

# Our world bank: Bridging the World Bank's Mission and Rural Bangladesh's Reality

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## Session Overview

Session: The World Bank - Mission, Structure, and Priorities

Speaker: Ms. Li Lou, External Affairs Officer, World Bank

This was the first session of the Max Thabiso Edkins Climate Ambassador program. It introduced us to the World Bank - what it is, how it works, and what kind of goals it follows.

The speaker was Ms. Li Lou, who currently leads the World Bank's Speakers Bureau. She has worked in many parts of the World Bank over the years - in fragile conflict zones, in water and public-private partnerships, and in communication teams. Before joining the World Bank, she worked in journalism and marketing, including at CNN and a Silicon Valley startup. Her experience showed in how clearly and confidently she explained things.

She talked about the structure of the World Bank, the five institutions under it, and how it mainly works through governments to support development in lower-income countries. She shared their key goals: ending extreme poverty, supporting the poorest 40%, and creating a livable planet.

One sentence she said stayed with me:

"We don't just provide pipes - we build institutions that build more pipes."

It made me think. This journal is where I tried to connect what she said to what I see - the gap between these global missions and our rural reality.





# How the World Bank Describes Itself

Before this session, I only had a vague idea of what the World Bank was. I had heard the name many times, but I didn't really know how it worked or what it actually did. Through this session, Ms. Li Lou gave us a full overview - from its structure and mission to how it operates and measures impact.

## III What is the World Bank Group?

The World Bank is not just one organization. It's actually a group of five institutions, owned by 189 countries, working together to reduce poverty and build development in low- and middle-income countries. They do not fund rich countries.

Here's how they're structured:

Institution	What It Does
IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)	Offers loans to middle-income governments
IDA (International Development Association)	Provides grants and low-interest credits to low-income countries
IFC (International Finance Corporation)	Supports private sector development through investment and advisory
MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency)	Offers political risk insurance to encourage investment
ICSID (International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes)	Provides legal support for settling global investment disputes



## 🎯 What are their goals?

The World Bank Group is focused on three big goals:

- End extreme poverty (reducing global poverty to under 3%)
- Boost shared prosperity (increasing income for the poorest 40%)
- Create a livable planet (supporting climate, equity, and resilience)

These goals are not just for speeches. They drive everything they fund.



## How do they measure success?

Ms. Li Lou made it clear:

"It's not about how much money we spend - it's about how many lives are improved, how many emissions are avoided, how many people became more resilient."

They don't just care about spending. They use something called the World Bank Scorecard to track impact. It helps them hold themselves accountable - to governments, people, and the climate goals they've committed to.



## What projects do they focus on?

Some major focus areas include:

- Infrastructure (roads, electricity, water systems)
- Education
- Health care access
- Climate resilience
- Private sector development
- Agriculture and food security

One example Ms. Li Lou mentioned was Mission 300 - a plan to connect 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa to reliable electricity by 2030. This shows their long-term approach to energy and development.



## 🚫 What don't they do?

"We don't give money directly to NGOs or youth. We work through governments."

This was one of the most important points. The World Bank does not directly fund individuals or local organizations. Instead, they work with national governments, who are responsible for managing and implementing projects.

This makes sense at a big scale, but it also raises a question - what happens when the government doesn't fully deliver on those promises? !



# Behind the Data: Bangladesh's Rural Reality



Bangladesh often shows up in development reports as a “success case!” From outside, it looks like we’ve made major progress – and in many ways, that’s true. But if you zoom in deeper, especially into rural or inland areas like mine, the story starts to change.

## 📋 What Reports Say vs. What People See

Development Area	Government/World Bank Report	What I Actually See in Rural Areas
Energy	100% electrification achieved	Broken solar kits, weak grid, no power in many homes
Health	Female school attendance rising	Girls sharing pads, period poverty, missing health access
Water	Safe water programs implemented	Smelly ponds, hyacinth-filled water, infections
Agriculture/Soil	Subsidies and modernization	Soil degradation, fertilizer misuse, crop loss
Climate Resilience	Coastal protection projects active	Inland areas ignored, no adaptation systems



These national-level claims are not exactly lies.

But they are incomplete.

They show what's on paper – not what's on the ground.





## What the World Bank Supports in Bangladesh (CPF Goals)

The World Bank's current Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Bangladesh (2023–2027) outlines five major focus areas:

- ✓ Private sector development and access to finance
- 🌐 Digital and spatial connectivity to drive inclusive growth
- 🌱 Climate resilience, especially delta management and green infrastructure
- 🎓 Human capital development (education, health, social protection)
- ⚖️ Socioeconomic inclusion for women, youth, and vulnerable groups

They've also committed over \$1.25 billion for rural resilience, agricultural reforms, and micro-enterprise recovery.

- ✓ These goals are meaningful.
- ✓ Many projects sound promising on paper.

But...

- ✗ Most of these investments concentrate on cities or coastal zones.
- ✗ Inland rural regions like Pabna rarely appear in focus.
- ✗ Even where rural programs exist, the follow-through is weak or temporary.

The CPF may mention "inclusive connectivity," but in reality, the connection stops short of villages like mine.

Projects often overlook where the power cuts first, where girls skip school for lack of pads, where filters are more needed than apps.