

# Can the IMF loan promote clean energy?

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The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) \$4.7 billion loan is mainly to ease the pressure on Bangladesh's current account balance through various reform measures. One of the important areas of reform is to address the challenges concerning clean energy and climate change. The IMF loan will be provided under three different facilities: Extended Credit Facility (ECF), Extended Fund Facility (EFF), and Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Of the total loan, \$1.4 billion (29.8 percent) will be disbursed under the RSF, which is the main component targeting clean energy and climate change-related concerns (i.e. adaptation and mitigation measures). These loans will be provided during FY2023-26 in seven instalments upon six successful periodic reviews of the implementation of different conditions.

As self-defined, most conditions – 10 out of 12 identified conditions – that will help ensure the green transition fall under the RSF criteria. The core policy objectives of the RSF programme are: rationalising subsidies; strengthening Public Financial Management (PFM)/Public Investment Management (PIM) to increase spending efficiency and facilitate climate adaptation; greening the financial system to meet climate needs; making infrastructure investment green and resilient; strengthening climate fiscal management; and mobilising private climate finance and enhancing financial sector resilience. These reforms complement reforms under the ECF/EFF by improving climate investment potential, strengthening institutions, and enhancing climate spending efficiency to build resilience and catalyse additional official and private finance.

The sum of 12 conditions needs to be fulfilled in different phases within six reviews starting from FY23. The review phase includes only one reform status: adoption of a sustainable public procurement policy paper and an associated action plan integrating climate and green dimensions, to be completed by September 2023. It is important to note that implementing the first-phase conditions will ensure the flow of funds from the second phase onwards.

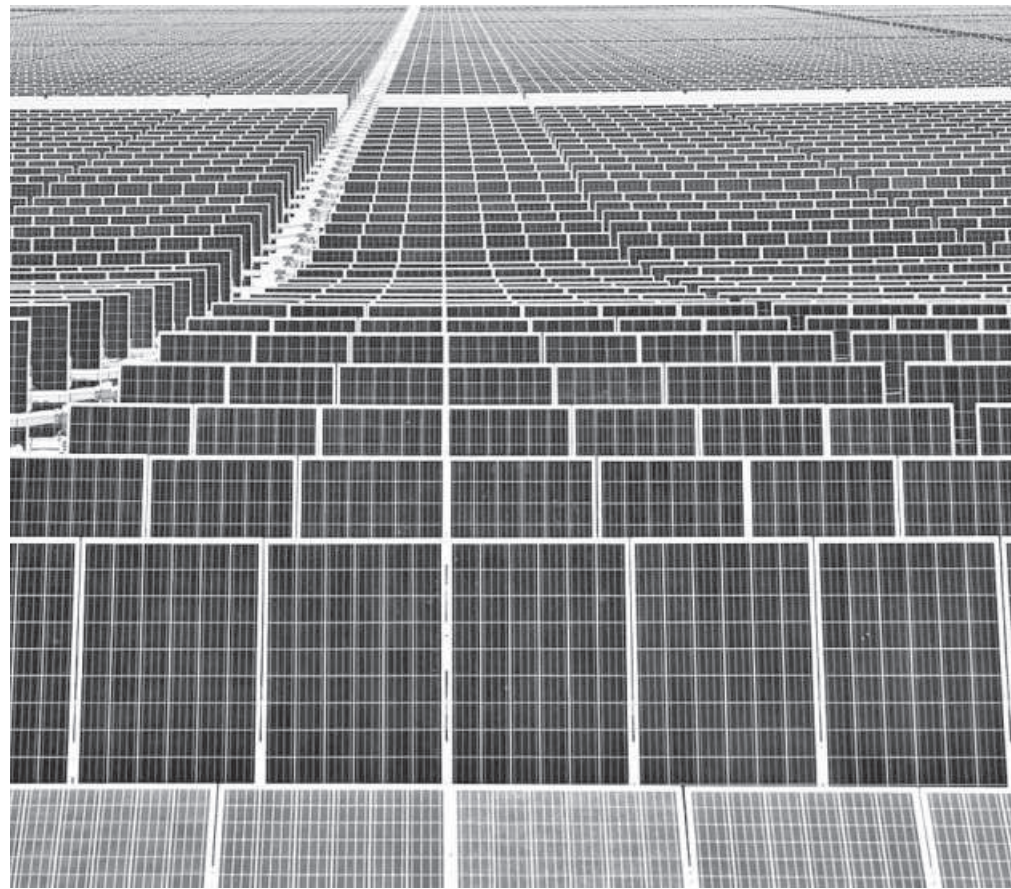
Among the medium-term conditions, five

or six can be very important in promoting clean and renewable energy, including the implementation of periodic formula-based prices, setting price adjustment mechanisms for petroleum products, and updating the policy on green bond financing by the Bangladesh Bank.

Subsidy rationalisation has been appearing and reappearing as a key reform agenda under

January-March 2023, the electricity price was hiked by 15 percent by government executive orders.

A large part of the subsidy burden is because of weak and disaffecting public policies and laws, including the non-competitive bidding process, creating excess power generation capacity, faulty pricing structure, excess capacity payment for IPPs, etc. Besides,



Clean energy, including solar energy, is a part of the reform agenda set to meet IMF loan conditionalities.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

both criteria. According to the conditionality, the subsidy mainly provided in the power and energy sector needs to be rationalised by adapting periodic formula-based prices under the ECF and EFF criteria, aiming to phase out subsidies on fossil fuel energy to promote renewable energy.

As part of the implementation of this reform agenda, the government has been gradually phasing out subsidies by raising energy and electricity tariffs. Fuel oil prices were hiked by 42.5-51.6 percent in August 2022 (amid the IMF loan discussion). Gas prices were increased up to 179 percent for industries from February 1, 2023. During

LNG import has been proposed instead of promoting gas exploration in onshore and offshore gas fields. Without addressing any of the above-mentioned issues, the government has passed its fiscal burden directly on to different categories of consumers.

The existing fiscal and monetary policies are highly discriminatory in terms of promoting renewable energy in the country. Promoting clean energy in Bangladesh will not be possible unless fossil-fuel-based energy infrastructure is not discouraged and renewable-energy-based infrastructure is not established. Hence, measures need to be taken targeting those policy and operational

weaknesses concerning fossil fuel and renewable energy.

Major reform measures will be adopting and implementing a methodology for embedding climate change in the Medium-Term Macroeconomic Framework (MTMF), analysing macro-fiscal risks from climate change, and publishing it in the Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Statement (MTMPS). Just analysing the macro-fiscal risks from climate change will not be adequate to make a big difference in the clean energy situation.

Such a policy statement is expected to put emphasis not only on adaptation, but also on mitigation measures related to climate change. Considering the policy targets set in achieving renewable energy – 30 percent by 2030, according to the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP), and 40 percent by 2041, according to the prime minister – the policy statement should set short- to medium-term targets for achieving renewable energy goals and the related methodology to be stipulated there.

Another important reform area is major infrastructure projects implemented under public and private investments in two important sectors. In the RMG sector, reforms have also started through the brands and buyers. Setting renewable energy portfolio standards for industries by the government and brand buyers can be the beginning of the clean energy era. Since the RMG sector has been building green factories (178 green/LEED-certified factories as of November 2022) targeting energy efficiency, resource reuse and clean energy, it is expected that renewable energy-based portfolio standards can be set and implemented in the coming years.

The Bangladesh Bank's policy on green bond financing for banks and financial institutions needs to be updated in the green taxonomy, particularly as it had to be aligned with the NAP to green the financial system. The existing policy promotes renewable energy in five specific activities: a) low carbon electricity; b) heating and cooling; c) generation of electricity using solar PV technology; d) hybrid renewable-powered electricity, heating and cooling, manufacture of renewable energy technologies, installation of renewable energy technologies (excluding solar pumps); and e) renewable-energy-led electricity transmission and distribution. All the activities in the green bond policy of the low carbon electricity, heating and cooling sector should include renewable and clean energy in some way or another.

Despite having such policies, the green bond is still not so popular as a mode of financing. Hence, financing fossil-fuel-based energy and electricity need to be discouraged and should be a part of green bond financing.

It is a fact that reform measures promoted under the IMF conditionalities addressing climate change-related hazards and clean energy development would be a kickstart. Moreover, implementation of the targeted measures is now crucial to see how far the reforms could be achieved. These reforms could ensure clean energy development, helping to eradicate the dominance of fossil fuel in Bangladesh. Hence, a set of parallel initiatives need to be undertaken targeting the structural weaknesses of the gas sector and power sector development to ensure energy transition, and thereby achieve the targeted 40 percent renewable energy use by 2041.

## Digital divide: The new face of gender inequality



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**GITANJALI SINGH**

The 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the largest global intergovernmental forum dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, successfully closed its two-week session (March 6-17) with the acknowledgment of the critical role of technology and innovation in achieving gender equality. This year's CSW provided a unique opportunity to have a dialogue on shaping a future where technology contributes to transforming harmful social norms, amplifying women's voices, pushing back against online harassment, promoting safe and equitable usage, and distributing the benefits of digitalisation equally to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Global data shows that women are 18 percent less likely than men to own a smartphone and far less likely to access or use the internet. While girls perform equally well as boys in science in most countries, just 28 percent of engineering graduates and 22 percent of artificial intelligence (AI) workers worldwide are women. They hold fewer positions globally in the technology industry and are subject to a 21 percent wage disparity. Moreover, nearly half of all women in the IT industry have experienced workplace harassment.

With the converging crises of climate change, costs of living, conflicts, and the Covid pandemic, we are witnessing a reversal in gender equality gains. This has further magnified the unequal

pace of digital transformation within and across countries, intensifying systemic barriers for women and girls, including the dangers they face online. As a result, the distance remaining to achieve SDG 5 is even longer.

The integration of a gender perspective in technology and innovation is crucial to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The UN secretary-general's report on the priority theme "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" provides an analysis of how to harness technology and innovation for gender equality. It sheds light on four key issues related to Access, Ecosystems, Design, and Safety:

**Access** – Taking an intersectional approach to ensure meaningful digital access and use that provides unique opportunities and life-long learning experiences that empower women; equal digital learning and skills that are technical as well as transferable; allowing women and girls to be both safe and empowered in their use of technology; and increased representation and leadership of women in STEM education that breaks societal stereotypes.

**Ecosystems** – Shaping inclusive and transformative innovation ecosystems that require a multidimensional policy framework that considers gender aspects and targets across all dimensions; have targets in place to measure the digital

transformation of economies and societies to develop evidence-based policies and programmes; have financial levers such as private sector investments; and a future of work that creates decent jobs that address skill gaps and stereotypes.

**Design** – Embedding gender perspectives across innovation and technology design, development, and deployment through the assembly of gender-balanced cross-functional teams; adopting a human rights-based approach to prevent, address, and eliminate safety and security risks; and have ethical frameworks and new regulations in place to ensure transparency and accountability in efforts to address unregulated behaviours and standards in ICTs, including the potential harm of products and services and usage of data.

**Safety** – Preventing and eliminating technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV) that requires digital citizenship teaching to counter not only gendered disinformation and sexist hate speech, but also positive values of empathy and ethical use of digital media; improved coherence in policy actions that do not threaten freedom of expression, law enforcement coordination, and expansion and amendment of legal frameworks; and improved accountability of state and non-state actors that accounts for comprehensive data on the prevalence of tech-facilitated GBV and transparent regulatory approaches with regard to the safety of women and girls and digital product design.

In February, a national consultation organised by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) supported by UN Women Bangladesh brought together participants from 13 line ministries, civil society representatives, and development partners to provide inputs to the CSW67's draft agreed conclusions. Affirming gender equality to be a constitutional commitment

for Bangladesh, Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP, the state minister for MoWCA, stated the government's commitment to increase women's participation in ICT by 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2041 at the CSW67 Ministerial Roundtable.

For technology and innovation to respond to the needs of women and girls and offer transformative digital solutions, the agreed conclusions endorsed by the member states have the following actionable recommendations that will help strengthen the Smart Bangladesh vision of a knowledge-based and digitally inclusive economy: 1) prioritising digital equity in policies to close the gender digital divide; 2) leveraging financing for inclusive digital transformation and innovation towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; 3) fostering gender-responsive digital and science and technology education in the digital age; 4) promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership as well as full employment of women in technology and innovation; 5) adopting gender-responsive technology design, development, and deployment; 6) strengthening fairness, transparency, and accountability in the digital age; 7) enhancing data science to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; and 8) preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technologies.

UN Women along with sister UN agencies stands ready to support the Government of Bangladesh and civil society organisations to bridge the gender digital divide, and as the UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently highlighted, "The math is simple: without the insights and creativity of half the world, science and technology will fulfil just half their potential."

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**CORRIGENDUM**

With respect to the CORRIGENDUM No. 14.39.0000.012.07.001.23.75, Date: 16 March 2023, the following changes has been made for the Tender Notice No. 14.39.0000.012.07.001.23.36; Tender Publication Date: 15/02/2023 \*Procurement of Multiple Carrier Per Channel (MCP) Broadcast Platform\*:

IFT SI. No.	Reference Clause of Tender Notice	Existing	Amended As
13	Tender last selling date	19/03/2023 Time: 04:00pm	29/03/2023 Time: 03:30pm
14	Tender closing date and time	20/03/2023 Time: 12:05pm	30/03/2023 Time: 12:05pm
15	Tender opening date and time	20/03/2023 Time: 12:20pm	30/03/2023 Time: 12:20pm

(Signed)  
**Md. Shafiqul Islam**  
Managing Director (Additional Charge)  
Email: [procurement@bscl.com.bd](mailto:procurement@bscl.com.bd)

GD-530

**রাঙ্গামাটি বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়**  
বাগড়াবিল, রাঙ্গামাটি-৪৫০০  
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সূত্র: রাঙ্গামাটি/প্রকিউরমেন্ট/নেটওয়ার্ক সার্ভার স্থাপন/২০২৩/২২২ তারিখ: ২৩/০৩/২০২৩ইং

**Invitation for Goods**  
**Rangamati Science and Technology University**

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education
2. Agency	University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
3. Procuring entity name	Rangamati Science and Technology University
4. Procuring entity district	Rangamati
5. Invitation for	Goods
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>	
6. Procurement method	Open Tender Method (OTM)
7. Budget and source of fund	GoB
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>	
8. Project/programme name	Not applicable
9. Tender Package No.	OTM
10. Tender publication date	23/03/2023
11. Tender last collection date	10/04/2023 (office hours)
12. Tender closing date and time	11/04/2023; 12:00pm
13. Tender opening date and time	11/04/2023; 12:30pm
14. Name & address of the offices	
Collection of tender document	Procurement Department, Administrative Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Jhagrabil, Rangamati-4500.
Receiving tender document	Procurement Department, Administrative Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Jhagrabil, Rangamati-4500.
15. Place of opening tender	Procurement Department, Administrative Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Jhagrabil, Rangamati-4500.
16. Price of tender document	300.00/- (three hundred Taka only)
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>	
17. Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	a). Updated trade license, b) TIN certificate, c) VAT registration certificate, d) Bank solvency certificate; and e). Experience in relevant work and other qualifications (as mentioned in tender documents/schedule).
18. Brief description of works	"Installation of Network Server for Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rangamati"
<b>PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS</b>	
19. Name of official inviting tender	Abdul Gafur
20. Designation of official inviting tender	Assistant Director (P&D)
21. Address of official inviting tender	Rangamati Science and Technology University, Jhagrabil, Rangamati-4500
22. Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 0351-62139
23. Special instruction	1. The procuring entity preserves the right to reject all tenders or annul tender proceeding. 2. If it is not possible to open the tender on the schedule date for any unavoidable circumstance, the same will be open on the next working day at the same time and same venue.

(Signed)  
**Abdul Gafur**  
Assistant Director (P&D)  
Rangamati Science and Technology University

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