

# Toward a digital Bangladesh: Enabling remote supervision with on-the-ground insights



Credit: World Bank

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- *Bangladesh is the first country in the South Asia region to implement the Geo-Enabling initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS) initiative of the World Bank.*
- *The GEMS initiative is helping the Bangladesh government to address knowledge gaps in operations and challenges to collecting data for its active development projects.*

- *Under the GEMS initiative, 117 government staff from 20 projects have been trained to use digital platforms for data collection, analysis, and management, which have already started to yield results.*
- 

Since 2000, Bangladesh has been one of the fastest growing economies in the world. To sustain its growth and development, timely implementation of development projects will be critical.

How can the government keep track of progress and assure that the intended impact is reaching the right beneficiaries, and on time?

[Geospatial data](#), which provides various types of data specific to a location, is integral to making evidence-based decisions in development and public policy. Moreover, accurate and reliable data is critical to [combating poverty](#). Data collection poses obstacles, however.

To address knowledge gaps in operations and challenges to collecting data, the Bangladesh government and the World Bank took a bold step by adapting an innovative approach to digitally monitor how projects are being implemented and impacting livelihoods across Bangladesh through the [Geo-Enabling initiative for Monitoring and Supervision](#) (GEMS) initiative.

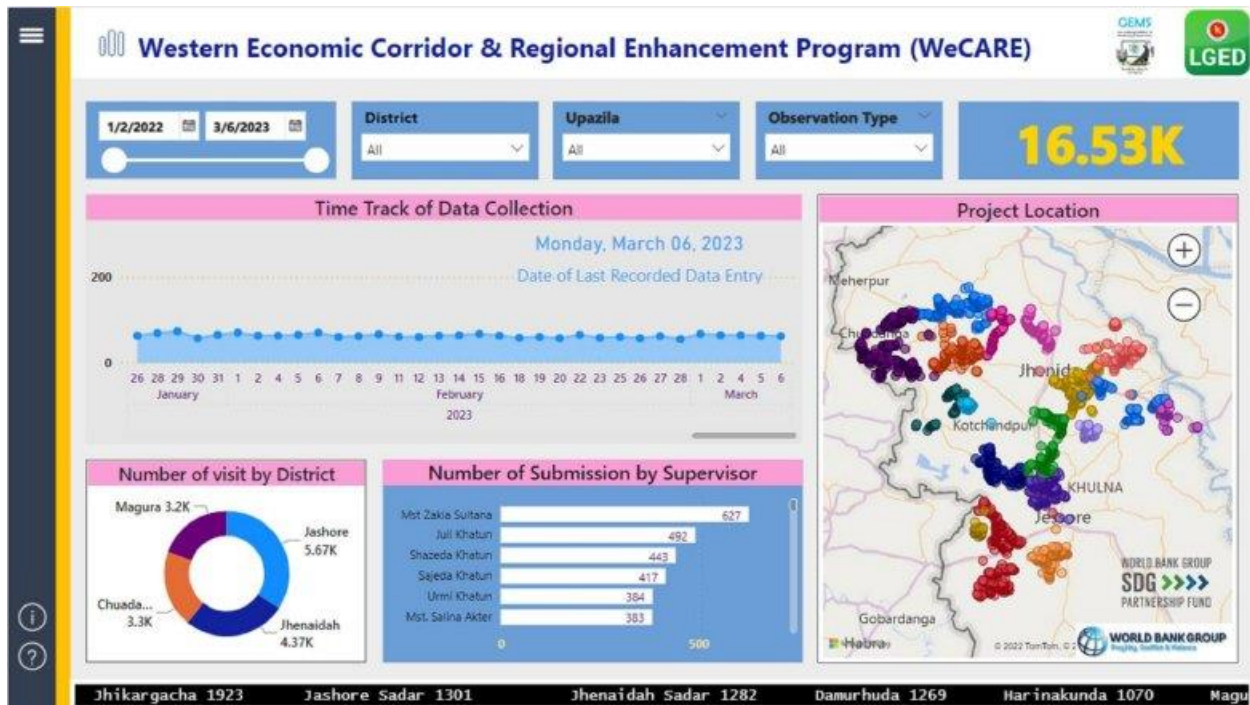
---

The Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP) tested a few GEMS features last year in the area of mapping and data collection. Training provided by the World Bank on GEMS enabled project monitoring staff to explore new possibilities for in-depth macro analysis and informed decision-making. This work was a valuable investment in improving the project's effectiveness and impact.

**Eun Joo Allison Yi**

*Senior Environment Specialist, The World Bank*

---



WeCARE project monitoring dashboard, visualizing data from market surveys.

GEMS is a World Bank capacity building program that trains and supports government counterparts, local stakeholders, and partners in the use of simple, free, open-source, and thus scalable technology and methods for digital data collection and analysis. While keeping costs to a minimum, GEMS allows operations to enhance the transparency and accuracy of project monitoring and evaluation efforts, and increase the accountability for third party monitoring conducted by external teams.

Project teams design and deploy questionnaires based on their information needs, which enables them to build customized, digital monitoring and evaluation platforms. Such platforms hold valuable data from simple text responses to multimedia files, GPS locations, metadata, and more. The system ensures data ownership by government agencies, as well as the security and privacy of data.

By bolstering capacity at the *local* level of project teams, GEMS also fosters sustainability. Trained local counterparts can –and often- do scale the method. Knowledge and expertise endure even after World Bank projects end.

So far, 117 government staff from 20 projects have been trained to use digital platforms for data collection, analysis, and management. As part of the training, project teams take part in a comprehensive data collection exercise where staff working in project sites gather granular indicators from field locations across the country by responding to a standardized survey on their smartphones.

---

### **Impact: More data for better decision-making**

The Government of Bangladesh has quickly implemented the GEMS platform across several projects for a variety of monitoring needs.

- The [Sustainable Enterprise Project](#) (SEP) measures project impact on micro enterprises that are within the scope of the project, to gain a better understanding of micro-enterprises' adoption of environmentally sustainable practices. The geo-referenced project indicators help compare implementation footprint with environmental threats.
- The [Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project](#) (DCNUP) monitors road construction weekly. Encouraged by the facilitated remote monitoring, the team plans to start a survey to measure user satisfaction levels for the completed activities. The [National Agricultural Technology Program- Phase II](#) (NATP-2) monitors some 40,000 farmers who engage in the same livelihood activities and share socio-economic conditions to increase smallholder farmers' agricultural productivity and improve their access to market opportunities.
- As part of the [Health Sector Support Project](#), the [Directorate General of Family Planning](#) monitors COVID-related indicators amongst staff and facilities in Moulvibazaar district, and conducts satellite clinic inspections to survey the details on services provided and demographics served, among others..
- The [Western Economic Corridor and Regional Enhancement Program](#) (WeCARE) has conducted over 35,000 market condition surveys and monitors the daily attendance of more than 700 crew members. The [Local Government Engineering Department](#) (LGED), with GEMS support, connected the market inspection data from the field to a powerful dashboard. The intuitive visualization and comprehensive, analytical insight enhance their decision making toward revamping Western Bangladesh.

***“We are using GEMS for remote supervision of the activities of the Labor Contracting Society (LCS) including LCS crew’s attendance monitoring, surveying market dynamics and rural road conditions. We are also getting real time pictures from our project sites through GEMS. In the future, we are planning to use GEMS for civil construction works progress monitoring systems.”***

- Momin Mozibul Haque Shamaji, *Project Director, Western Economic Corridor and Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE)*

## **Digital Bangladesh, and Beyond**

Although GEMS has supported over 900 projects globally, Bangladesh leads the first nation-wide GEMS implementation effort in South Asia. Coinciding with the celebration of the 50-year partnership between Bangladesh and World Bank, the collaborative approach to roll out the program has not only brought success in Bangladesh, but it could also inspire other nations and development partners in the region to consider similar approaches to monitoring and supervising projects. In the Africa region, where GEMS engagements are most advanced, partnerships led to the birth of a [sister program](#) by the African Development Bank. In South Asia, the World Bank is working closely with governments in Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Nepal in efforts to digitize their monitoring systems with GEMS.