



Integrated Country Strategy

BANGLADESH

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

As the United States and Bangladesh celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations in 2022, there is much to celebrate. With historic levels of economic growth over the past decade, Bangladesh has met the eligibility criteria for graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026. This achievement underscores Bangladesh's extraordinary development success—and the efficacy of USAID's \$8 billion in assistance—since independence in 1971. Bangladesh has emerged as a leading voice against global climate change. It has confronted terrorism and remains the world's largest contributor to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

But much remains to do. Since the flawed elections of 2018, civic space has shrunk considerably. Through the Digital Security Act and other forms of intimidation, the government has curtailed freedom of the press, the ability of labor to organize, the rule of law, and the right of people to engage in legitimate social discourse. While Bangladesh continues to host approximately one million Rohingya refugees from Burma, it does not fully support the international donor community's call for the refugees to be provided access to education and skills training. Bangladesh continues to balance its political and security relations with India, China, Russia, and the United States.

The entire Mission is working to foster a Bangladesh that is a closer partner of the United States. We seek a greater commitment to democracy, human rights, and protection of Rohingya; flourishing people-to-people ties, improved business climate and labor conditions; increased ability to tackle the climate and pandemic crises; and a strengthened capacity to contribute to regional security.

Strengthening Bangladesh's Commitment to Democracy and Human Rights: The 2023 national elections will be critical to determining whether Bangladesh moves towards greater democracy or greater autocracy. Efforts to strengthen Bangladesh's fragile democratic institutions and bolster its secular, tolerant, and pluralistic traditions will be essential. Reform of the security services—particularly in the wake of U.S. human rights sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion in December 2021—are key to this objective, as are democratic reforms ahead

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of the 2023 national elections. We will continue to engage the Government of Bangladesh to address the most striking human rights issues, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and restrictions on core civil liberties. We will work with civil society, especially youth, women, labor, and grassroots community activists, to revitalize Bangladesh's democratic culture. We will also build on recent progress to counter trafficking in persons.

Improving Bangladesh's Labor Standards, Business Climate, and Ability to Address the

Climate and Pandemic Crises: U.S. companies increasingly see Bangladesh as the future market and investment opportunity in South Asia beyond India, despite barriers to entry, challenges to doing business, and the sometimes questionable and non-transparent business practices pursued by some non-U.S. competitors. To achieve its economic potential, however, Bangladesh must strengthen labor rights and workplace safety and implement labor reforms identified in the International Labor Organization roadmap and its own National Action Plan. It must also address infrastructure deficiencies, pervasive corruption, regulatory issues, and the lack of diversity in its economy. Further efforts to improve health and education services are also essential for economic productivity. We will press for economic and labor reforms; strengthen Bangladesh's health systems to improve health outcomes and ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19; support primary education and vocational training; and build upon strong people-to-people ties.

Bangladesh is one of the highest-risk countries in the world for natural disasters and climate change. As leader of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Bangladesh is an important partner in addressing the global threat of climate change. We will encourage Bangladesh to press other countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while working with it to increase its capacity to adapt to and withstand natural disasters, improve management of natural resources, and sustainably develop cleaner sources of the energy needed to fuel its economy.

Strengthening Bangladesh's Capacity to Contribute to Security in the Indo-Pacific and

Globally: Bangladesh plays a key and growing role in supporting international peace and security. As a traditionally moderate, secular, peaceful, and stable country, Bangladesh is an important partner in the United States' global effort to defeat terrorism. Our support for the

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country's battle against extremism focuses on increased respect for human rights, better law enforcement investigation-led operations; increased judicial system capacity to prosecute terrorism cases; stronger border and territorial water security; and preventing recruitment by violent extremist organizations. We support Bangladesh's military through a growing range of training, exchanges, exercises, and military sales.

Supporting Bangladesh's Capacity to Host Rohingya and Facilitate Third-Country

Resettlement: Bangladesh will host almost one million ethnic Rohingya refugees from Burma for the foreseeable future. Hosting these refugees places a heavy burden on Bangladesh. Unfortunately, Bangladesh continues to restrict access to education and refugees' ability to have a livelihood. As the leading international humanitarian donor, the United States has a strategic interest, in coordination with the UN and the international community, in helping Bangladesh cope with the refugee burden; ensure the crisis does not destabilize the country or the region; and devise durable solutions to this crisis, including an eventual safe, voluntary, and sustainable return of the refugees to Burma.

Building the Management and Staffing Platform Needed to Carry Out our Mission: An enhanced management and staffing platform is essential to advance the growing U.S. strategic interests in Bangladesh. Post is undergoing a compound security upgrade. This project includes renovation of Post's Consular Section, which is the eighth-largest immigrant visa processing section in the world and provides consular assistance to an estimated 10,000 U.S. citizen residents and 20,000 U.S. citizen visitors. Guaranteeing Dhaka has adequate staffing to meet our Mission goals, including promoting diversity and inclusion principles, mitigating effects of poor air quality, and improving morale remain top priorities. Post will continue to request new positions, including EPAP and EFM supporting roles, a Commercial Attaché, Labor Attaché, DHS Attaché, Staff Aide, Deputy Management Counselor, and two CDC epidemiologist positions.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: A more peaceful and stable Bangladesh, better able to provide for its own security, counter threats to U.S. interests, and serve as a growing security contributor in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Bangladesh is more capable of protecting its sovereignty, population, and borders, combating terrorism, and countering violent extremism.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Bangladesh increases its support of the international rules-based order, regional economic connectivity, and expands its security partnerships with the United States.

Mission Goal 2: Bangladesh is committed to democracy, transparency, pluralism, tolerance, good governance, and respect for human rights.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Bangladesh holds free, fair, credible, and inclusive elections at all levels, protects vulnerable populations, and ensures civil liberties.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Citizen confidence in governance institutions increases due to reduced corruption, institutional accountability, and an improved public services and human rights record.

Mission Goal 3: Bangladesh is a socially and environmentally resilient country.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Improved human capital, particularly in health and education.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Improved food and water security and air quality.
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Increased capacity to address the climate crisis and other man-made and natural disasters.

Mission Goal 4: Sustainable and broadly shared prosperity, and improved labor standards expand and diversify Bangladesh's economy and opens it to greater regional and global trade and connectivity.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Expanded fair and reciprocal trade and investment, advancement of labor conditions to international standards including the right of labor to organize, and workforce skills development widen economic prosperity across the Bangladeshi population.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** Bangladesh is an open and attractive economic market for the Indo-Pacific region.

Mission Goal 5: Bangladesh meets international standards for humanitarian protection of the Rohingya refugees and continues to host them until a safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Burma is possible.

- **Mission Objective 5.1:** Bangladesh increases its capacity and commitment to host its refugee population in accordance with international standards.

Management Objective 1: Enhanced physical infrastructure to meet standards and take COVID-related measures to ensure the safety and security of Embassy personnel.

Management Objective 2: Enhance staffing to meet increased Mission goals by promoting the Post and its activities, mitigating effects of air quality and improving morale.

Management Objective 3: Integrate the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness, and Accessibility (DEIA) into Mission operations to better support Mission goals.

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Management Objective 4: Strengthened management efficiency and operational effectiveness.

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | A more peaceful and stable Bangladesh, better able to provide for its own security, counter threats to U.S. interests, and serve as a growing security contributor in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

Description | This goal helps advance our policy priority of protecting the American people and the homeland, including through our Consular services. We work to put Bangladesh in the position of being a net security provider rather than a security consumer. As emphasized in the Interim National Security Strategy Guidance, disrupting and defeating violent extremist networks and terrorists requires denying them the ability to operate or recruit anywhere in the world, including in Bangladesh. Messaging and outreach will be key components in helping Post reach these goals, objectives, and sub-objectives.

Objective 1.1 | Bangladesh is more capable of protecting its sovereignty, population, and borders, combatting terrorism and countering violent extremism.

- **Justification** | Bangladesh's security and stability underpin the country's economic and political success. This objective begins with the ability to mitigate terrorism and other forms of criminal activity within Bangladesh's borders. Bangladesh particularly requires improved capacity to conduct investigation-led operations and develop a sophisticated understanding of its adversaries to detect and disrupt them before they act. More broadly, Bangladesh must prevent transnational criminal organizations from propagating their ideology, accumulating personnel or resources, or planning and carrying out attacks. U.S. support also aims at buttressing Bangladesh's ability to shelter Rohingya refugees forcibly displaced from Burma to help preserve Bangladesh's stability (see Mission Goal 5). Finally, U.S. assistance and military sales facilitate Bangladesh's significant contributions to UN peacekeeping efforts.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objectives 1.2, 1.3, 3.3 and Goal 4 of the SCA-ASIA Joint Regional Strategy; and Objectives 1.4 and 1.5 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan; and links to pages 13-14 of the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective may leave Bangladesh less able to govern or sustain its population, threatening its basic stability, and thereby our relationship and interests in the region.

Objective 1.2 | Bangladesh increases its support of the international rules-based order, regional economic connectivity, and expands its security partnerships with the United States.

- **Justification** | With improved capacity, Bangladesh has the potential to be a more significant security partner fostering greater regional stability and helping to sustain global peace. Increased interoperability among all Bangladeshi security forces will further enable the country to provide for its own domestic security. Improved security at Bangladeshi air and seaports will reduce the country's vulnerability to terrorist and criminal activity as well as provide greater stability for international trade. Deepening the U.S.-Bangladesh defense relationship through bilateral enabling defense agreements and increased sales of more advanced U.S. military equipment to Bangladesh will expand U.S. access to and interoperability with Bangladesh. Finally, to support Indo-Pacific Strategy goals Bangladesh must protect its freedom-of-navigation, ensure equitable access to sea lanes, and promote maritime security to help advance regional stability, integration, and trade.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports Goal 4 of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy; Objective 1.4 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan; and the Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective would compromise U.S. relationships and influence in Bangladesh, hamper growth of bilateral trade, and, by extension, impede implementation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Mission Goal 2 | Bangladesh is committed to democracy, transparency, pluralism, tolerance, good governance, and respect for human rights.

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Description | Supporting democracy, good governance, and human rights is a central pillar of the Biden Administration's foreign policy and a core component of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy. Bangladesh's strategic location and its historical example as a pluralistic and tolerant Muslim democracy make it a critical partner. Respect for human rights and democratic processes, in concert with citizen confidence in governance, will reduce political distrust and increase the country's overall stability as Bangladesh looks to its national elections in 2023 and beyond. Messaging and outreach will be key components in helping Post reach these goals and meet objectives and sub-objectives.

Objective 2.1 | Bangladesh holds free, fair, credible, and inclusive elections at all levels, protects vulnerable populations, and ensures civil liberties.

- **Justification** | U.S. engagement, including collaboration with like-minded diplomatic missions, is key to strengthening Bangladesh's respect for civil liberties and tolerance and ensuring Bangladesh is a peaceful, democratic, stable, and prosperous partner. Bangladesh's embrace of such principles is not only essential to achieving long-term internal and regional security, but also ensures free expression, democratic debate, and free and fair elections can occur without the threat of political and communal violence. These principles are strongly tied to efforts to reduce and eliminate violence against minorities. Shrinking democratic space has been apparent in urban and rural areas. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region where ethnic minorities have protested GoB land policies, corruption, and displacement; and civil society leaders and foreign missions have not been able to move in and out of the CHT area freely.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports Goal 2 of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy and Objectives 1.5, 3.1, and 3.2 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.
- **Risks** | If democratic space continues to shrink in Bangladesh due to the increasing authoritarian nature of the central government, lack of progress on achieving this objective could lead to increased political instability and human rights violations and could undermine Bangladesh's economic progress, and impact Bangladesh's ability to serve as a net security provider. It may also negatively impact ties with the United

States and likeminded partners, potentially deepening GOB engagement with malign actors.

Objective 2.2 | Improve capacity and accountability of governing institutions, enhance public services and the human rights record to instill citizen confidence.

- **Justification** | Bangladesh faces four interrelated obstacles to effective governance: (1) the limited capacity of and political obstacles to developing nascent democratic institutions; (2) corruption and ineffective mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in all branches of government; (3) citizen challenges in accessing justice and the increased politicization of the justice system; (4) and the concentration of authority and resources at the national level. For most Bangladeshis, GoB accountability and responsiveness are measured in terms of the delivery of basic services, the level of corruption, the application of the rule of law and respect for human rights, and the administration of justice. For the majority of citizens, the most visible forms of governance are local government institutions. Support for increased citizen engagement and effective governance will generate increased demand for better public services, which, in turn, will culminate in improved accountability and responsiveness to citizen needs, thereby increasing citizen confidence in governance institutions.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objectives 2.1, 2.4, and 3.3 of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy and Objectives 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective could result in economic and political instability due to the further decrease in citizen confidence in government institutions, as well as diminished respect for the rule of law stemming from adverse public reaction to government corruption. At the same time, the GoB sees its hosting of approximately one million Rohingya refugees from Burma over the last five years as evidence of its humanitarian effectiveness and respect for human rights, as well as a costly barrier to investment in Bangladeshi development that will be increasingly unpopular domestically.

Mission Goal 3 | Bangladesh is a socially and environmentally resilient country.

Description | This goal focuses on building the capacity of the Bangladeshi people to ensure their well-being, productivity, and resilience. To become healthy, capable, and resilient, Bangladesh must effectively deal with natural disasters and rising seas levels. It must improve its public and private health systems and service delivery and be capable of preventing, detecting, and responding to infectious disease outbreaks that have international implications, including COVID-19. It must also accelerate improvements in the quality of education to build the skilled workforce necessary to sustain its development trajectory graduating from the status of Least Developed Country aiming toward upper-middle income status. Messaging and outreach will be key components in helping Post reach these goals and meet these objectives and sub-objectives.

Objective 3.1 | Improved human capital, particularly in health and education.

- **Justification |** Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has significantly reduced maternal and child mortality, improved the nutritional status of children and expanded access to family planning. However, challenges remain as the country looks to the next phase of its health sector development in order to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and meet the requirements of International Health regulations. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant health system weaknesses and inequities in access to health services. Strengthening and expanding the country's comprehensive approach to reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health; developing a public health infrastructure focused on prevention rather than treatment and detection; and response to infectious disease outbreaks such as COVID-19 remain high priorities for the GoB. Ongoing demographic and epidemiological changes drive increased demand for services, while resources and capacity are constrained. USAID and CDC will continue to advocate for increased domestic resources as Bangladesh aims for self-reliance while also improving efficiency in the health sector, enhancing the quality of services, and expanding equitable access.

An effective education sector is necessary for Bangladesh's development and economic ascendance. The GoB has made significant progress towards achieving universal primary education, yet the quality of education remains low. A lack of trained teachers combined with poor curricula and poor-quality education materials impede the education system's ability to provide students with the foundational literacy, critical thinking, English language, and soft skills necessary for advancement to higher levels of education and productive employment. Children marginalized due to their economic status, ethnicity, gender and/or disabilities, are disproportionately affected by the poor quality of education. The prolonged school closure due to the COVID pandemic has further constrained the quality of education and resulted in higher drop-out rates. The GoB plans to promote *Education for All*, minimize the gap in access to education, and attain equivalent educational standards between children living in urban and rural areas by ensuring effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT). However, the overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh's education sector has been weak because of limited economic and technological resources and providing ICT-based education mainly through online platforms made the urban/rural gap even wider. The improvements to the quality of education, particularly in English language learning, and a greater focus on developing critical thinking and analytical writing proficiency will provide students the foundational skills to succeed in school and the workplace. USAID will work with development partners to support alternative and accelerated education interventions. Additionally, stronger ties between Bangladesh and the U.S. through educational, academic, cultural, and professional exchanges will provide new educational and economic opportunities for Bangladeshi teachers, academics, and youth.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports 2022 Interim National Security Strategy's commitment to health, education, and resilience to climate change; objectives 1, 2, and 4 of the 2024 Global Health Security Agenda Strategic Framework; objectives 1.1, 1.5, 3.1, and 3.5 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan; the South and Central Asia Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy objectives 2.1 and 2.3; and the Indo-Pacific Strategy priorities of

enhancing human capital development and addressing environmental challenges in the region.

- **Risks** | Failure to improve Bangladesh's health status increases the risk of global pandemics and their impacts, including COVID-19, poor health outcomes, and reduced economic performance that would negatively affect U.S. interests in the region and may result in the need for additional U.S. resources to mitigate those risks. Failure to develop an effective education sector may create the risk of slower economic growth, increase vulnerability of children, and especially for girls, strengthen the influence of nefarious actors and U.S. competitors, and increase the need for additional U.S. resources to mitigate those risks.

Objective 3.2 | Improved food and water security and air quality.

- **Justification** | Close to a third of Bangladesh's population experiences moderate or severe food insecurity and more than half of Bangladeshis lack access to safe drinking water. To improve food and water security, the U.S. will work on both the supply and demand sides, with a special focus on women and youth. On the supply side, the U.S. will help expand access to technology, finance, and markets, while supporting the growth of key agricultural sectors, such as food grains, vegetables, pulses, fruits, livestock, and fish. On the demand side, the U.S. will raise awareness of effective and appropriate nutritional and hygiene practices through behavioral change communications. The main objective is to sustainably intensify agricultural production, while at the same time increasing the availability, accessibility, awareness, and utilization of nutritious foods. The U.S. will continue to improve access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities while increasing awareness of best hygiene practices for vulnerable communities. In addition to Bangladesh's food and water insecurity challenges, Bangladesh's air quality ranks among the worst in the world, with levels of particulate matter many times greater than those recommended by the World Health Organization. To address this, the U.S. will continue assisting Bangladesh to

protect natural resources and increase public awareness of and engagement on air quality issues.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports objectives 1.1 and 1.2 of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy, and objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, and 3.5 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.
- **Risks** | Failure to improve food and water security and to reduce high levels of pollution will threaten the health of Bangladesh's population. The continued unhealthy quality of the country's air poses a serious risk to the long-term health of the population.

Objective 3.3 | Increased capacity to address the climate crisis and other man-made and natural disasters.

- **Justification** | Bangladesh was ranked the seventh most climate impacted country on the Global Country Risk Index by Germanwatch in 2021. Rising seas, floods, and intensifying cyclones are just a few of the impacts that threaten Bangladesh's development gains and livelihood security. In addition, Bangladesh faces increased water shortages; loss of critical ecosystems; environmental destruction; native flora and fauna depletion; climate-driven migration; food and health insecurities; lack of resilient infrastructure; and risks of escalating conflict. Rapid population growth and development are driving increased demand for energy, water, food, and transportation, thereby increasing both carbon emissions and air pollution. Consistent with the United States' priority of tackling the climate crisis and because climate impacts respect no national borders, the United States will continue to be a leader in assisting Bangladesh to strengthen its capacity and mobilize resources to accelerate implementation of climate adaption, resilience, and mitigation measures across sectors from climate-smart agriculture to clean energy deployment, protect critical ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, protect wildlife, increase resilience, and respond to natural and man-made disasters.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports the Interim National Security Strategy; Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad; the SCA Joint Regional Strategy objective 1.2; and the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan objectives 1.2 and 1.5.

- **Risks** | Failure to strengthen resilience to natural hazards increases the risk of political, social, and economic instability by threatening Bangladesh's food and health security, increases its susceptibility to unfriendly actors, and consequently may require additional U.S. resources to mitigate these risks.

Mission Goal 4 | Sustainable and broadly shared prosperity, and improved labor standards expand and diversify Bangladesh's economy, opens it to greater regional and global trade and connectivity.

Description | A growing and prosperous Bangladesh creates opportunities for fair and transparent export of U.S. goods and services, and increased reciprocal trade and investment. It also creates a more diversified economy and enhances Bangladesh's resilience in the face of potential economic shocks. Greater trade and regional connectivity will facilitate a more integrated and open Indo-Pacific region. Improving labor conditions in Bangladesh to international standards will also facilitate greater trade by reducing labor-related roadblocks.

Objective 4.1 | Expanded fair and reciprocal trade and investment, advancement of labor conditions to international standards—including the right of labor to organize, and workforce skills development widen economic prosperity across the Bangladeshi population.

- **Justification** | With an average annual growth rate of nearly seven percent, the GoB and business sector are increasingly interested in creating an environment to improve productivity, attract investment, and diversify supply chains. USG programs and activities target increasing U.S. exports; promoting inclusive growth through private sector partnerships, public-private partnerships, entrepreneurship development, and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and agribusiness; improving access to finance; and improving productivity and the income generation potential of small farming households. Post advocates for Bangladesh to meet international worker's rights standards and economic empowerment that can ensure economic growth is not achieved at the expense of worker safety and labor rights and reduce labor-related trade irritants. The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in many factories, particularly in the

crucial ready-made garment (RMG) sector, reducing workers' hours and positions, rendering workers' unions ineffective in bargaining, and advocating for labor rights. Bangladesh will be better positioned to expand exports from over-dependence on the RMG sector through workforce skills development, which also will lead to more inclusive economic growth in rural areas. Further, increased engagement among the Bangladeshi diaspora in promoting greater U.S.-Bangladesh trade and investment remains a top priority. Engagement includes partnership with the U.S.-Bangladesh Business Council, American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, and other economic-focused organizations.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports the SCA Joint Regional Strategy goals 2 and 3; the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan objectives 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, and 3.5; the Indo-Pacific Strategy; and the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy.
- **Risks** | Failure to expand inclusive economic growth and increase fair and reciprocal trade and investment can impact stability, limit Bangladesh's ability to attract foreign investment, and hinder further economic growth.

Objective 4.2 | Bangladesh is an open and attractive economic market for the Indo-Pacific region.

- **Justification** | Bangladesh is poised to become a critical economic link connecting South Asia to Southeast and East Asia. Increasing the openness, transparency, and connectivity of Bangladesh's markets to regional and global partners would provide an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, promote greater stability, and open opportunities for U.S. investors. Through the Indo-Pacific Strategy and its mechanisms, the United States encourages regional cooperation to maintain free and open seaways, transparent infrastructure financing practices, unimpeded commerce, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- **Linkages** | This objective supports objectives 1.1, 3.1, 3.3, of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy; objectives 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan; and the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

- **Risks** | Failure to improve Bangladesh's regional ties will hinder economic growth and leave the country isolated and vulnerable to influence by actors less compliant with international best practices.

Mission Goal 5 | Bangladesh meets international standards for humanitarian protection of the Rohingya refugees and continues to host them until a safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Burma is possible.

Description | The Government of Bangladesh has provided safety to Rohingya refugees for decades. The most recent influx of over 700,000 refugees came in August 2017 following the genocide and crimes against humanity committed by members of the Burmese military. As of January 1, 2022, approximately 918,841 Rohingya refugees are registered in Bangladesh, residing in 33 congested camps in Cox's Bazar – the largest refugee camps in the world – as well as on the island of Bhasan Char. The violence in Burma following the February 2021 military coup d'état limits the possibility for the Rohingya to return in the short to medium term given the lack of progress made by Burma in creating conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return. Total USG humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya response since 2017 is over \$1.7 billion. Given the magnitude of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, and the significant U.S. role as the largest humanitarian donor to the crisis since its inception in 2017, Post determined a specific Mission Goal was justified.

Objective 5.1 | Bangladesh increases its capacity and commitment to host its refugee population in accordance with international standards.

- **Justification** | Bangladesh's internal security and stability are significantly impacted by the continued presence of approximately one million Rohingya refugees forced to flee from Burma. Building on Bangladesh's willingness to accept and house these refugees in camps, it is essential to bolster sustainable logistical and operational mechanisms for the camps, in coordination with the international community and Government of Bangladesh. Recognizing repatriation of these refugees will not be immediate, Bangladesh requires political and financial support to sustain efforts to manage this

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crisis over the mid-to-long-term, while efforts to secure Burma's commitment to safely repatriate Rohingya refugees continue. Advocacy, financial support, and outreach to key stakeholders will help Post reach these goals.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports objective 1.3 of the SCA Joint Regional Strategy; each of the four pillars of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy; objectives 1.3, 1.5, and 3.4 of the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan; and the Indo-Pacific Strategy priorities under the security and governance pillars.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective would imperil Bangladesh's record as a democratically governed regional strategic partner that respects international human rights standards and would threaten U.S. relationships and interests in the region. Advocacy, outreach, and coordination with like-minded donors, international organizations, and NGO implementers on monitoring and supporting Bangladesh's efforts to host the refugees in accordance with international standards will mitigate the risk of not meeting this objective.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Enhanced physical infrastructure to meet standards and take COVID-related measures to ensure the safety and security of Embassy personnel.

- **Justification** | The current physical infrastructure supporting Embassy Dhaka is already beyond full capacity and cannot sustain additional growth, something the Department recognized by planning to build a New Embassy Compound scheduled for occupancy in 2032. In the meantime, the embassy is undergoing upgrades to meet current DS security, and OBO structural requirements, and OIG recommendations – which have been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Linkages** | Supports SCA Joint Regional Strategy 7.1.3 (Ensure Safe, Secure, and resilient support platforms to carry our strategic priorities), State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (Protect our personnel, information, and physical infrastructure from 21st century threats), and National Security Strategic Guidance for the safety of personnel.
- **Risks** | Failure to implement these enhancements would result in an Embassy which is inefficient, insufficiently secure, unhealthy, inaccessible to differently abled staff and guests, and not conducive to conducting diplomacy and practicing good management oversight.

Management Objective 2 | Enhance staffing to meet increased Mission goals by promoting the Post and its activities, mitigating effects of air quality and improving morale.

- **Justification** | Due in part to the need for increased engagement with Bangladesh resulting from the Rohingya refugee crisis and implementation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), Embassy Dhaka's staffing is insufficient to adequately assist Bangladesh in its role in addresses these issues. A qualified and diverse workforce can best represent

America to the Bangladeshi government and people and will bring fresh perspectives towards issues of mutual concern. Additional Mission staff is required to meet address these issues, and the support it requires.

- **Linkages:** | Supports SCA Joint Regional Strategy 7.1.1 (Build resilient, engaged, and inclusive workforce through employee programs, professional development, work-life-balance, and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives); State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Objective 4.1 (Build and equip a diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce); and National Security Strategic Guidance to invest in our national security workforce, institutions, and partnerships, inspire a new generation to public service, ensure our workforce represents the diversity of our country, and modernize our decision-making processes.
- **Risks** | Failure to meet this objective could result in insufficient U.S. Government engagement with Bangladesh and a workforce that does not reflect and represent America.

Management Objective 3 | Integrate the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness, and Accessibility (DEIA) into Mission operations to better support Mission goals.

- **Justification** | A qualified and diverse workforce which represents America and its policies to Bangladeshi will show our commitment to these principles and allow for new ideas in our operations.
- **Linkages** | Supports SCA Joint Regional Strategy 7.1.1 (Build resilient, engaged, and inclusive workforce through employee programs, professional development, work-life-balance, and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives); State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Objective 4.1 (Build and equip a diverse, inclusive, resilient, and dynamic workforce); and National Security Strategic Guidance to invest in our national security workforce, institutions, and partnerships, inspire a new generation to public service,

ensure our workforce represents the diversity of our country, and modernize our decision-making processes.

- **Risks** | Failure to meet this objective could result in insufficient U.S. Government engagement with Bangladesh and a workforce that does not reflect and represent America.

Management Objective 4 | Strengthened management efficiency and operational effectiveness.

- **Justification** | Due to significant and sustained staffing shortfalls over the last several years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic despite increased engagement with Bangladesh, Post needs to increase automation, streamline processes, and create efficiencies. ICASS worldwide has emphasized the need for better data collection for more informed decision-making concerning management resource allocations. Post is following this model by concentrating on improving utilization of myServices and other reporting mechanisms to allow Mission workforce to be more effective in their duties.
- **Linkages** | Supports SCA Joint Regional Strategy 7.1.2 (Align resources and programs to strategic priorities) and 7.1.4 (Align resource to improve sustainment of missions and workforce), State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Objective 4.2 (Modernize IT and leverage data to inform decision-making and support mission delivery), and Interim National Security Strategic Guidance to match appropriate resource and as part of an integrated strategy.
- **Risks** | Failure to implement could hamper diplomatic engagement and constitute a lost opportunity to reduce government spending and increase efficiency in utilizing government resources.