographically difficult areas
- Development of economic and social infrastructure to facilitate decentralization of services
- Promote private sector investment for improved livelihood opportunities of women, disadvantaged groups



Engage different social groups in identifying and designing development initiatives based on their needs and aspirations.

Establish/strengthen GESI responsive institutions, community-based monitoring systems

Thank you

