

**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE**

Report No.: PIDA54537

Project Name	IN:Citizen-Centric Service Delivery Reform Assam (P150308)
Region	SOUTH ASIA
Country	India
Sector(s)	Public administration- Information and communications (50%), Sub-national government administration (50%)
Theme(s)	Other public sector governance (50%), e-Government (50%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P150308
Borrower(s)	Government of Assam
Implementing Agency	Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services (ARIAS) Society
Environmental Category	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared/Updated	12-Feb-2016
Date PID Approved/Disclosed	12-Feb-2016
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	
Estimated Date of Board Approval	18-Mar-2016
Appraisal Review Decision (from Decision Note)	

I. Project Context

Country Context

With 1.2 billion people and the world's fourth-largest economy, India's recent growth and development has been impressive, however this has been accompanied by growing inequality. Life expectancy has more than doubled, literacy rates have quadrupled, health conditions have improved, and a sizeable middle class has emerged. Inequity in all dimensions –region, caste and gender –remains a key challenge to be addressed. Poverty rates in India's poorest states are three to four times higher than those in the more advanced states. With a per capita income of US\$1410 (in 2011), India ranks among the lower tier of middle-income countries. Economic development and growth has been uneven and the eastern and north-eastern states have lagged behind.

The North Eastern States of India such as Assam face geographic isolation and severe service delivery challenges. Service delivery access continues to be a major challenge, arising from hilly terrain, poor connectivity and access, particularly in remote and rural underserved areas. To improve access to services, the Government of India has made notable efforts to support digitization of service delivery. However, e-Governance reform in Assam has not kept pace with

the rest of the country.

Once one of the most prosperous states, the Northeast state of Assam has faced natural disasters, insurgency and social tension and is now one of the poorest in India. With a population of 31 million (38% of which are poor) and a GDP per capita of US\$383, Assam's profile looks similar to other low-income states in India. Assam has wrestled with natural disasters, ethnic clashes, internal displacement of people due to social tensions, which have required exclusive focus on crisis management and public administration. As a result, there was little space in the past to focus on service delivery improvements. Assam has 3.88 million tribal people which accounts for 12.45% of the total population and 3.72% of the tribal population in India. Tribal live predominantly in 10 districts and 90 % of them belong to eight major tribes.

Sectoral and institutional Context

Access to Services Challenges from the Supply Side

Assam's service delivery system is marked by limited efficiency, inaccessibility and a lack of "citizen-friendliness". A first challenge is that the majority of processes at the district and sub-district levels are paper-based. The systems are primarily manual stand-alone systems, usually with no web-based capacities or database integration. Manual processing of applications limits service delivery efficiency because of cumbersome processes, and delays. Repeated citizen attempts to procure services and associated travel time and costs can encourage rent-seeking and middlemen, which deters people from accessing services on the front end. Second, ICT infrastructure in the state remains in the early phases of development, and many regions remain disconnected from networks and telecom connectivity, limiting service access points and resulting in high personal transport costs for securing services. Third, front-line institutions, which are the citizen's window to government, may operate in a non-transparent and bureaucratic manner and lack "citizen friendliness" which can create further opportunities for rent-seeking.

Front-line service delivery institutions are understaffed, fragmented and not well-understood by citizens. The District Office (DO), headed by the Deputy Commissioner (DC), plays the lead role in service provision. There is insufficient organizational and personnel capacity in the offices of DCs and subordinate offices. The challenge of low capacity is compounded by heavy administrative burdens and wide variations in staffing patterns across district offices. In addition, most of the 31 Government-to-Citizen (G2C) Departments maintain their own individual offices, while 3,000 public-private Common Service Centers (CSCs) - entrepreneurial village-based service centers – provide local access to a handful of digital services ("e-services"). In sum, many essential services for the poor and vulnerable are administered through a myriad of front-line delivery institutions.

Despite National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) efforts to provide a foundation for state-wide ICT connectivity, Assam's ICT infrastructure remains weak. NeGP resources have provided an important first step toward establishing a foundation for statewide connectivity in Assam; however, this core architecture remains operationally limited. Neither the State Data Center nor the State Wide Area Network (SWAN) is fully functional, calling for an infrastructure overhaul. Many parts of the state are not ICT networked at all. Lack of power in many areas and non-availability of communication bandwidth – below block and circle level – limit village level connectivity. While some states have chosen to finance their own last mile connectivity, others with modest resources such as Assam, are more dependent on central resources and initiatives. Lastly, NeGP did not finance horizontal connectivity– limiting communication among offices functioning at the same

level as well as communication among multiple departments.

Access to Services Challenges from the Demand Side

Citizen access to public services is limited by geographic isolation, connectivity, and social and ethnic factors. First, Assam's geography, topography and connectivity make service access and delivery difficult. Second, limited transport and communication infrastructure in certain parts of the state impose unreasonable costs on citizens for securing Government services. Third, social conflict in some areas has resulted in limited service delivery and development activities, internal displacement, and a degree of marginalization of local tribes and minority communities. Fourth, Assam's ethnic diversity makes it challenging to develop a service delivery system which can respond flexibly to different needs.

Service delivery is provider-centered with limited involvement of citizens in the process. Citizen engagement is a critical approach to improving accountability associated with service delivery. Limited civil society presence in the state has resulted in a service delivery system that is provider-centered, with less emphasis on ensuring that citizens have reliable access to services they need. There have been only limited attempts to ensure that citizens are aware of their entitlements and are informed about where to go and how to access a service or enhance their current access to services.

Effective citizen engagement towards ensuring accessible and responsive services would need to address several challenges. They include the development of key accountability mechanisms, particularly the effective implementation of Assam's Right to Public Services (RTPS) law, (ii) targeted support to selected departments involved in key service delivery functions, and (iii) the mainstreaming of citizen feedback and engagement mechanisms. Also, it would be critical to ensure that the Assam RTPS law is extended to the six autonomous districts so citizens living in those areas can also benefit from timely, efficient, and accountable service delivery.

Improving Public Service Delivery

In 2012, the state Government passed the "Assam Right to Public Services Act" (ARTPS) to strengthen service delivery. Fourteen out of 31 service delivery departments participate in the RTPS initiative which aims to improve efficiency and accountability of delivery. In particular, RTPS assures citizens of time-bound service delivery and of a formal appellate process which can penalize the responsible government official in case of non-compliance. Currently, these 14 departments provide 55 RTPS services, and the Government is in the process of expanding this number. The vast majority of these services are government authorizations, approvals, licenses or certifications that citizens need in order to access basic services. The certificates are essential documentation for securing entitlements and access to core social services, such as schooling and educational scholarships, which are fundamental for the most vulnerable citizens. Citizen consultations in Assam indicated however that the implementation of RTPS needs to be reinforced, since most citizens were unaware of RTPS services and how to access them.

The Government of Assam aims to deepen the service delivery reforms and provide equitable access to critical services through a citizen-centered reform program. The GoA has initiated a program to improve access to service delivery, efficiency, and accountability. The program aims to strengthen service delivery by strengthening the implementation of the state's RTPS Act; e-enabling and restructuring processes in select departments with a large public interface; creating a network of one-stop-shops to electronically process service delivery applications under RTPS, particularly at the block and circle levels; and establishing effective citizen feedback mechanisms.

II. Proposed Development Objectives

The Project Development Objective is to improve access in the delivery of select public services in Assam.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Component 1. Technical Assistance

Comments (optional)

Sub-component 1. Strengthening RTPS implementation

Sub-component 2. Supporting Process Re-engineering in Targeted Services

Sub-component 3. Setting up One-Stop Service Centers

Sub-component 4. Promoting Citizen Engagement

Component Name

Component 2. Results-based Financing

Comments (optional)

A result-based financing approach will be used to provide incentives for achieving key results. Specifically, this component supports the Government's Program which aims to broaden access to RTPS services particularly with regard to scheduled areas, increase the number of notified services and incentivize the establishment of one-stop service centers across the state. This component aims to support the Government of Assam to implement critical public management reforms related to delivery of public services. It will disburse upon achievement of key results as measured by four Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs), against the execution of agreed-to Eligible Expenditures Programs (EEPs).

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	49.00	Total Bank Financing:	39.20
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			9.80
International Development Association (IDA)			39.20
Total			49.00

V. Implementation

A High-Level Project Steering Committee has been established for the overall management of the Project. The Committee is headed by the Chief Secretary with the Secretaries of major departments as members. The Steering Committee will provide strategic direction, facilitate coordination among different departments, and resolve any major problems that may affect Project implementation. An Executive Committee will directly oversee the Project and be responsible for regular monitoring. The Executive Committee will be chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary (Administrative Reforms and Training); other members will be the Secretaries of Finance, Planning & Development, Revenue, WPT&BC, IT, Health & FW and Personnel Departments. The mandate of the Executive Committee will include routine coordination among involved departments. It will be responsible for monitoring the Project's goals and targets on a regular basis.

The Department of Administrative Reform and Training (AR&T) will provide policy and technical

support for the Project. The Project Executive Committee will be chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary of AR&T who will serve as the Vice-Chair of the Project Steering Committee. A Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society (ARIAS) which will be responsible for day to day implementation and compliance with Bank processes and procedures. ARIAS has been tasked with implementing Bank-Financed projects in Assam. A Project Management Unit (PMU) within ARIAS will coordinate with all participating or recipient agencies and liaise with the Bank. The PMU will oversee technical inputs, consolidate required documentation, and conduct financial management and procurement related to the Project. The PMU will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Bank's financial management, procurement regulations and safeguard requirements, and reporting to the Bank in a timely manner.

The State Project Director of ARIAS will serve as Project Director and Project will be responsible for implementation, coordination of technical activities and the supervision of the PMU. Nodal officers in targeted departments will drive process re-engineering and/or e-enablement, using PMU-appointed staff. The Project Director will serve as the Member Secretary of both the Steering and Executive Committees. The GoA requested and executed a Project Preparation Advance (PPA) as a means of fast-tracking the start of the Project. This funding has allowed the Project to establish the PMU and move forward with initial contracting and procurement.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	x	
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x
Pest Management OP 4.09		x
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		x
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	x	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		x
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x

Comments (optional)

The project is likely to have limited impacts on the environment, as activities supported are mostly small scale and located within existing building complexes, and has been assigned Category B. A simple environmental management plan has been prepared for implementing necessary measures to ensure that the issues are handled systematically and in line with requirements of the GoI and World Bank OP4.01. The key issues include the management of electric generators – gaseous and noise emissions, vibrations, and fuel storage, and handling and disposal of not-in-use equipment that are potentially hazardous material. These would include Batteries, which may contain Lead and would need to be recycled, and electronic equipment like computers that would need to be properly stored and recycled. Temporary impacts during installation and small construction to accommodate the installations would be managed so that the risk to safe movement of people using the facility is minimized. The ARIAS society, where the PMU is located, will confirm that the EMP formats have been properly filled and measures undertaken in line with the stipulations. The draft EMP cleared by the Bank has been disclosed by the Government and consultations with key stakeholders took place on February 9, 2016 in Guwahati.

While the project would be centered on participation and inclusion initiatives, special efforts will be made to reach out to tribal people. Assam has 3.88 million tribal people which accounts for 12.45% of the total population and 3.72% of the tribal population in India. A Tribal Development Plan (TDP) has been prepared to ensure that the tribal populations impacted by the project are adequately and fully consulted, and included in the entire process of preparation, implementation and monitoring of the project. There is not likely to be any involuntary resettlement given that project facilities will be housed in the existing government buildings and hence acquisition of lands is not warranted.

VII. Contact point

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